

A Timeless Way

A Photographical Tribute to Working Ranch Cowboys



Photography by M.L. Bolton

Project Plan

“A Timeless Way”

A Photographical Tribute to Working Ranch Cowboys

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Mission Statement

It is intended that a high quality, hard cover photography book be created and entitled “A Timeless Way”. The mission of the book is to document and pay tribute to the modern day working ranch cowboys and their families, both by selected text and by the photographic work of M.L. Bolton. This book will serve as an introduction and educational resource to those who are not familiar with working ranch cowboys and their way of life, as well as provide an enjoyable reading experience for those in and out of the ranching industry.

Every effort will be made to include a foreword by a nationally known celebrity, who treasures the working ranch cowboy and his family. Someone who understands that this uniquely American icon, along with his ethics, common sense, dignity, and spirit of tradition, is endangered from the economic pressures and the fast paced changes occurring in our modern world. A well respected cowboy and member of the ranching community who understands the importance of this work and fully endorses this project will be sought to write the introduction to this book.

As outlined in the following Project Plan, this book will attempt to cover as many aspects of a working ranch cowboy’s life as possible through both photographic images and text. The goal is to have the book published and distributed in the market place in a profitable and professional manner. All business and working relationships related to this project will be conducted with the highest regard for honesty and fairness and in the timeless way of the working ranch cowboy.

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Design and Structure

It is planned that the book will be an eleven inch (high) by fourteen inch (wide), high quality, hard back book. It will have a high gloss, illustrated dust jacket with four inch jacket returns. The final layout and design of the book will occur after the photographic image library has been completed and prior to invitation submissions to contributing writers. It is proposed that the book's layout and design be done in Adobe Creative Suite software programs at Valley Arts Studio in Belton, Texas.

The book will be divided into several chapters addressing the major aspects of the working cowboy life. As explained in detail later in this Project Plan, the photographic images and selected text will serve and support each subject matter of the different chapters. It is anticipated that the book will contain approximately 100-125 total pages and 75-100 photographic images. The photographic images will vary in size, location, and layout in an effort to maintain a visual flow and yet create a non-repetitive pattern from one page to the next.

The components of the book will include the standard fly leaf, publishing acknowledgements and copyrights, image splash page, book dedication, celebrity foreword, book introduction, table of contents, chapters of images and text, photography index, a word from the photographer, and notes of appreciation and acknowledgements. The front interior dust jacket return will consist of a quote from the celebrity's foreword with the celebrity's photograph. The back interior dust jacket return will consist of a photograph of M.L. Bolton and a summary excerpt from his book text.

Design and Structure - Continued

The chapters of the book shall be entitled as follows:

Chapter #1 - "The Land"

Chapter #2 - "The Gear"

Chapter #3 - "The Job"

Chapter #4 - "The Partners"

Chapter #5 - "The Cowboy"

In The Photography section of this Project Plan, a more definitive description of the supporting image library will be given.

The text of each chapter will include a beginning narrative by M.L.Bolton regarding the specific subject matter of that chapter. In addition, various written letters or interviews of persons in the ranching community that speak directly to the subject matter of that chapter will be included. As contacts and friendships are made during the photography process, these persons will be recruited to contribute to the text of the book. These contributing writers will be invited to write as much or as little as they choose, and their text will be supported directly with photographic images.

Publication research and book analysis will be done on other books published about working cowboys to review what has been covered, their approach and photographic methods, and design and layout. The artistic concept of "A Timeless Way" is to be different and convey the subject matter as no other publication has done before. Guided by this book's Mission Statement, the objective is to present working ranch cowboys in a fresh and accurate manner, and to do so in a very professional and artistic way.

It is fully recognized that with M.L.Bolton's being a first time author, changes will need to be addressed in negotiations with the successful publisher as to the design and structure of the book. However the concept and mission of the book will not be open for negotiations. It is the intent to present a "project" for consideration to the publisher and not just an "idea" for a photography book.

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Project Team

Several people will work and contribute to the success of this book. The project team's core members have been known since the book's inception, and additional team members and contributors will be added as the project evolves. The core members are as follows:

M.L. Bolton: *Photographer and Author (more information is detailed later in this Project Plan)*

Alice R. Wells: *Editor and Consultant – Alice is a published poet and lyricist and, as a former art gallery owner, worked for several years in association with western and cowboy artists in print production, marketing, and sales. Alice was born and raised in the heart of ranch country in the Texas Panhandle.*

Marcus Hammack: *Attorney at Law – Marcus is an Associate with the law firm Naman, Howell, Smith and Lee, L.L.P in Waco, Texas and will offer legal representation and council regarding Copyright and Intellectual Property law, as well as contract and compensation negotiations.*

Project Team - continued

Brandie J. Blodgett: *Booking Agent and Consultant: Brandie owns and operates Big Ranch Country Productions and works with scores of large historic ranches in Texas and the Western United States. Brandie was raised on the famous 6666 Ranch in Guthrie, Texas, and will be arranging contacts, access, scheduling, and interviews in the pursuit of the book project and its photography.*

Additional contributing writers who will be confirmed at a later date are as follows:

Celebrity Foreword Writer - see referenced in "The Text" chapter

Book Introduction Writer - see referenced in "The Text" chapter

Contributing Writers - see referenced in "The Text" chapter

The list of contributing writers is expected to grow over the course of the project and to include names unknown at this time. Contributing writers will bring a fresh, first hand perspective and flavor to the body of the book based upon their family's histories and lifelong experiences while living and working on large cattle ranches. The majority of these writers' contributions will be obtained by personal interviews, which will be audio recorded and transcribed. Transcriptions will be reviewed by each writer for approval and accuracy. Each approved interview transcription will then be edited, only in scope, to fit within the book's format.

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The Photography

The heart and soul of this book will be the photographic images of the working ranch cowboys and their families. Photographs will be captured in the field, under the same, sometimes difficult, weather and light conditions that face the cowboys during the course of their daily work. The images will not only attempt to capture all of the different working aspects of working ranch cowboys, but also make every effort to tell the story of their unique lives and their remarkable character and spirit.

The goal of the photography is to be strong enough to stand alone and tell the story, enhanced by the selected text. A special portion of the photography will focus on the cowboys' partners, including relationships with their wives, families, working dogs, and horses. The imagery will also cover the great landscape and expanse of the American west and the cowboy's love and stewardship for the land.

All photography will be taken by M.L. Bolton and will be processed in post production by him in his commercial photography studio, Valley Arts Studio in Belton, Texas.

It is anticipated that between 15,000 and 20,000 field photographs will be taken over a course of the estimated four year schedule to arrive at a volume that will render the final 75-100 images to be chosen for the book. It is also estimated that thousands of highway miles and numerous airline flights will be required during that four year period to travel and photograph large working ranches in Texas, New Mexico, Colorado, Nebraska, Montana, Wyoming, Idaho, and Oregon.

The Photography – continued

In order to accomplish the aforementioned photography goals, it is imperative that the photographer be equipped with light weight, nomadic professional photographic equipment that can produce the highest quality images possible. Historically large format film view cameras have been used and, without question, have produced some of the highest quality and most memorable photographs ever taken. Modern technology and lenses will always be a facsimile to the great film photography and photographic equipment of the past. However, the speed, durability, and photographic quality afforded with the advent of modern technology and digital photographic equipment allows a photographer to be reactive to unexpected photographic opportunities as they occur in real time. This freedom allows photographers to work all day long in all kinds of environments and weather conditions. Therefore, a decision was made to employ the most sophisticated professional digital cameras, the highest quality lenses, and the latest in image editing software in the world today to obtain the stated imagery quality and objectives of this project.

The equipment list always begins with the camera itself by which the image and the moment is captured. The proven and durable Nikon D2X (12.4 Std. Megapixel) and Nikon D2Xs (12.4 Std. Megapixel) cameras will be used during this project. Presently they are the highest quality professional digital cameras made by Nikon, Inc.

The high quality Nikkor lenses to be used will include, but not be limited to, wide angle, telephoto, fixed, and zoom lenses of various focal lengths. All are constructed with some of the finest glass and engineering qualities in the world. Neutral Density and Polarization filters will be used as needed and determined by shooting conditions. Bogen, Manfrotto, and Gitzo tripods and heads will be used as required, along with supporting equipment by Lexar, LowePro, and Promaster. This proven nucleus of equipment has been used throughout the world by professional photographers and the images produced have been exhibited in internationally known magazines, books, and fine art photography galleries.

The Photography - continued

An image library will be created from photographs taken in the field. Prior to entering the image library, the field photographs will be purged, selected, and processed in post production. The selected images will then be sorted for support of each of the book's chapters. Some subject matter is physical and can be described, while other type images are the result of emotions or body language not easily defined. The following is a brief list of subject matters that will be used during the four years of field photography as a reference list and guide:

"The Land"

- Land: Mountains, Grass, Water, Open Spaces, Dust, etc.
- Sky: Sunrise, Sunset, Clouds, Moon, Stars, Rain, Lightning, Storms, Snow, etc.
- Fences: Working Pens, Corrals, Gates, Chutes, etc.
- Buildings: Barns, Bunkhouses, Ranch Houses, etc.
- Food: At Houses, at Cow Camp, Cooks, Hoodies, Utensils, Fires, Chuck Wagons, Pot Tripods, Skillets, Coffee Pots and Cups, Cast Iron, etc.
- Misc.: Wagons, Signs, Tents, Blacksmith Tools, Branding Irons, Brands, Windmills, Water Troughs, etc.

"The Gear"

- Personal: Boots, Spurs, Chaps, Chinks, Leggings, Belt, Buckles, Hats, Coats, Gloves, etc.
 - Misc.: Bridles, Saddles, Blankets, Ropes, Hobble Ropes, Knives, Bits, Tools, Boot/Saddle Makers, etc.
-

The Photography - continued

"The Job"

- *Horses and Cattle: Gatherin', Roping, Branding, Doctoring, Feeding, Spring/Fall Work, Breaking/Starting Horses, Bookwork, etc.*
- *Misc.: Horseshoeing, Working Leather, Fixing Fences and Windmills, Breaking Ice, etc.*

"The Partners"

- *Ranch Women: Eyes, Hands, Clothing, Cooking, Working Cattle, Hair, Working Books, Boots, Attitude, Raising Kids, Faith, Support/Love for their Husbands, Resolve, Disappointment, Contentment, etc.*
- *Ranch Children: Working on the Ranch, School Work, Laughing, Chores, Growing Up, etc.*
- *Horses: Eyes, Disposition, Sweat, Scald Spots, Resting, Working, Being Shod, Hobbled, Eating, Drinking, Confirmation, Intelligence, etc.*
- *Dogs: Eyes, Willingness to Please, Working, Resting, Being Petted and Scolded, Body Language, Intelligence, etc.*

"The Cowboy"

- *Personal: Eyes, Face, Hair, Hands, Pain, Gratitude, Working, Resting, Worried, Laughing, Smoking/Chewing, Cuts/Bruises, Scars, Eye Glasses, Finger Nails, and Cowboy Portraiture, etc.*
 - *Spirit: Character, Dreaming, Independence, Solitude, Independence, Determination, Freedom, etc.*
-

The Photography - continued

The capture of the image in the field is phase one of a three phase process, with the second phase being the image editing and the third phase being the printing. All image editing and processing will be done with Adobe Photoshop CS2 Editing Software, with various supporting and third party software programs. Because all images will be captured in the field using the Nikon Electronic Format (NEF) in an uncompressed RAW file, the editing of photographic elements such as White Balance, Light Temperature, and Exposure Values can be adjusted in post production using Adobe Camera Raw Software. The ability to adjust several aspects of images in post production allows the photographer to better concentrate on his subject and image composition, while anticipating the action or reaction of the next photograph that will occur in the field.

The decision has been made to process all images selected for the book's consideration in a brown sepia tone. Images in this sepia tone will be reminiscent of the warm, brownish tones of vintage photographs that were either in Duo-Tone processing or Tin Type photography. Similar to black and white photography, the sepia tone will also direct the viewer's focus to detail, tonal contrast, and composition. The sepia tone will enhance to appearance of the subject matter and add a certain western flavor and continuity flow to the book's images.

The Photography - continued

There will be five “artist proof” copies produced at Valley Arts Studio prior to the project’s submission to potential publishers, contributing team members, and other interested parties. The purpose of these “artist proof” copies will be to exhibit the concept and flavor of the book as a complete, well thought project to publishers and celebrities considering participation in the project.

These “artist proof” copies will be professionally bound in hard covers and will have fully designed dust jackets. All interior pages will be printed on double-faced, high quality photographic paper. The paper’s finish and texture, whether 100 percent cotton rag fine art paper or high gloss paper, will be determined during production. All printing will be done on professional, wide format Epson R2400 and/or Canon i9900 printers using high quality, archival K-3 UltraChrome inks.

The layout and design of the “artist proof” copies will be done by M.L. Bolton, using the Adobe Creative Suite of software programs including Adobe In-Design. All selected text at the time of production will be written by M.L. Bolton and will be edited by Alice R. Wells. Although not a finished project at this state, these “artist proof” copies will convey the look, feel, and vision of “A Timeless Way”.

It is felt that the book has a greater chance of success of being published and distributed if a physical model of the project is presented rather than a mere expression of a creative idea.

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The Text

The selected text and written aspects of the book will support and enhance the storytelling abilities of the photographic images. The text is anticipated to be comprised in several forms and formats. During the assembly of the book’s “artist proof” production, Alice R. Wells will serve as text editor. Her review and work will oversee all written content, composition, and grammatical quality. At this time the book’s text is planned as follows:

Foreword: *To be written by a nationally known celebrity reflecting on the life of working ranch cowboys. Its purpose is to add to the book’s marketing and commercial appeal.*

Introduction: *To be written by a well respected cowboy and member of the ranching community expressing an overview of large modern day ranches and the role of ranch cowboys. Its purpose is to add validity and additional resource value to the book.*

Narrative Text: *To be written (at this time) by M.L. Bolton. Its purpose is to enhance the visual images with text and research specific to the subject matter of each of the book’s chapters.*

Contributing Writer’s Letters and/or Essays: *To be written by various men and women, who live and work on large cattle ranches, regarding specific chapter topics. Its purpose is to add perspective and realism to the book’s content.*

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Progress Schedule

The “A Timeless Way” book project was conceived in May, 2005. After several weeks of planning, study, and outline drafts, M.L. Bolton made the decision to proceed with this multi-year project. Prior to the first photograph ever being taken, it was fully realized that photographical access, geographical travel, and the expansive subject matter would present enormous challenges, both in time and financial resources. In order to accomplish both the logistic and artistic scope of work efficiently, the following estimated progress schedule was developed. It was designed to serve as a timeline and guide, yet be flexible to opportunities as they arise during the course of the project. An annual review of this progress schedule will be done to confirm it maintains its validity as an accurate and acceptable timeline.

2005

- Begin research of project and prepare a Project Plan*
- Begin making access contacts to large working ranches*
- Begin field photography - in Texas*
- Begin post production and image library*
- Assemble core team members*

2006

- Continue making access contacts to large working ranches*
- Continue field photography – in Texas and New Mexico*
- Continue post production and image library*
- Begin solicitation of contributing team members and their selected text*

2007

- Continue making access contacts to large working ranches*
 - Continue field photography – in Texas and New Mexico*
 - Continue post production and image library*
-

Progress Schedule - continued

2008

- Continue making access contacts to large working ranches
 - Continue field photography – in Nebraska, Montana, and Wyoming
 - Continue post production and image library
-

2009

- Continue field photography – in Colorado, Idaho, and Oregon
 - Complete post production and image library
 - Final image selections
 - Complete design, layout, and production of “artist proofs”
 - Begin solicitations of contributing team members for Foreword, Introduction, and Letters/Essays
 - Begin preliminary communication with both academic and private sector publishers
-

2010

- Complete solicitation of contributing team members and their selected text
 - Prepare a final Project Book Prospectus and Presentation – both in written and electronic formats
 - Begin presentations and negotiations with potential publishers
 - Enter into contractual agreement with publisher
 - Begin working with publisher in final editing and design
-

2011

- “A Timeless Way” is published and printed
 - Work with the publisher in assisting in the project marketing, distribution, and sales
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Budget Statement

It is acknowledged that the financial resources needed to pursue this project from the conception phase through the presentation phase to potential publishers will be significant. Therefore the financial source of these funds and how and when they would be required and expended was reviewed and addressed at the beginning of the project. Since neither monetary publishing advances nor private investor monies are anticipated at this time, M.L. Bolton and Valley Arts Studios will solely provide and bear the entire costs up through and until a publication agreement and contract is secured.

The financial accounting of this project and its actual total and yearly budget figures are not included in this Project Plan. However the condensed costing methods and anticipated additional revenues in general are listed as follows:

Expenses: *The purchase of photographic equipment, hardware and software, as well as other necessary supplies that are used during the normal course of business at Valley Arts Studios will be charged at a fair hourly rate to this project. All travel expenses, per diem, and other related direct costs that are required in the pursuit of this work will be charged directly to this project.*

Revenues: *All sales of images, limited edition photography, and other product revenue recognized during the course of this project will be credited to this project's account and be used as required during production.*

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Publishing Goals

Every effort will be made to reach an agreement and enter into publishing contract with a respected publishing entity. As previously stated in this Project Plan, the intent is to present a complete and physical exhibit of the book to prospective publishers, rather than just a creative idea. It is hoped that this approach will better define the project in the eyes of the publishers and thereby help them in their decision-making and evaluation process. It is also hoped that M.L.Bolton's preliminary design and layout work (recorded in electronic file formats) will be of an asset to the potential publisher, reducing their overall design time and production costs.

It is expected that since M.L.Bolton is an unpublished author and photographer, it will be a challenge to secure a publishing contract. However, it is believed that the quality of the content and photography will overcome that challenge. Additionally, in the course of the field photography work during the years of 2006 through 2009, M.L.Bolton will strive to improve the presence of his cowboy photography in the marketplace by pursuing magazine covers and articles, by the placing of his work in museums and galleries, and by gaining recognition of his photography by western heritage organizations and private collectors. This presence in the marketplace and industry acknowledgements will then be submitted during M.L.Bolton's publisher presentations.

The quality, stability, reputation, product promotion, and distribution strengths of a publisher will dictate the list of publishers that will be initially pursued. Publishing entities in both the academic and private sectors will be contacted to see if they have an interest in the project. From developing honest relationships to producing a high quality product, everything possible will be done to minimize the risk exposure and to enhance the profitability of the potential publisher.

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M.L. Bolton

Born in 1955, in Belton, Texas, M.L. Bolton and his brother Wayne were raised around cattle, horses, and working dogs. Under the guidance of their father, Boots Bolton, the brothers grew up riding and training both personal horses and outside horses for clients. In addition to raising horses, Boots Bolton also provided cattle for roping events for many years. With this as a backdrop, M.L. Bolton learned at an early age how to read and handle cattle and horses. He also learned the lessons of honesty and respect, not only for the animals, but also for the hard-working people in the farming and ranching community. At the age of seven, he began roping calves and competing in junior rodeos. During his teen years, he continued to compete in timed events such as calf roping, team roping, and steer wrestling in high school and professional rodeos throughout Texas.

In 1976, he went to work for Bill Cloud at the Cloud Ranches in Bell County, Texas. Among his responsibilities were breaking and starting young colts and helping to manage both a registered and commercial cow/calf operation. In 1980, he was invited to join Cloud Construction Co., Inc. in Temple, Texas, where he has served, since 1986, as Vice President of the firm. He and his wife, Susan, were married in 1977 and have raised two grown children, a daughter, Kasey and a son, Will.

An accomplished guitarist, M.L. Bolton pursued his instrumental and musical composition dreams in the early 1980s by performing his music throughout Texas and surrounding states. He was successful in winning many folk and jazz composition awards and gained state and national recognition for his writing and instrumental skills. His self-produced recordings and album projects are available in both national retail and Internet music outlets.

M.L. Bolton - continued

In 1990, he established his own commercial audio production studio, Valley Arts Studio. He became a well respected mixing and mastering engineer, producing numerous albums and commercial musical instrumental scores for both himself and outside clients. In 1996, Valley Arts Studio moved into its new facility and since then has expanded into providing commercial videography and commercial photography services. He also became a certified colorist and video editor, producing marketing, promotional, and instructional videography products. With many years of successful projects completed, M.L. Bolton and Valley Arts Studio have earned a reputation of high quality products and honest relationships with artists, commercial clients, and with industry professionals.

During most of M.L. Bolton's adult life, he has been concurrently involved in photography. He has transitioned through photography mediums from 35mm film cameras to his present-day work in digital photography. He has been heavily involved in commercial digital photography for the last several years. He is a member of The Texas Photographic Society, The Texas Professional Photographers Association, Kodak Professionals, and the Nikonians.

Over the past several years, he has attended numerous professional photography workshops and master classes, in an effort to constantly improve his technical skills both from behind the lens and in post production processes. In 2004 and 2005, he was the featured photographer in two area photography shows that were attended by friends and private collectors who continue to support his photography.

With all that he has accomplished in the different fields of the creative arts, M.L. Bolton has continued to be influenced by his early life experiences with cattle, horses, and the working cowboy. It is his continued love and respect for this timeless way of life that has formed his personal work ethic, influenced his will to pursue a dream, and lead to his intense passion to document, in photographic images, a truly unique breed of American, the working ranch cowboy.

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Summary

This Project Plan has identified the mission, structure, and content of “A Timeless Way” book project. It has addressed the manner in which it will be developed, produced, and published. But an additional aspect that needs to be acknowledged is the intense passion and determination that drives M.L. Bolton’s vision and efforts to complete this multi-year project. It is fueled by his belief that the modern day working ranch cowboy is largely unknown, and thereby his worth and his future are going unnoticed by the majority of the American population. The perception that the cowboy was just a romantic figure that helped settle the west and no longer exists is not correct. Much like the family farmer, family-owned ranches and the men and women who work and live on them need exposure and our respect.

The large ranches of the American west and the cowboys who work on them have a long history of faith and perseverance. They have overcome and survived through years of drought and adversity of every kind. They face both the good times and the bad, with a grin, a handshake, and a quiet prayer. They are a seed stock of people that have made this country strong. Their quiet manner, humility, and generosity are a missing dose of medicine that the young people of our modern world badly need. The working ranch cowboy needs to be described and documented for those people who do not know or appreciate his way of life and his moral fiber. He is a living legacy of our history and our nation.

“As land values appreciate far above production values, how do you justify large family-owned ranches continuing in operation as opposed to selling the property?” – John Welch - CEO and President of the Spade Ranches, July, 2004 edition of “The Livestock Weekly”.

Summary - continued

After reading this quote and learning more about the outside factors that the ranching industry cannot control, M.L. Bolton believes if we are not careful, in another generation or two, large family-owned ranches may be scarce and far between.

For in addition to dealing with unpredictable weather conditions, they are now facing rising energy and production costs and uncertain global economic conditions. The result of their future success will not only impact the ranching industry itself, but will also impact the working cowboys and their families, our western heritage, and a historic tradition of life that is truly an American treasure.

The ranching community will meet these challenges head on, as they have done for several generations. Most of this generation's cowboys and their families are college educated and very much aware of the happenings in our country and around the world. Although remotely located, with the advent of communication technology, they stay completely abreast of daily events from the Middle East to Wall Street. They approach each issue they face with common sense and innovative solutions such as improved cattle DNA and genetics, market and production analyses, and resource diversification programs. They, like the generations before them, will and are adapting to change. They are some of the most intelligent people on this planet and have inherited and retained an overview and value system that is rare and priceless.

It is hoped that through this project and its photographic images, a small amount of awareness will be brought to some readers who may not know the true story of the way working cowboys live their lives. This is the genesis of this project and why this effort must result in much more than becoming just another photography book about cowboys. It is not possible for one book or one volume of books to convey the endless scope of this subject matter. But it is the intent of M.L. Bolton to spend the balance of his photographic and creative career trying to achieve this purpose. No matter what the obstacles, he firmly believes that armed with their faith in God and guided by a simple and straightforward code of ethics, decency, and grit, working cowboys will continue to saddle their horses every morning, ride toward the skyline, and carry on in a timeless way.



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M.L. Bolton