

Testimony of Ted Barber

Ted Barber began his flying career in the 1920's, at a time when one of the only ways a pilot could make a living was by barnstorming from town to town. Later, during the depression, he found himself learning to run wild horses in northern Nevada. This experience led to other jobs removing wild horses from the ranges of Nevada and Oregon.

Ted was not much different from most who lived through the depression. They were a hard living, hard working people who loved being around their own kind. They were honest and straight forward. They based their thinking on what they thought was good for the country and those around them, and they expected others to do the same. To them, the wild horse programs that began to emerge in the 1960's were something that should not be tolerated. This is what Ted had to say:

Corralling ownerless horses on our federal range lands is a deep, involved, and “emotional” subject. The opposition would have you believe that aerial mustangers are an unscrupulous, inhumane bunch of outlaws who move around in the back hills, mostly by moonlight, and steal horses.

These people want you to believe it is inhumane to catch horses and sell them to someone who is going to slaughter them for making pet food. They see nothing wrong with horses becoming snowbound during periods of deep snow and slowly starving and freezing to death on open range lands.

Some of the people who write extensively about wild horses seem to have a vested interest in distorting the facts. This has resulted in giving the public a false picture of the problems that are created by having too many wild horses on our western range lands. The books and magazines articles on this subject never even touched the real story of wild horses and the men who worked with them.

Horses are not wild animals in the same sense that deer and antelope are. The horses that escaped or were turned loose by early settlers became the wild mustangs that were so numerous on our western plains....They are commonly referred to as “wild” horses simply because they run wild and are hard to catch. They were put on the range by man, so they do not belong to the public as deer and antelope do. They have no natural predators and their numbers increase rapidly to a point where they take over the range unless their numbers are controlled.

Mustanging was just a job that had to be done. It was a tough job and required highly skilled operators, and sometimes the best performance available was ot quite good enough. ..There has never been a time when there was the remotest possibility of completely cleaning the range of “wild” horses. There has never been any danger of wild horses becoming extinct. If they did, their numbers could easily be replenished with domestic horses.

The people of India have suffered for centuries under a strange religious concept that hold certain cattle as sacred. "Sacred cows" wonder the streets and byways, consuming precious forage, and are held absolutely protected while the people starve.

Americans have long been dismayed by that peculiar practice of literally wasting valuable resources...and yet we have permitted the adoption of a governmental program that amounts to exactly the same thing, with complete disregard for the welfare of our people and our growing national debt. The Sacred Wild Horse, that was made "Sacred" and inviolate by the Wild Horse and Burro Act of 1970.

Back in the late 1960's a zealous horse-loving lady out of Reno—the late "Wild Horse Annie" Johnson—spearheaded a campaign to "protect" the wild horses which roam western ranges. The major tactic of the "movement" was to instigate an emotional letter writing campaign by grade school children to congressmen. To say the children's crusade was successful would be an understatement.

Congress, in its sublime foolishness, not only prohibited the capture and commercial sale of free-roaming, unbranded horses, it also failed to provide a grazing allotment for them.

No doubt you could test any one of our lawmakers and discover they are almost as intelligent as we are. But when you get the whole lot of them together they get to playing a game; it is called "You scratch my back and I will scratch your back." Then the horse-trading really begins. At this point their level of intelligence, and also their level of integrity, can drop to very low levels.

So, for the years since this act, the sacred wild (feral) horses have consumed a vast quantities of range forage at an ever-increasing rate—forage that could have been far better utilized for beef production, and the sustenance for our shrinking deer herds.

The 17,000 horses I have corralled over the years did not cost the taxpayers anything. With each horse valued at \$500 each, which I am told is about what it costs our taxpayers now to remove each horse from the range, this saved the taxpayers \$8,500,000. We made a profit selling these horses for \$30 to \$50 each and generated money that helped the economy of our country—as well as our own— and we kept the wild horse numbers under acceptable control. We operated within the framework of "free enterprise," not under repressive, dictatorial, federal laws.

Using BLM personnel, hired buckaroos, contracted helicopters, traps on the range, government vehicles and large holding centers, cost of the roundup was \$600 per head. Before this, operating under the idea of a "free market system," mustangers were making a profit selling these horse for \$30 to \$60 per horse.

Many horses die from cold and starvation during hard winters. The best efforts of government and romantic programs like Adopt-a-Horse are not going to save thousands of horses from ultimate death.