

OCTOBER 22, 1981

More rain has fallen since my last report. The couple of inches of the previous week now sound scant compared to the new readings of four and five inches.

In Mertzson, the downpour had drops big enough to raise gauge levels by a full half an inch. Thunder claps at the peak of storm became soggy and waterlogged. Toward the end lightning fizzled in the moisture laden air. Many of the bolts were extinguished before they reached full light.

Telephone and electrical service failed in the first few minutes of the storm. The Shortgrass power system is engineered to resist dust. Specifications for line insulation are designed for low moisture protection. Often we'll be without power on a foggy morning. It's nothing for 40 miles of rural telephone service to fail from a dew.

For weather emergencies I keep an old-time kerosene lamp in the kitchen. However, kerosene is becoming obsolete. I don't know what I'll do once the lamp is empty. Candles won't work as a substitute because Child Who Sits in the Sun melts up the wax to use on her Injun paraphernalia. Flashlights are no answer. About six years and three months ago, she bent a six cell unit across the lower part of my skull. Since then, I've dropped all battery operated equipment from the inventory except a pen light that's kept on a key chain.

The other night I saved fuel by burning boys' old tennis shoes in the fireplace. Our seven sons have left enough discarded shoes in the closets to fire a respectable sized smudging operation for a citrus farm. Until I'd spent about 15 football seasons going in and out of boys' dressing rooms, the smell of burned rubber was offensive, but today a shoe sole burning is as cozy as an oak log.

We own a storm cellar across the street from the house. However, I got cured of cellars in the days the walls were unlined and the floors were made of dirt. The fear of thunder and high winds diminishes sitting in a glorified dugout that serves mainly as a snake den and an incubator for stinging scorpions and black widow spiders.

I was always too picky about my roommates to hide underground from a storm. Bad weather doesn't bother me as much as it does some folks. The worst I was ever hurt in a storm was from bumping my head crawling underneath an iron bed frame.

Storm cellar doors do make good beds to sleep outdoors in summer. The slant is perfect to encourage good blood circulation. I highly recommend that young husbands invest in a cellar. On the nights when their marital conflicts make a separate bed ground advisable, a cellar door sure beats sleeping in a pickup seat by a long shot and is a lot more healthful.

After a bad storm, I often wonder about how the hombres feel who earn their living making up stories to support their bids on sheep and cattle. The Big Man Upstairs has a way of malting his points with thunder and lightning. Even the auction traders that don't notice much more than the market reports are bound to have second thoughts on those kind of nights. But there's no way of knowing how they actually feel because they live such a tough life that one more wreck is hard to tell.

The country looks fresh and ready to grow winter weeds. October has sure been a good month for us. I'm going to try to rent my storm cellar for a barrel of kerosene. If frost will hold off until Christmas, we'll have it made.