

Catch basin worked

By BOB SMITH

For nearly two years, it's been known as the "hole in the ground."

An acre in area and 12 feet in depth, the hole at 38th Avenue and Brommer Street has sat empty and forelorn — unused.

The county flood control district mortgaged itself to its eyebrows two years and spent nearly \$200,000 to build the storm water retention basin in an attempt to reduce the flooding that had yearly threatened the residents in the nearby Blue and Gold Mobile Home Park.

It was a common occurrence in past years for Live Oak firemen to take to small boats and evacuate isolated residents in the middle of a driving rain.

Conceived as a "cheap" solution after a substantial minority protested the construction of a \$600,000 pipeline down 38th Avenue to the ocean, the basin was originally intended to have a dual purpose.

In the winter, it would be a flood control facility—storing the storm water that couldn't be handled by the small storm drain pipes under the Southern Pacific railroad tracks and under another mobile home park downstream.

But during the dry months of late spring, summer and early fall, the basin would be turned into a children's play ground—operated by the county's Parks, Open Space and Cultural Services Department.

But since its completion in the summer of 1975, nary a drop of storm water has found its way into the hole—that is, until last Thursday. And neither had the children. The inviting green grass planted on the floor of the basin was untrampled—protected by a massive wooden fence and a very stout padlock.

The 1975-76 winter was so dry that rainfall never reached the point that it would be automatically diverted into the basin.

But beginning last Thursday, a series of early season rain storms dropped 2½ inches of rain into the 41st Avenue area. Fed by the runoff from the blacktopped areas in the upper 41st Avenue area, storm water quickly reached the point Thursday morning that a very small amount of water flowed over the top of a weir and into the basin.

Engineers designed the weir so that any water flows under 100 cubic feet—the amount that can flow under the railroad tracks—would remain in the storm channel. Any flows over that volume would be diverted into the basin.

And then Sunday, a massive downpour completed the job—sending enough water down the channel to fill the pond—10 acre-feet or 3,300,300 gallons of water.

The installation was designed so the pumps—capable of lifting one million gallons an hour out of the basin and into the drainage channel—would turn on automatically.

But with rapidly-clearing skies overhead Sunday afternoon, the

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