Land Where Our Children Die

By Walter Davenport

A desert in which nothing can survive. This huge sandbank near LaMar, Colorado, was blown onto land that only a month before was level with the foreground.

Drugstores used to run out of sedatives after a dust storm. They don’t any more; they keep an extra large supply. But sedatives aren’t always enough. Some minds give way permanently under the repeated strain of a world turned suddenly into a black and gritty nightmare. Then the sufferer is likely to try to fix things up with an ax. Mr. Davenport takes you to see what combined arrogance, irresponsibility and greed have done to our Western plains.

Forty minutes after the dust storm hit us we were able to see the nose of our own car again. Doc said that the best thing to do after sitting out a dust storm was to eat something and drink something. It didn’t matter much what you ate but the doc said that beer was the thing to drink. Beer gave dissolving battle to the dust, didn’t dash with affinity swiftness into partnership, like water or milk, to make a mud which stuck to your vitals.

So we had a Poor Boy and warm beer at the Blue Ribbon, the clay-complexioned waitress, Willie May Something, explaining that the refrigerator wasn’t working. The dust had got into its gadgets the day before and the only man who knew how to fix it was laid up with “dust pneumonia.” A Poor Boy is a whole loaf of bread, like French bread, split lengthwise with a slab of barbecue sandwiched in.

Anyway, we ate all the Poor Boy we could and drank the warm beer. If you’re a native of the Dust Bowl and resigned to the dismal things it does to you, little things like warm beer and Poor Boy are pretty minor.

The doc said he guessed he’d go no farther with us. This was his home town and our destination was Denver. When we had arrived in Denver we would have driven about six hundred miles through the Bowl. And that was plenty.

We had started out from Amarillo, Texas. We had seen pictures, still and movies, of dust storms, and we had read about them—Black Blizzards. Pictures and literature had impressed us, of course, but not too deeply. Taking beatings from outraged nature gone amok was nothing new in our life. Hadn’t we bobbed around in floods which made chips of whole villages, singed our hair and fried our hide in forest fires which made charcoal of forty counties, weathered cyclones which made fine-cut of the trees we had clung to? Sure—we had faced calamity from ocean to ocean and had begun to look upon it as a brother act. How about the day our car froze in the front yard of the Arctic Circle, the thermometer at sixty below?

But we hadn’t tasted a dust storm. We hadn’t had our eyes bloodied and puffed up until they looked like dirty Brusseal sprouts by a storm of emery slammed into our faces by a forty-mile gale. We hadn’t inhaled a dust storm until closed nostrils forced our mouth open, after which we gulped it until we felt like old John Normans must have felt when the Indians launched him on his tortured way to Kingdom Come. The Indians pegged John Normans to the ground and slowly trickled alkali dust into his mouth—slowly so they could watch him swallow and choke until suffocation ended the fun.

We hadn’t known that for two days after our first major dust storm we would be spitting red, scared to our heels because we thought it was blood. And a dust storm tastes just as bad coming up as it does going down.

The doc, after two warm beers, said he’d let us go on without him because he was going to be busy. Other doctors told us that too. After every dust storm their telephones, like their patients, become hysterical. So do their doorbells, because much less than half the Dust Bowl farmers can afford to have telephones.

“Listen, Doctor, this here’s Twell Murfick—you know, where you been comin’. It’s my wife again. It’s like you said—she’s bad this time. We got her in her room tied up. Listen, kin you hurry?”

Or, “Doc, kin you come quick? Ackel’s gone and done it this time. This here’s Jere Hullomon over to Ackel’s telephonin’ from a railin’ station. Ackel’s got
of real-estate racketeers; the abandoned farmhouses, buried to their eaves in eddying dust; the corroded tops of farm machinery, deserted in what had been fields and now buried in sand with only leaves and rods protruding from their graves, like pitiful arms thrust upward, beckoning for help.

But we left Amarillo, having seen what dust storms do to a city population. On the prairie it is a vast, unbroken wall—a black, ghostly mountain broken from its moorings and screeching, buffeting, careening crazily along to Mahomet and you. It swallows what it meets just as water, having broken its dam, swallows the valley. And presently it disregards you, leaving you and similar puny things collapsed and gasping in its wake.

Its rolling, blundering spree lasts just so long—until the wind it rides dies or another, fresher wind hits it head on, carrying its own dust. And then one of two things happens: either the mountains combine and wallow off in another direction or, being evenly matched, they take the easiest course, upward.

Then it seems that the earth has exploded, hurling an immense bloom of black dust into the skies. If rain falls immediately thereafter, as sometimes it does, you'll think it's raining paint. Or, if the explosion was unusually heavy, mud.

Standing before a ruined building in a ruined land is Roy I. Kimmel, whom the federal government has drafted to co-ordinate the many and sometimes conflicting agencies for relief in the dust-devastated areas. Below is a typical dust storm as it approaches Springfield, Colorado

Fifty federal agencies and half that many state bureaus have pattered around the Dust Bowl for nearly four years, spending nearly three hundred million dollars to encourage hapless farmers to go on farming hardpan farms which wouldn't and don't support lizards. All that talking, dreaming, exhorting and political bookworming has bought us just more and bigger dust storms, less and lower morale and only one net gain. And that increase is in the number of acreage owners whose only possible crops are federal bounties, state subsidies, emergency legislation and an abiding conviction that it is no longer their privilege but their right to "farm the government."

We set out from Amarillo on a parched morning, the mounting sun besaered by the stinging tail of last night's dust storm. Our nerves were a bit tight, our throat was raw and our nostrils were stuffy. We were to see the wretched, naked desert the winds had left behind; the ghost villages, once the silvery ballyhoo
Land Where Our Children Die
Continued from page 13
him; he's like the chap who says he wasn't scared of the fire in the war. In the city, cooped-up nerves go jangly quicker than the farmers'. Drugstores used to run out of sedatives; they don't any more; they've learned what the demand will be.

The office building windows are crowded. There is a brave attempt at laughing, but it's involuntary, not real—a mildly hysterical giggle. Voices are shrill. The telephone operators told us that before the dust has gone, before the sun shines again, almost everybody will have called home.

"Howya, Ma—everything okay? See the dust storm? Howya? Everything okay? Oh, sure, we're okay. Everything okay at home? Ah, Ma, don't worry about a little dust. What? The vacuum cleaner clogged up? Whaddaya know about that? Vacuum cleaner. What? Oh, just twenty minutes of four. Why? No! Clock stopped again? Whaddaya know? Oh, sure, we're okay. What? No, nobody 'cept Mildred. Yeah—fainted. N-o-o-o, she's okay. Just hi-strikes. Y'know how she is. Ah, Ma, I'll be home soon and I'll help. hi-strikes. Y'know how she is. Ah, Ma, don't worry about the house. Sure, you just cleaned it and now—now Don't take on, I'll be home soon and I'll help. Some storm, wasn't it? Now listen, Ma—"

For all this there are easily isolated, man-created reasons. On our six-hundred-mile ramble from Amarillo to Denver, keeping mostly to the dusty back roads that we might see the bald clay, the dust clouted, the rounded houses, the abandoned farms and the government surplus farmers, we heard all of the inevitable shifting of responsibility. Preachers hurled Scripture and the Gospels at us.

Farmers, too, many of whom have no more talent for agriculture than we have, talked us old wives' tales of changes in the world's weather, in the earth's interior, in the deterioration of grain seed in the world's weather, in the earth's inevitable shifting of responsibility. None admitted to their woe. None admitted more talent for agriculture than we.

"...Chicago...London...San Francisco...Sydney."

Conklin Nozac is the sack-less fountain pen covered by United States Letters Patent, having every modern writing advantage.

Before you buy any pen, see the new Conklin, combining beautiful new designs and proved mechanical features. Write with it. The Conklin Nozac is the sack-less fountain pen covered by United States Letters Patent, having every modern writing advantage.

CUSHION POINT—A revolutionary advance in writing ease and smoothness. Writes at first touch to paper. 14 karat solid gold nibs.

VISIBILITY—Transparent ink chamber shows exactly how much ink is left.

SACK-LESS SELF-FILLER—An efficient and dependable patented device. Simple in design and operation—"winds like a watch."

CAPACITY—Extra large. Enough ink for you to write more than 5000 words.

LEAK-PROOF—Specially designed inner cap prevents leaking. Insures against ink-stained fingers.

Available in sturdy sizes for men, long and short slender sizes for women—In Royal Blue, Burgundy, Pearl, Black, Nile Green.

Leading dealers can give you full information. Or write us direct. The Conklin Pen Company, Toledo, Ohio...Chicago...London...San Francisco...Sydney.

* Conklin Nozac (no sac) Pens, $5.00 up; Pencils, $3.50 up; Sets, $8.50 up. Other Conklin Pens, $2.75 up; Pencils, $1.00 up; Sets, $3.75 up. Pen Desk Sets, $5.00 up.
**YES SIR, SHE GOT HER HUG!**

Don Heath's fiancee, Sally, coyly inquires whether he is running his diner for customers or for flies.

"Keep it up, and I'll use this on you, Don replies. "I expect next you'll tell me I can use flyspray around all this food."

"I'm going to do more than that, counters Sally as she runs out. "And, Mister Heath, I'll expect a man-sized hug for a reward."

She returns with gulfspay and says, "Watch, stupid, as she shoots gulfspay around. Every fly drops dead as a stuffed owl."

And there's no smell, no taste of spray in the food. Sally beams, "How about that hug? I've known for ages that gulfspay was the spray that couldn't taint food."

Gulfspay never contaminates food, never smells up a place, never stains things. Kills faster because it contains more pyrethrum, the killing ingredient, at your favorite store or Gulf dealers.

**GULFSPRAY**

Never contaminates food, never smells up a place, never stains things, kills faster because it contains more pyrethrum, the killing ingredient, at your favorite store or Gulf dealers.

**NEW LOW PRICES**

39¢ per pint, $1.95 per gallon

*Gulf Petroleum Specialties, Pittsburgh.*

Why Spend Good Money for Roof Coating that Flies Away?

**RUTLAND**

Insist on Rutland because more material stays on.

There's not much sense in using roof coating that blows right away. Yet actual tests show that one-third of the weight of some roof coatings evaporates within a few hours. Your hard-earned dollars are blown away!

Rutland No-Tar-In Roof Coating wears longer because it isn't "loaded" with solvent. More material per gallon stays on—forming a heavy, tough film of asphalt bound together with asbestos fibres.

Rutland may cost a trifle more per gallon but far less per year. You can Rutlandize your roof for only 1½¢ to 2¢ a sq. ft. Ideal for all roofs except shingles. Write direct if your local dealer does not stock Rutland.

Rutland Fire Clay Co., Dept. C-4, Rutland, Vt. Also makers of Rutland Patching Plaster, Furnace Cement, Stove Lining, etc.

R. S. for badly worn holes, around flashings, etc.—Rutland No. 4 Plastic Cement.

These three photographs, made less than a minute apart, show the progress of a dust storm as it approaches and envelops the town of Elkhart, Kansas.
The battery with 9 lives

Many an extra life is needed in auto batteries today.

Thank your battery for Jack Benny, a light for your pocket, warmth for your feet—and a dozen other conveniences of modern motoring.

—besides starting the car itself.

For the battery in modern batteries must carry you extra strength, power and life. You get them all in Prest-O-Lite—built stronger to last longer.

Prest-O-Lite Battery Co., Inc., Indianapolis, Ind.—Oakland, Calif.—Toronto, Can.
A “going concern” needs “going equipment.” You will be interested in the statement by the General Auditor of the Briggs Manufacturing Company, makers of bodies and stampings of nearly half the passenger cars produced annually throughout the world, and of Briggs Beauty Wore plumbing fixtures:

“We handle all our figure work on the ‘Comptometer’—costs, payrolls, sales, time-study work, factory production, statistics, and general accounting.

“In the highly competitive automotive and plumbing industries, costs must be carefully watched. The record of our experience over many years has convinced us that our figure work can be handled most economically on the ‘Comptometer.’ This outstanding economy is the result of high speed and extreme flexibility combined with accuracy. The ingenious Controlled-Key on each machine makes them almost ‘fool-proof’ in operation.

“The excellent service and suggestions by which the ‘Comptometer’ organization helps us to meet the demands of expanding business is another big reason why we have standardized on ‘Comptometer’ methods.”

If you would know why so many progressive businesses, large and small, are “sold” on “Comptometer” methods, permit a representative to show you (in your own office, on your own job). Telephone your local “Comptometer” office, or write direct to Felt & Tarrant Mfg. Co., 1714 North Paulina Street, Chicago, Illinois.

A “going concern” needs “going equipment.” You will be interested in the statement by the General Auditor of the Briggs Manufacturing Company, makers of bodies and stampings of nearly half the passenger cars produced annually throughout the world, and of Briggs Beauty Wore plumbing fixtures:

“We handle all our figure work on the ‘Comptometer’—costs, payrolls, sales, time-study work, factory production, statistics, and general accounting.

“In the highly competitive automotive and plumbing industries, costs must be carefully watched. The record of our experience over many years has convinced us that our figure work can be handled most economically on the ‘Comptometer.’ This outstanding economy is the result of high speed and extreme flexibility combined with accuracy. The ingenious Controlled-Key on each machine makes them almost ‘fool-proof’ in operation.

“The excellent service and suggestions by which the ‘Comptometer’ organization helps us to meet the demands of expanding business is another big reason why we have standardized on ‘Comptometer’ methods.”

If you would know why so many progressive businesses, large and small, are “sold” on “Comptometer” methods, permit a representative to show you (in your own office, on your own job). Telephone your local “Comptometer” office, or write direct to Felt & Tarrant Mfg. Co., 1714 North Paulina Street, Chicago, Illinois.
emissaries to the Dust Bowl referred to by the intractable farmer and the speculator as one of the "slick-hair college squirts," he is, in the main and deservedly, well liked—a purposeful, convincing, non-chafing diplomat who believes wholeheartedly in what he is doing. We wish him luck.

Black Horrors

He was with us when we met our first Colorado dust storm. Straight ahead we saw what looked at first to be a half-grown twister—a small cyclone. Then off to the left another reared itself, like a dirty geyser. After that they began to rise all along the forward horizon—a closely gathered company of black giants assembling to raid. Momentarily they grew in width and height, seeming somehow to stand still as our car sped toward them. Then their ranks closed, forming a solid wall.

Then with a hollow thumping like distant artillery, the outriders, the vanguard of blooms, gusts and searching shafts of grit, attacked. We had just time to close the car's windows before the onrushing wall enclosed us.

We turned on our headlights—sort of involuntarily. Anyway, we threw the light switch. You couldn't see whether the lights were on or off. A paper match would have served as well. You couldn't see through the windshield. It was as if we had been buried beneath an avalanche of blankets. Felt that hot too. You couldn't see heaven or earth. We lit the lights inside the car. Every opening was closed, but the dust had filled the car too. The lights inside were dimly visible.

Pretty soon we had to open one window a little, with handkerchiefs over our noses and mouths. It helped some. Had to do something.

The storm lasted about forty minutes. When at last we could see something of the road we relaxed. Perhaps we were stonily rigid during it all; but when we could see again we realized suddenly that we were very tired—physically and nervously exhausted.

We realized too that we had been scared. It was the same silly, unwarranted terror we felt the evening we got halfway up the stairs of that "haunted house" in Nova Scotia. We were afraid because suddenly the lights had gone out—afraid of the unknown, of the impenetrable darkness—because we couldn't see. We're not particularly heroic but we weren't nearly as frightened with forest fire on all sides or when the waters were out of control. Because then we could see our enemy.

Perhaps it all sounds foolish to you. But try a dust storm sometime. The doc laughed at us. He said there was nothing to be scared of, that everybody else on the road had pulled over to the side and was sitting it out like us. Nevertheless we were scared. We couldn't see. We couldn't breathe.

When we got going again, after that Poor Boy and warm beer, we met two others who were scared. A mile up the road two kids, a boy and a girl, ten or twelve years old we'd say, were sitting against what had been a fence. Now it was a dust dune. The girl was retching her soul out. The boy was pounding her back, crying hard and dry, but noiselessly. We asked them where they lived, who they were. They couldn't answer. We tried to coax them into our car. We said we'd take them back to the village. But they wouldn't move. They were still too full of terror.

• Whether it's the first year or the fourth year away at school, they miss you as much as you miss them. Yet you can bring their voices back to you in a matter of a minute or so... assure yourself that all is well; erase the loneliness they seldom admit.

Arrange now with your son or daughter away at school for regular telephone voice-visits at convenient times. Long Distance rates are lower after seven every evening and all day Sunday.