

Tough Old Rancher Steadfastly Holds Out Against Government

Editor's note: The U.S. Army has been buying up New Mexico land for its McGregor guided missile range. United Press sent correspondent William P. Montgomery out to talk to the thorniest holdout, rancher John Prather. In the following dispatch, Montgomery tells Prather's story.

By
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United Press Correspondent

Orogrande, N.M.—Tough, bitter old rancher John Prather tightened up his hard but aging muscles for a new defiance of the U.S. Army and said for maybe the 100th time, "I'm not leaving my birthright alive, by damned, government or no."

Periodically threatened with forced removal from the 120-section ranch he carved out of the wilderness with half a century of patient toil under a boiling south-western sun, Prather repeatedly has made the Army back down from a showdown. Whether the Army will make another "strategic retreat" from the newest deadline for his removal—Aug. 1—from its 1,000 square mile McGregor guided missile range is not clear.

But Prather's attitude, as it always has been in four years of negotiations and court actions concerning government seizure of the best 40 sections of his place, is clear.

CAUGHT IN THE ACT

Olney, Ill.—Four youths dumped a truckload of trash and debris at the homes of two of their friends as a practical joke. They planned to spend the next day watching their friends in the cleanup work. Police observed the "joke" though, and their friends watched as the four boys reloaded the trash they had dumped.

Grange Notes

Roxy Ann Grange
At the last regular meeting of Roxy Ann Grange Master Moore and several members from Eagle Point were guests.

Three applicants were voted on and will become members of the Grange. They are Mr. and Mrs. Clifford Kennedy and Mrs. Evelyn Hendricks.

The Agriculture chairman reported the livestock prices were about the same with a small increase in price for cattle and sheep. The hay harvest in the valley was in full swing.

Mrs. Eleanor Mankins had a display table of some articles of clothing and fancy work that had been in the family for years. Also of interest was a scale used by the Chinese to weigh gold.

Mrs. Joanne Lemacks was elected treasurer to finish to term vacated by Mrs. George Walters.

Chaplain May Dalton reported a number of members sick in the hospital and at home.

Roscoe Roberts gave a very interesting report on his attendance to both the Oregon and Washington State Grange.

Members retired to the dining room for a birthday cake and ice cream was served in celebration for those who have birthdays the last six months of the year.

The next meeting will be Friday, July 19, and Mr. and Mrs. Shy Morthland, Mr. and Mrs. Al Sims and Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth Shaw will be on the serving committee.

Phoenix Grange

Members of Phoenix Grange held a picnic Sunday, July 14, at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Johnson on Camp Baker rd.

The long table was set up on the lawn under fir, pine and laurel trees.

The meat dish of baked ham was furnished by the committee. Mr. and Mrs. Charles Johnson, Mr. and Mrs. Mark Norton, Mr. and Mrs. Walter Grochoki, Mrs. and Mrs. Mervine Hixon, Mrs. Christine Dinsmore, and Mrs. Mona Ferns. Ice cream and beverage furnished by the Grange and those attending brought vegetables, salads and deserts.

HEC Chairman Colar Schroeder called a short business meet of the club following the dinner. The Home Economics club will hold no meetings during the months of August and September.

Tuesday evening, July 16, members of several Granges in the valley made a surprise visit to Bellview Grange, their regular meeting night.

There were 46 visitors representing Central Point, Griffin Creek, Roxy Ann, Shady Cove and Phoenix Granges. Nine will be Tuesday, July 23, at 8 p.m.

Gertrude Lewin,
Publicity Chairman

Don't Say

"Hello"

Say ---

"FILTER-FLO"

"An American has got a right to die at home," he says. Headquarters for his ranch is a rock house barely one and a half miles inside the outer edge of the huge anti-aircraft missile testing ground.

The Army has said that a six-mile wide strip around the perimeter is reserved for a safety zone, but that Prather may not remain in his home unless he signs a lease limiting his occupancy to the house and yard.

"That's ridiculous," Prather stormed in a voice still as steady at 82 as it was when he followed a chuck wagon and "little herd of sorry cattle" from Texas to New Mexico in 1883.

The lease offered Prather also specifies his home and hearth would pass to government control upon his death.

"I've spent a lifetime building this place and I've always planned to be buried right here," he said. "Do you think I want a bunch of Army people making my home into a beer garden within sight of my grave?"

Crusty and obstinate, Prather nevertheless maintains a keen sense of humor that has sent colonels away from his home smiling in spite of assertions that "the Army had better start realizing we taxpayers have to have land to grow something to feed the damned government parasites."

Prather recalls scraping up earth with a horse-drawn slip to make surface tanks to hold water on an otherwise barren land. Under his direction, 1,000-foot deep wells have dotted the rolling plain he steadfastly declares is New Mexico's best cattle country.

The only time his voice nears a quaver is when he regards the sweeping vistas south of the Sacramento Mountains, sees the scattered bunches of Herefords and Angus "bred up from those sorry cows."

Then he says: "Move out and leave home. If I did, I'd die. I might as well die at home. We'll just have to wait and see if it's old age or if the government forces it."

Footlighters' Play Scheduled in August

The Medford Footlighters' summer show, "Mr. Angel," is now in its second week of rehearsal and will open the first week in August, according to Mrs. Max Wimmer, president.

The three act comedy was written by Harry Segall. It will be shown at the Footlighters' fairgrounds theater.

Thirteen characters in the play are divided between earthly and celestial beings. The directing is being managed by Frank Buchter. "Every member of the cast seems bent upon making this the best show we've ever done," Mrs. Wimmer stated.

Assisting Buchter is Lenore Zapell, Medford High School drama instructor; Bernie Roberts, who has constructed many Footlighter sets in the past, and Michael Thorniley, set designer and artist.

The cast will include Les Boardman, Clyde Wheaton, Joe Hilesburger, Margaret Dix, Jackie Colton, Helen Ashley, Claire Flickinger, Jerry Jerome, Donna Nelson, Beverly Johnson and Madeline Buonocore.

About 82 cubic miles of water are stored up behind the Hoover dam.

Dr. Campagna Joins Dr. Luce in Practice

Dr. Mario J. Campagna recently became associated with Dr. James C. Luce here in the gery.

Dr. and Mrs. Campagna and their children came to Medford from Rochester, Minn., where he completed four years of neurosurgical training at the Mayo clinic.

Dr. Campagna is a native of Portland and attended Oregon State college and the University of Portland, receiving a BS degree from the latter. He was graduated from the University of Oregon medical school and served internship at Philadelphia General hospital.

He was granted a master of science degree in neurosurgery by the University of Minnesota graduate school. He served in the Navy during World War II. The family is living at 215 Erie st.

Augusta, Me.—State election officials packed a day's supply of ham, beans and other food, when they took a portable voting booth to the hamlet of Brookton for a special liquor referendum. There is no restaurant within miles of the unorganized township in woodlands near the Canadian border.

Legislator Cannot Be School Teacher

Oregon City — Circuit Judge Ralph M. Holman ruled late Thursday that Thomas Monaghan cannot hold simultaneously jobs as a grade school teacher and a state legislator.

Monaghan indicated he would appeal to the State Supreme court. He had based his plea on the proposition that by taking leave from the school job and serving in the Legislature he was not in conflict with an article of the state constitution. The article says that no one "charged with official duties, under one of the state departments shall exercise the functions of another."

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