

Floods Can't Stop Summer Invasion Of Visiting Kinsmen

By Monte Noelke

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MERTZON — July rains are the big news in this land the Indians called “Big Drop-Off.” All outposts are reporting favorable amounts of moisture. Grass is green, cattle are fat.

Hombres around the coffee houses are taking the wet weather in high form. As in every other wet spell in our history, the ranchers are once again predicting an end to the great agricultural crisis that started under Thomas Jefferson's administration.

However, if my people had the hindsight of a red spider mite, they could see that rain doesn't cure any of our permanent problems. All it does is put off our drouthy dilemmas until another cycle of dry grief and dehydrated misery strikes again.

Take for instance the age-old summer influx of visiting kinfolks. Nobody ever heard of it raining enough to keep the Aunt Mollies and Cousin Nellies from gathering up their broods and descending on the Shortgrass Country. It could come a tropical waterspout for 30 days, the roads could become so treacherous they'd turn back the Royal Mounted Police, yet somehow or other the swarming hordes of vacationing relatives would enter our boundaries.

My wife says I'm a hopeless old tightwad for not wanting to run a free combination boarding house and dude ranch all summer long. But many years ago it became obvious that running up big winter feed bills wasn't the only way a rancher could go broke.

As the price of frijole beans climbed to hitherto unknown heights and such class company foods as salt jowls, turnip greens and cornmeal went out of sight, the tab of a three-day visit of cousins and mixed in-laws rose to over 80 cents per head. The expense shot even higher when the accounting included the extra electricity that was burned, plus the stepped-up depreciation on furniture and fixtures.

Soon after this alarming situation was noted, the whole thing took on runaway proportions. Old reliable appetite quenchers like popcorn and lemon drops became useless. The time-tested ruse of keeping a quilting frame in the guest room became proved of no value. Even in the slackest season, relatives poured into this area in such numbers that the side effects of their coming would have thrown the author of “The Merry Widow Waltz” into fits of deep despair.

As long as soft-hearted people like my wife run this country, rains isn't going to solve the summer migration problem. It's a dead cinch we can't get enough moisture to have a dependable mosquito plague; it's a double dead cinch that as long as everything's fancied up for the outlanders, they're going to keep coming back.

The way I see it today, our only hope is for livestock prices to go up and grocery bills to come down.

Conrad Hilton never would have made an international host if he'd started out here.