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Last fall, the county judge over at Mertzson sought a solution to one of the county's problems by appointing a citizens' committee to review a commissioner's proposal to turn an irrigated farm into a county golf course over on the east side of Spring Creek.

The property would boast a clubhouse and swimming pool. Memory sets the price at some \$750,000 for the acreage and improvements. More accurate details of the property are available from the commissioner. He represents the real estate firm offering the deal.

By the time the judge reached my name he must have been searching for a graybeard to set the mean higher on the age of the committee. After years on the school board, I'd sworn to drink a gallon of alligator blood before I'd ever accept public duty again.

By accident, His Honor hit a soft point. The subject property belonged to my maternal family before the big flood in the close of the 19th century. The family perched in a giant cottonwood to keep from drowning, until Creed Childress, an apparent nautical muleskinner, whipped a team and wagon through the floodwater to rescue them. (Part of this is true.) Seemed sacrilegious to think of golf balls bouncing on what was literally my family tree.

Next mail run, an official county envelope contained an appointment to the committee, including the date of the meeting, signed by the judge. Foiled, I went to the courtroom on the appointed evening.

As I sat down, four ladies entered – poised and gracious – but recognizable to a school board member as a SWAT team. Here strode a foursome able to make the story of the Northern blockade of Confederate seaports read like the withdrawal of a name from nomination for a yacht club office.

It became clear that with reinforcements like those four around the table, the chances of a golf course being built with public funds dropped lower than the proposed property's elevation below the flood line. Calmed, I folded my notes back inside the legal pad. Under my breath, I hummed the old victory song from the fifth grade, "Hail to the Winning Chief," concluding by tapping a few notes of the chorus on the oak desk in front of my chair.

Testimony in favor the golf course ran short. Next, one of the ladies read a list of priorities for the community ahead of building a golf course in a voice with the tone of a Royal Guardsman offering suggestions. Support from the others came in deft thrusts, ending with one lady able to testify to having lost a big wad of dough and a lot

of work on a golf course across the river from the proposed one. Defeat became so obvious that the sponsor of the golf course seconded the motion to end the matter.

Three months passed without a word from the committee. When my pal and I returned from our last trip, the county librarian reopened by asking help to write a letter for the committee to help raise 20 thousand bucks in local subscription to polish the edges of three hundred thousand dollars in grants to build a new library up on courthouse hill.

The county doesn't need a library. The community doesn't need a library. Mertzon does need a pool hall downtown, equipped with a tote board flashing the winning numbers of the lottery, with a roping arena out back to reintroduce a subtle touch of western flavor in the town.

Sure, going along to review a little tit-tat of a breach in ethics by a member of the Commissioner's Court offering his client's land to the county came under the business of a citizen's committee. But my point is self-serving, too. Cowboys don't hang around libraries - never have and never will. *Ranch Romance* magazines in his tin suitcase stock a cowboy's library, or used to way back when there were cowboys.

Youngsters' attentions need to be diverted from all the book stuff. Pool halls make perfect instructors. Lots of propositions (bets) develop on the green felt to keep an ol' kid broke and might force him to look for a ranch job.

No explanation was offered or indicated where a piddling sum of 20 grand goes in a three hundred thousand-dollar pot. I guess to buy bookmarkers, or perhaps silver tinsel to go on a big Christmas tree in the lobby.

The 09 Divide rate of exchange based on weighing hollow horns and booking cottonseed meal converts slow to the big-time ways of the city folks taking thirty-six inch strides by ticker tapes and tossing dough in the air like a fire wheel juggler.

The librarian is going to be mighty disappointed if she waits for my support of a new library. The dollar check-off on the monthly telephone bill is enough to support literacy in a small county. I could have gone a long time without hearing about committees.