

Right from the Fourth, Mertzson was short on gasoline and water. Bathtub addicts and squash farmers had bathed and irrigated the city's tanks to low levels. A breakdown in equipment at the refinery was blamed for a gas shortage. It was a sorry way to start a holiday and the citizens were most vocal in their displeasure.

Hardest hit were the husbands that didn't have a way to get to the ranch. You see, of the 120 houses that are hooked on the water system, only about four of them are not planted and over planted with every known species of house plant marketed on the continent.

I'm sure I don't need to explain what began to happen when all those plants and vines and ferns began to be faced by a drouth.

At my house the threat of sudden defoliation alone was enough to be a disaster. Child Who Sits in the Sun has every windowsill and every flat surface covered in tropical greenery. All of the ceiling space is taken up in eyescrews and guywires supporting a jungle of vines that make the Hanging Gardens of Babylon look like a second attraction.

Without water, we were in danger of a leaf slide. The doors are too small to allow a hay rake to enter. I'd always heard on the t.v. that the truckers were on strike, so they wouldn't haul us any water. I know without hearing it asking that the Red Cross too busy working in the tornado area on the plains to come. Mertzson has only one train a day. The railroad, I was sure, wouldn't undertake moving 250 acres of pot plants.

After I'd studied the matter about 20 minutes, I told Child Who Sits in the Sun I'd better go to the ranch and check the waterings before the holidays. I wished you'd been there to see her reaction. Remember those Tarzan movies when Tarzan and his monk would start a wrestling match in a thicket with a big old snake? This was more dramatic. I had leaves in my pants cuffs and pieces of ivy hanging in my hair. She tore off one of my shirt sleeves with a sharp pointed trowel and broke four pots with a shovel.

I never knew she felt so strong about my checking the waterings at the ranch. I'd caught on that she was opposed to three day out-of-town rodeos and race meets. I'd figured out that she objected to extended weekend chicken fights and pool games that ran overtime. But I sure didn't think watering our stock was an issue, but I sure know it is after that round of trouble.

Two new water wells have been hooked into the city lines. Gasoline remains an uneasy but available item. Everything is all right at the ranch.

Next time I'll just say I'm going to play dominoes. I never saw a woman so sensitive to words.