

One Very Sad Tale

By Donald A. Long

Our buffalo consisted of a herd of five: one male and one female seven years old, one male four years old, one female three years old and a female calf three months old. Their "home" was a corral of approximately one acre, and their diet consisted of alfalfa and mixed grains. Their only experience with grazing was when they would get playful and break the boards on the corral and get out among the redwood trees. They were "tame" to the extent that you could touch the two males. They all knew their names, which were Wilbur, Wanda, Willie, Wilma and Cookie. They were pets and were given lots of love and attention.

Our plan was to deliver them to St. Helena, Napa County, California and have them in a new beautiful 40 acre corral, where we also have vineyard land. We have a small sawmill here in Ben Lomond for our own personal use, and consequently were able to mill all the lumber for their corral. Their corral consisted of 85,000 board feet of redwood and fir, a ton and half of bolts and 300 gallons of white stain. It is in an isolated meadow that views on a lake.

When the corral was finished and I was about ready to have the buffalo moved, I contacted a veterinarian recommended to me by a friend. He had tranquilized and transferred his own buffalo. We had several conversations over the phone and he took one trip out to look over the buffalo and the corral. He suggested building a loading corridor, which we did, to accommodate a low bed heavy duty trailer. The man that owned the trailer was accustomed to hauling animals and was a good friend of the veterinarian. They compartmentalized the trailer for the trip.

The day started out with me meeting the veterinarian, hauler and his helper at a local restaurant, just to be sure everything was going according to plans and to be sure they felt comfortable about proceeding with the move.

At approximately 8:00 a.m. the veterinarian, hauler, his helper and four enthusiastic but inexperienced "cowhands" started the "roundup." The two males were the first to be tranquilized and Rompum was used. The animals were never watered after that.

At this point in time, I'm not exactly sure how much tranquilizer was used, but when I find out I will forward that information to the NBA.

The hours went by and at 4:00 p.m. the trailer with the animals began the trip north to St. Helena. The animals had all been brought down with the tranquilizer and the largest, Wilbur, had to be winched into the trailer. By the way, the compartments did not work out, so only the calf remained isolated. As we left for St. Helena, a trip that normally would have taken four hours, took approximately seven hours. There was a fuel pump problem with the hauler's truck on Highway 17—Santa Cruz Mountains, which was repaired with not too much effort, also a flat tire about a half hour later. We arrived at our property in St. Helena a little before midnight.

As the hauler pulled into the corral and opened the trailer the two females came

out first and stood on all four feet but were staggering and dazed. The males never did get to their feet, nor did the calf. The males kept eye contact with me, and I was aware of their breathing, and as I touched them I could feel warmth. They had to be slowly slid out of the van and about 1:00 a.m. we, my son and myself, returned to the ranch house, had a bite to eat, showered, jumped (or rather fell) into bed. We were so tired and exhausted, but so happy that after a long day the animals were moved and would be happy in their new home! As I was laying in bed, I just uttered a short prayer, "Lord it's a been a long day, but thank you. They've made it!"

My son, David, and I got up in the morning about 5:30 a.m. anxious to see how they

liked their new "home." Well, to our sorrow and shock we saw that they had all died. The two older females were approximately 100 yards from where they had been unloaded, but the two males and the calf had not moved.

Our family has not given up on buffalo. We intend to start with a new herd of 8 or 10 buffalo calves.

Thank you, Judi, for showing such interest. I would appreciate any contacts or information. I'd like to pick out our new herd personally and have them shipped directly to St. Helena, Napa County, California.

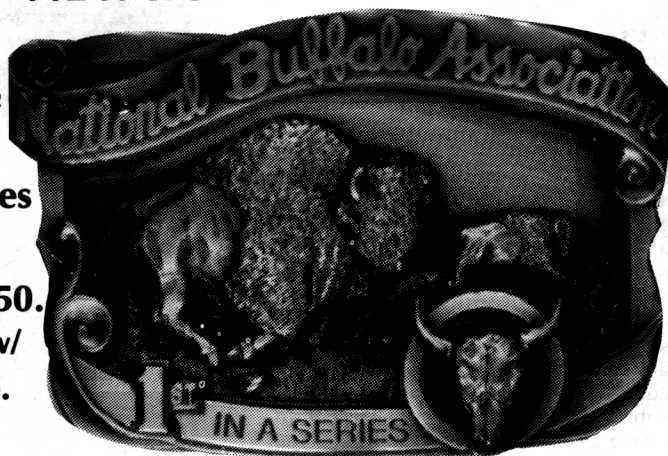
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