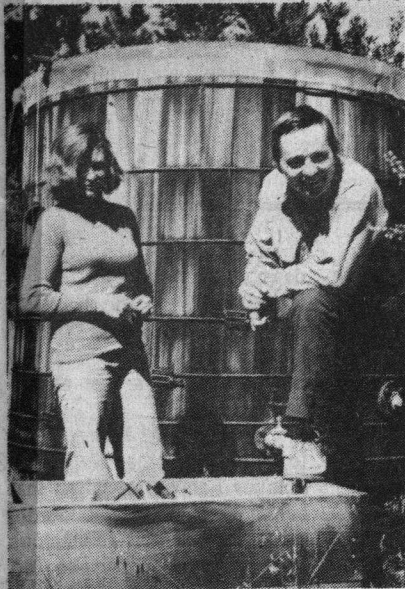


# Whether on wells or water co. system -- Santa Cruz Mountain people are suffering

By Keith Muraoka

When Bill Hewitt turns on his well pump he never knows what to expect. Sometimes he gets 15 gallons of water a day and on good days he might pump out 50 gallons. However, the bad days outweigh the good and sometimes he gets nothing but an empty sound.

His problem is not unique.



**EMPTY WATER TANK** - Bill and Mary Hewitt stand in front of their much-depleted storage tank. The Hewitts live south of Summit Road and have been hauling water for the past two years.

Photos by Keith Muraoka.

## WELLS DRY

Bill lives in the Villa Del Monte subdivision south of Summit Road in the Santa Cruz Mountains. Many wells are going dry these days and many were inadequate to begin with.

For Bill, his wife Mary and their two young children, their water problems didn't begin with this year's drought. It began seven years ago when they moved in.

"The well has never been any good since the day we moved in," said Bill. "We're right on the edge of the underground water supply and it just doesn't reach us."

## VALLEY REFUGEES

The Hewitts are refugees from the smog-ridden Santa Clara Valley. They thought about moving to the redwood forests and mountain meadows for three years before they did.

The Hewitts have done everything they could to develop their inadequate well. They even dynamited it in an effort to open it up. It failed.

## NEW WELL

The possibility of getting water from a new well is remote. County ordinances eliminate many prime locations since they are restricted from being near septic tanks, the county line or the lot next door. Also, there's no guarantee you'll hit water even if you spend \$3,000 to \$5,000.

Mary knows a friend who spent \$3,000 on a new well that went 200 feet deep. All that came up was dust.

## HAUL WATER

"It's cheaper to haul water than to take a chance," concluded Mary.

Thus, the Hewitts have learned to

live like desert dwellers. A whole new culture has developed throughout the water-less area.

The Hewitts pay \$25 twice a month for 1,200 gallons of trucked in water.

They take their laundry to town once a week and the children don't bathe as often as Mary would like them to. Any extra water is precious given to Mary's favorite tree rose.

## MOVE OUT

Yet the Hewitts, like other families, say they find life in the mountains so preferable to the crowded suburbs and cities that they wouldn't move back.

"Sell?" asked Mary. "There's times we've thought it's not worth the problems. However, if I'm going to be as honest as I am, who's going to buy a house with no water?"

She added, "I know someone who did just that. Just gave it back to the realtor they bought it from and he sold it. That would be a pretty rotten thing to do and I couldn't do it."

## FILLS TANK

Richard Rose, a construction foreman, who also lives in the mountains, spends his Saturdays running up and down the mountain filling a 300-gallon tank he keeps in the back of his pickup truck.

"Even if I had to haul water 50 times a week I wouldn't move back to San Jose," Richard said.

"Anyway we can, we intend to stay up here for a thousand reasons," added Jean Dempsey. Jean lives with her husband, two children and horses on a century-old farmhouse with three wells, none producing enough water to run their household for even a single day.

## ICE CREAM MAN

"I love the clean air here and there are no people on your back," Jean said. "Besides, I hate the ice cream man and the door-to-door salesmen you have to put up with in the suburbs."

For Bill and Mary Hewitt and the other mountain people, their only hope may be hooking up with the water company, if and when, it decides to expand.

## WATER COMPANY

However, for Dana Thompson, the Villa Del Monte Mutual Water Company hasn't been too good for herself or her family.

The Thompsons have been living in their home they built off of Summit Road for 11 years. Even though it has a hook-up to the water company, they have been hauling water off and on since last July. They first started

hauling in the summer of 1972.

Recently she spoke at a county supervisor's meeting.

"They were talking about water conservation measures should begin," she said. "I had to speak because we've been conserving water for a long time and the past two or three years people have been hauling water."

## BURROW CREEK

The water company serving Villa Del Monte gets its water from Burrow Creek, which is a tributary of Soquel Creek. However, it is so low presently

that the water company is hauling water from San Jose.

The much larger Soquel Creek is in fair shape, according to Steve Singer of the Watershed Management office.

"There's no real problem with it," Steve said, "but it's no shining example of the way a creek should be, either."

Thus, the mountain people of Santa Cruz appear to be in it together. Whether they're on the water company's system or have their own well, both share the prime concern of WATER!

REFERENCE

WATER SUPPLY 10 1990