

## March Is Traditional Month For Weird Illness Among Ranch Wives

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MERTZON — The month of March has traditionally been a period of abnormally bad temper tantrums among the female populace of the short grass country, a disturbing change in the domestic atmosphere which was noted even in the first day of the white settlers.

Earliest reports indicate that the pioneer woman, although prone to kicking cats and bashing furniture with churn dashers, was partially distracted by holding off raiding Indians, keeping large packs of kids at bay, and toning up their own muscles in order to withstand the kids and the redskins. But even considering these diversions, the frontiersmen dreaded March worse than a belly dancer dreads middle age. He felt, with justification, that dodging tomahawks and wearing homespun underwear were sufficient hardships without having a mad wife to contend with.

As a matter of fact it is believed that if the founding fathers had been left in peace by the Indians, had escaped the wrath of their espoused during March, and had been allowed a suit or two of store-bought undergarments, they would be remembered to this day as kindly men holding a dove in their hands. Instead, the poor men were choused and chafed until there were indeed some indoor as well as outdoor battles fought in their day.

Now one finds wives of the ranchland reacting to March weather even more violently than her predecessors. Just like the women of old, the modern wife falls into action when the first whirlwinds begin to mess up a washer or two of clothes on the line, or the blustery winds start forcing a few cubic yards of dirt through every crack and crevice in her house.

To complicate matters, her inexplicable rage spreads from house to house. All experts agree that when one case is spotted, it won't be 24 hours until the whole countryside is overstocked with infuriated wives.

Among mysteries surrounding the illness is the constant change of its symptoms. A few decades ago, when doctors first isolated the malady and labeled it Apache fever, "Calentura de India," their diagnosis was based on the patient's tendency to make threats or indulge in weepy spells; manifestation of the eternally popular hysterical crying fit combined with loudly exclaimed threats removed all doubt as the nature of the sickness.

Today, however, doctors feel that modern expected jet age matrons may at any time start unleashing left hooks that would silence Cassius Clay, or begin delivering a series of kicks capable of crippling the toughest goalie in the National Hockey League. To further darken the picture, not one physician can foresee any hope of reducing the din of the crying-and-threatening aspects of the plague. On the contrary, they fear the contemporary strain of Apache fever may cease to be a disorder commonly associated with March's howling winds and swirling dust, and become a year-around calamity.

Surprisingly, quite a number of experienced husbands share the latter misgiving.

Although medical science hasn't come close to finding a cure for wifely pre-spring fever, only last week there were rumors of a seemingly miraculous arresting of a case over in the north end of the short grass country. According to the story, a suspected carrier of the virus, or whatever causes the disaffection, was temporarily relieved by a brand of cold medicine which is ordinarily prescribed for cantankerous old maids. If this report be true, drugstores can expect a stampede of husbands that will make anything Light Horse Henry Lee ever came up with look like a sedate dress parade.

The ailment may be wiped out in time. Already, the introduction of clothes dryers and sealed windows is offering a measure of relief. Someday you might overhear a short grass male humming "Spring Time in the Rockies" without putting into it nearly so much feeling as he does now.