

**[Tom J. Snow]**

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Folk Stuff - Range lore

Gauthier, Sheldon F.

Rangelore

Tarrant Co., Dist. #7 [15?]

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FEC

Tom J. Snow, 74, living at 1704 May St., Fort Worth, Tex., was born Dec. 15, 1863, in Cleburne co., Ala., on a farm owned by his father, T.J. Snow, Sr. His father, who served in the Confederate Army during the Civil War, died five years after the war terminated, when young Tom was only seven years old. Tom possessed a natural ability for handling and riding horses and at the age of 15 was able to ride almost any horse. He was so proficient that he was able to earn his livelihood breaking wild Texas bronchos which were shipped into Ala., for sale. Tom came to Fort Worth, Tex., in 1883, where he has since continued to reside, with the exception of 18 months he worked on a ranch. His first job in Texas was tending bar. His next job was on a cattle ranch owned by Lewis Hunter. After termination of his work on the ranch, Tom became employed as a peace officer, continuing in this profession ever since. At the present time (1938) he is a Tarrant co. Deputy Sheriff. His Story:

I was born in Cleburne co., Ala., Dec 15, 1863. My father, T.J. Snow, Sr., owned a plantation and was one of the prosperous citizens of the county before the Civil War. He entered the Confederate Army the second year of the war and served until the war

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terminated. Father, like many other Southern men, was in destitute circumstances when the war ended.

“Father died five years after he returned from the army. His death caused the family to separate and it was not long until I was on my own resources.

“I possessed a natural ability to ride a horse, during my 'teen years I did a great amount of riding, and had learned to handle any horse or mule. I had learned how to stay in the saddle with a pitching horse.

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“At the time I went on my own, a great many of the wild Texas bronchos were shipped into Ala. and Miss., and sold for saddle horses. In those days, saddle horses were used extensively. Because of my ability as a rider and in handling horses, I was in demand as a horse wrangler, I devoted five years to the business of breaking the wild critters and received \$5.00 a head for the work.

“I trained the horses for saddle work. If the buyer wished to train the animal to be driven hitched to a vehicle, the animal was ready for further training by the buyer.

“After devoting five years to wrangling bronchos to earn my livelihood, I then got the idea of going to Texas. I arrived in Fort Worth in 1883, and Fort Worth has been my home ever since that date.

“I did not engage in range work when I first arrived in Texas. My first work was bar tending for B. Smith, who operated a saloon on the corner of Fifth & Main Sts, and followed working for several other saloon men.

“At the time I worked as a bartender, Fort Worth was a pure cowtown. Cowboys and ranchers, by the score, visited Fort Worth, bent on business and pleasure.

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“My experience back of the bar, while waiting on the cowboys and ranchers, was interesting and enjoyable. For one to be successful as a dealer with the cowhands, it was necessary to take the fellows as they presented themselves. However, one could always depend on the cowmen playing fair.

“I recollect many incidents which illustrates the rough, 3 humorous, but fair characteristics of the men who lived on the range. To present some idea of the things I experienced, I shall tell of some incidents which took place.

“One morning five waddies walked into the saloon and called for a 'frosty cocktail'. This particular drink was in great favor at the time and was among the expensive drinks. I mixed the five drinks and set the cocktails on the bar. The boys drank with great relish, and commended me on my ability as a mixer of the cocktail. When they had finished drinking, one of the party asked me if I had any chalk. I had an abundant supply of chalk, because we operated a few domino tables and chalk was used by the players to mark their score. Naturally, I informed the boys to the effect that I had a large supply.

“When the question was asked, I noticed each of the boys put a hand on his six-gun. Also, I saw a flickering smile on the lips of each. Well, when I told the boys we had a large supply of chalk, the spokesman asked:

“‘What is the bad news on the cocktails?’

“‘Just a dollar two-bits’, I replied.

“‘Mighty fair, Mr. bartender’, the fellow commended.’ ‘You take some of the chalk and mark the charge on the seat of your pants. We’ll be back and kick the marks off after a spell of time’. With this statement made, the party walked out of the saloon.

“I was certain the boys would be back, but could not anticipate their next move. I put a chalk mark reading '\$1.25' on the seat of my pants. I reasoned that the boys might refuse

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to 4 pay if they could not see the charge as ordered, but was somewhat disturbed about what might take place to remove the marks after they did pay the charge. However, I was determined to be game.

“The waddies returned within the hour, and as soon as they entered the bar I turned and showed the charge on the seat of my pants. Well, my act took them off their feet, and perhaps saved me from being the object of some rough fun.

“One of the party ordered another frosty cocktail. When the drink had been mixed and drank, one of the waddies threw a \$20.00 gold piece on the bar. I started to give the fellow his change, but he refused to accept the money, saying, 'fellow you beat us to the finish. You hold 'er, and we'll be back, now and then, to spend what's left of the gold !

“I soon learned to play with the cowhands instead of opposing them. By taking their puns and jokes in a spirit of good nature, one never needed to fear of being treated unjustly.

“Some of the cowhands' favorite sport was to shoot out the lights of an establishment, or start shooting suddenly near a crowd of people. They enjoyed watching the scared folks running away from the shooting. Also, the boys enjoyed fainting a gun battle, with someone between them.

“One night there was a stranger in the bar who had indulged in the cup that cheers slightly too much. He was a sociable fellow and had invited a couple of waddies to join him in taking a drink. The waddies reciprocated by buying a drink, but when it came to pay for their order they became involved in an argument 5 over which one should do the paying. The waddies didn't waste many words, but started to shoot with the stranger in line of their fire. The stranger attempted to move out from between the two men, but the waddies maneuvered to keep the fellow in the line of fire. There was some fast stepping and dodging for a minute and then, either from exhaustion or an idea, the stranger dropped to the floor.

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“The stranger was as white as an Easter lily and perspiring profusely. The shooting stopped when the stranger dropped to the floor. The scene then changed to the crowd indulging in more refreshments, paid for by the stranger.

“Having our lights shot out was an expected event any time a party of waddies arrived at the singing stage. I shall relate one incident when the light were shot out in our place and there happened to be an Easterner who knew we had a couple of 45's under the bar, because I had shown the guns to him while discussing some of the problems of conducting a saloon.

“The party of waddies were happy, as usual when something is pulled, and suddenly shooting started and the light went out. It was only a second after the shooting started till I felt someone's hand brush against me. It was the Easterner, who had jumped the bar and was looking for the guns. His intention was to get busy with a gun on the waddies. If the fellow had not brushed against me, or had found one of the guns, he may have caused some fun not intended by the other players.

“One night a party of commercial travelers were standing in front of the Metropolitan Hotel and engaged in conversation. A 6 party of waddies came walking past the hotel and saw the travelers in earnest conversation. The waddies [fainted?] a gun battle with the travelers in line of fire. It is needless for me to state how fast those travelers scattered.

“I tended bar four years, then accepted a job on the ranch operated by Lewis Hunter. The ranch was located about 18 miles west of Fort Worth.

“Hunter did the foreman's work himself and ranged about 3,000 head of cattle under the brand of '[LH?]'. The range consisted of about two sections of land, all under fence.

“Situated in the adjacent territory were the Wooton's, Corn's, Scott's and Eph Daggett's ranches. Daggett's range was the largest of all the ranches in this section and included all the territory northwest of Fort Worth for a distance of about 20 miles. Daggett owned a

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large number of acres in and around Fort Worth. He donated a part of a 300 acre tract of land to the T. & P. railroad on which to build their yards, depot, and other buildings, when the road came to Forth Worth.

“At the Hunter ranch, there was on an average of six cowboys employed. We lived in a ranch house and, during my day on the range, the boys slept inside practically every night. Of course, farther west the open range still existed and the waddies were compelled to live in the open a great deal. Due to the fence, our work did not require us to do night riding, because the fence held the cattle. One man did night work and he was kept to watch-over the herd. Our chief concern was the cattle thieves.

“One man was employed to ride the fence line each day. His 7 duty was to repair all minor breaks. He carried a hammer, pliers, and staples, in his saddlebags. When he found a loose wire, or a broken one, he would repair it. All major breaks, such as broken posts and breaks of that nature, he would report to the repair crew, at the same time giving location of same. The repair crew consisted of two men and they would drive the repair wagon to the location and make the repairs.

“Besides watching the fence, our work consisted of attending to the injured critters, cutting out market critters and driving the sale herd to the Fort Worth market. We had no roundup to make, except to round up the ranch's herd within the fence, for the purpose of branding and marking the calves in the Spring, also to count the herd.

“Hunter ranged from 75 to 100 [horses?], in addition to the herd of cattle. My time was devoted to attending to the horse herd. My job was watching the horse herd and doing the wrangling. I was the wrangler of the outfit and credited with being among the best of wranglers in this section of the range.

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“A horse which I could not ride had to be a snake-blood. Snake-blood was the term applied to an animal which could not be ridden or driven. The fact is, such animal is mentally abnormal by nature.

“I met a few of the snake-bloods back in Ala., which came off of the Texas range; but while working for Hunter, I was lucky in not having to deal with a single snake-blood.

“A snake-blood will buck until it is tuckered out and will then lay down. The balky critter among the work animals is a 8 counter-part of the snake-blood saddle stock. All horsemen know it is useless to whip a balky horse. One has to wait until the animal changes its mind. The only difference between a balky horse and a snake-blood is that the snake-blood will not change its mind.

“One of the favorite tricks of the cowhand was to put a greener on a bucking horse and tell the fellow the animal was a good saddle.

“All the waddies at Hunter's ranch knew me, because I had waited on them while tending bar at the various saloons. Therefore, the boys were going to give me an extra treat. The morning I reported for duty, Lewis Hunter pointed out a critter for me to use as my mount. I could tell the way the critter layed back its ears, it was no rocking chair. I put the saddle on the animal's back and mounted. The horse gave me something to do besides chewing my wax, but I was in no danger at any time. I soon convinced the animal it could not put me on the ground. I surprised the boys and convinced them I was a real rawhide, instead of a bartender.

“I worked 18 months for the Hunter outfit and then came back to Fort Worth. I engaged in law enforcement work thereafter. I have been a policeman, detective or deputy sheriff ever since.

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“As a law enforcing officer, I have dealt with many cowmen while they were in town on pleasure bent. Very few cowhands caused undue trouble. They were rough, but did not desire to injure anybody.

“We knew how to handle the cowmen and, during the late 80's and early 90's, we looked upon noise as harmless. Also, we did not molest the boys if they wanted to shoot the lights out, or practice shooting using the glass on the back bar as their target, because we knew that the damage property would be paid for. However, we insisted that they not injure anybody.

“We would run into a hybrid cowhand occasionally. What I mean is one who wanted to be tough because he thought toughness was one of the ingredients that went into the waddy's makeup.

“I recollect one hybrid who came under my charge while I was guarding a county road gang of prisoners. He repeated continually that he was tough, a cowhand, and would not work at anything else. He many times repeated the following:

“‘I'm from Bitter Root Creek where folks are tough. The farther up the creek you go the tougher they get and I come from the last shack at the far end of the creek’.

“When I arrived at the camp with the hybrid, I showed him a pick and shovel to handle, and then he went to pitching. He picked up a chain and hit a negro over the head, because the colored fellow brought the working tools.

“It was necessary to tame the boy, so I had four men hold the hybrid while I applied a strap on his seat. With the third wallop he let out a yell, saying, 'I'll be good, I'll work'.

“The fellow knew how to swing a pick and handle a shovel as if he'd been on the work before. He did his bit during the entire time he was at the camp. The day he was released I brought him back to town, and when we parted he thanked me for teaching him a lesson.

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“During my time, we in this section only had one or two 10 real tough cattle rustlers to deal with. However, we were called upon many times to apprehend cattle thieves. In fact, the call to catch cattle rustlers has been, and is now, more or less regular.

“When I first became connected with law enforcement, I was called on to catch a rustler who was getting Jim Corn's cattle. It was in the early 90's and Jim was losing cattle off his ranch regularly. Officers were trying to catch the rustler for several months, but had failed to catch the culprit. Corn finally offered a \$500.00 reward for the capture of the thief. Corn was forced to do something because, as he said, 'they will have me broke very soon unless the stealing is stopped'.

“Corn's foreman was a man named Mitchell and a fellow with a good reputation for being a dependable fellow. I knew Mitchell to be a straight fellow, so called on him for help. He agreed to follow my instructions about watching the identifying marks, such as shape of horns, color and size of critters, as they disappeared, and report to me. The brand could not be wholly depended upon, because it could be blotted. Mitchell reported as he agreed.

“The stealing continued for some time after my arrangement with Mitchell. One morning he reported a large cow stolen. The following day a negro came with some letters. He said the letters had dropped out of the pocket of his boss's coat while they were skinning a big cow. The negro's trouble was his boss had failed to pay him. I questioned the colored fellow and learned the cattle had been hauled from Corn's ranch, and always loaded after midnight 11 “This particular cow was fat and the day was hot. She became overheated and died. So the negro and his [boss?] hauled the carcass east of town to a ravine and there skinned and quartered the body. The meat was sold to a retail butcher by the name of Zimmerman.

“The letters turned over to me were addressed to Mitchell, but the negro did not know his boss by the name of Mitchell, but the letters were Mitchell's. How did these letters get into the pocket of the negro's boss? The answer would solve our problem.

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"I communicated with Corn. He knew about the stolen cow. I asked him about Mitchell's movements and Corn scoffed at the idea that Mitchell had any dealings with the thief.

"I requested Corn to hold Mitchell at the ranch, in the event the foreman was intending to go somewhere.

"I went to the ranch immediately and place Mitchell under arrest. He was confronted with the Negro and the letters. He admitted his guilt and was sent to the penitentiary for several years. I collected the \$500.00 reward, which Corn gladly paid because his cattle business was saved.

"I shall relate an unusual case of cowboys rustling an Englishmen, which was turned over to me for investigation. The Chief, Johnny Connalley, had a complaint laid before him by an English dude who claimed, he was deprived of his liberty and that great mental suffering was inflicted on him while at Hunter's ranch. The Chief called me in and said:

"You know all of Hunter's cowhands, because you have worked at the place. Go out there and investigate this complaint'.<sup>12</sup> "I called at the ranch and the boys readily told me what had happened.

"The Englishman called at the ranch while on a trip looking over the territory. The Englishman was dressed in a stiff front white shirt, claw-hammer coat, patent-leather shoes and a high silk hat. He also wore a monocle. Well, to the cowhand, the party was a curiosity worth a thorough examination. To make certain their curiosity would not get away before all hands had an opportunity to scrutinize it properly, the boys put the fellow in the snubbing pen, which was built from upright poles set close in the ground and was about seven feet high.

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“The boys guarded their wonder of wonders until all hands had looked the object over several times. Finally, the Englishman was turned loose and he came straight to town, lodging his complaint.

“I made my report to Connalley and he took the matter up with the dude. He convinced the fellow that the matter had better be dropped. Of course, the Chief knew it was one of the cowboys' jokes and that they did not intend any harm.

“Continuing with rustlers, I shall tell of the biggest haul of all made coming into this section. It was two carloads of horses shipped in here.

“I overheard horseman talking about the excellent bunch of range horses at the railroad yard and being offered for sale at an exceedingly low price. I looked the horses over and compared the price with the normal cost at the time. The variation caused me to become suspicious. 13 “I was informed by the railroad agent the horses were shipped from Roscoe. I wired Roscoe and word came back that the shipment was regular and made by a man named Crane.

“During the next few days I learned to know Crane by sight and found out he hung out at Jim Miller's joint. Miller was no angle. I shall take up his subject later. The fact Crane and Miller were intimate caused me to be satisfied we would hear something about the horses.

“The horses were sold in a very short time. Gus Zimmerman bought most of the two carloads.

“It was within a week later when we heard from Big Springs about a bunch of missing horses and the description tallied with Crane's horses. From information we could trace the horses from a range north of big Springs to Roscoe and from there by train to Fort Worth.

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“We gathered all the horses from the buyers and then set out to find Crane. We received information about Crane, which was to the effect that he would swap-out shots and was a quick true shooter.

“I received a report that Crane was at Miller's place one night. I called for two men to assist me and two men were detailed to go with me and get Crane.

“Before entering the joint, I sent in a dummy to buy drinks and locate what part of the joint Crane was in. While waiting for a report, my assistants and I talked about Crane. The two began to think of their family and said they did not want to swap out with Crane. I suggested that we should do our duty or resign. This suggestion did not meet with their approval. Well, I knew they would not do in a swap-out. I put the matter of assisting me 14 up to McClothen. He agreed to go into the joint with me and get Crane.

“The dummy reported that Crane was in a certain room with a girl. We entered the place and, a few seconds after we had entered, a girl came out of the certain room flustered. I stepped over to her and made a friendly inquiry. She readily told me that he was in the room and was sitting in the middle of the bed with two 45's at his side and had threatened to shoot her, because of some dissatisfaction. I asked her if it was Crane, and she answered “yes'.

“I asked her if the lights were off or on when she left the room and she stated the lights were out. I asked her where the light switch was located and she gave me the position, which was about chest high, next to the door casing on the right.

“I thought the situation out. I reasoned that if the lights were on I could step into the room quickly, with my gun leveled, and get the drop on him. I figured he would think it was the girl entering when the door started to open. Then, if the lights were still out, which I could determine by looking in the key hole, I could step into the room quickly and switch on the light, with my gun leveled when the lights came on.

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"I called McClothen and requested him to stay at my heels, after informing him of my plans.

"We went to the room's door. I looked through the key hole and saw that the lights were out. The only thing I feared then was whether or not he was still on the bed. If he had stepped to one side or the other of the room, he could cover me before I could locate him after I turned on the lights. But, that chance I had to take. 15 "With my gun ready in my left hand, I turned the knob and threw the door back quickly. I reached for the light switch and felt for a split second before my hand reached it, but I located it and pressed the button. The lights came on and there, sitting in the center of the bed, was Crane, with his gun at his side.

"He looked astonished. I said, 'Crane, we have you covered, don't make a move. We want you down at headquarters'. He left the bed saying, 'damn that girl! I reckoned it was she entering the room. If I had my idea it was you fellows, I sure would have swapped it out with you fellows.'

"We had caught one of the meanest and biggest horse rustlers in the entire section. He did his time in the penitentiary.

"Now I shall talk about Jim Miller. His wife looked after operating their joint and Jim was the schemer. Miller had one scrap with the law in Fort Worth. It was on a charge of murder. The killing took place in a washroom with no eye witness. The plea of self defense was successfully made at his trial.

"Jim Miller came here from Oklahoma, because it was too hot for him there. He had been mixed up with horse and cattle rustlers in Oklahoma, and we suspected he was in with Crane on the two carloads of horses. In Oklahoma, he was credited with 27 killings and it was claimed he would hire out to kill.

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“Just a short time before the Crane incident, Miller had sneaked into Oklahoma and killed a man named Gus Bobby. He was back in this vicinity hiding. After the Bobby killing was definitely placed on Miller, a \$2,500.00 reward was offered for the capture of Miller, dead or alive. 16 “Two officers from Oklahoma came here to locate Miller. They had a map which purposed to give the correct location of the man. After looking over the map, I knew it was incorrect and so informed the officers. But, they were obstinate and insisted on following the map.

“They said, 'all we want is a local officer to go with us, we'll do the rest'.

“So it was agreed that I should go with them and let the boys follow out their map, but if the map proved to be a piece of bunk, then I was to take charge of the hunt. The map proved to be incorrect, so I took charge.

“I had an idea where Miller was hiding. Miller had an Indian girl, a beautiful woman, who was his sweetie. She was seen going towards Mat Morris's ranch, which indicated to us Miller was somewhere in the vicinity.

“I led the two men out to Mat's ranch. The ranch house was located in sort of a ravine. I described the location and we talked about Miller. We all agreed Miller would swap-out with us if he had a chance, because he had proven by his prior actions that he was a killer.

“The location of the ranch house provided Miller with the chance to see us coming into the ravine. After getting the situation described, the two Oklahoma officers lost some of their courage and were perfectly willing that I should do the leading.

“On the way he passed Mat Morris on his way to Fort Worth. When I saw Mat headed for town, I told the men that we would have to hurry, because Mat would surely get word to Miller about us 17 being headed towards the ranch.

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"We arrived near the ravine and there my two partners refused to continue any farther, but wanted to wait until dark and then sneak upon the house. I knew waiting would be futile, because Miller would leave the ranch, if he was there, the moment he received word from Mat. However, the two officers failed to see the matter my way and would not go down into the ravine.

"I proceeded alone, and, as my mount started down the incline, I saw a man come out of the back door of the ranch house. The fellow appeared to be Miller's size and shape, from the distance I was looking. He looked my way and immediately reentered the house. I rode to the front of the house and hollered:

"'Hello in there!' The Indian girl appeared at the door and asked:

"'What do you want?'

"'I want to see Jim Miller', I answered.

"'He's not here' was her answer.

"'Who was that I saw at the back door as I came riding down the hill?'

"'A fellow who works here' was her reply.

"'I want to see him' I told her.

"Without waiting for her reply, I dismounted and walked to the door.

"I didn't draw my gun, but walked with my hands swinging at my sides, leisurely. The girl stepped aside as I approached the door. I opened the door and saw, standing in the center of the room, Jim Miller with two 45's leveled at me. 18 "I pretended to not mind the guns, but I did. The guns looked mighty big and menacing to me. I said:

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"Jim, I have come to talk with you'.

"What do you want, Snow', he asked.

"You are wanted in Oklahoma for the Bobby killing. This ranch is surrounded by men and they will get you dead if there is no other way out. Will you come with me, or should I return and tell the posse you want to swap-out with them?'

"Snow! he answered, 'you have come to me without flashing a gun and to give me a chance to decide what to do. I'll go with you, but no one else'.

"Alright Jim, give me your guns and let's get going'. I demanded, and he complied. I took me bad man back and lodged him in the Tarrant county jail to wait for extradition papers. We had corralled another cattle rustler and menace to the citizens.

"The two Oklahoma officers returned home. The extradition papers arrived in a couple of days and I started with Miller to deliver him to the sheriff at Ada, Okla.

"After the train crossed from Texas to Oklahoma, people were gathered at the depots and wanted to get a peep at Miller.

"The sheriff of Pontotoc co., at Ada, boarded the train several miles this side of Ada. He told me that there were 2,000 people or more gathered at Ada, all bent on lynching Miller. I informed the sheriff that I was entrusted with the prisoner with instructions to deliver him at the jail, and would stay with the man until I turned him in at the jail. 19 "I requested the sheriff to wire ahead and instruct his deputies to be at the depot and stand where the mob could see them. Thus the mob would be expecting Miller to be turned over at the depot, and that he did.

"I had Miller's personal effects in a grip. Among the effect were Miller's two guns which he had handed to me at the ranch house. I said to Miller:

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"A mob of several thousand people are gathered at Ada, bent on lynching you. I am going to defend you'. Pointing at the grip, I continued:

"In that grip are your two guns. If I toss the grip to you, I will expect you to use the guns'.

"Tom, you and I can give them plenty of lead. I am telling you I'll stay with you. If you go down, and I can make it to the jail, your delivery will be made', he said, and I knew he meant it.

"Alright, Jim', I said. 'From now on we are partners till you are delivered'. I said this to show him I had confidence in him doing what we planned.

"The train pulled into the depot and, as it was slowing down, I peeped out of the window and the crowd appeared like a small army in numbers.

"I took Miller to the rear platform of the next to the last coach and we squatted on the steps opposite to the depot.

"As I anticipated, the crowd was watching for the prisoner to appear where the sheriff's deputies were standing on the platform. That gave me a chance to drop off from the train at the opposite side from the depot and take a short cut to the jail. 20 "The success of my venture depended on no one seeing us leave the train and, also, not running into a crowd at the jail.

"We dropped off of the train just as it slowed to a stop. Before the crowd at the depot had time to realize the prisoner had been slipped off of the train, and decide on their next move, Miller and I had arrived at the jail.

"It was not long till the crowd moved to the jail, but were not sure that the prisoner was in the jail. However, the crowd was menacing. I stayed in the Ada jail during the night and returned to Fort Worth the next day.

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“During the day, after delivery of the prisoner, a man named West and another named Allen appeared, to make Miller's bond. The crowd lynched both of the men. One other fellow, named Washington, appeared to make bond and narrowly escaped being lynched. Miller was taken out of the jail the second night he was there by the mob and lynched. Thus the career of Miller, the cattle rustler, killer for hire, and other depredations, ended with the lynching of himself and two other men.

“I am still engaged in law enforcement work, but my work is confined largely to court work. At 72 I am still active, but do not feel capable to do the kind of work I did a few years back.