



# Penned by Lantern Light

This column will spotlight members of the Western Wordsmiths Chapter of the International Western Music Association. It will highlight an invited poet guest with possible short biographical information of his/her works. If a member of the Western Wordsmiths Chapter and if interested in submitting one piece of original work for publication, please contact the Western Wordsmiths chapter president.

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## STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

Bob Sampson

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*Jes' thirty miles from nowhere on a cold and windy night,  
I seen the rain a comin' by the bleak and fadin' light.  
I rode into a craggy wash and found a grizzly scene.  
Some wolves had got a heifer and were 'bout to pick her clean.*

*I fired off a warnin' shot that scared the pack away,  
But way too late to help her - just a meal for their next day.  
I walked around the carcass, no idea what I'd find,  
Then heard a cry from in the brush some twenty yards behind.*

*There, tangled in the thicket was a calf not three days old.  
Just how them wolves had missed him was a mystery left untold.  
It took a bit to get him loose, but finally he was free.  
I got him to my saddle, pulled him up across my knee.*

*The rain had finally caught us and the light was all but gone.  
The country was just way too rough to stumble on till dawn.  
Rememberin' a shelter that I'd spied in days gone by,  
We pushed along that canyon trail, still pelted from the sky.*

*The last dim glow of twilight then outlined a loomin' wall.  
A niche was carved into its face, a refuge for us all.  
I picked my way up to that hole cut in the red rock cliff.  
That calf was heavy, rocks were slick and I was mighty stiff.*

*We tumbled through the open gap. Thank heaven it was dry.  
The rain no longer bit my face, 'twas tight but we'd get by.  
Not five foot high, I couldn't stand. I tried to see the rear.  
That's when I heard a quiet growl. My spine went cold with fear.*

*I held my breath. Not one more sound, but we were not alone.  
I hugged the calf up tight to me, sat silent as the stone.  
The minutes passed. I thought, perhaps, it's better not to know  
What's lurkin' in the shadows there - it seemed to let us go.*

*But, fin'ly, I just had to see what hid there in the gloom.  
With shakin' hands, I struck a match and peered into the room.  
Two eyes like fire glittered back, the muzzle of a cat!  
The mountain lion growled again, the match dropped in my hat!*

*What if the cat attacked us? There's no way that I could shoot.  
To fire in the darkness, I'd as likely hit my boot.  
I vowed I'd wait that critter out, react to what would come.  
I hoped that I could move at all. My leg was gettin' numb.*

*I'm used to ridin' nighthawk, standin' guard 'neath starry sky,  
So I was startled when a sunbeam poked me in the eye.  
I'd dozed off 'gainst the cavern wall. The calf was well, it seemed.  
Just us, no mountain lion. Was that real, or had I dreamed?*

*I sat up, still a bit confused, surveyed the bright new day.  
Whatever happened in the night, we'd best be on our way.  
My horse stood waitin' down below, seemed none the worse for wear,  
But I was fairly covered with a coat of coarse tan hair.*

*Some years have passed since that strange day. The calf is grown and gone.  
I wake up and I ponder in the hours 'fore the dawn.  
I wrestle with the question and the horror that I might  
Have slumbered with a lion on that cold and windy night!*



### ABOUT BOB SAMPSON

Bob "Lefty" Sampson is a singer-songwriter and a relative new-comer to cowboy poetry. He was born and raised in the Hoosier State of Indiana where he learned to play guitar at the age of 14. At Purdue University he developed a love of folk music, which was popular at the time. When a job transfer took him to Phoenix, Arizona, he joined the Phoenicians, an award winning barbershop chorus. There he met Dick Goodman of the Reinsmen and Rex Allen, Jr., who hosted a Western show with the chorus in 2009. That led to his focus on western music, membership in the IWMA, and cowboy poetry. The story reflected in his poem "Strange Bedfellows," is based on personal experience.