

20SHORTGRASS.DOC

*(Note: Monte Noelke is recuperating from major surgery, so until he mans the keyboard again, we thought we would pull some Shortgrass Country from the files.)*

A stranger, judging ranchers by their actions in town, might surmise that these rural gentlemen have the Golden Rule tattooed on their arms and live strictly by that generous code. But the same stranger would change his mind if he had to get along with my neighbors at the ranch. This bunch of unreasonable characters would try the patience of the most charitable saint.

Take for instance what happened last week. A young rancher who neighbors with us on the west called up and demanded that we return his sucker-rod grab which we had borrowed last spring a year ago.

As politely as possible I informed him that, at the moment, I did not know for sure whether I had loaned the grab to my cousin out on the Pecos River, or if a trade I'd made with a junk dealer had included the tool.

While I was trying to think where I had last seen the grab, my young neighbor rudely slammed down the receiver of his telephone.

Actually, this was no surprise. Less than six months ago he carried on something terrible about our having

broken a few little connections on his new \$900 livestock sprayer. And just to show you how unreasonably angry he can become, he wouldn't even accept my directions to a wholesale house which sells sprayer parts at a bargain.

The other neighbors are no easier to deal with. We try to get along with them, but the net result is merely trouble heaped upon more trouble.

One will get mad because our Spanish billy goats happen to crawl through the fence to be with his Angora nannies. Before we can get him in a good humor, another neighbor will be raising Cain about a couple of our black bulls breaking in with his whiteface heifer calves.

At times these trifles cause serious threats. There was the occasion when a small band of our range hogs chose to winter on a neighbor's country to the south. This old crab, after asking us three or four times to do something about the hogs, up and threatened to call the sheriff. If the hogs had been doing some real damage, we could have understood his wrath. But all the animals had done was break into his cake shed and, if I recall correctly, they had broken a half-dozen or so brass float arms off his water troughs.

Our neighbors not only seem to thrive on dissension, they are also stingy. Just last week one of them refused to

lend me a few blocks of salt and a sack or two of milk cow feed.

Sometimes we get so discouraged with living around here we rue the day Grandfather took up land in such an un-neighborly country. Especially on the days when the railroad company joins in and acts as though the two or three loads of sand we borrowed without asking were all the bedding material the Santa Fe owns - or when the oil company's protests are so strident you'd think the dozen joints of two-inch pipe we picked up, thinking they were through with it, meant the difference between their declaring a dividend or going flat broke.

It's at these times we wish our grandsire had left a little fruit car or a popcorn stand, or just any business mounted on wheels, instead of a ranch. As it is, we have to try to tough it out. But it would help bring peace if my cousin or the wandering junk man would assist me in locating that sucker rod grab. - (05/20/65)