

Life Is Interesting for Mountain Farmers



TAKES HER TO GRANGE—Mrs. Lester Wertz, of the Climax area northeast of Eagle Point, poses on the tractor which sometimes took her to Grange meetings. When winter weather made the mountain road from her ranch impassable to cars, she drove eight miles by tractor and the remaining 12 miles by car which she picked up at her daughter's house. This meant a 40 mile round trip on Grange nights getting her back home after midnight.

Wertz Residence Picturesque Among Mountain Scenery

By JOE COWLEY
Mail Tribune Farm Editor

Cradled in a small valley among mountain peaks northeast of Eagle Point is a rustic farm home surrounded by 160 acres of high meadowland. Here Mr. and Mrs. Lester Wertz, about 70 years old, continue to raise beef and hay.

The house of rough, weathered lumber and hand-split roof shakes is a monument to the Wertzses. Like them it is rugged, but mellow and comfortable. The house was constructed before the Wertzses bought the farm in the early 1900's. It was built in 1869 or 1870. Water rights on the property go back to 1873.

"The Wertzses are remarkable people because they weathered the depression, really had to scrimp and save to make their farm pay, yet it didn't mark them," a friend remarked. The couple remember both good and bad times, but treat it all as a great adventure. This seems to extend to the whole family, to the two girls, the Wertzses' only children.

Dad Wertz, as he is called by his friends, laughs as he tells how he wrote out a check for hospital expenses after the birth of his older daughter then discovered his \$300 was wiped out when the Jacksonville bank failed. This was about 1920. And that was considerable money in those days.

This must have been a severe blow to this mountain farm family since their farm already represented considerable savings. Wertz, still wiry and limber - muscled, had worked six years in a logging camp and saved \$5,200. Purchase of the farm included a Model T Ford.

Not new to farming, Wertz had worked as a hired hand for the Cantrills on the Applegate when a young man. It was there he met his wife, Mabel, while she was teaching school.

"Yup, I guess you could say she got her master's degree then," he chuckled. "Never quite heard it put that way before, though."

Suited to Farming

Mrs. Wertz seems well suited physically to mountain farming, also. She is small, wiry and like her husband has almost always enjoyed robust health. They attribute it to the good, clear, invigorating

mountain air, good food and simple, active living.

"Mama said she thought 70 years was old until Daddy reached 70 and now she doesn't consider it old at all," the daughter said.

The early years were not easy. The Wertzses raised their own foodstuffs in a vegetable garden behind the house. Mrs. Wertz raised turkeys and her husband the hogs. The custom then was to let hogs run wild, then round them up for the market.

The old-timers talk about hordes of hogs drifting from the high mountain valleys to the lowlands where they would be rounded up, each owner claiming his own. However, in 1909 or 1910 the Jackson county hog law was instituted. It was called the Hanley Hog law since Mike Hanley spearheaded its creation. This law was resented as much by the independent, pioneering Jackson county farmers as the recently passed county dog control law.

Latest on Law
"I still meet old-timers in town who ask what's the latest on the hog law?" the veteran mountain rancher chuckled.

The Wertzses had to "make-do" during the depression times. Lacking money for a crib or bassinet for their older daughter they placed her in a dresser drawer.

The couple still uses a bathtub fashioned from a cedar log. The tree was felled with a crosscut saw. Then Wertz drilled a series of holes with a ratchet auger, split out a chunk of it with his double-bit ax and hollowed it out with a plane. Sandpapered smooth and painted an aqua-blue, the tub looks as modern as the latest tub with the smooth gently sloping sides.

It's probably the only bathtub still in use where a person has to pull the cork after taking a bath. Wertz piped the water into the house himself by gravity flow at a time when many farmers were still using old well pumps or carrying water by bucket from a nearby stream.

Wood At Fireplace

Another interesting feature of the Wertz home is the hand-hewn wood around the fireplace, particularly around the mantle. The large rough stone fireplace faces the living room but projects rearward into the bedroom.

Adding to the rambling home seems to blend into its surroundings, is the front gate hinged on an old buggy axle. A long, low wooden veranda seems designed for me to tilt back their chairs and prop their feet on the porch railing.

An outdoor lawn swing is shaded by a large oak tree. The jagged, rocky peaks tower all around this natural bowl. In the distance is Chimney Rock with its fire look-out. Pioneers, which included relatives on both sides of the Wertz family, took compass sightings from this peak before a trail was cut westward.

School ran from March to October since children in that general area had to come sometimes as far as three miles on foot, and the mountain trails and roads were high impassable during the winter. The Wertzses firmly believe the best insurance policy is a good education, so the girls had to go to school even when the younger daughter was the only one of the 13 pupils attending. This was Climax District 13, one of the oldest county school districts.

Regular Drill Teacher

"We had a regular drill teacher for a schoolma'am," the older daughter remarked. "When the assistant county school superintendent made her first inspection of the small one-room school house



AMATEUR GARDENER — Mrs. Lester Wertz straightens a small section of chicken wire fence at the back of her rocky behind her farm home surrounded by 160 acres of high meadowland. A former schoolteacher and a woman of many interests, Mrs. Wertz keeps busy at her farming, gardening, rock hunting and just enjoying mother nature. She said she wouldn't know what to do down in town if she had to live there all the time.

she listed a number of things the teacher should do to bring the school up to standard. Our teacher waited until the county official was all through, then erased her writing from the blackboard and continued with spelling drill."

To continue the girls' education, the Wertzses purchased a home in Central Point so their two daughters could live there while attending school. Relatives took turns chaperoning them.

The girls went on to what was then Southern Oregon Normal school in Ashland, now Southern Oregon college. They would hike home for weekends often bringing class notes with them. Then the family and guests would ride out to salt the cattle. A Sunday horseback ride is still the favorite family recreation.

Hike in Mountains
Mrs. Wertz likes to hike around the mountains gathering beautiful stones and is quite a rock hound as her large collection of crystal-like rocks indicates. When she works around the house she likes to look out at the mountain meadows where the red and white Hereford cattle form a picturesque scene against the backdrop of lush green mountain grass, jagged peaks and clear blue sky. She has cut many windows into the walls so she can always look out on the ever-changing picture of nature.

The house is as neat as a pin and is comfortably furnished. Large pictures of various landscapes are on all walls including the one by the bathtub. A wood stove in the kitchen helps heat the house. They read by kerosene lamps.

Mrs. Wertz's schoolma'am habits stay with her. She has a small blackboard in her kitchen where she writes in a firm, clearly legible hand her duties and needs for the day. Everything is spotless. Even on the day she left early for the state Grange meeting in Roseburg things were in impeccable order.

Grange Important
Grange is important to Mrs. Wertz. When the mountain road is impassable due to winter weather she climbs on her tractor and drives eight miles down the steep road to her daughter's house, then takes the car. Often she returns near midnight and slowly edges back up the mountain road on the tractor. One time going down the mountain she had to ford an icy creek and became stuck. Her husband helped her on her way again.

Of the total of 1,990 acres in the Wertz holdings, 75 acres of the farmland is irrigated. This includes the old Bybee place eight miles below the home place. This mountain meadow land produces an average of 4,700 bales of wild timothy and vetch.

Wertz figures he gets 1 1/2 to 2 tons an acre. Due to the gently sloping land, the veteran farmer gets better drainage on his "sticky" or gumbo type of soil. This means more clover and timothy.

On his overall acreage both in the highlands and down below he raises Herefords. He prefers Herefords because he says they can range for themselves while Black Angus do better in fenced pasture land which doesn't require such hardness.

The Wertzses firmly believe that the mountain thunder-

Summer Accidents Subject of Program

"Summer Accidents" will be the topic of the Adventurers in Medicine television program sponsored by the Jackson County Tuberculosis and Health association at 3 o'clock this afternoon over Station KJBS-TV.

The series of bi-weekly programs is presented in cooperation with the Jackson County Medical Society.

Appearing Sunday on the panel will be Dr. Laurel G. Case, general practitioner, Dr. H. L. Boehnke, pediatrician, and Dr. Jack Ingram, ear, nose and throat specialist.

Actual photographs, x-rays, charts, and other visual aids will be employed by the physicians to illustrate and emphasize the many hazards existing around every household, posing a constant threat to the safety of the family, and especially to small children.

Film Announced for Gold Hill Methodist

Gold Hill - "Saturation Point" will be the title of a film that will be shown during Church school at Gold Hill Community Methodist church today at 9:45 a.m.

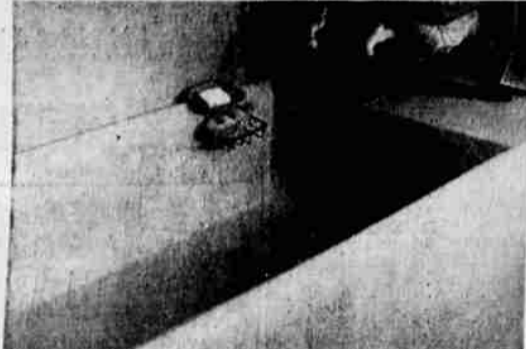
The Rev. O. L. Kendal, pastor of the church will present the sermon message at 11 a.m. The Intermediate Methodist Youth Fellowship group will recess for the summer. The Senior MYF will recess during the month of June.

instance, the once large, beautiful Applegate farms have been divided and redivided in recent years.

When Wertz bought his original 160 acres of mountain farm land he bought it from Jackson county for \$1 an acre. In the early days, he couldn't sell the mountain timber on his land for 50 cents a thousand board feet. Now lumbermen are clamoring for all the timber they can get. Much more timber is to come out of the alpine farmland above the Rogue valley. Most of the hardwood trees are untouched.

This is the land which paid for college educations for the two girls, paid for the purchase of the old Bybee place down below and has provided comfortable, active later years for the pioneering couple.

One daughter is married to the supervising engineer of the forest service at Corvallis. The other has returned to teaching in spite of the fact her husband is a successful farmer.



LOG BATHTUB—Lester Wertz made this bathtub by cutting down a cedar tree and hollowing out the trunk. The tub was made during the depression when regular bathtubs were too expensive for many rural families. The Wertz family refused to bathe in a washtub so this was the solution. The hollowed out tree trunk is slightly larger than many modern tubs and looks as good. The other end is slanted so when the two Wertz girls were little they could soap it good and slide into the water. Mr. and Mrs. Wertz still use it although some friends have been urging them to donate it to the Jacksonville museum.



EVERYBODY SING! — Three generations gather around the piano in the Wertz mountain ranch home as Mrs. Lester Wertz plays some favorite family tunes. From left, young Lester Hill, his mother, Mrs. Otis Hill, Mrs. Wertz, Lester Wertz and his granddaughter, Judy Hill, 13.



SALTING CATTLE—Lester Wertz, about 70, rides his horse around his Herefords scattering salt from a bag. Assisting him is his grandson, 11-year-old Lester Hill. The picture was taken up on the high mountain ranch recently. Wertz grazes about 200

Herefords on his high mountain ranchland and on the old Bybee place which he owns in partnership with his son-in-law Otis Hill, the boy's father. The spread totals almost 2,000 acres.

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(2) Cat D-7s, 17A Series and 3T Series w/Dozers, PCUs. One new 56.
(3) Allis Chalmers HD-20H.

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STAR GAZER
By CLAY R. POLLAN
Your Daily Activity Guide
According to the Stars
To develop message for Sunday, read words corresponding to numbers of your Zodiac birth sign.

ARIES 21	24-27-33-41	54-60-81-84	1 Something	31 First	61 Personal
TAURUS 21	24-27-33-41	54-60-81-84	2 You	32 By	62 Unexpected
MAY 21	24-27-33-41	54-60-81-84	3 Everything	33 Be	63 A
JUNE 21	24-27-33-41	54-60-81-84	4 Build	34 From	64 Creative
JULY 21	24-27-33-41	54-60-81-84	5 Put	35 Logs	65 Develop
AUG 21	24-27-33-41	54-60-81-84	6 Make	36 Push	66 As
SEPT 21	24-27-33-41	54-60-81-84	7 Seem	37 Be	67 You
OCT 21	24-27-33-41	54-60-81-84	8 Refuse	38 Your	68 Events
NOV 21	24-27-33-41	54-60-81-84	9 Lip	39 To	69 From
DEC 21	24-27-33-41	54-60-81-84	10 Evening	40 May	70 Better
JAN 21	24-27-33-41	54-60-81-84	11 Invitations	41 Some	71 Interests
FEB 21	24-27-33-41	54-60-81-84	12 To	42 Much	72 Now
MAR 21	24-27-33-41	54-60-81-84	13 A	43 Brick	73 Meet
APR 21	24-27-33-41	54-60-81-84	14 You	44 Due	74 Expected
MAY 21	24-27-33-41	54-60-81-84	15 Did	45 Hear	75 Delay
JUNE 21	24-27-33-41	54-60-81-84	16 Security	46 Prepared	76 Way
JULY 21	24-27-33-41	54-60-81-84	17 Good	47 You'll	77 Today
AUG 21	24-27-33-41	54-60-81-84	18 Friends	48 Through	78 You
SEPT 21	24-27-33-41	54-60-81-84	19 Be	49 See	79 And
OCT 21	24-27-33-41	54-60-81-84	20 Want	50 Your	80 Know
NOV 21	24-27-33-41	54-60-81-84	21 Matter	51 Things	81 Personal
DEC 21	24-27-33-41	54-60-81-84	22 Brick	52 Not	82 Light
JAN 21	24-27-33-41	54-60-81-84	23 You	53 For	83 Projects
FEB 21	24-27-33-41	54-60-81-84	24 Bound	54 Private	84 Matters
MAR 21	24-27-33-41	54-60-81-84	25 Yourself	55 To	85 Situations
APR 21	24-27-33-41	54-60-81-84	26 Progress	56 Contrary	86 Today
MAY 21	24-27-33-41	54-60-81-84	27 To	57 Dealings	87 Slightly
JUNE 21	24-27-33-41	54-60-81-84	28 Accomplish	58 Those	88 Now
JULY 21	24-27-33-41	54-60-81-84	29 In	59 In	89 Opposition
AUG 21	24-27-33-41	54-60-81-84	30 Bulling	60 On	90 Opposition

Good (G) Adverse (A) Neutral (N)

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