

## Jotton planting flurry continues

1 Extension Journalist
LUBBOCK - Recent rains across most the South Plains cotton farming region re brought renewed optimism and new ivity among cotton farmers in the ion's biggest cotton patch.
Memories of last year's devastating ring weather, coupled with sparse rainIl and cooler than usual days this spring, e giving way to full-speed planting in the 5 counties surrounding Lubbock.
Cust in the federal Acreage Reduction rogram have area crop watches predicting lat close to 3.24 million acres of cotton iil be planted on the High Plains this sea-
on. That's about 90,000 acres more than as anticipated in the area last year, before ratic weather throughout the growing

Ag News Inside:
G.L. Willis, veteran cattleman, interviewed, Pg. 2.

Btu tax snubbed by both Panhandle congressmen, Pg. 3
season wiped out about two-thirds of the crop.

About 60 to 65 percent of the planting has been done, according to Kater Hake, cotton agronomist with the Texas Agricultural Extension Service. "The greatest delays are in the western part of the South Plains," he said

Although subsoil moisture was generally good across the region this spring, surface moisture was lacking in most of the dryland area which makes up about 55 per$\frac{\text { dryland area which makes up about } 55 \text { per- }}{\text { See COTTON, Page } 4}$

Farmers and Panchers $\sqrt{[5]}$


Solid stand of cotton
Ruperto Rodriguez, who farms 320 acres of cotton in Hale County, inspects his two-week-old cotton this week west of Plainview.

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Auto Service

## Veteran cattleman never saw such a market

News

## By GORDON ZEIGLER

 Ag－Review WriterDIMMITT－My，how times change in the cattle business． G．L．Willis，75，has
May 29
FLOYD COUNTY
PIONEER REUNION：Parade featuring old tractors will highlight annual celebration． highight amnual celebration
Parade time is $2: 30 \mathrm{p} . \mathrm{m}$ ．

## June 5 \＆ 6

CLOVIS ANNUAL CELEBRATION－Parade， tractor pull and other tracior pull and oner
activities will highlight a weekend of fun．

## June 12

ANNUAL ARMSTRONG TRACTOR PLAY DAY：Paul and Jackie Amstrong will host the event on their farm， $31 / 2$ miles west of Hart on $3 / 2$
FM 145，then three miles FM 145，then three miles
south．A slow race，parade South．A slow race，parade
and plowing contest will be and
held．

## July 3

HALE CENTER JULY FOURTH CENTENNIAL：A tractor show will be the highlight of Independence Day events，with a parade set at 10 a．m．

## July 3

ANNUAL WEBB TRACTORS SHOW AND PLAY DAY： host a tractor play day 3 host a tractor play day 3
miles northeast of Amarillo on FM 136．A parade， on FM 136．A parade， tractor pull，slow race，wheat threshing and log sawing will be held．Also，a Baker fan demonostration feed grinding and other activities．

## July 10

LEVELLAND CELEBRATION： Parade featuring tractors at $10 \mathrm{a} . \mathrm{m}$ ．in the downtown area．For information， contact Preston Reeves at 562－4381．
scen it all－from the primitive to the high－tech－in his lifetime．

The revered cattleman first helped his dad punch cattle on regular drives from Dimmitt to Hereford in the 1920s －the only way，in absence of a railroad，to get pasture－fed beef， mostly Hereford，Angus and crossbreeds，to market back then．

Years later，he became one of the area＇s pioneers at the art of feeding on a large scale when he joined partners －Bob McLean，Charlie Hayes，Jim Elder and A．J．Kemp and business manager Ike Bradon in founding the Dimmitt Feed Yard in 1966.

By the Willis sold out to Bagley and Associates in 1981，he had watched capacity at the yard grow to a bulging 40，000 head－a far cry from they way he started out．

This past month，Willis got a chance to watch a new phenomenon enter the Texas Panhandle cattle market－a string of record breaking volumes and prices which kept the heads of Panhandle cattlemen spinning for several weeks．
＂I＇ve seen similar situations，but not to this extent，＂commented Willis， who remains active today as a cattle buyer，rancher and breeder of thoroughbred race horses．
＂Ithink this weather nortr of us has enhanced this deal，＂he says．＂The people in Kansas and areas where they had so much bad snow，they drew on this area fore their killing cattle，and kept these packers down here pretty close to the knife．．．not letting them get out of their hands to the north．＂

Willis thinks higher prices are great，but urges caution．He also put the perceived higher price in perspective，saying，＂Yes，cattle are bringing a nice price，but I wouldn＇t consider it high compared to other
 cattle market are unprecedented．
products we＇re buying．＂
＂Cattle are higher than they＇ve been in the past for a longer time，＂Willis observed．＂I don＇t know，it seems we must be exporting a little more than some of us thought．．．that may be where some of the extra cattle are going．＂

Though many are nervous about price，most feel that it is about where it needs to be．
＂It has been good for them，＂Willis said．

And，Willis admits the cattle business has been good for him and for others in the Texas Panhandle going on three decades now，and for many reasons．Many factors have helped the area become the nation＇s leading cattle raising area almost overnight．
＂When we started out，we had cheap grain right here．We didn＇t have to haul any grain in，＂explained Willis． ＂This would be one of the few areas， other than the cold country back north， where the grain was available and the cattle reasonably close．＂
From there sprang an industry that has bolstered the Panhandle economy，

## 㢄 <br> Feedgrain prices watching weather

Feedgrain prices saw a bit more volatility last week as USDA＇s World Agricultural Supply and Demand Esti－ mates gave us a first look at projections for 1993－94 U．S． and world supply and demand．The only real change in the 1992－93 numbers for the U．S．was the increase in corn exports as a result of the Russian aid deal．The decrease in corn carryover was partially offset by an increase in sorg－ hum carryover．
A couple of interesting points concerning the 1993－94 estimates are that carryover is expected to be down，but so are exports．That could set us up for a year when the mark－
ets must struggle to find some good news． ets must struggle to find some good news．
After the report，the markets quickly turned back to
weather．The latest USDA Crop Progress report shows weather．The latest USDA Crop Progress report shows U．S．corn and sorghum planting at 40 percent and 31 per－ cent，respectively．While planting progress is still running behind schedule，recent drier conditions have allowed for some planting to take place，and we could see more improvement this week．If planting progress can accelerate


GRAIN MARKET UPDATE
from this point，it would be diffciult to say how much any yield loss had been suffered．Much of that will depend on how the summer weather progresses．I would be more concerned about our Texas crop than the mid－west，where the climate is usually more forgiving．
From a marketing perspective，we are in a tough spot． Prices are lower than desired；but if weather is good，there

CATTLE SELDOM MOVED AS IN PREVIOUS MONTHS－G．L． Willis says the recent high volumes and prices in the Panhandle
creating a groundswell of jobs along the way．
＂I think it has been the lifesaving blood for these smaller towns，a stabilizing factor in my judgement for the whole High Plains area，＂Willis said．＂These feedlots employ approximately one man per 1,000 catte．The number of cattle being fed comprises a nice size employment．＂

Wheat grazing has meant a lot to the farmer，giving him an extra check in the winter，Willis poinis out． A native of Hereford，Willis grew up ranching and farming in Castro
County．His father had purchased land there in 1915．One of his earliest cattle feeding enterprises was a small feedyard，about 1,000 head，which he operated for many years．
He married Ouida Faye Byrnes in 1938 and raised three daughters on a family farm in Castro County．They continued ranching and farming in Texas and New Mexico．
At first he dealt in feeder cattle and
See WILLIS，Page 4
is downside risk．The question may be one of risk manage－ ment at this point，and determining what protection you may need and still have the potential to be involved if the market rallies．
So far as wheat is concerned，last week＇s first look at USDA＇s supply and demand estimates for the U．S．and the rest of the world did provide some surprises to the market， but the new information was quickly built into market prices，and the interest，at least for the new crop，returned to weather and crop conditions．
The increase in forecast for U．S．exports due to the recent Russian aid announcement more than offset the drop in domestic consumption．While that is good news，ending stocks did not fall as far as the trade had anticipated，mak－ ing the impact bearish．This partially offset the bullishness of the 1993－94 U．S．production estimate，which came in
（Dr．Mark Waller，Grain Marketing Specialist with the Texas A\＆M Extension Service，is an authority on the nation＇s grain markets．）

## GOP, Demo solons agree: Btu tax stinks

## Mother's loss of son inspires child farm safety program

## Combest says tax slaps farmers unfairly

WASHINGTON, D.C. - U.S. Rep. Larry Combest (R-Lubbock) issued a statement recently saying he would work to defeat the hefty taxes proposed for fuel, fer-
tilizer and irrigation under the proposed Clinton Energy Tax.
He warned that the taxes would increase diesel and gasoline taxes by at least 4 cents a gallon.
In a news release, Combest said the House

where there is reportedly strong opposition.
Instead of a 9-cent-a-gallon farmer's fuel tax, the increase is 4 cents on diesel and nothing for farmers to be happy about," Combest said. "There's little difference between being hit over the head with a baseball bat instead of a sledge hammer."
Combest cited the combination of the
Clinton Energy Tax on fertilzer produced Clinton Energy Tax on fertilzer produced from natural gas, natural gas-fueld irrigaiton pumps and diesel costing a farmer as much as $\$ 2,800$ to produce 800 acres of cotton and 500 acres of wheat in West Texas.
Additionally, the Clinton Btu Energy Tax in its present form will now be felt more directly by consumers. A Texas household can expect to pay as much as $\$ 442$ more each year in directo costs for travel, heating and cooling their home. These costs, Combest says, are in addition to the costs a family will pay for retail purchases that wil linclude energy taxes on the manufacturers and shippers of goods. (Rep. Combest represents the 19th Congressional District and serves on the House Agriculture Committee)

Ways and M
mittee voted to "slap farmers with the bulk of the Btu tax, contrary to what some farmers have heard about being exempt from the tax."
West Texas families would also feel the
sting of a Bu tax
sting of a Btu tax, claimed Combest
Combest said he is working to defeat the tax in both the House and U.S. Senate,

## Sarpalius breaks

with Clinton on tax

## By BILL SARPALIUS

The upcoming vote on President Bill Clinton's economic plan is a difficult one for me for several reasons, but one that stands out most prominently is the
Btu tax. One one hand, I want to support the President's efforts to reduce our deficit. But I cannot do it at the expense of all the citizens who live in rural
 America. I was elected to work was elh District work for the people of on my mind as the vote on this bill on my mind as the vote on this bill looms. How can I support a plan that
would take so much away from the would take so muc
people I work for?
people I work for?
The way the plan looks right now, a
26.8 cent per million Btus tax 26.8 cent per million Btus tax would be impost on almost all forms of energy consumption. The aluminum and chloralkali industries would receive a partial exemption from this tax. The bill also contains a 34.2 cents per million Btus surcharge on petroleum products.
Simply put, you can expect to pay eight cents a gallon more at the gasoline pump. Exempt from this surcharge are home heating oil and the gasoline and diesel fuel used in farming.
Now, this is where it gets crazy. Farmers will have to have two different tanks on their farm - one with diesel for on-farm use, and one with diesel for for on-farm use, and one with diesel for
off-farm use. The tax for the diesel off-farm use. The tax for the diesel
used on the farm will be the lower rate, used on the farm will be the lower rate,
while the diesel used off farm will be while the diesel used of farm will be
taxed at the basic rate of 61 cents per taxed at the basic rate of 61 cents per
million Btus - the basic rate plus the surcharge.
The agriculture industry has always been exempt from paying energy taxes, and this Btu tax would devastate the industry. In addition, the ramifications of this tax would extend far beyond the cost of fuel and diesel. They would also be felt at the fertilizer dealership, grain mill, cotton gin and everywhere else throughout the production cycle where energy is used to produce, process and ransport agricultural products. The Btu tax is especialiy hard on agriculture simply because a farmer or
rancher does not have the opportunity to pass increased costs along the marketplace because they compete in a global market. They also don't have the potential to absorb these kinds of losses. They are having a hard enough time as it is getting by without this added tax.

Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, Nebraska and North and South Dakota all rely on the Ogalalla aquifer to nourish the grain belt of this country. These states will suffer drastically because they will get no exemptions on energy used to run their irrigation wells.
It's possible for irrigation to account for over half of a farm's operating costs. If this tax is enacted, most farmers and ranchers will have a very difficult time surviving.
Unlike California and agricultural states in the Tennessee Valley Authority region, our stats in the Midwest do not get subsidized irrigation water.
When the President's economic plan comes before the House for a vote, I comes before the House for a vote, I
hope to offer an amendment that would hope to offer an amendment hat would exempt the fuel and electricity used for
irrigation from the Btu tax. This would irrigation from the Btu tax. This would
go a long way towrds making the Btu go a long way towrds making the Btu
tax tolerable for those in the agricultax tolerable
tural industry
And agriculture is not the only sector of the economy that will be adversely affected by a broad-based energy tax such as the proposed Btu tax. As mentioned eralier, it would touch everyone, from those who have to fill their car with gasoline that could include an added tax of eight cents a gallon, to those who pay for heating their home. This vote will also be a difficult one. for me because I am impressed with President Clinton's attempt to try and do something about the deficit. The Btu tax is definitely not the right way to do ti, but nonetheless, I applaud the President for making av alid attempt to shrink the deficit.
The Btu tax, in its current form, has the potential to place 12.5 percent of the energy tax burden directly on the shoulders of the people of Texas, a state that comprises only 6.8 percent of the nation's population. This just doesn't add up to being fair to my constituents. The costs of this tax are simply too high, and I believe we must work to ind economic savings without severely

Rep Bill Sarpalius represents the
Rep. Bill Sarpalius represents the on the House Agriculture Committee.)

WASHINGTON, D.C. - "Rural citizens are going to pay twice for President Clin-
ton's newly proposed Btu and other energy ton's newly proposed Btu and other energy
taxes," claims Robert Barrow, Master of taxes," claims Robert
the National Grange.
"First, because they live and work in rural areas they will pay substantially higher living costs. Second, they will pay through higher unemployment and the 1099 of stable, good paying jobs," said
Barrow, the leader of the nation's oldest, Barrow, the leader of the nation's oldest,
general farm and rural affairs organization.
Rural citizens, both farmers and non farmers, rely on competitively priced, traditional sources of energy to obtain most of the basic necessities of life, such as transportation and structural heating/cooling. According to the Census Bureau, each rural family generates $62 \%$ more in daily auto travel than do families who live in metropolitan areas. Additionally, only $1 \%$ of rural workers have access to public transrural strictures can average 15 percent more than for metropolitan homes and offices due to the isolated, exposed positions of rural buildings, higher energy dis-
tribution costs, and the age and condition of rural buildings.
Modern agriculture i9 an energyintensive industry that has few alternatives to traditional energy sources. Barrow cited as an example, Grange members Richard and Carolyn Rinta, who own Rinta Farms in Klickitat County, Washington. He said that $31 \%$ of their direct, farm-related expenditures must be used to pay for energy, either in the form of fuel or electricity. This doesn't even account for indirect costs, such as fertilizer and transportation "Family absorb the added cost of a Btu tax," Barrow said.
American farmers account directly for $2.5 \%$ of all the energy used in the United States. Indirect costs associated with agricultural production raise the farmer's share United States' total. "Energy taxes, especially those imposed on transportation fuels, could reduce annual net farm income by $\$ 2$ billion or more," claimed the Grange

## Grange leader speaks out

 against Clinton's Btu tax.



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$\qquad$

We live in an era where signboards like Toys 'R Us, become easily recognizable and readable" to our
youngest tots even before youngest tots even befo
they know the alphabet. they know the alphabet. children in a similar way when it comes to farm and home safety - with a funsounding program they can relate to and remember, like "Farm Safety 4 Just Kids"?
THE VARIOUS divisions of Chighti, Inc., in Plainview - including
Excel, Cargill Grain and Cargill Seeds - are doing just that in Plainview an the surrounding area. Cargill decided to become a corporate sponsor this year of a community service program called "Farm Safety 4 Just Kids" and hundreds of its locations in the U.S. and C
Friday, children at one of Plainview's elementary schools watched as Cargill employees demonstrated into grain handling sucked
ment - utilizing a small doll and a miniature, transparent grain wagon filled with corn kerneis. A second city school
program earlier
Employees present prog-
Empler Employees present prog-
rams to local school childrams to local school children, encouraging them to from a kid's point of view.

## UNBEKNOWNST to

 many, the Farm Safety 4 Just Kids program was inspired by a heartwrenching turn of events lost her 11 -year-old son to an accident on the farm. an accident on the farm. lyn Adams, whose son Keith was a farm accident victim, has put the emphasis of her program on the danger of gravity flow grain wagons among other things.Mrs. Adams developed the transparent wagon model - which is taken to which show children what can happen to a child who gets sucked into the grain
flow. gets
flow.


Farm Talk
Gordon
Zeigler

Lynn Yontz, in Plain view this-week to help form a Farm Safety 4 Just Kids volunteer chapter describes the motivation of Mrs. Adams, who put her heart into the program.
"She's a wonderful inspiration to work with," Ms. Yontz said. "She has a lot of enthusiasm and lot of love for the kids out there on the farm, and she definitely communicates that to all groups."
FOR MRS. ADAMS, her work has fosiered process that has helped heal the loss of her own child "Any time someone loses a child, there is naturally a lot of grief to deal with,"

## commented Ms. Yontz, "By

 promoting farm safety, Mrs. Adams has definitely been able to heal some of that loss. Her life will always be affected by it, but she feels she has done some good things because of her son's tragedy - and she feels he is a large part of the organization.Through her work with independent chapters and corporate backers like Cargill, Mrs. Adams has brought the program farther brought the program farther
than she had ever hoped.

## THIS YEAR marks the

 spring her son Keith would have graduated from high school. She has twowell
child.
The program is entertaining, and the accent is on fun. Children get a big bang out of it, observers report. A part of the program is encouraging children to take a Farm Safety Oath, pledging to:


## Largemouth bass are thriving in waters of Lake Mackenzie

Good populations of catfish, white bass and largemouth bass exist in Lake Mackenzie, according to a Mackenzie, according to recent survey by the Texas
Parks and Wildlife FisheParks and Wildlife Fishe ries Management office.

Five gill nets set in the lake to sample target species yielded specimens of white bass, catfish, walley and hybrid striped bass.
Charles Munger, a TPWFM biologists, said the catch including blue, channel and flathead cat fish was good. Rate of the

## COTTON

From Page 1
cent of the cotton acreage Growers who irrigate began planting in late April but cool weather has delayed emergence. A few dryland growers "planted dry" hoping for rainfall to ger minate the seed and get it to a stand
The week of May 15-20 wide-ranging rainstorms swept the area. Of 28 official weather reporting stations across the High Plains area, only six reported no
catch was around five fish per net night and many lengthy.
An average of about three walleye per net was collected, with 75 percent being over 25 inches in length. Wallaye are survivors of stockings between 1978 and 1985, and there has been limioted reproduction.
White bass were collected at over 10 per net and all were in good condition. Average weights were higher than the Texas aver-
age for the species. All were over 10 inches in length and 15 were over 16 inches.
White bass originallyw ere stocked in 1981 to pro vide an additional game fish to anglers. Population have not done much until ecently, Munger said. Hybrid striped bass were only stocked in the lake in 1979 and 1981. Fish frmo stockings still are providing some good fishing, with samples showing all over 24 inches in length and over 7.5 pounds.
at Texas Tech University rainfall. Stations at Crosbyreported an inch or more. "But many dryland fields in Cochran, Bailey and Hockley counties are still too dry to plant," Hake said. The southernmost part of Dawson County also is dry, he said.

Because of the cool weather, many fields are taking 10 to 14 days for emergence, Hake pointed out. He said this is evident by the small size of the cotyledons, the first leaves which emerge from the sprouted seed. Hake noted that Dr. Dan Krieg, agronomist
has found that the longer cotton takes to emerge, the smaller will be the cotyledons and the more vulner ons and the more vulnerble they will be to subse quent stress.
Al this time, the emerged crop is highly vul erable to adverse weath r," Hake cautioned. "If the ast days of May are hot with temperatures near 95 dcegrees, many plants with seedling disease willd ryout and die. If the weather stay cool and wet, more plants will become infected and existing infections wil become severe."

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## WT A\&M scholarship honors <br> CANYON

endowed scholarship has been created in the name of one of the early graduates of West Texas State University.
Dr. William B "Bill" Childress established the scholarship in honor of his mother, Addie Brown Childress, and brother Robert F. Childress.
"My mother always encouraged anyone inter ested in getting an education," Childress said. "This tion, Childress said. This
scholarship will continue scholarship will continue
her philosophy and help students at West Texas State."
The family's committment to education dates back to the earlier days of West Texas Normal College. Addie Brown, one of 11 children, was determined to complete her degree at a time when resources were limited. She borrowed money for tuition from her older brothers and repaid them with manuyal labor on their cotton farms. Hard work and study paid off when she received paid off when she received 1914, the same year the institution's only building was reduced to ashes.

## WILLIS

## From Page 2

at one time had a few hundred cows on a few hundred cows on pasture. helped found Dimmitt Feed heiped found Dimmitt Feed Yard, Willis had quit handling cows to concentrate mainly on yearlings -- he would put them on feed a around 700 pounds and selling them at 1,100 .
Willis has watched with interest as innovations in cattle feeding have changed the way he did business. He credits the high tech improvements with producing one of the best beef products the nation has ever known.
"It's probably the best they've every put out," Willis says. "The way they feed cattle now, I think it is an improvement on everything we had in earlier years .- the good mixing years the good mixing
equipment, troughs, drainequipment, troughs, drain-
age and water systems. It is age and water systems. It is an improvement over earlier deals."
Though he feels the future is still bright for the cattleman, Willis still respects the nature of the business.
"It is a gambling business," he said. "You've got to be willing to gamble to feed cattle. The years I've been in it, it has been a profitable business for the last 30 years. We've had some 30 years. We ve had some
ups and downs, with some bad downs as well as ups. bad downs as well as ups.
But, think there is a bright But, think there is a bright
future for the cattle business in this area."
Willis watches with interest the endeavors of three sons-in-law, all who are following in his own footsteps as owners of Rafter 3, a 38,000-headcapacity feedyard in Castro County. And he watches his grandsons feeding a few cattle and running some cattle on wheat
These cattlemen are mar-

Her love of education led her to serve as teacher and principal at Big Spring Grammar School.
Her three sons, Bill, Hardy and the late Robert, began college careers at Tarleton State University during the Depression and

## Two-day seminars set

 for women landownersThree special two-day seminars on Farm and Ranch Business Management for Women Landowners will be held at the following locations:
Amarillo, June
Amarillo, June 9-10, 993
Ft. Worth, June 16-17, 1993 June 30-July 1, 1993 "The seminar is designed to help women explore incomegenerating and taxsaving opportunities for their farms and ranches," says Dr. Wayne Hayenga, Economist and Attorney with the Texas Agricultural Extension Service, Texas A\&M University System. Discussions will center Discusse taxes center business organization and estate planning.
"Farm leases and operat-
ried to his daughters, Shari Willis (Mrs. Gene) Bradley, Jan Willis (Mrs. Mike) Baca and Kay Willis (Mrs. Andy) Rogers, all of Dimmitt. He also has six grandsons, He granddix grandand one granddaughter grandchildren.
Willis' active life of retirement includes farming

## REAL ESTATE <br> FOR SALE

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West Texas Country Trader call Kim Hagood al the News-
went on to graduate at The University of Te and Southwestern Medi School, Hardy from Ho ard Payne University Southwest Baptist Theol cal Seminary and Rob ho lied 1992 Texas A\&M.
ing agreements take ma forms," notes Hayen Many of these will be cussed at the semin including benefits restrictions to both land ners and tenants.
Regarding income planning, tax-saving opp tunities will be explored business growth, retirem income.
A registration of $\$ 75$ be charged, which inclu the cost of meals materials. Registrat nformation can obtained from your Cou Extension Agent or fr Wayne Hayenga or C Sabo, Department of A cultural Economics, Te A\&M University, Coll A\&M University, Coll (409) 845-2226
of wheat and feed grai He is an avid horse ing fan, and is involved partnership raising th oughbreds for racing Nebraska, Hot Sprir Ark., and Oklahoma $O$ in past years, his ho raced at tracks in Ruide anta Fe , Raton California.

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## PETS \& LIVESTOCK

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## REAL ESTATE

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## Oilman

Abiene Reponter News
ABLLENE - Abilene oilman John Chalmers has long been noted for his pioneering work as a civic leader and geologist, but he may rate a bit of international stature as well - and for something very unexpected.
Over the summer, he built likely the longest cattle guard in the world.
True, it was never really intended as a catile guard. Actually, it's a uniquelooking low-water crossing made of 7,000 feet of used oil-field tubing, 950 feet of old drill pipe, more than 300 feet of casing and 1,500 feet of succor rods.
But when welder Rick Chapman was working on it, the massive thing seemed to suggest something else.
"Have you checked the Guinness Book of World Records?" he asked John. "I think what we've really got is the world's biggest cattle guard."
When you think of it that way, it's hard not to see it as the most bizarre sight in Taylor County in all 1992. And that's saying something.
Whatever its appearance, the mammoth, 70,000 -pound structure was pulled and pushed into place with a dozer and truck this past

## Ground water levels increased for 1992

Ground water levels increased an average of 0.14 of a foot within the 15-county High Plains Underground Water ConUnderground Water Con-
servation District service servation Distric
area in 1992 .
Above-average precipitation fell across most of the Water District service area from January through May 992. This kept the fivefoot root zone soil profile at or near field capacity during the first half of the growing season. Therefore it was not necessary to pump ground water for irrigation until middle or late summer.
In addition, improved irrigation technology allows irrigators to apply ground water more uniformly with little loss to evaporation, seepage or runoff.
Many of the older high pressure above-line discharge center pivot sprink ler systems with irrigation application efficiencies of about 60 percent have been replaced with more efficient Low Energy Precision

summer. It was positioned over a picturesque section of Elm Creek, not far from Lake Abilene, several miles southwest of Buffalo Gap.

It replaces a cement lowwater crossing partly washed downstream $21 / 2$ years ago. Mark it down as another out-of-the-ordinary project for a man regarded by many as the dean of Abilene oilmen. Since moving here in 1950, John Chalmers, 73, has seen good times and bad in the oil patch. And along the way, he's faced his share of odd predicaments.
There's the time he was drilling that well down in Kimble County. His crew was putting surface casing down about 200 feet, to pro tect the surrounding water supply. Then suddenly, at only 110 feet, the drill pipe dropped sharply like it'd hit a pocket of air.
When John
When John ordered the pipe pulled out, the drilling crew was surprised to see bats fly out of the hole.
Turned out the crew had struck an empty cavern.
Not all surprises have come from beneath the sod. John also recalls some examples of that peculiar species known as "doodlebuggers." They're folks who, with the aid of rods or sticks or newfangled contraptions of their

Application (LEPA) systems with efficiencies of up to 95 percent.

Use of surge valves eliminates tailwater waste and allows producers to apply ground water more unif romily throughout their fields with water savings of 20 percent or more. Many producers use soil moisture monitoring devices, such as gypsum blocks and resistance meters and tensiometers, to determine when to begin irrigation and how much water to apply.


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own devising, can predict where one will find oil "Often, they hypnotize themselves into really believing it," John said. "Some are frauds, but most of them are sincere. And due to all their emotional makeup, they somehow think they can 'feel' the movement of oil. Happened once in Jones County.
"I knew right where I was going to drill this well, and the land-owner - well, he had his own doodlebug device. It involved a watch and some chain and I don't know what else. And he told me I was going to miss it but that if I moved over but three feet I'd hit a stream of oil". Yes, sometimes doodleYuggers sometimes do hit paydebuggers do hit paydirt, John said, but that has more to do with the law of averages not geological ESP.
John's latest project - his low-water crossing - came about when he got interested in drilling another well in southwest Taylor County, not far from the country homes of such well-known folks as Bobby Sayles and Sally Young Rock McAgnew.
The problem: Much of the last low-water crossing had washed away, making it a challenge to move a drilling rig across Elm Creek:
John didn't want to pass up drilling there. He'd been returning to this happy hunting ground about 25 years.
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without gaining her say-so. Which is just what you'd expect of an old gal who, by her own admission, was named for an "old sow cat." Incidentally, Sally confirms this shotgun story, though it's more complicated than the way John tells it. Seems Sally caught some oil prospector "going through here, and he told us he was going to drill on the Youngs' place, and since they're kinplace, and since they re kingo through for free.
"Come to find out he was going to the Sears Ranch. I going to the Sears Ranch. I
got the sheriff out after him."
Tales like that are enough to make prominent oilmen like John Chalmers watch their ways.
"She's like a lot of old She's like a lot of old
country women," he said country women," he said
admiringly. "She can sew up a quilt and then go out and a quilt and then go out and
kill a rattlesnake with her kill a rattles
bare hands."

Anyway, Rick Chapman,

35, and Waylon Lesley, 22 finished a lot of the work quickly, even allowing for breaks to sneak a fishing line into Elm Creek (one bite go them an 8 -pound bass). Only last year's early summer rains kept them from putting the crossing into place sooner.
Now John's waiting for the next flood. He's anxious to see if the crossing of his own devising holds. And it may hold. Then again, it may be as effective as a doodle bugger's divinely inspired oil-deducing rod. It may indeed, be no more than Texas-sized cattle guard.
Either way, only time will tell if John makes it into the Guinness Book of World Records. But the oilman is sure of one thing.
'We'll pay a premium if anybody's cattle jumps the length of this cattle guard," he said.
(Distributed by the Associated Press)

Deep below southwest Tay or County, he says, is what's left of a sand channel from an old riverbed, "just like the Mississippi, except this one is 150 million years old, give or take 5 million.
"And from a geological standpoint, the type of production that comes from this sand channel is very lucrative."

Happily, the construction of a new low-water crossing has earned John Chalmers the gratitude of folks living in the area. Besides the fac he and other oilmen can now haul in equipment to drill weils, many residents won Elm Creek rises $m$ Creek rises.
John says getting area support is important, especially when you're dealing with crusty types such as 78 -yearold Sally McAndrew. Sally who's lived there most of her life, once used a shotgun to stop an oil prospector callous enough to use her property


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