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WESTVIEW

A Journal of Western Oklahoma

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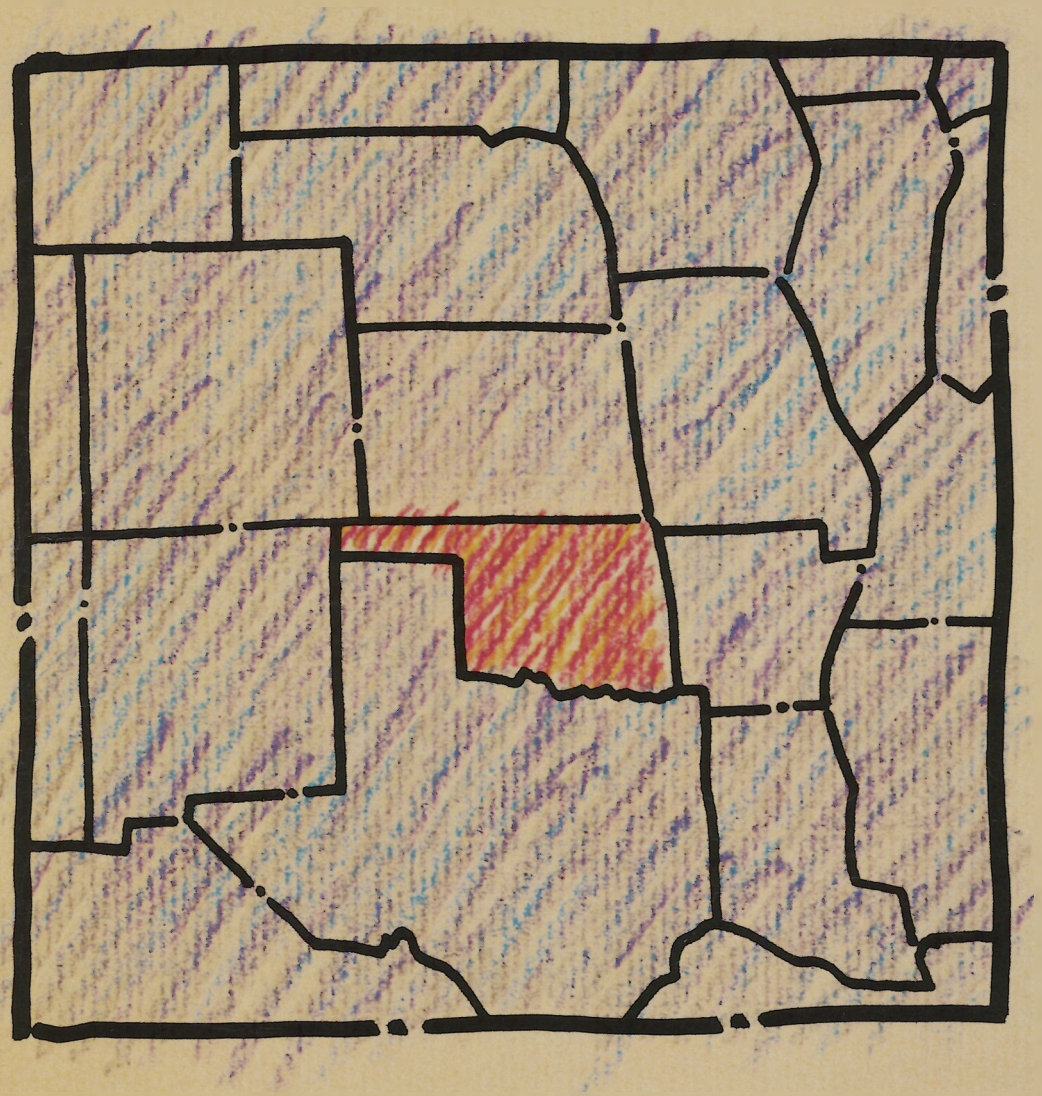


Western Oklahoma's Uniqueness

FOREWORD

As we look at the notation for this issue (**Volume 5, No. 4**), we are amazed that we have survived these five years. In a sense, we're unique. It seems that few journals are as inclusive as we are; in fact, about 95% of our copy is furnished by freelancers. Therefore, we honor our contributors; but like most humanoids, we never consider any situation perfect. We'll complain.

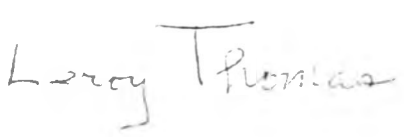
Contributors, will many of you quit being poets and start querying us about sending in some good, meaty articles? As of March 31, for instance, we have only one article for our "Western Oklahoma Schools" issue, whose deadline is July 1, 1986. We have **several** poems. By the time you read this Foreword, it'll probably be too late to get something into the Fall '86 issue, but query us concerning articles for all of our other projected issues. Surely there are some good possibilities out there.

Consider Colony; her town is observing a one-hundreth birthday this year.

So far, also, no one has made application for the position advertised in the Foreword of Spring, 1986 issue: "peppery heckler." Actually it's just as well since Dick Chapman is still with us anyhow. In fact, in this issue we have two of his works ("What I Couldn't Be" and "Eastward Bound") and one poem dedicated to him ("The Patriarch" by Wenona L. Dunn, his niece).

We remember how riled Dick was several months ago when he found out that his two works appearing here had been scheduled for the Summer '86 issue. His complaint? "I may not even be around by then." We smiled.

Dick is just one of the numerous readers and contributors who have enriched our lives. We'll wait until later to throw additional bouquets.



Leroy Thomas
Editor

WESTVIEW
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Summer

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COVER by David Oldham

WESTVIEW is the official quarterly of the Southwestern Center for Regional Studies. To be published in the journal are scholarly articles, local history sketches, memoirs, biographies, autobiographies, graphic arts, book reviews, and creative writing. Submissions along with SASE, are to be sent to: Dr. Leroy Thomas; Editor, WESTVIEW; Southwestern Oklahoma State University; Weatherford, Oklahoma 73096.

AUTHORS WHOSE WORKS APPEAR IN THIS ISSUE

Tena Bailey and her husband live on Foss Lake; he's a banker, and she's a real-estate agent and writer.

Opal H. Brown, always a WESTVIEW supporter, is a freelance writer now living in the Arbuckle Mountains.

Jill Carpenter, daughter of regular WESTVIEW contributor Yvonne Carpenter, is a freshman at Colorado State in Colorado Springs.

Yvonne Carpenter is Jill and Shane's mother.

Dick Carpenter was, until his death on December 24, 1985, Arapaho's "Poet Laureate" and WESTVIEW's peppery critic.

Dona Maddux Cooper, an active member of Stillwater Writers, is a successful freelance writer.

Betty Jo Denton, alumna of SOSU, is an elementary schools counselor in Putnam City; her assignments are Windsor Hills and Hilldale. She's also a teacher/consultant for the Oklahoma Writing Project at O.U.

Olive DeWitt is a retired federal government employee now living and writing in the Tecumseh area.

Wenona L. Dunn, Dick Chapman's niece, makes her second appearance in WESTVIEW with a tribute to her Uncle Dick.

Richard Garrity can always be depended on for a high level of energy as a freelance writer and photographer. He enjoys going after the challenging story.

Diane Holcomb is a real-estate agent and poet from Sperry.

Pat Kourt teaches and writes in Thomas while mothering two sons and wifing a pharmacist husband.

Glen V. McIntyre is a native of Kingfisher, where he is currently curator of the Chisholm Trail Museum. He's a poet, novelist, and non-fiction writer.

Billie Marsh is a prize-winning poet from Tulsa. She's a member of the PSO, OWFI, and the PRA. Her works have been published in TULSALITE, LITTLE BALKANS REVIEW, CALLIOPE, and CAPPER'S WEEKLY.

Fran Merrill is a name that appears often in the winners' lists of many writers' contests. Fran is an active member of Shawnee Writers.

Margie Snowden North, wife of a minister, lives in Erick. Writer of all genres, she has many published works to her credit.

Dee Ann Ray is the seemingly indefatigable director of the Western Plains Library System; her freelance writing and photography appear in many state publications.

Euelda N. Sharp is a native Oklahoman who admits a deep attachment to Western Oklahoma in particular. Her freelance work, both as writer and photographer, illustrates her interest in our state's natural world--especially its birds and wildflowers. She is also publications editor at the State Insurance Fund in Oklahoma City.

Lu Spurlock is a moving force in the DFW Writers' Workshop and the OWFI. She is often called upon as a workshop consultant.

Dr. Dale Teeters was reared in Western Oklahoma. His B.S. in Chemistry is from SOSU, and his Ph.D in Physical Chemistry is from OU. Currently he is Assistant Professor of Chemistry at TU

The colorful male black-capped vireo is only four and a half inches long. He actively defends his nest and young. Photos by John Shackford

From one who loves the vireo's song.

Unique Is Hardly The Word

By Euelda N. Sharp

Come with me to the red rock canyon country of Western Oklahoma--I want you to meet a unique resident of this special area. Bring along your binoculars, and we'll go on some early morning in May.

When we arrive in the canyon country just south and east of Hinton, a soft haze is rising from the hills and ravines and the air is full of bird sounds. A mourning dove coos like a gentle sigh, a titmouse scolds, and a tattletale bluejay sounds his raucous note of alarm. From somewhere down the road a wren trills its exuberant song.

Suddenly, a clump of bushes almost explodes with a cascade of emphatic protest. We peer into the tangled clump and finally locate the tiny singer as he flits madly from limb to limb, uttering his hurried call from each perch.

Ah-h-h! This is the little fellow we've come to see. He is a black-capped vireo (Vireo atricapillo), a species whose rigid habit requirements seem to be satisfied only by certain parts of the Oklahoma canyon country in spring and summer.

Often listed as a rare species, this vireo qualifies as a pioneer resident of our state. In fact, it was first reported in what is now Blaine County in 1901, well before statehood.

The birds arrive in Oklahoma in late April each year to breed and nest, then retreat to their wintering grounds in Western Mexico in late August.

They prefer grassy hillsides riddled by ravines and spotted with bushy clumps of young blackjack oaks and cedars with foliage clear to the ground. When trees grow tall or cattle strip the underbrush, the species disappears. In the early days, Indians periodically burned large areas of the rolling prairies and this probably helped perpetuate the kind of habitat needed by the birds.

The little bird we're watching continues trying to sing us away from his hiding place. He sounds angry--his nest is probably inside this clump of blackjack shrubs. Watch him through your binoculars while I go on with his story.

The black-capped vireo is unique, not only because of the restricted area in Oklahoma it calls home in spring and summer, but also because of several traits which set it apart even from other species of vireos.

First of all, it is the brightest colored of all eight species which occur in the

state. Look at the glossy black cap on this male we're watching (now you know where it got its name!). Females and immatures wear gray ones. Nearly complete white rings around the red eyes look almost like spectacles. His back is greenish; his throat, breast, and underparts are white, brushed with greenish yellow on the sides; his wings show two yellow wing bars.

Next, its song varies from most other vireos. It contains many different phrases and is delivered in a hurried rush, while most other vireos slowly repeat the same monotonous phrases over and over.

A third difference is habitat preference. Other vireos feed slowly and deliberately through forest treetops. Only the black-capped and one other--the Bell's vireo--select low, brushy sites for their nests.

Its behavior makes the black-capped vireo distinctive too. Restless and quite active, it behaves more like a warbler.

Oh, look! There's the nest, a short little cup suspended from the fork of a limb in the center of the blackjack clump, about four feet from the ground. It's woven with fine grasses, roots, and strips of cedar bark or grapevine; and bits of spider web decorate the rim (this is a typical vireo habit).

Three or four eggs make up the usual clutch. This one has three. Here we see the final way this species differs from its kind: the eggs are pure white. Other vireo eggs are speckled with brown. Would you believe that one little 4½-inch bird could be so unique?

Let's walk down the road now and leave the birds to their nesting duties. Too much disturbance might cause them to abandon the area.

Thanks to a detailed study made by Mrs. Jean W. Graber during 1954 to 1956, we know more about the habits and behavior of the black-capped vireo than about many other birds. Her study was conducted as part of the requirements for a Ph.D. degree at OU, and the base site was near Cogar, Oklahoma.

According to Mrs. Graber, the males return in the spring a little ahead of the females. They establish their territories by song, warning other male intruders away. The birds appear to gather in loose colonies of three to five pairs, each with a territory of two or more acres.

Although the males may build a nest or two in different places in their territories, the serious nest building is done by the female, who begins soon after she arrives in territory and has found a mate. First nests of the season may take four or five days to complete; later nests are built in less time.

Egg laying begins the day after the nest is completed, and one egg is laid each day for three or four days. Incubation begins when the second or third egg is laid, and both male and female share this chore during the day; the female spends the night on the nest.

When the eggs hatch--in about 14 to 17 days--both parents share the job of feeding larvae, spiders, and small flies to the hungry young. Mrs. Graber observed that the male provided about three-fourths of the food for the brood. As the babies grow, the *number* of feedings stays the same, but the *size* of the food items increases. Grasshoppers and katydids make up the meals now.

The young birds grow rapidly and leave the nest in about 10-12 days. The male parent continues to care for them for five or six more weeks, while the female begins a second nest. She may care for this brood by herself, but sometimes will take another mate to help her.

And so the life cycle of the beautiful black-capped vireo has repeated itself since it was first discovered in Oklahoma 85 years ago. But today, this feathered pioneer is in big trouble, not only in our state, but throughout its range.

Once reported regularly in a broad band from South-central Texas, through the cross-timbers area of Oklahoma, and into Kansas, black-capped vireos were found in 1985 in only three locations within the state, and none north of Blaine County. Known population in Texas has also diminished greatly. Researchers who literally beat the bushes last year for the elusive little birds estimate that there were fewer than 120 adults in the Oklahoma summer population; only 45-50 birds were actually seen. The vireo has now been recommended for federal Endangered Status and probably will be designated as such this year.

What caused this decline in population? Scientists and government officials who have been closely observing the birds for the last three years have identified several factors which affect their survival. Among them are habitat destruction due to overgrazing, drought, and urbanization; and nest

continued

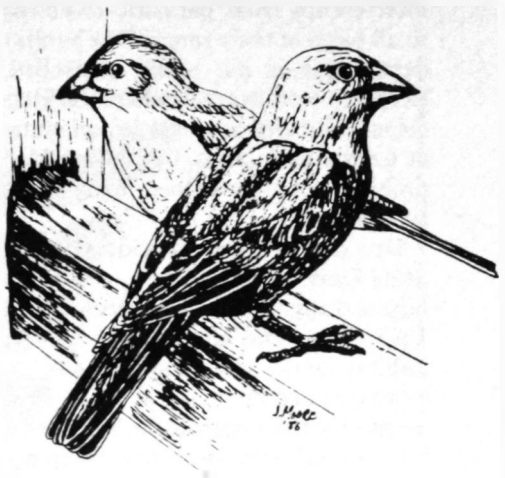


ILLUSTRATION BY JACK MOORE

The Brown-Headed Cowbird

Molothrus ater

Length: *6-8 in.*
What to look for: *conical bill; male glossy black, with dark brown head; female gray, with paler throat.* **Habitat:** *farmlands, groves, forest edges, river woodlands.*

A Social Pariah

Few birds are as generally disapproved of as the Brown-headed Cowbird, which lays its eggs in the nests of other birds, particularly flycatchers, sparrows, vireos, and warblers. A newly hatched cowbird quickly grows larger than the rightful nestlings and devours most of the food; it may even push the hosts' eggs or young out of the nest. The foster parents feed the huge intruder until it can fly.

They range over most of the U.S., but are migrants in the North. In Oklahoma during the winter, the males and females gather in separate flocks and sometimes roam with other blackbirds. When feeding on the ground among other birds, cowbirds can be recognized by the way they hold their tails high in the air.

Male song is a gurgled, creaky "glug-glug-gleee." He sometimes gives a high whistle, with two lower notes. The female makes a chattering sound.

Look closely at the drawings; the birds' silhouettes are distinctive--slightly sloping heads, short tails, and stubby beaks. This bird in your yard means trouble for nesting songbirds in spring and summer.

interference from parasitic cowbirds in all parts of their range. The habitat destruction is not easily controlled, except in certain areas where the little colonies luckily have settled on state- or federal-park lands, but the cowbird problem can be helped by human intervention.

Dr. Joseph Grzybowski, Central State University professor of biology, began studying the vireo situation in 1983. When the birds in the Hinton habitat area, and another site in Texas, raised no young at all in 1984 because of the cowbirds, he launched a pilot experiment in decoy trapping. Aimed at reducing the cowbird population in nesting areas, this method employs a large wire trap in which several live cowbirds are placed. These decoys attract other cowbirds that enter the trap, are unable to leave, and can be removed from the premises. Decoy trapping has been successfully used to aid the rare little Kirtland warbler in Michigan, and it was successful in Oklahoma too. In 1985, 10-11 young were fledged from the Hinton colony, and the Texas site reported the same encouraging results.

The parasitic cowird phenomenon is itself unique, and the damage it does is not limited to the black-capped vireo. Many of our loveliest songbirds--the cardinal and oriole among them--are suffering as cowbird numbers increase all over the U.S.

The brown-headed cowbird (Molothrus ater) is a small blackbird which feeds around corrals and cattle feed lots. The female cowbird builds no nest. Instead, she simply watches until she finds one unattended, deposits her egg, and goes blithely on her way. The host bird feeds and raises the young cowbird, at the expense of its own young, since the cowbird egg hatches earlier and the baby is bigger than the host's own.

Has help come too late to save this long-time resident of Western Oklahoma? We hope not.

Dr. Grzybowski and his associates expanded their trapping efforts this spring to help the vireo hold its own against the cowbird threat. They also continue to search likely habitat areas all over the state to see if other vireo populations exist. Much has been learned about this little songster, but much more must be learned if it is to survive this modern world. The very uniqueness of the species is working against it now.

If the black-capped vireo, its beauty and distinctive song disappear from the Western Oklahoma landscape, certainly no great economic loss would result. But just as certainly, its loss would mean one more species gone from the natural world which loses ground every day. And even if we don't realize it, the wild community adds much to the quality of life for everyone.

The Indians understood.

Crowfoot, Orator for the Blackfoot Confederacy, put it this way:

"What is life? It is the flash of a firefly in the night. It is the breath of a buffalo in the winter time. It is the little shadow which runs across the grass and loses itself in the sunset."

Many people are working hard to keep the black-capped vireo from becoming a little shadow which loses itself in some August sunset and does not return with the spring.

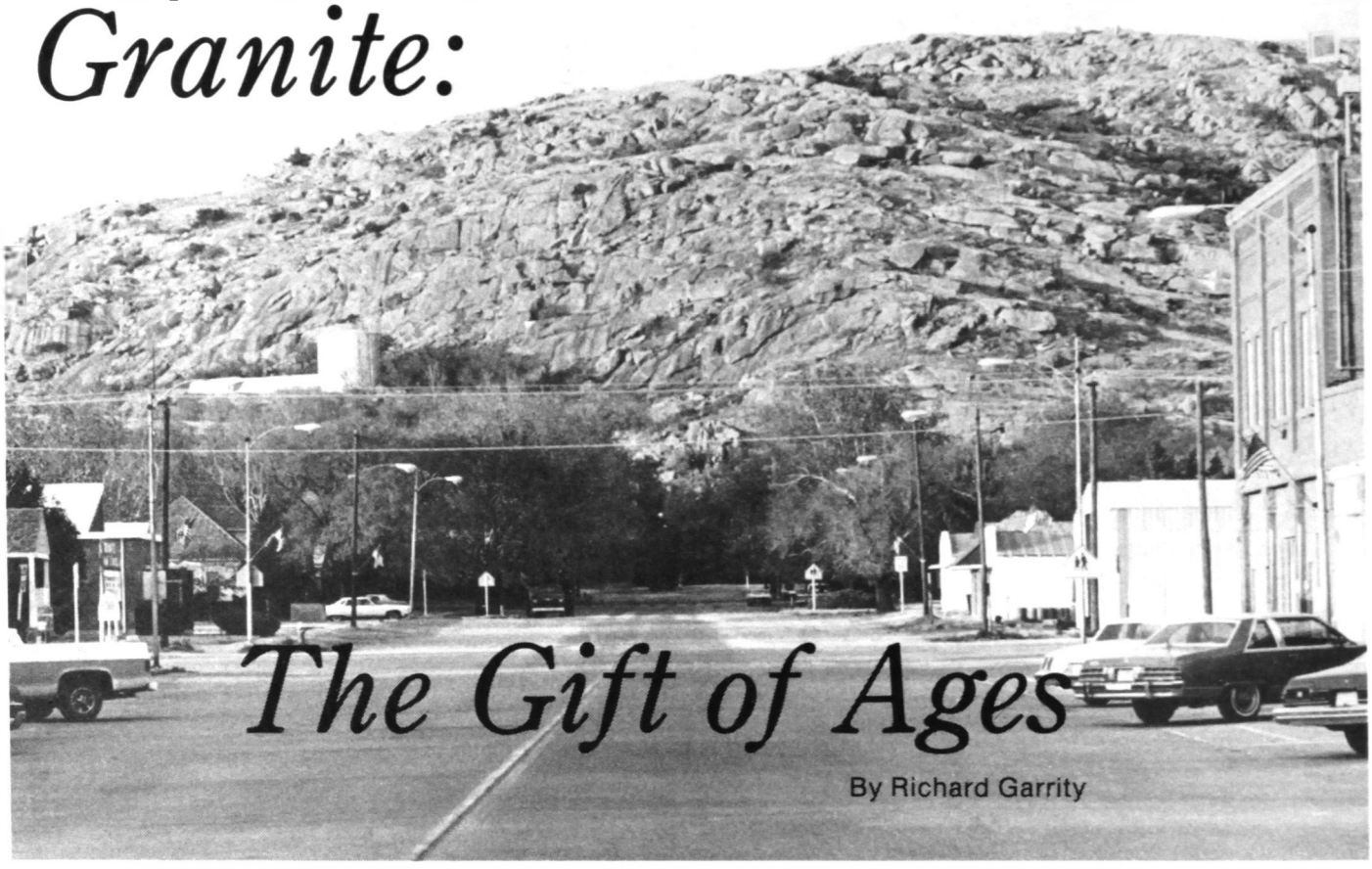
Let them succeed!

The gray-capped female vireo cocks her head to peer closely at her nest. Note how it is draped with spider webb strands.

Typical black-capped vireo habitat near Hinton, Oklahoma: cedar/brush-rimmed ravines and grassy, rolling hills. Photo by Euelda Sharp

Providing beauty for a variety of locations.

Granite:



The Gift of Ages

By Richard Garrity

Headquarters Mountain provides the backgound for this photo of Main Street in Granite, Oklahoma. Photo courtesy the author.

People all over Oklahoma and even in other states know about a small town nestled at the foot of Headquarters Mountains because of a unique use of a product from that mountain range. Bill Willis of Granite manufactures monuments and memorials from the Wichita Granite (W.G.) Group, a 500,000,000-year source. Before statehood, the production of granite products was established in the area.

About 1902, the Pellow brothers were quarrying from Headquarters Mountain. They used steam and wood and steel cranes to move the material. Granite became a symbol of the town. For instance, building fronts were constructed of polished granite. Rougher materials were used for the walls, and street storm gutters were stabilized with the product. Lawns were graced with granite seats, and some of the houses were granite-veneered. With the arrival of the railroad, the market became nationwide.

In 1950, J. R. Willis, Bill Willis' father, purchased the quarry. When Bill returned from Oklahoma State University, he moved easily into the granite industry. Bill's explanation of the operation is given in understandable terms: The granite quarry, the largest in Oklahoma, is located on a half section of land and is of undetermined depth. To obtain the red granite, holes are drilled by air into the rock, filled with black powder, and detonated. This removes a section as large as a room. Wedges are then applied to split it again. Care is taken to prevent damage to the surface. It will produce a block about the size of a small car. The block is placed upon a platform and sliced by a wire running over wheels. Once sliced, it is removed to a diamond-tipped saw to be cut into desired thickness. With a rating of seven on the hardness scale, the procedure is time-consuming. The slab is then ready for polishing and engraving.

Bill Willis and all of his family members, including his three daughters and his wife, are involved in preparing the granite surface. Linda is an artist; Brenda, a geologist; and Karen, a combination artist and office manager. Cooperating with the girls is their mother, Ellen, who directs the sales deparmtent. J. R. Willis, Bill's father, is also always ready to assist.

In the process, a cutout stencil is made, placed upon the slab, sandblasted, and removed. Further details are obtained with a hand drill to produce the fine lines. The finished slab may have a portrait of a person, history of a location, or a panorama. It is hard to believe a rock as hard as granite can be so worked.

Some other existing examples may be found at the Hall of Fame in Mangum, Oklahoma. This display contains sixty upright panels five feet six inches tall, nineteen inches wide, and four inches thick. Each monument has an engraved picture and short biography of an early settler of Old Greer County. At Cheyenne is a panorama marker overlooking the site of the Black Kettle Massacre. Elk City

has a description of the Anadarko Gas Basin, and a few miles east, there's a polished-granite slab at the entrance to the Southwestern Oklahoma State University campus.

Willis has also branched into other states. An outstanding work attesting to his creativity, a tribute to Bob Wills, was unveiled at Turkey, Texas, in 1971. This thirty-foot shaft has four life-sized engravings of Bob Wills on the sides. As the shaft slowly rotates on the base, a tape recorder plays the singer's best-known songs.

Presently the quarry is in heavy production. In addition to the usual demand for customized grave stones, the Willises are busy on Civilian Conservation Corps markers to recognize the CCC's work. Another is a memorial for the Daughters of the Confederacy, and the Oklahoma Historical Society has constant requests.

Recently Bill was commissioned to supply the granite for the Aquaticus in Oklahoma City, which has added more to his busy schedule; but he is happy to be part of the project.

The Aquaticus is a $5.2 million-dollar 65,000 square foot marine life facility east of the Oklahoma City Zoo. The Oklahoma Zoological Society, under the direction of Lee Allen Smith, developed the funding. It will contain the most comprehensive aquatic life collection in the Central United States. It was designed by the architectural firm Glover, Smith, and Bode of Oklahoma City.

After three years of construction, the unit will contain salt- and fresh-water pools with 250,000 gallons of water for the dolphin activity to the 200-gallon aquarium. The partly glass pools will feature dolphins, seals, or other sea creatures.

At the main entrance is the dolphin fountain. Three six-foot bronze dolphins appear to play in the water which tumbles over four large granite rocks. Immediately beyond the fountain is the Donor's Wall.

The wall is twenty-two feet long and six feet high. Forty assorted granite slabs of a two-inch thickness are fastened to the wall. They range from eighteen inches wide by twenty-three inches high to five feet wide and ten inches high. They contain the profiles or names of the donors. These were crafted by Bill Willis.

Within the building are conference rooms, gift shops, banquet rooms, and educational rooms. The structure can also be entered from the zoo. Excepting Christmas Day, it will be open year round from 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Salt-water fish need salt water. Again, Oklahoma supplied the needed product. Brine is pumped from the salt flats of the Cimarron River near Freedom, Oklahoma, by the Cargill Salt Company. It is piped into vats where the water is evaporated by the sun. The resulting dry salt is trucked to Oklahoma City. There, the laboratory under the direction of Jack Schneider combines it with city water to get an acceptable salt water.

Bill says he was very anxious about finishing the project by the time of its April 6, 1986, opening. He has always managed to beat deadlines and will do so in the future, a future which will undoubtedly be crowded with granite creations.

CREDITS: Bill Willis-Granite, OK; Al Bode of Glover, Smith, and Bode, Inc., Oklahoma City; Oklahoma Zoological Society, Oklahoma City; and Dr. Robert H. Arndt (OU), Norman.

The selenite crystals of the Great Salt Plains can be found in clusters or as single crystals.

Uniqueness in Alfalfa County

Diamonds in the Soil

Who knows what George C. Sibley thought in 1811 when he first saw the vast, flat expanse of white glistening salt and sand? The six Osage Indian guides who led him here had informed him of the vast amounts of salt available; but Sibley, who was the first white man to see this wonder of Western Oklahoma today called the Great Salt Plains, had no idea that crystalline jewels were only a few inches beneath the surface buried in the salty soil.

The Great Salt Plains located in Alfalfa County about four miles east of Cherokee is in itself a unique feature of Western Oklahoma and has played a significant role in the history of Oklahoma both before and after the arrival of the white man. It covers approximately forty square miles of almost perfectly flat terrain which is entirely devoid of vegetation. The floor of the plain is composed of silt and a very fine sand which is usually covered with a thin crust of white salt that gives it a snowlike appearance in the sunlight. Plains Indian tribes vied for control of the salt flats because of the large number of animals which migrated there for the salt supply. In the early days of the settlement of the Indian Territory, Western Kansas and Texas cattlemen sent wagons to the Great Salt Plains to haul back loads of this precious commodity. But beneath the white, crusted surface of this salt plain are objects that are precious for their beauty rather than need.

About six to eight inches below the surface in the sand and silt are crystals of the mineral gypsum. When one thinks of gypsum, the large mounds of white rock gypsum that are so common to the western half of the state come to mind. But this crystalline form of gypsum, called selenite, exists as beautiful crystals that can have the shape of well-defined blades occurring as single crystals or in radiating clusters of from two to literally hundreds of crystals. These selenite crystals can be as tiny as one-carat diamonds or in clusters as large as a hand. When a hole is dug into the sand and silt, salt water that contains almost 30 percent dissolved salt rises until the hole is filled to within about six inches of the top. The brine water of the Great Salt Plains is thus concentrated enough that as the water evaporates in the soil crystals of selenite can form just above the water table. During warm weather, when conditions are right, the crystals form very rapidly and can increase in size as much as 26 percent through the summer months.

The formation of selenite crystals in this manner is a relatively rare occurrence in nature. It is known to occur only in such places as the clay around the Great Salt Lake in Utah, in the Laguna Madre in Texas, in Western Australia, and in the country of Tunisia. One characteristic of these crystals is unique only to the Great Salt Plains, however. The larger transparent crystals reveal an hourglass figure within the structure of the crystal. These reddish-brown hourglass figures inside the clear selenite are formed by the capturing of iron-bearing sand inside the crystal as it grows. Only in the Great Salt Plains are such crystals found; and because of this, mixtures of selenite crystals from Western Oklahoma are found in many textbooks on mineralogy published in the United States.

The formation of these crystals with the hourglass inclusions is so unique that scientists from many of the universities in Oklahoma and surrounding states come to the Great Salt Plains to collect the crystals and study their formation. The collecting of these crystals is not limited to scientists, however. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service allows digging for these crystals on weekends and holidays from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. by anyone who wants to have these beautiful minerals. The "digging" season runs from April 1 through October 15. On a given weekend, sometimes as many as one hundred people of all ages can be seen excavating holes with shovels in areas designated by the Fish and Wildlife Service as crystal collection sites. Many families use trips to the Great Salt Plains as weekend outings because children especially love to find these "diamonds" in the soil.

The uniqueness of Western Oklahoma expresses itself in many ways. These small crystalline wonders of nature are just another example. A few hours spent on a weekend in the summer at the Great Salt Plains can provide a very attractive and novel example to put on a fireplace mantel.

By Dr. Dale Teeters

Hometown--a place for hanging your memories

My Town

By Betty Jo Jenkins Denton

When making a telephone call meant going to the phone office
Visiting with operators Jewell, Vinita, or Nadine.
Then giving them the name as no number was needed.
And, after being plugged in at the switchboard, you used
the counter phone because the booth had no door anyway.
And the eighty-foot grain elevator was the skyscraper at
the west end of town.
When the water tower stood there in the dark, daring you to
climb it and paint SENIORS on its side--
That was my town--1949.

When Madge and Fat had the corner drugstore,
And wrapped boxes of sanitary napkins in plain white paper,
And Laila kept an eye on purchases and lectured the boys if they
went to the back counter,
When jewelry could be ordered there for a sweetheart or a limeade
shared at the soda fountain--
And Toots R. fried tasty onion hamburgers and Paul barbered
nearby---
And Chandler's on the highway served the best cherry pie a la mode
And teenagers could congregate, buy a Coke, and spend the
afternoon.
When we could play the pinball machine or get six songs for a quarter.
That was my town--1949.

When Clyde L. Johnson was our teacher and school superintendent
too.
Aided by Mrs. Keith, Cecil Folks, Lockett Back, and Mr. Hatchett,
And Mrs. Affholder-McKenzie had taught us social graces and how to give a style
show,
A determined Mrs. Washington "pounded" English literature
into our reluctant ears.
When a young Johnnie Goodwin was Senior sponsor--his goals
were to produce a class play and survive a Senior trip--
That was my town--1949.

When Allie Jenkins, Hubert Breeze, Mr. Biscoe, and the old man
Embry sat on the corner bench, whittled, and swapped stories
about the caring Dr. Denby
And recalled again how Press Rogers and Lum Ridley had enforced
the law.
As they soaked up the sunshine, argued the next election,
swapped knives, and kept an eye on us,
When four generations grew up in the same area--
That was my town--1949.

continued

When Foster Johnson worked at the Post Office seven days a week,
And Bryon Clancy and O. T. Keith delivered mail at the end of
our dusty lanes,
And Landy Copp bought cream and eggs and Saturday was a real
Big day,
When Slug Cooper, the law, wore a gun on his hip--
And Estell Embry, Don Powell, and Brandy McAlpin worked with
Walter Higgenbothum to repair the rails.
And the Katy depot was buzzin as Bertie Denton sent messages
over the telegraph wires,
And Ray Clark and Comer Taylor owned one lumber yard and Emory
Simpkins managed the other.
While two gins were kept humming with cotton AND dominoes,
When Simpson's and Chandler's grocery stores were both
needed.
That was my town--1949.

When McKenzie was in the bank and Tabor worked for him,
And Boone's laundry was the battlefield to see who could get the "whitest,"
Where bluing was sold for pennies and starch for overalls was mixed hot.
When women concealed their "undies" as through the wringer
they went,
When cars parked in the shade of the drugstore on Saturday
afternoon
Afforded a vantage point for Cloeta, Lorraine, Velda, Teola, Vergel, and others,
As they watched us, the teenagers, as we came to town in
blue jeans and saddle-oxfords,
To pair off for Saturday night and hopefully a movie in a nearby town.
And we were admonished never to walk in front of the pool
hall
Or go into the cafe where they sold beer.
Yes, that was my town--1949.

When social activities included Masons, Eastern Star, Odd
Fellows, Rebeccahs, Rainbow, and pioneer Study Club,
And Jettie, Lois, Pinkie, Mable, Bluie, Alice, and Janie turned
square corners at Eastern Star.
And Steve Howard gave lectures inducting young men into the
manhood of Free Masonry.
When Herman Ward could be counted on for his water trick,
And Mrs Keith "mothered" her Rainbow girls.
And Doc Reed could be called on for music or medical advice.
When the Baptist, Holiness, Methodist, and Church of Christ
All had large attendance and could share Luthey's Baptizing
pond.
That was my town--1949.

When the movie house opened on the weekends and the Saturday Western
was a fun place to go,
And Gennie Carter and Preacher French, with their comments, made
"Shoot-em-ups" believable,
And, during the fall, when some cotton-pulling money was available,
The Stanley Players, with their tent show, would "play" our town.
When a purchase at Deller's Variety Store meant having it wrapped neatly
with paper and twine--
As ladies' curls were processed by Eva or Madge
And Loleta covered buckles, buttons, made belts, and sold feed.
And dry cleaners were at either end of our two-block town,
Cars were sold by Chandler and Maxey--
And a croquet yard by Doc's furnished recreation for Paul East, Preacher Reel, Fred Broderick, and more,
Watches and clocks were repaired by Judge Taylor, while Bruister Taylor
and Roy Tapp had the sporting goods store.
When Carl Denton and Virgel Smith provided a gathering spot as they cut
and shaved.
That was my town--1949.

When the original good ole boys--Ben, Sam, Harold, Less, Trump, Jawbone,
Willis, Lowell, and others--gathered at George's and Bryan's
Where they played pitch or perpetrated tricks on one another--
And five-cent Cokes were enjoyed by Elmer, Green, Nolen, John, and
others at Charley's across the street.
As they planned how they could help someone in need, whether it was
a field of an ailing neighbor that needed plowing, harrowing the baseball field, or
launching a polio drive,
When people could be counted on when the "going got tough,"
That was my town, 1949.

When a school bus could pick up half a busload in just one mile,
And you started to school with one group of friends and graduated
with them twelve years later.
And Sunday meant reading the funnies, putting on your Sunday best, and going to church
And fried chicken at dinnertime far surpassed the Colonel's,
When people knew and cared for one another,
That was my town----CARTER---1949.

When time has passed and the expansion of our world has been accomplished,
And goals are established and mountains have been climbed,
When fame and fortune, as well as trials and tribulations, have been our lot,
As memory travels along well-remembered and easily recalled paths,
Then, it is fun to revisit, if only in our mind AND with our heart--
OUR TOWN, 1949.

HARMONY

A controlling metaphor

Western Oklahoma Red

By Billie Marsh

Writing a poem about Western Oklahoma,
metaphor fails.
Western Oklahoma red clay
is like nothing else.
Not rose red. Not blood red.
Not scarlet letter red.
Just Western Oklahoma red clay,
slashed by bitter winds which leave
raw cuts by the roadside,
gaping wounds that hurt the eye.
Even the ponds and streams are red,
clotted with dust.
The cattle must choke.
Puny things don't last here.
Harsh winds blow away all dry husks,
leave only rawboned people,
scrub oak, skeleton earth.
Green fields of winter wheat, rooted deep,
bow before the wind's ominous roar,
a sound like grinding bones
for giants' bread.

HOPE

Western Oklahoma August

By Dona Maddux Cooper

The hot winds
of the late
summer afternoon
stirred
the red soil
out of its
complacent furrows,
turning
sun-paled images
into
faded tintypes.

PATRONS

Hydro Dry Goods, Hydro
Northside Drug, Hydro
Somewhere Else, Hydro
Kelley Jewelers, Weatherford
Driscoll Ford, Inc., Thomas
Joe McMillin, Attorney at Law, Weatherford
Weatherly RCA, Elk City
United Community Bank, Weatherford, F.D.I.C.
Bank of Hydro, Hydro, F.D.I.C.
Weatherford New Car Auto Dealers Association

An occasional — sometimes cherished — happening.

Round-Up

By Margie Snowden North

The alarm disturbs a sound sleep at six o'clock, and we're tempted to turn over and catch another forty winks. Instead, we roll out and hit the floor. Breakfast is hurried, the dirty dishes stacked in the sink to be contended with later.

These are modern days, so we don't saddle horses--though many ranchers still do--but we pull on our boots, and maybe hats, and step out into a fresh new day. It's still early enough to be cool down here on the river, and some of us are shivering. In an hour or two, heat waves will be dancing before our eyes and sweat dripping off noses.

It's round-up time on the BN Ranch, an activity that occurs two or three times a year on most Western Oklahoma ranches. In early spring, we round up in order to work (i.e., brand, castrate, inoculate) a new crop of calves and put tags in their mamas' ears. Number tags for identification purposes are thrust through the lower ear when cattle are purchased; tags containing an insecticide designed to ward off flies are attached yearly in the same way.

In the fall there's another round-up in order to separate calves from their mothers--the weaning process. If sickness occurs, round-up is necessary for the purpose of treating sick animals. Occasionally round-up is required solely for sorting cattle and moving portions of the herd to other pastures. In our case, with two Hereford bulls, two Beefmasters, and a Limousin-cross, and mother cows ranging from black baldy to Brangus and even a Longhorn-cross or two, there's a certain amount of shuffling required to keep certain breeds together for optimum results.

Round-up today is no longer regularly scheduled for certain seasons of the year; it's purely a financial venture. We've got a note due at First American, and we'll run in the collateral and pick out enough to make the payment!

The three-wheelers and four-wheel-drive pickup have been gassed up and are ready to go. We head out, a small procession, through gates and cowlots and a triangle lane, toward the north eighty. Should the round-up occur in winter when cattle are accustomed to being fed and their dinner bell is a pickup horn, this procedure would be simple. A few toots of the horn and a parade of cattle would follow us straight into the corral. But it's early summer at present, and round-up is a different story--though still not a problem.

The BN Ranch is bounded on the east by Turkey Creek and on the north by the Northfork of Red River, extending for about two miles down-river. We're a relatively small ranch with less than a thousand acres in the initial block (rented property gives us an additional two thousand acres) and much of the terrain is rough: sand hills, bogs, ponds, washes, shinnery, sage, bear grass, native grasses, plum thickets. But today's small herd has already been lured by fresh pasture into a fairly consistent field--leveled by dozens of hours of labor, three or four hundred gallons of diesel fuel, and a hard-working four-wheel-drive Case tractor--so the operation will be relatively simple: all vehicles to the east end and bring them down.

Don't get in any hurry. Flap an arm at stragglers. Move easily, circling, nudg-

ing. Make a doughnut on the three-wheelers in order to head off an upstart. Dodge a clump of hackberry. carefully skirt the carcass of a beautiful black baldy cow that recently dropped dead for no apparent reason. Idly study the patch of newly sprigged grass on one side of the pond, and the waist-high haygrazer on the other side. What was once a strip of virtual wasteland is fast shaping up and you briefly consider the many remaining acres that need improvement.

Dust hangs in the morning air, as well as an occasional cry urging the cattle on. The sun is already beginning to get hot, the sky paling into a hazy light blue. A covey of quail scurries for cover in a shinnery patch. Calves bawl questioningly, even while ambling obediently for the corrals, unaware of their approachig fate.

We move steadily, everything under control. Across the remaining acres of the eighty. Through a shinnery patch at the west end, down the narrow little pickup trail, through the gate and the lane, through another gate. Cattle crowd a little, protesting, reluctant to be pushed into pens. But finally the last gate is latched and the animals are milling, half-heartedly seeking a way out, searching for stray bits of hay in the racks. Actual round-up is over, just that easily, and we stand for a moment looking the herd over.

Now for the sorting, done by size in this case. Think this one will go six? Run him in! Here's the little orphan. Doing better, but he won't make this load. This one--remember him? "Pulled" him early one Sunday morning. A first-calf heifer was the mama; she was too little and he was too big. Ben tended to the technicalities while I turned the crank on the calf-puller (a nylon rope is attached to the calf's hoof). I braced myself in my boots and worked almost as hard as the heifer until it was over and there he was, huge and wet and bawling. My legs were trembling almost as much as his by then--and we still made it to church on time.

Here's that Brahman-cross heifer, still homely, but stretchy. Look at those legs, that straight back. Kick her back--we'll give her a chance to live up to her mother's standards.

Black baldy steers are still the best sellers. Cut out those three--they'll go. And that little red baldy. He'll go six, I'll bet my last year's hat, and the year's before (which is the same one). Run him in!

Head that Brahman-cross steer off. Man, he's sleek. He'll sure go. And that Hereford. Look at the size of him. If we had two or three hundred of that calibre, think of the interest we could pay!

Okay, that's twenty, a fair-sized bunch for the old goose-neck trailer. Back her in there now. Little to the left. Hold it right there. Let's load! Slam the gate--make sure the latch catches. Remember the time we strung them out from here to Erick?

Here we come, Hollis Livestock Auction. Got a load fresh off the river--how's the market today? Pretty stout, you say? Music to our ears! Maybe we can pay that note off now and relax for a few months 'til the next one's due. . .

HOPE

Unique in its universality

OKLAHOMA CHRISTIAN WESTERN

By Diane Holcomb

Red Clay. . .Home

By Pat Kourt

Coyotes--
burrowing in red-clay prairie dens
Cheyennes--
camping near red-clay river beds
Pioneers--
nestling in red clay, sod dugouts
Outlaws--
watching from remote red-clay canyons
Ranchers--
feeding with acres of red-clay pastures
Suburbanites--
conserving in modern red-clay undergrounds
Versatile. . .red clay. . .home.

The Patriarch

By Wenona L. Dunn

He alone remains
  of his contemporaries;
For all the rest have long since gone.
He yet lives
  in his little house
Which for so long has been his home.

He's aware that life
  is only temporary;
So he can tell (and we should heed)
Of those things
  which truly count--
A cheery word, a kindly deed.

Though sight and hearing
  sometimes are quite contrary,
His heart and mind are eager still.
He at times
  writes a cheerful verse
About the wind or songbird's trill.

Though his strength and health
  are both so momentary,
His ninety years have brought insight
  into life,
  and he's learned to trust
The One who keeps us by His Might.

(written for Uncle Dick Chapman on April 12, 1977)

A Prairie Miracle

By Pat Kourt

Winds dust the gray-brown prairie with whirling,
  stinging grit.
Sunflowers surrender meekly to gusty afternoon
heat blasts.
Quail cluster innately to their temporary prairie-
  grass nests.
Cottonwoods hover expectantly along cracked, dry
  creek beds.
Clouds congregate quickly, becoming powerful
  charcoal threats.

Suddenly. . .

Thunderheads explode frigid hailstones onto the
  scorched earth.
Rain sheets design a network of minute rivers
  and waterfalls.
Lightning bolts flash hurried cues to massive,
  growling thunder.
Coolness calms the escaping heat to refresh patches
  of wild clover.
Sunshine breaks boldly through weakening clusters
  of showers.
A prairie miracle. . .

God blessing the land to His glory!

Exemplary lives.

Osceola Where the Tough Survived

By Tena Bailey

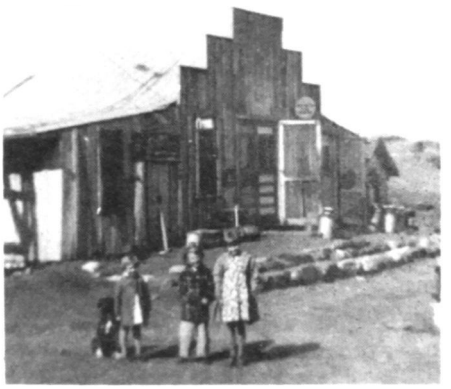
In the winter of 1934-1935, the effects of the Great Depression hung over Western Oklahoma like a cloud shrouding the sun. Many people gave up hope as they realized that lost finances wouldn't be regained. Others came up fighting, never dreaming of giving up. My parents, Phillip (P. J.) and Rosa Martin, were among the fighters. In December of 1934, they built the Osceola Store. Osceola was located seven miles north of Butler, Oklahoma, at a four-corner intersection.

The store was built of rough-hewn cottonwood that was sliced through neatly at the old mill on Barnett Creek, just south of the one-room school and original townsite of Osceola. Also, the cottonwoods came from that creek, where they had grown as majestic giants with towering limbs reaching for the sun, while leaves sparkled in the sunbeams like drops of dew, as only the leaves of the cottonwood can.

First Daddy built only one large room for the General Store, and he and Mama stocked it with canned goods from the wholesale houses in Clinton. Later a bedroom and kitchen were added and finally another bedroom so the family could be looked after while the store was open. Yet we children wouldn't stay put in the family dwelling; we wandered out into the store, visiting with the patrons, listening to the yarns, and learning about life. Youngest of the children, I was worse than the others.

When the store was built, my sister Omagene was 2½; my brother Otis was 14 months, and I was 6 weeks. We grew up loving the atmosphere of the trading area that was permeated by wood smoke from the Franklin stove and the shelves that were filled with fascinating things. Benches surrounded the inside of the store so visitors could "sit a spell" and customers had to reach across them to retrieve the items from their "want lists."

High on a shelf above a locked candy case filled with chocolate bars sat big jars of candy with huge, inviting mouths: jelly beans, licorice sticks, chocolate drops, and orange slices. These things were kept up high on purpose—out of reach. But little girls learn young how to charm and wheedle their whims out of grown-ups who should know better.



Tena Martin Bailey and her siblings in front of the Osceola Store: l-r: Tena, Otis Jay, and Omagene Martin

Every day, some farmer, sporting an uncut beard and striped overalls, would look at me with pity and ask, "Have you had any candy today?"

Because my memory was short, I always said, "No! My mama wouldn't give me any candy today."

Invariably the tough man, who braved zero weather and dust storms, faltered, and he lifted me high above the counter to fill grubby little hands with sugared treats.

Other delights filled the store. There were salt blocks that tasted very grimy and tart to little tongues that tried them out before the cows ever got a chance at them. There were barrels of beans and real banana stalks that swung from the ceiling, dangling their golden, delicious fruit.

There had been a depression, but children with full bellies didn't worry about it. Only their parents worried.

How did Osceola Store survive with the economic upheaval of the times? Why did my parents dare to go into debt for their first "stock" or inventory of groceries? Why did they believe they could succeed while so many others had failed? Yet succeed they did, and they sold that little store later to purchase a bigger, more successful one in Butler.

Osceola patrons had their share of troubles, and they had little cash to purchase staples. But there was a cream station where Daddy could buy and test cream for the farmers, and he would "candle" eggs to be sure they were fit for market. Cash earned in this creamery allowed farmers to buy sugar, flour, and coffee. Sometimes they dared charge a few groceries until a crop came in or until a cow or pig was butchered. When it was butchering time for a farmer who was delinquent with his account, we fared well. Mr. Farmer, with a cud of tobacco in his cheek and a twinkle in his eye, would drag an eighteen-inch wash tub full of oozing, red, raw meat into the front door of our establishment. That was an awesome sight and scary at first. Later we younguns learned about tenderloin and steak, and those tubs of red meat looked good to us.

Farmers came for miles to trade with us, and few of them drove cars. Most of them came on horseback or with wagons pulled by teams of huge, muscled horses. There were hitching posts mounted on the porch of the store to secure those gigantic animals. The few vehicles that arrived looked like rejects from a salvage yard, and most of those rattletraps had to be cranked before they would sputter, chug, and finally start.

Like a true pioneer, I preferred the horses. Old Snip was the favorite steed to grace Osceola territory. He was a red bay gelding owned by the Ed Kauk

family, who lived a mile south of Osceola. The pony's coat glistened like copper, and he nickered delightfully. The Kauks raised a whole passel of kids, and daily somebody from that household would ride Ole Snip up to the store. While his owner came inside and bought groceries, I held the reins of that glorious mount. Not the biggest kid in the county, I felt hearty holding that horse in tow. I was petite enough to fit into a ten-quart milk bucket (Mother and I had many a round over my muddy footprints in the bottoms of the creamery buckets); yet that old horse with soft, wise eyes just stood like an angel and looked at me, totally compliant and subdued.

If Old Snip was Osceola's favorite horse, Ruth Kauk was Osceola's favorite rider. When Snip came lopin' down the road, stirring up red dust, we looked carefully to see if perhaps Ruth was riding. She always had time for little girls she called "Toots." She usually threw in a free horseback ride. Years later, Uncle Edgar Addington married Ruth Kauk in a wheat field, while she used sunflowers for her bouquet. Smart man! Not only did he get a jewel of a lady, but the farmers cut his wheat free because the wheat field wedding was a response to a dare.

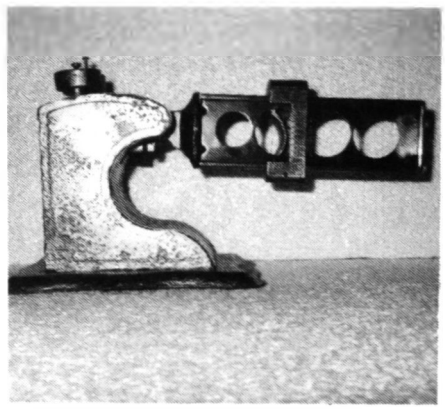
Some folks weren't as congenial as the Kauks, and Dad had a ruckus or two over unpaid bills. One day when Daddy P. J. was in Butler, he looked up a delinquent customer in the lumberyard and proceeded to dun him. There's not much telling what Daddy's exact words were, but he must have made that enormous farmer mad. Although Daddy weighed 200 pounds and had participated in some wrestling, he was no match for his opponent. That farmer grappled him to the floor and chewed off part of his right ear.

On another occasion, Dad hauled wheat to market for a poor neighbor who was having trouble with his bill, with the understanding that the wheat money would be applied to the late account. When this fellow came to settle up, he felt he had been cheated; as he started outside, he said, "P. J., you're a damned liar."

Daddy didn't like cussing, and he believed a man was only as good as his word. As the farmer added a few more curse words, Dad vaulted the counter and caught the customer on the porch. He fared better in this fight, while his surprised daughter watched.

Most of the Osceola patrons were white, mostly the Russian Germans, who had left Germany, migrated to Russia, and then had come to America because of persecution. But one day another group of people arrived in the building while I was left to keep store. Mama and Papa were enjoying a Sunday afternoon nap, and they had left instructions about being called if a customer arrived.

So isolated was the life of this four-year-old storekeeper that I had never seen black folks--before. Sitting on an empty lard can, just inside the open door, I suddenly sensed a frightening presence on the porch. They must have been folks because they were talking, but they were as black as thunderclouds on a purple tornado day, and



These candy scales were used during the 1930's and 1940's at Osceola. They survived a fire, then lay exposed to the elements for years. Tena Bailey and Shirley Lewis, a friend, found the scales on the old Osceola Store site in 1984; Bobby Lewis of Darrouzett, Texas, restored them; they now remain in Lewis' private museum in Darrouzett.

they were laughing, and they were pointing right at me. My tiny legs didn't have to be long to move fast. I still remember the fear that I felt as I crawled, absolutely speechless, to the bottom of the covers between Mama and Daddy. Mama grabbed my heels and dragged me out to see what the problem was, but it was safer under the covers and under I went again. Only after those "creatures" were far down the road did I venture out. It took me a while to get over that scare and to accept black folks for themselves.

WPA workers, who were given jobs via a government relief program, came by Osceola almost daily, filling canteens with water and spending pennies for bologna sandwiches or candy bars. Some of them had no money for food. Many of these people came from surrounding farms, doing what was necessary to live. They handled shovels and picks, and they worked hard. Planting the nation's first windbreaks, they carried water, day after day, to rows of Chinese Elm and Cedar trees. They widened roads, straightened curves, and built bridges; thus, they were able to feed their families. Proud and industrious, they were among the depression survivors

Most people were honest and paid their debts if they could. When tragedy struck a family, Mother would bind up all the delinquent tickets, mark them **paid**, and send them with a sympathy note to the bereaved family.

My father was a Christian who couldn't bear to see anybody hungry. Our family had a philosophy about never giving hungry people money, but never turning them away with empty stomachs. The few beggars who came through were offered work in exchange for their meals. Humanity was sacred. A person didn't humiliate other people or spoil them with handouts. Children were a different matter. If there were hungry children in the neighborhood, they got a visit from Rosa Martin. It was amazing how many sacks of flour and cans of soup a person could pack into the cab of Dad's old Ford truck. It was astounding how a person could survive that generosity.

Mother often said in later years, "Folks weren't selfish in those days; they always shared what they had."

The big-hearted Germans left the brightest memories at Osceola. Those folks knew about sharing. When a German family built a house, the entire community came together and worked. If a farmer needed to have a barn built or if a sick farmer's wheat needed harvesting, the group organized a team effort and got the job done. There was never any complaining or quarreling--just good-natured bantering and a willingness to help.

Most of these people still used the German language; in fact, many of the older people couldn't speak English at all, so Daddy learned some German in order to serve them in the store. They had their own German church near Osceola, where they worshipped and sang to their God in the language of the old country.

My father's old truck, like every-

thing else, had to pay its own way. It was used weekly for the grocery hauls from Clinton; and when Dad was lucky, he got a cattle-hauling job to the stockyards in Oklahoma City. For some crazy reason as a toddler I went on those drives, bouncing around in the truck cab like a twenty-pound ball while the cramped cattle grunted and shifted in the truck bed behind.

In those days, the roads between Osceola and Clinton weren't paved; and when it rained, red mire formed ruts up to the axle on the truck. The vehicle was shifted down to compound as it struggled to pull its vibrating load of cattle up steep hills through the oozing muck.

Cash was scarce, and on these trips we rarely stopped to eat. Lunch was a packed sandwich or a bowl of greasy chili at a roadside cafe. A hotel was a forbidden luxury. Regardless of the unloading hour at the stock yards, we could always look forward to the gruesome half-day trek back home in the dark--often in the mud.

Winters seemed harder in the late thirties when we had only wood stoves for heat and there was no electricity. North winds howled with fury across the rolling hills with only a few farm shanties and stunted tree rows to slow it. Swirling snow quickly blocked country roads, and sometimes the mail wouldn't arrive for days. Then the farmers would saddle their horses and carefully make their way through the drifts to the store for necessary supplies. When a customer, half frozen and bundled beneath huge coats and blankets, arrived, he always stayed an hour or two chewing the fat about neighbors and collecting the community news. Isolated with their families, without telephones and radios, human contact was deemed precious and kept many farmers from the blight of "cabin fever." But after a father had thawed out by the Osceola wood stove and talked his heart out, he would don his sturdy frontier garb, pull on his damp, cowhide boots, and step into the cold to mount his pony and make his way back home.

When the weather cleared and the roads became passable, Daddy always scheduled a card party; and everyone within riding distance galloped in for an evening of fellowship. They brought decks of cards and dominoes, setting up tables on counter tops, and plumping down on empty nail kegs. Kerosene lamps and lanterns, with fragile mantles glowing, provided dim lights for the games while Grandmother poured mugs of hot coffee and made popcorn. If the wagons could proceed through the muddy ruts, the kids came along for their own party. The Frank Ramsey family alone had eight children. On one of those cold nighs, I managed to tip over one of Mama's cabinets, spilling Karo syrup, sugar, spices, and pantry items all over the kitchen.

The evenings weren't all peaceful. Some Custer County residents couldn't handle their booze, and one neighbor came by parties only when he was intoxicated. During a regular Saturday night domino party, this drunk neighbor arrived, wanting to fight. He stood in the middle of the store and threw cans of tomatoes through the glass on the front door.

One fellow seemed to get zonked every Saturday night, and he would get arrested. The next day, one of his teenage sons would travel to Arapaho to collect his dad from the county jail. I can remember standing on tiptoe, looking into the car at a disgraced Papa sleeping off a binge while Son filled up with gas at the Osceola Station. On at least three occasions, this same farmer drove off the Barnett Creek Bridge, plunging into the water below. He walked away from each incident.

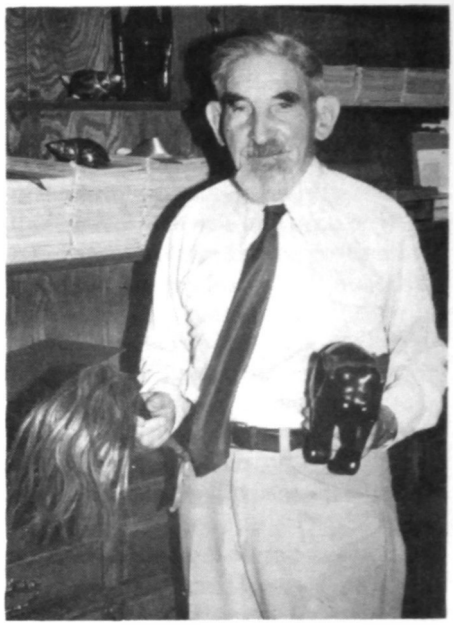
Custer County was cattle country, and the Ramsey and Todd Ray Ranches ran a great deal of beef. Several times each year, they moved hundreds of cattle down the road by the store and out to a new pasture. We could hear the lowing and tramping for miles, while the cowboys whooped, waving their dark Stetsons, trying to keep the cows from taking the wrong turn. When Mother heard a herd on the move, she rushed to take her children safely indoors where everyone watched the waves of cattle rippling by. The cowboy that brought up the rear always stopped to buy a knapsack of food and fill the canteens. But nobody ate until that herd was safely penned away from farm crops and neighborhood gardens.

All good things do indeed end. Time passed, and our family sold the store to Uncle Ernest Martin; he later sold it to the Ray family.

Beautiful people with voices from the past stand out in Osceola's memories, shouting out lessons learned while colliding with life. Haneys, Kauks, Crowls, Bakers, Hugheses, Joe Miles, Hendrix, Touchstone, and scores of others haunt the old corner where the store burned in the 1950's. The foundations still stand, and the cement porch that was poured by my father is still there--whispering ghosts of the past.

In June of 1984, after burying both of my parents, I went back to commune with those ghosts. Standing on that spot, I remembered the laughter, the hope, and the perseverance of a hardy, brave people of the past. Looking through the debris, I found an old pair of candy scales, made of brass, surviving the years. Those scales have been restored and placed in a museum in Darrouzett, Texas. They are a witness to the fact that Osceola existed, and they are a monument to the fact that the tough still survive.

Westview pasteup by: Southwestern Oklahoma State University Advertising Layout 2 students.
John Burrus Jack Moore Joni Phillips Isaak
Jerry Johnson J. VanOrsdol



Although Klemme says that smiling for photographs leads to creating illusions, there's warmth about his face and eyes that reveals an interesting and caring individual. Traveling around the world since 1921, he has collected a number of souvenirs of the countries in which he has worked. (photo by Dee Ann Ray)

Marvin Klemme — A Flair for the Eventful

By Dee Ann Ray

Some people live long, uneventful lives, staying among family and friends in one community. Others strike out to make a way for themselves and see the world, living many years among strangers, laboring for the good of many countries, and yet retaining their native roots. Marvin Klemme of Bessie is a citizen of the world who finally came home. He has seen much, been involved in some of the major events of this century and continues to contribute to the growing good of the world.

You've perhaps seen him. He stands out in a crowd. He's neat and trim looking; he has piercing eyes that appear to use x-ray powers on whatever they behold. His powers of observation have been of great help to the causes of American land management, grazing, and forestry projects in a large number of foreign countries. His latest project is the establishment of the Marvin Klemme Youth Ranch west of Bessie. The thousand-acre ranch is to be managed by the Windsor Hills Baptist Church of Oklahoma City but operated as a non-denominational home for children.

Marvin Klemme is a courteous man whose intellectual pursuits haven't robbed him of old-world charm. He's an individual. Although a sickly child, his good health is obvious now. He hasn't taken a pill of any kind since he left the foreign service in 1965. He took only necessary medicines then to prevent malaria and other diseases prevalent in the countries in which he worked. "I like to keep fit. I go out to the ranch and walk several miles a day. I feel good when I come home," says the soon-to-be 84-year-old man. "On December 7, I'll be 84. I was the oldest person to participate in the recent Crop Walk in Clinton. When I made a trip to Tibet two years ago, the guide told me the only other person near my age to make the trip was a man who was 79." Actually, Marvin Klemme is ageless. He is one of those persons to whom the years are kind although he has lived in the backward countries of the world under harsh conditions.

When asked to smile for a photograph, the unpretentious Mr. Klemme replied, "I never like to smile for photographs; it creates a false impression." Being an honest man, Mr. Klemme is inclined to "tell it like he sees it."

A native of Missouri, Mr. Klemme came to Oklahoma with his father, Henry. Marvin is one of eight children. Only four of the children from Henry's first family are still alive. Henry married Glendora on March 10, 1898. To their union were born Milton, Marvin, Ben, Dovie, Jessie, Gloria, James, and Paul. Milton, Jessie, and Paul all died before they reached the age of one. Glendora died on May 2, 1911.

Henry Klemme's second wife was Anna Rhodes. To their union were born Samuel, Ruth, Naomi, and Esther.

Of the first family, Ben, Gloria, James, and Marvin survive. Of the second family, only Ruth and Naomi are alive. Ruth lives in Weatherford, and Naomi lives in Indiana. Ben lives in Oklahoma City, and James lives in Clovis, N.M. He retired there after having managed the Klemme farm west of Bessie for years.

The Klemme family traces back to Germany. Marvin has made a study of the family and has written a family history book which is available in the library through his generosity. His great-grandfather was Christian Klemme, a tailor by profession. Christian brought his wife, Sophia, and four daughters to America in the fall of 1845. They settled in Southeast Missouri (near Cape Girardeau).

August Klemme, a son, was born to Christian and Sophia on April 1, 1846. August fought in the Civil War, serving as a bugler and captain's orderly. He married Augusta Feurerhahn in June of 1869. They had eleven children--eight

boys and three girls; three of their children died in infancy.

One of August's sons was Henry, Marvin's father. A brother named George came with Henry to Oklahoma for the first time in 1897, with the first threshing machine to work the wheat fields around El Reno. Off and on for several seasons, the brothers operated the threshing machine, moving it to a spot near Parkersburg (west of Clinton).

August Klemme decided to follow his sons and moved his family to Oklahoma in October of 1900. Henry also moved, selling his Missouri farm land in 1901. Until then, he came to Oklahoma only during the threshing season and then returned to Missouri for the rest of the year.

For several years, the Klemme family migrated back and forth from Missouri to Oklahoma, selling out completely and resettling at times. They often visited back and forth as well.

After his mother's death, Marvin and the other children spent the summer of 1911 with their grandparents in the Bessie area. After his father's remarriage, the family lived in Missouri until 1915, when they returned to Oklahoma to stay. In 1914, Marvin's uncle George Klemme was elected a county commissioner in Washita County.

Marvin worked hard during his growing years. He attended only eight years of school and describes them as "poor" educationally. He worked for his Uncle George at the cotton gin at Braithwaite, west of Bessie. He often got only half of his pay because his father received the rest of the money.

Farming was a way of life; but in 1920, the bottom dropped out of farming and prices fell drastically on all crops. Realizing that farming was goig to get rougher, Marvin gave his land and equipment to his father and joined the Marines. He wanted to enlist for World War I, but his father wouldn't let him because he was too young and was needed on the farm to aid in the war effort to produce more food.

The Bessie farm boy got his first taste of foreign travel in the Marines in 1921 and 1922. He was sent to service in Santo Domingo in a holding action and to keep down revolutionaries. He says actually even then the seeds of the present unrest in Central America were being sown. Although he was on the island of Santo Domingo, U.S. Marines were seeing service in Nicaragua and Central American countries.

It was in the Marines that Marvin got his first taste of forestry work. The Marines were trying to reclaim some land around Quanticio, Virginia, where there's a large Marine base. Marvin signed up for the first trial project and liked the work.

"I also owe the Marines a debt for the opportunity to study and better myself educationally. That's what I did in my off-duty time. It enabled me to prepare myself for entrance to college, although I lacked a high-school diploma," says Klemme.

"When I was discharged, I went to Oregon. I wanted to get in the U.S. Forest Service, but you had to pass written and oral tests which necessitated a college education. I entered the University of Washington Forestry School and graduated in 1930. During the summers, I worked for the Forestry

Klemme served in the U S Marines twice. The first time was in 1921 and 1922 in Santo Domingo and the United States. In this photo, made during World War II, he was serving as a recruiter.

Service as a Forest Guard. I think I developed my good health during those years. Living up on a mountaintop, I breathed fresh air and worked hard. I became very strong."

Marvin passed the forestry test before he graduated from the university, but he had a job waiting. He worked in ranger districts in Colorado and other western states. At times he was given special assignments like a tree survey along the Mississippi River. He spent the slower winter months studying as well as doing maps and reports. He continued learning all he could. He helped to set up the grazing districts after aiding in the passage of the congressional legislation to establish such districts.

Because of his outstanding achievements in the Forestry Service, Marvin was encouraged to enter Yale and earn his Master's degree, which he did in 1935.

Through working with the grazing districts and continual study, Marvin began to want to know what other countries of the world were doing about land management and use. He could see that the United States had literally worn out great areas of land and thought that perhaps other countries could give ideas about what should be done to better conserve the land.

In 1939, with the blessing of the United States Government, Marvin was off on an around-the-world tour to study land uses. He spent almost a year touring the world, visiting some thirty countries.

The year 1939 was an eventful one in world history. Japan was already making inroads in colonization by military force in the Far East. Germany was rattling sabres in Europe and a war-weary world was gearing up for the next fight.

Everywhere he went, Marvin not only traveled back into the hinterlands to study land use and methods of raising cattle and grazing them, but he saw a world going to war. He stood on the rubble of a bombed Shanghai. He was regarded with suspicion by most foreign countries who questioned his seemingly harmless mission, wondering if indeed he was a spy.

In the introduction to the book he wrote about that trip, entitled THE AMERICAN GRAZIER GOES ABROAD, Marvin warned other travelers that such a trip involved some primitive living conditions, but that visiting the rural areas was necessary to view the true conditions of the country.

With insight gained from his 1939 odyssey, Marvin, in the closing statements of the book, related the problems of the world as he observed them. Interestingly enough, the problems then are still prevalent. Even time doesn't change some conditions.

While Marvin was in Turkey in 1939, war broke out in Europe as a mobilized Nazi machine began to roll across the map. Traveling became a problem and a hazard. Marvin and another American on tour traveled steerage on a Besarabian ship to reach

neutral Greece and then made their way home.

Having maintained his home in Oregon, Marvin returned there and wanted to get into the war effort. He was assigned to the job of recruiter for the Marines and spent his war years doing that until returning G.I.'s were assigned to the job and older men were retired.

Out of the Marines in 1945, Marvin went to Washington, D.C. to find a government job which would keep him involved with overseas duty. He became interested in a new organization called UNRRA (United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration). Although he had some doubts about the political connections of some of the folks working for the group, he was interested in the mission to aid the displaced persons who would flow out of concentration camps once the war ended.

After some brief training, Marvin was issued his gear for UNNRA which was very military-like and shipped out for his first assignment in Europe. During the trip over, the war in Europe ended. The event was celebrated on the ship with a special dinner.

For two and a quarter years, Marvin worked with the displaced persons program. He aided in processing and handling the skeletons which crawled out of the Nazi concentration camps. He and the other UNRRA workers lived under almost impossible conditions, but they felt the importance of what they were doing.

For part of the UNRRA assignment, Marvin used his forestry training. He organized the displaced persons into work crews which chopped the wood needed to warm Europe during the cold winters of 1946 and 1947. He proved that, given proper incentives, the displaced persons were motivated to aid in their own survival.

When UNRRA ended its mission in 1947, Marvin returned to Oregon and worked in politics, serving as campaign manager for Cordon's race for the U.S. Senate. He became acquainted with many political figures who were working on farm legislation. He also wrote the story of UNRRA in a book titled THE INSIDE STORY OF UNRRA, AN EXPERIENCE IN INTERNATIONALISM.

When the Korean War started, all thoughts of the importance of a farm program for the U.S. were abandoned by the Congress, which took up national defense. Marvin found there was little for him to do in the way of working on farm legislation, and he looked around for a new cause.

In 1939, Marvin Klemme traveled around the world surveying land-use management. He is shown here in Columbia with coffee plants. His odyssey took almost a year and ended in Turkey as war broke out.

"Sometimes I have thought I spent more time working for other people and countries of the world, and I probably should have done more here in my own country," remarks Marvin, thinking back on his years of foreign service.

In 1950, Marvin went overseas again with the Marshall Plan, which has changed its names over the years but is still in operation with varying projects involving development for foreign countries.

First assignment was Greece and he remained there for almost four years. From then until 1965 when he retired, Marvin roamed the world working in Africa in a number of underdeveloped countries, as well as Iran, India, and South America as a consultant in agriculture and grazing. He also often helped in forestry projects. Always he was assigned to the rural areas of the countries and lived under primitive conditions. He had ample opportunity to observe the customs and way of life of the countries.

Every two years, Marvin came back to the United States for thirty days. Part of that time he spent in Oklahoma. "I had the family keep watch for land for me. When I came home, I closed the deals. I kept buying land all those years. My family looked after my interests," relates Marvin.

Marvin's last overseas assignment was Saudi Arabia. He traveled first to Rome and prepared his final report. Then he took "the long way home" around the world. He started east traveling through Pakistan, India, Nepal, Cambodia, etc. He arrived in Viet Nam just before the Tonkin Gulf

During the 1930's, Klemme (far left) worked in the Western United States, but sometimes drew special assignments--such as this tree-survey trip down the Mississippi River.

affair. "I wrote a lot of letters home telling people about our being in Vietnam. We had no business there. We are just different from those people. We can't solve their problems because we don't understand anthing about the way they believe or live."

Even in 1955, Marvin could see the inroads Communism was making in Southeast Asia. Everywhere he went, he saw the unrest and move toward revolution.

Once back in the United States, Marvin went to Oregon and cleaned up his business affairs and moved to Bessie to make his permanent home.

"James, my brother, was still managing the ranch at that time, and I occupied myself with conservation measures. I did a lot of dirt work, building ponds and dams, etc. I kept a room at the Calmez in Clinton and often stayed there. The Hamms were operating the restaurant at that time, and it was excellent food."

Keeping active is a way of life for Marvin Klemme. When he isn't building fences and reservoirs, he takes trips and attends meetings of his various professional organizations.

Since retiring, he has taken at least one trip overseas every year. He has been to Europe, the Holy Land, Central America, three trips around the world, to Antarctica with a scientific expedition, Russia, and Tibet. "We were the second group allowed into Tibet since the Communist takeover. I was with Society Expeditions, a group of scientifically trained people. We did some climbing which amazed our guide because he hadn't seen someone my age doing that."

For some years, Marvin was vice-president of the Republican Party in Washita County. He is active in the Washita County Historical Society and a contributor to its museum. Two years ago, he received his fifty-year pin from the Society of American Foresters. He also belongs to the American Society of Range Management, and he's a member of the Clinton chapter of the National Association of Retired Federal Employees.

Last year, Marvin decided to donate land west of Bessie to establish a youth ranch. "I want to help orphans and give them a good home. I made arrangements for the home to be non-denominational although operated by the Baptist Church. The children should be allowed to make their own religious choices. I'm managing the land until the church can raise the money to establish the home and get it operational. Up to now, all they have done is build a road in there and they have done some testing for water wells. They need a big donation, I think."

If Windsor Hills Baptist Church doesn't succeed in establishing the youth ranch, the Klemme land will revert to Marvin and his heirs. Marvin hopes it does get going because he would like to see the land serving a useful purpose.

Recently, Marvin made a generous gift to the University of Washington to aid in their forestry program. He enjoyed his visit to his Alma Mater because he liked what he saw in the educational line. "I have never liked the hippies. I am concerned about the lack of respect for teachers among the students of today. I think there must be discipline in life, and it begins early."

It is probably the discipline which Marvin has exercised in his own life that has enabled him to pack so much into the space of only 84 years. He has done much, been a part of all he saw, and still is. That discipline was born out of growing up in a time when everyone in the family worked to aid the common good of the family. Times weren't easy. Marvin can remember when things were much different than they are today and life was much less easy.

Marvin's Western Oklahoma roots have stood him in good stead, and they have brought him home to Bessie where he is now laboring for his own country as he often thought he should.

Although he is a modest man, when Marvin can be encouraged to tell of his exploits, there are surely some interesting stories. One of a breed of true individuals of whom we see little in these modern times, Marvin is a credit to his country.

First published in the CLINTON DAILY NEWS--December 2, 1984

Mother, Frankie Cooke, and the author, Marge Cooke Porteus in 1943.

Cindy Conkle, granddaughter of the author of this story, displays a quilt made by Frankie Cooke. The quilt was made from recycled tobacco sacks.

A memory to savor.

Mother's War on Poverty

By Marge Cooke Porteus

Poverty program advisors could have learned a great deal from my mother. Living with her was an education in economy, psychology, Christianity, and patience. Mother had gained her authority from experiences as a child growing up in a large, poor family who homesteaded in Indian Territory and from rearing six children during the hard times of the twenties and thirties. Those experiences, plus her sense of adventure and her ingenuity, created a most unusual person.

I began to realize her uniqueness only after I had my own family and after she spent several months in my own home. I was amazed and amused by her war on poverty, even though we were above the poverty level.

I had grown up realizing that she never threw anything away. The realization started when she brought a crocheted rug similar to those she had made and scattered around the house when I was a child. It was made from deep, rich colors and was exceptionally beautiful. She was a little hesitant about offering it because, as she said, "You younger kids don't always appreciate such things, and you might be offended by something made from throw-aways. Needless to say, I appreciated it and I wasn't offended.

I once mentioned how much I liked a skirt made from identical gores that a friend was wearing. Mother said that she could cut a pattern, a knack she learned when there wasn't money for patterns. She didn't want me to invest in material, not even inexpensive material, until we tried the pattern on something old.

We looked through my odds-and-ends box (I inherited her keep-everything instinct). She kept going back to a long length of heavy, rough tan material left from drapes. From that she cut the gores and made a skirt. It turned out so well that she made a matching jacket. I wore it to work, and I liked it so well that I even chose it to wear to a professional meeting.

Not only did I gain a suit from my scrapbox, but she made me quilt block pattern pillows and a wool couch throw that were the envy of local Americana collectors.

At her insistence, and since I worked, I let her take over the cooking during her stay. She was a connoisseur of all leftovers; no food was thrown away. As always, leftover vegetables went into the soup kettle, but one day I saw her sneak a couple tablespoons corn into her meat loaf. I asked about that. Her reply was, "Didn't you know that I always put a few vegetables with their juice into my meat loaf?" Later I discovered that her meat loaf might also include leftover cooked oatmeal as well as bread crumbs. They might be one kind or mixed. I always mash them because my own family knit their brows at leftovers--especially vegetables.

We live in Colorado apple country, so every fall I glean enough apples for my year's supply of applesauce. While Mother was here, I made the mistake of taking her with me to glean. We picked up all I needed for a year, but she wouldn't stop. Instead of a bushel, we had over three because she couldn't stand to see apples go to waste. She made all those apples into applesauce and canned them "in case there isn't a crop next year."

As a teenager, one of my favorite after-school snacks was Mom's junk cake. I had never thought much about it; but when my family liked it, I asked her how she made it. She just smiled and said there was no recipe. I badgered her until she finally said, "It's just some junk I've been saving. I used all those crumbs in the bottom of your cookie jar and scraped the jam out of those nearly empty jars in the refrigerator."

Her instructions were vague. "Cover all the crumbs you

continued

have with milk. Put in the jellies. Add other stuff to make a batter."

I pressured her for a few more specifics. After she left, I experimented; here's her recipe for junk cake. Call it *potpourri* if you don't like the word *junk*.

1-1/3 cup cookie or cake crumbs (not enough crumbs? Use cereal)
3 eggs
1/2 to 1/4 cup jelly and/or fruit
1/2 cup more liquid: milk, juice, or maybe rum
1 tsp. nutmeg
1/2 tsp. allspice
3 tsp. soda
1/2 cup cooking oil
1 cup sugar
2-1/4 cups flour

In large mixing bowl, place moistened crumbs, eggs, jelly and liquid. Mix well. Add other ingredients. Mix well. Pour into greased and floured tube pan. Bake 350 degrees for 45 minutes to one hour.

NOTE: Mother was Frankie Cooke (Mrs. Henry), who lived all but the first few years of her life in Thomas.

FUTURE ISSUES

Fall 1986

WESTERN OKLAHOMA SCHOOLS

WINTER, 1986 (Western Oklahoma Events; deadline: 10-1-86)
SPRING, 1987 (Western Oklahoma Settlers; deadline: 1-1-87)
SUMMER, 1987 (Western Oklahoma Weather; deadline: 3-1-87)
FALL, 1987 (Western Oklahoma Memories; deadline: 7-1-87)
WINTER, 1987 (Western Oklahoma Success Stories; deadline: 10-1-87)
SPRING, 1988 (Western Oklahoma's Pacesetters; deadline: 1-1-88)
SUMMER, 1988 (Western Oklahoma "Stars"; deadline: 3-1-88)
FALL, 1988 (Western Oklahoma Politicians; deadline: 7-1-88)
WINTER, 1988 (Western Oklahoma Landmarks; deadline: 10-1-88)
SPRING, 1989 (Western Oklahoma Festivals; deadline: 1-1-89)
SUMMER, 1989 (Western Oklahoma Celebrations; deadline: 3-1-89)
FALL, 1989 (Western Oklahoma Cemeteries; deadline: 7-1-89)
WINTER, 1989 (Western Oklahoma Artisans; deadline: 10-1-89)

We prefer 5 x 7 or 8 x 10 b & w glossies that we can keep, as well as clear, original manuscripts (no copies, please).

An influence that's still with us.

What I Couldn't Be

By Dick Chapman

I don't really know when I learned to ride a horse; in fact, I rode quite a while without thinking anything about it. I know that I felt better when I was on a pony of some kind.

When I was very young, I thought I would be a cowboy. I didn't have anything else in view, and that's what I wanted. I had a chance to get a taste of it from all sides about eighty-five years ago, but by the time I was really ready to earn my spurs, the range was being crisscrossed with barbed-wire fences. The grass was being turned under, and many old cowhands were out of jobs and were forced to become kaffir corn woolies. The longhorn was fast becoming a relic.

The bunch grass was being replaced by Russian thistles and ragweeds. Even the rattlesnakes and buzzards were leaving out. So how could I become a cowpuncher with no cows to punch?

A significant change.

RFD Citifies Country Folks

By Donita Lucas Shields

After free mail delivery began in larger cities in 1863, farmers began asking for rural service. In the beginning, the idea seemed preposterous. Economy-minded people thought that nothing could be more ridiculous than hiring hundreds of federal employees to travel across the country to deliver a few letters.

Some visualized that country roads would be overrun with officials traveling miles and doing nothing but increasing costs of postage stamps. Small-town merchants voiced their opinions loudly that rural free delivery would ruin their businesses because farmers and their families spent money while they waited in town for irregular and uncertain mail service.

During the late 1800's when country folks carried political clout, they began petitioning their congressmen for rural delivery. Immediately politicians saw an ideal way of garnering votes at election time. When John Wanamaker, an energetic Philadelphia merchant, became Postmaster General in 1889, post offices began rural free delivery on a limited scale.

In 1893, Congress approved a resolution for rural delivery, but the system remained chaotic until 1898. Farmers again petitioned their congressmen--this time for more efficient delivery service. As a result, the rural postal system became a miniature bureaucracy with rural agents, route inspectors, and additional carriers.

In a year's time, 9,000 new routes were added throughout the countryside. To increase mail safety, the Postmaster General requested farmers to remove their crude mail buckets and boxes and replace them with government-approved containers. Since 1899, the familiar design of rural mailboxes has become the universal symbol of farm life.

By 1906, all essential rural routes were completed, and agents were incorporated into the government postal service. Rural free delivery may have been one of the most important communication revolutions in American history, but the revolution didn't end with the U.S. government's delivery of letters, newspapers, and magazines.

Farmers still had to pick up all but their lightest packages at the nearest freight depot. Before 1913, any parcel weighing more than four pounds couldn't be delivered by domestic mail service. Four companies--Adams Express, American Express, U.S. Express, and Wells Fargo--carried the nation's parcel's--to city people.

Postmaster General Wanamaker repeatedly requested a government parcel post, but the four express companies had no desire to lose their lucrative business. The issue became a political hot potato, which the powerful farmers' lobby eventually won. On January 1, 1913, within a month after the inauguration of President Woodrow Wilson, Congress approved rural parcel post service.

Actually it wasn't the advent of rural free mail delivery that sealed the doom of rural merchants. Instead, it was parcel post and the mail-order houses that introduced farmers to the ways and conveniences of city life. During the first year of parcel post, more than 300 million packages were delivered to rural families. In a few years, the village general merchantile/-post office became nothing more than a romantic memory of the vanishing rural way of life. (first published in the SENTINEL LEADER-July 26, 1984)

THRIFTINESS

A scene to love

Oklahoma Prairies

By Opal H. Brown

I love the prairies,
  where I can see the pale horizon
beyond the lea.

I love the prairies,
  where I can gaze on distant scenes
through purple haze.

I love the prairies,
  where I can hear the freight trains
whistling far and near,
  lorn coyotes answering in the dark,
the peeping of the meadow lark.

I love the prairies,
  where I can smell the new-mown hay
in yonder dell,
  the upturned earth,
when spring comes 'round
  to soak the moisture-famished ground.

I love the prairies,
  where I can romp in summer's sun
without much pomp.

I love the prairies,
  where I can trod along in vastness
and talk with God.

MEMORIES

The best route--beginning in '26

Old 66

By Margie Snowden North

Ghost road,
Crumpled, sometimes threadbare ribbon
that tied the nation together
starting 1926;
Pitted and pock-marked now
by time and Oklahoma elements
and by tires of a half-century's
worth of hurrying automobiles.

Road to freedom for dust-weary Okies,
Road back home when a way out
was no longer needed,
snaking over humps and gashes in the terrain,
through patches of shinnery and sage and sunflowers,
once host to tourists and Model T's,
to hobos and wagonloads of watermelons,
to new-fangled motor courts
and Burma Shave signs and
neon lights beckoning from big cities.

From west to east,
Texola to Quapaw,
a strip of concrete sections
that once made Oklahoma
the very heart of the Main Street of America.
Old 66,
Phantom from the past,
cracked and fading,
obliterated or by-passed--
but remembered still.

Memorable events

Mother's Trip

By Lu Spurlock

Growing up,
Mother picked cotton on Rocky Hill
while wearing her brother's shoes
that made blisters on her feet,
Never was enough money
to buy shoes for her.

At mealtime, Grandma
always told her to be lady-like--
"Ladies don't need much to eat."

On washdays while Grandma
cooked dinner for Granddad and the boys,
Mother got out the lye soap,
made a fire under the washpot,
and carried water up the hill
from the stock tank.
The boys helped carry water,
didn't help scrub clothes.
Washing was woman's work.

When weather was so bad,
the boys didn't want to saddle up
and go to the mailbox, Mother went.
Rode Sadie. When she was out of sight,
she ungirded the side-saddle,
lifted her skirts, and rode bareback.
Thought hurrying pleased Granddad,
he never said it did.

She fell off Sadie one December morning,
Broke her left arm.
Granddad hitched the team to the wagon,
said he'd get her to the doctor pretty quick,
but he stopped by Roy Ferguson's still.
Started drinking and it was dark
when they got to Dr. Lowry's office.
Mother's left arm always hurt when it rained.

Mother never said much good
about life at Rocky Hill,
but at ninety-one her mind returned
to Grandma and Granddad and the boys.

I didn't know why Mother made the trip
until she said,
"It's good to be home."

The mother impulse

Let The Pots Dance

By Glen V. McIntyre

We were part of the mother,
the earth,
clasped to her brown bosom upholding
all the universe,
nurturing all created creatures--
even man.
Then you with your
questing, curious hands
reached
into us and took us
apart--
and shaped us in your own dreams,
your own wish fulfillment and then
kept us
separate.
Still we dream of the Mother
and at night
we dance to her rhythm
unheard by
denser ears.
Let us dance.

Hands

By Olive DeWitt

her rough hands lay still,
lines of selfless labor of love
etched across her palm

A dark time in Western Oklahoma history

Dust Bowl Memories

By Donita Lucas Shields

During the Dirty Thirties, not only did static electricity play havoc with auto ignitions, but it also killed young, tender shoots of wheat and other vegetation by destroying the roots.

Every dust storm contained some static electricity, but none were as spectacular as the St. Patrick's Day duster in 1923 and the April 14, 1935 roller. When observing the flashing electrical displays, many people thought there was a big fire in the North.

Those who remembered the 1923 roller described it as an aerial display of crackling colors similar to the Aurora Borealis, the Northern Lights. Others called the sight a Fourth of July celebration in the spring.

No one will likely ever know how the measurements came about, but it is claimed that there was enough electricity produced by the 1935 duster to power New York City for 24 hours with enough left over for the state of Connecticut.

Children, of course, discovered a game to play during the dust storms. They would hold hands and form a circle around an iron stove. Whoever stood at the end of the broken circle received a nasty shock.

Both adults and children had an unusual form of entertainment during these dry, dusty years and at the same time attempted to protect their meager growing crops. Rabbits tended to take over the sparse vegetation in the fields and ate the few remaining green plants. To prevent this over-abundance of wildlife from literally eating families out of house and home, High Plains farmers held a rabbit hunt nearly every Sunday afternoon.

These primitive rabbit drives usually covered an area of 15 or 20 miles as people walked on foot to drive the rabbits into a "V" shaped enclosure of wire mesh fence where the animals were clubbed with anything handy. This activity provided food for the table as well as thinning out the rabbit population, which reached an all-time record of 4,500 bunnies per square mile.

On Black Sunday, April 14, 1935, many of the hunters were caught out in the open when the gritty, windy darkness struck. After reaching the parked cars, most people climbed into the first empty vehicle rather than trying to find their own. After the black roller lifted, they continued the search for their own cars.

According to one newspaper report in THE PANHANDLE HERALD published in Guymon, Black Sunday of 1935 was remembered not only for its static electicity and black dust but also as the day the rabbits got away. (first published in the SENTINEL LEADER-April 18, 1985)

Lost forever if not handled right

Time Marches

By Diane Holcomb

Keep time,
take time,
give time,
save time,
in time.

Attuned

Drought

By Fran Merrill

A silent shift of wind
the feel of fall on my face
during summer drought

A way of life

Harvest

By Yvonne Carpenter

Knowing treasure lay beneath the field,
I sold all to buy it.
Now I dig and sift, labor and search,
And glance with envy at my neighbor
Reaping a conventional harvest.

Dawning of a new day

Today

By Pat Kourt

A back-porch summer sunrise yawning
through streaks of golden red
Awakens the sleeping Oklahoma prairie
with ancient Indian wisdom--

"Look east, my friend, a new day
is dawning now
Put yesterday's worries behind and
arise with today's happiness"

MISCELLANY

Explorers

Levels Of Love

By Yvonne Carpenter

Clinging to an ice floe
In an arctic ocean,
Cold buoy in the chill.
Break off a weapon, less
Standing room aboard. Beat
Another with cold club,
Fewer warm companions.
Bore the frozen mass to
find ice at all levels.

Each ice dweller decides
How deeply to explore.

A mighty force

Eastward Bound

By Dick Chapman

Spreading wide from hill to hill
roily red and rolling
never soundly sleeping
only waiting for a chance
to demonstrate its mighty power
and make the willows dance.

Cottonwoods will shudder as they bend
before the tide that throws the
debris out and on before the waters wide.

Ever rolling eastward
claiming its right to move
never satisfied to stay within a grove
reaching with mighty wavelets
all within its maw
since before the time of man
was the restless Washita.

Sensuous signs of harvest

Wheat Harvest

By Jill Carpenter

Chalky wheat dust coats me
in a dry film.
I coax the truck into motion.
Pregnant with grain, it roars
and gripes across the tracks in low
gear.
clutch shift gas
Second is a relief to us both.
Wind stirs the dust and candy
bar wrapper on the floor board.
The motor complains loudly;
it's uncomfortable in second.
clutch shift grind grind gas lurch
Dreaded third gear achieved.
A short calm, then the motor
starts to work on outgrowing third.
Looking out through the steering
wheel, I feel outsized.
The truck smell of dust, exhaust,
and suspected rodents settles into
my skin along with the wheat dust.
Ignored stop sign simplifies
the process and
clutch shift gas
Fourth gear soothes the motor
which settles into the pace.
chug
The truck loses power
Panic
clutch grind shove chug
Third gear doesn't help
clutch gas
Nothing
Inertia carries the load a block
traffic horns stares
The motor turns in endless circles.
Brakes only slow the rolling
Pride and assurance are
backed over.
Surrender Defeat
a level side road
abandoned.

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