

Allen McCarden is a cattleman.

And, by rights, he should be just about the most famous cattleman in the world. Right up there with Sam Houston or Jesse Chisholm.

What Allen did was no less legendary than the antics of a real life "sucker" Texas Bill. What Allen did was save the Texas Longhorn, the legendary cow of the West, from extinction. There's not a person in America who doesn't know the Longhorn by sight. Just a glimpse of those sweeping horns set, "The all-white."

Young men feed the pull of adventure. Old gentlemen grow misty-eyed, longing for days gone forever. And ladies feed the string and trepidation shined by their frontier sisters.

When Allen was fifteen in 1916, there were still places of Longhorn Cattle around, the scattered remains of the giant herds that had built the West. Some were running wild and unattended. Allen caught glimpses of them pecking through the brush while peering with his dad on their ranch near Skags, Texas.

By the time Allen was a young man in 1925, evidently there were no Longhorns left.

"They're all dead. Every last one." At least, that's what a "college man" from Texas A&M said when he visited Allen. They were talking on the back porch of Allen's home in Eag, Texas.

Allen replied, "Oh, there's a few crossbreeds around, but they wouldn't amount to a manure fly on the butt of a panfried Longhorn."

The college man took a long pause: "I think they're extinct. The breed's dead!"

Now, Allen knew what any Texas cowhand could tell you about Longhorn Cattle. They're

HOW A TEXAS LEGEND NEARLY BIT THE DUST.

as smart as Colles. They can open gates, unplug electric fences and always find the best food and water, so on nothing of consuming most horses.

Allen and the old cowboys who tended the heads knew that if anything could save the species, it was the Longhorn. They were the "orniest," toughest, most determined and "notional" critics on cattle.

So, Allen figured it'd be just a matter of time before the Longhorn to prove everybody wrong. Allen told the college man that he thought some were probably still alive.

That's where Allen got his trouble. The college man bet him that he was wrong, then offered him the job of finding those cows, if indeed there were any.

"I need your help," he said. "Will Barnes is a ranch management forester for the Forest Service. For years, he's been after Congress to save the Longhorn. They finally gave us \$3,000 and some Forest Service land on the Wichita Mountains of Kansas. But, Will thinks it's too late. We can't find any animals."

Next thing Allen

knew, he and a cowboy from San Angelo, along with five tough Mexican vaqueros, were riding through every mesquite patch, every gully and crack in the earth in Texas and Mexico look-

ing for ghosts. It looked like the man from college was right.

Will Barnes set out several other groups of searchers. They reported the same sad story.

"Like a will of the wisp. We hear rumors... But nothing comes of 'em."

Many of the animals they tracked down turned out to be an insupportable cross between a Longhorn and a Brahmin. "Interbreeding was what did it," Allen said. "The Longhorn was bred to extinction."

"Longhorns had the staining power, but other breeds were easier to handle. So they crossed them."

It seemed that they were to leave the world as they had entered it — with tremendous handsip. Their ancestors had barely survived the voyage to Catholic missions in the New World. These cows were an offshoot of

another, sometimes deep into the wilderness of East Texas and Mexico, they finally found an old cow, and heard about a pet bull. A year later they had two cows, a steer, an old bull and a fine calf.

And a story from a farmer about a bull with horns way out to there.

Four months later, Forest Service cowboys found that bull, with a harem of crossbreeds, in a remote corner of the "picky pear" country of southwest Texas. They started him moving toward a rendezvous with other Longhorns on the Red River.

After a couple of days, the riders had to trade horses with a Mexican rancher in order to keep up. "Once we got him moving, they reunited. He was like a train. He just put his old head down, and there was no such thing as stop."

The men heeded horns, following those horns.

Two days after finding the bull, they were

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Allen McCarden became the supervisor of the Wichita Range, the wildlife Longhorn refuge designated by Will Barnes. Thanks to him and other cowmen, Longhorns are once again thriving.

In a final irony, scientists at the University of Texas recently tested all the breeds of cattle and found that this wild man-yielder horse, healthier than most.

Most producers, filing a market demand for young, lean fat, lower cholesterol meats are again breeding Longhorns to herd stock. The cattle industry that once drove them to the brink of extinction has been given a shot in the arm by the legendary cow of the American West.

