

The Day I Took the Spotlight

Wouldn't it be superb to have one moment when you took the spotlight, to have everybody clapping for you and cheering loudly? I have had that once-in-a-lifetime opportunity—the day I took the spotlight!

Sometime in February, my teacher told us all about the Woodmen of America speech contest. The topic was “people who have overcome obstacles in their lives.” I thought my great-grandma Lorraine Parsley, who has had recurring cancer 13 times and is still living, would be perfect. She has overcome a lot of obstacles in her life.

A couple weeks later, the class gave their presentations. My teacher had to pick three to five students to go on to the next level. I was one of them! Then the top five from each of the three fifth-grade classes competed. The top seven would be the finalists; again, I was one of them! The top seven worked really hard. We had until March 15, 2001, to practice.

March 15 rolled around. Before I knew it, I was in our school gym with people all around, including the judges, listening to every word I said. I was the sixth to present. I was soon done; what a relief! I knew the top seven got ribbons, certificates, and pins; but I still wanted that trophy.

After the seventh person finished, the judges made their final decisions. They announced the winners. The third-place winner was Aunum, the second-place winner was Sarah, and the first-place winner was Kelli! I had just won first place! I was ecstatic.

That was my once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. The students in the audience were going wild clapping and cheering! That was a moment I will always remember, when I took the spotlight!

A Cowboy's Journal

I am so upset at myself. I don't know where my head was. Finally, here I was, with \$80 to my name (which is meager compensation for a two-month cattle drive), and then I lose it all gambling. Just one night, and now I am bankrupt all over again. Yesterday was my 22nd birthday, as well as my payday, so I allowed myself a little gambling in Abilene, Kansas, a cow town. But I got so caught up in the action that I couldn't stop, and pretty soon, I was broke.

I had been hoping to save enough money to start my own business, Bronco Jones and Company, but I suppose that will just have to wait for the next cattle drive. Hopefully, by then I will have better sense.

But enough talk about that. I shall write about the cattle drive, in case I ever look back in this journal 20 years from now and wonder what it was like. Cowhands have very tough jobs, not to mention boring at times. I am a swing rider, and I help keep the cattle from straying. There are several other cowhands and, of course, a point rider and a cook. Lucky for us, we now have a talented cook who can turn anything into a delicious meal. We've had much worse cooks in the past.

One little piece of excitement that sticks out in my mind is the day a single gunshot started a cattle stampede. I didn't even have time to wonder where it came from, for in a split second, the longhorns had already taken off at an alarming run. It was all chaos for some time. Finally we managed to slow down the stampeding herd by turning them in a wide circle. That memory shall certainly amuse me for some years to come, and I do need some fun, for tomorrow I am returning to Texas for yet another cattle drive. I hope it's my last.