

**April 28, 2010****EDITORIAL NOTEBOOK**

## **Getting Out**

**By VERLYN KLINKENBORG**

Nine Angus bulls are moving down the fence line in a pasture along Clear Creek, north central Wyoming. I can see only their backs, black and as powerfully angled as the mounded coal in the hopper cars running north to Montana. There is a man on horseback ahead of the bulls and another behind them. They turn the bulls, out onto the asphalt just at the highway crossroads.

It is, to use an old word, a viridescent day. The cottonwoods stopped moaning in the rain overnight. Every creature is suddenly addled with the season. A pair of sandhill cranes stand motionless against the hills. A bald eagle circles higher and higher. A tom turkey works the fence line, making Kabuki moves, his eye on some invisible hen. The deer are trapped in their winter coats, looking disreputable. The air is full of the ticking of red-winged blackbirds, full of the soft spring sun.

But what I hear myself thinking is, "The bulls are out." They make for Clearmont then change their minds. They head toward me, Sheridan way, before the riders veer them off, whooping and swinging great, stiff team-roping loops. The bulls are not belligerent, only confused. They don't know the question they're being asked, much less the answer. The correct direction, as it happens, is Buffalo, and soon the nine are strung out in an amiable line along the ditch, snatching mouthfuls of grass as they make their way down the road.

My worst dreams are the ones in which the horses or the pigs get out. I like tight fences and good working gates. I like to see animals with deep grass and their heads down in it, grazing contentedly. I think I share my sense of order with those nine Angus bulls, who are being driven from home with too many choices. They go the right way at last just to calm the men on horseback.

That's when I know where I am. The road stretches for miles into the low hills in every direction. The fences are tight, all the gates closed but two: the one the bulls came from, and the one where they're heading. There is nothing but pasture and creek bottom, nothing but green grass and the highway and the sound of bird song. There was no getting out for those bulls. They crest a hill to the west, and I can feel the whooping and hollering inside me dying down.

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