

# Ya cain't git close 'nuff ta prod'em in the.....

As one who has been around professional rodeo for quite a while and seen enough to have a good idea of what is going on, I feel that I should enlighten the writer of "Cowboys Have Balls for Brains," and also prevent people from getting misconceptions about rodeo. The main thing I would like to know is what he bases his accusations and criticisms on. It is obvious he has never been around rodeos or, if by some chance he has been, he is either:

- (1) blind, (2) incapable of seeing the true situation for some other unknown reason, or (3) "seeing" only what he wants to see.

Rodeo is considered by many to be the toughest sport - not only physically - note the number of broken bones (I also personally knew two men killed during a rodeo event), but in trying to win enough money to keep on going. The cowboy is paid no salary, yet he must pay an entry fee to compete, on top of his living expenses. Even if he rides the horse or bull or ropes the calf, he may still get nothing. Competition is very tough - e.g. 30 cowboys trying for only 6 money paying positions - and only the top ones make any money. At the next rodeo they may make nothing.

### Pure nonsense

The ramblings about the use of cattle prods are pure

nonsense. Even if they are used they only give a mild electrical shock. I know people who have felt it and they suffered no ill effects, not even a burn. They are not used often - usually yelling and cracking a small whip is sufficient to move the animal in the direction you want. A prod is only used when necessary and not in the areas the writer states. I would like to see him stand close enough to the animal to do such a thing. Even if he was outside a chute he may end up with a broken arm. The only time I saw one used was when a bull half-turned in the chute so that he was looking at his hind end, which was where he was given the prod to make him straighten out.

The use of a flank strap does not hurt the animal. The flank is usually lined with sheepskin, and I have never seen or even heard of barb wire or anything similar being used. If the horse is in such pain, why do almost all of them stand quietly in the chute? Those that do fight a little merely want out.

It is true that horses are bred for their bucking ability. Good bucking horses are hard to come by. A rodeo stock contractor gets his bucking stock from wherever he can. Some are sold to him because they do buck and the owner couldn't control him. I saw one instance where a horse was bought from a farmer because it bucked and he had no use for it.

## READER COMMENT

It was tried out as a bucking horse. The better the horse bucks, the more it's worth.

### Bite, not chew

One doesn't chew the horse's ear, you only bit down on it. Also, one does not put on flank straps in the wild horse race - a saddle is put on and if the writer knew that he would have probably said that the cinch was done up too tight or has barbed wire imbedded in it. Biting the ear doesn't really hurt the horse but perhaps the writer would rather see the cowboys trampled.

With regard to calf roping, I have never yet seen a calf not get up and run away once it was untied, which would be pretty difficult to do with a broken neck, especially when the calf is looking around him when he runs. I have never even heard of a horse with a broken back. Horses used for steer wrestling and calf roping are well trained, but not by beatings. Nobody with any sense trains an animal he wants to work by beating it, especially a horse because it will shy away from you if he is afraid, which will upset the teamwork necessary to be successful. Clearly the writer has not looked closely at how these animals are treated. They

are quite valuable - the owner of a good one makes far more money renting it out than he does by competing himself. Who would mistreat such a valuable property.

The foolishness of the writer's comment that "The rodeo is really nothing more than a theatrical performance of sadism imposed upon sweet innocent loving quiet animals" is not worthy of commenting upon. However, I will give one example to illustrate how wrong this statement is. The writer must never have seen a bull charge a man. He probably thinks that the clowns are in the arena only to entertain the crowd. Their main reason for being there is to distract the bull's attention to give the cowboy a chance to get to safety. I would like to see the writer give a "sweet innocent loving quiet" brahma bull to his mother for a pet.

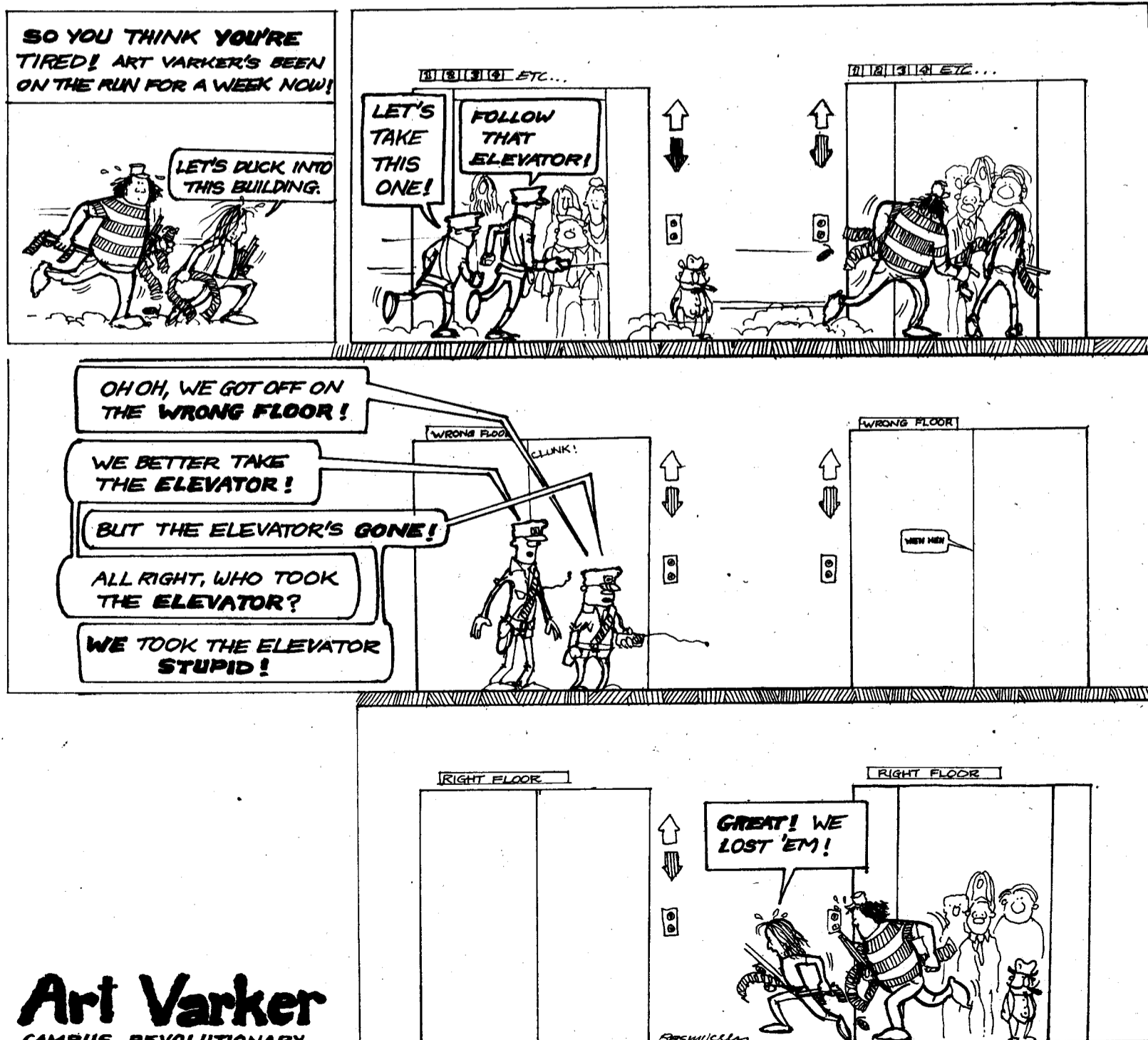
### SPCA

Rodeo animals do have it good - for only a dozen or less seconds per day (and not every day) they do their job and then they do nothing, except eat all they want. A member of the S.P.C.A. is around the rodeos to see that the animals are not abused. It must also be remembered that rodeos do take place in front of the public, and thus it is also a safeguard in preventing cruel treatment of the animals. I would say that an

animal caged up in a zoo all year has a far worse life. The rodeo animals are turned out on the range when their season is over, and into the infield (the area enclosed by the racetrack and it is usually grassy) during the season whenever possible. I hope the writer never goes to zoos or he won't be able to live with himself. Compare all this to the position of the cowboy - he may not get fed if he doesn't win, he get his legs crushed against the sides of the chute, he gets trampled, horses fall on him, and he gets pitched into the dirt at any angle, which often results in broken bones. The worst that happens to rodeo animals can't compare to this. Why would such valuable animals be mistreated, and someone take the risk of losing them or decreasing their performance and therefore their value? Stock contractors and even competing cowboys are businessmen as well as sportsmen.

Naturally, I haven't seen all the rodeos that have taken place but I feel I have seen enough of them. The writer could have based his comments on a very rare occurrence, as accidents and incidents happen in rodeo just like in everything else.

The U of A Rodeo is over now, but I would recommend that everyone go to the upcoming Edmonton rodeo or to one in the summer, and see first-hand how things are done and judge for yourself if rodeo is cruel to animals or not.



**Art Varker**  
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