



# A REPORT ON WATER DOWSING

By Cecil R. Roseberry



FIRSTLY, what you are about to read is not another strident argument in the recurrent and somewhat tedious debate over water dowsing. It is the straight, factual narrative of a series of experiments set afoot to explore the validity of dowsing by the most direct of all possible methods — the punching of holes in the earth. If Kenneth Roberts and his miracle-man, Henry Gross, came out on the short end of the stick, it was not because of a crooked drill.

Secondly, although the tentative answers we have obtained are unfavorable, by and large, to the art of divining as a reliable guide to the recesses where water gurgles unseen, they do not gainsay the existence of a very real and puzzling class of phenomena (including dowsing) which appear to lie in the shadow-land somewhere betwixt psychology and physics.

Kenneth Roberts' book, *Henry Gross and His Dowsing Rod* (a briefer and more apt title might

have been "Henry and I"), was published early in 1951. The reviews appeared on a Sunday. Early Monday morning, my friend the New York State geologist, Dr. John G. Broughton, called me at my desk in the *Albany Times-Union* and asked: "Are we going to let him get away with it?"

In my column the following day, I quoted Dr. Broughton on some uncomplimentary remarks about water-witching: that it had been thoroughly discredited by science; that groundwater is to be found beneath approximately 90 per cent of the earth's surface; that there is no such thing as "veins" of water, unless the solution channels in limestone might be considered such; that dowsers are usually familiar with the water potentialities of the landscape over which they work; that they may be perfectly sincere in believing the rod acts without their volition, when it is actually induced to do so by a muscular

twitch that is more or less subconscious. Dr. Broughton summed up his views in one trenchant statement: "Dowsing is humbug."

Up in Kennebunkport, novelist Roberts saw red. Through my column, he flung back a challenge at the state geologist, and any other geologists who might be within range. He offered to post with me his check for \$100 to be paid to Dr. Broughton (or to Dr. Winifred Goldring, the state paleontologist, whose name had been dragged in also as being a skeptic) if he could find in the book "one statement concerning water dowsing that can be successfully controverted." The letter stipulated only that the judge should be Professor J. B. Rhine of Duke University, and wound up on this caustic note: "I am overwhelmed by the apparent inability of the human race to limit its utterance to what it knows, and to grasp what it reads."

This little exchange of pleasantries between one of America's foremost authors and an eminent scientist was the seed from which sprang the drilling experiments now to be related. Drs. Broughton and Goldring promptly withdrew behind the cloak of scientific dignity. Broughton was "sorry he started the whole thing," and said he wanted no part of a "publicity stunt" to advertise Roberts' book — not even for \$100.

A correspondence was initiated between Roberts and me which led on to bigger things. The thought

quickly occurred that, if the Maine maestro, Henry Gross, could locate "domes" of fresh water in Bermuda by remote-control from Kenneth Roberts' study in Kennebunkport, then it ought to be apple pie for him to project his talents the mere 170 miles between Kennebunkport and Albany. Roberts readily assented to a test. It was the more agreeable to him because a successful denouement would be under the very noses of the geologists who had deprecated dowsing.

A PARTICULARLY baffling problem was at hand. A young couple, Mr. and Mrs. Bob Pauley, had recently "gone to the country," purchasing a venerable farm in the Normanskill Valley near Albany. Along with its rolling acres and red barns, they presently discovered that they had acquired a water dilemma. The only household supply came from a dug well which had a distressing habit of running dry. They sought advice from the Farm Bureau, from soil experts and geologists, all of whom discouraged them. The farm rests upon a plateau of dense, glutinous blue clay, once the bed of a glacial lake, and its depth to bedrock (as we subsequently learned) is about 125 feet. Water, except in oozes and trickles, simply is not to be had in such stuff.

The Pauleys (with a motive that was not entirely altruistic, to be sure) volunteered their farm as a "guinea pig."

The reaction of Roberts and Gross was instantaneous: "The whole proposition interests us very much because of the insistence of the local geologists that there can't be any water under Pauley's land. We know different." (If there is anything Roberts deplores, it is a geologist.)

ON THE BASIS of a preliminary description of the terrain, Henry's rod was able to detect three "veins" aslant the farm: "One carrying three and one-half gallons in dry weather; one that carries two gallons in dry weather; and one that peters out." Roberts added: "Offhand, if you and Pauley stand at Pauley's kitchen stove, that good vein will prove to be about 87 feet away."

A map of the farm, together with elevations and compass bearings, was mailed to Kennebunkport at his request. It came back marked in red pencil with two diverging "veins," one on the east, the other on the west side of the farm buildings. Both were supposed to emanate from a "dome" located 3,556 feet south of the boundary line of the farm. The best "vein" was the east one, Henry's rod having informed him that it would yield three and one-half gallons a minute at a depth of 46 feet. The west "vein" would give two gallons a minute.

The covering letter from Roberts said: "Henry's thought is to get one of your local dowsers and walk

him straight out along the south line of the house to the eastward. If he's any good, he'll hit the vein as indicated. Have him do the same thing in the vicinity of the southwest corner of the second barn. If he's good, his rod will go down where I've put the red lines."

By this time we had a large pool of home-talent dowsers from which to draw. Mention the word in print and they seem to dowse themselves up from nowhere. By letter, by telephone, and in the flesh they materialized. They ranged from a prominent attorney who used a coat-hanger for his rod, to a railroad engineman. Not one of them had ever found a "dry hole." We selected one who seemed to be more persistent and available than the rest — a horny-handed jack-of-all-trades named Peter Finkle (he also had a "sure-cure" formula for malaria, if the doctors would only listen).

Finkle was turned loose on the Pauley farm without being informed that Gross had already given it a "map-divining." He couldn't get a real pull at all where Roberts had charted the good east "vein." But he picked up the west "vein" in short order. Here a startling coincidence arose. Roberts had mapped this "vein" as diagonally crossing a corner of the second barn. Finkle's forked stick led him bang up against the same barn, same corner, from two directions. This was the most puzzling circumstance of all our flirtation with the unknown. We

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lured him back to try again, with the identical result. When we finally took Finkle into our confidence and showed him the map, he nearly dropped his coffee cup. From that day forth, Pete Finkle was not only the peer of Henry Gross — he was his deadly rival! (The “vein” under the corner of that barn still lingers as a haunting conundrum. Another dowser who roamed in during the drilling tests also mapped it, without knowing of the prior instances.)

IN THE SPRING of 1951, Roberts and Gross came to Albany to “pin-point” the job. Quietly and with the professional dignity of a magician going into his act, Henry Gross cut a forked twig and waved it tentatively around the fields as a moth might flicker its antennae. In brief, his results on the spot were more than a little at variance with his map-dowsing. The west “vein” appealed to him now far more than the east “vein,” and he traced it veering off in a quite different direction from that shown by Roberts’ red pencil on the map. Finally he halted in the bottom of a deep ravine, thrust his wand in the ground, and said, “Bring your post-hole auger.”

While the hole was being dug, Henry said water would begin to flow into it at a depth of five feet. It did. That, he said, was where the Pauleys should dig a ten-foot well, and wall it up with stones.

When the post-hole was later dug

to ten feet it had water in it, but every time a hand-pump was exercised in it, the water vanished.

Before Gross left, we asked him to mark a second-choice spot near the house. He ground his heel into the back lawn at a spot which could be interpreted as being “87 feet from the kitchen stove.” He said a well there would produce seven gallons a minute at 40 feet.

But Peter Finkle, our hometown dowser, kept shaking his head. “You won’t get a spoonful there,” he reiterated. “The place to drill is the front yard. I get a powerful pull there.” And he drove a stake some 100 feet distant from the Gross site.

In fairness, it should be remarked that neither Roberts nor Gross advised drilling, in so many words. A major Roberts tenet is that the “hammer-type” drill crushes and ruins “veins,” so that dowsers are discredited. But to dig a forty-foot well in that clay was ridiculous, and would have proved nothing new.

We drilled. At 40 feet, where Henry had said we should get seven gallons a minute, there wasn’t enough water to keep the bailer full. The driller went on past sixty feet, to give Henry the fullest possible chance. Still no strike.

The rig was transferred to the Finkle site in the front yard — Well No. 2. Pete Finkle was cannier than Gross in one major respect: he steadfastly declined to predict depth or volume. He merely said, “My stick tells me there’s a lot of water

down there, somewhere," and sat stoically while the drill churned through the dismal clay.

IN THE MIDST of this operation, the telephone rang. Kenneth Roberts calling from Kennebunkport. It was a very irate Roberts. He fairly burned the wire for half an hour. If the operator had been listening in, his long-distance bill would have been less. "We told you to dig, not drill," he vociferated. "You aren't giving us a fair test. What are you trying to do — crucify Henry?"

While Roberts was upbraiding me by phone, the drill outside had passed the sixty-foot level which had been allowed Gross. When it got down to 100 feet, Pete Finkle began showing signs of uneasiness, though he merely said, "Keep going." At 110 feet we struck water — and bailed over twenty gallons a minute without reducing the "head."

Meanwhile, a gnawing doubt remained: Supposing we had drilled the Gross well likewise to 110 feet. Would we have struck the same water?

Unhappily, for the dowsers, but happily for a more finished experiment, Well No. 2 was ruined before it could be used. The water did not diminish. But somehow the driller bungled it. He neglected it for three months, and the clay caved in.

At this juncture, a second driller — one who emphatically distrusts dowsing — volunteered to drill a third well. Ronald S. Hall specified

that his well must be in ground where the dowsers had not detected any water; if possible, where they had definitely denied the presence of water. It must be at a spot *between* the "veins" charted by Gross and Finkle. Naturally, Hall worked on the assumption that the bed of sand struck in Well No. 2 was not confined to a narrow, culvert-like "vein" (as dowsers postulate), but that it was a uniform blanket laid over perhaps a considerable area where clay meets bedrock.

Hall staked the location of the "anti-dowsing well" with a view to convenience, near the basement wall. It was approximately 35 feet from the Gross well, 65 feet from the Finkle well, and *between* the two. Gross had passed the spot and dismissed it. Not one of the motley array of dowsers who had swarmed over the farm had paused here.

IN BRIEF, the "anti-dowsing well" struck the sand and proved just as productive as Well No. 2 had promised to be. It was cautiously developed, with the result that it is now pumped and piped into the Pauley home and keeping the Pauleys supplied with all the crystal-clear soft water they ever will need.

The foregoing recital does not prove that the dowsers were altogether wrong. But it surely suggests that the dowsers were not altogether right, either. Even if dowsers sometimes locate water, they also sometimes miss it — but good!

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## TRAGEDY AT YALTA

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*By W. M. Lauderdale*

**N**EARLY everybody has had a go at telling what happened at Yalta, but nobody yet has told the full story.

Perhaps no one ever will. But the offstage incidents — the sideshow going on outside the main tent — may provide a parallel.

President Roosevelt was seriously ill. The Secret Service knew it. The heart specialist who accompanied him must have known it.

And while the Russians were trying to take advantage of his illness, our Navy, occupying an inconspicuous place on the sidelines, was giving our radar secrets to the Soviets, telling them everything there was to know about our radar frequencies.

Though trivial by comparison in an age when atom spies and hydrogen bomb developments hog the headlines, these frequencies were then and are now classified "confidential." An enemy knowing them

can jam our radars into uselessness.

The "give-away" was an incident in the voyage of the *U.S.S. Catoctin* to Russia. I was a lieutenant, U.S.N.R., aboard that ship.

Our journey into history began in late 1944, after the *Catoctin*, a headquarters flagship with Captain C. O. Comp, U.S.N., in command, dry-docked at Palermo, Sicily.

Workmen quickly transformed the vacated admiral's quarters into quarters suitable for occupancy by the President of the United States.

Bulkheads were cut with blowtorches, hatches became doors, bunks were removed and a full-size bed was brought in.

Ramps of steel were welded into place, leading from the quarterdeck to the admiral's porch one deck higher.

Departing from Palermo, weswung south of Greece, skirted Crete, then turned northward toward Istanbul.