The Ballad of One Four Oh

An old range steer has little to fear
Where Wyoming’s breezes blow,
But the stress and strife of a test steer’s life
Blew the mind of One Four Oh.

His early days were a pleasant haze
Of juvenile bovinity
Till man’s harsh hand applied a brand
And removed his masculinity.

Then he was weaned and cowboys lean
Rounded up the herd en masse
And hauled their freight down the Interstate
To a place called Happy Grass.

‘Twas not too bad till a little lad,
Less mischievous than dense,
Did put the fear in all the steers
And chased ‘em through the fence.

A further strain on his bovine brain
Were flies of nightmare size;
He’d never heard of whirlybirds
In an Air Force exercise.

Some orn’ry folk then tried to poke
One more tag in his ear;
He cut up rough, one tag’s enough
For any research steer.

But a whisk’ry dude of manner rude
Smacked him upside of his head
With profanity rich; “You sonofabitch!”
Was the mildest thing he said.

One Forty’s psyche then took a hike,
His mind came plumb unravelled.
Up went his tail, right through the scales
And over the fence he travelled.

A cowboy shrink diagnosed “I think,
Though the etiology’s hazy,
He’s a manic-depressive schizoid-repressive;
In short, the critter’s crazy!”

Now he roams the range with manner strange,
Making no contribution to science.
He will until MacDonald’s grill
Puts an end to his defiance.

And if sometime you chance to dine
‘Neath the arches’ golden glow
Then home you’ll take a belly ache,
The revenge of One Four Oh.

— Dick H. Hart

Editor’s Note: “Happy Grass” is the “High Plains Grassland Research Station” = (HPGRS). The “whisk’ry dude” is Dick Hart