

### 13. ROY BROWN AND THE DOW

Bordering our new Rabbit Creek Ranch on the west was the DOW's Lower Cherokee Park Unit. 1360 acres of that area had once been part of the old Williams place. George Williams told me he had never agreed with his father about selling that part.

One day in the fall of 1978 I saw a legal notice that the grazing on the Lower Unit was being put out for bid. I was excited because I knew we could really use some extra fall pasture and it was right across the fence.

I put in our bid for \$10 an Animal Unit Month (AUM), which was at the high end of the going rate for private pasture. I was notified that we had won the bid. Then, after some delay, I was told that the DOW had decided not to lease grazing on the Lower Unit after all.

Well, it turned out that the DOW had cut an inside deal with the Brackenbury Ranch ex-foreman, Chet Wahl (1916-2010), who had been paying \$4 per AUM.

Chet said he would "be g\*\*d\*\*\*\*d" if anyone was going to get his lease. The DOW had been required to put the lease out for bid periodically but apparently had not expected any takers except for Chet.

So, the DOW pulled a King Solomon and nobody got to graze it for the next 20 years. I could have fought the DOW bureaucracy and maybe even won, but....

Chet blamed me for losing his sweetheart deal and let me know it every time I saw him for the next thirty years. It didn't help that Roy Brown (1929-2002)<sup>1</sup>, who I introduced in the last chapter, was an old friend of Chet's.

The UP lease situation on George Creek had really gotten under Roy's hide. He gave us no end of grief about how we managed our cattle on the George Creek Permit. One evening outside his front door we got into a shouting match that could have ended in a

fight. It was just as well for me it didn't – Roy was a tough customer<sup>2</sup>.

As time went by (skipping ahead in the story for the moment) we ended up in a truce of convenience. I wanted to crack down on trespass fishing on Haligan and the North Fork and Roy wanted to arrest violators.

There's one thing that drives game wardens nuts: Land owner reports trespasser; game warden arrests trespasser; game warden does paper work; land owner drops charges.

So, I guaranteed Roy, if he arrested a trespasser on our place, we'd press charges, even if it was 'my grandmother.' That worked well and we got on mostly OK after that. Roy also shoed horses in his spare time and did ours for a while.

Kent and I hit a rough patch with Roy when a lion (or a bear) killed a fancy yearling bull that we were keeping for someone else. In order to collect damages from the DOW, the Game Warden needed to certify that it was a lion (or a bear) and Roy dug in his heels, dismissing the big raking claw marks down sides of the dead bull.

Game Wardens can kinda be like that. Long after Roy retired, we had a lion at our place that was stopping by for dinner every week or so. He liked variety – a lamb one week, three or four chickens the next...

Despite obvious evidence, the Game Warden denied that it was a lion. Then, after Sarah saw the lion trying to get into the chicken coop in broad daylight, he suggested with a touch of sarcasm that I should shoot it. He was clearly surprised a week later when I called him and told him to come get his #\*>&! lion. I'd shot it the night before in the act of killing a fourth lamb.

So, picture this: Here's the dead lion lying next to the dead lamb (how's that for a twist on an old theme?). Before the DOW would own up to damages, a junior Game Warden was sent over to skin the lamb and measure the bite mark on the lamb's neck

to make sure it matched the teeth on the lion. Good grief!

After Roy retired, he went into the excavating business with his son, Stan. I recommended them to the Phantom Canyon Ranches Landowners Association for road maintenance.

After Evan died, Catherine Roberts called me one day and said she was tired of her hired hands fighting over how to repair their River Ditch – would I get it done right? I agreed on condition of not accepting any pay. I consulted on a plan for repairs with an engineer I knew who did work for the North Poudre Irrigation Company. My suggestion to Catherine was that she engage Roy and Stan to do the work recommended by the engineer.

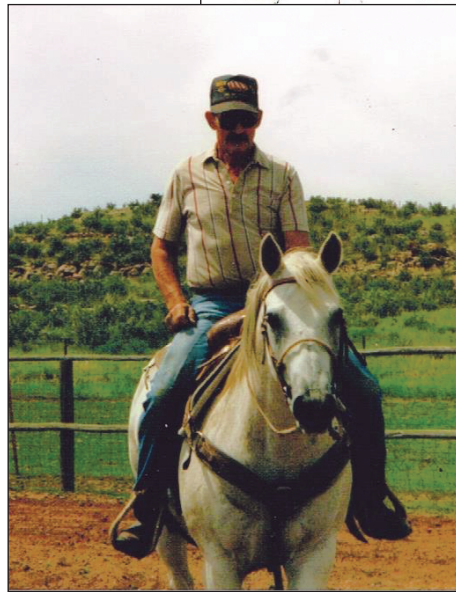
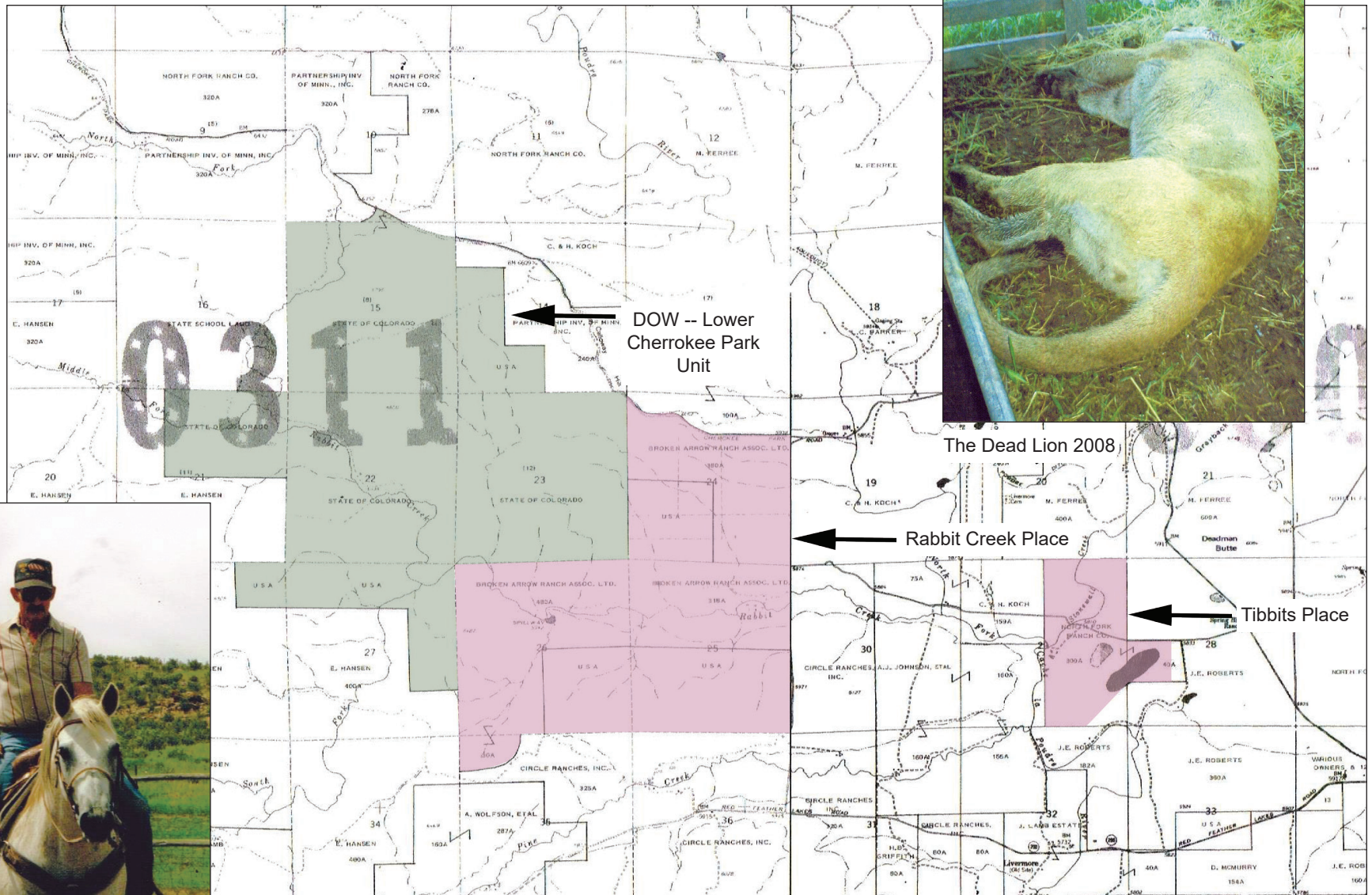
During the project, I came around a corner to find Roy and one of Catherine's hired men (who was bent out of shape over my involvement) bad mouthing the repair project.

When I got Roy alone, I lit into him. *Here I was volunteering my help for a neighbor and Roy was flapping his gums behind my back, after I'd recommended that Catherine hire him to do the work, etc. etc.* When I was finished, I stomped off still fuming. A few minutes later, Roy came up, said I was right and apologized. You could have knocked me over with a feather.

For all of our ups and downs, Roy was the genuine article. You could say he rode for the brand – DOW – right or wrong. I'm glad I knew him.

<sup>1</sup> Roy Brown was raised on an irrigated farm about two miles south of the Wellington farm I was raised on. He was 15 years older, so we never knew each other until we were neighbors in Livermore.

<sup>2</sup> Years later, Roy was on a hunting trip, miles from help, when he was kicked in the face by a pack mule. I heard it took him a couple of days, but he made it out, mule and all, by himself. His jaw was wired shut for a long time and his face was never the same. Roy died of a heart attack on a hunting trip in the Flattops Wilderness in 2002. He was 72.



Roy Brown 1997 (courtesy of Stan Brown)