

## ALONG NATURE'S TRAIL

By KEN McLEOD

I have touched upon the erosion menace as an important factor in the field of conservation. This is a subject with which the majority of our people have much concern because of the vast amount of publicity that has been accorded to the subject. The catastrophic aspect of erosion is popular with present day writers, because it leads to spectacular and dramatic stories—truly great gullies are eating away good soils in many parts of the United States and they do need public attention drawn to them; this in turn will awaken public concern over the dangers that exist in excessive erosion and lead

to public knowledge of the causes that create the growing menace of accelerated soil erosion.

Erosion, without doubt, is a serious problem to the economic life of our Nation and to many parts of the world. In the United States it has been estimated that nearly five hundred thousand acres of productive land is lost each year due to the forces of erosion. Five hundred thousand acres of farm lands is quite a sizable area, over twice the size of the land surface now being irrigated in the Klamath Basin and almost equal to the total area that can be developed in this section if all arable land could be brought under irrigation by extensive reclamation development.

It will take many years to build up such an extensive area of productive land. Mother Nature wipes this much productive land away each year in her erosion processes which have been aided by the thoughtless acts of man. Erosion therefore becomes a serious problem which will require consideration and study, but like all other problems of the soil, the study of erosion has long been neglected. Lessons of the past are not always taken to heart by agriculturalists and so we find today that many farmers in the Great Plains Region apparently have forgotten the lesson taught by Mother Nature during the drought period of the thirties when their area earned the title of being the "Dust Bowl" of the nation.

As a consequence, lest these farmers be careful there will again be soil blowing, wind erosion of the soil, during the periods of drought that are sure to come again to the region as it has now come to Texas. Another period of very low farm prices will almost certainly be accompanied by serious soil erosion.

But not all spectacular erosion is caused by man's occupation of the land, much of it is the perfectly normal result of Mother Nature's process of mountain building and the wearing away of the mountains, a ceaseless action that has been going on now for some two billion of years in the history of the earth.

Likewise, due to the great scheme of things in Nature, not all erosion is harmful—in fact, we must depend upon the forces of erosion as an essential part of the formation of productive soils. One can not stop erosion. Some phases might be partially checked for a period of years but eventually the slow relentless forces of nature will prevail regardless of the wishes or desires of man. Consequently man's best efforts should not be wasted in fighting a battle in which the odds are stacked against him which is truly the case when he attempts to halt all forms of erosion. But rather he may have some hope in studying the forces of erosion and with the knowledge gained of the forces he can apply measures of control. Thus man can work with Nature and her forces, rather than wasting his efforts in working against natural forces.

When we speak of erosion, our thoughts usually turn to pictures of the spectacular examples that writers on conservation topics so dearly like to use as examples of destruction. Actually, however, of the erosion forces that are at least conspicuous to the casual observer can be even more harmful than the catastrophic examples. The effect of the removal of the surface soil horizons, or layers, by the forces of erosion varies with the soil type. A productive soil with a massive clay pan, or hard-pan, at eighteen inches may be severely damaged by the removal of six to twelve inches of the surface soil; whereas, a soil with a deep, friable profile may not be influenced at all provided the process of erosion is stopped short of gully-ing.

In fact, the more serious erosion injuries to the soil are not chemical—that is, the loss of plant nutrients, but the really serious factor comes through the change of the soil structure—the loss of the crumb-like surface horizons and the exposure of massive clays, hard-pans or even solid rock.

## Man Kills Indian Wife

ROSEBURG (AP) — Burt Owens told state police he shot and killed his full-blooded Choctaw Indian wife Tuesday while his four children were playing nearby. Officer Holly Holcomb said the shooting at Owens' home in the Riddle area, climaxed a long dispute between Owens, 45, and his wife Betty Jean, about 30.

Owens shot his wife as she was sitting in a rocking chair on the porch of their home, Holcomb said. Mrs. Owens' sister, Willie Woolsey, reported she had witnessed the shooting.

Holcomb said Owens had filed divorce proceedings against his wife last week and that they had been in Roseburg earlier in the day to arrange a property settlement.

Mrs. Owens returned home with her sister. Owens went to the home of a half-brother, M. L. Kirkendall, and borrowed a shotgun, killed his wife, and then returned the gun to the brother, Holcomb reported.

Owens then drove to nearby Canyonville where he turned himself in to police.

In his divorce complaint, filed Aug. 17, Owens contended that his wife once fired a rifle at him, narrowly missing him and their 3-year-old son.

The Owens' two children, and two of Owens' by a previous marriage, were being cared for by neighbors.

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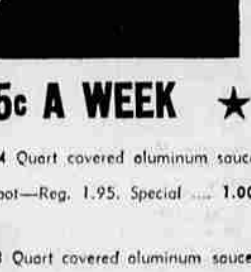
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