

JANUARY 22, 1981

Mertzon is holding its annual county fair today. Outside my window a brisk North wind is whipping flurries of sleet and snow. Perfect stock show weather is what everyone is saying down at the exhibition area. Under breath, however, I fear the word "perfect" is being substituted by far gamier language.

By nightfall the parents will be having sighs of relief of such force that air pockets will form around the deserted show ring. 4-H mothers and dads use a large portion of their strength and hope on stock show days.

Old gals and boys that think the holiday flu is a tragedy change their minds. Couples that dread visiting in-laws or frozen plumbing are humbled under the stress of making the big shows. Liking packing and moving, the show circuit is a big strain on the marriage bonds.

I have an excellent place to watch the fair. Our town house is two blocks from the show barn; our fireplace is two blocks and 32 feet from the excitement. Things weren't always that good. Once all of our seven sons followed that path to youthful glory. I suppose in the years they had fatted stock, they had more fights over who was to feed the lambs than the Golden Gloves Assn. handled in this part of Texas. The results are unrecorded, but as I recall, the closest any of them ever came to a yellow ribbon was holding the same for some friend while he cried in disappointment.

The event I'd like to see added to the program is a spring judging of the mothers and daddies. Say, along about the Halloween carnival, have the parents submit a copy of their latest medical check-up and an un-retouched photograph of themselves to an impartial board. Then in late spring, after the last shows and award banquets, have a team of doctors judge and select the sturdiest families still left on their feet and able to maneuver up and down the show alleys.

For fun, bald spots could be measured and fallen arches calculated. Contests could be held on highest blood pressure gains and the largest overall sugar counts. There could be races, like kicking off over boots and shedding overcoats. I think a large field of events would develop, once the show was organized.

The manager at the wool house said at least three more big shows are on for today. I'm sure that's what's drawn the cold weather. Brave indeed are the bands of parents that make such affairs possible. I long for the boys to come home, but I sure am glad they are out of the show game once and for all.