

On the way back from San Angelo the other night, 12 drops of rain hit my windshield. Weathermen had been predicting a 20 percent chance of rain. However, coffeehouse meteorologists had been giving future bets to July 1980 that rain was about as likely as Mr. Carter throwing the south half of Georgia to Mr. Kennedy for free. So I just kept my mouth shut until now about seeing the rain drops.

Way back, like maybe 20 years ago, I learned to be quiet about the temperatures and rainfall. Down at church, I began to notice that my hot flashes and bone chills didn't coincide with those of the flock. I'd be kneeling in my pew, all squinched up, feeling prickly sensations clear down past my knees, and right across the aisle a person might be shivering and wrapped up in a coat. After I was embarrassed a few times for spouting off about how cold I was or now hot I was inside, I realized that the sermons and gospels weren't affecting other folks like they were me.

One time for sure that is happening, dry weather is on hand, Feed trucks are already rushing up and down the highways. Range cubes, I learned last week, are only delivered by appointment. Too, the freight is high and truck drivers are scarce. I saw a television show of a rancher driving his cattle to town to save on trucking bills. I didn't see any mule teams pulling wagons hauling feed back to his ranch, but I did wonder about such a fate after our feed dealer told his tale.

It's going to be some deck of mixed up cards if we do start trailing our staff into market. As close a fit as a pickup cab has become for many of us the amount of stomach that'll extend over a saddlehorn is going to be awful, especially with tourists passing by wanting pictures of the scene.

I know that going back to trail driving is a good move. I don't believe we'd leave as many head at the ranch to feed with only a wagon to freight in the feed. A return to the old ways might bring us back to our senses. We wouldn't be hard to convince it was dry if we had to spend one week a month going back and forth from town.

A drouth feed program started in our county 10 days ago. The last emergency program we had, I had enough money to support my philosophy against government aid. This time it only took about 10 minutes to struggle with my conscience. I gave up an afternoon nap and my favorite TV show to make it to the courthouse.

The days dawn bright and clear in the Shortgrass Country. Pray for an early spring and a mild winter. I ought to be looking for livestock trucks instead of feed wagons. We are going to make it, I'm sure. The count just may be a bit smaller by spring.