



The conservation message for this month has been mentioned and alluded to various times in all preceding epistles. If we take care of and conserve our water, many of the other environmental concerns that we may have will be solved in the process. This message is to document the diminishing supplies of H₂O. The story and documentation is focused on a specific business, but there is ample reason to believe that the changes that are happening on this parcel of land are applicable to most, if not all, of Bandera County, and should be a prime consideration when contemplating any kind of development in this County.

The story begins with Hicks Creek that has its origin at the upper end of Faris Ranch Road in north central Bandera County. The first documentation of this stream was in the mid to late 1850's until well after the Civil War. Jack Stevens brought his bride from Atascosa County, and they built their home on the banks of the creek in 1868 because of the dependability of the water supply from what was then a flowing stream. Almost immediately when the first home was constructed, nine native pecan trees were planted with the intent of providing shade for the home. These trees grew to be 70-80 feet tall.

The creek is no longer a flowing stream, and the huge beautiful pecan trees are beginning to die from lack of water.

In the early 1900's the creek got on a big rise, and apparently threatened the

home to the point where the house was moved about 400 yards up a bluff away from the creek. In order to have water, the men of the family chiseled a cistern that is currently under the northwest corner of the Farm Restaurant porch. Chiseling meant using an iron bar to pound a shaft that is 2' in diameter at the top but that balloons out at the bottom so that there was room for the boys to work with their iron bar, bucket on a pulley, and a coffee can. The shaft was declared complete when they hit a small spring at 15'. The spring water was supplemented by placing a gutter along the eaves of the main house, passing the water through a concrete filter filled with sand and charcoal that then emptied into the cistern. All of the cooking and drinking water for the family of 13 came from this cistern. There was a bucket on a pulley above the cistern. Water was drawn up in the bucket, and everyone drank from the same dipper that was kept beside the cistern. Currently the bottom of the cistern is completely dry showing more evidence of our diminishing water supply.

The next step in water development was a 60' windmill well that produced very bad water that was only useful for livestock and plants. This gyp water has an odor, tastes awful and stains everything it flows across brown. The windmill is so outdated that repair doesn't appear practical, attempts to use even a small pump have pumped the well down so fast that this water source has not proven useful. The

worst problem with this water is that it has shown up in the upper stratas of other wells on the property and presented casing problems.

The third well drilled on the property serves The Farm Country Club recreation area, and the Farm Cupboard Restaurant. This well was drilled in 1960 to a depth of 380'. It was necessary to cement case the afore mentioned gyp water to keep it from seeping into the good water. The geologic strata that this well draws from is referred to as the lower Glenn Rose or middle Trinity limestone. The static water level was determined to be 50', and the original pump was set at 150', 100' in the water. Apparently everything rocked along without problems until 1996 when the original pump went out possibly due to dropping water levels. The static water level at that time was determined to be 140' meaning the water level has dropped roughly 90' over the 36 year period.

Eighteen years later May 20, 2014, there were major well problems again. The static water level at this time was determined to be 240', a drop of 110' in the 18 year period. The well depth was determined to be 340' meaning that about 40' of the original well had caved in. The current pump is set at 320' therefore it is only 20' off the bottom of the well. What this documentation adds up to is that we probably have some something less than 18 years to implement water saving measures, but we are mining the water faster than nature is replenishing it.

Finally, what we call well #1 or the big well that serves the RV Park, and our home was drilled in 1980 to a depth of 540' in a formation referred

to as the "Cow Creek". The shallow strata of gyp water was again a problem even though this well was close to ½ mile away from the other two wells where the gyp water occurred. The static water level at that time was 100', and the drillers estimate of potential yield was 50 gpm. The first pump was set at approximately 200' placing it 100' in the water. The first problems with this well were incurred on News Years Eve of 1993. Whatever can go wrong will go wrong at the worst possible time! The static water level was then measured to be 150' a change of about 50'.

The new pump was set at 252'. Everything rocked along smoothly until June of 2009 when a hole in one of the galvanized pipe fittings caused a reworking of the well. At this time the water level was measured at 215' a drop of roughly 65' necessitating the lowering of the pump another 60'. The pump was now at 312'.

The latest glitch was May 20, 2014. In the ensuing 5 years since 2009, the static water level has dropped another 50', and the pump was lowered another 60' placing it now at 375'. Since the well is 540' $540-375=165/50=3.3 \times 5=16.5$ years that we might last using only this well.

Presenting this documentation of a possibly unique isolated situation is only meant to create awareness of the water situation that extends throughout the Texas Hill Country. While there are feasible, responsible measures that can be taken to preserve our water resources, it is up to us as individuals to listen to the warnings and implement conservative practices. Please let's not

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wait for or expect the government to solve these problems. The initiatives and creativities of individual private land owners are what made this country what it is.

The guidance and supervision of our local Bandera County River Authority and Ground Water District is all the government intervention that should be required.



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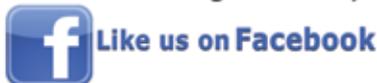


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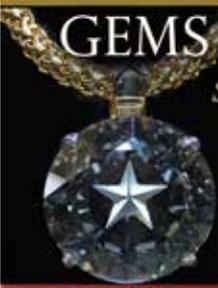
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