

From Cowhand to Minister

Back in the early years of West Texas when ranch hands were cowboys, tougher than nails, ranches were miles from any semblance of a decent road, railroads were the high water mark of the modern age, hard work was something you did if you wanted to eat, and fences were new and required a great deal of maintenance—then, personal toughness was a requirement.

In the midst of Springtime, two mounted cowboys riding along side a barbed wire fence, one of them was searching for meaning in life, the other a very proud, vulgar man who resented any goodness what-so-ever. Their primary mission was to repair and secure the fence between them. Both were hardened men who had no fear of any man or any beast. They had been mounted for most of the day and had stopped only to make repairs on the fence. A squall line was rapidly approaching from their rear, this meant a good soaking and the possibility of being pelted by hailstones. This fact did not amuse Billy Frank the older of the two. He starting complaining and cursing about the drenching they were about to receive as they dug their rain gear from the bottom of their saddlebags.

Before the rain began, a bolt of lightning struck a fence post ahead and between them which frightened both horses and ignited the sparse prairie grass.

"You missed me you Jew Bastard!" Billy cursed at God as he shook his fist up at the heavens, simultaneously struggling to control his excited mount.

Obie Fleming watched in amazement as his mare was bucking hard trying to rid herself of him and run away, but somehow Obie managed her.

In less than a few seconds after Billy Frank had cursed God, another bolt of lightning struck—this one more powerful than the first, the crashing sound was deafening, it left Billy and his mount dead and smoking on the ground amidst the burning prairie grass.

A moment in time can change a man. Obie suddenly became afraid and started to pray aloud. "Lord have mercy on me a sinful man! Dear God, I'll do anything, I beg for your mercy!" The rain began and the grass fire was extinguished. There was nothing Obie could do. Rainwater began to puddle around the smoldering body of Billy Frank lying on the ground with his right leg beneath his dead mount. The disgusting mixed odor of cooked flesh, burning hair and ozone remained in the air.

With a ringing in his hears, Fleming continued to ride north in the cold soaking rain toward the ranch headquarters two miles away.

Upon reaching the empty bunkhouse, Fleming fell on his knees in prayer, rainwater still dripping from his wet slicker and asked God to come into his life. He confessed and repented for all his sins and told God that he was completely willing to do anything and everything that God asked of him. And, he did just that. He claimed an old dusty Bible that had been sitting on a shelf in the bunkhouse unread for years, and he began to study it. He continued as a ranch hand for a few years, however, he was a completely transformed man. Eventually, Fleming became a Minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and served as the Pastor of a Small Church in El Paso, Texas for nearly 50 years. He died while sleeping and went to heaven in

1953 at the ripe old age of 94. He left behind a wife, four sons, three daughters, twenty-three grandchildren and now there are more than sixty great-grand children. Most all of them are living examples of loving Christian men, women, boys and girls.

Based on a true story.

~By Adverse Yaw