

RANGE

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RANGE is an award-winning quarterly devoted to the issues that threaten the West, its people, lifestyles, lands and wildlife. No stranger to controversy, RANGE is a leading forum for opposing viewpoints in the search for solutions that will halt the depletion of a national resource—the American cowboy.

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Up Front

A hell of a ride.

By *C.J. Hadley*

This is my 100th issue. Yep. My mind, body and soul can feel it. I am indelibly marked one hundred times because RANGE has offered an extraordinary education—and revelations—in each and every one.

This is also my 26th year and I've had my horse longer than I've been running RANGE. Gib, 30 now, came to Washoe Valley in 1989 as an almost three-year-old. I think we had the same color hair. It was also the year five cowboys asked me to produce a brochure to send to Congress to help prove that cowboys and sheepherders are not the bad guys.

I told those cowboys, "Why, sure," not realizing the kind of intense labor demanded and what an extremely long and money-lacking project it was going to be. I was a meat-eating liberal from New York City who knew little about the subject. I had been wandering the world as an international travel writer and on walkabout in Nevada for a decade as publisher and editor of Nevada Magazine. How tough could it be?

I met Basque sheepherders and a few miners and cowboys in the high desert. (I have yet to find a logger.) I visited towns the size of a Big Apple tea klatch, which means pretty small. I watched Melvin Dummer—a fish salesman from Gabbs who claimed a big slice of Howard Hughes' estate—as he squirmed an Elvis impersonation at a casino in downtown Reno. I borrowed a slick black Ferrari Dino from Bill Harrah to test on the roads around Verdi (maybe because I used to be managing editor of *Car & Driver*). I drove thousands of miles on dirt roads in a 1972 Dodge Polara state car which had a 440 Hemi engine with enough power to jump creeks on Hinckey Summit. And I have been welcomed onto ranches from the Dakotas to California, often leaving with tears in my eyes.

RANGE offered a drastic change in perspective and one hell of a learning curve. Yep, in an early issue I spelled the word for a female sheep "yew," just like the tree. Yep, I allowed my art director to illustrate an Angus

bull with horns. And, yep, I cussed too much. (Wasn't it Mark Twain who said, "Profanity offers relief denied by prayer"?) But I also had a growing understanding and affection for hardworking, independent rural families and more doubt regarding America's leaders.

RANGE started out nice and easy. A few ranch stories. Nice photos. A mustang feature I had been investigating since the mid-70s. Right from the start I included our nostalgic "Confessions of Red Meat Survivors" about ranching's old-timers, and I found some brilliant writers, researchers and photographers willing to work for RANGE's pittance. A few of those talents were ready to come out of the socialist closet, including Tim Findley who died in 2010 but left an



GIB in his prime © JEFF T O S S

astounding body of work that is available at www.rangemagazine.com along with other masterpieces by Dr. Mike Coffman, Dave Skinner and hundreds more.

Because of our contributors, RANGE has been called "a national treasure" and "a triumph." Some say, "I read it cover to cover." Our subscribers live in every state of the Union and 23 foreign countries and our successes are because of you, our readers. For this I am inspired but also humbled.

Gib hasn't been ridden for a while and he's ready for heavenly pastures. (Eddie Brooks' beautiful saddle is in my living room.) His grave is dug but filled with eight feet of water due to the 280-percent snowpack in the Sierra Nevada last winter. A bit swaybacked and rough looking now, Gib has always been a talented and gentle partner. I asked him to hold on till the desert dries up again because I don't want to bury that beautiful horse at sea.

I, too, am a bit swaybacked and rough looking now, partly because RANGE—so far—has been one hell of a ride!

Thanks for traveling with me. ■