



Larry Smith often travels hundreds of miles a day building and maintaining fence on the Babbitt Ranches in Arizona. His foreman says Larry's work is pure artistry (inset).



FENCE WORK

In their eternal struggle, it's all that stands between man, cow and chaos.

By Larry Smith, TONALEA, ARIZONA

I am a wage-earning fence worker. I build and repair fences on a cattle ranch. My pay is fair, and the work is hard.

Some say it's a dreadful job. The days are long, and the fences are strung out for miles of unforgiving barbed wire and fence posts.

I have my trusty fence truck and my pride to get the job done. Just the way a ranch cowboy has his horse, living the life he loves, working his cattle and his horses. It's his pride and the glamour that keep him going.

Maybe someday I might say I've had enough, I want a change of scenery. Then again, I still like being out on the range, mending fences, pulling barbed wires tight, digging post holes, tapping down new cedar posts, pounding down T-post, putting up new gates, tying on new fence stays, watching cotton-candy-colored thunderstorm clouds form, and seeing abundant wildlife.

This is why I love my job. It is hard work, but I would have to say, it's a cult, a lifestyle, and sometimes a melancholy one.

All that being said, a cattle ranch with some good fence work looks a lot better.

PHOTOS BY TOM BEAN

