

## Ranch News

### RONA MORRIS WORKMAN ROCKING W RANCH

The Rocking W now numbers as well as one of its assets—or liabilities. (More information on that point at some later date.) Every time the Nehalem in flood tore out our spring pipe-line and the Big Boss had to wallow in the icy waters trying to repair the break and I had to dip water out of a rain-barrel or the fish-pool until the river went down enough to get the irrigation pump working, we have vowed we were going to have a well. We always swore the same thing when the spring went dry in the summer.

Several months ago the smaller section of a well-drilling outfit

came into this region and we fell upon them with delight. They came, pounded and sweated and swore for two days, then gave up and said the big section would be here in a week or so and would have to finish it, because their light machinery couldn't make any headway, since in two days they had penetrated into the bosom of Mother Earth only about ten feet.

I have always contended that everything on this earth is useful, but I found out then that a dry ten-foot hole, six inches in diameter, is, next to the politician, the most nearly useless thing in or on earth, so I covered the hole with a board to keep the kittens and the chickens from falling into it and waited for the real-impement for drilling to arrive. Weeks went by, the spring went dry and

and we began to sigh—"for water, cool, clear water." (Nice song. Ever hear it?)

Then one day last week a huge ungainly contraption rattled and snorted across our front lawn—digging nice skid-marks, pulling up to the "politician hole" in the ground and went to work. As we had elected to dig the well about five feet from my kitchen window I got the full impact of every thudding blow, as well as the exhaust. The dishes danced merrily to the outer edge of their shelves and the hanging pots and pans beat a xylophone accompaniment, but it was sweet music to my ears.

Now, what with a river at our door, neighborhood wells that are only twenty-five or thirty feet deep, and streams of water here, there and yonder, we assumed we would hit water very quickly, but decided loftily that we would go down at least fifty feet and have GOOD WATER. Thud, thud, bumpy-bang, rattle and clash, and still the drill went down and down and no water. Forty, fifty, sixty feet, and still no water, while every time the drill took a foot of dirt out of the earth it gouged four dollars out of our bank account. I alternated between picking up broken dishes and figuring up the checking account, and still that drill thundered further and further into the dry earth. One hundred feet. The Big Boss came in and said, "Will it stand it?" I didn't need to ask what he meant by "it," and answered grimly, "Old dear, at a hundred feet something is going to crack pretty soon, either water or the bank account."

Another ten feet and another forty dollars out. The suspense was getting terrific. Two feet more (and eight bucks) then comparative silence outside. I went forth hopefully. The drillers were examining a handful of fine, broken rock-like stuff. Again the

thudding began, then suddenly a trickle of water made its appearance in the depth of the hole. One more foot, then two, and a broad grin creased the old well-driller's face. Water, real honest-to-gosh water, was pouring in, and at such a rate that soon even I could see it ripple and bubble in the narrow earth-cylinder. Saved, saved, in the nick of time. (Where have I read that before?) I shut off the washing machine, left my laundry in the rinse, and galloped joyfully up the hill to tell the Big Boss that we wouldn't have to mortgage the ranch, sell our bonds, nor would I have to take in washing in order to pay for that well. The well was wet before our bank account was dry.

It is interesting to note how many things can go into a well six inches in diameter and one hundred and fifteen feet deep. I figured my new kitchen linoleum, a swagger winter coat and hat, a lot of much-needed farm machinery, and a miscellaneous assortment of odds and ends had disappeared into that hole in the ground. Something like that is always happening on a ranch. I know of one case where a bunch of sick animals swallowed up an entire formal wedding, complete with six bridesmaids and "black-tailed" ushers, along with a high-priced soprano shrieking "O Promise Me." And I recall that four years ago my complete winter outfit became, by some strange mystery of change, an extension on the horse-barn, while the Big Boss' new suit and overcoat turned into a young bull. Right now I am planning upon attending the Northwest Writers' Conference the last of this month and pretending to be a writer. I keep thinking how exciting and interesting I am going to look with a one-hundred-and-fifteen-foot well draped about me, a la sarong, and wearing an electric pump for a hat. I feel I shall really create a sensation.

THE EAGLE, VERNONIA, ORE. THURSDAY, OCTOBER 17, 1946 5

O well, why gripe? That is a part of ranch life. One does, I imagine, get used to it after twenty-five or thirty years.

A new far-northern oil reserve near Point Barrow, Alaska, was explored by Seabees as a war project in 1944.

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