



IT IS RUGGED COUNTRY up where the Christmas trees grow on the 5,000 acre Ken-Dell ranch out of Tennant. This picture was taken high on the hill above the ranch headquarters in mid-November during a tour of the operation. The road winds its way through the timber to the 6,500 foot level where thinning operations are currently being carried out.

## Christmas Trees Are Big Business Now

By PEGGY WALSH

DUNSMUIR — In selecting a Christmas tree whose shiny ornaments will reflect in the eyes of his children on Christmas Day, the average purchaser does not realize the tree has been an object of tender care for as long as 15 years before it reached the sales lot.

It is not a matter of chance that a tree is green and fragrant. The whims of nature are not conducive to symmetrical growth of a tree with one needle-covered tip just waiting for the Christmas lights or angel.

At the Ken-Dell ranch in northern Siskiyou County, Christmas tree production has become a science. Kenneth Bishop of Los Angeles and his partner, Del Reynolds of Montague, now assure their wholesale buyers a 100 per cent marketable shipment of trees within an established price range.

The Ken-Dell operation was explained to foresters, conservationists, timber holding interests and educators in all-day session at the ranch in mid-November. Both the cache yards where grading and sizing is done and the cutting operations were toured by about 30 men.

A system of Christmas tree farming, contract cutting and

### DIRECT CONTACT

AUSTIN, Tex. (UPI) — An official of the American Medical Association tells this story:

The man on the phone asked the nurse about a patient named McGowan. "His operation was a success," she replied, "his fever is down, he'll be eating in two days and will be released next week. Who is this calling?" The man replied: "This is McGowan. Nobody tells me what's going on around here."

grading has been developed with the help of forest experts, conservationists and a "great deal of trial and error," Bishop told the group.

Public fancy now leans toward the red fir, popularly known as silvertip because of the gray-green new growth at the end of each branch. Color, stem, taper, fullness and even needle-length must meet the demands of what the housewife thinks in terms of interior decoration for the holiday season.

Silvertip thickets above the 6,500 foot elevation on the 5,000 acre Ken-Dell ranch, 30 miles north of Weed, have been thinned so each tree has a six foot growing base. A standard of 1,240 trees per acre has been set for maximum growth of top-grade trees. These trees are pruned and "shocked" to develop uniformly thick whorls of branches. The "shock" is a slash along the side of the trunk which delays the growth and prevents development of a tall, spindly specimen.

Once a growth area is developed, tree harvesting begins. At least 20 per cent of the foliage on the stump is retained and pruned to provide one upthrusting branch. A new tree grows from the old stump in three to five years. The Ken-Dell ranch counts on a 100 tree per acre harvest for the next 100 years from this method.

Christmas trees and timber grow on mountainsides in complimentary fashion, Bishop told his guests. Timber provides wind protection for the Christmas trees and the shorter growth of the Christmas trees allow sunshine and light to reach the developing timber. Bishop said he refused to allow loggers to cut over his land unless they would agree to preserve the Christmas tree stands.

Uniformed nature lovers envision waste in the destruction of unused Christmas trees. Some even deplore the use of Christmas trees at all. They do not realize the

orderly growth and harvesting of Christmas trees is actually a conservation measure and every tree that leaves his mountainside has fulfilled a purpose in nature, Bishop explained.

The trees are harvested by contracts let to "gyppos," a colloquial term for small timber contractors.

"We used to contract on a footage basis," Bishop said, "but we got a lot of trash trees. Now we have a premium tree incentive basis of pay. The trees are graded into four categories; diamond label, gold label, red label and green label. When a perfect tree reaches the cache yard, it is given a diamond label and the contractor is properly tallied. The procedure continues for the not-quite perfect gold label tree and the standard red label tree. Returns to the contractors are on the basis of increased pay for better trees. Nothing is paid the contractor for the green label tree. These are sold in lots to jobbers or converted into greenery for wreaths and other decorative uses."

"There is only one diamond label tree to a truckload," Bishop concluded, adding there is a great

deal even to tree handling. "A gold label tree may be green label by the time it reaches the yard but with the incentive method a larger percentage of trees each year are gold label trees." Returns from green label trees go into pruning for stand improvements.

Ken-Dell tree graders are women and they've learned the skill through practice. Marian Tassie of Mount Hebron works in sub-freezing weather in the cache yards during October and November but says she looks forward to this change in her routine as a ranch wife.

One of Ken-Dell's larger orders this year is for Sears, Roebuck and Company retail stores in California. Graders and sorters were busy filling orders for 10,000 trees as the guests observed the operations. Specific orders for each store are filled from a specially measured and graded cache. The trees are marked with their retail price at the grading area and trunk ends are painted with various colors for identification of each order. The truck driver identifies each store's trees by the painted butt ends of the trees assuring quick, orderly delivery of each order.

The Ken-Dell ranch uses everything but the patch of blue sky from which the mountainside seems to hang. Pruned branches provide a mulch for the developing trees and in the last two years a wreath, spray and centerpiece business has developed as a side line. Mrs. Bishop designs the pieces, a crew of seven women make up the base of the designs at the ranch. These are shipped in bundles to Los Angeles where decorations are added and they are placed in retail outlets. Margaret Knowles of Klamath Falls, is in charge of the door charm, wreath and centerpiece operation. She supervises the work both at the ranch and in Los Angeles and frankly admits she is amazed to

have found a new career after passing 60.

Analysis of equipment, roads and costs has not escaped the Ken-Dell management. The partners have determined that machetes and hand axes are best for pruning, power saws for cutting, bulldozers with fork lifts for handling larger trees and a half track with a man in a bucket crane for specialized cutting. Thirty miles of road have been built in the last 10 years and 50 miles of logging spurs. It costs \$60 an acre to prune a worthless tree thicket and in three years the stand is worth \$500 an acre, Bishop explained.

The climax of the day at the ranch was the tree judging, an annual event. Each contractor in the area had submitted his favorite tree and the top tree for beauty, conformation and color was one cut by Bert Tassie on Ken-Dell developed land.

Judges were Bob Kohn, manager of the Ralph Smith Lumber plant at Mount Shasta; Hans Karstensen of Yreka, U.S. agricultural stabilizer; Lous Frandsen of San Francisco, president of the Southern Pacific Land Company; Rick Kirk of G. R. Kirk Company, Tacoma; Roy Ritchie, resident manager of the Latour State Forest at Redding; Fred Landman, trustee of the R. G. Watt estate, Redding; Ed Anderson of Yreka, soil conservationist; and Leonard Hines, chief forester for International Paper Company at Weed.

### MILK A STANDBY

BURLINGTON, Vt. (UPI)—What was good enough for the 13th century troops of Genghis Khan is good enough for people today, says the University of Vermont dairy department. The department said milk is still the best thirst-quencher and instant dry powder milk will serve well as a substitute. The department noted the soldiers of Genghis Khan had dried milk included in their field rations as far back as the 13th century.

### THE COVER

Ken Bishop, one of the owners of the Ken-Dell Ranch at Tennant, holds a by-product of the Christmas tree industry, a trimmed branch which will find its way into a door charm. The ranch is one of the largest, if not the largest, Christmas tree operations in the country.