

## [Dr. A. S. Rattan]

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Phipps, Woody

Rangelore

Tarrant Co., Dist. 7 [Folkstuff - Range Lore 91?]

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Dr. A.S. Rattan, 75, was on his father's stock ranch at Greenville, Tex. Dr. Rattan learned to ride a horse at an early age and was doing regular cowboy work at 10 years of age. His father moved the family to Breckenridge with 200 head of cattle and 50 horses in 1877, and established a ranch on Cedar Creek. His father sold out in 1880 to move his family to Fort Worth where his children could receive an education. Dr. Rattan learned medicine and was a country doctor for many years. He later operated drug stores in Fort Worth, then retired to the Masonic home for the Aged in 1934, which is located about 12 Mi. E. of Ft. Worth, Texas. His story:

“Well, I guess I can tell you a little about the range life because I was born with cattle, rode a hoss when I was so young that I can't recall when I learned, was a puncher before I was 10 years old, then on top of that, I was one of the old time saddle bags doctors.

“First, I was born in Runt county, near Greenville, Texas, on November the 1st, 1862. My dad and granddad run cattle on the outskirts of Greenville when I was born. I don't recollect my granddad's brand but I know that dad branded a figure 71 on the left hip of his critters. Reason I know that was because I looked at them so much when I was just a

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kid. Why, I had to do regular cowpunching work before I was ever taught any reading and writing at all.

“My dad had been a Confederate soldier and it seemed like the Unionists had the upper hand and was trying to run things like they wanted it so times got pretty squally before dad decided to move out of it all. He sold everything in 1877 but 200 mother cows and 50 native hosses. C12 - 2/11/41 - Texas 2 He loads what he wants us to take with us in an old box wagon cart, hitches his team of oxen to it, loads mother and sis' into a hack pulled by a couple of ponies, then we lights out for the [West?].

“Man! Man! Was I thrilled? Why, I'd heard about the West all of my life. I'd heard about big ranches, rustlers, Indians, and what not the same as kids hear nowadays. It sure wasn't no trouble to rouse me out in the mornings and get the herd started to drifting. I was always ready. If it was necessary, I'd stand the night watch and drive all the next day too. I wanted to get there. I was in for a disappointment, though, because it was a day of small ranches and the old timers had gunned the varmints out of the country. Why, the wild game wasn't even so plentiful at that time.

“Of course, there was lots of excitement and something going on every day. I forgot to date our trip out there, we started on June the 1st, 1877, and arrived on Ceder Crick, seven mills East of Breckenridge, in Shackelford county, Texas, on July the 1st., Just one month on the road.

“The first thing we did after getting onto dad's land was to throw up a little old log cabin and a canvas wall for another room. Dad rebranded all of his cattle, putting the running M on every head. Now, the running M is made without any sharp corners. Just make an M that's all curves and straight lines and you've got it.

“Now, the work was a little different in those days from the way it is today. For instance, all we waddies knew was just to work, work, work, while the modern puncher has a chuck wagon follow him around with all the comforts that a ranch can afford. [?], high powered

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chuck, his high powered bed roll, and everything. C12 - 2/11/41 - Texas 3 If we waddies wanted to take anything with us, it could be no more than a little chuck in a saddle bag, a slicker and a bed roll back of the cantele, and maybe a rifle in a saddle scabbard.

“We always had a Spring roundup to brand the calves and a Fall roundup to cut out the sale cattle. When we had a roundup, all the neighboring ranchers pitched in with us and we all went down South into Eastland county, where our cattle usually drifted. There were always around 50-60 cow punchers in a roundup and we had a lot of fun together while going down. It was different coming back though, because we scattered out fan-wise, and combed the country clean. We didn't leave any cattle behind us either. They didn't have to belong to us to get into our roundups. We all did it, though.

“A fellow by the name of JJ (Jack) Robinson, was always trail boss on the roundups. He'd ram rod the spread and make all the rules and divisions until the roundup was over. He was one more powerful good rider and he had a real cutting hoss. He run the OX brand over on the other side of Breckenridge from us. I don't recall anybody saying how many head he run but I guess it was about the same as the rest of us.

“There were three fellows that ranched together but had different brands. One was Bill Hittson, and he was supposed to run about 1,000 head with the HIT brand. Then, there was his brother that was rumored to run a few hundred, I don't recall how many, with a lazy A brand. You make it by laying the A down and making it point toward the shoulder. He burnt it on the critter's left hip. And John Millsap, his brother-in-law, who run the MIL brand. Now, I don't recall just how many head he did run but I wouldn't be at all surprised if the 1,000 that Bill was rumored to run wasn't the total number of 4 their cattle. I recall one more ranch run by old Jim and Ike Fridge. They run about 600 cattle with the JJo brand. You make it by making two J's, then burn a small o right over the two J's.

“Theses roundups showed a fellow's mettle. If he had anything to him, he could make a good hand. The real asset to a cowpuncher though, is his hoss. If he can ride good, and

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he's got a good cutting hoss a cowpuncher is setting on top of the world because he don't have a thing to worry about, much. I had two hosses that I always used. One of them was a big hoss, the other a little one. I named the big one, 'Big Dexter', and the little one, 'Little Dexter'. They was both real hosses that would make any cow hand a top hand. The little one was the best hoss because I could use him for a night riding hoss. He was safe, sure, and sensible. He knew might near as much as a man and I used to think he knew my brand. I sure hated to part with that hoss when we moved away from there but dad sold him so I couldn't help it.

“One of the bad things that happened to us while we was there was a drouth. It came in the year of '76, and I'd see cattle going down the dry crick bed, licking the mud for a little moisture. The way we got water was to run some of them across the crick and keep somebody standing in one spot. That way, the cattle would stomp the other part down and force the water up in the spot they didn't stomp. Then we'd take a shovel and dig down a ways in the loose spot and water would well up. After about six or seven head had drunk, you'd have to dig again because they'd have the place filled up again. You couldn't pull that anywhere except where you had a sandy bed or in quick sand. 5 “I [said?] there wasn't no rustling but there was a little done by what we called the 'Nesters'. They'd made a little settlement down in Eastland county and would take a beef whenever they wanted a little meat. They'd also milk our cows too but when we came through on a roundup, we rounded everything up so they couldn't hurt us 'til the cattle had time to drift back after we got through with them. Of course, we watched the cattle all the time in order to be ready in case some rustlers did spread a long loop.

“We broke up in 1880, and dad sold out in order to bring all us kids back here to Fort Worth and send us to school. You see, at that time, the rail road ended here at Fort Worth. The only engines moving West of Fort Worth was the construction trains and I don't believe they was going any farther then Weatherford. It seemed like Fort Worth was where the West ended, or where the civilized world started. It seemed like Fort Worth was home

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to all the ranchers West of Fort Worth so when dad decided to settle down in some place where us kids could go to school, he comes to Fort Worth.

“Well, I considered that the most foolish thing ever done. Just completely throw up a good living and a coming business to educate a bunch of kids. After we got here, I decided I wanted to be a doctor. I studied enough to get me a little business, then started out in Mason County in 1890. I turned out to be a saddle bags doctor. You know, carry all your stuff on a hoss and go from one ranch or farm to another. I was just as regular as the old circuit riding persons except when some contagious disease broke out.

“I got to thinking maybe the grass grew a little greener out in the panhandle so I lit out for Channing and Hartley counties. I made me a route out there the same as I did before but it was too far between customers so I came back to Parker county for awhile, then I came into Fort Worth and went into the drug store business.

“I've run drug stores all over Fort Worth since I came back. The two biggest ones were on Allen Avenue and another one on East Front Street.

I finally got too old to do much pill rolling so I retired and come out here to the Masonic Home. This is a mighty fine place for an old man to spend his last days.

“Now, about being married, I've been married three times. I don't have any use for an old bachelor that's gone through life without helping take care of somebody. There happened to be 10 or 12 old bachelors together here the other day and I says, 'A man that never married or raised a family and took care of kids got no business being took care of in his old age. He oughta be done like we used to do an old stag, just drag him off into the head of an old holler and let him dry up'. Then I walked off and left them gaping. You know, when I'm not feeling my age so bad, I'm lots of fun. I'm all the time into some devilment like that.