

Great Plains Morn

(A true story by Cactus Jack McCarty)

Well named the "Llano Estacado"
When Coronado roamed
While buffalo fed the Indian tribes,
Where this cowboy is homed.

New "leather creaking in the quieting"
Still sounds "with... trot again"
Rememb'rin' those who rode before,
Pride stirr'd by poet's pen.

'Midst scents of sage and yucca's bloom
Mix'd with the tease of dew,
In still of dawn as prairie flowers
Dance by in changing hue.

Surrounded by a Master's-piece,
A clipper sailing grass,
Refreshing glory of the dawn
Now pales the ev'ning pas'.

The flowers so thick the dirt's unseen
Where fire stopp'd Uncle's** heart.
Protecting range that keeps us fed,
A hero played his part.

Now sage and yucca stand aside
While flowers and grass applaud
A man who gave his life to land,
His fam'ly, friends, his God.

Hey! Watch out for that coyote's den!

My mem'ry warning wield.

The falling hoss roll'd over Rick***

As sev'nteen bones broke yield.

When summon'd back to earth again,

I find the hunted cow.

Her bag is dry, head and tail high,

Dream's gone, adventure's now.

*Adapted from lines 3 & 4 of the poem "Anthem" by Buck Ramsey. I heard Joel Nelson call it "the greatest piece of cowboy literature ever written" and Hal Cannon of the Western Folklife Center in Elko, Nevada refers to it as "an American classic". If "imitation is the highest form of flattery" even if it's cheap, Buck, consider yourself right honored. Andy Wilkinson helped with the tuning. Thanks!

**My Dad's brother, Sam McCarty, died in a grass fire last fall. Sam was driving the best fire-fighting machine on the range, his road-grader, when he was overcome by smoke inhalation. His selfless efforts, with no expectation of reimbursement or pay, have saved many hours of firefighting and many acres of winter grazing for all of us fortunate enough to have known him. Steve Irwin also died a few years ago when lightning struck him while fighting a range fire. Both accidents were within 8 miles of my house.

**My brother, Rick McCarty, fell with a bay horse named Widowmaker who stepped in a varmint hole with both front feet at a lope. The horse was cushioned by Rick's body and was not hurt. Rick broke both arms, both jaws, his nose and 12 ribs. He noticed that his watch was still running before he found out that his arms didn't work.

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