

"CAN'T HOLD 'EM B' GOSH SAID DICK RIDDLE ABOUT SPRING CREEK SORRELS

(By David W. Hesse, in the Portland Telegram.)

Every stage driver on the road knew the "Spring Creek sorrels" every one but Sam Speed. Johnnie Forbes, the regular driver, was under the weather, and Sam was sent up from Salt Lake to handle this team.

"If a hell storm comes up, Sam, watch 'em, fer if they ever get on top of you you're a goner," the boys warned the new man.

"Then, damned little rats, I'll pull 'em up in the front hood an' let their ears off."

Speed made two and a half trips

ton, talks of the Spring Creek sorrels his eyes snap and he moves nervously in his chair. For Dave Horne began driving a stage in 1855, and he didn't quit until he went into the hotel business in Pendleton back in '77.

During the convention of the state editors at the Round-Up City last week, Dave Horne came down town to see if any of the old-timers happened up that way. He did not find one of the writers he hauled in gold six years ago, but he spun a number of yarns that sure did entertain.

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sorrels were pitched up, as they were after Sam Speed had run them into the telegraph pole, instead of biting off their ears, and were soon on the road again. It took Johnnie Forbes somewhat longer to get into driving form. He never blamed the sorrels any, but he thought that someone had rolled the boulder into the road, if he's ever found the chap who did it, there would have been a nice spot by the highway where the dabbler might grow.

One of the best known of the old western drivers was Dick Riddle. He and Horne were together on the Cortina road for some time, and the Pendleton man can spin many a yarn



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without accident. The run was 14 miles, and the Spring Creek sorrels made it in an hour and a quarter. All the driver had to do was to watch them. Sam was an old timer, and what he didn't know about driving a stage coach wasn't worth knowing. At least that's what Sam thought.

The hell storm that he was warned to watch for came soon after he started back on the third trip. The sorrels made a jump and Sam Speed lost control. All he could do was to pull them into a telegraph pole; for the second pole was knocked down, only two of the horses were left, and he managed to get control of them. When he drove into the station the boys walked out and looked at the remaining animals.

"Thought you was goin' to haul 'em up in the front hood an' let their ears off," remarked one of the fellows. Speed's only reply was to tell them to go to a place that such and every one of them refused to go. Sam went back to Salt Lake.

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ton, talks of the Spring Creek sorrels his eyes snap and he moves nervously in his chair. For Dave Horne began driving a stage in 1855, and he didn't quit until he went into the hotel business in Pendleton back in '77.

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"One time when Johnnie Forbes was drivin' these sorrels," remarked Mr. Horne, "the little 'buggers got

away from him. They shied at a boulder that had rolled down into the middle of the road. Johnnie was drivin' at night, and before he knew it these animals was beatin' it down the road like greased lightning. There was only two passengers in the stage that night, a German and a Chinaman.

"Well, Forbes knew the team had the best of him, and the night was too dark for him to look for a safe place to halt, so he hung on as long as he could. The stage turned over, but the sorrels kept on dravin' it for quite a spell before they got stopped. About this time a couple of boys happened along and they pulled the two passengers out. As soon as the Chinaman was out of the coach, he said:

"Two mules fast! Where's the man?"

Dick Riddle was froled.

Dave Horne laughed until his sides ached when he thought of this frightful oriental calling for the man that wild night on the Cortina road. The

about Dick, who was the funniest man north of the Rio Grande, and the best part of it was he didn't know he was a comedian.

"Mr. Riddle only had one curse-word. It sounded like 'be-gosh'—guess you kin figure out what it was—and he used it all the time. He talked about as fast as a mail train makin' up lost time, and he threw in them 'be-gosh's' every half second.

Last time I heard from Dick was two years ago, he was livin' in Sheridan, Mont., I figs. If you should ever happen to bump into him, wish you'd let me know."

When Dick Reached Dry Creek.

And then the Pendletonian told of the time that Dick Riddle arrived at Dry Creek station, having come up from Salt. He did not say a word to any one for two or three days while he stayed around inspecting the horses, harness, stages and everything else about the place. On the third day he got his orders to go out—his team was the Spring Creek sorrels. Dick looked at them just once, then turned

to Dave and said:

"Darned little rats—b'gosh—ain't big enough to steady the pole—b'gosh—hit a rock as big as your fist—b'gosh—throw a wheel horse out o' the road—b'gosh!"

Then he drove on. The signal for the driver to start was for the agent to hand up the waybill; these the driver put under his seat, and the coach pulled out of the station. Nothing was said.

A week later, when Horne saw his friend at Dry Creek, he asked about the welfare of the "darned little rats."

"Can I hold 'em—b'gosh—just sit there—b'gosh—and look around and see the road make—b'gosh."

Years afterward Riddle was driving into Helena, one of his passengers was an invalid who was going back to Missouri to die. Something scared the "wheelers," the stage was upset and the sick man fainted. They laid him out in the shade, and the other passenger whispered that he was dead. Dick heard them, went over and put his hand on the man's forehead.

"Yes—b'gosh—too dead to skin—b'gosh."

This was the only remark the driver made about invalid or accident.

"Some of the boys who had been down to Denver before Riddle came up our way told me a story about this hell-raiser chap who was one of the best fellows that ever drove a team. Seems that Dick had been drivin' for Ben Holladay up to Golden City, but he had some row and was layin' around Denver doing nothing. The rains were ruinin' Cain down on the South Platte, runnin' the boys off the road and killin' settlers whenever they fell like it.

"Dick seemed to think the boys was showin' a streak o' yellow, so he says he'd go up there and drive. But the owners wasn't riskin' losin' any stock, so Dave got a job up at Julesburg checkin' corn in a warehouse. He had just started to work when some Indians walked in the door. Dick showed up at his favorite hang-out in Denver mighty soon after he'd left, so the barkeep gave the boys the wink and says:

"Dick, I don't see any of them Indian scalps you're talkin' about?"

"No—b'gosh," says Dick. "I was workin'—b'gosh—when in comes a thousand of 'em—b'gosh—through the front door—b'gosh—and I goes out the back door—b'gosh—darker, says you kin say 'What'll ye have—b'gosh—and I didn't stop 'em—b'gosh—up—b'gosh—I reach this here dump—b'gosh!"

As Dave Horne explained, Dick Riddle was a man of few words, and a truthful citizen.

I remember—

Just then the old driver was called away. "Come around tomorrow and I'll finish that story," he called back.



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