

Women Are Best Able To Handle Weather Reports

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Page 8

MERTZON — Large portions of the Shortgrass Country have finally received some moisture. Draws and creeks which had been lost from the tax rolls are once again filled with water. Water gaps which hadn't caught anything but tumbleweeds are swept beneath the underbrush. Ranchers who before the rains wouldn't have laughed at private reading of Adam Clayton Powell's case are as light hearted as a group of college kids returning from a full-scale picketing venture.

As usual, news coverage of the rains has been poor. Wet weather reporting is practically a lost art out here. Newspapermen, as well as television and radio announcers, have covered drouths for so many years that not one in the lot is capable of describing anything from a light dew to a cloudburst.

The weather bureau over in San Angelo suffers the same handicap. Anytime those college trained cloud watchers are forced to change their forecast from "clear" to "partly cloudy," they muddle the report until the head translator at the United Nations couldn't unscramble the opening phrases.

About the only place to get a reliable report on rainy periods is from the mother Shortgrassers. Regardless of how wet it gets, the women remain as calm as a veteran astronaut. Neither floods nor hailstorms shake the female element.

For example, the other day, on the first morning after our big rain, I called my mother to check if their long string of missing rains was broken. Reports had already reached town that their country was under water.

The telephone system was in a barely audible condition. In order to establish contact, I had to shout at least at the decibel range of a longshoreman's bull horn. Intermittent popping and growling made communication even more difficult.

After about three minutes of yelling our head off, I was able to find out that their ranch had received 6 inches of rain. Then, after further shouting "What?" until my ears had built up considerable pressure, I found that my mother mainly wanted to tell me to be sure that my wife attended a shoe sale in San Angelo.

Now let's pause a minute and evaluate what was taking place. Here was a ranch-raised wife, stranded on a place that hadn't had a good rain in nearly eight months, yet she was composed enough to realize that life must go on. Even out there in the middle of a flood, she could remember that green tennis shoes and toeless sandals were scheduled to go sale at bargains that would cause a hermit to leave his cave.

In comparison, and this is important, my stepfather came on the wire completely mesmerized by the rainfall. He was so unduly excited about being able to stop feeding that it's doubtful if he realized that within the hour the doors of the department stores in the Wool Capital would swing open on what could be one of the biggest shoe sales ever held in Texas.

So, as the situation stands today, it is clearly obvious that rain reporting and weather forecasting should be in the hands of the ladies. If we are ever going to have reliable history of our wet periods, the women are going to have to take over the task.

One more thing: I never did hear how the shoe sale came out. I suppose if anybody was trampled down in the rush, it would have been in the papers.