

Tom Waddell Reminisces About Years As Game Warden

[The following story written by Olive Spitzmiller appeared in the Nov. 29th, 1981 issue of the Wharton Journal-Spectator and is about Tom T. Waddell, longtime Eagle Lake resident and a retired Parks and Wildlife Department game warden for many years. Mr. Waddell recounts in the article many interesting experiences while working with wildlife and hunters of the area. Mr. Waddell now resides in the Heritage House in Eagle Lake.]

He sat in a wheelchair in front of the T.V., a silver-haired man of 92 wearing his right arm in a white cotton sling.

As he began to speak, his voice faltered, breaking now and then like a child's. But he gathered strength remembering the good times, his acute blue eyes looking beyond the drab walls of his nursing home, to a distant prairie where clouds of geese rose from the rice stubble.

"They made me game warden in 1923," Tom Waddell told me, "and I served until 1958. At first I covered 8 counties. Didn't get around to doin' much more than take a look at the court houses. Never did carry a gun with me till they called me up from Austin and told me I had to or they'd fire me. In those days I had a good right arm," he said, glancing at the sling. "I didn't need no gun."

Few men of any age know as much as Tom does about migratory game birds and other wildlife in this neck of the woods. A rice farmer in Wharton and Colorado Counties since 1912, he has fished, hunted and trapped just about everything that flies, swims, crawls, or trots in these parts, starting back when game was even more abundant than it is now.

I asked him what accounts for the annual autumn invasion of ducks and geese by the thousands. The answer was short, simple, and obvious to almost any native: rice.

Grown on the Eagle Lake and Wharton prairies since the late 1800s, the crop attracted hundreds of thousands of southbound game birds headed from Canada to Mexico and Central America, making this part of the state a magnificent winter spa for

ducks and geese.

In fact, Tom remembers when the birds were so numerous and so hungry-

they threatened the rice crop. "This county was just full of ducks," he said. "Right next to me there was a fellow with a hundred acres of rice, and back then you cut it with a binder pulled with mules, you know, and shucked it in the field. Those ducks ate that whole hundred acres in one night. He never got a barrel."

Officials in Washington had a hard time believing Tom's tally of 400,000 ducks in 1925. "They wanted to come down here and check on me, so I could show 'em the birds. Well, those fellows did come down and found out there was more than 400,000. You could shoot 25 ducks a day, legally, and you could kill 25 with one shot," Tom giggles like a boy.

Another species found on the prairie by the thousands was the prairie chicken, a succulent but stupid bird now all but extinct. Only about 150 of them survive at the Attwater Prairie Chicken National Wildlife Refuge near Eagle Lake.

"The end of those chickens came about 1926," Tom said, "but before that they were so thick they would destroy the rice while it was in the shock." Waddell tried to help increase their numbers by introducing baby chicks into existing nests, to see if he could persuade the hens to raise them.

"I'd take my horse out and see how those little ones was doin', but I only got two nests out of the ten I kept track of. The varmints got 'em—oh, coyotes, skunks, raccoons, turtles, even ants."

Tom's voice broke as he recounted the coup de grace: a tropical storm that dumped over 20 inches of rain on Egypt, drowning chickens by the thousands. "Everything went wrong at one time, the water and the farmers poisoning the cotton—everything."

Was hunting different in the old days, I wondered? Did the huge number of birds make it easier? Well, sure. Were hunters setting out spreads of white rags to attract birds as they do now? Tom grinned. There may have been a trace of scorn in his voice. "We never used 'em. We'd get 'em where they'd come off the roost, and

those boys in jail if he caught them? When Tom let loose with a giggle I knew he'd been one of the boys that night. "I wouldn't have been out there if I'd been warden."

Tough on law breakers once he pinned on that badge, Tom was especially protective about deer. Having brought in a fellow whom he caught driving with a deer he shouldn't have been with, Tom was angry when the judge fined him only 50 dollars.

"Later I got with that

judge and told him if that was all he was going to do with them poachers, I was gonna quit 'em after 'em."

More recently, he stopped a car at one a.m., finding five teenagers in it. "They had deer, a turkey, a crow and hen in that car," Tom remembers, "and everyone of 'em were cops' kids."

"Tom, how old should a kid be before he gets a gun?" asked. Just a while ago, made the acquaintance of five-year-old whose dad had given him his first shotgun. "That's crazy,"

old man said. "He should be at least 15. A little kid doesn't know what he's supposed to shoot at." He looked at me and grinned. "Of course, the average hunter today, he doesn't know what he's got after his kids' life."

"Like those kids, a lot of 'em trigger happy."

Hunters - You can get a beautiful "Goose Hunting Capital of the World" lapel pin for only \$3.00, at the Headlight office, 123 McCarty, or at the Hospital's gift shop.

Rice CISD Christmas Holidays

Schools in the Rice Consolidated School District closed for a long Christmas and New Year holiday break at the end of classes and programs last Friday, Dec. 18th and will remain closed through Sunday, January 3rd, 1982.

Classes will resume after the break at the regular hours on Monday, January 4th, 1982.

Joy to The World



The Christmas miracle... a Child is born and with Him comes the peace and joy of His love. May this peace and joy which is the glory of this holy season be an inspiration and a comfort to all.

WINTERMANN & CO.

Eagle Lake, Texas

Warmest wishes to all for an old fashioned and joyful holiday.

Sincere thanks for your support during the past year!

Eagle Lake Volunteer Ambulance Corps

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Improving Basic Abilities Goal Of RCISD 5-Year Plan

Rice Consolidated School District's board of education, in session Monday, Dec. 14th, accepted a Five Year Priority Plan for the district as recommended by a management team comprised of administrators and faculty members. The plan covers projected improvements in programs dealing with Mathematics, Language Arts and Reading.

Comprising the team developing the plan were: C. W. DeShazo, Assistant Superintendent, chairperson; Fred Grahmann, Rice High School principal; David H. Mims, Eagle Lake Middle School principal; John M. Mader, Garwood Elementary School

principal; Wm. C. Gohlke, Sheridan Elementary School principal; H.M. Benge, Eagle Lake Primary School principal; Iris Danklefs, Rice High School teacher; Deborah Blinks, Sheridan teacher; Elizabeth Miller, ELMS teacher; and Claudine Shorter, ELPS teacher.

The five-year plan is a requirement for accreditation with the Texas Board of Education. The new plan takes effect with the beginning of the 1982-83 school year.

Goals Cited
The plan sets out that the goal of the plan is for "each student in terms of individual aptitude will develop basic

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Another Plate Glass Window Broken At Gifts Of Distinction

Another large plate glass window at the front of Gifts of Distinction on the west side of the city square was broken sometime during Saturday night. Although apparently nothing was taken, several pieces of Lenox china, valued at over \$200, on display in the window were broken.

Eagle Lake Patrolman Lupe Villarreal noticed the broken window at around 2:30 a.m. Sunday and he notified the shop's owner, Mrs. Raymond (Liz) Waddell.

Investigation did not reveal the object used to break a large hole in the glass window. Shivers of the glass were found in all areas at the front of the store.

Police are investigating the possibility that the person or persons who broke the

window were scared off before they could take anything, or the possibility that the window was broken as an act of malicious mischief.

The window broken Saturday night was on the opposite side of the door from the one which was broken the night of Dec. 9th. Two persons, one of them a 18 year old juvenile and another 25 year old man, Ismael Hernandez Aguilar, were arrested less than five hours after that entry was spotted and they were charged with burglary of four wrist watches from the store.

Aguilar is in the county jail in lieu of \$5,000 bond. The juvenile was taken before juvenile court in this county and was ordered sent to the Texas Youth Council in Brownwood for indefinite confinement.

Sheriff's Officers Display Confiscated Marijuana



Colorado County Sheriff's officers are shown above with the 21 boxes packed with 20 pounds of "high grade" marijuana in each of the boxes, confiscated from a van which unloaded the marijuana from a plane which landed in the Nada area last Thursday night. Sheriff Jim Broussard, at left, called the "bust" the largest ever in Colorado County and estimated the street value of the 420 pounds of marijuana at from \$450,000 to \$500,000. In the center above is Deputy Reinhard (Curley) Wied and at the right is Deputy Lucien (Sarge) LaCourse who

participated in the arrest of two Louisiana men charged with the possession of the marijuana. Lawrence Berger, of Garwood, Constable in Precinct 2, and Eagle Lake Chief of Police Earl Winebrenner (who are not shown) also played key roles in the drug bust. LaCourse is holding a radio used by the two arrested men for communication from the ground to the aircraft. The radio has been confiscated by the sheriff's department and will be put to good use in future investigations, added Broussard.

Guns Stolen From Gary Cranek's Pickup

Gary Cranek, of Garwood, reported to the County Sheriff's office at 6:07 a.m. Thurs., Dec. 17th the theft of three guns from his vehicle. Cranek told the officers that he parked his vehicle at his residence at 10:30 p.m. the previous night. The next morning he noticed the vent window to his vehicle was open and the guns missing. He reported taking a Remington 12 gauge shotgun, a New Haven 12 gauge shotgun and a .22 pump Remington Rifle. Investigation of the theft continues.

Burglar Found In Home Of Elmo Werla

Elmo Werla, who resides a mile east of Altair, near the Altair Rice Dryer, was awakened from his sleep early Monday morning and chased off a burglar who had entered his home.

The county sheriff's department received a call at 3:12 a.m. Monday. Investigation revealed that Werla was awakened by a noise, grabbed a rifle and a subject in the house fled from the scene. Entry had been gained by cutting the screen on a side porch.

Werla found a 20 gauge shotgun on the kitchen table, some bath towels on the living room floor and a 12 gauge shotgun in a scabbard in the garage, all of which had been moved from their normal places and it is assumed the burglar planned to take the items but was scared off. Werla reported that a .22 Browning rifle was missing from his pickup truck. Investigation of the entry continues.

Printing To Be Limited After Jan. 1st

Robert L. Goode, who has been head of the Headlight's printing department for many years, has announced that he plans to retire on Dec. 31, 1981. Hence effective that date printing orders will be very limited, until other arrangements can be made.

Central Appraisal District To Begin Year In Courthouse

To Be Located In
Former County Tax
Offices Jan. 4th

Colorado County Central Appraisal District employees are making plans for the big move beginning next Wednesday, Dec. 30th into the offices formerly filled by Colorado County Tax Assessor and Collector Henry J. Hajovsky on the first floor of the county courthouse. It is anticipated that the central district will begin taking assessments and renditions in the new location on Monday, Jan. 4th according to Chief Appraiser Billy Youens.

County Tax Officer Henry J. Hajovsky and staff will move to new and smaller quarters in the basement of the courthouse since the central appraisal district will take over assessing and collecting taxes for the county in the year of 1982.

Mr. Hajovsky's office will continue all functions, including voter registration, licensing of vehicles, and others, with the exception of assessing and collecting taxes.

Five Directors Named
Directors on the board of the Central Appraisal District will begin new two-year terms on January 1st. They include: W. K. Merrem of

Weimar, Leslie Heinsohn of Freelsburg, Roy Hefley of Columbus and Arthur Anderson of Eagle Lake, all re-appointed after completing their first two-year terms on the board. The fifth board member will be Parke Christenberry of Garwood who will fill the position vacated by Cecil Smith of Garwood who chose not to serve another term on the appraisal district board.

The five directors were appointed to office by the participating entities and represent geographical areas in order to give all citizens of the county representation on the board. Mr. Merrem represents the Weimar area, Mr. Heinsohn the areas north of Columbus, Mr. Hefley the Columbus area, and Mr. Anderson and Mr. Christenberry the Eagle Lake and Rice School District areas.

To Collect Taxes In 1982
The Central Appraisal District has been working to place 100% of market values on all properties in the county as required under state statutes, but in 1982 the district will begin the new role of collecting taxes for the first time.

There are ten entities participating in the appraisal portion of the district's

function - all made mandatory under state law - including Colorado County, Rice, Columbus, Weimar and Provident City School Districts, Cities of Eagle Lake, Columbus and Weimar; and water districts at Garwood and Glidden. The district will collect taxes for six of the entities, Columbus, Weimar and Rice school districts, the Garwood and Glidden water districts, and Colorado County, at the option of governing bodies of these entities.

\$5 Million Annually
Chief Appraiser Youens estimates that the district will collect an estimated \$5 million in property taxes in 1982.

Plans to consolidate tax statements for the entities on a single statement could reduce costs of collection considerably. This will enable the taxpayer to write one check instead of paying separate tax bills to the entities in which he resides.

The central district board recently approved a budget of \$188,000 for appraisal work and a budget of \$116,240 for collection purposes.

The appraisal budget, with mandatory participation by [Continued on pg. 12 sec. 3]

Becky Benge Is New Lions Club Queen



Pretty Becky Benge, daughter of Major and Sandra Benge, center, has been named the Eagle Lake Lions Club Queen for the year of 1982. Kitty Thomas, the 1981 queen, at right, is shown placing the crown on the

new queen at the Lions Club annual Christmas Banquet held in the Community Center Thursday, Dec. 10th. At the left is Ralph Truly, current president of the Lions Club. For more on the banquet see page 4, section one.

420 Lbs. 'High Grade' Marijuana Dropped Off By Plane At Nada

Two Louisiana Men
Charged; Linked To
Operation In Austin

Colorado County officers, with the assist of a private citizen who desires to remain anonymous, made one of the largest "drug busts ever" in this county Thursday night.

Two Louisiana men were arrested and charged with felony possession of marijuana after 21 boxes each packed with 20 pounds of "high grade" marijuana were seized, Colorado County Sheriff Jim Broussard estimated the "street value" of the marijuana, judged by narcotics officers from the Department of Public Safety as some of the "best ever seen", at a minimum of \$450,000 to \$500,000.

Lawrence Berger of Garwood, constable in Justice of the Peace Precinct 2, received a call at around 9:30 p.m. last Thursday that a plane had landed on a dirt and gravel strip used for crop dusting aircraft, just southwest of Nada. Berger immediately notified the sheriff's department and Sheriff Jim Broussard and Deputy Lucien (Sarge) LaCourse were in a vehicle and started at top speed toward the Garwood area.

When Berger arrived at the air strip, the plane had just taken off and he was unable to identify the craft or determine if it was a single or multi-engine aircraft. However he did spot a white 1975 Ford Van driving away from the scene at a high speed. Meanwhile Eagle Lake

police chief Earl Winebrenner was notified to approach the scene on FM 102 and FM 950 to prevent escape in that direction; and Deputy Reinhard (Curley) Wied, who lives in the Garwood-Nada area, was called to the scene to assist Berger.

According to Berger, the van left the scene with the lights on but circled on back roads and finally turned lights off and he lost it.

According to Sheriff Broussard's report, Berger set up at the intersection of 71 and 115 in Nada to prevent escape from that direction as Sheriff Broussard and Deputy LaCourse approached on Highway 71 from the west.

Refuse Identification

Just about time Broussard and LaCourse reached a point between Garwood and Nada, they saw the van come off a county road which runs beside the home of Judge Lester Cranek, and lights on the van were turned on when the van turned onto Highway 71. Berger and Wied were notified to be on the lookout for the approaching van and Wied stopped the vehicle.

The two occupants refused to give their identification or to allow the officer to look into the van and demanded that they be left to go on their way. They reportedly started off in the van, however Sheriff Broussard notified Wied by radio to stop the vehicle and he did so. Eagle Lake Chief Winebrenner arrived at the scene at about that time and the two

men in the van were arrested on a traffic violation. A check with the computer service in Austin revealed the van was leased out of Austin. It was learned later that the vehicle was leased to a woman who reportedly let the men use it. Officers believe that the woman might be implicated in the incident as the investigation continues.

Sheriff Broussard ordered the van towed back to the county jail facilities, still unaware that the van held the large amount of marijuana.

Charged With No Lights
Driver of the vehicle.

[Continued on page 6 sec. 3]

1982 To Bring Many Important Elections

Voters will have an opportunity to elect many national, state, county and precinct officials in the elections to be held during the year of 1982. Democratic and Republican primary elections will be held statewide on May 1, 1982. The deadline for filing for office in the primary elections will be Monday, Feb. 1st, 1982.

Officials to be elected in 1982 will range from a United States Senator on down to Justices of the Peace in the eight precincts of Colorado County.

Statewide, voters will elect a Governor, Lt. Governor, Attorney General, Comptroller of Public Accounts, State Treasurer, Commissioner of General Land Office, Agriculture Commissioner, Railroad Commissioner and various judges to the Supreme Court and Court of Criminal Appeals. On the county level, important positions to be filled include: County Judge, County Sheriff (unexpired term of the late George Doc Mueller), District Clerk, County Clerk, County Treasurer, County Surveyor, County Commissioners in precincts 2 and 4, all Justices of the Peace, and party and precinct chairmen.

Two Have Already Filed
Sheriff Jim Broussard, appointed to fill the office of Sheriff following the death of George (Doc) Mueller, has filed for election to the office for the two years remaining on Mueller's term, and Justice of the Peace M. M. (Mac) Jones has filed for re-election in Eagle Lake J.P. Precinct 8. Many other announcements are anticipated for the various offices to be filled from now until Feb. 1st filing deadline.

MAY YOUR HOLIDAY BE A BLESSED AND JOYOUS ONE