

BeefTalk 518: Failure Is Only Looking at Yesterday

Future problems are the result of failing to evaluate the past and understand the present.

Some thoughts on the cattle business: I started writing BeefTalk 10 years ago, so one could conclude there are a lot of thoughts about the cattle business. The concept was simple, after spending way too many miles traveling to meetings and presenting a few thoughts to those in attendance, the concept of writing about those thoughts instead of traveling seemed appropriate.

Ten years later, the same is true. There is always something to write about. And despite the current trend of instant communication and interaction, reading is good. The ability to sit in one's easy chair to read about a relevant topic, contemplate what one is reading and to think about how the words may affect one's life is good.

We need to read.

We need to contemplate what is written and then respond. Many times, that response seems pointed to the one who wrote the material, but that is not the case. The true response is what happens within each of us when we learn, think and ultimately make a slight adjustment in what we do.

Words transcend generations. For anyone who has dusted off an old book, generally, one is met with a sense of humility. We repeat and repeat and repeat what we already know. The challenge is to absorb the meaningful words and avoid the tendency to change the meaning of a word to better fit the present.

So writing is important and is the basis for generational communication. The present is good, but the tendency to live only in the present is very real because today's instant communication often overwhelms our need to write and our need to read. Long-term communication, the ability to collect the pieces and mold them into a thought and then present that thought, is critical to what we do. We tend to want the quick fix or the immediate answer.

The real answer is in sorting through all that we know or have learned and then write a response. From the response, we formulate new actions to move on. If our only response was what happened yesterday, we would fail. Instead, we read. We read what was written through the years, decades and even centuries to better fit what happened yesterday into our lives.

There are no simple answers. If there is a problem in the future, it is because we failed to evaluate the past and to understand the present.

So often, someone will call and want to get involved in the cattle business. The assumption is that anyone can feed a few cows in the backyard and wake up to the smell of fresh coffee. I guess that is fundamentally true, but impractical.

Cattle are diverse. One knows this because of what is written. Cattle have supplied people for thousands of years with food in the form of meat, blood, milk and various products too numerous to name. Cattle hides continue to be valued as an important source of clothing and are utilized in many other products. Their size is utilized for power as draft animals in many parts of the world. They are revered in some societies and considered an indication of wealth and social status.

So welcome to the cattle business. It's not going anywhere and it was not a cow that was heard saying the sky is falling. That was a chicken. Cattle have been hunted by people probably before the cave people learned to draw on caves. Cattle will continue to serve people regardless of current trends and the chickens worrying about the sky falling. The sky is not falling and, in the end, we simply will be another chapter in books such as "The Cattlemen" by Mari Sandoz.

In the meantime, take some time to read about the past, present and, for those who dare to peek, into the future. Once we are the past, let's hope we left more than just cheap sayings. Let's hope we left heartfelt expressions of what we did and tried and what worked and what didn't.

The cows still will be here, so I will continue to find something to write about. One hopes that occasionally a true response will happen by those who read. The hope is that we will learn, we will think and ultimately make a slight adjustment in what we do.

May you find all your ear tags.

Your comments are always welcome at <http://www.BeefTalk.com>.

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