

Drilling is a cooperative effort

Local residents profit from oil

By LAURA HENDERSON
Special to The Battalion

The drilling for natural resources, such as oil and gas in the Kurten area, has had great economic significance for Brazos County and the communities within.

Alvin Wooten, spokesman for the Texas A&M University Real Estate Research Center said the drilling around the Kurten community has provided a lot of income into the area.

"The drilling has brought a lot of money into the area," said Wooten. "However, it has had little to do with the upward wing of land prices since they (the drilling companies) lease the land instead of buy."

Brock Faulkner, a Kurten landowner, said the presence of oil in the area has been a known fact for quite a while.

"It just wasn't economically feasible to drill until just now," he said. Delvin Barrett, president of Feather Crest Farms Inc. in Kurten, said there have been many attempts in the past to drill, but nothing has come from the efforts. Jerry Russell of the Texas Railroad Commission in Austin explained that even if company members know oil is in an area, they cannot enter the area and begin drilling.

The men must fill out several application forms and send a map of the area to the Railroad Commission's office in Houston. The leases are checked for any discrepancies and then sent to Austin where they are rechecked, said Russell.

"Each field has regulations which must be checked out and followed," he said. "For instance, a well must be at least 467 feet from a pipe line and only one well can be drilled to every 40 acres."

There have been drilling operations set over the county; however, the majority have been located along the Navasota River near Kurten.

Along with the wells have come a number of large and small drilling companies. The largest in the area is a Canadian company, Amalgamated Bonanza Petroleum Ltd.

One area landowner expressed concern over the fact that it took a Canadian company to really begin the operation.

"I just wish they could have been from the United States," he said.

R. L. Ramby, production supervisor for Bonanza, says the firm now has 62 producing wells. "So far

we've been lucky and haven't come up with any dry wells."

Ed Wesson, supervisor for Cayuga Exploration Co. (a smaller company in the area), says they are now maintaining seven wells, each producing about 50 barrels of oil per day.

"Mine aren't big wells, but some is better than none," he said.

Ramby explained that his wells individually produce anywhere from 50 to 400 barrels of oil each day with

three acres for the actual drilling site.

The actual depth of wells drilled in the Kurten area ranges from 8,400 to 10,000 feet. Wesson said Cayuga's average depth is about 9,500 feet.

Gordon Van Eaton, of ATCO Drilling Co. in Bryan said depths in the area have been between 5,000 and 12,000 feet.

Ramby commented that most of the landowners in the area have been more than cooperative in allowing the oil companies to drill on their land.

Barrett said the companies actually began leasing up a large portion of the land about two years ago.

According to a spokesman for Bonanza, oil was first struck in the Kurten area in late 1975 or early 1976.

Barrett said the drilling companies have been very respectful to wishes of landowners.

Barrett explained that before the companies can drill they must lease the land from the landowners. Royalty interests and any specifications the landowners feels need to be negotiated are discussed. After the lease is signed each party must consider it to be legally binding just like any formal contract.

Barrett cited as an example that he had requested in his contract that no well be drilled closer than 600 feet to his chicken houses. He said the company has respected this clause and made no attempt to drill any closer.

"It is a wonderful thing which has happened to our community," he said. "It is great for county and for the individuals within the county. I do not look at it as any type of a hindrance."

W. W. Humphries, a landowner in Reliance, has two wells on his property.

He said the only problem he has had is finding his gates open and the stripping half and acre of topsoil all the way around the wells which will render the land useless for a few years.

But he agreed with Barrett that "the benefits far out weight the detriments."

The majority of the landowners seem to feel the same way, although a few do have mixed emotions.

One landowner said, "I wish I had a hundred. I like the money I'm getting."

Another said, "In one way it's bad. They tear up the roads and the

land. But, if they find anything, I guess it will be worthwhile."

One landowner found that having a well on her property did not quite live up to her expectations. She explained that the drilling company left large piles of dirt and boards. She said she had spoken to them, but had gotten no response.

"I guess I made them mad because they were hauling my dirt off my land and I told them not to," she said.

Ramby stated that in most cases the wells are a benefit to the land.

"We try to leave it in better shape than we found it," he said. He added that many of the chemicals used while drilling are beneficial to the land. While those of the county with wells on their land are "raking in the profits", those without producing wells are also joining in with high spirits.

Said one landowner with a well, "I'm still hoping."

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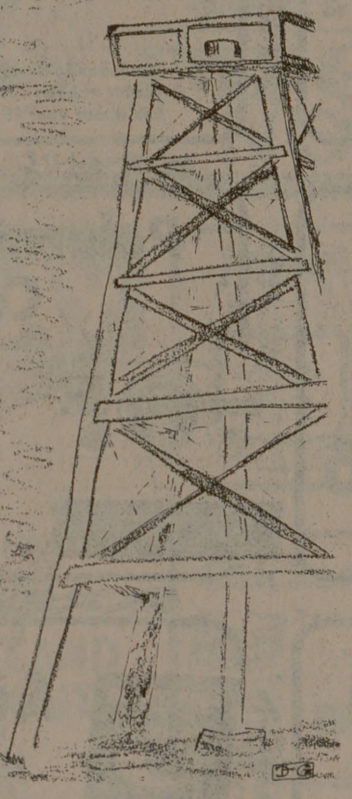
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total oil production running about 4,800 - 5,000 barrels.

Ramby said the surge in drilling in the area actually started with one "wildcat well" located just out of Kurten. A wildcat well is one drilled in an area where there may be oil. Oil was struck and the drilling and pumping rigs began moving in.

Wesson projected the cost for a single well to be around a half million dollars. Ramby, on the other hand, estimated the cost to be around \$2 million per well.

The cost of leasing land for drilling in the area is \$60 - 4100 per acre. Each well is usually allowed two to

nature, with a clear majority of 59 percent who did not hold that view. In the new survey, only 50 percent denied Americans are violent by nature, while 43 percent took the opposite view.

Of those interviewed, 72 percent said violence is played up too much by the news media — an increase in that view from 64 percent in 1975. "While most people are averse to invoking censorship over the display

of violence on TV or in newspapers or magazines, there is a growing sense that the showing of violence begets more violence," the survey reported.

The poll also indicated increased doubts about the assassinations of President John F. Kennedy, his brother, Robert Kennedy and of Martin Luther King, with more people than ever now convinced of a conspiracy in their deaths.

Violence concern increasing

United Press International
NEW YORK — Concern over increasing violence has grown sharply since 1975, according to the latest Harris Survey, but half of those polled still deny Americans are "violent by nature."

The survey of 1,201 adults nationwide revealed a hefty majority of 77 percent who felt the nation is slow to find ways of controlling violence and 71 percent felt the United States is an easy place to commit assassinations.

The poll said in 1975 a similar survey turned up 34 percent who attributed violence to the American

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