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# JOURNALLY *Speaking*

## Geographical Note

**G**OVERNMENT and corruption may be synonymous to some folks when they meditate on the mink coats, deep freezes, and fast-change work in the internal-revenue department. But down in the grass roots it is still, sometimes, synonymous with dignity.

Out in West Texas, in the Spraberry area, dignity has triumphed, and at the prodding of the federal Government.

Hadacol Corner, lusty and growing offspring of the oil industry, no longer exists. Midkiff has taken its place. The change came about when the Post Office Department decided to open a fourth-class office in the town but balked at the idea of entering Hadacol Corner in the Postal Guide.

Something more dignified, please, it asked. And the townsmen complied by honoring a well-known ranching family and an oil-field discovered by a wildcat on the Midkiff Ranch.

The oil industry promotes progress, but it has no monopoly on it. It sometimes has to share it—occasionally with the federal Government.

## Wildlife Note

**S**NAKES are rearing their ugly, and poisonous, heads in the petroleum industry.

In fact, they have become such a nuisance in a couple of places that the oil companies have had to hire snake catchers in order to keep their workers on the job.

Out in California last month, Richfield Oil Corp. announced it had hired Dr. Raymond B. Cowles, a snake expert from the University of California. His job is to reduce the rattlesnake population in the Wheeler Ridge and Cuyama areas—and at the same time educate the workers not to be afraid of rattlers.

Only a couple of weeks later, Standard Vacuum Oil Co. disclosed it had put Julio Desebrook, who at 66 is called South Africa's No. 1 snake catcher, on the payroll.

Desebrook was assigned the task of catching mambas, puff-adders, and

other miscellaneous poisonous varmints in an area near Durban, where Standard Vacuum is trying to build a refinery. Desebrook got the job when workers complained the area was so overrun with snakes they were even dropping out of the trees.

Even with adders and mambas to play hide 'n seek with, it seems Desebrook got the softest job. One thing that sounds tougher than catching critters of that nature is teaching roustabouts and roughnecks not to be afraid of rattlesnakes.

## Note of Sympathy

Nomenclature committees are like baby-contest judges. They can't win. No matter what science they employ or with what conscience they operate, someone is forever pointing out how wrong they are.

One committee chairman recently was petitioned to change a pool name. The letter read in part:

"The facts are these: The pool is named for the community of Denver, which is 8 miles away. . . Denver consists of a store and a church. Little Axe, which boasts a big school, church, and two stores and is a lively community center, actually is only a mile and a half from the pool and rightfully deserves the name designation. . .

"Chief Little Jim and the Shawnee tribe. . . join me in urging your committee to correct this wrong. . ."

It can be assumed that the publishers of the Rand-McNally maps got an even more pointed letter. Denver appears on them, while Little Axe is ignored. Civic pride—it's wonderful!

## Social Note

**S**OCONY - VACUUM OIL CO., INC., and Standard Vacuum Oil Co. last week conducted their third annual flower show for employes, annuitants, and their families.

More than 250 awards were presented in such classes as perennials, annuals, potted plants, vegetables, and flowers from bulbs, tubers, and corms.

Ted Armstrong

## WEST COAST



SUNRAY OIL CORP. uses this closed-system, diatomaceous earth filtering plant in Newhall-Potrero field. It has a brine output of only 350 bbl. daily, but the company was required to inject it underground.

# Brine Injection Gaining

Volume still is small, but it's growing as production of salt water increases, pollution control becomes stricter

D. H. Stormont

**L**OS ANGELES.—More and more of California's oil-field brine is being injected underground, although the volume involved still is only a small fraction of that produced.

The trend toward this method of disposal, either into oil-bearing strata or into other formations is resulting from these factors:

**Disposal requirements** are becoming more severe.

**Injection often** is the most economical method acceptable where the fields are any distance from the ocean and brine is produced in sizable quantities.

**The volume of brine** being produced is increasing.

Currently, California fields are producing about 1,660,000 bbl. of brine daily, or 360,000 bbl. more than was being produced 5 years ago. During this period the water cut increased 4.3 per cent, to an average of about 62.7 per cent. So today, for every barrel of crude produced nearly two barrels of brine are being withdrawn.

About 125,000 bbl. of this production is in the Coastal region fields, 475,000 bbl. in those of Los Angeles basin, and 1,000,000 bbl. in San Joaquin Val-

ley fields. Average percentage water cut of each of the three areas is 36, 59, and 71, respectively.

**Where it goes . . .** As to methods of disposal, about 400,000 bbl. daily is being dumped into the ocean after the oil content is reduced to less than 25 parts per million. Of this volume, ap-

proximately 300,000 bbl. is coming from Los Angeles fields and the remainder is from Coastal.

About 1,200,000 bbl. daily either is being run to pits for evaporation and percolation into the soil, or is being discharged on the surface and allowed to seep into the ground. Aside from the little injected underground, all of the brine produced by San Joaquin fields is handled in this manner.

Only about 65,000 bbl. is being returned to underground formations, including that associated with pressure maintenance and water floods. This is a small amount when compared to the total. The current level, however, is almost twice that of only 2 years ago.

**Matter of survival . . .** California's economic life depends upon its fresh-water supplies, and these have been decreasing at an alarming rate. State, county, and city agencies thus are becoming more insistent upon proper disposal of industrial wastes in order to prevent pollution of surface and underground waters and of arable lands.

The petroleum industry already has taken many steps—probably more so than any other industry—toward proper disposal of its oil-field wastes.

Where huge volumes are being run onto the ground or into unlined pits, the activity for the most part is remote from agricultural activities and in areas where ground waters have a high mineral content. Local pollution, however, is occurring or is imminent in many fields and it is these situations that oil groups and state agencies are trying to correct.

**Pollution control . . .** Principal Cali-



RICHFIELD OIL CORP. uses this central disposal pit for getting rid of its brine in South Cuyama field. Daily brine production is about 3,500 bbl. daily.

fornia body governing brine - disposal activities is the Water Pollution Control Board and its nine regional boards.

This organization was established by the Dickey Act, passed in 1949, which made comprehensive changes in the state's water pollution laws. Some counties have industrial-waste pollution laws but the regional boards are tending to handle all waste-disposal problems.

The boards so far have maintained a reasonable attitude toward the oil industry's disposal problems. Composition of the brine and location of the oil field are considered in their recommendations as to how the salt water must be disposed of. If the brine is low in chlorides, sodium, and boron content, and is being produced in a nonarable area where the ground waters are not fit for irrigation, use of unlined pits and percolation into the ground generally is permissible.

Brines being produced by all fields are analyzed by the boards, which also study the disposal methods being used in each field. Where pollution is believed to exist or to be imminent because of improper handling, a soil-sampling program may be undertaken and detailed geological and hydrological investigations initiated.

Where a field is located in an agricultural area and pollution of the land and ground waters are threatened by discharge of brine, legal action can result if the regional board's recommendations are not followed. If pollution is occurring, cost of proper disposal is given but little consideration.

An illustration of this point is the Newhall - Potrero field. There Sunray Oil Corp. recently installed a diatomaceous earth filtering system so that 350 bbl. of brine daily could be injected into a disposal well. As the field is too far from the Pacific for the brine to be economically dumped there, this was the most feasible method that was acceptable to the Los Angeles regional board.

In the future it is expected that more and more brine will have to be injected into wells. This is particularly true in San Joaquin Valley, where the amount of irrigated farming is steadily becoming more widespread. Injection wells already serve Ten Section, East Gosford, Greeley, Rio Bravo, and other central valley fields. Operators in some west-side fields shortly will have to dispose of their brines farther up in the hills or provide disposal wells.

In Cuyama Valley, underground disposal facilities were recently completed at Russell Ranch to handle that field's increasing brine output. Preparations are under way for a similar system at South Cuyama.

## Reef Core Study Available

AUSTIN.—Descriptions of cores from 75 wells in the Canyon Reef fields of West Texas are being made available for public inspection in Austin and Midland, Texas, and Washington, D. C.

The descriptions were prepared by the Geological Survey and the Bureau of Mines for the Petroleum Administration for Defense. They record such features as the composition, texture, fossil content, sedimentary structures, and type of porosity.

## Navy to Test Discovery

LOS ANGELES.—A production test of a discovery well to the Carneros zone in Naval Petroleum Reserve No. 1 (Elk Hills), will be started before the end of the year.

The well, No. X55-30R is located in the SE $\frac{1}{4}$  30-30s-23e, Mount Diablo Base and Meridian.

In anticipation of the test, the Navy

Department will auction off its share of the oil under the unit-plan contract with Standard Oil Co. of California in the Federal Building at Los Angeles October 1.

The successful bidder will be given a contract for an indefinite term but not exceeding 1 year, but it is estimated that the testing of the well will take a period of approximately 6 months.

Preliminary tests have indicated an initial production in the discovery of approximately 200 bbl. daily.

## Coastal Limits to Be Fixed

LOS ANGELES.—A special House interior subcommittee headed by Rep. Clair Engle of California will open a 2-day hearing in Los Angeles October 3 on legislation to define the seaward boundaries of the coastal states.

The study of the question of state boundaries was authorized by the House last session after President Truman vetoed the tidelands quitclaim bill.

## ECONOMICS

# Cut in Runs Needed

Product stocks climbing fast; overproduction could mean price break, with a shortage following a change in yields

John C. Casper

CURRENT statistics indicate that refiners in this country may have to cut crude runs before the end of the month because of the shortage of storage space for finished products.

This comes about because of the combination of (1) high refinery runs since the end of the May strike, (2) consumption during the summer at a somewhat lower rate than had been anticipated, and (3) the probability that most distributors and consumers have already filled their storage tanks.

At the end of April, just before the refinery strike, primary inventories of the four major products were about 10,000,000 bbl. greater than at the same time a year earlier. The heavy draft on stocks to meet demands during the May strike left primary stocks of major products 29,000,000 bbl. under the total for the end of May 1951.

**Runs are high . . .** Refiners started a program based on increased refinery runs in an effort to rebuild inventories that were used up during the strike. A new throughput record was established for the week ended June 28 with runs averaging 6,949,000 bbl. daily. Daily average runs passed the 7,000,000-bbl.

mark for the week ended July 12. Runs averaged a little more than 7,000,000 bbl. daily for the 10-week period ended September 6.

Since refiners had been warned that runs would have to be held at a very high level in order to rebuild inventories, some were surprised at the rate at which major products were added to storage.

Primary stocks of major products amounted to 309,805,000 bbl. on September 6, or about 4,200,000 bbl. more than at the same time last year.

**Demand lagging . . .** One of the important factors in the rapid buildup of stocks was low summer demands. Total demand for all products during the summer months, May through August, was no greater than in the same months last year.

Complete Bureau of Mines data are available for May and June. Total demand for the 2-month period was 54,000 bbl. daily less than in May and June of 1951. Estimates of demand for July and August, based on incomplete weekly data, show total demand for the 2 months averaging about 7,180,000 bbl. daily, or almost exactly the same as last year.

Even the demand for gasoline has