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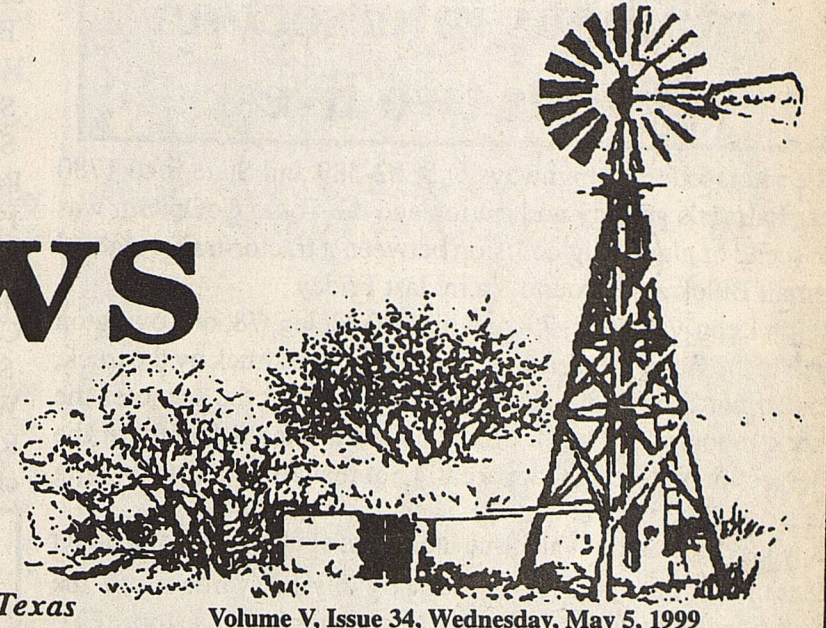
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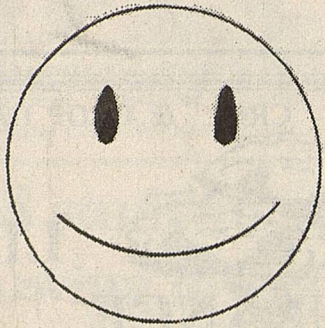
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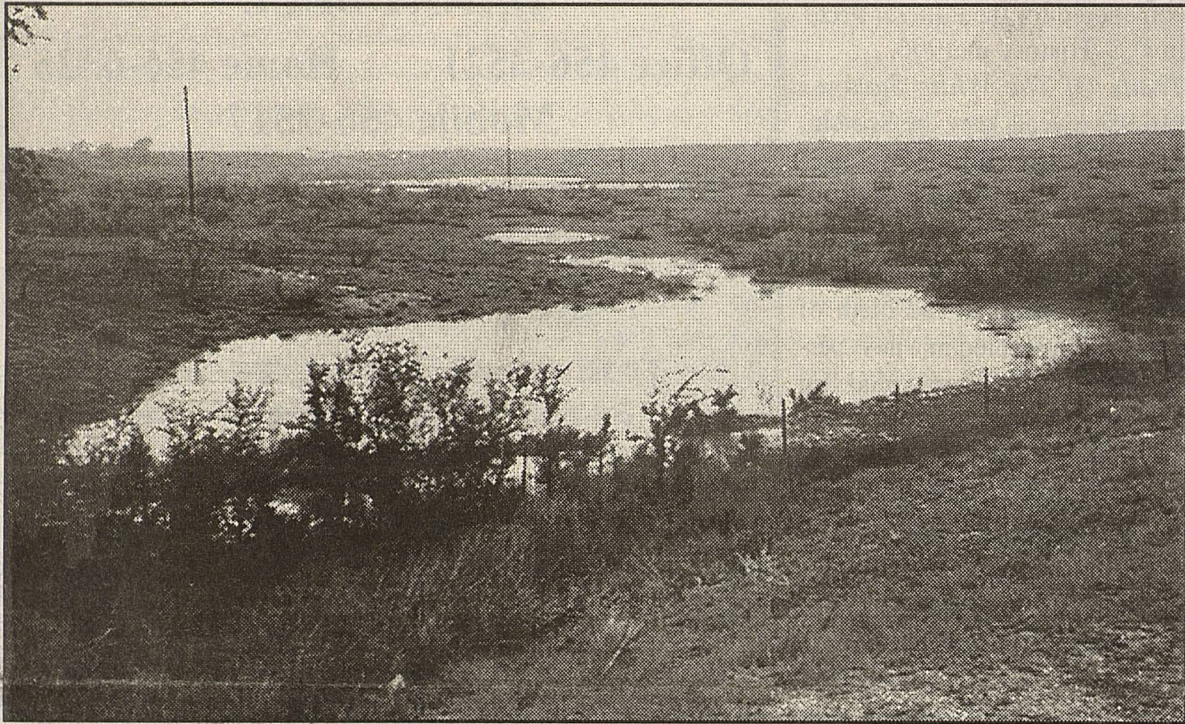
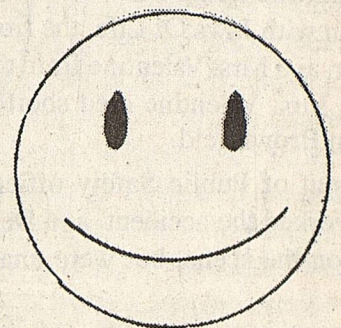
Published each Wednesday in the county seat of Yoakum County, Plains, Texas



Volume V, Issue 34, Wednesday, May 5, 1999



! R A I N !



Water was still standing in Sulphur Draw Saturday noon following Friday evenings downpour.

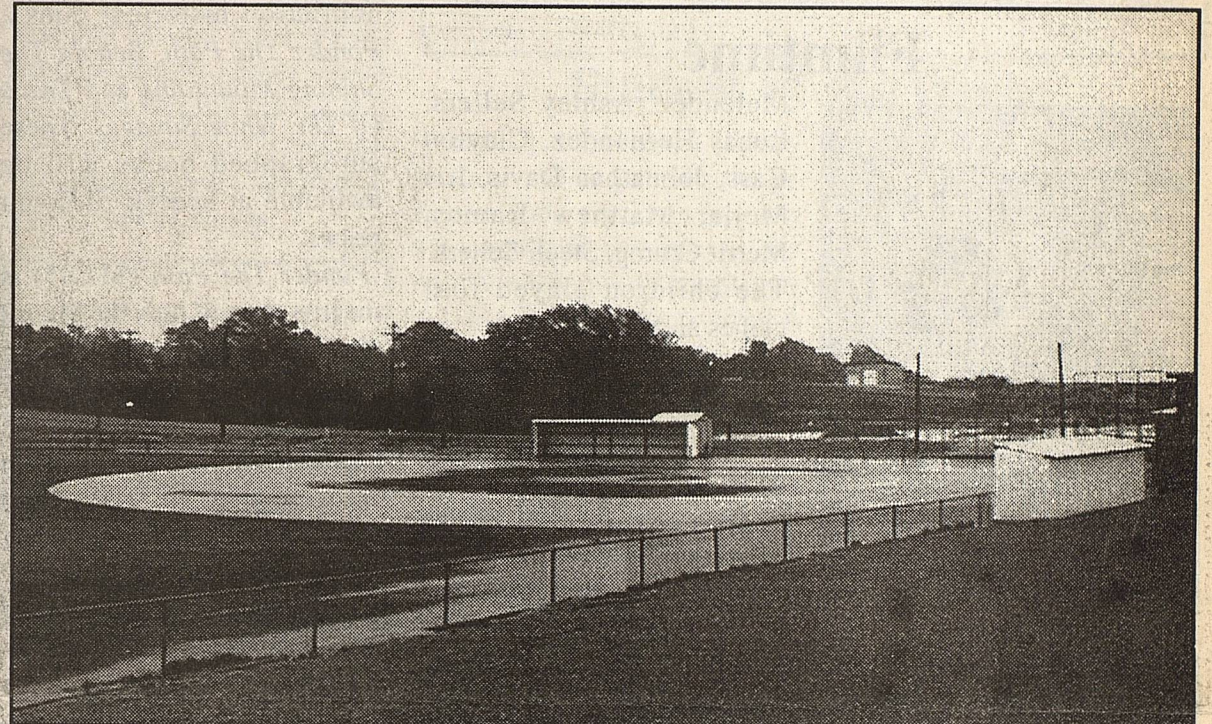
Rain surprises some, delights everyone

Quickly, when was the last time you saw running water in Sulphur Draw? How long has it been since the county (well, a good portion of it at least) received four plus inches of precipitation?

While the deluge was accompanied by some damaging hail in scattered areas, and a few tornados were reported by radio and TV, the storm which swept through here last Friday could not have come at a more opportune time for county ag producers and ranchers.

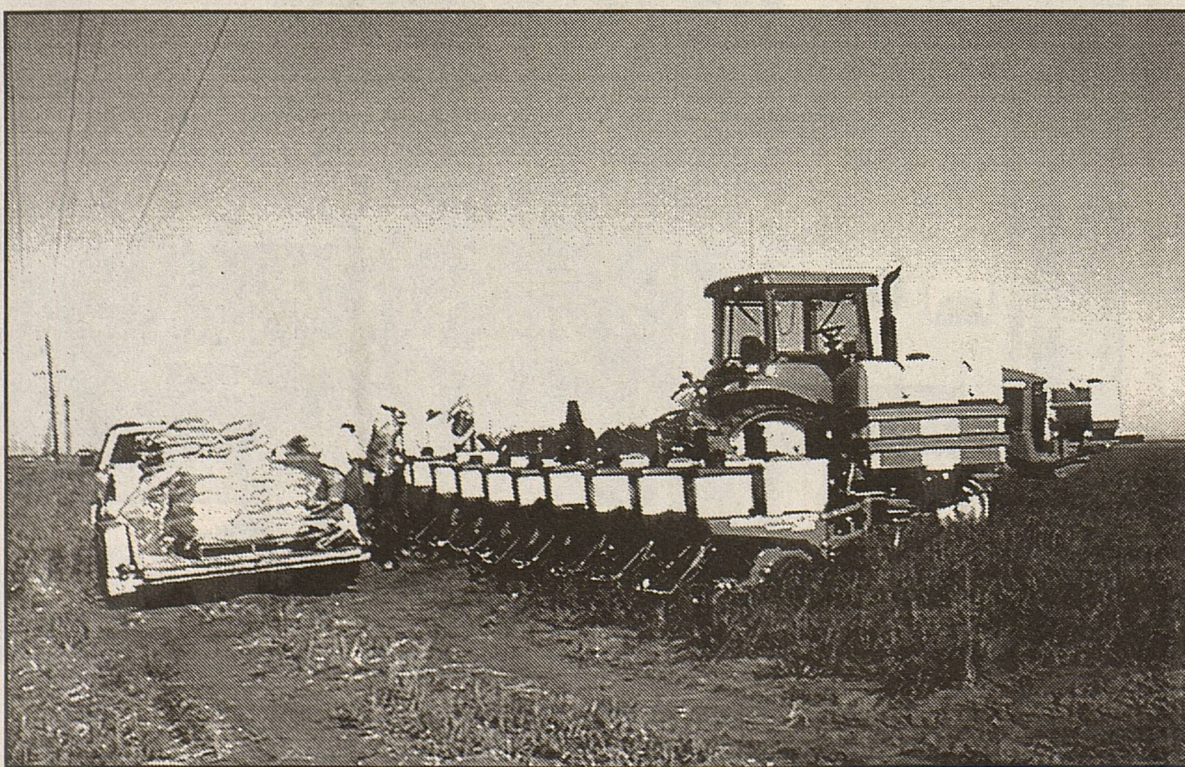
Apparently the storm system (there may have been two, according to television reports) produced much more rain in the central and southeastern parts of the county. Several residents in town reported over 4.5 inches in gauges, but reports from portions of the northwest part of the county indicated less than an inch in spots.

There was some minor damage from wind and run-off water in town, including asphalt on a number of roads being washed out. A minor concern, considering the benefits.



No baseball today. The Cowboys ball park was deeper underwater before this shot at noon Saturday.

Planting time has producers busy



Workers are shown here re-filling the planter boxes on a John Deere Max-Emerge 12 row planter. An irrigated circle of Runner type peanuts was being planted on one of producer Jim Jackson's fields west of town last week. The large planter was pulled by a track type John Deere 8400 tractor.

Many other producers have been busy planting peanuts around the county. Gary Six, FSA Executive Director, told CCN exact acreage figure won't be available until producers certify their crop acreage in July, but he estimates some 12,000 acres of Runner, Valencia and other va-

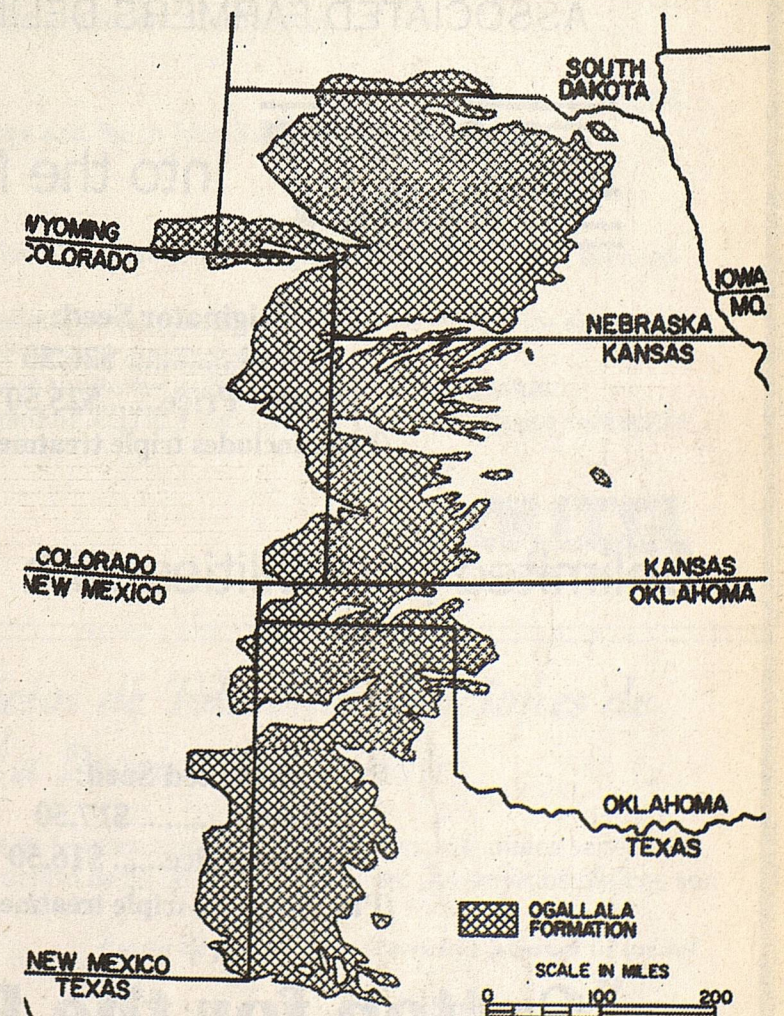
rieties will be planted this year.

There have been reports of some cotton being planted in the county, and the season is well underway in Gaines County to the south. Recent cool, damp weather has caused many cotton producers to take a wait-and-see attitude about full scale cotton planting.

Watermelon transplanting, featured in the April 21 issue of CCN, is underway. Producer Macky McWhirter said, "I may be proven wrong, but I think the recent cool, damp weather will prove less stressful on the young plants than putting them in the ground when it is really hot."

National Water Week to be observed here

The State Legislative Session two years ago saw the passage of Senate Bill 1, a broad and encompassing addressing one of the state's most pressing issues - conservation and improvement of the state's water resources. Tadd Knight, Ag Agent with the Texas Agricultural Extension Service told CCN last week the extension service office here and all others across the state of Texas will be focusing more of their programming efforts in coming months on water quality and conservation efforts, provisions called for in Senate Bill 1, and water management planning. A necessity of life everywhere on the globe, water is of paramount importance in our day to day lives here on the High Plains of Texas. Without adequate ground water for irrigation purposes, the area's bounty of cotton, livestock, corn, peanuts and grain sorghum production would be severely reduced, as would the area economic base. Rainfall in the region is simply insufficient to reach production levels of these commodities current irrigation methods produce. Yoakum County belongs to one of the regional planning group of counties mandated by provisions in Senate Bill 1. Judge Dallas Brewer is the County Director of Llano Estacado Water Planning Group. Other counties in the



group include Bailey, Briscoe, Castro, Cochran, Crosby, Dawson, Deaf Smith, Dickens, Floyd, Gaines, Garza, Hale, Hockley, Lamb, Lubbock, Lynn, Motley, Parmer, Swisher and Terry. These 21 counties rely on groundwater stored in the Ogallala Aquifer, one of the world's largest. The giant underground water storage reservoir stretches across parts of eight states, from South Dakota to Texas, some 174,000 square miles. About 95% of water pumped

from the aquifer is used for irrigation purposes, or some 65% of all irrigated acreage in the United States. While figures vary from year to year, in 1990, Texas had about 12% of the water in storage, some 417 million acre feet. During National Water Week, and throughout the year, an intensive effort will be made by The Texas Water Development Board, the state

Turn To Pg. 2
'WATER'

Truck - Car crash at infamous intersection claims two lives

The intersection of highways U.S. 82-380 and State road 1780 near Palmer's grocery and station and the Tokio CoOp Gin was the scene of a grinding collision between a tractor-trailer rig and a small Buick auto around 8 a.m. last Friday.

Ralph Leon Valentine, 79, and his wife Helen, 78, of Lovington were in the Buick headed east when they were struck by the truck, headed north on 1780. A number of people on the scene of the wreck reported the truck driver pulled around a pickup at the intersection's stop sign, apparently not realizing he was running the stop sign.

It was reported the Valentine auto was spun around and under the trailer of the truck, and carried possibly 100 yards north, the truck traveling a distance further before coming to a stop.

Emergency units from Plains and Denver City were dispatched to the scene, including both town's fire departments and EMS units. Even with Jaws Of Life, the firemen had great difficulties getting Mr. and Mrs. Valentine from the crushed vehicle. He was dead, and Mrs. Valentine died shortly after being taken to the hospital in Brownfield.

Department of Public Safety officers John Hardin and Rob Shugart worked the accident, and Deputy Sheriff Jerry Howard was also on the scene, but were unavailable later for an interview.

The intersection has been the site of numerous serious wrecks over the years

Filmtime



There were 14 children attending Filmtime April 24, 1999. They were: Karla Powell, Roberto Castillo, Whitney Davis, Haley Welch, Bailey Winn, Sammy

Melendez, Ashley Sellers, Lucas Hernandez, Clayton Gass, Johnathan Davis, Iris Mejia, Matthew Ramos, Merrit Crump, Steeli Sellers. The children played four games and heard a story.

The program this week was the Davis twins, Whitney and Johnathan, celebrated their 4th birthday. A party of Rice Krispie cookies and drinks was supplied by their mom. The Library was without electricity that morning, but all the kids had a great time playing games outside.

Services for Aileen Wall

Services for Aileen Wall, 86, of Plains were held at 2:00 p.m. Saturday at Dalhart Church of Christ with Ray Young, minister of Church of Christ in Plains, officiating.

Burial was in Memorial Park Cemetery under the direction of Hass Funeral Home.

She died Thursday, April 29, 1999, in Lubbock.

She was born and raised in Cottle County. She graduated from Paducah High. She married J.R. "Raney" Wall on January 17, 1939, in Elbert. They farmed in Littlefield and Herford before moving to Dalhart in 1965. He preceded her in death in 1991. In 1997 she moved to plains. She was a member of Dalhart Church of Christ.

Survivors include two sons, Charles Wall of Amarillo and Dan Wall of Plains; a daughter, Marylois of Plains; a brother, Clayton Ryan of Paducah; three grandchildren; and two great grandchildren.

Historical Artists to perform at Library

Authors Gary Wiles and Delores Brown, in buckskins and lace, will give a free program on Texas history and U.S. Western expansion of the early 1800's for the Yoakum County Library in Plains from 3 to 4:30 p.m. Tuesday, May 25. They will also discuss their rousing nonfiction historical books, *Ponder The Path*, *Behold The Shining Mountains* and *Trails Of The White Savages*. These autographed books will be available at special discount prices.

Ponder The Path (\$12.95) is the true story of how the Mountain Men explored the western wilderness, later annexed to the U.S. You'll fight Arctic cold, bears and bad whiskey with Jim Bridger, Jedediah Smith, Milt Sublette and other rip-roaring Mountain Men. Hugh Glass' capture by the Comanches is featured. *Ponder* was a candidate for the Best Historical

Book Award.

Behold The Shining Mountain (14.95) weaves the Mountain Men and the Missionaries into a fiery tapestry. Meet Narcissa Whitman, a chemistry professor with red-gold hair, a clarion soprano, a love of God, and guts every man envies. *Behold* was considered for the Pulitzer Prize in U.S. History in 1996.

Trails Of The White Savages (\$16.95) reveals how the Scotch-Irish, branded 'White Savages' by Benjamin Franklin, pioneered all the early 1800's trails into the West, Sam Houston and David Crockett's roles in the birth of Texas are presented in a new perspective, with them speaking their own words. *Trails* is being considered for the 1998 Pulitzer Prize and was considered for the Bancroft History Award.

With maps, extensive bibliography and an index, these non-fiction trade paperbacks feature a high action format like a PBS documentary. Dialogue evolves from journals, letters and autobiographies. All three have fine reviews by noted historians now available at the library

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FROM Page 1 'WATER'

mandated Water Planning Groups, Underground Water Districts like Sandy Land here, Texas Ag Extension Service and other governmental and private groups to create awareness of the importance of water throughout the state.

Future issues of CCN will feature articles and news releases outlining what both producers and consumers can do to assure safe quantities and quality of this priceless asset.

*Wish Your Mom A
Happy Mother's Day!*

Field Scout and Demonstration Technician needed for Summer employment by Terry-Yoakum Pest Management Association and Texas Agricultural Extension Service. Reliable vehicle, proof of insurance, valid drivers license required. Any individual regardless of sex, age or race may pick up an application at the Terry County Extension office. Applications accepted until May 12, 1999.

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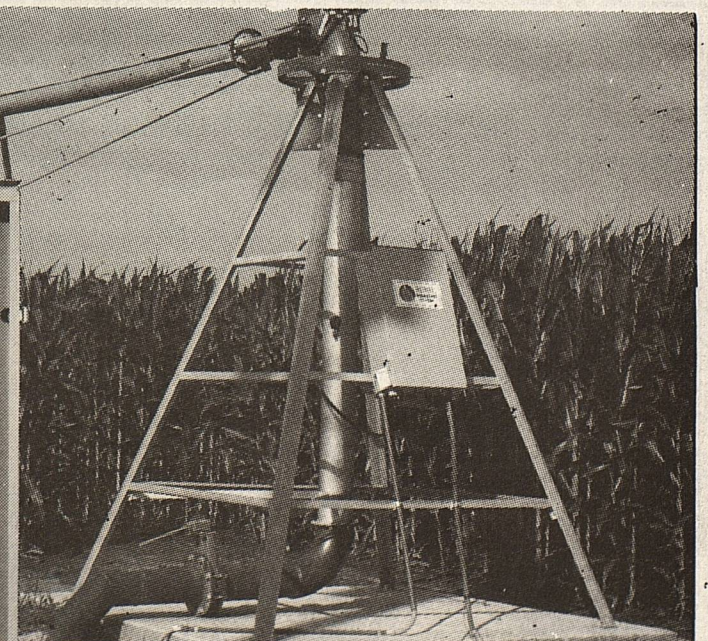
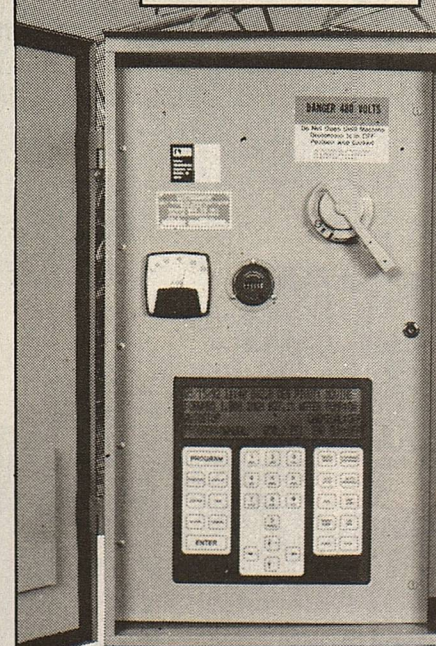
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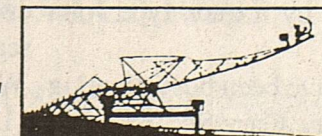
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Ready for the trip to Austin



These brainy guys will represent PHS at the big UIL Academic Meet in Austin. Pictured, front row, L-R, Krystle Blundell, Annaliesa O'Quinn, Lesli Rowe, Nicole Haynes, Tommie McNabb. Back, Kyle Sisson, Velvet Canada, Clint Burrus, Kristen Gray.

PHS students make strong showing in Regional UIL

Facing stiff competition from dozens of other 2A schools, the PHS University Interscholastic League team came within just 'inches' of capturing first place honors in regional competition at Abilene last Saturday. Plains scored a total of 149.3 points, just behind winner Stinnett West Texas High. The other top five finishing schools were Ozona, Stamford and Tuscola Jim Ned. Forty schools competed in the event.

Individual PHS performances included; 1st-Team Calculator Applications-Kristen Gray, Tommie McNabb, Clint Burrus. 1st-Team Number Sense-Kristen Gray, Clint Burrus, Annaliesa O'Quinn. 2nd-Team Mathematics-Kristen Gray, Tommie McNabb, Clint Burrus. 4th place-Informative Speaking-Krystle Blundell. 4th place-News Writing-Nicole Haynes, 6th place-Maranda Box. 1st place-Feature Writing-Lesli Rowe. 6th place-Headline Writing-Maranda Box. 1st place-Calculator Applications-Kristen Gray, 4th place-Tommie McNabb. 3rd place-Computer Applications-Kyle Sisson, 4th place-LaCresha Johnson, 6th place-Tandi Jones. 5th place-Computer Science-Kyle Sisson. 3rd place-Mathematics-Kristen Gray, 5th place-Tommie McNabb. 6th place-Number Sense-Kristen Gray, 6th place-Clint Burrus.

High Plains Jr. Rodeo

Three local youngsters managed to place in last week's HPJRA rodeo in Lubbock, sponsored by the Texas Tech Rodeo Club and the Lubbock Optimists. Kimberlee Jones placed 9th in her first rodeo of the season in 13-15 year old barrel racing. Blake Parrish had 3 out of 4 top 10 finishes. He was 5th in 9-12 roping, and 9th in ribbon roping. Brett Squyres was 5th in 13-15 ribbon roping, and earned a point with a 10th place in tie-down calf roping. steer stopping, 6th in breakaway roping, and 9th in ribbon roping.

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PHS Track update

At the Regional meet in Abilene, the Cowboys had some good performances, but failed to advance to the State Meet. Individual results included; 3200 M- Felipe Reyna 5th, 10:34.1 31600 M- Reyna, 9th, 4:57.4 Duscus- Steven Bunch 7th, 140' 4" 400 M- 4th prelims, 52.1 Cowgirls: Coach Haragan expressed her appreciation for the girls work and efforts during the long season. She said Michaela Traweek, in her 200 M event, was running her best of the year, just behind the heat leader, when she took a nasty fall, but was up to finish the race. Haragan said she would have qualified for the finals without the spill.

Kayla Redman was 9th in high jump with 4' 10", and thre the shot 34' 1.75" for 7th place. Lisa Parrish ran a 2.44.97 800M,

Amanda Garcia ran 6:12.96 in the 1600 M, Wendy Hernandez was 6:14.60 in the 1600.

Haragan said the 1600 relay team, Krystle Blundell, Lisa Parrish, Anne Palmer and Kristen Gray performed well but didn't advance.

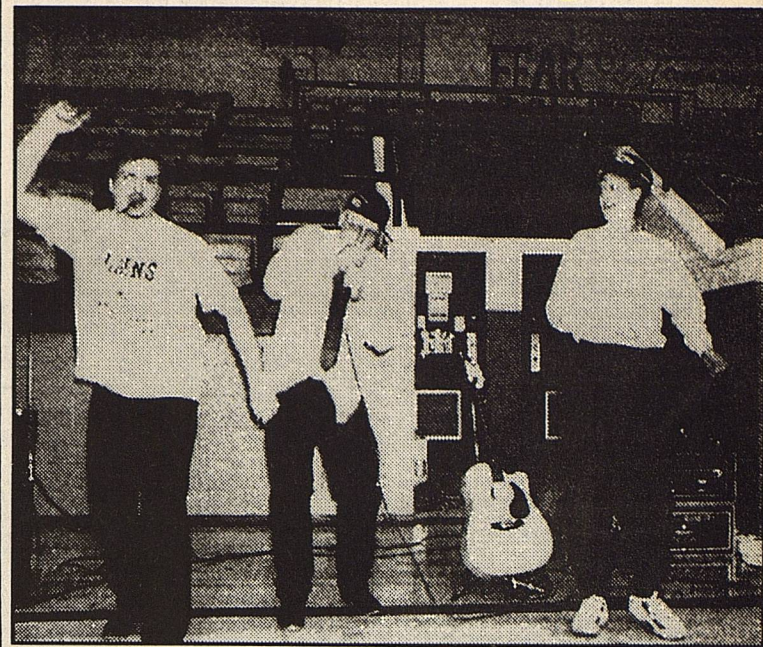
She reported Kristen Gray was very sick prior to the meet. Despite her illness and bad weather, she ran a 45.53 in her specialty, the 300 M hurdles to qualify for the finals. She seemed even sicker following this performance, but the next day she came back strong and won the grueling event with a time of 46.87 to qualify for the State Meet.

Regional Tennis

PHS Cowboys and Cowgirls tennis players competed in the Regional meet in Abilene. Senior Velvet Canada qualified for the State Finals in Austin with her second place finish. Doubles players Jessica Flores and Laura Morales fell to a Big Lake team, and Dustin Brunson - Clent Burrus were downed by a pair from Eldorado.

CCN congratulates the PHS Academic and Athletic students going to State! We Hope You Bring Back The Gold!!

Who are the two "Rappers" shown here on the right?



On April 19, Country and Western recording star Daron Norwood spoke to and performed for two assemblies of PISD's elementary and high school students. Norwood has been a strong advocate of avoiding alcohol, and described the perils of alcohol abuse he and many of his friends have experienced. The native of Tahoka "Volunteered" Superintendent Jim Haynes and Coach Cheryl McKinzie to accompany him in a number, only after tugging Hayne's shirt out and placing a cap on his head backwards, making him make weird noises in the mike he held, while McKinzie gyrated around the floor. An elementary student was delighted with the show, and said, "Man, that was neat. Mr. Haynes could make that mike sound just like a rooting hog!"

Student of the Week

Elva Ruiz, a sophomore and the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Angel Ruiz is student of the week. She was nominated by Mr. Friesen, who said "She has traits of a great person. She has persistency when it comes to learning. She makes those around her better persons. I believe she is an example of the phrase, "Iron sharpens iron." She isn't afraid to ask for help when she doesn't understand. This tenacious personality trait will help her go far. Combine this characteristic with a very sweet person and you have Elva."

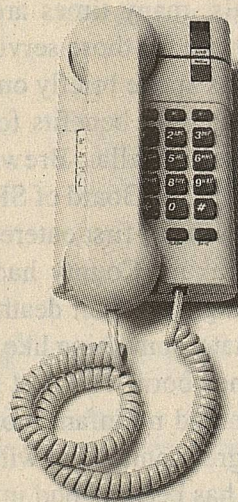


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El bloqueo de llamadas con recargo está disponible para aquellos clientes con ingresos bajos que califiquen para dicho servicio. Existen recargos por servicios de emergencia (9-1-1) según los recargos gubernamentales.

Las personas con ingresos bajos que sean elegibles para los programas de asistencia para teléfonos Lifeline y Link-Up pueden ser elegibles para descuentos de estos cargos de servicios básicos a través de planes de asistencia específicos del estado.

Los servicios básicos son ofrecidos a todos los clientes en los territorios de servicio de ALLTEL, según las tarifas, normas y condiciones especificadas en las tarifas de la compañía. Si tiene cualquier pregunta acerca de los servicios y beneficios de ALLTEL*, póngase en contacto con un representante de servicio a los clientes de ALLTEL llamando al 1-800-452-5354.

*En ciertas áreas pueden existir excepciones temporales.



'And The Rains Came'



Several streets around town were damaged by runoff water following the rain, including this one in front of the Jack Lowe residence.



Rushing water from the rain washed these landscaping timbers into the street from the yard of Jan and Bruce Lester's home.

The Eddie Carter and Jim Jackson families wish to thank Michael & Martin Barrientes and Shane McKinzie for their selfless acts, and the entire community for the prayers and concern shown for Caitlin and Kimberly. God Bless!

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Court hears values and benefits of Health District

In Monday's session of Commissioners Court, three officials of the South Plains Health District told the court, "You and the citizens of Yoakum County are getting excellent returns on the money you contribute to this district, and health services which wouldn't be available to hundreds of residents."

Dr. Morris Knox, Director of the health district, former resident VeeAnn Fitzgerald, RN and

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Director of Nurses, and Diane Gillit, Contract Mgr/Medicaid Liaison, each spoke briefly about the health organization which serves residents of Yoakum, Terry, Dawson and Gaines Counties, and the City of Levelland.

Contributions make up a small portion of the health district's operating budget. The City of Denver City, City of Plains, and the County contributed under their contracts a bit over \$42,000 to SPHD. Dr. Morris said, The total dollar amount returned to your local county economy through the district totalled almost \$187,000. That is a good return on any investment."

Fitzgerald and Gillit both outlined the services available to county residents from their departments.

Fitzgerald presented some impressive statistics; The district provided immunizations, including flu shot for seniors; Maternity Clinic/Prenatal visits, primary health care diagnosis/treatment visits, preventive health visits, Lab tests at Yoakum County Hospital, X-Rays, sonograms by the hospital, prescriptions through county drug stores, and screening/referral for Medicaid and other programs.

Gillit said her department provided a wide range of services including restaurant and food handlers inspection and training, septic tank inspections, health hazard inspections and investigation by registered sanitarians, disease investigation for TB, Hepatitis, measles, etc.

The three district staffers stressed their many services are far less expensive for many individuals, many times are the only source for those services.

Dr. Knox spoke briefly on prenatal/maternity benefits for locals. Judge Dallas Brewer, a member of the Board of SPHD, stated "When I first entered office, Yoakum County had the state's highest infant death rate in the state, something like 13% of the newborn. This last year, we recorded no infant mortalities. I agree contracting with the district has been a good investment for our people."

In addition to funds from counties and cities, the health district receives healthy amounts of state and federal grant funding.

This is the scene of a near tragedy last Saturday



The Lord God must have been smiling on two little girls and their families in the community last Saturday morning, following the huge downpour of rain which fell here. The culverts shown are just a few feet from the Cowboy Baseball Field. Saturday morning, head baseball coach Eddie Carter, daughter Caitlin and her friend Kimberly Jackson were on the scene, investigating the damaging floodwaters which swept through the field. Fortunately, other school district employees were also present.

The young girls were apparently watching the swirling water, already dangerously high and swift, well out in the street dividing the field from the rodeo arena to the east, when Kimberly was suddenly swept into the culvert openings. Frantic screams from the child attracted the attention of Michael and Martin Barrientes, and Shane McKinzie, who rushed over to help pull the child from the water, when she was already inside the culvert pipe. As they were saving her, Coach Carter was yelling instructions, and his daughter Caitlin, misunderstanding him, thought he told her to help save Kimberly.

Caitlin moved forward, was swept off her feet, and she too was pulled into the culvert. Carter jumped into the water, grasped his daughter, but because of the current, could not pull her from the pipe. "Only the help of the three men, the Barrientes' and Shane Mckinzie, allowed me to pull Caitlin out."

Both girls were shocked, but safe and sound, and both had scrapes and abrasions from being tossed against the steel culvert pipe.

Caitlin later told her dad, "I really thought I was going to die, because I had been holding my breath so long, and I just didn't have anymore."

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This has been a quiet week, except for the storms and some much needed rain.

Our condolences to the family of Evelyn Stroup.

New people for the lunch hour are Estelle Ivey and Martha Webbs son was with her for lunch one day.

Don't forget the Cinco De Mayo entertainment. The program will be by school students and will be in the Gym at 12:15. The Gym is down the hall from the Senior Citizens entrance. Everyone is welcome to attend.

The Memorial fund is for anyone wishing to remember in time of sorrow as far any occasion. Its a nice way to say "Happy Birthday to a Special friend or relative."

The daily activities go on like long walks in the hall, games, exercise equipment, crafts and lots of good fellowship.

The '42' Tournament on Tuesday was fun. Gladys and I won the ladies games. The men did not play.

See you next week,
 Smitty

"Don't be Afraid Brigade" Performed for TSA MO GA

Thirty three through sixth graders, the First Baptist Church Don't Be Afraid Brigade," performed for the TSA MO Club's meeting at the church. The youngsters are under direction of Patrick Hamilton, Youth Director of FBC. The youngsters performed a medley of three Christian songs.

Special guests at the meeting were parents of the 'Brigade Carolyn Culwell served as program coordinator, and refreshments were served by Connie McWhirter and Bonnie Earne



4 - H Clubs

Still have a few Pecans for sale! Help
 our Plains and Denver City clubs!
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Sincere Thank-You's

From our hearts: Some debts of gratitude can reach so high that we can never repay, they reach the sky. We thank you more and more with each passing day but just saying "THANK You" is just not enough to say for your thoughtfulness. We don't know where to start. If only you could hear the thank-you's from our hearts. May God give each of you a special blessing, who helped out by praying a prayer, and the giving of your generous gifts when disaster came our way, THANK YOU! God has truly blessed us with many friends.

Love In Christ
 David and Lyndia Alexander



Is This A Record ?

While the event may not earn a spot in the Guinness Book of Records, it is rather unusual. Two different mothers gave birth to baby daughters less than 24 hours apart, which made some local folks grandparents and great grandparents.

Lexi Sorensen was born Friday, April 30, 1999 at 5:46 p.m. in Odessa Regional Hospital, the daughter of Paul and B.J. Sorensen. She weighed 5 lbs., 8 oz., and was 19 inches long. Maternal grandmother is Dolores Wilson of Plains, and maternal great grandparents are Gary and Holly Dyer, and John Holly, of Plains.

Jewelina Marie Wingfield was born Saturday, May 1, 1999, at 4:44 p.m. in Westwood Hospital in Midland, the daughter of Jonas and Stephania Wingfield. She weighed 8 lbs. 4 oz., and was 21 1/2 inches long. Her maternal grandmother is Debbie Welch and Steven Dyer of Midland, and again, great grandparents are Gary and Holly Dyer.



Mother's Day

Special!

May 9, 1999

- * Pit Smoked BBQ Brisket... with Pinto Beans, and Potato Salad, OR
- Homemade Steak Fingers... with salad, french fries, gravy, Texas toast
- \$ 5.29

Cowboy Cafe

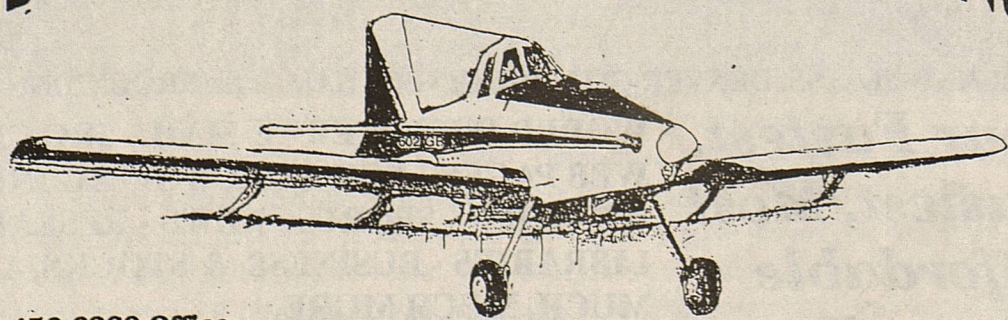
502 Cowboy Way - 456-2020
 Mon. - Fri. 11 am-2 pm, 5pm - 9 pm
 Sat. & Sun. 6 am - 2 pm, 5 pm - 9pm

BAND CALENDARS!!

Your band calendar order is due now! If you haven't ordered yet, please do so as soon as possible! Forms are available at the Public Library, Band Hall, and Lowes, or call Cindy Gray at 456-2473

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Monday - Friday

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Boys ball park was deeper underwater before this shot at noon Saturday.

WANTS

The Musical

Presented by

MAY 16TH, 6:00 P.M.
 FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

Parents....
 You and your children need to see
 this meaningful production

'And The Rains Came'



Several streets around town were damaged by runoff water following the rain front of the Jack Lowe residence.



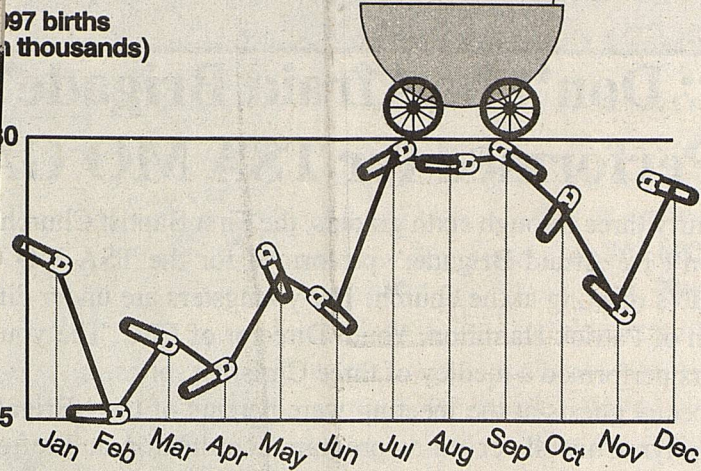
Rushing water from the rain washed these landscaping timbers into the Jan and Bruce Lester's home.

The Eddie Carter and Jim Jackson families wish to thank Michael & Martin Barrientes and Shane McKinzie for their selfless acts, and the entire community for the prayers and concern shown for Caitlin and Kimberly. God Bless!

Keeping an eye on Texas

Babies boom after Mother's Day

On average, Texas mothers welcome 915 newborns each day. In all, 3,829 babies were born in 1997, with the most births occurring in the former months. Mother's Day 1999 was May 9.



SOURCES: Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts (www.window.state.tx.us), and Texas Department of Health

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Blk	555 lbs	\$64.50
Blk	670 lbs	\$57.00
Rwf	560 lbs	\$62.50
2 Blk	208 lbs	\$210/hd
Blk	565 lbs	\$62.50
RMF	570 lbs	\$65.00

STEERS		
Red B/Y	595 lbs	\$62.50
Red B/Y	610 lbs	\$64.00
Spot	365 lbs	\$65.00
WF	645 lbs	\$70.50
3 Blk	217 lbs	\$220/hd
Blk	485 lbs	\$80.00
Rwf	550 lbs	\$75.75

COWS		
Hol	1210 lbs	\$37.00
Spot	1020 lbs	\$36.00
Red	1465 lbs	\$40.00
Red	1070 lbs	\$38.75
Red	1270 lbs	\$36.50
Spot	1350 lbs	\$36.50
RWF	1190 lbs	\$35.00

GOATS & SHEEP		
Spot Billy	200 lbs	\$190/hd
Nanny	85 lbs	\$85/hd
3 mix Billies	212 lbs	\$112.50/hd
3 WHT Nannies	53 lbs	\$35/hd
Blk Nanny	130 lbs	\$50.00/hd
BF Ewe	200 lbs	\$28.00
2 BF	153 lbs	\$39.00
Brn Nanny	130 lbs	\$60.00/hd
Grey Kid	30 lbs	\$24.00/hd
2 Kids	43 lbs	\$30.00/hd

PAIRS & BRED COWS		
Blk Pr	1225 lbs	\$630/pr
RMF Pr	1055 lbs	\$515/pr
6 Char Pr	1110 lbs	\$600/pr
Char Pr	1255 lbs	\$580/pr



Walker, Texas Rep

By State Representative Gary Walker, Dist. 80

MORE RURAL BILLS PASS HOUSE

HB 2615, of which I am a co-author, is on its way to the Senate. The bill extends oil and gas severance tax incentives programs. Keeping these tax incentives in place helps our producers effectively plan their exploration and operation activities. The Railroad Commission estimates that this program's overall economic benefits to the state has provided an additional \$42 billion, with a tax exemption of just under \$1 billion.

Two Drought related measures given county officials greater authority have also passed the House. The first, HB 2620, provides specific authority for counties to restrict or ban outdoor burning during drought conditions. The second, HB 2279, gives counties authority to prohibit or restrict the use of all fireworks when drought conditions exist.

HB2 will be of interest to agriculture producers. The bill directs the Legislature to conduct a comprehensive study of current agricultural support programs and the state's role in preserving the agriculture industry. Agriculture is our second largest industry, and generates 16 percent of the gross state product, or \$45 billion per year. Although agriculture represents a major segment of Texas' economy, the state has no clear agenda for agriculture, and this bill will eventually provide such an agenda.

SB 448, which I co-sponsored, related to cost-sharing programs for boll weevil eradication would provide the legal basics for appropriated funds to be used in a cost-sharing program to wipe out boll weevils and pink bollworms. \$25 million has been allocated for this program in the appropriation bill.

May 10 is the last day that the House committees can pass a House bill with any hope of passage. Senate bills considered by House committees are passing House bills as fast as they can, meeting long hours. It's do or die time in the House.

Many education issues have passed out of the Senate and are now being considered by the House Committee on Public Education. The House's approach to education differs from the Senate, and differences will have to be ironed out in the days to come.

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