TABLE OF CONTENTS

FEATURES
2 Foreword .............................................................. Editor
3 Book Review: DANCE HALL OF THE DEAD ........ Simone Pellerin
5 Future Issues ....................................................... Editor
5 Stylesheet .............................................................. Editor

CHILDHOOD
6 In Dustbowl Days ...................................................... Elva Howard Deeds
7 Welfare Boots .......................................................... Carl Stanislaus
8 Tough Times ............................................................. Ken Shroyer
9 Dear Bill ................................................................. Maggie Aldridge Smith
13 Molly in the Mist ....................................................... Orv Owens

DROUTH
16 Weary Inside ............................................................. George L. Hoffman
17 Memories of a Duster ................................................. Ken Robertson
18 Dirty Dust ............................................................... Elva Howard Deeds

EXODUS
19 A Farewell ............................................................... Margie Snowden North
20 Dustbowl Balladeer Woody Guthrie ....................... Lisa Southerland

NIGHTMARES
22 Oklahoma: 1935 ......................................................... George L. Hoffman
23 Dustbowl Memories ................................................... Doris Hatchett Beverage
25 Midnight Terror ......................................................... Elva Howard Deeds
26 With No Warning ...................................................... Carl Stanislaus

STORMS
27 The Dustbowl: 1937 ...................................................... Pat Kourt
28 Shining Nature .......................................................... Wenona L. Dunn
29 Black Sunday ........................................................... Margaret Friedrich
30 When the Dust Came .................................................. Margie Snowden North
33 Black Blizzard ........................................................ Carl Stanislaus
35 Black Night ............................................................. Logan Eakins
36 A Scene of Horror .................................................... Serena Kauk

EDITORIAL STAFF
PUBLISHER .............................................................. Dr. Dan Dill
EDITOR ................................................................. Dr. Leroy Thomas
ASSISTANT EDITOR .................................................. Dr. Roger Bromert
ART DIRECTOR ........................................................ Ms. Laurie Jolliffe

Westview design & graphics production by the SWOSU Graphic Design Studio.
Illustrations & layout by Southwestern Oklahoma State University Commercial Art Students.
Cover design by Clinton T. Wood
FOREWORD

Since October, 1981, the time of our WESTVIEW beginning, we have said goodbye often. Most recently, Dr. Jeanne Ellinger, Assistant Editor, departed. Dr. Ellinger had taught in our Language Arts Department since 1965. She joined the WESTVIEW Editorial Board as Assistant Editor in August, 1988. We will miss her because she brought literary discernment and creativity to the Board. She now lives in retirement in Oklahoma City.

The interest of our contributors in the present theme, “Western Oklahoma Dustbowl Days,” has been heartening. We hope that you, our readers, will be able to enjoy the selections, do some remembering, and be thankful that life is much better for most of us now than it was during those Black Days.

If there’s too much gloom in this issue, all of us can look forward to Winter, 1992—“Western Oklahoma Colorful Characters.”

Leroy Thomas
Editor

To Our Readers:

With regret, the editorial staff of Westview must notify our readers that our editor of many years, Dr. Leroy Thomas, has passed away. His efforts on behalf of Westview are well known, and he will be missed by both readers and staff alike. I write to you as a colleague of Dr. Thomas’s who has been asked to assume the editorship of Westview. While this is a formidable task, our magazine has a new Assistant Editor, Ms. Melissa Bruner, as well as the continued help of Assistant Editors Dr. Roger Bromert and Ms. Laurie Jolliffe. The four of us will be maintaining Westview, one of Dr. Thomas’s finest achievements, in his memory.

Fred Alsberg
Editor
Tony Hillerman, author of Dance Hall of the Dead, started writing novels just before 1970; although the first publisher he went to see about Messenger Birds (later retitled The Blessing Way) advised him to forget everything about Indians, he didn't give up. For one thing, he wanted to write detective stories because he enjoyed such authors as Eric Gambler, Graham Greene, and Simenon and because he felt tired of producing nothing but newspaper articles after many years working for United Press International as well as teaching journalism at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque. But with even deeper urgency, he wanted to write on the Navajos, fascinated as he was by their culture and by their capacity to resist assimilation and eager for Americans to know more about them. Harper and Row finally accepted his book; and up to now, nine other novels dealing with Navajos have been published. In the meantime, he has become widely known and appreciated in the United States as well as abroad.

Hillerman's second novel involving Navajos, Dance Hall of the Dead (1973), like all the previous and following ones, deals with religion and sorcery, which form the background and the foundations on which the investigation is built. At the same time, they account for the specific quality of the suspense. As such, and because of its masterly treatment of the problem of identity, it is quite representative of Hillerman's creativity. Dance Hall of the Dead is also one of Hillerman's best novels in that it is both exotic to us non-Indians and is written in such a way that, paradoxically, the reader can feel very close to the characters, although they belong to such a different culture.

Apart from working out a good detective story, the purpose of the book is obviously to tell the reader about the Zunis and the Navajos, their way of life and their beliefs. Hillerman is thoroughly documented on all aspects of the subject, but the reader never gets the impression of being taught anything. On the contrary, learning so much information is as easy as can be just because the author is never didactic in any way; what we learn is through following the progress of the investigation and trying to guess what can have happened by taking into account all the information about the way the characters might react, according to their own specific culture.

Quite obviously, then, the other outstanding trait of Hillerman's stories is the handling of inter-ethnic and often inter-tribal relationships. In this respect, Dance Hall of the Dead offers, in my opinion, one of the best examples of finely wrought and extremely complex vision of "others" ever written.

What is most striking in the novel is the way the reader is given all necessary information through a
series of contacts with different characters—be they white, Zuni, or Navajo—so that all the information is never quite objective, but exclusively subjective. The consequence, then, is a feeling and, more than that, a belief, that any cultural point of view is not only valid but also respectable. From the very first words, the reader is launched into a strange, unfamiliar world, but taken for granted: “Shulawitsi, the Little Fire God, member of the Council of the Gods and Deputy to the Sun, had taped his track shoes to his feet.” The author acts as if the readers already know about the religious context referred to, while they don’t even know yet in what time or place the scene occurs. Only later will they understand that the boy is a Zuni.

Besides, as the policeman on the investigation, Joe Leaphorn, is a Navajo, he is as much a stranger in Zuni country as they are; and it is through his Navajo eyes and understanding that they will slowly discover all the details on the Zunis. Furthermore, as Leaphorn considers, studies, and appreciates what he observes among the Zunis by comparison with his own culture, we learn at the same time about the Zunis and the Navajos.

The knowledge of all the ceremonies is intricately interwoven with the investigation proper, in such a way that we can’t understand anything about what is going on if we don’t shift from our own vision of life to that of the Zunis and Navajos. At the same time, it’s through the device of the suspense that we are led, unaware, to dealing with notions and behaviors quite remote from our own. One telling and repeated example is the fact that the Indians in the novel don’t use the words right or left but east or north, etc., which is how Hillerman makes us both feel and understand the Indian’s vision of the world as not revolving around man but as being a whole in which man is only an element among others, not the center of the universe, but part of it. The tremendous importance of the landscape and the weather in the plot itself force the readers to acknowledge Hillerman’s love for the country, which provides some moving descriptions as well as weighing upon the characters and making us understand that man is dependent upon nature and never its master.

The relationships between different Indian cultures and between whites and Indians are often and successfully described with a great deal of humor, always pointing to the same concern for presenting a different point of view from that of the white man.

MS. SIMONE PELLERIN teaches American Studies in Paris, France. Her specialization is Western American Literature. Her husband, Henri Lemare, is also a professor.
FUTURE ISSUES

Please study our needs and submit something to us. Notice the deadline for each issue.

SPRING, 1993 (Western Oklahoma Lawmen and Outlaws; deadline: 12-15-92).
SUMMER, 1993 (Western Oklahoma Feasts; deadline: 2-15-93).
FALL, 1993 (Western Oklahoma Farmhouses; deadline: 7-1-93).
WINTER, 1993 (Western Oklahoma Youth; deadline: 9-15-93).
SUMMER, 1994 (Western Oklahoma Hard Times/Good Times; deadline: 2-15-94).
FALL, 1994 (Western Oklahoma Terrain—Rivers, Lakes, Hills; deadline: 7-1-94).
SPRING, 1995 (Western Oklahoma's Cowboys and Indians; deadline: 12-15-94).
SUMMER, 1995 (Western Oklahoma's Separations; deadline: 2-15-95).
FALL, 1995 (Western Oklahoma’s Now and Then; deadline: 7-1-95).
SPRING, 1996 (Western Oklahoma Animals; deadline: 12-15-95).

STYLESHEET

Being published in WESTVIEW is mission possible if a writer follows these guidelines (after first sending a query):

1. Always mail a submission flat in a 9 by 12 Manila envelope, remembering to include a SASE (self-addressed stamped envelope) for a possible rejection. Mail to: Fred Alsberg; Editor; WESTVIEW of SOSU, 100 Campus Drive; Weatherford, OK 73096.
2. Use a coversheet that contains name, address, telephone number, suggested issue and date (e.g. “Western Oklahoma Colorful Characters”—Winter, 1992).
3. Remember to leave your name and address off the submission itself. We want each contributor to be anonymous during the Board’s assessing procedure.
4. Remember the importance of a clean typewritten or word-processed manuscript (double-spacing for prose and single-spacing for poetry). Use a good grade of 8 1/2 by 11 white paper. Submit pen-and-ink graphics on white paper. Submit 5 by 7 or 8 by 10 black and white photos that you will let us keep on file in our office and not return. Please don’t send valuable family pictures. Send copies.
5. Be sure to submit material that is related to Western Oklahoma. The geographical boundary is the area lying west of Interstate 35. However, we don’t require that our contributors be Western Oklahoma residents.
6. We prefer free-verse poetry that contains no archaic language and negative attitudes. We will seriously consider rhymed poetry that contains no straining or manipulating of meter and rhyme and no syntax inversions. Line limit is 25.
7. We prefer that your prose submissions be no more than ten double-spaced pages, that they be well organized and clear of purpose, and that they express worthwhile, upbeat attitudes.
8. We maintain that our journal will be wholesome to the extent that it can be appreciated by all readers.
9. Feeling that your submission will be accepted, you also need to send along a short biographical blurb written in third person. Example: DR. SYLVESTER PERRINE of Current, Ohio, is a retired English professor. Dr. Perrine, a former resident of Western Oklahoma, has made many previous contributions to WESTVIEW.
10. Strive for a natural writing style, good grammar, good taste, correct spelling.
11. Accentuate originality and creativity.

NOTE: A potential contributor may purchase a sample copy for $4.00 ($3.00 plus $1.00 for mailing expenses). Send payment to the Editor.
IN DUSTBOWL DAYS

by Elva Howard Deeds

My experience with the dust-storm diversity
And others while studying at Panhandle University
Planted within my inexperienced heart
An appreciation for people somehow set apart
From others I had known while I was growing up.

Their acceptance of household chores with cheerful mood,
Their patience with cooking (despite the dust) the daily food,
While living in an environment lacking greenery and beauty,
They deemed “doing without” a temporary duty.
These generous women influenced my developing philosophy.

Faith that these dustbowl days would eventually stop
And Panhandle folk would come out on top:
This belief rubbed off on me, and I could see for these folk
A new future in agriculture—belying as a cruel joke

THE GRAPES OF WRATH.

ELVA HOWARD DEEDS, formerly Washita County Teacher of the Year, is now retired and living on a farm near Sentinel.
Janie had to live on welfare
In a house across the tracks
And wore little faded dresses
From printed flour sacks.

She didn’t know her daddy,
And her family had no roots.
She lived on hope for better days
And wore old welfare boots.

She never had a bicycle
And walked two miles to school.
She took her bath in a washtub
As a Saturday standing rule.

Now she’s doing better,
But won’t wear furs or fancy suits
Because a lady came to her house
And gave her welfare boots.

CARL STANISLAUS of Chickasha, retired career employee of OTASCO, enjoys playing with rhyme and his personal computer.
TIMES were tough during the Dustbowl Days. I remember those times very well. I was just a youngster; therefore, I had to attend the local one-room school about 1 1/4 miles from my house—despite the dust, wind, or whatever the weather.

Back then, there was no television to bring us the latest information about the weather. We had only the old battery-operated radio; sometimes it didn’t work very well.

I remember that Mom would pack lunches in brown sacks for my sister and me and tell us to watch out for the weather as we trudged off to school each day. Sis wore her homemade flour-sack dress, and I wore my faded, patched overalls.

My parents couldn’t afford to buy much flour and some of the nicer things that others were getting since Dad’s wheat and corn crops were mostly covered with sand, and some of the plants had even blown away. Dad would take some of the grain he had saved from the previous year for planting; then he would put a smaller screen in the hammer mill to make the homemade flour for Mom’s cooking.

Dad taught me a very important lesson in those tough times, though. He would check our family bank account, what little we had, each month and say, “Son, remember, if you can’t pay for it, don’t buy it.” I remember that lesson very well.

In school, one of my teachers told us that it was far better and more honorable to fail than to cheat. She would say, “Have faith in your own ideas—even if some folks say they are wrong. Listen to everyone; then try to filter out the bad things and let the good things sift through.”

She taught us never to put a price tag on our hearts and souls and that God would be with us to steady and support us. That’s another lesson I still remember.

Those Dustbowl Days were indeed rough and tough, but I think that everyone who lived through them learned something worthwhile. I know that I’m a better person for having come through those times. But I was one of the fortunate ones. My folks were Christians, and I was brought up in a Christian home where I was taught to love God, read His Word, and believe in Him for my provisions. These are mostly the things I learned from being in the Dustbowl.
DEAR BILL

by Maggie Aldridge Smith

Author’s Note: These were letters written to Bill Daniel in the Fort Cobb area during 1929-1930. School and the ability to attend were the main theme of the letters.

Apache, Oklahoma
May 29, 1929

Dear Bill,

Hooray for you! I saw you boxing Saturday night. Pretty good. I think I mean it was pretty good you didn’t see me.

I was at Oak Grove not very long ago. I saw you, but I couldn’t speak. My knees played Yankee Doodle, and my tongue wouldn’t move.

Hope you aren’t ill. You don’t have to answer this, but I’d feel much better if you did.

Vivian and I are certainly enjoying ourselves.

Sincerely yours,

MEA

Apache, Oklahoma
Tuesday night

Mr. Ozell Daniel
Fort Cobb, Oklahoma

Dear Ozell,

I suppose you will be surprised to receive a letter from me, but you shouldn’t be surprised because I will do anything, “ALMOST.” ha ha

I came home from Elk City Friday night and Sunday night Maggie came and got me. Of course I had to come stay with her. I wish you could be down here with us. We are nearly as mean as we used to be. Maggie gets so mad at me sometimes. But I can get by with her by telling something good.

I saw you in Carnegie last Saturday but you didn’t see me.

Maggie has been singing and just made me forget all I ever knew and that wasn’t much. ha ha

OX All mistakes are hugs and kisses.

Your Aggravating Friend

Vivian Smith
Carnegie, Oklahoma
February 24, 1930

Dear Bill,

I'm sorry, Bill, but I've sure fixed things for you now. I don't see why I didn't think and not say anything, but I did and I'm sorry. Will you forgive me this time? I'll tell you what I've done.

Last Saturday Vivian and Vera Kelly came into the store. Of course I said something to Vivian about getting a letter from you. Vera says, "Oh, Pearly gets letters from Bill all time." I knew I had been "talking out of school." I'm sorry. Perhaps Pearly won't care. I hope she will not be angry with you.

I see the kids from Oak Grove quite often. They aren't much in love with Lutie Mae. Why? Do you know?

No, Billy Boy, I'm not getting serious. I couldn't if I tried.

"HUNT AND PECK SYSTEM" for typing: I think I've been trying the "Find and Peck," and I believe yours is the best for I still can't type and you type letters. So I'll learn your way a while.

I must study lessons now. I may send you a picture pretty soon (if they are any good).

Bye Bye MEA

EDITOR'S NOTE: The author didn't just write letters that year. The Carnegie High School Debate Team coached by Ramona Allen, of which Maggie Aldridge Smith was a member, won the Southwestern Conference championship.

Apache, Oklahoma
Route 5
May 30, 1930

Dear Bill Daniel,

Suppose you thought I was never going to answer, but I IS at last.

I heard your father was ill not very long ago. Did you come home? I thought I saw you one day on the street. I said, "Hello, Bill"; the boy waved, but it wasn't you. He's been speaking to me ever since.
How's your crop? Our cotton is a patch of weeds since all these rains. However, we are trying to hurry and work it out. Sure has rained an awful lot lately. I must hurry and get this mailed—you hurry and answer and don't wait so long, please.

Respectfully, your friend, MEA

Apache, Oklahoma
Route 5
June 17, 1930

Dear Bill,

Since you didn't get my last letter and it came back, I'll write again. Vivian told me she saw you at Oak Grove the last day of school, so I thought perhaps you had left Canton.

Talk about grass, weeds, sun, and work; well—you can't tell me anything new about any of these. What have you been doing? Riding a plow or a hoe handle?

I can hardly wait until school starts again. No telling where I'll go to school, though. I've been quite undecided. Daddy needs me here with the crop work. I want to go back to Carnegie. Mattie and Clarence are down here. The store has quit business. My sister and her husband (Izette and Bud Lowery) are down here, too. So we have quite a group of workers.

When you come this way, be sure to come by to see me. How is your crop? Grassy? It's been raining. When we could get into the fields, we had to do oats and wheat. The cotton and corn are grassy—not very clean. Answer soon and so will I.

MEA

Apache, Oklahoma
July 28, 1930

Dear Bill,

How does this warm weather find you. In a swimming pool having a big time. That's where it finds me when I have time to get there.

I'm getting to be real lazy—as if I hadn't been that all my life because I just want to sleep and read all the time. Mama is visiting her father in Siloam Springs, Arkansas; therefore, I don't
have much chance to sleep and read.

I went to Wewoka last Sunday. Came back before I wanted to. I wanted to stay a long time. I must stay out here a while now because I'll probably have to stay out there a whole nine months. Ain't that the worst luck? I want to go to school at Carnegie, but I can't. So—

All our nephews and nieces have visited me since Mama left. I wrote and told her I'd be gray headed before I'm seventeen if they stay.

Hang crepe on your nose—your brain is dead if you think I haven't time to read long letters. I have time to read them but not to write.

I must get to bed; it is late, but:

Remember me at morning
Remember me at night
Remember me F.O.B.D.
And don't forget to write.

LOVE TO YOU, MEA

Apache, Oklahoma
June 24, 1931

Dearest Bill,

Glad to have received your letter and your maxim “Better late than never.” Bring Vivian and come over Sunday night. I'll be counting the minutes until then 'cause I can hardly wait to see you kids. I'll write her and tell her to prepare to come. If anything happens that she can't come, you come anyway.

Swimming, fishing, sleeping, and reading—running around—has been my routine this week. I've enjoyed it immensely too because last week I found myself a constant companion to the cow. Probably will repeat that performance next week.

It is so hot here it would make a Honolulu girl (if one were here) want to shed a few more garments. Impossible? Did I hear you say? Not quite!

Must drop Vivian a line now, so I'll close, expecting to see you soon.

I remain yours, MEA

MAGGIE ALDRIDGE SMITH is originally from Western Oklahoma. She presently lives in Siloam Springs, Arkansas, and has served for seventeen years as the director of Ozark Writers and Artists Guild now located at Crowder College in Neosho, Missouri.
The dim outline of a man dogged her footsteps into a blanket of mist. Molly Troy strained to see the soddy in the middle of the field—the soddy with a dirt floor—her childhood home.

The autumn wind swept leaves and old memories into a pile, threatened to destroy the memories but failed. Memories came back like brightly colored dolls marching to drum rolls on the horizon of her mind.

Molly’s song had begun there amid love and laughter, watered down by occasional tears. To her, a delightful, vibrant song began each day in that wonderland only a child can know by heart. Each day added a lovely new verse to Molly’s song—until the birds and small animals disappeared. She never saw them again.

She stared at memories upon the harsh face of the mist. Western Oklahoma and surrounding states had been part of the wind-erosion, part of the blackened skies of despair. Nature had punished man for his failure as caretaker of the soil.

Molly aimed herself at the musty smell enveloping the soddy.

“Remember, Harry?” she whispered, knowing there was no need to whisper. “We nearly starved. Day after day of suffocating dirt with nothing to hold it in place and not enough clothes of any kind to block out the blinding dirt and sands; not enough curtains, not enough towels, not enough quilts to keep out the smothering sound of dirt-filled wind.

“Gone now,” she said loudly, knowing no one could hear. “Forever gone.”

She walked across the wheat field for a closer look at the soddy of her youth and to listen for the song of earth as it spun toward a destiny only it understood.

“We won,” she said to the mist. “We fought the centipedes, we fought the drought, we fought floods and finally when it all looked hopeless, we came across our field, standing tall, unbowed by the disasters hurled our way by the fickle hand of fate that hovers overhead.

“We did it, Harry. We did it.” She smiled at the memory of a sun-tanned youth with thinning brown hair standing firm against seasonal tides of hope and despair—against everything nature could demand.

“Admiral Halsey said it all: There are no great men, only great challenges,” she said to the mist. “But there are great men who conquer in spite of disease and
pestilence. Halsey couldn't have won our war, Harry, but we did.”

A crow flew overhead. She couldn't see it; but when it cawed, it gave itself away.

She topped the soddy and stood looking down, hands on hips, at the rusted pipe extending from a dust-covered, rusted stove through the roof.

A centipede crawled out the rotted door and disappeared into the mist. She had once killed centipedes with an axe.

She turned and looked north but couldn't see the three-bedroom ranch-style brick in the distance surrounded by elms, oaks, and evergreen shrubs. She shivered. Mist had soaked through her chambray shirt and jeans.

"Harry left us," she said and bristled when Harry's voice came out of memory. "You know better, Harry. Our son hated this life."

She put her hand to her forehead, gripped the temples. As though imaginary trees were weaving bodies in an African clearing, the drums came pounding, throbbing, beating. She tried to force the sound away. "Stop," she mentally screamed. "Stop."

She swayed as the day raced tomorrow and hugged herself—mumbled at those naked, sweating bodies that only she could see.

"Love every brick in our house, Harry. Each board has a story to tell. Each crack has a memory... the empty cradle rocks in the attic. Do you still hear it, Harry?"

She stared at the ranch home she couldn't see, and 1935 came back, spurred by the sound of the ever-present Western Oklahoma wind. About half of the dustbowl area was cropped and half devoted to intensive cattle raising. Both forms left the soil exposed to the winds constantly sweeping over gently rolling land. Grass covering the cropland was plowed under and grass of grazing land cut short and trampled into the ground by large herds of cattle.

She clenched a hardened, sun-darkened hand, fingernails cracked and shortened almost into the quick by hard work.

"Remember, Harry?" Organic matter, clay, and silt in the soil were carried for hundreds of miles by the wind (in some cases darkening the sky on the Atlantic Coast), while sand and heavier materials drifted against houses, fences, and barns. In many places three to four inches of topsoil were blown away; sand and silt dunes four to ten feet in height were formed.

"The year of our first-born, Harry. I can hear that feeble cry—always—as the doomed must hear the call, and see the bright light of tomorrow as they leave us behind."

"She lies beside you, Harry. The child we never got to know. The child we named Evalina after a beautiful poem."

She trudged back to the house into a bright yellow kitchen to make a pot of tea. She saw her reflection in the kitchen window—looked at her hands, face, and stomach that had once been tanned and smooth, and legs that had been firm, long, and slender and now were as sun-darkened as the rain clouds that sometimes hovered overhead.

She didn't need a mirror to tell her how she looked. She knew exactly how time had creased her face, prepared it for final closing; how her entire body had been fashioned by years spent planting, harvesting, and taking care of family demands.

Success and failure seemed to be part of the fate lingering just outside the window, beyond the trees, beyond the sky, and beyond the realm of light—the same failures that sometimes crowded into her bed to mock and laugh at the apprehension she clutched to her breast.

"Look at these hands, Angelina," Molly whispered to the figure in the mist she strained toward with time-blurred eyes. "See the veins? Remember how they held you close, caressed your fevered cheeks? You should have been the daughter to go with my son. Imagine the talks we could have had—the memories that never came to pass."

She cocked her head. "Go 'way, drums. Go 'way."

She imagined the cradle rocking in time to the drums.

"The dustbowl not only took you, Angelina; it took neighbors and friends."

She smiled at the figures in the mist that only she could see. "I wouldn't have traded it, Harry. I wouldn't have traded sunflowers and daisies of the field for candlelight, roses, and the taste of the sweet red wine. It was a beautiful, wonderful life spotted with the storms everyone has to face." She sipped tea, leaned over the sink with only her plate, spoon, fork, and knife waiting to be washed, and stared at the figure coming closer, closer.

"Lights in the kitchen, Harry, warm and bright. Rocking on the porch when day was done, rocking away daily cares. Now, there's only the sound of a cradle rocking in the attic, spinning stories of what might have been."

"There's so many things left undone... so much I want to do. There's so much to share with Jan, so many stories to tell her about heritage."

"The dustbowl not only took you, Angelina; it took neighbors and friends."

She smiled at the figures in the mist that only she could see. "I wouldn't have traded it, Harry. I wouldn't have traded sunflowers and daisies of the field for candlelight, roses, and the taste of the sweet red wine. It was a beautiful, wonderful life spotted with the storms everyone has to face." She sipped tea, leaned over the sink with only her plate, spoon, fork, and knife waiting to be washed, and stared at the figure coming closer, closer.

"Lights in the kitchen, Harry, warm and bright. Rocking on the porch when day was done, rocking away daily cares. Now, there's only the sound of a cradle rocking in the attic, spinning stories of what might have been."
What might have been never mattered, Harry, only what was. I miss you both, Harry. Miss the gossip we could have shared, those days of going without and sharing laughter over the antics of a girl child.”

She placed a hand on her hip, straightened, and went into a pink bedroom. She stretched out on the bed, folded arms across her chest, and looked through the slitted shade at the mist.

“She had Papa’s beautiful blue eyes,” she said to the mist. “Mama’s hair and aquiline nose. So much like…”

She rolled off the bed, strained to see through the mist for a better look at the figure, patiently waiting for her to join him.

“Ninety-six million acres,” she said softly. “Black clouds of our livelihood blown away; tons of dirt covering us with its disgust.

“We won, Harry.” Planted large areas in grass; a three-year rotation of wheat, sorghum, and fallow; introduced contour plowing, terracing, and strip planting; planted long shelterbelts of trees to break the force of the wind that forced our neighbors to pack meager belongings in sputtering old cars and head out under a dark cloud to seek the sun.

“We paid our dues, Harry. We paid them with heartaches and tears.”

She rubbed her chest. “Go ‘way,” she said to the pain. “Go ‘way.”

She heard a car motor die and went back to the kitchen. Henry hated it but drove out from town each day to tend cattle waiting to be hayed, pigs and chickens to be fed. And each day he brought his daughter who loved the feel of dirt in her hands.

Molly leaned against the sink and nodded at the mist. She gripped the edge of the sink when her granddaughter Jan appeared out of the mist.

Molly put a hand to her cheek to brush away a tear. Jan was like Angelina in so many ways.

“Not now, Harry,” Molly said to the mist. “There’s so much to share with Jan, so many stories to tell her about heritage.”

The wind whispered at the door, opened and tried to lift the mist. Molly imagined that the wind sobbed as it swept over tombstone grass; smothered a child who struggled to live.

She held out her arms to Jan, who ran to her and waited to be lifted up, blue eyes trusting and hopeful, waiting for the hug she knew was coming, for a kiss to warm her cheek.

Molly shook her head at the mist.

Closer.

It withdrew when Molly kissed Jan’s cheek.

Figure and drums disappeared into the mist when Molly began telling Jan about the dustbowl and how it threatened to end a way of life that held beauty, strength, and perseverance for all yesterdays, todays, and tomorrows in its bosom.

Molly glanced out the window and back at the child. “Not now, Harry,” she said to herself. “There’ll be plenty of time after my work here is done.”

She hugged Jan, took that small hand, and together they went across the field toward the soddy where sunflowers and daisies grew.

A grandmother looked across the field with eyes that had seen feast and famine with the passage of time, and lips remembering the taste of the sweet red wine, leading a granddaughter with rose-petal lips unfamiliar with watermelon fresh off the vine.

The mist lifted, the sun blessed them with warmth, and the past became today as yesterday’s sorrow faded away, and smiles came out to play.

Molly laughed for the pure joy of living. Jan laughed too and reached for a hand that caressed her, protected her from harm, and being hugged, listened to a heart beat in tune with all their tomorrows.

ORV OWENS of Watonga does free-lance writing and contributes to WESTVIEW and the WATONGA REPUBLICAN.
DROUTH

WEARY INSIDE
by George L. Hoffman

Old Drouth has done got me,
An' he been pushin' so hard,
Now he got both feet in my door;
Oh, Lord, though I've tried
To keep him outside,
He jest keep pushin' some more!

With his hot burnin' breath
Blowin' out of the west,
An' the sun in his empty sky,
The rains won't come
'Til the season's done,
An' the cotton half knee-high!

The cornfield is brown,
The leaves have all curled,
The pastures are shriveled and dead,
An' though I labor all day,
There jest ain't no way
To earn my pore family's cornbread.

The taxes ain't paid,
The mortgage is due,
All my credit is gone at the store,
An', Lord, I hev tried
'Til I'm so weary inside,
I jes cain't try any more.

I'm gonna leave this ol' shack
An' never look back.
I won't even bother to close up the door;
Let the hot burnin' wind
Blow the yella sand in,
Let the weeds grow up through the floor!

I'll crank up Ol' Ford
An' head 'er out west;
I'll get a job in a factory-store
'Cuz, Lord, I hev tried
'Til I'm so weary inside
I jes cain't try anymore.

GEORGE L. HOFFMAN was born and reared on a farm near Custer City, Oklahoma. He graduated from Southwestern and taught in various schools in Oklahoma, Colorado, and Oregon. He is now retired and pursuing a writing career. His present address is 12865 SE 132nd, Clackamas, OR 97015, and he requests correspondence from anyone of those still surviving from that other time.
MEMORIES OF A DUSTER

by Ken Robertson

The last good rain had come in September when an east wind brought turbulent gray clouds and a cold downpour that began with driving torrents and ended in a steady drizzle lasting until nightfall. No snow fell the entire winter. In January, a Norther brought light showers of sleet that left tiny dimples in the sandy soil of the dry fields when the pellets melted.

In February, the wind blew cold from the north and then warm from the south with a hint of spring, alternating as if it were running a potato race—stirring the dust and carrying soil from open fields into their fence rows, piling hummocks caught by the skunk brush, wild currant bushes, and sunflower stalks that lined the roadsides. By March, the topsoil was as dry as talcum powder, and the winter wheat had hardly grown beyond the initial spike or two of its sprout.

On a Sunday, the wind began to blow from the west with fierce gusts that raised clouds of powdery soil from the dry fields into the air. The following day, high atmospheric dust arrived from the vacant plains of the Texas Panhandle, blotting out the sun until it was as dull as a tan moon you could look at directly without blinking. The wind blew steadily, rolling the dust high into the air and slithering the heavier grains of soil across the land, penetrating clothing, houses, barns, and cars, finding every crack and crevice and leaving a dun-colored layer of gritty dust on bed and floor and table and stove.

On Tuesday I hurried home from school in the gusts of the storm, a mile and a half across dusty fields before I reached the protection of the blackjack oak trees of our wooded pasture. My eyes were reddened by the grit and ringed with muddy brown circles where eye water had mixed with dirt. Mother looked at my face and handed me the water bucket to fill at the windmill outside the kitchen door.

"Wash up," she ordered. "I'll get you a clean towel."

She had stuffed damp cloths in the cracks around the kitchen's poorly fitted windows in a vain attempt to keep out the pervasive dust and was baking a guinea hen with gravy and great lumps of dressing that made the dark, stringy meat more appetizing. In a covered dish in the closed oven, the meal was safely protected from the dust.

The storm had brought Harley Alcorn, a horse trader from Fort Cobb, who stopped at our house every year or so for a free meal as he traveled about like a gypsy, driving a team pulling a light wagon and trailing two or three horses behind. Pointing skyward, he shouted to Father over the noise of the wind, "Say, my friend, there's a farm up there if you've got a place to put it."

Father had been raised in Kentucky, and he took pride in his ability to judge horses. He liked to brag of the times he skinned Alcorn in a trade. Mother was sceptical of Father's horse-trading prowess and considered Alcorn a windy fool, but she always cooked a good meal and arranged a place for him to sleep when the old trader happened by.

At the table, Alcorn told about a summer when, as a young man working with a threshing crew, he drove his team and hayrack all the way to Nebraska. "Nebrasky," he pronounced it. The sound of the word fascinated my five-year-old brother, Lester, who slid from his chair and ran behind us chanting "Nebrasky, Nebrasky, Nebrasky," until Mother, embarrassed by his mockery, caught his arm and hushed him by threatening to withhold his dessert. Lester had watched as she made the lemon meringue pie flavored with extract bought from the Rawleigh salesman and topped with fresh egg whites whipped up under the protection of a dampened cloth.

During the night, the wind abated and the sky cleared. Mother rose before daylight, swept the dust from the floors, and cleaned the table, chairs, and stove before cooking breakfast. But the dry smell of dust remained throughout the house and didn't entirely disappear until April's rains brought an end to the dust storms and Mother boiled the bed covers and curtains spotless during spring house cleaning.

KEN ROBERTSON of Decatur, Illinois, spent his formative years in Custer County near Fay.
Katy Passenger 306 was flagged to stop at the small depot at Martha, Oklahoma. Section foreman Henry Howard escorted his 18-year-old daughter aboard the train, and she was on her own—bound for college at Goodwell in the Panhandle of Oklahoma. Elva’s trip by rail would end at Forgan, the last station on the northwestern division of the MKT Railroad. Friends at Forgan would meet her train and go on to Goodwell.

Her father’s seniority after many years of employment on the railroad—beginning with the building of new branches in New Mexico, Texas, and Oklahoma—qualified him for his choice of sections. He had chosen the Hester-Martha location, which would be less stressful than big-line maintenance. His family members were entitled to free passes for traveling by rail. Elva loved railroad trips and always felt secure alone in passenger coaches, where she was acquainted with many of the trainmen, friends and relatives of her family.

Former School Superintendent of Martha, Sylvester Spann, had recently become an instructor at PAMC (now Panhandle University). His wife, Gertrude, and Elva had become friends in high-school Debate and Speech and in English courses taught by Mrs. Spann. The Spanns wrote to Henry about sending his daughter to Goodwell. He had turned down an offer of a business scholarship for her because he “didn’t trust them.”

Elva was excitedly interested in everything she encountered in the Oklahoma Panhandle. She was naive and inexperienced in social situations, sometimes amusing her new friends with pronunciation and terms different from any they were speaking. For instance, when she met some people, the O’Hairs, and asked them the name of their new baby, they answered “DUSTY.” Their son had been born at the height of a dust storm.

Now, anything touched with dust or anything made of soil was “dirty” in Elva’s vocabulary. When she visited the O’Hairs a few weeks later, the first question she asked was, “How is DIRTY?” She enjoyed the joke on herself. Friends commented, “Your lovely hands are so soft and white; you have probably never washed dishes or done much work.” She smiled and answered that she used cold cream under her gloves while “pulling cotton” for farmers back home—and as an older daughter of a large family she had washed dishes since she was six years old. To friends in her home town, these chores were accepted in big families. However, her new northern acquaintances were skeptical, especially about the cotton labor, a demeaning chore to many wheat farmers.

Miss Howard became fond of the people in Western Oklahoma. She recognized their high quality of character and their simplicity of living with confidence in their own self-worth, sharing their humor and possessions with trusted friends.

When dust storms increased and caused their problems in farming and everyday activity to become more difficult, most people calmly accepted them and began to plan for farming methods which might improve in the future. Of course, there were some who couldn’t afford to “stick it out,” and some families became so discouraged that they packed up what they could and left for other states.

In the spring following the frightening episode of the black sandstorm, the registrar at Panhandle drove a group of students hoping for teaching positions to some of the area schools. One place they decided to visit was Felt, Oklahoma. As they approached the little school, they noticed that the sand had blown into heavy drifts that almost reached the window sills.

They turned away and headed back toward Goodwell.□
A Farewell
by Margie Snowden North

Bills to be paid, mouths to be fed,
while in the fields the crops are dead.
Nothing to do but stand mutely by
as dust hangs, threatening, in the sky,
dust that strikes fear into grown men's minds,
a fear that seizes and insidiously binds.

Pack the car and latch the gate;
California beckons—and it's getting late.
The Dustbowl Days of the 1930’s will forever be an invisible scar to those who experienced them as will the sense of hopelessness and despair that resulted from the twin disaster of that decade, the Great Depression. Many are the stories of the big black cloud of dust that wiped out the sun followed by the blazing, burning sun. Many are the memories of the mortgage collector or the tractor man pushing the already desperately poor horse-and-plow tenant farmers from their dry, barren plots of ground. Many are the photographs that recorded visual images of the haunting dustbowl story—dirty children, haggard young women, and powerless men in the prime of their lives, farm and homesteads under a blanket of dust, withered crops, and loaded-down jalopies headed west. And just as poignant and descriptive are the lyrics and melodies of Woody Guthrie. Born the summer of 1912 in Okemah, Woodrow Wilson Guthrie was named in honor of the man the Democrats had just nominated for President. Years later, as an Oklahoma native, Guthrie verbally expressed the contradictory feelings of hopelessness and optimism among those affected most by the dust and depression: the tenant farmers, their wives, and children of the Western Plains—the Dustbowl.

Woody Guthrie was early and well acquainted with the despair and hopelessness of tenant farming in Oklahoma. Long before the big cloud rolled in across the prairies in the mid-1930’s, Woody’s grandfather had been a dirt farmer in Kansas; his father, Charley, was a hard-drinking two-bit politician and land speculator in Oklahoma. The Guthrie family, like many other families in Oklahoma in the early 1900’s, struggled consistently to put food on the table. The cycle of boom and bust in Oklahoma, evident since statehood, has affected the population throughout state history; the Guthrie family was no exception.

As a youngster, Woody became known as an "alley rat," a loner, and a scavenger collecting junk while playing a harmonica. He dropped out of school and supported himself by song-and-dance routines performed for a meal. A series of family tragedies sent Woody out on his own. At 17 he hit the road "nibbling at the edge of hobo culture.”

By 1935, after four summers of drought, a patina of dust hung in the air across the Plains forcing housewives to keep pots covered on the stove while cooking and preventing the proper setting of a table; plates and cups were set bottom side up to avoid being filled with the fine dust that sifted in through the cracks and crannies of farmhouses. Dust pneumonia became a regional health hazard. Hunger and exhaustion were daily occurrences. Those who could and those who were forced to loaded up and moved west in hopes of finding work in California. To the rest of the nation, Sooners became Okies, and Okies encompassed the whole retinue of those Arkansans, Texans, and Kansans, who were dusted out, mortgaged out, and pushed off the land. Most preferred to blame the dust, accepting it as a divine judgment for the waywardness, slothfulness, and lack of tenacity in the tenant farmers. Few would seek to address causes outside of natural disaster or divine discipline. One of the few was Woody Guthrie.

Like John Steinbeck in The Grapes of Wrath, Guthrie provided through his Dustbowl Ballads a personal, political, and social view of the plight of the victims of the economically induced environmental disaster. When the ballads were recorded in May 1940, the dust had settled, but the story hadn’t ended. The exploitation of people and land themes are strong in the Dustbowl Ballads and reflect the human tragedy of the disaster. They include "Dustbowl Refugee,” “Talking Dustbowl,” “I Ain’t Got No Home,” “Do Re Mi” (not a reference to the quaint dirty
sung by Julie Andrews in The Sound of Music—instead, a reference to the lack of money: if you don’t have the do re mi, Buddy, you’re out of here), “So Long; It’s Been Good to Know You,” “Dust Can’t Kill Me,” and others. The songs were thought-provoking and made the listener uncomfortable as they mirrored the lives of the unfortunate Dustbowlers who migrated to California by the thousands when the cloud settled in over their farms. It wasn’t long before the ballads were recognized as “a landmark, one of the most influential American recordings of the twentieth century” (Joe Klein, Woody Guthrie: a Life. Ballantine Books, New York, 1980, p. 164). Not only did the ballads describe the events but also the words and simple, defiant optimism projected through the images in the songs of a dusty little man wandering around the country just ahead of the cloud, the tax collector, the wife and kids—the central “mythology of the generation of radicals coming of age.”

The showcase for the ballads was a folk music program on prime-time network radio. Dramatizations of homefolks’ reactions to the Great Dust Storm of 1935 were complete with sound effects and Woody’s very southwestern, dusty, natural singing.

In “Dustbowl Refugees,” written in 1937, Guthrie describes those fleeing from the oppressive dust as homeless, moving from crop to crop like “whirlwinds in the desert.” He often introduced the song by saying, “You know, there are different kinds of refugees. There are people who are forced to take refuge under a railroad bridge because they ain’t got no place else to go, and then there are those who take refuge in public office…” He then wrote “Dust Pneumonia Blues,” which ended with a popular Dustbowl joke about a girl who had fainted in the rain and into whose face a bucket of sand was thrown in order to bring her back again. Later, he wrote “Dust Can’t Kill Me,” which captured the defiant pride and anguish of the refugees:

That old dust storm killed my baby,  
But it won’t kill me, Lord.  
No, it won’t kill me.

Some of his songs were parodies of the politicians’ response to the refugees, while others mocked the refugees themselves who believed that the dust was a sure sign the world was at an end, divine judgment—their lot. When the clouds rolled over the churchhouses, Woody poked fun at the preacher who folded his specs, put down his text, and took up a collection.

The “Dusty Old Dust” song was a fairly traditional rendering of the events of the Great Dust Storm of April 1935, while the chorus has become a standard of American folk music:

So long, it’s been good to know you  
So long, it’s been good to know you  
So long, it’s been good to know you  
This dusty old dust is a-gettin’ my home  
And I’ve got to be drifting along...

Drifting is what Woody did, from Oklahoma to Texas to California and back—to New York and California and back—always Oklahoma in the middle. For Woody possessed a free and restless spirit, a defiant optimism in the face of tragedy, despair, and disease; and that was his way of beating the Dustbowl Blues.

LISA SOUTHERLAND of Hobart is a SOSU senior in Social Science Education. She, her husband, and their four children live on a farm where they produce alfalfa, hay, and wheat, and raise cattle and Angora goats.
I am Oklahoma, land of red people,
Oklahoma, land of red earth!
My heritage is of the ages,
For I am of noble birth!

I was sired by ancient granite mountains
And born of warm and tropic seas;
Pristine was my existence
Before the sailing of the Genoese!

Once my prairies lay rich and fertile;
Deep and clean my streams did run;
Anemic now, I lie brooding,
Silent and suffering in the sun.

Came here the white man, pestilent, greedy—
He furrowed my prairies and scoured my grassy plains;
I choke and weep, my tears are bloody
From incessant winds and marauding rains!

Once my woodlands were thick and verdant,
And my valleys teemed with game;
Cruelly raped and desecrated,
They are now emblems of my shame!

And the Oklahoma, my red people,
Once fierce and proud, where are these?
They are dead or debauched
By white men, whiskey, and disease!

And you, White Man, pestilent, greedy,
You justly deserve my bitter scorn!
You have crushed the lovely prairie rose
And bared to Heaven its naked thorn.
Dustbowl Memories

by Doris Hatchett Beverage

To those of us who are old enough to have experienced the Dustbowl, forgetting is impossible. In 1933 and 1934, the day could begin with beautiful sunshine and cool clear air. By noon or mid-afternoon, though, those storms would roll in. The sky would turn as dark as night; visibility would reduce to less than a quarter of a mile.

Many times at the old Foss school, the superintendent would call the bus drivers and send the students home. Everyone loved my bus driver, Lula Jennings; she was a good driver, and she drove bus number 3 for over thirty years.

Rain storms, snow storms, and muddy slick roads—I've experienced all of them—and nothing compares with dust storms. Ordinarily, we had to walk either 3/4 mile or 1/4 mile to meet the bus. But on dust-storm days, Lula took us on home. When we would arrive home, my mother had old pieces of wet sheets tacked over the windows and doors. Sometimes I had to wear a man's handkerchief, wet and folded, half-tied over my nose and mouth to keep from choking or breathing the dust; but I could still manage to smell the brown beans with ham hock as I walked into the front door.

We would have to shake the comforters and sheets on every bed before we went to sleep at night. Studying by the light of an old kerosene lamp on the dining room table cast such an eerie shadow that we could hardly keep our minds on our lessons.

We always raised a big garden as well as a big flock of chickens, and we milked seven or eight cows. There were several years that we raised very little crop. It was very difficult to survive. We owned our 160 acres, and all of us worked really hard. Mother always raised five hundred or more fryers every year and made dresses out of 100-pound feed sacks. If one of us needed a new dress, Mother would buy two or three sacks alike and recycle them into a dress.

Our home place was three miles north and 3/4 miles east of Burns Flat. Rural Electric Association didn't come into being until 1938. There were a few farmers who had Delco battery systems, but we weren't so lucky.

We were Methodists and went to Page Methodist Church, a mile west of our home. The church had only about forty members, most of them kinfolk, and was on a charge with Foss and Canute. In those days we had many tent meetings, where the
preacher would deliver “hell-fire and brimstone” sermons. I still remember thinking that the world would end with one of those Dustbowl dirt storms, and one Sunday it almost did.

It was a bright and sunny spring morning in March, 1934. We were having an all-day meeting at the Canute Church with dinner at noon. My mother had made me a beautiful pink and white good-print dress with a white collar—one of the few not made from chicken-feed sacks. She also made a beautiful long white velvet-corduroy coat. I had new white shoes and my first long hose. The service was very good, as was the dinner. The afternoon service had just started when Dad came to Mom and said, “Alice, there’s an awful dirt storm rolling in. I think we should go.”

Dad, Mom, two younger sisters, and I hurriedly gathered our dishes and loaded into the car. By the time we had driven the Olds 66 to the Clinton Dam corner, we had to turn on headlights and barely crept the next fifteen or sixteen miles home.

After we got home, Mom and Dad started driving the chickens into the henhouse. Dad even put wet cotton sacks over the windows. Many times, the chickens would become frightened and get into piles and die. I burst into tears when I walked into the house and saw how brown my white coat was.

“Don’t worry,” I remember Mom saying to try to comfort me. “They will all wash.”

I had a county voice contest coming up in Cordell the next week and had planned to wear my new dress and coat to that contest. And to my surprise, my wardrobe for the event was spotless after Mother took care of it.

I never lived in a modern house until after I married. Our first home wasn’t modern; it had a kitchen sink with water and a path to the outdoor toilet. Later, before Dad died twenty-seven years ago, he gave me the old washtub in which all ten of us used to bathe. I still have it today.

Soil conservation, tree shelterbelts, terraces, etc. helped rid Oklahoma of those devilish dust storms. So I believe in ecology.

With all the homeless people out of work now in our country, I give a prayer of thanksgiving when I crawl into a tub of hot water for a nice, soothing bath. I sometimes feel guilty that I have so much room and food for just one person that I fix food for the Jesus House, the Ark, and other shelters in downtown Oklahoma City. But even after fifty years, I still occasionally have terrible nightmares of living in an old, very open house where I can’t seem to get things clean. I call those my “dustbowl nightmares.”

**DORIS HATCHETT BEVERAGE** is a “child” of Western Oklahoma who daydreams about her “Dustbowl Years” in Midwest City, Oklahoma. Retired, Mrs. Beverage says that she counts as one of her blessings the opportunity to read WESTVIEW four times a year. Her works appear often in our journal.
Gritty dust was everywhere—
On the desk and on the chair,
Covering window sills and floor;
Wipe away and there was more
Seeping, stealing ’round the door,
Ever present in the air, enemy of skin and hair.

College girls returned from lunch,
Gathered together in one big bunch
In the parlor of the dorm
Waiting out another storm—
Hankies held to nose and mouth,
No signs of rain to end the drouth.

Suddenly, a great black bank appeared in the west
Boiling, rolling toward their campus rest.
Girls now screamed in nightmare fright
As noon became a black midnight!
None could recognize person or place
Nor see a hand before her face.

“It’s the end of the world!” screamed someone.
“It’s Doomsday!” cried another one.
Then light returned and lessened the gloom.
Though memory would threaten young security,
Young students gained a new maturity.
It was early one morning
When without any warning
A swarm came out of the west
And put our town to a test.

What brought this blackened blight
And caused this terrible sight?
Few can remember, and no one knows
Why it covered our town
Like a new suit of clothes!

The pounds of crawling creep
Filled every doorway two feet deep,
And the appalling, sickening stench
Seeped under the doors and filled every trench.

A call went out to our City Hall
For trucks and loaders; and in no time at all
There was an end to our nightmare morning
And the cricket invasion—without any warning.
The Dustbowl (1937)
by Pat Kourt

Angry brown clouds roar onto the rugged field—
Tackling the sluggish, depressed opposition.

Leaning, gray outhouses
Weakening, barbed-wire fences
Sagging frame farm houses
Slumping, toil-worn farmers
Rolling, aimless tumbleweeds

Racing and charging toward the goal line!

Slipping through aging wall cracks
Shadowing dim kerosene lamps
Blocking sad, confused children
Crippling farm-to-market travel
Holding ripped, worthless screen doors

Penalizing with desolation, drought, and despair

A painful, but historic, touchdown
Dust Storm 7 Plains 0

Retreating tiredly off the field, the losers head west
To the next contest and become O

Pat Kourt, a regular contributor to WESTVIEW, is a free-lance writer and public-school librarian in Thomas.
SHINING NATURE

by Wenona L. Dunn

It blew in from the west
on rolling, boiling winds
And came on all day long—
It seemed 'twould never end!

The sky was filled with dust—
It settled everywhere.
Gray silt was on the floor.
On the beds, on the chairs.

The chickens went to roost—
They thought 'twas night at noon!
The headlights of the cars
Came piercing through the gloom.

At last the wind died down.
But yet the dust was there—
Until a snowstorm came
And cleared it from the air.

And now the earth lies clean—
The snow hides all the grime.
God's handiwork is seen—
All nature seems to shine!

WENONA L. DUNN, who lives near Foss, has been a regular WESTVIEW contributor for many years.
BLACK SUNDAY

by Margaret Friedrich

All winter and spring of 1935, dust storms were a daily occurrence in Western Oklahoma. There was no relief. After a night of fitful sleep with a wet cloth covering mouth and nose, breakfast with clear, clean, hot coffee was a high point of the day.

A shower and clean clothes prepared a person for the day’s work. But the clothes were not really clean. There were no family clothes dryers in those days. The clothing, even after a vigorous shaking, still felt gritty.

Palm Sunday was an answer to prayer. Clear, clean, not a cloud in the sky, no dust blowing, the day was meant for celebrating. I had bought a new pink Easter dress but decided to wear it that day because I was going to church and out to dinner with my best boyfriend. As it happened, that was our engagement dinner.

While driving to dinner that bright Palm Sunday, Henry and I saw a black cloud reaching from ground to sky rolling in from the northwest. It did not twist and swirl as a tornado does. It simply moved toward us quietly and relentlessly. We pulled off the road not a moment too soon.

The huge black cloud was upon us. It rolled over and over us, enveloping us in dense darkness. That was April 14, 1935—Black Sunday, the worst of the Dustbowl Days.

“Is this the end of everything?” I heard my voice tremble.

“If it is,” he chuckled, his chin in my hair, “we die happy.”

He gave me strength, and I waited calmly in his arms until the cloud blew past. We wiped the dust from our eyes and looked at each other. We brushed the dust from our clothing as best we could. (Oh, my beautiful, pink Easter dress!)

We went to our party and found everyone else in the same condition. We had faced our first ordeal together. More than 57 years have passed since that day. Black Sunday is but a memory, a sharp and bitter-sweet memory.

MARGARET FRIEDRICH has been submitting articles to WESTVIEW since its first edition. She is a former English teacher in the Clinton School system where she taught 21 years. She has been retired for 20 years.
When the Dust Came
by Margie Snowden North

In 1984 I began laying the groundwork for a novel (as yet unwritten) by researching some of the history of Western Oklahoma. When it was time to gather material for the Dustbowl Issue of WESTVIEW, I got out my notebook and dozens of photocopied pages and began skimming them for pertinent information. I learned all over again that the dust problem didn’t begin in the 1930’s; it merely reached its peak then.

A passage from THE HISTORY OF CONSERVATION IN OKLAHOMA by Drake, Solomon, and Birdwell may be used as substantiation. The authors say, “One of the first signs of widespread abuse of the land in Oklahoma began to appear within six or eight years after statehood, when gullies began reaching their greedy fingers into fertile fields. By 1920, gully erosion became a major threat to Oklahoma landowners.

“During the four decades following the opening of the Oklahoma Territory for settlement, topsoil on millions of acres was washed away or depleted to the extent that further cultivation was not economical. Many farmers were not willing to take part of their land out of production since they had to squeeze all they could from every acre to feed their families. So the situation grew worse.

“In the 1930’s when the first erosion surveys were made, it was estimated that over six million acres

WESTVIEW, FALL 1992
of Oklahoma farm land was rendered useless by erosion. Over 15% of all the land in Oklahoma was forced out of production!

"Actor Dale Robertson, a native Oklahoman described the disheartening days before conservation programs took hold. 'When I was a youngster, they called Oklahoma "the great Dustbowl". The thick, red dust was everywhere...in our crops, in our homes, in our throats...it even got into the hearts of many Oklahomans. Many got discouraged, and they picked up and left.'"

Though most of the people I interviewed spoke of the "dirty thirties," a few mentioned these earlier problems with dust, wind, and erosion. I drew the following comments either from notes of those interviews or from copies of family histories provided by various ones. After all, those who lived through the times can tell the story best:

"One year in the early 1900's we finished picking the last bale of cotton about the last of February. It was too late in the day to go to the gin. My father hitched his team to the wagon and brought it close to the house. About nine o'clock a heavy black cloud was rising in the north. Dad didn't want the cotton to get wet, so he and my brother took a lantern and covered the cotton with a sheet or tarp. In a few minutes the storm struck. It wasn't rain, but wind and dirt. We all went into the cellar, and at times it seemed that everything would be blown away. The next morning, the storm had spent its fury and all was quiet. But every little tree, bush, and weed was hanging full of dirty cotton. The wind had torn away the tarp, and at least half of the cotton had blown away" (Marion Dobson).

"One evening I went out in the pasture to catch the horses, and the sky was black and red and yellow. There seemed to be no air; it was very dense. We put a tub of water at the door and draped a blanket in it. We threw water through the screen to keep it wet. That kept some of the dust out. Still, people had dust pneumonia and died at home. They didn't go to the hospital much. I had dust pneumonia four times in my left lung. I always said if it came a cloud and you were leaving home, take an umbrella and raincoat and rubber shoes and your fan 'cause you didn't know what weather you would come up against" (Marion Dobson).

"I remember a Sunday afternoon in '34. A black cloud came rolling in from the north. We thought it would be a rain storm and went to the dug-out. The dirt started sifting in til we could hardly breathe. We went back to the house, and it was so dark we had to use the lamps. It lasted all night. By the next morning, our faces were black—you could just see our eyes. The streets of Erick weren't paved 'til the late thirties, even Main Street. I've seen sand a foot deep on Main. Our Model T couldn't go down it; it was too sandy" (Jim Mayfield).

"In '35 it was so dry we didn't make a bale of cotton or a bundle of feed. We sold eggs and cream to buy groceries. During dust storms we put a sheet over the baby's bed and on the headboard of our bed. Each
morning we got up and took the sheet off and dumped it out. Sometimes dust was so bad we couldn't see over a hundred yards. Times were pretty hard. Lots of people had dust pneumonia; some were babies. They would choke up like a cold; you couldn't control it. It was before the time of penicillin” (Mrs. Johnnie Wester).

“The Government killed our cows in '35. We didn’t have any grass or water. The Government paid some for the cows. The ones with meat on them, they sent to canneries or shipped them out of state. As the Government killed them, the people had picnics, getting them one to butcher. They skinned the cows and carried the beef to the locker. Some people think back to the good old days, but those weren’t all good days. We ate hard-shell or soft-shell turtles. The meat’s white—good like chicken. We ate frog legs, too. They would scare you to death, jumping out of the skiller” (Geraldine Jackson).

“One night we went to a Farmer’s Union meeting and a sand storm came. Several of our friends came and spent the night with us. We put sheets over the north door and window to try to keep the sand out. We had a saying, ‘Only a fool or a newcomer would try to predict the weather’” (Lois Flowers).

“The worst years were '35 and '37. A lot of people went to California. Those clouds of dirt would come rolling across the fields and black out the houses. My brother Tink said, ‘Did it say in the Bible it will rain sand in the last days?’” (Joe Flowers).

“I remember it getting as black as night. We could write our names on the kitchen table. Lots of people thought the world was coming to an end. Some of them were kidding around and said they ought to get down on their knees and confess all the bad things they had ever done to their wives” (Margie Berry Fowler).
Farming the plains wasn’t heaven
in clapboard, sod, and dugout shelters,
but ‘til ’35 we made a living.
Then the black blizzard engulfed the land.

Powder-red soil drifted as high as your hat,
leaving the yucca bare below its roots.
Old suitcase farmers didn’t have a prayer,
but said one anyway—to Armageddon!

They said the Farmall tractor was at fault,
and the one-way plow with its shallow furrow,
but I think it was Hoover and voodoo farming
before Roosevelt’s “New Deal” administration.

I heard this story, and I believe it’s true,
how Herb Taylor lost his hairpiece
and most of his clothes
in a duster on the old Post Road!

Living wasn’t living; it was just existing,
selling everything a soul could find—
even parts off the old Farmalls,
and things (it was known) we never did own!

Some folks lit out for California,
no more tears, no drought, or dying,
or prairie, cow chip, coal for warming,
just bound for glory in their pick-up trucks.

Now, it wasn’t paradise out in the West;
and if there was a lesson to be learned,
it’s in farming—plow as deep as you can
and take more pride in your chosen land.
STORMS
Black Night

by Logan Eakins

The night is black-
As black as all of life’s sorrows.
Often, it seems, the blackness of night
Haunts the rest of your tomorrows.
Though sorrow is black, as black as night,
life will go on.

Sorrow is black, as black as night.
It speckles all of the days of life.
But the sorrow of one day
will be out-shone,
out-shone by the morning of the morrow.

Life is speckled-
As speckled as stars in the Black of Night.
But imagine, if you will, the blackness of night,
as bright as the stars.
And their light...as black as the night.
Sorrow would be out-shone
by the brightness of good,
just as the Black of Night is,
by the morning of the morrow.

Sorrow is black, as black as night.
But without sorrow,
happy would be sad,
and black would be white.
Black isn’t bad
so sorrow isn’t sad.
If you look closely, this is all explained,
all explained...by the blackness of night.

LOGAN EAKINS is a senior at Mountain View/Gotebo High School. He wrote “Black Night” as an assignment for his English III class. In addition to writing poetry, Logan is an honor student, and he enjoys playing football. He also enjoys playing the harmonica as a pastime.
A Scene of Horror

by Serena Kauk

My son came in Sunday eve,
Said, "Mother, leave your book;
A cloud so queer is in the west;
Please come and take a look."

A scene of horror met my eyes—
A rolling, seething mass,
A cloud so black and terrible
Was rising in the west.

In all my years of life
I never saw the like.
We closed windows, barred the doors.
And knew it soon would strike.

A roaring, moaning kind of sound
And then a calm like death.
So still, so very still it seemed.
We scarce could get our breath.

Then came the storm with awful din,
And darkness filled the land
For dirt and dust were in the air
And stinging gusts of sand.

The house was filled; we could not see
Each other in the gloom.
We sat and watched with bated breath;
It seemed the hour of doom.

Out in the road the cars were stalled;
They could not face the blast.
And people prayed who never had,
"Lord, let this horror pass."

Our eyes were blinded as we sat;
The trees bent down their heads—
The chickens flew up on the roosts;
All nature went to bed.

At last it passed as all things do.
The sun shone clear and hot.
But this day's storm of wind and dirt
Will never be forgot.

SERENA KAUK, a resident of Leedey, is a SOSU junior and is majoring in Accounting and minoring in Computer Science. "A Scene of Horror" is her first published work.
ED BERRONG
INSURANCE AGENCY

Insurance  Real Estate  Bonds

"THE AGENCY SERVICE BUILT"

520 East Main Street  Weatherford, OK 73096  (405)772-3329

"Your Community-Owned Bank"

FIRST
NATIONAL BANK AND TRUST COMPANY
OF WEATHERFORD

(405)772-5575  FDIC  1100 EAST MAIN
Mark Motor Hotel
Independently owned & operated

9 Blocks from Southwestern University
24 Hour Restaurant
26 Non-Smoking Rooms
Refrigerator in all King & Queen Rooms
Free Local Calls
Complimentary Coffee & Newspapers
Special Senior and AAA Rates
HBO

Special rates for Weddings & Reunions that exceed 6 rooms.
Children under 12 Free
5 Blks. from 15,000 Ft. Antique Mall
5 Blks. from Downtown Shopping

1-40 East Bound Exit 80A - 1-40 West Bound Exit 82
525 E. Main, Weatherford, OK 73096
(405)772-3325

THE FIRST NATIONAL BANK OF CUSTER CITY
MEMBER F.D.I.C.
P.O. Box 100
CUSTER CITY, OK 73639
(405)593-2291

BANK OF WESTERN OKLAHOMA
Supporting Western Oklahoma
Member F.D.I.C.
Elk City, OK 225-3434
Vici, OK 995-3323

floral treasures
balloons weddings
plants gift baskets silk flowers
fresh flowers
108 E. Main 772-1401
Weatherford Ok 73096
CITY NATIONAL BANK
OF WEATHERFORD

Member FDIC

TELEPHONE: 115 N. CUSTER
(405)774-2265 WEATHERFORD, OK 73096

THE WOODSHED FRAME SHOP
AND
THE ART GALLERY
PICTURE FRAMING & ART WORK
105 E. MAIN
WEATHERFORD, OKLA. 73096
G. E. JONES (HEAD TERMITE)
Phone 772-5648

THE WOODSHED
FRAME SHOP
AND
THE ART GALLERY
PICTURE FRAMING & ART WORK
105 E. MAIN
WEATHERFORD, OKLA. 73096
G. E. JONES (HEAD TERMITE)
Phone 772-5648

DAYLIGHT DONUTS
Mon. - Sat.
5 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Charlene Steizig & Joann Hamburger, Owners
Pasteries, Cookies, Cakes for all Occasions
103 W. Main, Weatherford, OK 774-2947

LOCAL FEDERAL BANK
Weatherford Office: (405)772-7441
P.O. Box 271 109 E. Franklin
Weatherford, Oklahoma 73096

united community bank
MEMBER FDIC
122 North Broadway
Weatherford, OK 73096 (405)772-5541

Rader's Auction & Real Estate
"No Sale Too Small or Too Large"

116 N. Custer, Box 351, Weatherford, OK 73096
Toll Free 1-800-444-5160
Day 405 / 772-3396
Night 405 / 772-2687
Gary D. Rader
Auctioneer & Broker

ALLEN PHARMACY
"Prescription specialist."
521 E. FRANKLIN WEATHERFORD, OK (405)772-3347

Blunck's
Creative Professional Photography since 1910

- Senior
- Family
- Wedding
- Glamour
- ABC
- Athletic
- Teenage Casual
- School-Day

1-800-8-BLUNCK
Studios located in Clinton, Elk City, Lawton, Moore
and Weatherford, Oklahoma and Amarillo, Texas
The staff of Westview would like to thank our new advertisers in this issue. If you would like to become an advertiser in Westview, please contact us at:

(405)774-3793

Published by Southwestern Oklahoma State University—Weatherford, Oklahoma 73096

WESTVIEW is the official quarterly of the Southwestern Center for Regional Studies, and it is printed by the SOSU University Press of Weatherford under the direction of Mr. Larry Becker.

To be published in the journal are scholarly articles, book reviews, local history sketches, memoirs, biographies, autobiographies, graphic arts, and creative writing (including fiction, poetry, and drama). WESTVIEW holds only First Rights for all works published herein; therefore, a contributor may feel free to publish a work elsewhere. For purposes of exposure, however, we ask the courtesy of a bibliographical imprint (e.g. First published in WESTVIEW). Submissions along with SASE are to be sent to Fred Alsberg, Editor; WESTVIEW of SOSU; 100 Campus Drive; Weatherford, OK 73096.

To order issues: Checks for single issues ($4.00, including mailing; $3.00, if not mailed) and for subscriptions (one year: $8.00 in USA; $20, out of country) are to be made payable to Dr. Dan Dill, Publisher; WESTVIEW of SOSU; 100 Campus Drive; Weatherford, OK 73096.