

FIRES REPORTED

Salem—Seven small new forest fires were reported to the state forestry department Tuesday. The largest was a five-acre blaze in Douglas county. All were classed as man-caused, and all are reported out.



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Slanted Oil Well Drilling Revealed as Texas Scandal

By PATRICK CONWAY

Austin, Tex.—While the Billie Sol Estes case has been stealing the headlines, a scandal has been building up in East Texas that could make Estes' manipulations look like a tempest in a petty cash box.

This scandal involves the slanted drilling of oil wells. There is no clear indication of how long it has been going on, or how widespread it is, or how much oil has been stolen.

But it involves the East Texas oil field, the biggest in the Western Hemisphere, the nearby Hawkins field and Webster field. Webster field is southeast of the East Texas field, in Harris county or the city of Houston.

Texas Atty. Gen. Will Wilson estimates the value of the oil stolen from slanted wells is in the millions of dollars.

From 1895 through June 30, 1962, a total of 310,614 oil

wells were completed in Texas.

Most of them were drilled by the geometric rule that a straight line is the shortest distance between two points; in the case of oil wells, between the surface of the ground and the oil under the ground.

Some oil operators learned how to strike oil even if there was none under the ground they had under lease. They did it by drilling at a slant from their leases until they tapped pools under nearby leases.

This is slanted or deviated drilling. Wilson has cut off some 500 wells in East Texas from pipelines because they are on leases that contain slant-drilled wells.

According to Wilson, there are other forms of skulduggery in the fields. One is the "granddaddy well." It is a producing well tied in by plastic pipes to a number of dry holes.

The dry holes draw oil from the "granddaddy well" and are thus made to look like producers. The reason for this is that there is a legal production quota for every oil well.

Legally, only the "granddaddy well" has a quota. But by attaching it to dry holes, the crooked operator multiplies the production of the "granddaddy" by the number of dry holes he has it attached to.

He uses plastic pipe because metal detecting devices cannot detect it.

Another form of crookedness is to make a marginal well out of a good oil well by choking it. A marginal well produces less than 20 barrels of oil a day but it can legally produce every day in the year.

On the other hand, a well that produces more than 20 barrels a day can produce illegally only eight days a month. It often pays to have a marginal well.

The East Texas field contains 19,116 wells that produce 120,000 barrels of crude oil a day. At the current price of \$3.10 a barrel, this totals \$372,000 a day. Almost 4,000 of the wells are classified as marginal.

The Texas Railroad commission started a secret investigation of slanted hole drilling last January. As the investigation grew and the knowledge of it became public, 30 Texas Rangers and Department of Public Safety Intelligence men and patrolmen were sent to guard the East Texas wells.

Wilson thought a guard necessary to keep crooked operators from plugging wells with cement and preventing their being checked for an illegal slant.

Survey crews began to find slanted wells; the total discovered is 77 and the investigation is proceeding. Wilson has filed suits totaling \$20 million against operators of slanted wells.

So far, no tests have been made on property under lease by major oil companies. The major companies have, in fact, contributed to an attorney general's fund to investigate wells operated by small, independent companies.

This does not please independent operators. G. H. (Pappy) Yoachum, a leading Kilgore, Tex., independent operator, has protested the "strong-arm methods" in the investigation.

"Evidence of possible collusion between certain monopolistic interests and certain state agencies is continuing to accumulate," he said.

Yoachum said major oil companies are the worst slanted hole drilling offenders. He and three other independent operators and a company they own have appealed to U.S. Atty. Gen. Robert Kennedy to investigate the major oil companies for possible violation of anti-trust laws.

The operators also have sued the majors for \$10 million.

Oil kept Gregg, Upshur, Rusk, Smith and Cherokee counties in East Texas from feeling the full impact of the great depression in the 1930s.

Now, the slanted hole drilling investigation threatens to plunge the area into depression while the rest of the country lives in prosperity.

Hundreds of oil workers are out of jobs. The state is losing thousands of dollars in taxes and the situation may get worse.

Hedrick Students To Attend Meeting

A meeting will be held for all students entering the seventh grade at Hedrick Junior High school Friday, Sept. 7, from 9:30 to 11 a.m.

Students will receive books, schedules, and lockers, meet their teachers, see their classrooms, and have an opportunity to ask questions at that time.

Students who will be new to the school should attend the meeting, as well as seventh graders. Registration should be done as soon as possible.

For students in the Lone Pine, Howard, West Side, and Wilson areas the bus schedule will be that normally in operation for the 8 a.m. schedule at Hedrick Junior High school. For the orientation meeting, the busses will operate one hour later than the usual time, school officials said.

Two Women Killed In Gresham Accident

Gresham—Two unidentified women died Wednesday in a collision between a car and a log truck. The injured truck driver was tentatively identified as Walter Vanberg.



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