trade. Some exotic breeds are finishing in the 1,600 pound range and those are too large."

However, Powell added, those larger carcasses are being marketed to the Japanese who require more fat and greater marbling.

"I would guess that in time the Japanese will begin looking at the cholesterol issue in the future and demand there will also drift toward leaner carcasses," he said.

Powell said the beef industry is developing an export program that this year "has added a couple of dollars per hundredweight" to feeder calf prices.

"Cattle prices are now close to parity and that is an economic condition which is necessary if the cattle industry is to be a viable industry in this nation," he said. "I would not believe the price of beef would decline into figures much lower than they are now because of strong demand, low numbers and strength of producers, feeders and packers in the industry today. I foresee six to eight years of good to stable prices in the beef market while cow herds are being re-built. Ranchers will keep their replacement heifers, also reducing the available supply in the market, enhancing the ultimate price of the feeder animal."

Agricultural financing also concerns Powell. Commercial banks (holding company banks, in particular) are moving away from agriculture, he said, due to the lack of "experience lending officers and onerous regulations."

"Regulations are demanding almost solely a cash flow requirement rather than adequate equity and character of the borrower before a loan can be made," Powell said. "Those regulations have permeated every end, including PCAs, Federal Land Banks and insurance companys so that if you're unable to achieve an adequate cash flow in any period, your loan becomes severely criticized. This process has limited credit to a great host of young people who would like to go into agriculture and has limited the expansion of currently profitable operations. Those conditions have limited the number of buyers and buyers' ability and in the final analysis reduced value of land."

Survivors in agriculture, Powell believes, will be those agriculture enterprises that have the ability to diversify within agriculture.

"Current income tax laws that implement the passive income features effectively eliminate diversification by agricultural enterprises into other types of non-agricultural business," he said. "That's an aberration of free enterprise and the free market concept and it will hurt the future of capital development in this country. The small producer who is operating on a minimum economical unit today will witness a need to enlarge his operation to generate an increased cash flow to bear the cost of these future onerous regulations. The only part in the economic system that could change that would be for ag commodities to achieve a higher price plateau and maintain it. An increase of 30 percent in commodity prices would need to be realized."

Jimmy and Nancy Powell at their ranch near Fort McKavett, Texas.

Powell said agricultural producers differ from manufacturers in the sense that manufacturers can cover their costs by increasing costs to the consumer but in agriculture, "producers are price-takers and have little ability to become price setters."

The Powell family is involved in numerous ranching operations in West Texas and, besides raising finewool sheep, Powell maintains herds of commercial and registered Herefords. Powell also has a herd of Angus cows in Nebraska and an interest in Wishbone Herefords.

Powell continues to use the same Hereford bloodlines used by his father, Virgil Powell, who died in 1988. Virgil Powell began raising registered Hereford cattle in 1955.

Powell and his wife Nancy reside on their ranch between Eldorado and Menard. The couple has two daughters, Victoria and Lorrie. Powell's mother, Johnnie Dell, resides in San Angelo.□

to suppress fire, overgraze rangeland and disrupt an ecosystem that had developed over millennia.

Ironically, Texans built those reservoirs without realizing that a fundamental ecological shift had reached its zenith during the 1950s drought - a shift that made the very reservoirs built to deal with water shortages less able to do so. During the first half of the 20th century, the process of converting grass-covered savannas to brush-covered rangeland peaked. Seventy-five million acres, or about 80 percent, of Texas rangeland had been invaded by noxious brush (juniper, mesquite, prickly pear, salt cedar) and weeds. Land that had, when covered with grass, absorbed 80 to 90 percent of rainfall was now robbed of 75 to 80 percent by trees and brush. Springs and streams ceased to flow, and thirsty reservoirs failed to receive the expected runoff.

We used the land hard because we could get away with it without having to make too many inconvenient sacrifices. We still can - at least for now, as long as it rains when and where we need it to. The summers of 2005 and 2006 were the latest examples of dodging the bullet. As lakes in even normally wet East Texas ebbed, Texans began to face the unpleasant fact that they might have to change their wasteful ways. Texas faced a serious water crisis.

And then it rained.
And rained, and rained.
Lakes that had been empty filled. Some overflowed.
And we went back to using water like it would never run out.

The United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service estimates that brush in Texas uses about 10 million acre-feet of water annually. In comparison, total human use in the state amounts to about 15 million acre-feet. The obvious answer to the state's water supply problems, at least in part, is to transfer water use from brush to people, but that is no simple task.

Somewhere around 95 percent of the land in Texas is privately owned. Solving the problem of public water supply inevitably means working with private landowners, if for no other reason than the fact that most rain falls on land privately rather than publicly owned.

Brush control is not the answer to everyone's water problem, but for some people it is the only answer. Mort Mertz and his son Michael ranch around San Angelo in the Concho River watershed on land that has been in the family for three generations. Mort saw brush invade their land, and he's now seeing the results of removing that brush. "Brush became a problem after World War II," he says. "After we started clearing brush, creeks started running that had not flowed in the last 25 years."

"If you don't have something sucking water out of the soil, where can it go except into the water table?" asks Michael Mertz. "We want to improve our property, and at the same time we are benefiting wildlife habitat. I don't mind spending the money if my land grows more forage and has water.

Brush removal helps increase the water supply for people in cities, and that's a major plus."

Jimmy and Nancy Powell also ranch near San Angelo, and like the Mertzes they see brush removal as benefiting not only their land but also thousands of people who will never set foot on the place. Powell laces his conversation with factoids that convince listeners he's studied the problem from every angle. "I've calculated that with 18 inches of rainfall, and all the land in the Concho watershed in grasses, that would produce enough water to fill an 11,000-acre lake 60 feet deep every year - and that's enough to meet the water needs of San Angelo," he says.

"There is no immediate payback for brush control," Powell adds. "In 10 to 12 years you will, if you maintain the land properly and keep the brush off, have an immense return. But you have to maintain an investment program and have good grazing rotation to keep the grasses."

Powell sees brush control in a historical context. "We have a different set of problems than early settlers had," he points out. "They had to tame a wild country. Our problem is to deal with the changes to the landscape that followed settlement, such as overgrazing and brush encroachment. It is our obligation to find a way to solve the problem."

On the eastern edge of the Edwards Plateau, in the Hill Country, finding a way to solve the problem is made more difficult by fragmentation of land into smaller and smaller pieces. It seems that everyone wants their own piece of the Hill Country, and with raw land prices approaching $5,000 an acre, large tracts get chopped up and sold piecemeal. Leonard Hilliard and his wife, Kathy, bucked that trend by buying three pieces of adjoining property near Fredericksburg, but they are the exception.

"Everybody wants a piece of the Hill Country, and they are loving it to death," says Tom Hammer, who's spent 20 years in the Hill Country with NRCS. "Fortunately, people like Hilliard want to keep the land the way it is or improve it. They want to see the place the way it looked when the first settlers came here."

"In the 1800s soldiers traveling across this country to Fort McKavett described a vast grassland with scattered live oaks and running creeks, and that's what we're trying to get back to," Powell says as he shows us Pecan Creek, a tributary to the South Concho that now flows year-round for the first time in a quarter-century. Monarch butterflies flit across the creek on their way south for the winter, a wild turkey takes wing from a tree at water's edge, and minnows dart across the concrete slab of a low-water crossing. Without the water, none of this would happen. Without brush removal, the water would not be here.

Idyllic as the scene is, the water is only passing through on its way to a lake, where it will nurture a complex web of life before becoming someone's morning cup of coffee in San Angelo. Water, indeed, is the stuff that life is made of. It is also the tie that binds the lives of city dwellers to the lives of

those who tend the land.

Aldo Leopold, the father of modern conservation, wrote: "The practices we now call conservation are, to a large extent, local alleviations of biotic pain. They are necessary, but they must not be confused with cures. The art of land doctoring is being practiced with vigor, but the science of land health is yet to be born."

In the six decades since Leopold wrote those words, that science has been born, it's being practiced in Texas, and the next drought, when it comes, will be less severe, at least for some, because of it.

Working with ranchers are a host of resource and conservation specialists at a variety of levels of government - the land health practitioners Leopold foretold. "When we brush sculpt a place, we maintain wildlife corridors and recharge streams and aquifers," says C.A. Cowsert, NRCS district conservationist in Johnson City. "When you get more grass cover, the rainfall is filtered. You don't get as much runoff, and what does run off is good, clear water."

Grass roots delve deep into the soil, holding it in place and providing a pathway for water to percolate deep into the earth. Flood events become less frequent and less severe. Equally dramatic is what happens in the unseen underground. "The water level in some of our wells rose 80 feet, even before the rains in 2007," says Todd Bannert, ranch foreman for Jimmy Powell.

Vaden Aldridge, NRCS district conservationist in Eldorado, gets excited when he sees native grasses coming back to a pasture after it's been cleared. "The seeds are there, they just need an opportunity to breathe," he says, pointing out little bluestem, vine mesquite, Halls panicum, sideoats grama and other grasses in one of the Mertz pastures. "It opens up a whole new world when you take the brush off."

Educating landowners to what the possibilities are is a big job of the modern conservation scientist - some things have not changed since Aldo Leopold's day. "The daily challenge for us is, ranchers say, 'It's green out there, I'm going to buy some more cows,'" says George Clendenin, NRCS conservationist in San Angelo. "We really need to educate them so the next time it's green, they can make an informed decision. They need to have a grazing plan and stock conservatively to prepare for the next drought.

"By making healthy upland areas, you are also making healthy riparian areas," Clendenin continues. "In the past we did not put a lot of emphasis on riparian areas, but now we understand their importance, and they are as big a part of a management plan as upland areas."

Through the Continuous Conservation Reserve Program, NRCS helps landowners establish buffer zones. Brush is not cleared from these streamside areas, and they must be protected from grazing for 10 to 15 years, but they can be used for recreation and hunting. "Selective brush

clearing as part of an overall plan is important. While it may be beneficial to selectively clear upland sites, it is equally beneficial to selectively leave brushy motts and wooded sites along creeks and draws," Clendenin points out.

Ryland Howard and his mother, Edith Boulware, manage the Head of the River Ranch near Christoval, and they have established riparian buffers along a mile and a half of the South Concho River. "It took a lot of our land out of grazing, but our philosophy has always been to take care of the land and preserve the springs that are there," he explains. "There is no question that removing water-using brush results in more aquifer recharge and stronger stream flow."

"All these programs are totally voluntary," points out Melony Sikes, an NRCS program manager in San Angelo whose passion is managing riparian areas. "Ranchers are not doing it for financial gain - they're doing it because it's good for the resource. The offsite benefits to the public are tremendous, and there is nothing prettier than a pasture full of grass that comes right up to a flowing creek."

Calvin Hartmann, his wife, Sonja, and his sister, Sally, operate the Rosa Ranch, a 3,000-acre jewel of a place near Johnson City. Buffalo Spring spurts from the base of a cliff on the place, feeding Buffalo Creek, a major tributary of the Pedernales River, part of the Colorado River system that supplies water to Austin and other cities. Hartmann, who is retired, spends his days pushing brush and caring for the 130 or so cows on the ranch. "My dad had a ranch, and managing the land was something we always did," he says. "We tried to help the wildlife by providing more food for them. I'm convinced that brush control helps streams flow. I've cleared 500 acres the last three years, and Buffalo Spring is really flowing. It never stopped during the last two dry summers."

Tropical Storm Erin is dumping heavy rain on us as we sit on the porch of the century-old ranch house, pounding on its tin roof. I ask Hartmann why he works so hard to send water down the Pedernales to people who will never know he's alive. He ponders for a bit before answering, as if embarrassed by what he's about to say. His answer, when it comes, gives me hope that Texas will solve its water problems: "I just love the land."

Maybe I'm a hopeless romantic, but I really do believe that love will conquer all - even cedar, mesquite, salt cedar and prickly pear.

Details

- Natural Resources Conservation Service (www.nrcs.usda.gov/)
- Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board (www.tsswcb.state.tx.us/brushcontrol)
- Lower Colorado River Authority (www.lcra.org/community/conservation/creekside.html)
- Upper Colorado River Authority (www.ucratx.org/)
- Texas Water Matters Project (www.texaswatermatters.org/)

Brush Strokes

Not all brush is created equal, nor will clearing brush yield the same benefits in all parts of the state. Brush removal generally yields the greatest benefits where Ashe juniper ("cedar") is thickest, soils are thin and underlain by porous rock and rainfall is at least 18 inches per year. That pretty much describes much of the Edwards Plateau and West Texas, and that's where brush control efforts in Texas are concentrated.

In addition to using water itself - a 10-foot mesquite tree can use up to 20 gallons per day, a salt cedar even more - brush traps much water before it ever reaches the ground, allowing it to evaporate. Leaf litter beneath brush keeps more water from entering the soil. Cedar traps an average of 73 percent of the rain that falls; live oaks 46 percent; grass 14 percent. Put another way, cedar allows only 27 percent of rainfall to be put to use, while grass makes 86 percent available to grow plants, recharge aquifers and keep streams, springs and faucets flowing.

A study conducted by the Upper Colorado River Authority on the effects of brush removal on water yield of the North Concho watershed concluded that removing 95 percent of the brush in the watershed would result in an additional 33,515 acre-feet of water supply - more than the city of San Angelo uses annually.

Ranchers who clear brush can be reimbursed for up to half the cost through various state and federal programs, and some river authorities also offer financial aid. Costs for brush removal range from about $90 to as high as $175 per acre, so the investment for ranchers can be considerable and take years to recover. Their payoff comes in reduced feeding costs and increased grazing capacity - stocking rates can double on cleared land because it produces more grass. Many ranchers remove only a third to half of the brush, leaving the rest for wildlife habitat.

"Brush control is not a permanent fix," notes Vaden Aldridge, NRCS district conservationist in Eldorado. "It's a control measure, not an eradication program. You have to stay on top of it each year." Once brush has been cleared, periodic prescribed burns take care of most regrowth. "Proper grazing management (proper livestock stocking rates with planned pasture deferments) along with continuous retreatment are the keys for maintaining healthy rangelands and improving groundwater and surface water resources," Aldridge says. "Poor range management following brush control can offset the work that has been done. Improving herbaceous cover and maintaining that cover is the key."

Brush removal is expensive, but it is the most cost-effective way to increase water supply. Melissa Grote, a conservation planner for the Pedernales Soil and Water Conservation District, cites figures from a study done by the Lower Colorado River Authority in 2000.

"The average cost to yield water by brush control in the Pedernales watershed is $16.41 per acre-foot," she says. "The cost per acre-foot of constructing and operating an aquifer storage and recovery system is $839." In most West Texas watersheds, the cost of additional water from brush control runs from $40 to $100 per acre-foot. At the high end of that range, that's only $0.0003 per gallon.

Benjamin Franklin said, "When the well is dry, we know the worth of water." The Texans who came before us built a great civilization based on cheap and plentiful water. What happens next is up to us.

"Unlike most other states, we control our own destiny when it comes to the future of water in Texas," says former TPWD executive director Robert L. Cook. "For all practical purposes, the following rivers and their tributaries start in Texas and flow totally through Texas to reach the Gulf of Mexico: the Devils, the Nueces, the Frio, the Sabinal, the Guadalupe, the Blanco, the San Antonio, the Lavaca, the Navidad, the Concho, the San Saba, the Llano, the Colorado, the Brazos, the Trinity, the Sulphur, the Neches and the Sabine. These are our rivers - the lifeblood of Texas - our water supply. If they get messed up or abused, it is our own fault. If they are well-managed and conserved, and if they continue to supply our vast state with an abundance of fresh, clean water for centuries to come, it will be because we made the decisions and took the actions necessary to ensure their continued health and productivity.

"We cannot control when, where or how much it rains. However, we can stop wasting water, we can protect our water supply and we can provide for our state's future water needs if we will properly manage the rangelands and the wildlife habitat of Texas. We can do it. Get involved."

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SAN ANGELO STANDARD-TIMES

SAN ANGELO, TEXAS, TUESDAY MORNING, DECEMBER 6, 1966 • SECTION B

Astronaut Borman Fails To Get Shot He Wants

By JIM BATTEN
Standard-Times Staff Writer

ELDORADO — U. S. Astronaut Frank Borman didn't get the shot he was waiting for Monday.

The shot had nothing to do with the U. S. space program — the one he's after will down a Schleicher County deer. The Air Force colonel is here with his family — boys aged 13 and 15 and his wife — as guests of Jimmy Powell, Schleicher County ranchman.

It's one of those infrequent vacations astronauts are allowed and Borman said it's been wonderful to take a break from the fast pace of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, r e l a x and hunt.

The Borman family came to Eldorado Sundy night. Borman was out bright and early Monday to hunt for a deer. Later Borman spoke to the Eldorado High School student body and toured El Dorado Woolen Mills.

"We had a couple (shots) but I'd better not tell about that or I'll be in trouble. You don't talk about the ones that missed and that sort of thing," Borman said when asked if he'd gotten any shots at whitetails.

Although he was in the field Borman couldn't say enough for the hospitality he's been shown here: "This is wonderful country out here. We've had a wonderful time; everyone has been so nice."

For him and his family it was "one of the few vacations I've had and it's a wonderful opportunity to get away with the boys and my wife."

Joe Ed Spencer of El Dorado Woolen Mills said Borman told him "really and truly he just slipped off for a couple of days."

But even on a trip to West Texas, Borman can't get far away from what the U. S. is doing in space. People won't let him.

At the high school assembly program, Borman said he "just tried to give them a little insight into what we've done and mostly answered questions."

He said the questions all were "very intelligent questions. I think youth the world over are very interested in this subject and they are very knowledgeable on it."

But during his tour of the woolen mills, Borman forgot the space race for a while, or forgot it as nearly as an astronaut can, and talked football.

"He got to talking football — he went to Army — and said he wasn't aware that Texans were as football conscious as they are until he moved here," Spencer said. "So we got to talking football rather than the space program."

Spencer said among Eldorado residents who visited with Borman at the mill was Paul Page, a former SMU star who had several friends in common with Borman. That kept the football topic rolling until Borman left for another try at a buck.

Borman's historic flight in space which began a year and two days ago and ended Dec. 18, 1965 reached a speed of 17,500 miles per hour. He said the orbit around the moon he hopes to make before the end of the decade will be at about 25,000 miles per hour.

How did he feel after his weightless trip and return from space?

"Of course, it was a successful mission — what we'd been striving for — and it was great!"

That mission was a success. But Borman's mission here — arranged by Wes Hooper of Austin, was to get a deer. And so far, that stage of the mission hasn't been completed.

So he'll try again this morning before returning to Houston to work in the Apollo program.

COL. FRANK BORMAN
. . . Astronaut deer hunter

Business Leaders Learn Of Research

Standard-Times News Service

FORT McKAVETT—Two Texas congressmen, a state legislator and numerous West Texas business leaders and ranchmen met near here Sunday to learn about research being done in natural fibers and brush eradication.

Rep. W. R. (Bill) Poage of Waco and O. C. Fisher of San Angelo, along with State Sen. Dorsey B. Hardeman, got a first hand look at brush eradication work being done on the James L. Powell ranch. They also heard of advanced research being done in blending cotton and wool fibers, use of dura-press and treatments of wool and mohair fibers to stop shrinkage.

Special guests were Dr. Harold Lundgren, director of the U. S. Department of Agriculture's research laboratory at Albany, Calif., and Jordan A. Tartikoff, production development manager for the Koratron Co., Inc. of San Francisco.

Lundgren, considered one of the world's top authorities in wool and mohair fiber research, gave a brief program on what the USDA's Albany laboratory is doing to aid the wool and mohair industry in product development.

"We call ourselves hair-splitters," Lundgren equipped. "And we mean this literally."

He said wool and mohair fibers undergo the most rigid tests conceived by man in the Albany laboratory, including such tests as sound vibrations created by rubbing fibers together in a specially designed machine, complete X-ray examination, tests on absorbtion, moisture and other characteristics.

Lundgren was developer of the WURLAN process for wool, making it machine washable. Since the process was developed on a commercial basis, production of the especially treated wool has been running about 3 million yards of material per year. He is now working on a WURLAN II process, which will allow wool to be permanently pressed.

Tartikoff told ranch guests about the Koratron treatment developed for dura-press of cotton and blends of other fabrics.

He said the company's original patent on the process was recently extended. Most of the major clothing manufacturers in the United States are licensed to use the Koratron process.

Both Lundgren and Tartikoff will be in Lubbock today for conferences with Texas Tech textile department officials, businessmen, and cotton, wool and mohair industry leaders. Conference discussions will center around future research, development of natural fiber fabrics and the manufacturing of such fabrics.

"We believe these new fiber blends and treatments will be a great help in boosting the natural fiber industry of the Southwest," Lundgren said.

Prior to the discussion of fiber research, the congressmen, Hardeman and others were given a tour of brush eradication work being carried out on the ranch.

Powell, along with Norman Sachnik, president of the Ranch Engineering and Development Corp. of San Angelo, explained the use of the company's new chemical herbicide, and showed visitors results achieved on the ranch during the last two years of tests. The company also has test plots throughout West Texas and on the South Plains.

Among the special guests for the meeting were members of the board of directors of El Dorado Woolens, Inc., officials of the Texas Sheep & Goat Raisers Association, Charlie Scurggs, editor of the Progressive Farmer Magazine, Scott Poage, brother of the congressman and Central Texas ranchman, Houston Harte of San Angelo, chairman of the board of Harte-Hanks Newspapers, and Fred Conn, publisher of the San Angelo Standard-Times.

SAN ANGELO STANDARD-TIMES
EDITORIALS
Opinion Page

Brush Control Could Remake West Texas

Brush control is getting increasing attention in this area of the state; as well it might. To that end, the visit of Texas Land Commissioner John C. White to a successful West Texas brush control operation is welcome indeed.

Commissioner White toured the ranch of James L. Powell east of Eldorado Thursday, and announced he was pleased with the brush eradication results he observed. The Powell ranch has been noted as a model in this field, utilizing one of the most modern brush control techniques.

A member of the commissioner's party, Dr. R. E. Patterson, dean of the Texas A&M agriculture department, noted the difficulties and expense of brush eradication and control. "A lot of people are watching this operation from the eradication and cost factors," Dr. Patterson said. "It could mean a lot to the people of Texas."

That it could, should the methods employed by Powell and others be utilized on the grand scale necssary to reclaim the West Texas landscape. But such a task won't be easy, nor will it end with eradication. Proper range management must follow.

All of this will require a great deal of money, for even the cheapest proven methods of brush eradication are costly. The ranchman or farmer, of course, can expect to receive increased yields from acreage so treated and properly cared for. But the entire economy of the region would benefit, too, from a truly massive program of brush eradication.

This is nowhere more dramatically apparent than in the field of water conservation. West Texas brush is a water hog; the lack of significant runoff from recent rains offers discouraging proof of that fact.

Were West Texas brush to be eliminated, and then not allowed to return, the benefits to our precious water supply would be enormous. It is estimated that fully 60 per cent of rainwater falling on Texas is consumed by useless brush and other noxious plants. If only a fraction of this could be transformed into runoff for storage in the system of reservoirs already existing, the economic and recreational benefits could bring about a new day for the entire region.

It is clear that unless research yields spectacular advances, meeting the cost of brush control and its aftermath will present a terrific and perhaps insurmountable obstacle. But the potential is so great that no effort should be spared to find new and cheaper methods — and perhaps some new program whereby West Texas can receive assistance in combating this problem. Money spent in such a cause would pay assured dividends, not only to the farmer and ranchman, but to the city-dweller — and to the entire economy of the state.

ON SCHLEICHER COUNTY RANCH

State, Federal Men Inspect Brush Project

San Angelo Standard-Times

By BILL HINNANT
Standard-Times Staff Writer

ELDORADO — Texas Commissioner of Agriculture John C. White visited the brush control project being carried out on the James L. Powell ranch, about 22 miles east of here, Thursday and said he was impressed with what he saw.

The present method being employed on the Powell ranch involves the use of hormone herbicides, applied in a foam form.

"There are three basic problems to be overcome in this important matter of brush control," the commissioner said. "Can it be used safely? Is it effective? And, is it economical?

"From what I have seen here today, this particular method of control seems to meet the requirements so far."

Several other agriculture officials of the state and the universities of A&M and Texas Tech, state representatives and ASCS committee members from all the state were here to study the project.

Members of Texas A&M University staff here to observe the results of the project were Dr. R. E. Patterson, dean of the agricultural department, and Dr. C. L. Leinweber, head of the range science department at the university.

Dr. Patterson commented that one of the most important things to Texas is to get rid of undesirable brush.

"In order to get rid of brush here, one must destroy the bud growth of mesquite and other brush and also destroy the leaves," he said. "Of course, the roots must be destroyed, too.

"A lot of people are watching this operation, from the eradication and cost factors. It could mean a lot to the people of Texas."

Dr. Patterson said that even with a high degree of success on the Powell project, stockmen and farmers will have to follow the eradication program with good management practices.

A Texas Tech visitor to the project was Dr. Wayland Bennett, assistant dean of the agriculture school. Bennett was accompanied by Richard Hannah, Harvest Queen Mills executive of Plainview.

E. Base Smith of Marble Falls, a member of the state ASCS committee, and Louis David, state executive director of ASCS, of Bryan, were representatives of the federal government present at the inspection.

Other visitors included Bill Pieratt, deputy commissioner of the Texas department of agriculture, and State Rep. Bill Heatly of Paducah, chairman of the House Finance Committee.

Powell, Norman Sachnik of the Range Engineering Development Corp. of San Angelo, and Lowell Davis of Odessa, engineer for the firm, conducted the group over the ranch to acquaint them with the brush control procedure and its results.

Bryan Hunt, Sutton County ranchman on whose ranch a similar project is being conducted, was also a member of the group.

Powell said, "I think one of the important aspects of the trip over the ranch today was the interest shown by the agents of the state and federal government."

Lunch was served to the guests at the Powell ranch home.

VISITORS DISCUSS BRUSH CONTROL — John C. White, left, Texas agriculture commissioner, explains his reaction to rancher James L. Powell and Dr. R. E. Patterson, dean of agriculture department at Texas A&M University to a brush control project on the Powell ranch. About 16 legislators, state officials and ASCS officials examined the project Thursday.

exas Welcome

Howard Derrick of Eldorado, left, welcomes Harry Douglas, North American director of the New Zealand Meat Producers Board, to West Texas. Douglas and his wife, Phyllis, are visiting the Jimmy Powell family in Schleicher County.

AT HOME, IN U.S.

New Zealander Talks Fr

By GARY COATES
Standard-Times Agriculture Editor

The United States isn't the only nation with a meat price freeze, nor is it the only nation in which chemicals have been banned.

Harry C. M. Douglas, North American director of the New Zealand Meat Producers Board, arriving in San Angelo Tuesday for a visit on the Schleicher County ranch of Jimmy Powell reported that a meat price freeze on lamb has been in effect in New Zealand for several months.

"The government set over 1,400 different prices on lamb and mutton cuts," reported Douglas. "It's a very complicated thing," he said.

In setting the freeze, Douglas said the government dropped prices on mutton and lamb two cents a pound. "The government gives the two cents back to the farmer," he continued.

As far as the chemical ban is concerned in New Zealand, it differs slightly from that in the United States in that there are no predators in New Zealand and thus so chemical toxicants used to control predation. However, there is a ban on DDT and other insecticides in New Zealand.

Speaking of the sheep industry in New Zealand, Douglas, reported that the average "farm" is two to three thousand acres in size and is stocked with approximately 1,500 ewes and some beef cattle.

"No pen feeding is done in New Zealand and no additives are used," said the meat board director. "All the fat lambs are range fed, with the majority of them being Hampshire-Southdown crosses," he said.

"Our ranges have a lot of clover on them and are aerially fertilized each year."

According to Douglas, the climate in New Zealand is fairly temperate with the average summer temperature being 70-80 degrees F. "We do get some frost in the winter but very rarely does it snow at sea level. We do get snow in the mountains, of course," said Douglas.

Most of the wool in New Zealand is sold at auction with no subsidy from the government. "Most of our wool is of the medium wool type, with most of it going into carpet production," he reported.

The visiting New Zealander reported that, as in Texas, farmers in New Zealand are short on labor and shearing crews.

"Most of our farms are family run," he reported.

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Reporting that prices o

Range management is key to rancher Powell's success

By JEANNE M. SERIO
Staff Writer

FORT MCKAVETT — Management, plain and simple, has been the secret to Jimmy Powell's success.

Since 1965, when Powell first toured an extension forage program in South Africa, his range management has been a complex, integrated system that has provided profitable returns.

"I toured an extension program in South Africa and saw grass growing on the desert," he said. "It was designed so that water and feed were before livestock at all times, which minimized the energy required to seek food and channeled that energy into gain.

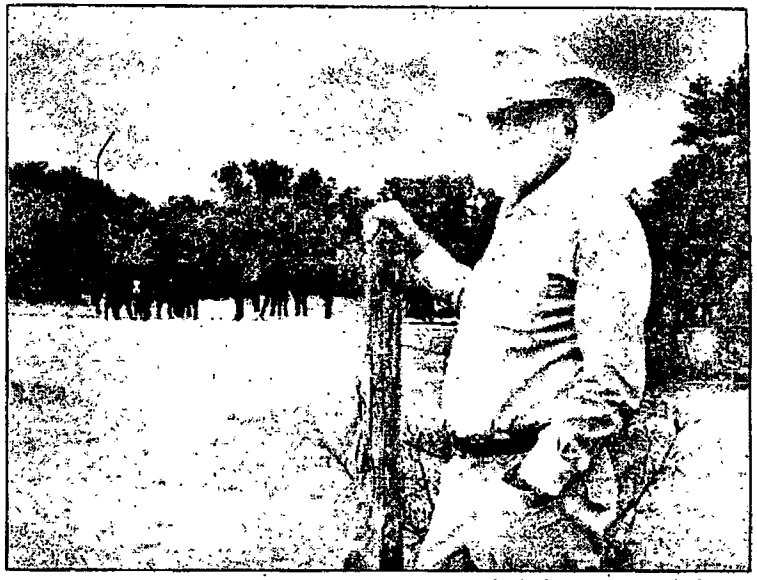
"The purpose of the ranching business is to provide livestock with forage in the most efficient way so that the return per (carcass weight) or wool or mohair can be increased; the combination of high intensity, low frequency range management has worked well for us."

The ranch has had an outstanding cover of grass since Powell began implementing his management discovery in 1966.

He started by dividing his ranch into 12, 900-acre pastures which are still rotated every 14 days unless the grass is unduly short.

The carrying capacity of each pasture is 40 animal units. A single animal unit is described as a cow-calf pair, or five sheep or goats. The sheep and goats stay two pastures ahead of the cattle at all times. The pastures are visually appraised on a regular basis.

"The livestock graze the preferable grass first and we keep them in the pasture long enough to graze the less desirable species



S-T Photo by Jeanne M. Serio

Intensive management of his land and livestock has proved a winning combination for James L. 'Jimmy' Powell, shown with some first-calf Angus heifers and their Hereford-cross calves.

and labor costs since he doesn't have to constantly monitor his cattle for their food and water needs.

"People always think you're crazy when you start spending money on a capital investment like fencing and pipe," he said. "But we've increased our stocking rates by 80 percent, which has increased our income through the years."

A verbal advocate of progressive ranching, Powell utilizes artificial insemination (AI), expected progeny differences (EPDs) and intensive selection pressure in his cattle business. He also raises Angora goats and sheep, and manages successful hunting leases for deer and turkey.

As far as the cattle industry is concerned, "We have to produce what the consumer and retailer wants," he said. "To do that, we have to go through the feeder and

Please see POWELL, Page 10G

cleared of mesquite and other brush. Powell didn't have to say much . . . the evidence was all around.

Texas' No. 1 rancher, Gov. Dolph Briscoe was the keynote speaker at a noon program under the giant flag pole in the center of the fort's parade ground. As a whirlwind whipped by, he transported to different pastures of the ranch to view improvements.

The ranch had been operated since 1934 with a continuous grazing program. During the good years, mutton lambs were held until spring, increasing the stocking rate for sheep by as much as 25 per-

JIMMIE POWELL
. . . Shows range management

"Four years prior brush control progra range was fenced approximate 1,00 pastures, and wate placed on each one-ha tion," he continued. fore lambing in Oc the ewes were sep into pastures, as we cattle prior to calv November."

At this time liv were spread over 1 tures equally and l for the winter. In the (April) lambs were ed, and ewes were gi and rotation began. third of the ranch pastures, was desi for deferment for the ing season. The liv were rotated every weeks through the re ing eight pastures. I the calves were w and the cattle joine rotation plan.

"Critical inform drawn from forage ar has guided our more breeding and pa rotation program," mented Powell. "I given us the much-n

00064

May 25- 1975

West Texas Brush Control Told

It's time for the finals in one of the most intensive, carefully-controlled programs ever executed to improve chemical brush control in Texas and all indications are the report card will be good.

The program indtroduced TORDON 225 Mixture herbicide to Texas ranchers as a new hope for better chemical control of mesquite, prickly pear, tasajillo and many other types of brush in 1970.

The "experimental" label expired that year and TORDON was not available under Federal EPA registration until 1972. Since then, thousands of acres have been sprayed with the new material under rigidly-controlled regulations designed to assure proper and safe use..

C. E. Fisher of the Texas A&M Agricultural Experiment Station at Lubbock, professor in charge of field brush control research, cautioned ranchers back in 1970 against making hasty judgement though research had indicated great promise. "After three to five years, the resprouting is done and it is possible to calculate root kill with some degree of certainty," he said.

Those years have passed and Dow sponsored a "flying brush tour" Wednesday to let newsmen see results of both old and new TORDON 225 work and bring them in contact with ranchers who are using the material.

The route included low-level flights over some 80,000 acres of land sprayed with TORDON 225 on 18 ranches. In most of those pastures, flagging was light and grass appeared excellent.

"Commercial work with Tordon now runs into the hundreds of thousands of acres and it confirms what our experiments showed earlier," said Dr. J. B. Grumbles, Dow herbicide research specialist now assigned to Mexico and recently based in Lubbock.

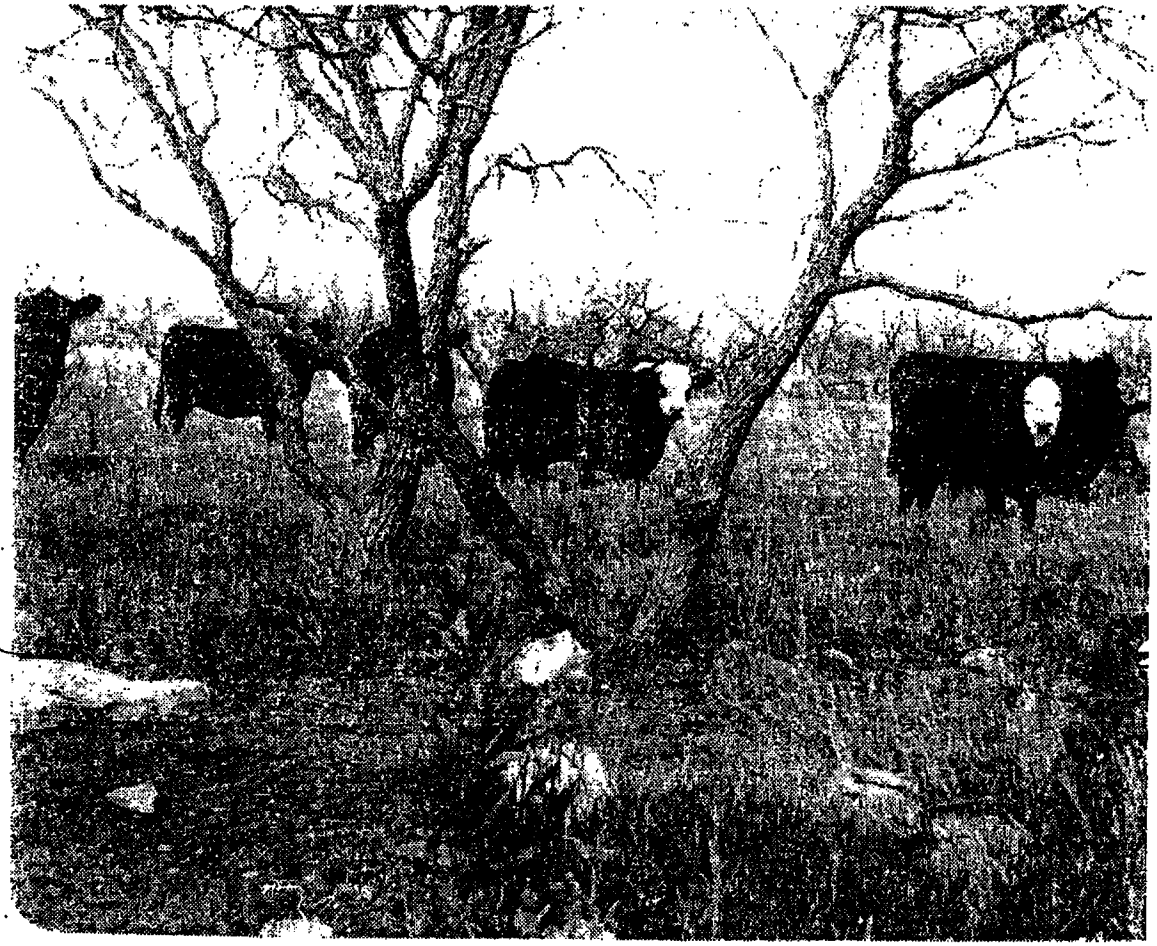
"Generally the root kill is twice as high with Tordon as with 2, 4, 5-T," he said.

Perhaps even more important, he added, the material has proven deadly on several types of brush that 2, 4, 5-T does not control, particularly prickly pear, tasajillo and huisache.

In its continuing research in the years since 1970, Fisher said, Texas A&M has found that calves grazed on sprayed pastures on numerous ranches gain 30 lbs. more than those on adjacent unsprayed pasture in one year's time.

Tordon's passing grade is good news for ranchers looking at the possibility of spraying in 1975 because, in much of West Texas, Fisher says:

"This looks like the best year we've ever had for spraying mesquite — assuming normal leaf development, lack of worm damage and things like that."



Powell Runs Cattle With Sheep

Both cattle and sheep running in 6,000-acre pastured sprayed with TORDON 225 in 1974 came through winter and into spring in better shape than livestock on similar adjacent country that was not sprayed, says James L. Po Eldorado. Here, some of his cattle move an the dead and dying mesquite enjoying grass has responded to treatment.

and Edwards County Line. Current Zone 4 director is George Brockman. Extension Service Office.

Range Tour Hosts Gov. Briscoe

A range tour will be held on the Jimmy Powell ranch near Eldorado Thursday, starting at 9 a.m.

Following the tour, Governor Dolph Briscoe will speak during an afternoon program at historic Fort McKavett. Lunch will also be served at the Fort, located about six miles from the Powell ranch. Chartered buses will be used to transport people over the ranch and to Fort McKavett.

Sponsors of the tour are The Texas Section, Society for Range Management; The Eldorado-Divide Soil and Water Conservation District; The USDA Soil Conservation Service; The University of Texas System, and the Texas A&M University System.

Powell is carrying out an extensive grassland improvement program as well as a carefully planned supplemental feeding program based on laboratory analyses of forage made by the Texas Agricultural Extension Service.

As a result, carrying capacity on the 11,800-acre ranch has more than doubled.

Powell accelerated his grassland restoration work in 1969 when he worked out a detailed conservation plan.

The plan, after being approved by the board of directors of the Eldorado-Divide Soil and Water Conservation District, was used as the basis for a Great Plains Conservation Program contract which Powell entered into with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. GPCP is administered by the Soil Conservation Service.

The plan called for about 10,200 acres of tree dozing and range seeding. It also called for cross-fencing six pastures and adding 26 new water developments, including 9 windmills and two and one half miles of pipelines. Powell now has 12 pastures on the ranch, ranging in size from 300 yards to 1,300 acres, with a total of 34 livestock watering developments.

To date, Powell has increased his stocking rate from 24 animal units per section to 55 animal units per section.

When deer on the ranch are included in the calculations, Powell's stocking rate hit an almost unbelievable 60 animal units per section, or one animal unit to about 10.6 acres.

And that's in an area that averages only about 22 inches of rainfall per year.

Powell runs sheep, cattle, Angora goats, a few Spanish goats, and a string of horses. He uses a modified short duration grazing system on part of the ranch from about April 15 to about September 1.

Here's how the complicated system works: After fall lambs are sold in the spring--generally by Easter or not later than April 15--some 2,700 to 3,000 head of sheep from 12 pastures are grouped into one herd and placed in one pasture. (Actual livestock numbers fluctuate according to range condition). About every two weeks, the sheep herd is moved to a different pasture in the rotation.

After calves are weaned in June and July, some 270 to 300 cows are also grouped into one herd and placed in the pasture immediately ahead of the sheep.

About every two weeks, both herds are moved again, with the cattle always ahead of the sheep. After the pastures are grazed, most of them are rested until September, when the livestock are scattered back into the 12 pastures on the ranch.

But only about two-thirds of the ranch is grazed with this rotation. The remaining one-third is rested during April to September period.

All livestock are fed supplemental feed during the winter, although the amount depends on the weather, amount of forage available, and other factors.

The cubed ration is formulated to correct specific deficiencies revealed in the bi-monthly forage analyses made by the Texas Agricultural Extension Service.

These tests have been made regularly since 1971. Forage collections are made by TAEX personnel station at the San Angelo Research Center and the Schleicher County Agricultural Agent. Laboratory analysis work is done by TAEX personnel at Texas A&M University.

The Texas Agricultural Experiment Station is also making some bitterweed control experiments on the Powell ranch, but results are inconclusive at this time.

OUTDOOR TEXAS

First Doe Kill Hardest--So Is The Next

By HART STILWELL

There stood the little doe looking at me, and Jimmy Powell said go ahead and shoot, and Billy Works said shoot and Hal Ferrell and J. E. Boog-Scott said the same.

This was on the next to last day of the deer season just gone down in history, and all season long I had been going through the motions of bagging a doe deer.

You see, I figure that I have **YET I HAD** hedged and thinking and emotions to changed conditions if I am to be at all consistent in urging fellow Texans to kill does, something they absolutely must do. I had to kill a doe.

YET I HAD hedgd and hedged. I'd never shot a doe. Furthermore, I have written probably a hundred thousand words denouncing as the scum of the earth any man so cold-hearted as to kill a doe.

But . . . the season was coming to an end and I had to get over that emotional bind. So boom! And I had shot a doe.

And with that breakthrough I was better able to fit myself into the new pattern of hunting in Texas.

Furthermore, that trip gave me a whole lot clearer understanding of the problems of those West Texas ranchmen.

SURE, I KNOW they've been denounced from here to Maine. I've done some of the denouncing.

But take the ranch of Jimmy Powell as typical of the rancher-deer-hunter situation in a big chunk of Texas.

Jimmy owns and operates 11,000 acres — and, strangley, he talks about it as acres, not sections, the way most West Texans do. . .

Jimmy says and does some other things that might not fit your idea of the typical West Texas rancher. He is a graduate of Rice and did post graduate work at the University of Texas — in economics!

If taking courses under Bob Montgomery and Clarence Ayres fits into your idea of a West Texas ranchman, then you've got a different idea from mine.

ANYWAY, Jimmy is an unusually enlightened young man, and there is always a scarcity of enlightened young men . . . also old men.

Here's his problem: A deer eats just about as much as a sheep or goat, which is about one-fifth what a cow eats. So if you work out a nice balance of say 20 head of cattle and 170 sheep and 170 goats to a section, then how the devil do you maintain the balance if there are 170 deer?

In the good old days ranches didn't operate the way they do now. A lot of cowhands were necessary — and those cowhands and their families had to eat. So venison was a staple diet, year around. And the deer practically vanished.

Come the new day of conservation and roads and jeeps and few cowhands and there was no way the ranch personnel could use all that venison, even illegally.

SO THE BEST bet was to SELL the deer to hunters — and that's exactly what it amounts to, no matter how it is rigged legally.

The selling was done by leasing. But pretty soon this failed to work, because of the so-called buck law. The hunters, paying a pretty stiff price for a lease, bagged the big bucks. And the deer herd increased — and it's going to increase a lot faster as the screwworm control program is carried out.

The only solution is either day hunting, or leasing to a much larger number of hunters - - coupled with the shooting of does.

Okay, during the season just closed Jimmy tried that on a big part of his land.

BUT, AMAZINGLY, he couldn't get enough hunters to come out and partake — at a fee of $15 a day, and no pay if you didn't get your doe. If you wanted a buck the fee was $25.

We simply have not adjusted to shooting does, which is the reason I finally bagged that one, after deliberately passing up a couple and missing a couple because I closed my eyes before shooting—couldn't stand to shoot the little doe while she was looking at me.

We talked over all these odd changes, and in the group at Jimmy's ranch were both old timers and young hunters.

There was J. E. Boog-Scott of Cleburne, one of the wheels in the Hereford Cattle Breeders Association. He's an old-timer — and he bagged his first doe after a long career of hunting.

There was Hal Ferrell of Cleburne, connected with the State Comptroller's Department. He bagged what he thought was his first doe, but it turned out to be a young buck.

AND THERE was Billy Works, the bright young game warden who lives at Eldorado and who is trying hard to get ranchmen to follow the pattern of Jimmy Powell and open up their land to the public — at a very reasonable fee.

Even with the hunting the past season, Jimmy faces a problem of overpopulation of deer the next few months.

But he's hoping for more hunters next year to help him maintain a population balance on his ranch.

TSGRA'S JIMMIE POWELL

Rancher Needs 'Time-Stretcher'

BY JAMES E. VANCE
Star-Telegram Ranch and Farm Editor

FORT McKAVETT, Sept. 21—A fellow-rancher observed James L. Powell and remarked, "a time-stretcher is about the only thing that would let Jimmie do any more for sheep and goat ranchers and the wool and mohair industry."

Powell possesses a combination of business sense practical experience, wealth, youth and dedication.

As president of the Texas Sheep and Goat Raisers Association, and with deep personal conviction for a sound economy with less government control, Powell's efforts extend from grazing land of the Edwards Plateau to downtown Boston, center of the wool and mohair market.

* * *

POWELL, WITH a degree in business administration earned at Rice University after a stint in the Navy, married Nancy Hunt in 1959. This linked two of the best-known ranching families in Schleicher and Sutton Counties.

They left Sonora and San Angelo, where they lived to attend high school, and moved to a 17-section tract five miles west of Fort McKavett to settle down to ranching and raising a family. Lorrie is 2.

"We felt that if we were going to ranch it was best to live on one," Powell explained.

They have Hereford and Angus cattle for commercial calf production, Rambouillet open-face sheep and Angora goats on the Fort McKavett ranch and on another 14 section near Eldorado. In addition Powell is in partnership with Joe Bean and Mort Mertz in another operation near Ozona.

Powell stocks ranges with 15 cows, 160 sheep and 50 goats per section in an effort to improve his ranges.

"I stock that low because it offers higher utilization without being detrimental to the grass," Powell said. "Also this low rate is compatible with wild game population. A census showed about 60 deer per section, and they are included."

—Star-Telegram Photo

RELAXED RANCHERS — Jimmie and Nancy Powell and Lorrie, 2, find time in a busy life to relax on their ranch near Fort McKavett. Powell is president of the Texas Sheep and Goat Raisers Association. They produce cattle, sheep and goat...

Fort Worth Star-Telegram

Sponge Experiment Boosts Lamb Crop

FORT McKAVETT (Spl)—While most sheep ranchers hope all their ewes will bear a lamb—or possibly twins—each year, Jimmie Powell's flock has produced three lamb crops in two years.

"We used a hormone-soaked sponge insert to induce early conception," Powell explained. "It's an experimental synchromatic styrofoam called GD Searle."

JIMMIE POWELL
. . . more lamb crops

Powell raises cattle, sheep and goats on several thousand acres of land in Sutton and Schleicher Counties.

* * *

"OUR LAMB CROP in November 1964 was 97 per cent and in August-September 1965 was 107 per cent," added Powell. "The third crop already is more than 80 per cent and some ewes still are lambing."

He said the 107 per cent last year was unusually good considering the breeding period to produce it lasted well into days with high temperatures. Gestation time for a ewe to produce a lamb is five months.

"With marked rams we found that over 80 per cent of the ewes with sponge inserts conceived in the first five days of the mating periods in January and February," he said. "Breeding period also was during the lactation time and while ewes were nursing lambs."

* * *

POWELL SAID that even an 80 per-cent crop would increase lamb production by 40 per cent this year. He said it was entirely possible to get 100 per cent production from the third, or extra, crop.

"The system would require additional time with the flock, but would not necessarily require employment of additional labor nor closer surveillance of the flock," Powell said.

Managing the Whole Ranch

This Texan gets the most out of what he has and so can you!

By Steve Munday

THINGS JUST DIDN'T add up. How could two pastures produce smaller lamb and calf crops than the other 10 pastures when the management and supplemental feed practices were identical?

James L. (Jimmie) Powell, 48, a personable West Texan ranching 12,000 acres between Eldorado and Menard near historic Fort McKavett, decided the difference had to be forage quality.

Forage testing revealed the pastures were indeed low in phosphorous, copper and also protein during dry or dormant seasons. Armed with this information, appropriate changes in mineral supplements and feeding were made and production increased.

That was several years ago and today Powell counts his forage analysis program among his most valuable management tools.

His work in this area as well as brush control, pasture and livestock management — the total management concept — has drawn the attention of ranchers statewide. Field days and range tours of the Powell Ranch have been sponsored by the Texas Section, Society for Range Management; USDA, Soil Conservation Service; University of Texas System; Texas A&M University System; Texas Christian University ranch management program, and other colleges and universities.

Powell was named "Man of the Year in Texas Agriculture" in 1978 for District 7 recently by the Texas County Agricultural Agents Associaton.

The Powell Ranch runs commercial Hereford cattle, Rambouillet sheep, Angora goats and saddle horses. The stocking rate has increased 129 per cent since 1957 to a high in early 1977 of 55 units per section. With the drouth in recent months, numbers have been reduced to about 29 units per section.

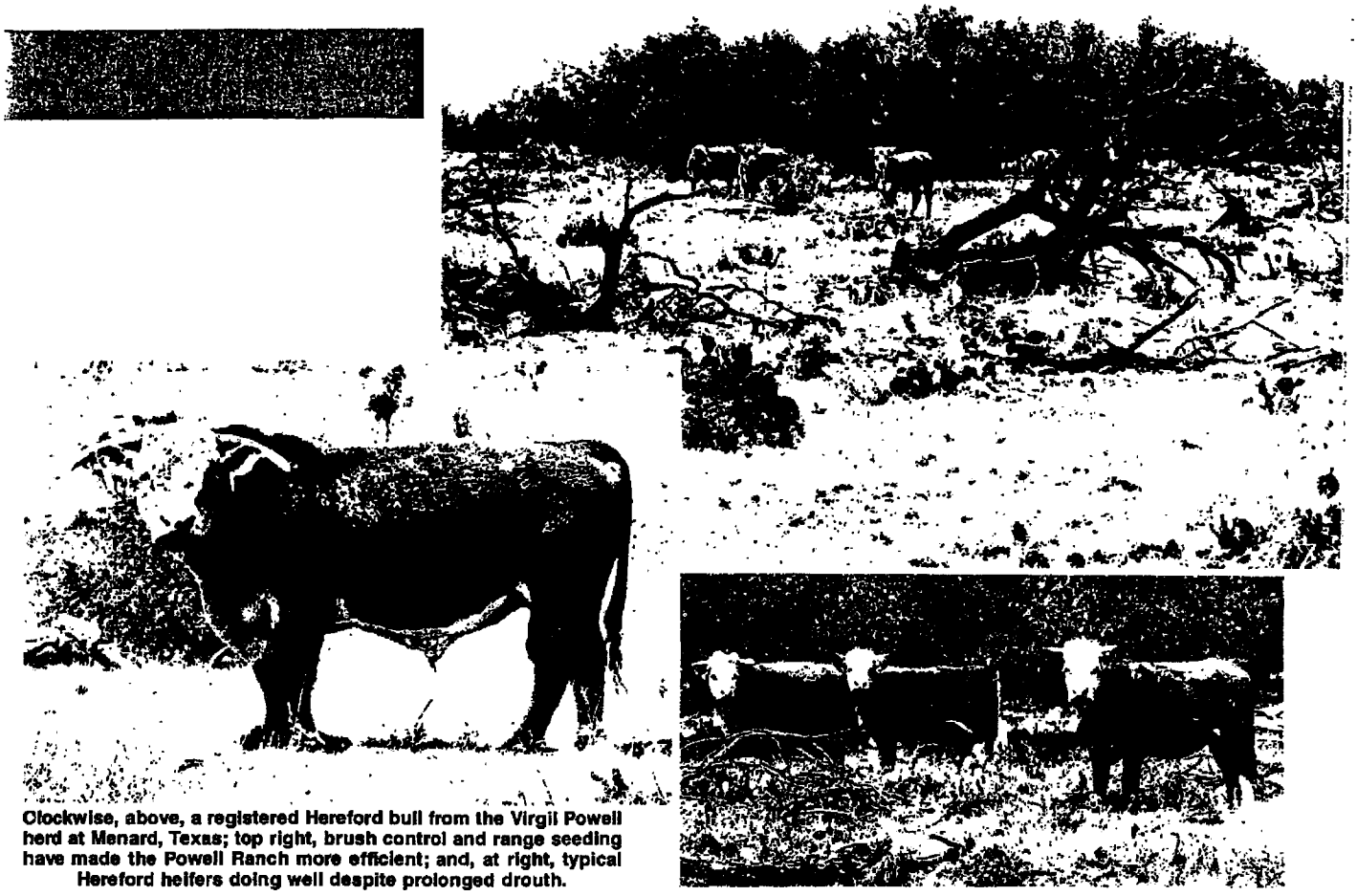
The ranch had been operating since 1934 with a continuous grazing program. In the good years, mutton lambs were held until spring, increasing the stocking rate for sheep by as much as 25 per cent during the winter months. In the dry years, all offspring were sold.

During the drouth of the 1950s, female stock was reduced to a level of 24 units per section, down from a high of about 70 animal units per section in 1942.

In 1970, the ranch was enrolled in the Great Plains Conservation Program and a range management plan, consisting of a complete brush control program and a modified short duration rotational grazing system, was begun.

All mesquite and other non-beneficial plants were tree-dozed and reseeding followed. Four years before, the range was

Jimmie Powell of Eldorado, Texas, raises commercial Herefords, Rambouillet sheep and Angora goats on his Ft. McKavett ranch.



Clockwise, above, a registered Hereford bull from the Virgil Powell herd at Menard, Texas; top right, brush control and range seeding have made the Powell Ranch more efficient; and, at right, typical Hereford heifers doing well despite prolonged drouth.

fenced into approximately 1,000-acre pastures and water was placed on each half-section.

"Before lambing in October, the ewes were separated into pastures, as were the cattle before October calving. At this time, livestock was spread over 12 pastures equally and located for the winter," Powell says. "In the spring, usually April, lambs were weaned and ewes were grouped and rotation began. One-third of the ranch, four pastures, was designated for deferment for the growing season. The livestock were rotated every two weeks through the remaining eight pastures. In June, the calves were weaned and the cattle joined the rotation plan."

In 1976 a hay program for the cold winter months was begun.

Round bales weighing approximately 1,500 pounds are put up on irrigated fields in the summer and fed all livestock during the most severe weather.

"With the coordination of brush control, range and livestock management and the forage analysis-supplemental feeding program, we have increased calf shipping weight averages about 34 pounds from 10 months to eight months. Lamb shipping weights are about the same, but we are now able to deliver during the Easter spring lamb market with handy weights."

With forage analysis, Powell has seen "an increase in variety and species of wildlife, including bobwhite quail, deer and turkey on the ranch. Calf and lamb crops have increased 15 per cent, weaning weights are up 15 per cent, wool quality has improved with no fiber breaks and the wool clean weights have increased."

Extension range specialist J. Dan Rodgers of San Angelo has worked closely with Powell as have Jerry Swift, Schleicher county agricultural agent; Bob Steger, extension range specialist, and Freddie J. Williams, district conservationist, USDA, and he endorses the forage examination program wholeheartedly.

"The Powell Ranch demonstration shows the need for continuing forage monitoring for both quality and quantity," he says.

As for other ranchers, he suggests, the Powell Ranch can show them how to get information on their own operations, how to estimate forage quality values and make better investment decisions on range supplements.

The forage samples, collected at two-month intervals year-round on each of the 12 pastures and monthly during dry or nutritionally stressful years, are taken from valleys, shallow hills and low stony hills. Analysis is made by the Texas A&M University soil testing laboratory at College Station and is free through the Texas Agricultural Extension Service.

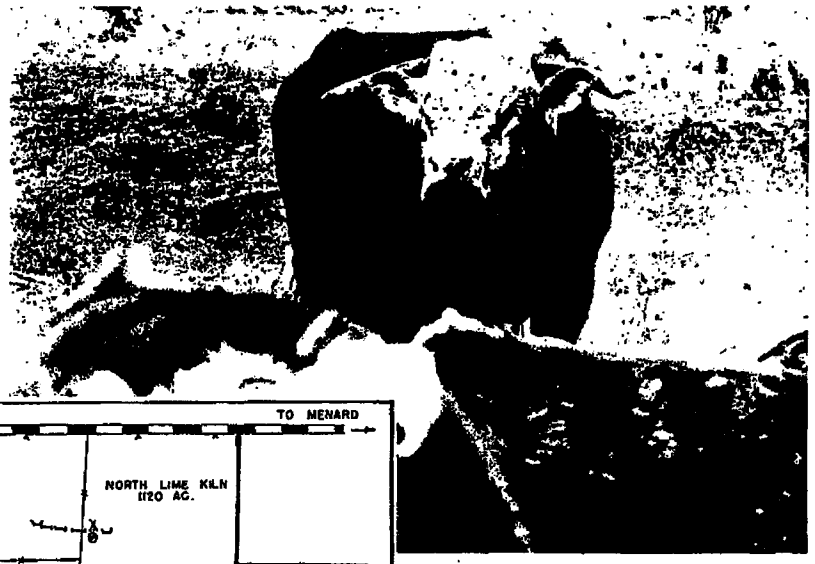
The forage analysis program provides the following information to the rancher:

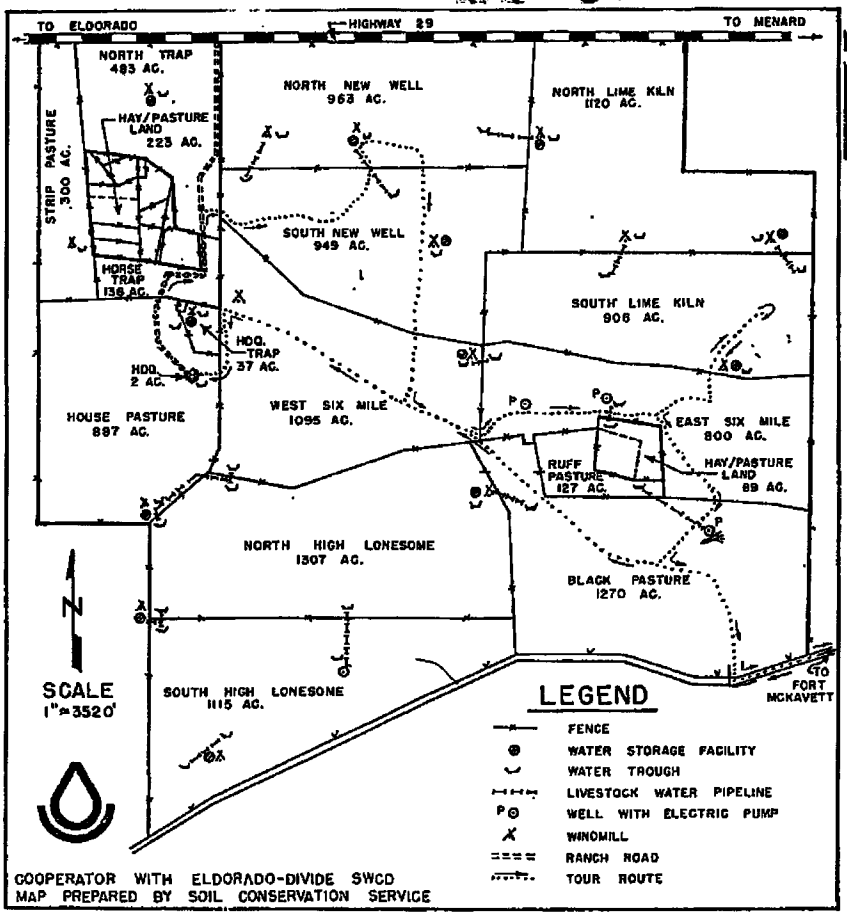
- The variations of plant material available for livestock by pasture.
- The seasonal variations in quality of plant material used by livestock.
- A monitor of forage quality from year to year.
- The variation between sites (low stony hills, shallow hills and valleys.)
- Provides a basis for feeding supplemental mineral and protein.

The information proved very valuable in making a marketing decision this spring. In 1977 the rangeland produced only one-half the forage of the previous year and by early 1978 growth had dropped to only 5 per cent of normal. This data coupled with projections for continuing drouth taken from an independent weather service to which he subscribes indicated a need to reduce livestock numbers or risk damaging deferred grazing areas. A study of the markets showed that both the lamb and cattle market were high — unusual in that they peak conversely in most years. Powell elected to cut his cow herd in half and to sell half of his flock. Interest rates were going up, too.

erage rainfall is 22 inches with about 15 inches occurring during the warm season. Drouth conditions since the fall of 1977 have altered this.

Vegetation on the ranch is quite typical of the Edwards Plateau with the more important grasses being switchgrass, several species of bluestems and gramas, Indiangrass, wildrye, curly mesquite, buffalograss and Texas wintergrass. Major forbs include orange zexemenia, bush sunflower, mallows, peavines and vetches, verbena, coneflower and some bitterweed. Trees include liveoak, shinoak, mesquite, juniper, prickly ash, hackberry, pecan and redbud.





Clockwise, from left, this map shows how Powell cut up large pastures to better manage his grass and livestock; above, this thick, muscular Hereford bull checks out some heifers; below, another good, young registered bull; and, bottom, an excellent example of the difference in pastures when brush control is used.

The hills have shallow soil underlain by limestone and a rocky surface. The valleys are typically deep, heavy soils. The vegetation on the hills includes oak and other trees in a savannah form with grassy areas between. The valleys are typified by larger oaks, mesquite and mid-to-tall grasses. Weeds or forbs comprise a major component of this area.

Brush control has been a significant project on the Powell Ranch since the 1950s. Until 1970, chemical control with 2,4,5-T was used with limited success on root kills. In the 1970s mesquite, cedar, algarito and prickly ash were tree-dozed

(Continued on Page 76)

Managing the Whole Ranch

(Continued from Page 39)

with a D-5 Caterpillar. The tree-dozed pits were seeded to a mixture of sideoats grama, Kleingrass and green sprangletop. A limited amount of weeping lovegrass and plains bristlegrass was also used.

Powell settled on tree-dozing as the most feasible method of brush control for four reasons: (1) Desirable browse was left undisturbed for wildlife and esthetic value; (2) desirable native grasses and forbs such as vine mesquite, Texas wintergrass, bush sunflower and orange zexmenia are left to add variety; (3) less ground disturbance resulted in smaller concentrations of bitterweed, and (4) tree-dozing provided better control of mesquite on the clay loam sites than rootplowing.

A grubbing attachment on a farm tractor will be used to control resprouts of mesquite, he says. Approximately 85 per cent of the ranch was tree-dozed. Some livecak and other desirable species were left in this area to provide cover for deer.

Short duration grazing was first begun on the ranch in early 1965 after Powell saw firsthand its success in a nine-inch rainfall area of South Africa. Vegetative improvement was apparent in South Africa with grazing periods of no more than two weeks, followed by adequate deferment.

Powell's initial system was operated similar to the South Africa system with all sheep and cattle grouped into one herd and rotated through eight pastures. This plan was modified in September 1966 after Powell noticed a drop in lamb and calf weaning weights. To avoid stress, lambing dates were moved to fall so that the short duration grazing could be done primarily in the growing season with dry stock.

The plan has been successful and Powell says these are the advantages:

- Development of vigorous grass plants with ability to respond more quickly to less moisture and rest than areas grazed continuously.
- Concentration of livestock reduce labor and observation.
- Less maintenance of windmills and equipment.
- Brush control in conjunction cuts back on labor.
- Flexibility. Perhaps the most important item. Can react to market within one week.

Powell does see some disadvantages:

- Initially, the investment for cross-fencing and water facilities requires large investment.
- Danger from overgrazing is great.
- Rotation of offspring with dams tends to stress younger calves.

Basically, the system works this way: Four of the rangeland pastures are deferred from about April 15 until Sept. 15. This deferment is rotated among all 12 rangeland pastures in order to give each pasture a full growing season deferment once every three years.

Each year, around April 15, all of the fall lambs are weaned and dry ewes are placed in one herd and rotated through eight pastures on two-week intervals. Calves are also weaned from first calf heifers and generally placed in one herd along with mature cows with heifer calves. The cattle are also rotated through eight pastures at about two-week intervals ahead of the sheep. Cows and steer calves are placed in two pastures generally until June or July, when the steer calves are weaned. At this time, these cows are grouped with other cows and this basic rotation of two weeks' grazing by one herd of cattle and two weeks grazing by one herd of sheep continues until about Sept. 15. At time o tagging (around Sept. 15) cattle an sheep are generally spread into all 1 pastures.

The ability to make adjustments whe necessary in the basic system has been major reason for the success of the Po ell Ranch. The basic system is illu trated in this article.

Another big factor in the ranch smooth operation is water. In 1961 Po ell had eight windmills, but he kn with the short duration grazing syst

more water would be needed. In 1965 he began adding nine more water wells. In addition to the wells, he has 34 water troughs and 2.5 miles of water pipelines. There is a water trough for every 320 acres.

Additionally, he has 29 miles of cross fences constructed when he sliced up his ranch into 12 pastures between 300 and 1,300 acres.

Bitterweed presents a major problem in the western Edwards Plateau area and Powell has his share of the problem. A cool-season annual, it poisons sheep. Drouth and unusually cold weather is reported to make bitterweed more toxic. Death losses in sheep from bitterweed poisoning average 1 to 6 per cent annually throughout the area.

Good grazing management like Powell practices is one of the most effective methods of avoiding the bitterweed problem. However, reduced cover of desirable forages due to periodic drouths and untimely short-term over-use can result in bitterweed problems.

On the Powell Ranch, oil field locations are watched closely for introduction of bitterweed and other noxious plants. Livestock sprayers are used for spot spraying to control localized infestations and some bitterweed is pulled by hand. A bitterweed wash is required of all oil field equipment before entering the ranch. In 1976 and 1977 Powell used broadcast aerial spraying of 2,4-D ester at one pound per acre on several pastures.

The mineral supplement includes salt, phosphorous, calcium, sulphur, trace minerals, molasses, fat, vitamin D, flavor and coloring and is the same for both cattle and sheep except sulphur is deleted for the cattle ration.

Powell fertilized several pastures in 1973 with an application of 100 pounds of 30-0-0 and 26-13-0 per acre. An increase in crude protein was experienced for only a few months. However, he did note the fertilized pastures remained greener for a longer period of time during the fall and green-up occurred earlier the next spring on these pastures. While production figures were not compiled, there was an increase in forage production as a result of fertilization, Powell says.

Livestock were held on the fertilized pastures twice as long as usual and as much vegetation remained on the pasture at the end of this grazing period as was usually found, he adds.

Powell runs ranches south of Eldorado and north of the Fort McKavett ranch under much the same program. The brushwork has been more chemical and mechanical there and the Hereford cows are bred to registered Angus bulls purchased from reputation herds.

Powell, a director of the Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association and member of the Executive Committee, was born in San Angelo and educated at Rice University, where he received a bachelor's degree in business administration. He did graduate work in finance and economics at the University of Texas. Powell served in the U.S. Navy during the Korean conflict.

A past president of both the Texas Sheep and Goat Raisers Association and the National Wool Growers Association, Powell was a member of the Secretary of Agriculture's Technical Advisory Committee for Multilateral Trade Negotiations in 1975. He is recipient of the Outstanding Conservationist Award of the Eldorado-Divide Soil and Water Conservation Board.

Powell is married to the former Nan Hunt and they have two daughters, Lori and Victoria. ■

Barber Brahman Dispersal

197 lots averaged $702
Auctioneer: Stanley Stout

Glenn Barber's Complete Dispersal Sale June 24 at Jasper, Texas, saw 197 lots gross $138,295.

Cloverdale Cattle Co. of Animas, N.M., bought IW 411, the high selling bull, for $5,000. RS Lady Rex Manso sold to Humber Cattle Co. of Liberty, Texas, for $2.000.

Volume buyer of the sale was Charlie Dial of Orange, Texas.

Powell Sees Need for Public Education on Cattle Issues

Ranchman James L. Powell addresses agricultural concerns.

Jimmy Powell possesses a unique perspective of agriculture. As current president of the Texas & Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association and past-president of the Texas Sheep & Goat Raisers' Association, Powell understands that both industries share common obstacles and goals. Foremost, explained the Fort McKavett ranchman, is the need to educate the public on three basic subjects — food safety, environment and animal rights.

"Food safety is a concern to me because the people who are criticizing American agricultural products do not understand the inspection systems and procedures companies go through to clear vaccines and chemicals before using them on animals," Powell said. "The system is much more sophisticated than it was even five years ago but we still get criticism. I see it as an educational challenge to inform the public on safety and inspection procedures to ensure our food is safe."

Environment, Powell explained, is an issue "all Americans are involved in." And again, he said, an education of the populace concerning responsibility and operating procedures ranchers use as "custodians of the land" should be made known.

"There are pollution problems which are basically industrial," Powell said. "But we in agriculture should be concerned and should help find solutions."

Animal rights is another area in which Powell believes some of the general public is mis-informed.

If the population in this country is to continue to grow and be strong, Powell said, agricultural producers must continue providing their commodities.

"Animal rights activities want to reduce harm to animals but that is virtually impossible if we're going to raise animals for food. And there are other issues concerning animal rights activists, like inhumane treatment to dogs and cats. But the type of research being carried out is necessary if we are to strive for a disease-free world," Powell said.

He also feels the cattle industry is making progress in breeding the kind of lean cattle the public demands and certain health issues are being successfully addressed.

The food safety issue has guided the beef producer in the development of a leaner, more muscular animal that will gain more efficiently with less fat, Powell said. That beef animal has evolved in a relatively short period of time, he added.

Jimmy Powell with Rambouillet rams and Hereford bulls at the family ranch on the banks of Clear Creek, near Menard, Texas.

"Packers are still getting some carcasses they have to trim but every year better feeder steers are being bred to make it less costly for the packer and retailer to merchandise," he said.

Traditional breeds such as Herefords, Angus and traditional English breeds are undergoing a rapid change in carcass quality, he said, to produce a larger, leaner animal which is nearer what the consumer wants.

"Crossbreeding is an important ingredient in producing fed cattle for slaughter," Powell said. "Herefords and Angus are being crossed with Salers, Brahman, Charolais and various other breeds that produce the large, lean carcass the public wants. The crossbreeding program was impressive and effective in the early stages when we needed to change the carcass composition of those traditional breeds. Today our packers like to finish steers at 1,200-1,250 pounds and those carcasses fit well into the boxed beef

trade. Some exotic breeds are finishing in the 1,600 pound range and those are too large."

However, Powell added, those larger carcasses are being marketed to the Japanese who require more fat and greater marbling.

"I would guess that in time the Japanese will begin looking at the cholesterol issue in the future and demand there will also drift toward leaner carcasses," he said.

Powell said the beef industry is developing an export program that this year "has added a couple of dollars per hundredweight" to feeder calf prices.

"Cattle prices are now close to parity and that is an economic condition which is necessary if the cattle industry is to be a viable industry in this nation," he said. "I would not believe the price of beef would decline into figures much lower than they are now because of strong demand, low numbers and strength of producers, feeders and packers in the industry today. I foresee six to eight years of good to stable prices in the beef market while cow herds are being re-built. Ranchers will keep their replacement heifers, also reducing the available supply in the market, enhancing the ultimate price of the feeder animal."

Agriclutural financing also concerns Powell. Commercial banks (holding company banks, in particular) are moving away from agriculture, he said, due to the lack of "experience lending officers and onerous regulations."

"Regulations are demanding almost solely a cash flow requirement rather than adequate equity and character of the borrower before a loan can be made," Powell said. "Those regulations have permeated every end, including PCAs, Federal Land Banks and insurance companys so that if you're unable to achieve an adequate cash flow in any period, your loan becomes severely criticized. This process has limited credit to a great host of young people who would like to go into agriculture and has limited the expansion of currently profitable operations. Those conditions have limited the number of buyers and buyers' ability and in the final analysis reduced value of land."

Survivors in agriculture, Powell believes, will be those agriculture enterprises that have the ability to diversify within agriculture.

"Current income tax laws that implement the passive income features effectively eliminate diversification by agricultural enterprises into other types of non-agricultural business," he said. "That's an aberration of free enterprise and the free market concept and it will hurt the future of capital development in this country. The small producer who is operating on a minimum economical unit today will witness a need to enlarge his operation to generate an increased cash flow to bear the cost of these future onerous regulations. The only part in the economic system that could change that would be for ag commodities to achieve a higher price plateau and maintain it. An increase of 30 percent in commodity prices would need to be realized."

Jimmy and Nancy Powell at their ranch near Fort McKavett, Texas.

Powell said agricultural producers differ from manufacturers in the sense that manufacturers can cover their costs by increasing costs to the consumer but in agriculture, "producers are price-takers and have little ability to become price setters."

The Powell family is involved in numerous ranching operations in West Texas and, besides raising finewool sheep, Powell maintains herds of commercial and registered Herefords. Powell also has a herd of Angus cows in Nebraska and an interest in Wishbone Herefords.

Powell continues to use the same Hereford bloodlines used by his father, Virgil Powell, who died in 1988. Virgil Powell began raising registered Hereford cattle in 1955.

Powell and his wife Nancy reside on their ranch between Eldorado and Menard. The couple has two daughters, Victoria and Lorrie. Powell's mother, Johnnie Dell, resides in San Angelo.□

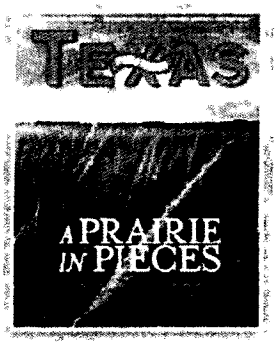
James Powell, speaking to members on the Dow Chemical Company brush tour who were visiting his Thomson Ranch country, said he has received over average rainfall on the ranch for the last three years. "We have received up to six inches or more already this year," he added.

A staunch soil and water conservationist and believer in pasture rotation systems, he said he uses a 12-pasture rotation system on the ranch, which allows the land to rest one-third of the time.

"We have some country which has not hand any brush control or brush eradication work done on it and we placed some calves on it at the same time we placed a like-number on the sprayed country. They were the same kind of cattle, the same weight and everything, and the sprayed area as given us more forage and grass and the calves have done much better," he explained.

Powell said he has been spraying his cattle recently, since the heel flies have been pretty bad in the area. "Fortuntely, we have not had any screwworms. In fact, Schleicher County has not had a case this year," he added.

FEBRUARY 2008



How the perennial obsession with water-guzzling golf courses and rural lakes can help big cities prepare for the next drought.

By Larry D. Hodge

It's mid-August, and I'm standing in a pasture on the Rosa Ranch in Blanco County. It should be sere and hot and thoroughly unpleasant this time of year. Instead, it's green and lush. For the first time in my life, trees on the verge of fall still look fresh, not tired, dusty and droopy. Creeks in the sandy granite regions of the Hill Country are flowing. In August.

Texas is. Not. Wetter than I've seen it in more than three-score years.

I spent my childhood on a sandy-land sharecropper farm in Central Texas wearing feed-sack shirts and holey jeans and shoes during the drought of the 1950s. Only memories – of parents worn down by worry and water trucks filling up on the square in Elgin to haul precious fluid to West Texas towns with no water – keep me from feeling foolish about being here in the middle of one of the wettest years on record to write a story about how land managers can cope with drought.

Make no mistake. The old adage may be that the only things you can be sure of are death and taxes, but anyone who's spent his life in Texas knows there's a third certainty: drought. Texas is awash in water in late 2007, but ranchers and farmers know the next drought begins one day the rain ends.

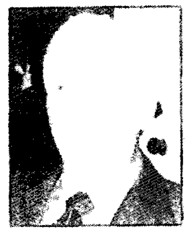
The drought of the 1950s spurred Texans to do what some future environmental historian may label shortsighted: Instead of looking for ways to make the land better able to withstand drought and sustain them in dry times, Texans built reservoirs – a quick fix for a long-term problem. This was the latest chapter in a story that began when Europeans arrived and began

Kappa Sigma Newsletter
April 2008

Alumnus Gained Lifelong Friends from Tau Chapter

Spotlight on James B. Powell '52

[illegible] '52 the reason for joining a fraternity [illegible] people and develop character. He [illegible] Kappa Sigma [illegible] great friends and [illegible]. He enjoyed the [illegible] [illegible] His best memories [illegible] his association in the [illegible] with his friends.



His undergraduate experience taught him more than just [illegible] work. "It taught me the way nations, societies function and the way ethics and morals are exercised." Through his business degree, Jimmie learned economics and finance, which he believes are the foundation for operating any business. After college he served in the [illegible] then moved to his ranch. He is now in business for his family, raising livestock.

To Jimmie, leadership is something very valuable to this country. "The well-informed, intelligent leadership will come from the youngsters in this country, what they learn in school and their experiences," says Jimmie. "The Fraternity will teach and train them how to associate with the population and how to be accepted as leaders. It is a very good training ground."

[illegible] Jimmie has learned [illegible] graduation day. The gentleman at the ceremony spoke [illegible] learning to learn. He said the education they received in the last four or five years only taught them where to find answers to questions they'll encounter in the future. The speaker said they should continue to learn as they begin to apply the information acquired in school. Since hearing this he has realized that it's very true. He tells younger Brothers to "continue learning as much as you possibly can. Never think you've absorbed all knowledge."

Jimmie grew up in west Texas. He lives on the ranch at Fort McKavett with his wife, Nancy. They have two daughters, both living in Texas. Their daughter, Lorrie, married Arthur Old, has three children and lives in San Antonio. Their daughter, Victoria, married [illegible] and has three children as well. They live in Austin. When Jimmie has free time, he enjoys playing golf and visiting various parts of the United States. He can be reached via e-mail at powellranch@hotmail.com

Retracing history

Students follow historical icon's trail by wagon

By MATT PHINNEY
mphinney@sastandardtimes.com
or 659-8253

SCHLEICHER COUNTY — Bill Coate could drive his students across Texas in a van or school bus.

They could stay in warm motels and eat in inexpensive restaurants.

But that wouldn't be nearly as much fun.

Coate and 18 Madera, Calif., students are braving the wind, rain and cold mornings to retrace — in reverse order — the steps of William H. Huff, who left Texas in the 1840s and followed the mob west in search of gold. Huff didn't find riches, but he collected a treasure trove of memories and observations along the way, which he recorded in a diary.

The diary is a road map for the Madera Method Wagon Train that began around El Paso on Jan. 4 and will end Jan. 27 near Houston, where Huff died. On Tuesday, the group rode from Big Lake to the Six Mile Ranch just west of Fort McKavett.

The train will go to Fort McKavett today and will be in and around Menard until Friday.

Fort McKavett is 48 miles southeast of San Angelo.

Fourteen Reagan County middle school students joined the wagon train Tuesday, and Menard students will join the trail today.

Coate, 64, said he wants the students to be part of a "collective critical thinking experiment" where middle school students take a doctorate-level topic and "see what they can do with it." He's impressed with the results.

"I want the students to understand what pioneer life was like," said Coate, a sixth-grade teacher. "They learn some life lessons such as sometimes we lose in civilized life, and you have to

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S-T PHOTO BY ARTHUR SPRAGG

Aaron Michalewicz of Big Lake and Ali Spina of Madera, Calif., shared a ride in the lead wagon of the Madera Method Wagon Train on Tuesday as they followed the trail of Texas gold prospector William Huff. The trail went across James Powell's Six Mile Ranch off State Highway 190 west of Fort McKavett. "This is about being able to say, 'I've experienced life in a way you can't from a book,'" Spina said about retracing Huff's trail across Texas to the California gold fields of the 1840s.

STUDENTS: Trip has been rough, fun

Continued from Page 1A

just keep on going. This puts a little seat knowledge with that head knowledge."

Fredy Cisneros, 11, already has learned some life lessons along the trail. He said the ride has been exciting and "fun when it's not cold." Two weeks riding in the back seat of a wagon also has taught the California boy patience.

"Sometimes it's rough, and sometimes it's smooth," he said. "But it's been mostly fun so far and interesting to see the same things someone else saw 100 years ago."

Jacob Sheeter, 11, said the trip has been "awesome" and that he is amazed at the beautiful scenery in West Texas. William Coate, Bill Coate's grandson, said the trip has been rough and cold but fun for the most part.

The wagon train keeps as close to Huff's original trail as it can and has even ridden in limestone ruts believed to be left long ago by Huff's party, Coate said.

The wagons twice have been moved in a trailer; once on the Guadalupe Mountain Range when high winds made the trail too treacherous, and another near Mertzon when the waning days of hunting season made passing through a large ranch too dangerous, Coate said.

The group is traveling in five covered wagons, and cowboys and cowgirls from Madera and other ranches are providing support. The Texas Parks and Wildlife Service also is helping with the wagon train.

The caravan's progress can be monitored from the agency's Web site at www.tpwd.state.tx.us.

Coate came into contact with Huff's diary while working on another trail ride. Coate said he is fascinated by the country's migration west in the 1800s and immediately was interested by the diary.

In the diary, Huff writes about his friends Stephen F. Austin, William Travis and Jim Bowie, three leaders of the Texas Revolution. The diary also contains a map of the battle of San Jacinto, Coate said.

After the war, Huff followed the gold rush west. He later died penniless in Houston, Coate said.

What he left behind for historians has proven priceless to Coate and his students. The caravan will conduct a ceremony Jan. 25 on the Capitol steps in Austin, Coate said.

The trail will end Jan. 27 in Houston with a graveside service at Huff's grave.

Texas and California students, who are writing journals along the route, will publish a collection of their journal entries, Coate said.

"I think some of we educators have our sights set way too low," he said. "I think these kids can do a lot more than we give them credit for. If you don't expect much out of them, then you won't get much, I don't think."

Range Evaluation Field Day Held At James Powell Ranch

LOOKING OVER GRASSES ON POWELL RANCH
. . . Left to right, Dr. Steger, James Powell, Dan Rodgers

By GARY COATES
Standard-Times Agricultural Editor

FORT McKAVETT — A range evaluation field day was held on the James Powell Ranch here Wednesday.

"Purpose of the demonstration was to try to improve the efficiency of supplemental feeding and minerals in the production of livestock in the area by knowing what, approximately, nutrients in the vegetation the livestock are receiving off the range," Jerry Swift, Schleicher County Extension agent, told those present during the afternoon tour.

"By finding out what nutrients the livestock were receiving during the year-long demonstration we can determine the quality of the mineral and protein supplement needed," he continued.

Dan Rodgers, Extension Service range specialist from College Station; Dr. Bob Steger, area Extension range specialist from San Angelo; and Dr. Tom Woodward, area livestock Extension specialist from San Angelo, were on hand during the session to explain in detail the different tests run in order to determine the condition of the range and just what nutrients the livestock on the Powell Ranch were getting.

Dr. Steger explained that the demonstration consisted of the analysis of 12 pastures on the Powell Ranch, from which samples were taken of grasses, weeds, and browse, which had been grazed during the last year. The samples were taken every two months and then sent to Texas A&M for analysis.

"From these samples we were able to work out the protein, phosphorus, copper, iron, forage magnesium, and zinc percentages of the dry matter being grazed by the sheep and cattle," said Rodgers.

"We then set some minimum animal requirements for a 1,000 pound cow, a 120-pound ewe, and an 80-pound doe, whether lactating or gestating, and match the lab results with the minimum requirements to see that supplemental feeding of protein and mineral is needed," said Dr. Woodward.

Dr. Steger cautioned those attending about carefully interpreting the range evaluation findings, saying, "You have to make your assumption from the samples taken from pasturage, however, you can't make an accurate assumption from just one sample. You need samples taken over a length of time, during various seasons of the year before you can pick up any trends," he added.

Among the grasses tested on the Powell Ranch were Three Awn, Green Sprangletop, Plains Bristlegrass, Buffalo, Klein Grass, Sedge, Hairy Grama, Sideoats Grama, Texas Wintergrass, Vine Mesquite, Curley Mesquite, Texas Cutgrass and Little KR Bluestem.

James A. Powell, owner of the ranch, reported that he grazes his pastures under a modified intensive grazing system.

"At the present we're running 40 animal units of breeding stock per section, counting cows and sheep, and not counting goats, deer, bucks and rams," said Powell. "We're using two-thirds of the ranch and resting one-third of it the year round on a rotation system."

Powell ranch perfect setting for retirement

By JOE McCLURE
Staff Writer

FORT McKAVETT — Nestled in the rolling hills of the Edwards Plateau near the Schleicher-Sutton county line is a modern ranch home with all the conveniences of a neighborhood home situated near a public park.

The oasis-like setting looks over a vast rangeland and small fertile valley. The rangeland is home for Hereford cattle, Rambouillet sheep and Spanish goats, while the valley produces hay in the summertime to satisfy at least a portion of the animals' winter feed requirements.

The oasis is called Six Mile Ranch and is home for James "Jimmy" L. Powell and his wife, Nancy. Their nearest neighbor is in Fort McKavett six miles away, hence the ranch name.

Powell, who will retire from the presidency of the Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association in March, has his computer-filled office next to the stone patio. The patio, protected on two sides by the house, is bordered by oak trees, flower gardens and a manicured lawn.

Down a rock path and through a little area of undisturbed native flora is the tennis court. The native vegetation, lawn and cultured flowers around the ranch house area are protected from the intrusion of white-tail deer and other unwanted guests by an 8-foot fence.

S-T photo by Mike Howell

Jimmy and Nancy Powell's ranch spreads far behind them.

The Powells are parents of two daughters who graduated from the University of Texas and are now living and working away from home. Lorrie is in San Antonio, and Victoria is in Austin.

The third-generation ranching family is living on an 11,000-acre ranch purchased by Powell's grandfather more than 50 years ago. During the past several years the ranchland has changed considerably.

All the mesquites have been grubbed out and many improved varieties of grasses and beneficial forbes have been introduced. New mesquites are eliminated when they are found. Grass burs and cockleburs also have been grubbed out and eliminated.

Seven families live on the ranch to help keep the operation going smoothly.

The ranch has been able to increase the animal-unit population by 50 percent with the incorporation of cell structured pastures. The high intensity-low frequently rotational grazing schedule has a two-week sheep grazing period, followed by a two-week resting period. The cattle are then grazed on the pasture for two weeks before the pasture is rested for 24 weeks.

The 30-week cycle allows natural reseeding of pasture grasses and forbes by preventing livestock from grazing at the same time of year for more than 10 years.

Powell said when he started the cell system in 1957 his stocking rate was 24 animal units per section, and it is at 44 animal units now.

Diversification, along with a keen eye on consumer demand, is the key to surviving in today's ranching industry, Powell said.

In the past 50 years, the ideal beef animal in the American rancher's eye has fluctuated from a small frame, wasty fat animal to a large frame, lean animal and neither actually produced the beef that the American consumer wanted, he said.

There is a place in the market for over fat beef cattle, he said, referring to Kobe beef that is produced in Japan. Kobe beef is produced from pampered beef animals that are hand fed for several years. The market price is very high, but the volume is too small to compete in, he said.

Powell raises registered Hereford cattle and has a commercial herd of crossbred Hereford and Angus.

"The cross breeding gives the offspring a boost from hybrid vigor that pays off in the pasture, feedlot, slaughter plant and the meat market," he said.

The cross will produce a 1,100-pound Choice, yield grade 2 steer that meets the demand of packers.

"The beef from that animal is nutritious, healthful and tasty, and will satisfy the current American taste with a minimum of waste fat," he said. "When the consumer demand changes, we will change with it."

The same philosophy is applied to the Rambouillet sheep flock to produce crossbred show lambs and lean-lamb for the demanding consumer, he said.

Angora goats are raised on the Edwards County portion of the ranch where the terrain is more adaptable to the goats.

Oil wells are scattered around the pastures, offering another form of diversification.

The annual fall steer supply is sold through auctions, direct to buyers and via satellite auction.

Powell also has maintained ownership of the steers through feedlots when the market appears in his favor, he said.

Powell, who has contributed a large share of his adult life to public service, says everybody should contribute some time and effort to his favorite organization.

"Public service has been a rewarding experience," he said. "There are a lot of young people coming up who are educated and have a lot of good ideas. They need to get in public service and do a good job. There are a lot of changes and challenges facing the industry today, and we need agriculturally educated people to guide it."

Powell said he is going to "tend to my business" when he retires from the leadership of the TSCRA in March.

Tending to his own business in the past has included being a director of banks scattered from Houston to Ozona and being connected to several wool and mohair warehouse organizations and a utility company.

Powell also has been chairman of the University of Texas System Board of Regents, member of the UT Development Board, the UT Chancellor's Council and the UT M.D. Anderson Cancer Hospital Board of Visitors.

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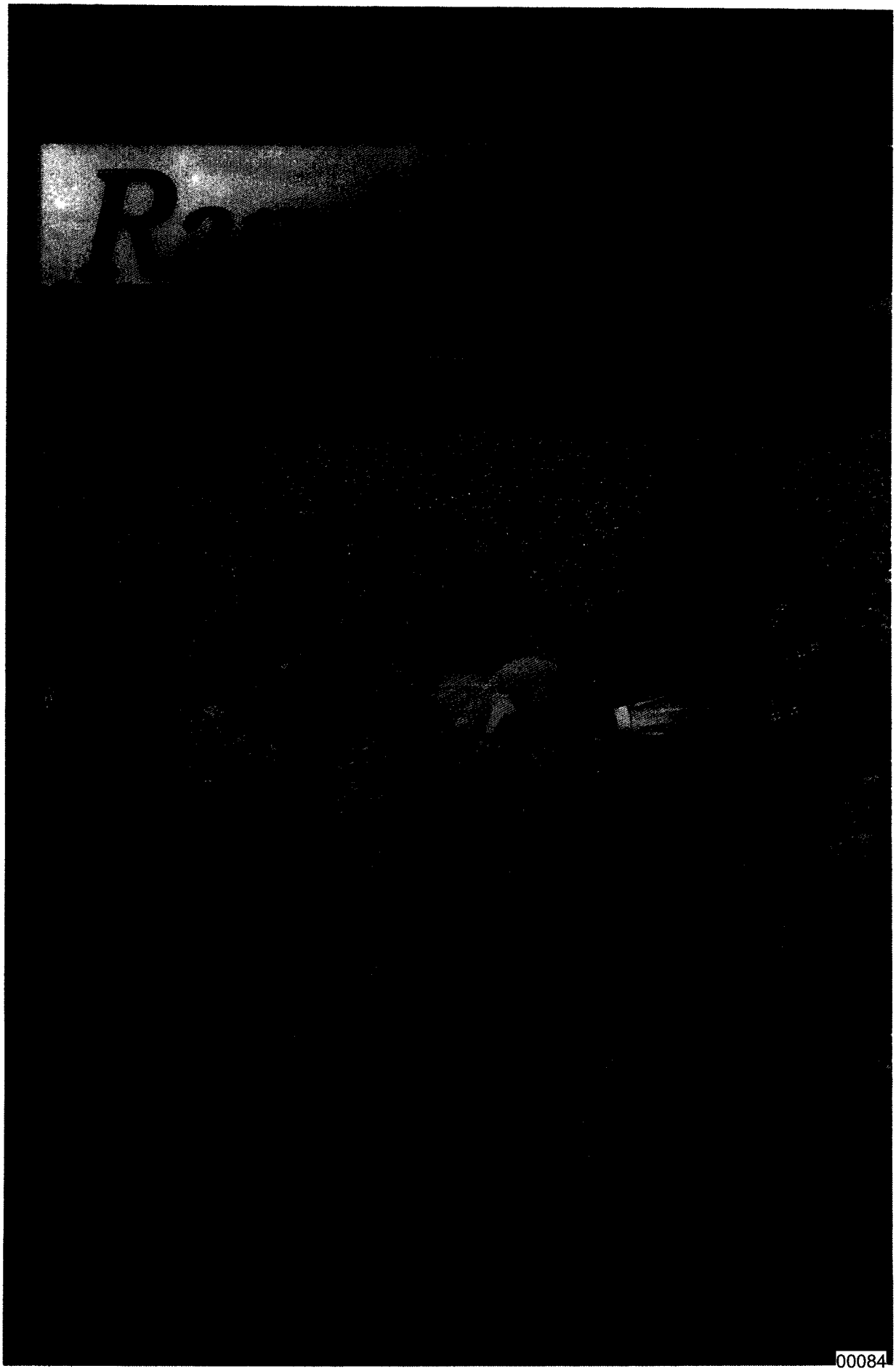
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A moving experience
Coming face to face with all your belongings is never pretty. LIFE & ARTS

Your health exam c
Jane Greig explains what medica
required for each decade of your

Austin American-Statesm

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Drug war lays siege to border town

Residents go on maximum alert after Mexican leaders send police to quell violence in prisons

By Mary Lou Pickel
MEXICO CITY STAFF

MATAMOROS, Tamaulipas —Federal police with automatic rifles cruise through town in pickups, and helicopters fly over the maximum security federal prison, putting residents on edge.

After six guards were found murdered outside the prison last week, President Vicente Fox intensified his efforts to impose order on warring drug lords who have operated with impunity out of the country's three maximum-security federal prisons.

Earlier this month, he sent the army into a federal prison outside Mexico City. On Friday, troops took over the federal prison in Guadalajara.

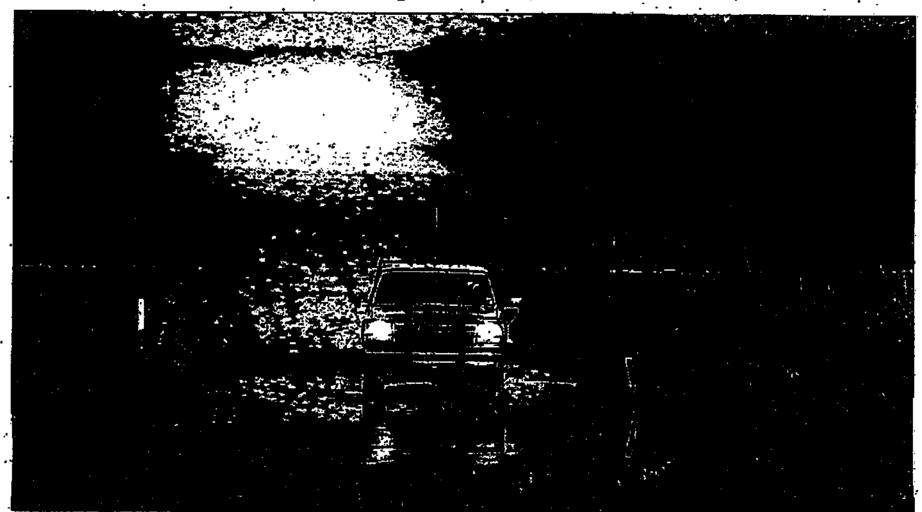
The action had mixed results in Matamoros this week. When federales showed up at 5:30 a.m. to search the facility, the prison warden kept them waiting outside for an hour. According to news reports, the police didn't find much when they finally got inside: 15 knives, a saw, six computer diskettes, six box-cutters, five pairs of scissors and 10 pairs of sneakers with shoelaces. Laces are prohibited.

The daily newspaper in town

See BORDER, back page

Vicente Fox
Mexico's president says he doesn't want interference in internal affairs.

In West Texas, a battle against nature to restore scarce water



Matt Rourke photos: AMERICAN-STATESMAN

It's been a long time since drivers have encountered a pool at the Pecan Creek low-water crossing on Door Key Lane near San Angelo. Brush control efforts have been credited with rejuvenating the stream by ridding the landscape of water-hogging cedar and mesquite trees.

Reclaiming the land

Trees are being razed so San Angelo ranches again might thrive

By Asher Price
AMERICAN-STATESMAN STAFF

SAN ANGELO — The oldest ranchers in these parts say the only trees here a half-century ago on the grassy savannah were the pecans and the live oaks that thirsted by the banks of creeks and rivers. Those creeks are long dry, and the trees that fed upon them are parched and rotted. It was the enormous appetites of the mesquite and cedar that exhausted the land of water, that crowded out the prairie grass and eventually starved the competition.

Now deep within the dense, shrubby forest of invasives that has taken root on the ranch of James Powell, a lone excavator is restoring long-lost grasslands, one tree at a time. Swiveling in a whiny frenzy, the giant machine slices each tree just below its ankles, scoops it in the air and flings it to the ground. Fallen trees litter a swath of machine tracks. They will be left for termites or set afire, and, in a decade or so, the grasses will return — and, perhaps, the water.

Brush clearance will cost Powell about $70 an acre, but the state pays 70 percent of the cost. It is one way programs partly underwritten by state agencies promise to remake the earth and skies of this wide-open country. With a combination of aerial herbicide spraying and widespread grubbing (the name for the excavator's work), shearing (in which a machine with gigantic scissors cuts down trees), or chaining (an enormous battleship-anchor chain is tied between two bulldozers, which proceed to maul a small forest) the state hopes to suppress mesquite and cedar in 910,000 acres, or about 1,400 square miles, in the San Angelo area alone. It has

See LAND, A12

James Powell and other Texas ranchers are expected to pay 30 percent of the brush-clearing cost, and to recoup that money within a decade.

The questioned science of cloud seeding gets little support, A12.

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By Robert Elder
AMERICAN-STATESMAN ST

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By Larry Kaplow
INTERNATIONAL STAFF

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See IRAQ, A10

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LAND: Waging a Texas-sized tussle, one tree at a time

Continued from A1

already cleared 493,000 acres. At the same time, it has given some money to cloud-seeding operations designed to stimulate rain.

In its scale, ambition and history, it is a Texan tale of man against nature, and it may yet prove a futile showdown.

"If something isn't done, this whole region is moving into desert," said Fred Teagarden, a senior hydrologist at the Upper Colorado River Authority. "The reason we're so zealous is because it's a matter of survival."

The reign of the trees

The cedar and mesquite are icons of the range that have made themselves a little too much at home. The reign of the brush has been long and terrible, according to the ranchers, and no one knows quite how it began.

Some say conquistadores imported the cedar as feed for their horses. More likely the plants originally grew only along streams and rivers in open groves in Texas. The suppression of prairie fires by European immigrants, overgrazing, wagon trains crossing the state, trail drives and drought led to their spread.

Whatever the exact cause, the plants have moved across the state: There are as many as 130 million mesquite trees and 100 million cedars statewide. They are durable (mesquite roots can grow 65 feet deep), they are thirsty (2,800 pounds of water translates into only one pound of mesquite), and they are persistent.

"Chopping cedar sprouts is a lot like playing a video game: You find and zap endless streams of enemies that appear to die but then come roaring back for more battle," wrote Rick Smith, a columnist for the San Angelo Standard-Times. "It's completely altered the character of the land," said Powell, who has ranched in the area since the early 1950s.

The jumble of brush has reduced the amount of cattle that ranchers can raise and squeezed water resources in San Angelo, a city of about 90,000 on the edge of the Edwards Plateau between West Texas desert and arid Hill Country. Some of its lakes and reservoirs are at only 5 percent to 10 percent capacity, and the city has anxiously purchased the rights to more than 1,000 acre-feet, or about 326 million gallons, of water annually from upriver ranchers, said Will Wilde, director of the city's public works department.

The fate of the city's water resources, which under current conditions will meet demand only through 2025, hinges in large part on the success of the ambitious brush-control program. By destroying the sponge-like brush, the state hopes to increase the amount of water that trickles into city water sources.

Matt Rourke photos AMERICAN-STATESMAN

An excavator goes to work on the Pecan Creek Ranch in Tom Green County, eliminating the mesquite and cedar trees that rob vegetation of much-needed water. If the effort works, ranches will be able to run more cattle and thrive again some day.

Time for a change

The Texas Brush Control program was established by the Legislature in 1985, but the program was not funded until 1999, when Rob Junell, then a Democratic representative from San Angelo, championed a bill that earmarked $7 million for brush clearance in the San Angelo area.

Brush clearance projects, all based in West and Central Texas, have received about $25 million more in bond and general revenue money since then. The state pays for 70 percent of the brush clearance on private property. Property owners might expect to recoup their 30 percent share a full decade later in enough grasses to run more cattle.

"That reimbursement is critical," said Darrell Ueckert, a professor of rangeland ecology and management at Texas A&M. "It's gotten to be extremely expensive (to clear brush), and if the rancher has to bear the entire cost himself he can't afford to do it. The rate of return is not sufficient to justify that expense."

The cost of brush control depends on the type and density of brush, the soil and topography of the area treated, and the method chosen, but generally comes out to $60 to $70 per acre.

The brush clearance reduces the total evapotranspiration, or the loss of water into the atmosphere due to the evaporation from soil and from leaves and shrubs, Ueckert said. The flush of grass uses water more efficiently, allowing more water to seep downward, in turn rejuvenating springs, rivers and reservoirs.

"The brush control has been very good for people out here," he said. "It's stimulated the economy and it's good for wildlife."

The program has its challengers. Environmentalist groups have criticized the destruction of habitat for the golden-cheeked warbler and the black-capped vireo, endangered songbirds also found in Austin. A drought since the late 1990s has made measuring the program's success elusive.

"Brush control won't matter without rainfall," said Johnny Oswald, a program administrator at the Texas Soil and Water Conservation Board.

> *'We're dealing with Mother Nature and trying to control something that seems impossible to control. We have to try to make a dent where the most water is.'*
>
> **Johnny Oswald**
> a program administrator at the Texas Soil and Water Conservation Board

Officials at the Upper Colorado River Authority and the Texas Soil and Water Conservation Board are still able to point to small victories, like the restoration of the once-perennial Pecan Creek, southeast of town, which had been intermittently dry for decades.

But even the fiercest proponents of the project say they can never hope to eradicate the brush.

"You're never going to whip it, but you can always try to control it," said Stephen Brown, a former city manager for San Angelo.

"We're dealing with Mother Nature and trying to control something that seems impossible to control," Oswald said. "We have to try to make a dent where the most water is."

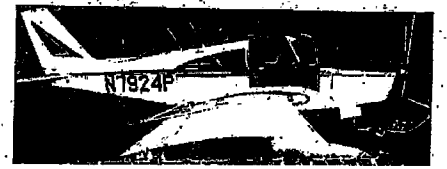
asherprice@statesman.com; 445-3543

State, federal money for cloud seeding is declining precipitously

By Asher Price
AMERICAN-STATESMAN STAFF

SAN ANGELO — Out of a small, octagonal building still stocked with antiquated National Weather Service equipment at Mathis Field airport, James Selasky oversees a nonprofit "weather modification" operation that [illegible] be all dried up.

The cloud seeding is designed "to give the growing cloud a 'nudge' to enable it to be more efficient in the way it uses available cloud droplets to grow raindrops," according to a summary of "Rain Enhancement" operations posted by the Texas Department of Licensing [illegible]



Whatever the case, cloud-seeding operations soon might be without state money. The Legislature did not appropriate money for cloud seeding in the past session; and remaining money from previous state grants, which once totaled more than $1 million, is now down to less than $65,000. Any additional

weather modification research in the 1970s but now spends less than $500,000 annually.

"Certainly, cloud modification does work," said Richard Orville, a Texas A&M University professor of atmospheric sciences. What is uncertain is whether that affects rainfall on the ground, he said.

LANDOWNER INSPIRED BY SOUTH AFRICAN GRAZING PROGRAM

STANDARD-TIMES PHOTO BY ARTHUR SPRAGG

Rancher Jimmie Powell's plans to maximize his ranch land's productivity include killing water-hogging trees such as mesquite and ashe juniper, then burning the stumps and grassland. He intends to have 100 pastures supplied with water that cattle can forage on for five days every six months.

ON THE DOUBLE

Rancher plans to multiply land's production capacity

Perry Flippin
editor emeritus
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or 659-8217

It's back to the future for Jimmie Powell, who expects to clear the remaining mesquite, juniper and cactus from his 33,000-acre Pecan Creek Ranch next year.

Powell, past president of the Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association as well as past president of the Texas Sheep and Goat Raisers Association, intends to double the production capacity of native rangeland by rotating livestock within 320-acre "paddocks."

Coming Monday
A look at a key developer of the former Door Key Ranch property.

Powell is the latest rancher to hold title to part of the former Door Key Ranch, which was founded in 1880 by a pair of St. Louis businessmen — Albert Leath and Jack Frost. The Ewing Brothers bought the ranch for $31,500, and, later, John Willis Johnson paid $208,000 in 1909 — $4 per acre.

Acquiring the Door Key made Johnson the largest landowner in Tom Green County, with more than 90,000 acres. The ranch remained in Johnson family hands for nearly a century. Now, all of the Johnson ranch holdings have passed into new hands.

"The economic objective in any

Please see PERRY, Page 7A

STANDARD-TIMES PHOTO BY ARTHUR SPRAGG

Leon Johnson smiled back at his cousin, Scott Uhl, and grandfather Jimmie Powell as the three shared a funny moment during the Powell Hereford Sale at Six Mile Ranch, near Fort McKavett.

Ranch evolves with the times

When "Tip" Van Court went to work at the Door Key Ranch in 1957, the boss sent him to round up 200 wild horses — a dangerous job suited only for the bold or the foolhardy.

"They had suffered terribly through the drought," he recalled, explaining how corrals were built around water to trap the cagey steeds.

After 27 days and one terrifying encounter with a rampaging stallion, he shipped the last of the herd, no longer fit for ranch use, to a dog food factory in California.

"Looking back now, it would have been much kinder to kill them," Van Court continued, somberly. "It was an exciting experience but not one of my favorite memories."

Van Court, 79, and his wife of 57 years, Billie, still live on the ranch where she was reared. Her father, uncle and grandfather first leased 20 sections of the Door Key in 1925, following the death of pioneer John Willis Johnson, who bought the ranch in 1909 for $4 an acre ($208,000).

Please see CHANGES, Page 4A

CHANGES: Ranch life hasn't changed much in 100 years

Continued from Page 1A

The Van Courts' lease ended last November, when Johnson's heirs sold the Door Key to San Angelo real estate developer Joe Heartsill.

Heartsill said he will retain the 4,536-acre headquarters ranch, 14 miles southeast of San Angelo. He has no plans to sell that ranch.

"The Van Courts can live there as long as they want," Heartsill said, citing the former operator's extensive knowledge of the ranch.

I asked Van Court whether it saddened him to see the historic Door Key being sold piecemeal for development.

"At first, I was a little depressed about seeing it cut up," he told me, "but now, as I see what's being done, I'm more excited and grateful that I'm being a small part of it."

Six days a week, he drives a bulldozer, pushing noxious brush from the ranch that once ran 1,000 cows and 10,000 sheep and goats.

"Now it's going to have zero — or nearly zero," he said.

"I'm amazed that people are so interested," Van Court continued. "We'll sit ductive people and new ideas.

"It's an exciting time, really."

Yet people buying ranch home sites — presumably in search of solitude — are building houses next to highways, a strange phenomenon to reclusive ranchers such as Van Court who prize their privacy.

The most beautiful part of the Door Key, he said, is along the high bluff west of U.S. Highway 277, where sunsets are spectacular. Below the bluff, the South Concho River flows into Twin Buttes Reservoir.

Another favorite area of his is the mesa-topped hills in the southwestern-most part of the ranch near Christoval, which includes the highest spot in Tom Green County.

"The terrain is totally different," said Van Court, still captivated by its natural beauty.

"My dream was to get all the brush off of it," he continued. "Except for five sections, I got it all off three times. Every time I'd get it off, it would get dry, and we'd run out of money and have to stop. It would come back — thicker than ever.

"I was just chipping at it. We didn't have the financial ability to do enough acres to make any difference. With the state's help, pay 80 percent of the cost to clear brush; the state pays 65 percent (the extra 5 percent serving as an incentive to keep livestock off the land for at least 90 days).

Van Court has calculated that he can push 240 trees in an hour — about an acre.

"Multiply that by four years," he said. "That's a lot of trees. If each tree drinks just a handful of water, that's an ocean of water that we're not losing."

People might not understand the significance of brush clearing until they see streams running again, such as Pecan Creek, which has flowed this year for the first time since 1990.

Recalling the primitive conditions in which his grandfather drove cattle to the railheads, Van Court turned sentimental about the often-harsh and always-lonely life on the ranch: "It was romantic, and it was fun. We loved it. It took a special kind of personality to do that."

Except for pickups instead of wagons, he said, ranch life hasn't changed much in those 100 years.

"We managed (Door Key Ranch) the best we could with the resources we had," he continued. "We all loved the land."

Some lessees are still bitter about the ranch being sold for real-estate development, but Van Court said he doesn't feel that way.

"We've been so fortunate to enjoy this place for 50-something years," he said. "It's probably time that other people get an opportunity.

"Time can't stand still. It's got to move on. I hope I get to live to see it all work out."

— Perry Flippin

Rancher: Agriculture needs incentives

Editor's note: The Preview '93 stories in today's business section are based on speeches given during the annual conference Tuesday. Stories from the program concerning new construction at Shannon Medical Center and San Angelo Police Chief Russell Smith's call for the creation of a community coalition against crime were published in Wednesday's newspaper.

By WILLIAM TAYLOR
Staff Writer

Government policies enacted six decades ago have reduced the U.S. farm population and should eventually force prices up on some commodities, rancher James L. Powell told those attending Preview '93 last week.

But needed growth and long-term stability will not come until incentives are in place to bring younger people into agriculture, he said.

The annual program featured a slate of local business and community leaders, who provided their own views of the San Angelo economy and community.

More than 100 people attended the morning-long session at Angelo State University. It was sponsored by the Leadership San Angelo Alumni Association and the San Angelo Chamber of Commerce.

S-T photo by Mike Howell

West Texas rancher James Powell talks about agribusiness during Preview '93 at Angelo State University Tuesday.

Powell explained U.S. farm policy came in response to rising prices forced by increased demand from a growing U.S. and world population.

"In the 1930s, politicians found (that rising prices were) unpopular, so government subsidies were initiated to keep the family farmer in business to produce an abundance," he said.

That policy allowed the older farmer to make a meager living and stay on the farm, but encouraged the young farmer to seek higher-paying jobs in the cities, he said.

"That wasn't exactly the concept Congress had in mind at the time, but that is the result," Powell said.

Today, the average age among farmers is 55, but the number of agriculturalists in the United States continues to drop. Eventually, that will create "pockets of scarcity" in the market, sending prices higher and increasing demand for imports, he explained.

Powell predicted that rising prices will encourage an increase in U.S. cattle production.

But current cattle numbers are level with last year and about 4 percent lower than in 1975, he said. Texas cattle numbers are up 2 percent this year.

"This condition should keep cattle prices at higher levels until the beef cattle inventory begins to increase faster than the increase in U.S. civilian population or some very negative, reliable publicity surfaces that reduces demand for beef," Powell said.

Sheep industry numbers have also been dropping, he said. The number of sheep is down 5 percent nationwide this year and 7 percent in Texas.

Those numbers also should send prices higher, but price movement has been slow, Powell added.

Currently, prices of both wool and

Please see POWELL, Page 2B

POWELL

Continued from Page 1B

mohair, two major West Texas agriculture products, are down, "resulting in an increased use of fine apparel wools produced in this area," he said. "The use of mohair is not yet increasing, but should as fashions change to a softer look."

Powell explained that "a confined market limited to a number of buyers and little competition has led to lower prices," while the federal government has provided incentives to produce more wool and mohair because of their strategic importance in case of war.

"On balance, I believe the West Texas economy and business in general in this community should remain stable as it is influenced by the livestock industry," Powell concluded.

But, he added, "Strong improvement and growth may not be seen in this industry until long-term stability in prices and availability of credit for the younger people wishing to enter agriculture develop."

WORK AT HOME—James L. Powell of Fort McKavitt, president of the Texas Sheep & Goat Raisers' Association, takes time from ranch chores to catch up on paper work at his home office.

TS&GRA CHIEF

Jimmy Powell's Work Schedule Keeps Him Busy

James L. Powell, Schleicher County ranchman and president of the Texas Sheep & Goat Raisers' Association, is a quite busy young man on the move—looking after vast ranching interests and his duties as head of the largest wool and mohair group in the nation.

Serving his first year as president of the TS&GRA, Powell is a fourth generation stockman—his great-grandfather, having been a stockman in Tennessee, the native state of his grandfather, the late L. P. Powell of San Angelo.

Powell resides on his home ranch of 11,000 acres, near Fort McKavett, his postoffice, located in Schleicher County, but he spends much time these days traveling in carrying out his duties as TS&GRA president as well as looking after personal business. He comes to San Angelo several times each month to catch up on any association business that may be pending.

Powell takes an optimistic view of the sheep business for the next few years. He looks for lambs and ewes to do very well pricewise. Numbers in Texas are lowest thev

County ranch, Powell operats the 14-section Thompson Ranch, located mostly in Sutton County.

Powell and two brothers-in-law, Mort Mertz of Big Lake and Joe Bean of Ozona, also operate a 40-section ranch 30 miles north of Rankin in Upton County.

Other than his partnership interests, Powell runs about 5,000 sheep, all Rambouillet producing about a three-inch staple fleece, 450 to 500 Hereford and Angus cows and about 750 Angora goats. He maintains small registered herds of Angus and Herefords to raise his own bulls and also has a registered Rambouillet flock, producing his own rams and selling others to sheepmen over the area.

The Powell ranch home, modern in every detail and with every convenience, is located on a slight hill, a sort of knoll, in about the middle of the ranch. From one side there is a view of Fort McKavett, about six miles away, and from another side may be seen the cultivated and irrigated acreage

When the home was built a lot

GRADING WOOL—Grading fleeces from his Rambouillet flock takes up much of the time of James L. Powell, TS&GRA president, at his home ranch in Schleicher County. Powell has shed space for 500 sheep in case of showers when shearing is in progress and loses very little, if any, time during this spring operation.

MOMENTS OF LEISURE—The James L. Powell family finds time for some relaxation in their comfortable home atop a knoll on the home ranch. Mrs. Powell is the former Miss Nancy Hunt of Sonora. Playing cowgirl is Lorrie, the 18-month-old daughter of the Powells. (Staff Photos by Smith)

WORK AT HOME—James L. Powell of Fort McKavitt, president of the Texas Sheep & Goat Raisers' Association, takes time from ranch chores to catch up on paper work at his home office.

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Powell takes an optimistic view of the sheep business for the next few years. He looks for lambs and ewes to do very well pricewise. Numbers in Texas are lowest they have been in some time and many ranches to the west of San Angelo have very few, if any, sheep. Prices have been steady on replacement ewes.

"There is less inventory and a greater demand for wool," Powell says. "The only thing that might dampen the market will be imports, particularly if tariffs and quotas are lowered from their present positions."

He served more than two years in the U.S. Navy, most of this time on the West Coast and in the China Seas.

Ranching since 1948, Powell graduated from San Angelo High School and Rice University (then Institute) at Houston where he majored in business administration and economics. He did graduate work at the University of Texas in ecoonomics. He is an avid student of today's business and keeps in close touch with both state and national legislative proposals concerning agriculture and taxes. When any new legislative proposal regarding agriculture comes up, Powell makes a close analysis of the l.eo in an effort to determine just how it might affect agriculture, whether it will be beneficial or detrimental to the industry.

Powell doesn't do all his association work in the headquarters office here. He has an office just off the front door of his home where he spends much time.

A member of the association since he began ranching, Powell has been a director since 1955 and served as vice president for a year. He is a former chairman of the association's wool and mohair promotion committee and was a chairman of the Miss Wool of American Pageant Committee.

On his home ranch he has about 220 acres in cultivation, with about 100 acres under irrigation from wells. All feed raised goes into his own livestock. In the winter the irrigation acreage is used for pasturage.

In addition to the Schleicher County ranch, Powell operates the 14-section Thompson Ranch, located mostly in Sutton County.

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When the home was built a lot of fill had to be hauled in and soil conditions were not the best in the country for flowers but Mrs. Powell got her husband, Jimmy, (that's what everyone calls him) to move in a little more dirt here and there. Now she has a fine yard and flowers, roses and the like.

In keeping with the family's belief in wool and mohair as the best of natural fibers, all drapes, carpeting and upholstery in the home are either wool or mohair, or a combination of the two.

Powell's grandfather migrated to Texas from Tennessee, farmed briefly and then started homesteading and selling land in the Panhandle and later in New Mexico, finally settling in Reagan County near Big Lake and later moving to San Angelo.

His parents are Mr. and Mrs. Virgil Powell, 1401 S. Madison. Virgil Powell, ranchman and oilman, is a former vice president of the TS&GRA but resigned when his health would not permit him to devote time to duties of the office. His grandmother, Mrs. L. P. Powell, lives at 1401 Paseo de Vaca.

Powell and Miss Nancy Hunt, who is a former Miss Mohair, were married Feb. 27, 1960 in Sonora. They have one daughter Lorrie, who was 18-months old May 10.

Powell has twin sisters, Marolyn, who is Mrs. Bean, and Madolyn, who is Mrs. Mertz.

Running Water And Grass Focus Of Powell Ranch Tour

By JERRY LACKEY
Agriculture Editor

FORT McKAVETT — When a ranch operation can show the doubling of animal units and have running water where there was none and plenty of grass to eat . . . all in a time when a drought seems to grip the state . . . Jimmie Powell can make believers in range management of a lot of people.

And that was the scene in this Live oak and rocky terrain Thursday as over 1,000 ranchmen, farmers and politicians walked over ranchland that has been carefully managed and cleared of mesquite and other brush. Powell didn't have to say much . . . the evidence was all around.

Texas' No. 1 rancher, Gov. Dolph Briscoe was the keynote speaker at a noon program under the giant flag pole in the center of the fort's parade ground. As a whirlwind whipped by, he turned to a rancher-neighbor and said: "If that's not a sign of drought, I don't know what is."

The Powell Ranch, host of tour and field day co-sponsored by the Eldorado-Divide Soil and Water Conservation District, the Texas Agricultural Extension Service and a number of other Texas research and range conservation societies, welcomed guests with hot coffee and doughnuts at an old chuckwagon setup in front of the beautifully landscaped headquarters. Following introductions and a welcome address by Powell, guests were loaded on 14 buses and transported to different pastures of the ranch to view improvements.

The ranch had been operated since 1934 with a continuous grazing program. During the good years, mutton lambs were held until spring, increasing the stocking rate for sheep by as much as 25 percent during the winter months. In the dry years all offspring were sold. During the 1951-1957 periods, female stock were sold to the level of 24 units per section from a high of about 70 animal units per section in 1942.

"In 1970, the ranch was entered in a Great Plains Conservation Program contract. Our range management program consisted of a complete brush control program and a modified short duration rotation plan," explains Powell. "As mesquite and other non-beneficial plants were treedozed and reseeding followed.

"Four years prior to the brush control program, the range was fenced into approximate 1,000-acre pastures, and water was placed on each one-half section," he continued. "Before lambing in October, the ewes were separated into pastures, as were the cattle prior to calving in November."

At this time livestock were spread over 12 pastures equally and located for the winter. In the spring (April) lambs were weaned, and ewes were grouped and rotation began. One-third of the ranch, four pastures, was designated for deferment for the growing season. The livestock were rotated every two weeks through the remaining eight pastures. In June the calves were weaned, and the cattle joined the rotation plan.

"Critical information drawn from forage analysis has guided our more recent breeding and pasture rotation program," commented Powell. "It has given us the much-needed scientific approach to feed and mineral supplementation leading to maximum livestock production.

"Feed and mineral supplements are prescribed to eliminate the deficiencies," he says. "A hay program during the cold winter months was successfully begun in the winter of 1976. Round bales weighing approximately 1,500 pounds are put up on irrigated fields in the summer and fed all livestock during the most severe winter."

Calf crops generally have held steady and lamb crop averages have increased about 15 per cent. Calf shipping weight averages have increased about 34 pounds, and the calf holding period has been reduced from 10 months to 8 months. Lamb shipping weights are about the same, but we are now able to deliver during the Easter spring lamb market with handy weights.

"Coordinating the brush control, range and livestock management, and forage analysis-supplemental feeding programs, we have experienced an increase in stocking rates of 129 per cent since our lower rates in 1957 to our present level of 55 units of 22 inches of rain with about 15 inches occuring during the warm season. Rainfall peaks occur in May and October.

Vegetation on the ranch is quite typical of the Edwards Plateau type. The vegetation changes as soil types change. The hills have shallow soil underlain by limestone and a rocky surface. The valleys are typically fairly deep, heavy soils.

The vegetation on the hills consists of oak and other trees in a savannah form with grassy areas between. The valleys are typified by larger oaks, mesquite, and mid to tall grasses. Weeds or forbs comprise a major component in the area

More important grasses include switchgrass, several species of bluestem and gramas, Indiangrass, wildrye, curley mesquite, buffalograss and Texas wintergrass. Major forbs include orange zexmenia, bush sunflower, mallows, peavines and vetches, verbena, cone flower and some lotebush.

Governor's Speech

Texas governor Dolph Briscoe was keynote speaker at the Jimmie Powell Ranch field day when over 1,000 agriculture people took a break for lunch on the parade grounds of hisforic Fort McKavett Thursday. The governor told those ranchmen to continue their lifestyles despite the hardships "for you are the real conservationists and environmentalists of this country and someday those who eat will realize that." (Photos by Lackey)

Oil & Agriculture

Surviving the 1980s, looking toward the 1990s

On the cover

The morning sun provides a stunning silhouette of a windmill on the road from San Angelo to Brady *(Photo by Mike Howell)*. Insets: James Powell is pictured on his ranch near Fort McKavett *(Photo by Mike Howell)*. Cows walk across a clearing in a pasture near a pump jack *(Photo by Joe McClure)*.

Powell ranch perfect setting for retirement

By JOE McCLURE
Staff Writer

FORT McKAVETT — Nestled in the rolling hills of the Edwards Plateau near the Schleicher-Sutton county line is a modern ranch home with all the conveniences of a neighborhood home situated near a public park.

The oasis-like setting looks over a vast rangeland and small fertile valley. The rangeland is home for Hereford cattle, Rambouillet sheep and Spanish goats, while the valley produces hay in the summertime to satisfy at least a portion of the animals' winter feed requirements.

The oasis is called Six Mile Ranch and is home for James "Jimmy" L. Powell and his wife, Nancy. Their nearest neighbor is in Fort McKavett six miles away, hence the ranch name.

Powell, who will retire from the presidency of the Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association in March, has his computer-filled office next to the stone patio. The patio, protected on two sides by the house, is bordered by oak trees, flower gardens and a manicured lawn.

Down a rock path and through a little area of undisturbed native flora is the tennis court. The native vegetation, lawn and cultured flowers around the ranch house area are protected from the intrusion of white-tail deer and other unwanted guests by an 8-foot fence.

S-T photo by Mike Howell

Jimmy and Nancy Powell's ranch spreads far behind them.

The Powells are parents of two daughters who graduated from the University of Texas and are now living and working away from home. Lorrie is in San Antonio, and Victoria is in Austin.

The third-generation ranching family is living on an 11,600-acre ranch purchased by Powell's grandfather more than 50 years ago. During the past several years the ranchland has changed considerably.

All the mesquites have been grubbed out and many improved varieties of grasses and beneficial forbes have been introduced. New mesquites are eliminated when they are found. Grass burs and cockleburs also have been grubbed out and eliminated.

Seven families live on the ranch to help keep the operation going smoothly.

The ranch has been able to increase the animal-unit population by 50 percent with the incorporation of cell structured pastures. The high intensity-low frequently rotational grazing schedule has a two-week sheep grazing period, followed by a two-week resting period. The cattle are then grazed on the pasture for two weeks before the pasture is rested for 24 weeks.

The 30-week cycle allows natural reseeding of pasture grasses and forbes by preventing livestock from grazing at the same time of year for more than 10 years.

Powell said when he started the cell system in 1957 his stocking rate was 24 animal units per section, and it is at 44 animal units now.

Diversification, along with a keen eye on consumer demand, is the key to surviving in today's ranching industry, Powell said.

In the past 50 years, the ideal beef animal in the American rancher's eye has fluctuated from a small frame, wasty fat animal to a large frame, lean animal and neither actually produced the beef that the American consumer wanted, he said.

There is a place in the market for over fat beef cattle, he said, referring to Kobe beef that is produced in Japan. Kobe beef is produced from pampered beef animals that are hand fed for several years. The market price is very high, but the volume is too small to compete in, he said.

Powell raises registered Hereford cattle and has a commercial herd of crossbred Hereford and Angus.

"The cross breeding gives the offspring a boost from hybrid vigor that pays off in the pasture, feedlot, slaughter plant and the meat market," he said.

The cross will produce a 1,100-pound Choice, yield grade 2 steer that meets the demand of packers.

"The beef from that animal is nutritious, healthful and tasty, and will satisfy the current American taste with a minimum of waste fat," he said. "When the consumer demand changes, we will change with it."

The same philosophy is applied to the Rambouillet sheep flock to produce crossbred show lambs and lean-lamb for the demanding consumer, he said.

Angora goats are raised on the Edwards County portion of the ranch where the terrain is more adaptable to the goats.

Oil wells are scattered around the pastures, offering another form of diversification.

The annual fall steer supply is sold through auctions, direct to buyers and via satellite auction. Powell also has maintained ownership of the steers through feedlots when the market appears in his favor, he said.

Powell, who has contributed a large share of his adult life to public service, says everybody should contribute some time and effort to his favorite organization.

"Public service has been a rewarding experience," he said. "There are a lot of young people coming up who are educated and have a lot of good ideas. They need to get in public service and do a good job. There are a lot of changes and challenges facing the industry today, and we need agriculturally educated people to guide it."

Powell said he is going to "tend to my business" when he retires from the leadership of the TSCRA in March.

Tending to his own business in the past has included being a director of banks scattered from Houston to Ozona and being connected to several wool and mohair warehouse organizations and a utility company.

Powell also has been chairman of the University of Texas System Board of Regents, member of the UT Development Board, the UT Chancellor's Council and the UT M.D. Anderson Cancer Hospital Board of Visitors.

Improved pastures boost production 80 per cent

By JAMES E. VANCE
Star-Telegram Writer

FT. MCKAVETT — Fleshy Hereford cattle grazed near by, and fat Rambouillet lambs scampered in the distance as rancher Jimmie L. Powell reached down in the pasture and yanked out a handful of thick grass.

"Don't guess I can remember when this ol' country showed more promise," he remarked.

For this, he gave a lot of credit to the extra six or eight inches of moisture per year during the past four or five years. But Powell himself can take credit for the improvements which have seen him double the number of animal units on his pastures, resulting in what is essentially 80 per cent increased production of beef, lamb, wool and mohair.

The ranch encompasses 12,000 acres about four miles west of historic Ft. McKavett, where the Hill Country blends into the Edwards Plateau.

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POWELL, A GRADUATE of Rice Institute, has the sort of imagination which probes for answers. The ranch and its output show that Powell has found the right answers to everything from combatting drought to analyzing grasses to determine which nutritional elements are lacking for livestock.

"Finding ways to produce more grass, and the animal output is a never-ending job," Powell said. "The drought in the '50s taught me the first big lesson — we were into it for two years before we knew it.

"Grass was under stress and I was down to 27 animal units per section of land (640 acres). Mesquite and other brush was competing for the water."

(An animal unit, by his definition, is one head of cattle, five sheep or six goats.)

Mesquite uses up about 2,700 pounds of water to produce one pound of leaf forage for animals, while only 700 to 750 pounds of water are required by the better species of grasses.

Stock not only will eat the grass better Powell pointed out, but with it, they make higher gains.

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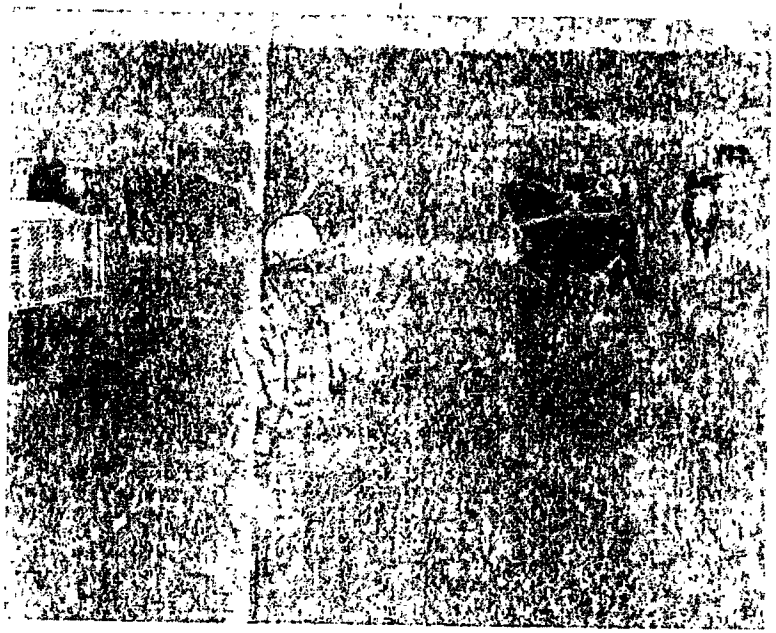
TO BEGIN A program of grass management, Powell bulldozed the mesquite and other undesirable brush, and then sowed the scarred terrain with seeds of native improved sprangletop and sideoats grasses, along with the new Klein grass.



—Star-Telegram Photo

PROLIFIC PASTURES . . . Jimmie Powell on his Ft. McKavett ranch

After ranges were clean, the ranch was crossfenced into 12 pastures of 1,000 acres each. Windmills were spaced to furnish water in each half-section (320 acres, to keep livestock from "walking off" pounds of meat, and losing wool and mohair, to reach water.

"In addition to the reseeded grasses, some of the native grasses we didn't know were here made a return, Powell added. "And if you don't think livestock knows what's best, these grasses are the 'ice cream' of the pastures."

The terrain climbs some 150 to 200 feet from the valleys to the top of the hills. Powell evaluates pastures by ten per centage of valley, where grass traditionally grows better, to low stoney and shallow hills.

"I noticed that in a pasture that was 70 per cent hillside and 20 per cent valley, ewes dropped 20 per cent fewer lambs and cows had 10 per cent fewer calves than they did in other pastures," he said. "This started me to wondering why — and what might be missing in the soil and what nutrients the grass might not be getting."

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POWELL PROBABLY was the first rancher in Texas to have forage tested. Farmers and some ranchers have soil analyzed, but stop short of having forage tested.

"The mineral content in this particular pasture was much lower, with phosphorus [illegible] ments in most critically low supply," Powell said. "They were as much as a third lower."

Phosphorus is necessary for bone development, and aids in reproduction in animals. Copper is vital for wool, and magnesium is important to "unlock" other minerals for use, as well as helping prevent grass tetany sickness in animals when there is heavy rainfall on forage.

So supplemental feeding of animals seemed to be necessary.

"One of the biggest problems is getting a mixture of the ingredients. Most feed-mixing companies want to sell their own, and they don't want to mix less than 2,000 pounds," Powell said.

"However, once the minerals were ment in each pasture, the stock just seemed to inhale it, and about a month later they had adjusted. It costs about $6 per year per ewe but it comes back, and much more, in more lambs, marketed at higher weights."

His livestock combination on pastures consists of 40 per cent cattle, 48 per cent sheep and 12 per cent goats.

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NOW THAT THERE is ample grass, Powell makes sure that it isn't abused by overgrazing.

"Basically, stock grazes in a high intensity, low frequency system two weeks and then are removed for 14 weeks. The grass really pops up," he said. "What it amounts to is that about two-thirds of the pastures are grazed each year, leaving the remaining third to rest and grow for a year."

Powell breeds ewes to lamb in fall, getting the lambs ready for spring market when prices generally are higher. This also provides more grass for other stock during the hot summer.

He maintains a complete vaccination and health program, and clean pastures and flourishing grass reduce health problems.

"There has been an increase of 15 per cent in the lamb crop, and their weights when shipped to market have increased from 70 pounds to 79 or 80 pounds. There has been a five or six per cent gain in the number of calves, with weaning weights up from 480 pounds to 495 pounds."

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POWELL POINTED OUT a big wild turkey gobbler dashing across the road, and said that the increase in grass and other cover also attracts more deer, turkey and quail. These add to the ranch's income, through hunting leases.

He enlisted assistance from the Soil Conservation Service in brush control, and range specialists of the Texas Agricultural Extension Service for improving his pastures.

"Of course, our goal is a maximum of livestock. We don't know the limits, but I'm increasing the number as fast as the grass permits," Powell said.

Almost as satisfying to him as own progress is that of county agents now modifying his plan to fit other ranches. He believes that the program, in one form or another, could be adapted to fit into management of any ranch.

Powell said: "What it all boils down to is that economics will give a rancher a choice for his future. He can use intensive management, or he [illegible] of the

BULLDOZING AND RESEEDING have become Jimmie Powell's approach to the brush problem on his Fort McKavett ranch after years of experimentation. Powell, left, and Eldorado soil conservationist Bill Rountree look over an area dozed and reseeded last year. Righthand picture shows an area bulldozed and reseeded last winter, then rested since. The downed brush gives some idea of its former size and thickness.

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Jimmie Powell Moves Entirely To Mechanical Brush Control

FORT McKAVETT, Tex. — After years of experimenting in various types of chemical spraying for brush control, Jimmie Powell has gone over entirely to mechanical methods.

His father, Virgil Powell, volunteered acreage back in the early 1940s for some of the first experimental aerial spraying.

Jimmie, a past president of the National Wool Growers Assn. and Texas Sheep & Goat Raisers Assn., has followed his father's lead in brush experimentation. He says he has some areas on which he has spent $40 per acre or more on chemical control, some of it by conventional commercial methods and some strictly experimental. For a time he was personally involved in development of a foam spray technique which was eventually abandoned.

He says he has finally decided to place his faith in the bulldozer.

Over the last three years he has bulldozed and reseeded most of his 12,000 acre home ranch here; he plans to finish the rest of it in about another year.

He says under normal conditions the mechanical methods are more expensive, but he believes in the long pull they will prove to involve the least cost for the grass production increase and the life of the job. Preliminary counts indicate to him that he is getting about 95 percent kill by bulldozing mesquite, using a special blade that has two stinger type points which leave a modest pit and rip up relatively little unnecessary ground.

Commercial chemical methods usually get him 10-15 percent root kill, and in instances an outside top of about 85 percent.

Mechanical work on his place has run from as low as $9 per acre on thin scattered stands to around $24 on heavier brush, based on commercial time rates and including reseeding. Actually, he bought his own bulldozer and has his own operator.

He finds little resprouting from old growth after bulldozing, although he gets new seedlings from dormant seed in the ground. He plans to go back over each area about three years after the original work and get the seedlings with a smaller but similar stinger blade on a smaller farm type tractor.

He and Eldorado soil conservationist Bill Rountree estimate that he should have 15 years of good pasture use before he has to begin thinking about any major type of brush work again, beyond simple maintenance.

Powell signed up for a Great Plains conservation program on about two-thirds of the ranch. The first year used up the GP payment limit. The original program called for some aerial spraying, but he has wound up doing none of it. One reason he went to the bulldozer, besides the almost perfect kill, is that it provides a good seedbed for the grass seed hand-scattered immediately behind the dozer. Another is that it allows selectivity; it gives him a better opportunity to preserve the trees which make the best wildlife cover and feed.

He has been doing the mechanical work during the winter, starting after Jan. 1 and continuing until about May 15. He always hopes for spring showers to sprout the seed and get the grass up to a stand; he has had it the last couple of years. Livestock remain off of the newly worked area until after frost. They are allowed to graze that winter, then come off again about April 1; the pasture gets a second growing season deferment under the Great Plains agreement. The only further requirement is that it get one more three month growing season rest sometime during the next three years.

He plans to do the same work over the rest of the ranch without Great Plains aid.

His primary target has been mesquite, but he has also removed prickly ash, catclaw, tatebush, cedar and elgerita. For the benefit of wildlife he has left hackberry and liveoak.

In his reseeding program he has used basically native grasses including sideoats, green sprangletop and plains bristlegrass. The only introduced grass in the mixture is Klein, which he has found to be not only a high forage producer but a very palatable feed.

His livestock management program includes a modified

STILL A BELIEVER in sheep, Fort McKavett rancher Jimmy Powell also runs Angora goats and both Hereford and Angus cattle. His belief is not an article of blind faith, however; Powell studies every aspect of his business from picking replacement stock to monitoring foreign developments that may bear on local markets.

Jimmy Powell A Lifelong Student Of Ranching's Many Ins And Outs

By Colleen Schreiber

FORT MCKAVETT, Texas — Jimmy Powell is a rancher first and foremost, but his commitment to his career and that way of life stretches far beyond his own ranch entrance.

Powell, a third generation rancher whose grandfather took up ranching in West Texas in the early part of the 20th century, makes it his business to know the livestock industry inside and out — more important, he makes it his business to understand it as well as he can in all its complexities. It doesn't matter if it's foreign policy or domestic policy, the wool industry, the cattle market, or the lamb industry; Powell is up to speed on it all. He can even relate how much water a mesquite tree uses.

"If you're going to be successful, you have to know these things," Powell says.

His commitment to the industry often carries him to Washington to lobby on taxes, imports, and other issues of importance to stockmen. He also takes an active interest in the lives of the young people trying to make a living in agriculture.

Today Powell Ranches operates in Sutton, Schleicher and Menard counties in Texas, and in Cherry County, Nebraska.

Powell's grandfather, Leon P. Powell, was reared in Tennessee but migrated to Everman, Texas, just south of Fort Worth when he was only 19.

In those early days, Leon made his way in what might be called the "homesteading trade," a business distinct from homesteading itself. He proved up the land, got title to it and then sold it, staking a new claim elsewhere. He did this all over West Texas and New Mexico.

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In 1918, the family was liv-g at Capitan, New Mexico. was a terribly cold winter that ar, so much so that Powell kept ;ge bonfires burning at the se of the foothills to keep his eep alive. It was that expe-ence that sparked a desire to urn to Texas. He put his son, rgil James, Jimmy's father, charge and took off to Texas search of land.

Powell was able to find ıd close to Big Lake in the rthern part of Crockett unty. He wired his son to ıd the sheep by rail to Big ke. When the sheep arrived, ıy were apparently quite a ht. The animals had crowded close to the bonfires, Powell ys, that they singed their ol and the once white sheep re now black sheep.

It's been passed down ough the years that it was well's infatuation with the del T that got him started the sheep business.

"My grandfather apparently one of his friends driving wn the street of Roswell in a del T. Realizing that he could more country a lot quicker h a car than with a horse and gy, he approached his friend sk how he got enough money uy one," Powell says. "His nd told him that if he would sell his steers and buy sheep he would be able to make enough money to buy that car."

Powell followed his friend's advice, and in two years' time he had his own car. From that day forward, sheep, in his mind, were good property to own.

Powell says he's not really sure where his grandfather's original sheep genetics came from, but when he came back to Texas he shifted from the New Mexico type sheep to Corriedale. Jimmy's father, however, got his beginning with genetics from a herd near Deerlodge, Montana, owned by Sylvian Polly. He bought 1000 to 1500 head of yearling ewes from him.

Back then the Rambouillet had a closed face, and Powell says his father recognized the need to open it up. He wanted to do so without losing size, and he found the proper genetics in some rams at Caprock, New Mexico. Powell incorporated those genetics in 1934, and by about 1950 he had a herd of open-faced Rambouillets.

As the Powells expanded their operation to the east they added cattle to the enterprise. "This country here in Schleicher and Menard counties is wonderful combination country," Powell remarks. "You can raise about as many cattle in animal units as you can sheep, and you need to do that if you're going to maximize this country's potential."

Though the elder Powell had given up homesteading for ranching when he came back to Texas in 1918, he was still an expansionist at heart, and in those early years he and his son built a significant ranching enterprise in short order. By the 1930s they were operating in seven counties in Texas.

Growing up in the business, Jimmy developed a love for ranching.

"I never found any other activity that I enjoyed more — working with livestock and horses and the land. I get to use my imagination and my own judgment, and I'm not encumbered with company policies," Powell says.

His goal early in life was to one day carry on what his grandfather and father had started. Before doing so, however, he completed a degree at Rice University in accounting and then went on to the University of Texas for a master's in finance. His studies were interrupted when he was called into the armed forces to serve his country in the Korean War. Powell made it back to the family ranching operation permanently in 1954. He married Nancy Hunt, a native of Sonora whose family was also in the ranching business. Together they raised two daughters.

The 1950s were not the easiest times for ranchers in the Southwest. A severe drouth, now considered to be the drouth of the century, had a firm grip on all of West Texas.

"When we started in 1954, we actually thought we might be coming close to the end of the drouth," Powell recalls, "but turns out we were right in the middle of it.

"It was a tremendously hard environment to survive in," he continues. "We were burning pear from daylight to dark and feeding everything because there was absolutely nothing for the livestock to eat. That went on for 12 months a year until June 1957, when we got our first good rain."

The land eventually recovered, but it was a slow recovery as was the rebuilding process. The lessons learned during the drouth were many, and in 1966 when Powell had the opportunity to visit South Africa he took home yet another lesson that has helped him survive many more drouths.

While in South Africa, Powell learned about a range enhancement program — in effect, a high-intensity, low-frequency grazing system in which large pastures are divided into smaller units and livestock are rotated through the system on 14-day intervals.

"I learned that I could graze the grass right to the ground as long as I didn't reduce the root system. That means taking the livestock off before the 14th day," Powell explains.

Powell replicated that system upon his return, and it's been in place since. This system over time, he says, allowed him to increase stocking rates by 60 percent over the county average. He stocks about one animal unit to 12 acres compared to the county average of 20 acres to the animal unit.

Keeping brush in check, Powell says, is a big factor in being able to utilize such a rotational system. Over the years he's incorporated a variety of methods to control his mesquite and cedar, everything from grubbing to spraying to chaining and burning. Now it's mostly a maintenance type management program, Powell says.

The rotational grazing program is only employed during the growing season from about the first of May through the first part of October. The sheep are rotated through the system first. Cattle follow about two pastures behind. During the dormant season the livestock are grouped together.

"We would give up some in performance if we rotated the livestock during lambing or calving, so we don't start rotating again in the spring until after we're completely finished lambing and calving," Powell explains.

Powell considers himself a livestock man, not a cow man or a sheep man. Unlike his father, Powell has always had Angora goats in the mix.

As it was for his father and grandfather, however, sheep have often been the ranch's mainstay. The Powells have always raised a dual purpose sheep, though income from wool, in the early years, was often the profit factor.

"During the war, wool w..s a sought-after commodity . . a good product to rai..e." Powell says. "In the 1930s and 40s quite a few ranchers kept

See Powell
(Continued On Page 16)

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