

Shortgrass Country

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Shortgrass County moisture conditions are spotted. East of San Angelo the rains have been of general nature; from the western perimeter on, showers have dotted the land on a skip and miss basis. Portions of the western country are getting plenty dry.

Why one scope of the rangelands is blessed by rain while another is dried into a misery has never been understood. The oldtimers made up a bunch of jokes based on the biblical saying that the Lord took care of the unjust as well as the just.

Their humor never did take much hold as there were always enough people suffering a drouth to ruin the best comic work that could be produced. In fact, doctors know that it's a bad symptom to see anybody smiling during a dry spell. No telling how many perfectly healthy citizens have been treated for rabies or running fits just because they appeared too light-hearted in the midst of a drouth.

The greybeards also blamed failure to pay the preacher as a reason rain missed certain outfits. I know that isn't right. You can put a four-bit piece in the collection plate every Sunday from now until the frozen tundra of Alaska is producing crops typical of temperate zones, and it won't change the weather pattern one drop. During the dry calamity of the 1950s some of the boys went so high as to ante a full dollar. If any of them ever got their money back, the rains were kept an awfully close secret.

Why it ever rains within the city of San Angelo is the biggest mystery of all. The Lord must have a failing for hedgerows and St. Augustine grass. He surely notices how those slickers are prone to pull tricks like buying eggs for 35 cents a dozen and taking a full nickel on them before putting them on the shelf. He's bound to see them peddling tennis shoes at \$6.95 a pair, or offering "one-owner" secondhand cars that have titles of previous ownership longer than an ant trail.

The rain clouds ought to be sent to the rural districts instead of to the cities. In my whole lifetime, I don't remember over a couple of dozen country boys who were caught cheating on a deal. I'd be afraid to guess how many city hombres I've suspected of being dishonest. The number would run into the hundreds.

Man doesn't know what pain is until he becomes part of a dry belt. Of the dozens of major plagues that challenge a rancher's survival, being on the dry side of the fence is the worst. Pouring out feed when your neighbor is thinking about cutting prairie hay is the number one rangeland tragedy. One short episode is enough to last forever.

However, life is too long to start worrying about the dry spots. The fickle clouds will be reshuffled again. After all, the gates of entry to the Shortgrass Country doesn't proclaim that the rough days aren't as bad as the rest of the year.