

Hoof Prints

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In the many entities of my life that I have embraced or endured, there is one that stands prominent in my memories.

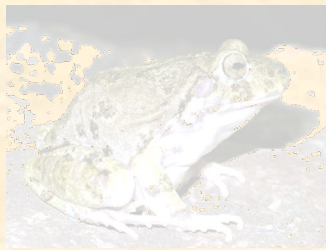
I once found myself in the employ of a cattle company.

My job was driving a feeder truck to the different pastures, filling feeders. These pastures were scattered throughout central Texas, many of which were larger than a thousand acres.

The soil of central Texas is a tight sediment known as “black gumbo”, very similar to modeling clay, only black. When it rains, it takes a long time for the soil to absorb the water. Sometimes in the late summer, the ground stays soft and pliable for several days after the rains have gone.

Once, I was filling a feeder in a remote pasture. For a great distance from the feeder out, the ground was blanketed with the hoof prints of the cattle that came there to feed. These were wide, deep, puncture marks, honey combing the landscape.

In the distance was a stand of Bo d’ark trees with Mesquite and Willow thinning out away from them. On the Texas prairie, this is usually an indication of a creek bed or tank of standing water.



While closing the feeder and fixin' to climb back in my truck, I looked down to see a small green tree frog. He was stuck in the bottom of a hoof print. With a tremendous effort, he struggled to the top of that hoof print, and flopped over into the next. He rested a moment, and began climbing into the next. I watched that frog, and then looked up at the endless span of hoof prints to the small oasis of trees. I couldn't help, but wonder to myself, that if that frog could see all the multitude of hoof prints in front of him, he wouldn't just give up and die in his hole.

Then I realized, at the top of each hoof print, he could see the trees, and the promise of something better, and the only thing standing in his way, was this next hoof print.

It occurred to me, that if we could see all the struggles before us, would we keep climbing that hoof print? Many times in my life, I felt as hopeless as that little frog.

Then I thought, the individual accomplishments of each of those hoof prints is what makes life so enduring.

If we could see all the hoof prints ahead of us, would it be an eternity of struggles, or the opportunity to accomplish innumerable successes?