

AUGUST 31, 1978

Close to the rain gauges, our country is green and flush. The best end of a rain always is collected in the measuring glass of a rain gauge. I think it's the accumulation of the bugs in the bottom of the tube that enriches the moisture. Whatever it is, it's a good idea to empty them without wasting a drop.

To me the worst place that our government has failed in the vast amount of services offered is in not providing an official representative to read the rain gauges on the different ranches. Outfits like my neighbor Goat Whiskers the Younger turn up with flood readings from thunder showers that don't mark the ground elsewhere. Since the state and federal governments take such a complete interest in us citizens, it looks like we'd have an agency to tour the gauges after a rain. In drouths, they could measure dust or estimate the amount of tumbleweeds rolling across the highways. I'm not suggesting government waste. We have enough of that already to backfire the power plants in the Tennessee Valley Authority.

I've often thought that making ranch hombres notarize their rain reports would improve the accuracy. After rains, the notary could move her seal down to the coffee house or the post office. Then the hombres that are prone to turn the morning dew into a cloudburst about four times the size of the crest of Noah's flood would have the choice of honesty or signed perjury.

Something else that'd help clarify the situation would be to have the grand jury pull spot checks on the rain measurements. The jury isn't empanelled in Mertzon but twice a year; nevertheless it doesn't rain in Mertzon much more often than that. Let's put it this way, checking on the rain out here certainly wouldn't overload the docket. In the times of the old district judges, their very presence was enough to straighten up the town. Those old time magistrates were so fierce that it'd be a month before the jurymen's oaths would wear off. I recall one citizen that was so stricken by that "so help me" line that he even confessed a bunch of stuff to his wife that, before the jury service, the warden at Sing Sing couldn't have pried from his lips.

I know you may think I'm kidding but it hasn't been five years since the head of State Highway Patrol ate breakfast every morning at the local cafe for a week. He never did say why he was going through Mertzon, and I don't care. What I cared about was that his visits caused two of our calves to come home that'd previously been invisible to one of my neighbors. I tried to get the patrolman to join the local Lion's Club. His name on the roster would have had considerable influence.

Much of the Shortgrass Country received rain in August. Goat Whiskers the Younger claims he had over an inch two days ago. Whiskers' rain must have fallen awfully fast as people going down the highway by his outfit didn't have to turn on their windshield wipers.

I'm going to ask the county judge what he'd charge to swear in a few extra people next term. It's a shame for so little moisture to be distorted in so many measurements.