FOREWORD

During our five years with WESTVIEW, we have met many interesting contributors. One of our most interesting, and surely our principal sparring partner, was Dick Chapman, Poet Laureate of Arapaho. Mr. Chapman died at age 98 on Christmas Eve, 1985.

One of our mutual friends in the Poetry Society of Oklahoma referred to Dick Chapman as “peppery.” Peppery he was, and we’ll miss his direct, subjective reviews that we were sure to receive within a few days after the publication of each issue. We always laughed, but further thought--because of the wisdom of the critic--caused us to analyze our efforts.

We need someone to keep us in line. Who is there among our readers and contributors who will try to assume Mr. Chapman’s role?

Our admission of a need for help isn’t just idle chatter. Recently we discovered that we had referred to the subject of one of our principal articles in our Fall, 1985 issue as William Albert Ryan; actually, Dr. Ryan’s name was Warren Albert Ryan. Our apologies to the Ryan family. We also discovered that we deleted the last three lines of Pam Daugherty’s poem “Cowboy’s Prayer.” We’re also regretful of that faux pas.

We did do one correct thing, however. One of our loyal readers told us that there was indeed a cow that got stuck in a Western Oklahoma silo along about 1951—as referred to in the “Foreword” of the Fall, 1985 issue.

Hopefully, this issue will appeal to our readers. It has been in the planning stages for three years, and it contains interesting contributions on a variety of subjects in Western Oklahoma sectors.

Leroy Thomas
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AUTHORS WHOSE WORKS APPEAR IN THIS ISSUE

Evelyn Bachmann, a freelance poet from Tulsa, has submitted many of her works to WESTVIEW.

Yvonne Carpenter of Clinton has been a teacher and journalist and is now working on novels.

Mary Beth Christensen, who earned a Bachelor’s degree at OBU and a Master’s degree at SOSU, makes her first appearance in WESTVIEW. Now a journalist, she is also interested in freelance writing and photography.

Robetha Masters Darby is a 1965 graduate of Duke High School. She presently teaches Mathematics at the Duke School, where she has been employed nine years.

Olive Dewitt, who worked many years on an Arizona reservation, is a freelance writer living in Tecumseh.

Maggie Culver Fry, Poet Laureate of Oklahoma, resident of Claremore, again reveals her charming poetic wit in this issue.

Richard Garrity, a freelance writer and photographer, pursues a great variety of research interests; he lives in Oklahoma City.

Dean Gerber writes for the SAYRE JOURNAL and teaches Special Education in the Erick Elementary Schools.

Rosemary Gibson of Norman is author of books, articles, and short stories. “Spring Gala,” which appears in this issue, is her first poem offered for publication.

Diane Glancy, a prize-winning poet in state contests, is vice-president of the Poetry Society of Oklahoma.

Ernestine Gravley, a professional writer of Shawnee and foremost prize winner in writing contests, once more emerges in WESTVIEW as a poet.

Pat Kourt, Creative Writing teacher in Thomas, hardly needs an introduction to WESTVIEW readers since her works have appeared here so often.

Kate Jackson Lewis, one of our most prolific contributors, is a former Western Oklahoma teacher now living in Purcell—except when she’s summering in Colorado or wintering in South Texas.

Joanna Thurston Roper, formerly an early retiree of the SOSU Language Arts Department, has returned to teach some Composition courses during the Spring Semester.

Cathy Rutledge has lived in Elk City for over twenty years. She works as a waitress at the Quality Inn Restaurant in Elk City.
When Miss Jane Jayroe received the ultimate honor for young ladies in Atlantic City on September 10, 1966, few people outside Western Oklahoma had ever heard of her or of Laverne, her hometown. Yet, everyone across the nation loved her immediately when she became the symbol of the best in the American way of life.

Today, twenty years later, Jane Jayroe has become a part of almost every household in Oklahoma as KTVY News 4 anchor/reporter with Jerry Adams and Linda Cavanaugh and as host of “Oklahoma’s Own” and the “Jane Jayroe Special.”

The moment that the Miss America crown was bestowed upon Jane, she became a “first” in more ways than one. She was the first Miss America from Western Oklahoma. The Miss America Pageant of 1966 was the first to be televised nationwide on color TV. And Jane Jayroe was the first Miss America to visit a combat zone during wartime.

Shortly after her coronation, Jane mentioned that more than anything else, she wished to visit with the soldiers in Viet Nam. Her wish came true in August, 1967, when she and five other beauties-Miss Maine (1964), Miss South Carolina (1967), Miss Alabama (1966), Miss Connecticut (1966), and Miss Wisconsin (1965)-entertained the troops with “What’s Happening Back Home.”

With humility, Jane greeted the battleworn soldiers with “No one knows what it means to me to meet the real VIPs of Viet Nam.” She sang “Cabaret” and other popular songs to them in the blazing sun and monsoon rains. Dressed in drab battle gear, her natural beauty, talent, and kindness shone through to brighten the Viet Nam scene.

While Miss America, Jane-as goodwill ambassador-traveled more than 200,000 miles throughout the U.S. and foreign countries in her portrayal of the ideal American girl. She belonged to America and became a celebrity controlled by the Miss America Corporation. For her travels she was provided with a Jet Commander, an Oklahoma-made twin jet private airliner. For shorter distances between airports and for her parade appearances, she was furnished with ten white Oldsmobile convertibles. The corporation allowed her to work four hours a day with a guaranteed income of $100,000. This amount included a $1,000 salary for each appearance plus her clothing and a scholarship to continue her education after completing her reign.

Jane’s personal characteristics of honesty, cheerfulness, determination, and compassion served her well as she climbed to the top. No doubt it was her belief in honesty to herself and to others, coupled with her humility, that opened the doors to her many successes.

At age 16, she won her first pageant when she was a senior in Laverne High School. As Miss Laverne, she entered the Northwestern Oklahoma State University Pageant in Alva to become Miss Cinderella. Three months after enrolling as a freshman at Oklahoma City University, she stepped into the throne of Miss All-College Queen. The next crowns were given to her as Miss Oklahoma City and Miss Oklahoma in 1966. When she moved on to the greatest pageant of all where the judges selected her as Miss America, she commented that she hadn’t even become used to being Miss Oklahoma.

Those who observed Jane throughout the various pageants recognized that she had the naturalness, kindness, beauty, and poise and charm to possibly be a winner. As she fielded questions and performed as a professional trouper, she always remained the unspoiled, unassuming young lady, never realizing that she had the potential of becoming the best in the nation.

At one time Jane actually said that a small-town girl from Western Oklahoma would never have a chance—that the Miss America crown was attainable only by the sophisticates of the big cities. No one was more surprised than she when she received the coveted Miss America crown and scepter. In fact, after having won the Atlantic City talent contest with her rendition of singing and conducting the pageant orchestra, she could never have been happier. Being selected as Miss America 1967 was to her the icing on the cake.

Jane Jayroe vowed that becoming Miss America wouldn’t change a thing. She would always remain a small-town girl. She loved small country towns and always would. Today, twenty years later, Jane still returns nearly every vacation and holiday to Laverne, where her parents have retired.

Jane Anne Jayroe was born in Clinton on October 30, 1946. At that time her parents, Pete and Helene Jayroe (Mr. and Mrs. E. G.), and her 4½-year-old sister, Judy, lived at Hammon where Mr. Jayroe taught school. When “Janie” was three, the family moved to Sentinel, her father’s boyhood home and the home of her pioneering grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. C. J. Jayroe.

The Pete Jayroes lived in Sentinel for eleven years. According to her parents, Jane began singing at the local Methodist church at age three. When she started to school, Mrs. Blanche Thomas, a 45-year veteran first-grade teacher who had also taught Pete Jayroe in 1926, recognized that Jane was a very special little girl that loved to sing, a child that stood out as a leader.

Singing was natural for Jane. Her mother, an elementary classroom and music teacher, acquainted her with a love for and the basics of music. When she entered the sixth grade in Sentinel, her classroom and music teacher, Mrs. Ferne Howard, noted Jane’s exceptional talents and introduced her to the rudiments of conducting. Mrs. Howard continued her musical training for three years until the Jayroes left Sentinel in 1960. She was assisted by Mrs. Jane Jayroe: Pride of Western Oklahoma

By Donita Lucas Shields
Lawton Cothran, who gave Jane piano lessons. She always rated high in music contests, receiving top scores at state levels when she was in junior high school.

Mrs. Howard, now deceased, remembered that Jane had the ability to overcome anything in her way without being unkind to others. When the Town of Sentinel honored Jane as Miss Oklahoma 1966, Mrs. Howard was quick to notice that she was especially kind to autograph seekers and to all children.

After moving to Laverne where her father became assistant principal and head basketball coach, Jane continued her musical education with Mel Kenney of Beaver. In addition to her practice sessions and the 50-mile weekly drives for private lessons, Jane also became a first-string forward on Laverne’s high school basketball team. When she was a senior, the team won second place in the state playoffs. Her coach, Walter Hoffman, described Jane as a hard worker who was a great “hustler” because of her personal ideals and determination.

Upon entering Oklahoma City University, Jane continued playing basketball on the Alpha Chi Omega team and also conducted her sorority’s top-notch musical production at OCU’s traditional May Sing in the spring of 1966. Her music teachers--Mrs. Inez Silberg (voice), Nancy Apgar (piano), and Dr. Ray Luke (conducting)--believed that she was well prepared to enter the Miss Oklahoma City Pageant in the summer of 1966. She did, with a vocal medley from FUNNY GIRL, “Sadie, Sadie, Musical Lady” and “Who Are You Now?” She won and went on to the top honor in the Miss Oklahoma Pageant in Tulsa.

Jane’s Oklahoma sponsors decided to change her repertoire for the Miss America Pageant. Kenneth F. Harris, an executive in the production department of WKY TV, who also arranged her FUNNY GIRL medley, supplied her with “One, Two, Three.” With this, she won the talent contest in Atlantic City. Mr. Harris had never met Jane at that time but was far prouder of her than of his personal efforts.

After completing her successful year as Miss America, during which she emceed over 130 state and local pageants throughout the United States, Miss Jayroe returned to Oklahoma City University to complete her Bachelor of Arts degree in Vocal Music. She continued her education at Tulsa University where she earned a Master of Arts in Humanities. While in Tulsa, she met and married a Tulsa attorney. They had one son, Tyler Jayroe Petersen, who is now nine years old.

It must be assumed that Jane Jayroe’s whirlwind schedule as Miss America served as a mere prelude to her many notable and worthwhile endeavors. In addition to her TV anchor/reporter responsibilities in Dallas, Fort Worth, and Oklahoma City, she is an effective public speaker and entertainer. She has given numerous lectures on charm and self-improvement to teenagers. She presided at the dedication of the Lloyd Noble Center in Norman. She was toastmistress at a Cowboy Hall of Fame Banquet in Oklahoma City, and she served as co-host with Art Linkletter when they aired their 13-part series special, “The Other School System,” on eighty-four national channels.

As an actress, she has appeared in numerous leading roles in theater productions in Dallas and Oklahoma City. She starred with Yvonne DeCarlo in THE SOUND OF MUSIC and held other starring roles in OKLAHOMA, FIORELLA, and THE BOY FRIEND.

Jane Jayroe spent four years in Dallas and Fort Worth before returning to Oklahoma City. While in Texas, she was news anchor at KKAS-TV. She was the first woman to receive the “Woman of the Year” award when she was recognized as the Outstanding Television News Personality by the American Women in Radio and Television. THE DALLAS TIMES cited Jane as one of the three best-known women in the area, and an Oklahoma City newspaper listed her as one of the “great” personalities in Oklahoma.

THE DALLAS MORNING NEWS featured her in a Sunday publication, which included a full cover-page color portrait and 1½ pages of interview. Jane was also one of six women TV anchors featured in PARADE, a magazine insert in 123 national Sunday newspapers.

Jane’s college sorority awarded her the Alpha Chi Omega Achievement Award, and in 1982 she received the Muscular Dystrophy Broadcast Journalism Award for her efforts and achievements. She has worked as host and producer for educational programs on OETA and as a specialist in arts in education and in the handicapped program for the Oklahoma Department of Education.

Her interests in health, education, and welfare are evident in the many humanitarian organizations with which she is now involved. She is a member of the advisory boards of Oklahoma County Child Welfare, the Oklahoma Blood Institute, the Oklahoma Child and Family Institute, the Women’s Professional Studies Program at the University of Oklahoma, and is chairman of the Breast Care Diagnostics.

She is also a member of Leadership Oklahoma City, the Steering Committee of Volunteer Connection, past honorary chairman of the membership drive for YWCA, and honorary chairman of the Conference on Teen Pregnancy. She is an active member of the Church of the Servant, where she is Sunday School teacher for five-to-seven-year-old children, and the Skyline Urban Ministry to the Inner City Christian programs. She sings in the church choir and is a member of the Women’s Connection program committee. She is a past member of the Board of Ministries.

For the past two decades, Jane Jayroe has continued to live by the traditional Miss America concepts. She once commented, “The nicest thing about winning is being able to share with other people.” Today she continues to share her capacity for hard work, her beauty, her talents, and her love for humanity.

She still remains the same unassuming person that she was as a child, a person who strives for perfection in her attempts to eliminate injustice, prejudice, and poverty—a striving for goodness and the best attainable in the American way of life. Without any doubt, Jane Jayroe, once the unknown ideal American girl from Western Oklahoma, has now become the ideal American woman.
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An interest in flying led to space missions

What is it like to be in the space program and fly within eight miles of the moon? A January, 1986 interview with General Thomas P. Stafford of Weatherford, Oklahoma, provided in-depth answers to this question.

General Stafford was born in Weatherford on September 17, 1930. As a child, he set his sights upon the moon. When he slept outside in the summer, the moon looked so close he thought that someday man would fly to the surface.

It had always been his ambition to fly. His home was on the flight path of the American Airline’s DC 3’s. He couldn’t afford flying lessons, but he was able to get his first few rides with Jessie Duncan of Weatherford.

He attended and graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis as Second Lieutenant. As he was more interested in planes than ships, he volunteered as a test pilot to be able to fly higher and faster.

In 1962, he was selected by NASA to participate in the Gemini and Apollo projects. Before the flight of Gemini 6 in 1965, he was given intensive training for the orbit. During this time the future pilots had hundreds of hours in the simulator, which was a copy of the space ship. While aboard, the pilots experienced any possible conditions which they might encounter in flight. His co-pilot in training was Walter M. Schirra.

The crews were carefully selected for their ability as test pilots. There were few conflicts between the members as the importance of the mission overcame any personalities.

On December 15, 1965, Thomas Stafford and Walter Schirra were launched upon the Gemini mission. They were to rendezvous with Gemini 7, which had been in orbit twelve days. The result was the first successful space rendezvous.

Gemini 6 was a small vehicle with crew quarters not much larger than the front seat of a Volkswagen bug. It was impossible to move in the injection seat during the entire trip. Any movement would put the head against the ceiling. Feet were jammed into the foot well with one foot upon the other. The
During the blast-off, there wasn't any time for fear. During the long training period, the astronauts were completely programmed to be in full control during the blast-off. If any pilot was thinking about personal risks, he didn't belong in a space capsule costing hundreds of millions of dollars. His ambition was to have a good mission and no errors.

Weightlessness didn't begin until the engines were stopped and the craft was in orbit. To combat floating, the crew members were strapped lightly to their seats. Dishes, books, food, and tools had patches of velcro attached to them to keep them in place. If not secured, pencils would drift into space. Loose objects would eventually collect on the air ducts. Some would be permanently lost. Stafford said that a person could lose an elephant.

On June 3, 1966, Command Pilot Stafford and Eugene A. Cernan were launched in the Gemini 9. They rendezvoused with a target vehicle which had been aloft for three days. The contact failed because the docking shroud didn't deploy to allow the meeting. Radar on the Gemini locked in on the target at eighty to one hundred miles. From there, the crew programmed the advance. Gemini 9 remained aloft for three days.

Aloft, the capsule orbited the earth in 90 minutes. This resulted in about 53 minutes of daylight and 30 dark. Aluminum panels were placed over the windows, and lights were lowered to darken the ship. Assorted noises of motors disturbed sleep NASA usually had a wake-up call.

On May 18, 1969, Apollo 10 was launched from Cape Kennedy for an orbit of the moon. General Stafford was the command pilot. Eugene A. Cernan and John W. Young were co-pilots. It was to be a flight of nine days. In three days it reached the moon to begin 31 orbits. Before Apollo's trip to the moon, unmanned satellites had viewed, crashed, and landed on the moon. This provided information for all phases of landing excepting the landing itself.

While Apollo 10 was in orbit around the moon, Stafford and Cernan boarded the Lunar Module and descended to about eight miles to get pictures and make observations. Temperatures on the moon ranged from -240 to +240 degrees. During the eight hours in the module, they circled the moon four times.

After the flight, the module returned to the command ship, docked, and Stafford and Cernan entered the Apollo. The module was dispatched as a dead object to circle the sun forever.

At that time the Apollo 10 was America's largest space ship. It was possible to float about in a limited manner. Water and oxygen were carried on board. Oxygen and hydrogen powered the motors. This combined to manufacture water. The excess was dumped into space to become snow or ice. Sometimes it would condense within the ship and float about until it lodged. Air pressure was about five pounds as compared to fourteen pounds at sea level.

When the mission was completed, the Apollo 10 landed in the Pacific east of the American Samoan Islands. They were greeted by Navy frogmen and taken aboard the Navy Aircraft Carrier "Princeton" where they had a ceremony and cut a cake.

General Stafford logged his fourth space flight as Apollo Commander of the Apollo-Soyuz Project (ASTP) mission July 15-24, 1975, in a joint space flight between the American astronauts and the Soviet cosmonauts.

He has logged 507 hours and 43 minutes in space flight and wears the Air Force Command Pilot Wings. He has flown over 110 different types of aircraft and has more than 7,100 flying hours.

He is married to the former Faye L. Shoemaker of Thomas. They have two daughters: Dionne Kay and Karin Elaine. His mother, now 92, still lives in Weatherford. The city of Weatherford has named its airport after him. In addition, a building is being constructed next to the airport to house his collections. His home street is also named after him.

Presently General Stafford works in Oklahoma City as a technical advisor for many major aerospace firms. He is on the board of directors of several major corporations and often goes abroad to advise foreign countries. He works out of an office in the Defense Technologies, Inc.

When asked the question, "Now that you have completed these space missions, would you try it again?" Stafford answered, "If possible, I'd go tomorrow!"
The first Big-League catcher to win the "Rookie-of-the-Year" award

Johnny Bench, Binger’s Best

By Kate Jackson Lewis


No doubt the feeling between man and town is mutual. Bench’s frequent visits to Binger are convincing. For it was in Binger that he spun his first dreams of becoming a big league baseball player. With Mickey Mantle as his hero, the one-eighth Choctaw lad paid his dues in hard work, perspiration, and dedication to earn the title “World’s Greatest Catcher.” His achievement record indicates that the youngster set his goals high and maintained a steady pace of hard work until he reached them.

Soon after Bench retired, Binger held its fourth “Bash for Bench” billed as “Thanks for the Memories.” That night, Bingerites poured their congratulations on their native son and, like fond parents, queried, “What will you do now, Son?” Bench didn’t quibble in replying, “I’ll try to become the U.S. Amateur Golf Champ or something like that.” His childhood buddy, Dean Ingram, now his financial manager, playfully quipped, “This is the last one (appreciation night) unless he comes up with a new career or wins a National Golf Championship.”

Ingram, who perhaps knows Bench better than anyone else (parents excepted), described Johnny as an all-around athlete. The 6’1” 210-pounder can palm a basketball in one hand, dunk the ball, and in high school had a 23-point average, winning All-State honors. Too, his catching hand...
Ted and Katy Bench instilled in Johnny a sound sense of values. A serious, industrious youngster, he worked in the peanut harvest, threw papers, and helped to buy a pair of Levi's now and then. He has great respect for his parents and vows that he could play better when his mom was in the stands. Once in the bottom of the ninth inning of the National League Playoffs game when the score was tied, Johnny heard his mother hollering his name, "Hit me a home run, Son." He did, advancing the Reds to the World Series.

What motivated "The Rifle" (one of his nicknames) to do his best at all times? Bench replied: "I've always wanted to be the best. That's just my mind. I try to tell the kids that whatever you're going to do you ought to try to try to be the best at it. Work hard enough for it, whether it's to be the best lawyer, the best Indian chief, the best writer. Put time and effort into it because you're only going to get out of it what you put into it. And if that isn't your goal, then at least give everybody a fair shake and a fair day's work and be happy with yourself.

"Too many people fight internally with themselves. To be the best, you have to put your abilities into your work everyday. Have them at peak performance at all times so that you are prepared mentally and physically. This is what I have to do, playing with professional teams."

Was Bench a cocky player? Some writers referred to his cool-headedness behind the plate as cockiness. The player's response was, "As a catcher, you have to be cocky." Because of his fast reflexes, quick wrists, and powerful arm, base-runners referred to Bench as "cocksure"—seldom trying to steal on him. Fewer than 50 of those who did were successful.

Before the first season was over, the 21-year-old Bench had proved himself as a capable clutch hitter and "Rookie of the Year" winner, the first catcher ever to receive the award. Because of his ability to handle seasoned pitchers, Johnny was dubbed "The Little General" by his teammates. The father's tutelage was paying off, and his son was gaining acclaim. Soon he was to be called "The Wonder Boy," causing Bingerites to burst more vest buttons.

How could one so young win so many awards without becoming distracted?

Johnny said, "I try to keep things in the proper perspective. It's not easy. I want to enjoy life, but I also want to make the most of myself in life."

To enlarge on his reference regarding his activities after retirement, Johnny told his Binger friends, "In winter, I'll do the things I've always done—the Grand National Quail Hunt, the Bob Hope Golf Tournament, the Bing Crosby event, and I'll shoot some more of the 'Baseball Bunch,'" a syndicated TV show to teach baseball to children in an entertaining and informal manner. He has increased his programs to number 55 on more than 82 stations, winning the Film Festival Award for a children's series.

With achievements ranging from kids' baseball to singing "Pops" with the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra and his recent induction into "The Hall of Fame," how is Binger's Boy Bench to be best remembered?

A TV announcer gave a fitting answer when he said, "When that kid throws a ball, everybody in baseball drools."

(Ed's note: The interview portions of this article are a synthesis of the following sources: DAILY OKLAHOMAN, SPORTS ILLUSTRATED, JOHNNY BENCH: A BIOGRAPHY (by Libby), Johnny Bench's public speeches, correspondence between Kate Jackson Lewis and Dean Ingram)
JOHNNY BENCH — NUMBER ONE

DATES AND EVENTS

1968—National Rookie of the Year, the first catcher in history to win the award.
1970—Most Valuable Player, the youngest player who ever received the award.
1972—Won the MVP again.
1976—Named MVP in the World Series.
1980—Set catching-endurance record—100 or more games for the thirteenth consecutive season.
1980—Set a new Major League record of home runs by a catcher; was ten-time Golden Glove Award winner (no other catcher's achievement); ALL TIME top vote-getter in fans' ALL STAR balloting; ALL TIME highest slugging percentage (.792) in ALL STAR history; ALL TIME Runs-Batted-In and home run leader for the Reds.

DETAILS

Height: 6'1"
Weight: 210 lbs.
Birth Date: December 7, 1947
Birth Place: Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
Residence: Cincinnati, Ohio
1967: Joined the Major Leagues
Age 4: Moved to Binger
Parents: Ted and Katy Bench
Great-grandmother: Choctaw Indian (Johnny is one-eighth Choctaw)
Childhood Work: Picked cotton and peanuts to buy Levis and shirts; delivered ANADARKO NEWS.
Activities: Played shinny with flattened milk cans and various types of sticks for hitting the cans.
Retired: End of baseball season, 1983.
November 16, 1984: Hall of Fame Induction.

CIVIC ACTIVITY

Charitable: Heart Association, The American Cancer Society, Hike for the Handicapped, Kidney Foundation, and Muscular Dystrophy
Cultural: Raises money for Cincinnati Public Television and Cincinnati Symphony, for which he has sung Pops. Had his own syndicated TV show. Made personal appearances throughout the United States and abroad, including a Far East tour with the Bob Hope Christmas Show.
TV Filmings: Because of Bench's special love for kids, he makes “Baseball Bunch” films in Tucson (13 shows); Ronald McDonald House, Oklahoma City; and Athletics for Cancer, Los Angeles.
Honors: Honor award by Congressmen of Ohio, State Senate, Athlete of the Year Award, and Hall of Fame.

NOSTALGIC NOTES

Many people express fond feelings for Johnny Bench. John Feroli (PURCELL REGISTER) for example, said, "I'm sad when I turn to a TV baseball game and automatically look for Johnny—knowing for sure he won't ever be there again. He's like an old shoe—comfortable—a small-town boy, one we could all talk with."
Some people might think that being born in a small town is a handicap, and that being born a woman in a small town is a double handicap. However, sometimes it’s those values you learn in your youth that push you over the top. "I started life as a cotton pickin’ cotton picker," Yvonne Kauger says. "Then I drove tractors. I decided there had to be something else."

"There’s a lot of people who come from small towns who become successful," she notes. Yvonne Kauger is a prime example of a small-town woman who has become successful. On March 22, 1984, she officially took office as a justice in the Supreme Court of Oklahoma. She’s the third woman in Oklahoma to serve the court and certainly the first woman from Western Oklahoma to aspire to such heights.

Ms. Kauger found the road to success long in some ways, but certainly worth the perseverance it took to get there. Perhaps the values she learned as a schoolgirl in Colony helped her overcome the obstacles on her road to success. "In Colony, basketball was King," she remembers. "It wasn’t ‘life in the fast track’ for sure, but I wouldn’t take anything for it. You have to learn in life a few elbows are going to be thrown. You do have to compete. Team sports really teach you that."

Because she looks so comfortable in her office in the Oklahoma State Capitol Building, it’s hard to imagine this lady of position fighting it out on the basketball court in small-town America so many years ago. "I feel a little bit like a suffragette," Kauger admits. "You’re not alone in this world. You get along with help from everyone you know. Teamwork is a universal concept."

Yvonne Kauger graduated from Colony High School in 1955, valedictorian in a class of seven students. She was active in basketball and received the Betty Crocker Homemaker Award. She was well known and respected in her hometown, an affection that seems to be mutual: "They (the people in Colony) have loved me all my life and I love them. They’re tickled to death about my success."

After graduation, she took what she had learned from Riley Tippens, her high-school basketball coach, and entered a broader competition. "He taught me that life is 90 percent a head game," she recalls. Kauger’s next stop was Southwestern Oklahoma State University (then Southwestern State College) at Weatherford, where she majored in Biology and minored in Chemistry, English, and Home Economics. She graduated in just three years. The friends she made there—Wayne Salisbury, Kay and Al Terrill, and Jim Archer—she lists among the best parts of the experience.

From college, Yvonne Kauger went to St. Anthony Hospital in Oklahoma City for her Medical Technician intern-ship. Her days were filled with laboratory testing, blood testing, and analyzing all types of body fluids and tissues.

In 1965 she entered the Oklahoma City University Night Law School in "the old barracks." She graduated first in her class.

"We were called the ‘petticoat class,’" she explains proudly. "The deans were so pleased. They had admitted thirteen women." And upon their graduation four years later, the top three "men" in Kauger’s class were women.

With diploma in hand, Yvonne went to work as an associate for Rogers, Travis, and Jordan law firm. Calling her employment there "a wonderful experience," she notes what she learned from each member of the firm. From Cleta John Rogers: "You have to care and show humanity to your clients. A firm handshake and a big smile go a long ways in the practice of law and in life in general." From A. Bob Jordan: "I learned to do a workmanlike job in a workmanlike manner. His standards were extremely high."

When Justice Hodges asked her to work for him, Yvonne began an association that would last for twelve years. For Justice Hodges she "did research and wrote opinions for his blessing, editing, or total revision." For three years she was in a private law practice, and it was here that she realized "what I really wanted was to be in the Supreme Court."

It happened in 1984. With the encouragement and blessing of her friends and business associates, Yvonne Kauger submitted her application to a judicial nominating committee comprised of six lawyers, six laymen, and one swing member. They then submitted three names to Governor George Nigh, who selected the new justice. She found out that she had been
appointed on March 14, 1984, when a phone call from Governor Nigh confirmed the appointment. "I really felt like I was on a tightrope," Justice Kauger admits. After the Governor informed her of her new appointment as a Supreme Court Justice, she thanked him, promising, "I'll do my best."

The Governor responded, "I'm sure you will, or I wouldn't have appointed you."

Now, months after taking office, and comfortably ensconced in the State Capitol, Yvonne Kauger is happy. "I'm just reveling in all this," she declares. "I take work home every night. It's kind of like plowing from seven to seven. But that's what it's going to take to even approach doing the job I want to do. It's a goal certainly-a dream realized."

Her days are now filled with the work of this dream-come-true. The Oklahoma Supreme Court is a court of last resort for all civil matters. Since Oklahoma has a two-court system, Justice Kauger isn't required to deal with criminal cases.

She might feel a bit like a suffragette, sitting on the bench with the men, but she's up to the challenge. 'I knew how to do most of it before," she says. "And now I have the vote."

How have the other justices accepted her? Wonderfully, she claims.

Besides her career on the bench, Yvonne Kauger leads a full life. She is married to Ned Bastow, a lawyer; and her daughter, Jonna Kauger Kirchner, recently graduated from Dartmouth and began law school at Boston College. Yvonne and Ned have built a "cave home" in Colony on a bluff overlooking Seger Indian Valley, a home for the small-town girl that lives in her heart. It comes complete with a moving sculpture in the front yard—a windmill.

She lives daily by the rules she learned in her hometown and from her parents, John and Alice Kauger of Colony. A favorite Bible verse comes from Luke: "Things which are impossible with man are possible with God."

"We don't always get to choose our time," she notes. "But once I decided to reach my goals, I prepared like a team player. You may not win this one, but regardless of the outcome, you have to get out there and play the game."

Yvonne Kauger, who also founded the Gallery of the Plains Indians in Colony (demonstrating how even the busiest people can still find time to devote to causes they love), is always looking ahead. "It's not too soon to be looking at that Federal Court," she quips with a grin of confidence.

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In 1910, Oklahoma had been a state for three years when Mr. Flake Keys moved his family to Hollis, Oklahoma. Mr. Keys, an experienced furniture-store manager from Miles, Texas, had come to Hollis to manage the Spooner Furniture and Hardware Store for his widowed sister-in-law, Berta Spooner. He would later purchase the store.

When they arrived in Hollis, the family consisted of Mr. and Mrs. Keys and their four children—Rex, Jackie, Marjorie, and Charles B. They were considered to be an average, everyday type of family. On June 4, 1915, that opinion would change.

Mrs. Alma Keys, age 33, was expecting her fifth child. On June 3, the other children—ages 6, 8, 10, and 12—were taken to the home of a nearby relative to spend the night. The family physician, a Dr. Pendergraft, as well as the ladies who would assist with the delivery, had been summoned. In those days, home deliveries were the standard rather than the exception since hospitals weren't always readily available. Soon that night in 1915, everything was ready; all were prepared.

Babies seem to have their own time schedule as to when they will make their appearance, however. True to nature, the delivery process started around midnight; and on June 4, 1915, the Keys family had been blessed with an additional four baby girls. The residents of Hollis—and as can be understood, Mr. Keys—were flabbergasted by the news. The four babies were named after the aunts and grandmothers who were on hand to assist Dr. Pendergraft. Roberta, weighing 4½ pounds, was the first one born; she was named after her aunt, Berta Spooner. Mona, Roberta's identical twin, also 4½ pounds, was the second-born; she was the namesake of Aunt Mona Curry. Mary, an even 4 pounds, was the third child delivered. She was named after her paternal grandmother, Mary Keys. The last quad, Leota, 3¾ pounds, was named after Leota Dulan, her maternal grandmother.

The news of the multiple births was known quickly around the town, and it soon spread even across the nation. At the Keys residence, a crowd of local citizens gathered to see the newborn children. Mr. Keys had the quadruplets lying crosswise on the divan and was allowing the visitors to come through the house to see them. In all the excitement, the older children had been completely forgotten. Finally, someone remembered them, and they too were allowed to see their new sisters and also to see their mother for a few minutes.

Before long, the family was overwhelmed by telegrams, telephone calls, letters, and visitors. They received at least one telegram from every state in the nation, as well as one from President Theodore Roosevelt. Visitors continued to come to the house, so someone suggested that a register should be used to keep count of the numbers. After 3,000 visitors, no further attempts were made to keep the register current.

One of the immediate problems that had to be dealt with was the clothing supply. Not expecting multiple births, the parents found that their meager supply of clothing was far inadequate for the demand. In those days, all baby clothing was handsewn; even the diapers were hand-hemmed. To solve the clothing problem, several of Mrs. Keys' friends came to the house and brought a second sewing machine. One of the stores (believed to be the J. B. Ellis Department...
Store) was opened so that the ladies could get material for baby clothes. They sewed for about a week to complete the job. The quads' first outfits were cream-colored kimonos trimmed in ribbon, with handmade French knots down the front.

The babies must have been extremely healthy, despite their birth weights. There was no attempt made to isolate them from the many visitors that came through the house. For nine months, the girls received absolutely no food except what they nursed. After the nine months, they were given other foods.

During Mrs. Keys' pregnancy, a housekeeper had been hired to help with the housework. With four new babies, Mrs. Keys needed much more help. Mrs. Dulan, Mrs. Keys' mother, stayed for quite a while but eventually returned to her home in Paducah, Texas; gradually the workload shifted to the four older children. Thus, Jackie and Marjorie washed many dirty diapers.

When the quads were three months old, the family went to Paducah, Texas, to visit. Because of flooding rivers, the family had to stay overnight in Quannah, Texas, to catch a train the next day. On the way to the train the next morning, they were overwhelmed by people who wanted to see the famous quadruplets. On arriving in Paducah, they found that the visitors were just as numerous as they had been in Hollis. Mrs. Dulan solved the problem by posting visiting hours, thus reserving some time for family visiting.

When the quads were five months old, they were exhibits at the Oklahoma State Fair. Advertised as a "Bunch of Keys," they were quite a drawing card; fairgoers were charged twenty-five cents a head to see the babies. The quads continued going to the State Fair until they were six years old. At that time, they complained about having to miss two weeks of school. Also, some of their classmates were complaining about the special privilege the quads were getting. The fair-going immediately ceased, the parents wanted the quads to have normal lives.

When the quads started school, visitors were still going to Hollis to see them. Mrs. Keys made a standing rule that when the girls were attending school, they would receive visitors only during recess time. To admit visitors during class time would have disrupted the class.

At the age of 10, the quads were given IQ tests probably because they were quadruplets and not because of problems with the academic work required of them. Their scores were 118 to 125, which placed them about two years above their chronological age. Their teachers considered them exceptional students.

At the age of 3, the quads had developed a talent for singing and were much in demand. They not only sang for their church, First Baptist, but for other denominations as well. And they sang at funerals as well as at meetings of different organizations such as Rotary and Kiwanis. They also developed a talent for playing the saxophone and at one time played from the back of a truck during a Hollis Christmas celebration. They were always receiving offers from various show-business people and letters from fans.

In 1933, the quads graduated from high school. Mary was class valedictorian. They then attended Baylor University in Waco, Texas, where they graduated in 1937. During their senior year, Leota was named to WHO'S WHO AMONG STUDENTS IN AMERICAN COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES. In addition to Leota's honors, one of the highlights of their college days was their being selected to go to Canada to ask the Dionne Quintuplets, then two years old, to participate in the Texas Centennial Celebration. On the trip to Canada, they appeared on the Famous "Town Hall" Program with Fred Allen.

After graduating from Baylor, the quads did a three-year tour of show business with Mr. Keys as their manager. They performed in schools, churches, and theaters primarily in the Southern states, but they also went on two tours to the Southeastern states such as Tennessee, the Carolinas, and Virginia. After the three years of show business, they began to go their separate ways. Mona, the first to be wed, married Bob Fowler in Oklahoma City in 1940. She was a Kindergarten teacher in Oklahoma City for many years. The Fowlers have two children and two grandchildren.
During World War II, Leota worked at Fort Hood, Texas, as director of the Enlisted Men's Service Club. While there, she met her future husband, Bob Hall. After her marriage to Hall, she became a professional book reviewer in Oklahoma City. Using her speech and drama background, Leota was in great demand for her humorous book reviews in Oklahoma and other states as well. The Halls had two children and three grandchildren. Leota died in 1970 at age 55.

Roberta, the oldest of the quads, married Roland S. Torn in 1941. She currently lives in Houston, where she has been in charge of a volunteer project dealing with cancer research. The Torns have three children and four grandchildren.

Mary, like Leota, was a volunteer worker during World War II and was director of the Enlisted Men's Service Clubs at Fort Hood. She married Jack Anderson, and she lives in Dallas. She's a member of the Board of Trustees of Baylor University and is also a member of the Board of Trustees of Baylor Hospital in Dallas. She is quite active in church and community affairs. The Andersons have three children and two grandchildren.

The Keys Quadruplets at the time of their birth were the only quads of the same gender known to the world. They are also believed to be the only set of quads in which all four have earned college degrees. One of their most difficult tasks was to attain individual statuses after being a group for twenty-five years and to be successful in that individuality.

[*Editor's note: WESTVIEW is appreciative of the help of several people in the preparation of this article:

1. the author, Dean Gerber, of course, for his synthesizing of details.

2. Mrs. Dick Dudley of Hollis for her article on the quads in the Harmon County History PLANNING THE ROUTE.

3. Judy Webb, editor, for her June 2, 1977 article in the HOLLIS NEWS.

4. Mrs. Roberta Keys Torn for the pictures used in this article and for the following letter (March 1, 1984):

"Dear Sir:

'I am Roberta Keys Torn and have a few pictures that I am glad to send you. I have laminated many of our pictures and am sure they would be hard to reproduce. The small glossies were made by the Publicity Department of the National Institute of Health in Bethesda, Maryland in 1980. We were there for one week participating in a genetic study of Parkinson's disease. Mona Fowler, my identical twin, has the disease. We had national publicity at the time, and they sent (the glossies) back along with the big ones we had loaned them.

"Miss Judy Webb, News Editor of the HOLLIS NEWS, also used many of our pictures in a nice feature article published on June 2, 1977. I am sure the NEWS people would be glad to let you have the copies or negatives of the pictures.

"I'll be glad to assist you in any way possible.

"Please return the pictures to me. They are getting scarce as our children and grandchildren are becoming more interested in our 'past' fame.

"Sincerely,
Roberta Keys Torn"

5. Mrs. Charles B. Keys for information provided in a recent telephone conversation. She told us that there are still three surviving quads--Roberta Torn, Mona Fowler, and Mary Anderson--and that they were honored on their seventieth birthday with a family celebration held in a Houston-area beach home owned by Roberta's daughter. The celebration was on June 4, 1985; shortly afterwards, there was a full-page spread about the quads in the HOUSTON CHRONICLE. Presently, that issue is unavailable to WESTVIEW.]

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In the "Dirty Thirties," Oklahoma had an exodus. Land, water, people, and finances were leaving a land plagued by floods, dust storms, and poverty. During the powder-dry dustbowl era, Hammon, Oklahoma, experienced the worst flood in its history. When the water receded, dust returned. The often rampaging Sandstone Creek was a potential cornucopia, and the new government administration was determined to prove it.

Shelterbelts of selected trees were planted to stabilize a land recklessly turned by the ambitious plow. They thrived and are still deflecting the wind and dust. In later years some of them were uprooted to provide more cropland. Their worth has been proved to the extent that the plantings have been revived.

The Washita River was a constant threat. Usually a nearly dry watercourse, it often becomes a raging demon, spreading death and destruction on the 650-mile and often more than five million-acre drainage system. Farms, crops, roads, bridges, and homes are destroyed or covered with silt. In 1934, after eleven inches of rain fell in a short time, seventeen people of Hammon lost their lives. The river had to be controlled.

Congress established a national policy of flood prevention under control of the Department of Agriculture in 1936. In 1944, Sandstone Creek, within the Washita River basin at Cheyenne, Oklahoma, was selected as a pilot program. This was the first upstream flood control system in the world.

Farmers in the basin accepted the program as they usually lost one crop in three. Acres of prime bottom land were often covered with mud or water. Scrub timber reclaimed the land, property values decreased, and many farms were abandoned.

Before flood retention dams could be constructed, the land had to be prepared. Preparation consisted of engineered terraces, stream stabilization, ground cover, and dykes to stop the flow of silt into the future ponds. Much of the work was done by the landowners under the supervision of the Soil Conservation Service at Cheyenne. Land was donated for the structures, and the dams were built on tributaries of Sandstone Creek. As a result, the 5,000 acres of bottom land were left intact.

When the preparation was completed, the dams were constructed. Impoundments were small, ranging from one to twenty acres. After a heavy rain, water was slowly released. Sandstone became a clear, ever-flowing stream. In 1954, rain in excess of six inches fell upon the watershed. The terraces and dams survived.

L. L. (Red) Males, a prime mover of the Sandstone Creek project.
A Cornucopia

Jerry Swartwood at a retention dam on a tributary of Sandstone.

Lower Sandstone Creek near the entrance to the Washita River.

prevented excessive flooding.

The project was completed in 1953. Water which percolated into the ground raised the water table. As a result, irrigation was possible with additional wells and pumps. The land was reclaimed, property values increased, crops were no longer destroyed by flooding, and the farmers were reaping an abundant harvest. All these benefits were accomplished with a minimum dollar outlay. In addition to the agricultural benefits, fishing, recreation, and camping could be enjoyed on the larger ponds. Assets of the Security State Bank at Cheyenne advanced from $100,000 in the Dirty Thirties to nearly $5,000,000 in 1963. Sandstone Creek has an annual rainfall of twenty-four inches. Even during the dry years the creek continues to flow, and the water table is constant on the 68,000 acre, fifteen-by-six mile drainage area.

On January 5, 1956, the U.S. Geological Survey made a reading of the stream gauge located five miles upstream from the confluence of the Sandstone and the Washita. It registered that the Sandstone was flowing 2,393,280 gallons of water daily. All of this water was coming from the 65,000-acre watershed of Sandstone Creek. In contrast, the Washita River, with a watershed of 749,000 acres untreated, was “dry as powder.”

On U.S. Highway 283, two miles west of the project, the Oklahoma Historical Society has erected a marker which explains the undertaking. From this overview, the observer can view most of the drainage system of Sandstone Creek. Ponds, fields, and watercourses are in sharp detail visible proof of good soil stewardship.

In August 1981, Russell Salisberry of the Cheyenne Soil Conservation Service provided an in depth tour of the basin. Sandstone Creek was flowing clear. Crops of head feed, alfalfa, and native grasses were thriving. Sprinkling systems were pumping water from the creek and wells. Pastures were lush and were supporting cattle. Homes were prosperous and well kept. Folks were friendly.

In September 1985, Jerry Swartwood of the Cheyenne SCS conducted a second visit. Crops were ready for harvest. Through good management, the pastures weren’t overgrazed. The runoff was stabilized by numerous impoundments on the tributaries of Sandstone Creek. Water was slowly released from the dams.

Foremost in the watershed project was L. L. (Red) Males, president of the Security State Bank of Cheyenne. Mr. Males has been supervisor of the Sandstone Creek drainage system since its inception. During this time it has received worldwide acclaim. Delegates from the entire United States and many visitors from abroad have viewed the installation. As Red says, “It is so simple they can’t believe it until they see it.” He is rightfully proud of the accomplishment.

During construction and after completion, Mr. Males traveled extensively to explain the stabilization of Sandstone Creek. His slide shows and talks supported the value of water control. For this work, on April 18, 1961, at the Eighth National Watershed Congress in Tucson, Mr. L. L. Males received the first Watershed Award as “Mr. Watershed of the Year.”

As a banker, Red Males recognizes the value of conservation. He wants to keep soil, water, and money stable.
It was every child's secret fantasy and every school administrator's nightmare. On April 9, 1964, as the cry "Fire!" echoed throughout the halls of the Duke School, this small community in Southwest Oklahoma was faced with reconstructing the entire facility. However, with the students safe and smoke still pouring from the rubble, it was first necessary to find a temporary location in which to finish classes for that year. The unharmed lunch room, bus shed, and community churches provided makeshift space for learning that spring.

Immediately following, plans were made to rebuild a permanent school in this progressive community. The late Mr. D. L. Boyer, superintendent at the time, spent many months of travel, study, and planning for the construction of the new school building. After visiting an underground school building in Artesia, New Mexico, school officials decided that such a structure was feasible for Duke.

The building which was occupied on August 16, 1965, contained 23,000 square feet of floor space—including fifteen classrooms, two offices, four rest rooms, a cafeteria, a workroom, and a mechanical room. The architect for the project was William Appleby, Jr. of Altus. The contractor was Cuthbert and Hall of Elk City. The final cost of the building was $280,418 or $12.19 per square foot. However, a year later a gymnasium was added above ground at an additional cost of $81,870.38.

The facility provides excellent shelter from tornadoes and nuclear fallout, as well as being completely fireproof. It has a capacity of 1950 and a protection factor of 300. Emergency generators complete its safety features.

The underground design offers a number of advantages which include more compact floor plans, fewer distractions from outside noise, and reduced maintenance and energy costs. Also, lighting is controlled, making darkness easily obtainable for projector usage. In addition, air flow is regulated and consists of 40% fresh air and 60% recirculated air which is kept in constant motion, which greatly reduces allergy problems.

Currently, the 20-year-old building remains in excellent condition. The present superintendent, Mr. Bill E. Morgan, and the 144 students invite anyone visiting in the area to tour the school.
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I've been runnin' this Shamrock station since 1942—ah course there's been a gas station on this corner almost as long as Sweetwood's been a town. That's why my Shamrock don't look as fancy as those in big places. I guess the guy that built it didn't have no special brand—he just sold gas.

Right across the street from me is the Rutledge Hotel. It was built in 1948, and Jap and Iris lived on the first floor. It's a kinda unusual for a small town like Sweetwood to have such a good hotel. Actually, lots of us have worked to keep customers as fancy as those in big places. I guess the guy that built it course there's been a gas station on this corner almost as long as Sweetwood, and Jap and Iris lived on the first floor. It's a clean place to stay, and Granddad's Restaurant—it's a good place to eat. I always keep good help here.

It was on account of the Rutledge Hotel that Sweetwood got acquainted with Gayland Cole. Now, he's one funny bugger. I don't mean funny in any comical way—it's just that for some reason folks always laugh at him. But it's not the same way they laugh at Dean Coleman.

Dean's funny, now, but he don't always mean to be. Like just the other day, a bunch of guys was in here and they got to talkin' about findin' minnows. Dean, he always likes to be in on ever' thing, so he said there was minnows up at Diamond Slough. "I bet there's a million of 'em," he said. And he thought a minute and says, "Hey, I bet there's more'n that, I bet there's five thousand!" A course they all laughed—Dean, he always means funny, but he didn't have no idea they was laughin' at 'im.

But Gayland—he's not like that—he's smart. At least, he's book smart, and he can do lots of things most people in Sweetwood can't. Oh, I was gonna tell you why he moved here.

Jap Rutledge built that hotel, and he and Iris worked like dogs to make it go. Well, Iris died in 1952, and Jap tried it alone—he hired a few locals, but their heart just wasn't in it. Hotel work is hard. Finally Jap got his sister—Marie was a widow—to come up here and live with him. So Marie and her son moved in and Jap took one of the suites right off the lobby.

Well, that was quite a boost to Sweetwood society. Marie was a matronly sort of good-lookin' woman, and a great one for playin' bridge. And Gayland—it'd been a long time since there'd been a older-type bachelor in town. It seemed like there for awhile he was always swishin' around the place. A course, he was good lookin'—slim as a stove pipe, so clothes looked swell on him. He got invited to ever' social event the ladies around here could think up.

You know, it just occurred to me. He always got invited places, but I don't remember him ever invitin' any of the local girls out. But I guess when you're that popular, it just sort of slips your mind to ask them out—no need to, really, since you naturally got your pick.

There was a salesman in here one day—it was after Gayland had been here quite awhile—he was a Shamrock rep, and he had got into town late—actually early in the mornin' it was—so he had to ring the night bell in the hotel lobby. When he come over here the next mornin', he was madder'n a hornet. Said he hadn't slept a wink—said he worried about what that kook downstairs might do.

I said I didn't know of any kook in town, much less across the street at Jap's place. Turned out he was pretty irritated at Gayland.

"When I rung that bell, he come prissin' out wearin' pajamas, fer God's sake! Silk ones at that. And a red bathrobe with gold fringe on the belt."

"Well, maybe folks where he comes from wears pajamas," I told him. "Around here, I reckon they're mostly for girls."

"I didn't think much one way or the other about 'em til he came up. He looked like a crazy fool asked me if I'd like to go to his room for a cup of tea."

"Now that was polite of him."

"Polite, hunh," he says. "I ain't goin' to no man's room and sip tea! Not even at high noon—much less two in the mornin'. And him wearin' that shiny bathrobe with gold fringes hangin' off it."

I just dropped the subject—mad as he was, and all. Once he pointed it out, havin' ice tea already made up in the middle of the night is kinda funny, though.

Well, around Sweetwood, like they would anywhere else, I guess, some people liked ol' Gayland, and others couldn't stand him. Some said they didn't like him on account of the way he walked. Of course, he was a little prissy when he walked—I used to watch him crossin' the street comin' over here from the hotel, and he did have a funny little twist. But he always reminded me more of a racehorse—the way he picked his feet up and put 'em down.

Really, I sorta liked havin' him around the station. His teasin' sorta livened the place up. Like Dean Coleman—he was so fat, and Gayland was always lightin' into him about that. And then one time ol' Dean did have a heart attack and the doctor told him he had to take some weight off. So Dean, real serious like, asked Gayland how he thought he should go about takin' it off.

"Why don't you try Metrecal?"

That was about the time that stuff first come out, and every woman in town was drinkin' it. Dean, he thought about it awhile, and then he says, "Do you take it before meals or after?" We all thought that was pretty funny. A course, lookin' back later we all felt pretty bad about makin' fun of him when ol' Dean had a heart attack and died.

After Gayland and his mom had been here a few years, he finally got him a job. There didn't seem any real need for him to work since Marie was pretty well fixed after her husband died. But I guess most fellows like to have their own money. So he started teachin' at that boys' school between here and Allis. A lot of the fellows hurrered about that, but I figured a job's a job. And if a guy's qualified to teach drama and stuff like that, why it oughta be all right. It must be hard puttin' on a play.
though, with nothin' but boys--a 'course, I wouldn't know--the only plays I ever see are the senior plays here in Sweetwood--I always patronize the hometown kids--but they say those aren't real drama. But those kids dressed up like hillbillies and such are pretty funny.

Oh, and he taught debate, too. Now, I never have seen a debate. What it sounds like to me is an argument--you just divide up in teams and argue, and ol' Gayland was probably good, much as he liked to argue. As a matter of fact, they'd go off on weekend trips and debate teams from other schools.

After one of those trips the boys got to makin' snee remarks about how much fun Gayland must be havin' on weekends now. Me, I don't know how they figured that--bein' cooped up in a motel with a bunch of onery boys--now that would purely try my patience.

Speakin' of arguin'--I used to wonder if he argued the Bible with them school kids as much as he did the boys here at the station. Well, not all of em'--he never could get much of a rise out of anybody unless Buster knew his Bible.

I never figured out why Gayland was so keen to argue about the Bible because he was an atheist--anyway that's what he said. I never figured somethin' I didn't believe in was worth arguin' about.

And the things he picked to harp on--marrying, for example. Him not even married and always tellin' Buster that all those Bible scriptures--and he could quote 'em right--anyway, they sounded right--weren't even good sense, much less true.

I remember one in particular--the one where Paul said it was better to marry than to burn. I remember that because ever' dadgum' time he brought it up, the fellows would start snickerin' and laughin'--or else they'd go back to the grease room where they'd laugh and slap their leg. It didn't bother me that ol' Gayland didn't want to get married. A 'course I didn't need him tellin' me that all the time. It was pretty obvious since he never dated any of our local girls--not even any over at Allis so far as I knew.

But anyway, the boys got the biggest bang out of him arguing that gettin' married wouldn't keep a fellow from burnin'. I told them fellows that I knew guys right here in Sweetwood that was married and still chased after anything wearin' a skirt. They all thought that was real funny--said Gayland wasn't likely to go chasin' any skirt. A 'course I didn't think so, either. He had him a good job, and his mother was well fixed, and he stood to inherit that. So I really didn't think the whole thing was all that funny.

One time that caused a big stir in Sweetwood was the summer Marie went to Europe. I don't remember anyone in Sweetwood ever goin' there before. I sort of wondered why ol' Gayland didn't go, too--I know I would've if I'd had the chance. But the boys just laughed and allowed that Gayland would find more interesting things here. I couldn't imagine what in the world he'd find in Sweetwood that he hadn't already found.

"Oh, he'll find something he likes," ol' Leroy Murphy said. "Yeah," I agreed. "He's one funny bugger." And they laughed like I'd said something real funny.

The first thing you know, Gayland had this guy visitin' him. He introduced him around town as his cousin from Houston. I'd never heard Jap mention havin' any kinfolisks in Houston--so I figured it must have been on his dad's side. None of us around here ever knew Edward Cole--that was Marie's husband. Jap--he wouldn't talk much about that cousin. I guess long as Gayland helped tend the hotel right, Jap didn't mind him invitin' company in.

That guy's name was Ralph Johnson. I don't mind tellin' you there was just somethin' about him I didn't like. He had this limp handshake, but then he sort of held it so tight you had to pull your hand away. And when he talked to you, he got right up close. There wasn't any use of that. I told the boys at the station I just wished he'd stay out of here. I was a little bit irritated.

But ol' Leroy--he's a real clown--he got up and prissed over to the water fountain walkin' just like Ralph--only exaggeratin' a little bit--then he turned around and raised one arm up to his chest and let his hand hang there--kindly like and says, "Oh, Ralphie's a good boy. He don't mean no harm." A 'course, I had to laugh with 'em--Leroy always had a way of makin' things out funnier'n they were.

But the thing that blew my mind, as the kids say, happened after Marie died. Well, really, it wasn't anything that happened exactly. I couldn't have been more surprised if--well, I just can't think of anything in the world that would've shocked me like that did. I wouldn't even believe it if it hadn't come from an inside source--not Jap--he wouldn't talk about it--this was someone who worked there. A 'course, I wouldn't name any names, but everybody around Sweetwood knows anyone that works anywhere in town, and you can't go tellin' a lie about folks and get away with it. Same way with the truth--if somebody tells what's true, there's no need goin' around tryin' to deny it. Well, I declare I was shocked.

A 'course, everyone sympathized with Gayland when his mom passed away. It was sad, and it was kinda sudden. But sooner or later, everyone sorra expects to lose their parents. But ol' Gayland couldn't get over it--he moped around here for weeks complainin' how he couldn't sleep nights and all. Well, I thought that was understandable. But then this come up, and I declare I didn't know what to think.

What it was was that Gayland went to sleep ever' night with his mother holdin' him--can you imagine that! Now, I don't mean like a man and his wife--I mean like she was a cuddlin' him so he d go to sleep.

After all those years I'd known ol' Gayland, I just couldn't hardly believe it. You could have fooled me. I purely don't understand how a grown man could sleep with his mother. I just purely don't.
First... The Redbuds... Then The Treasures

By Pat Kourt

Remember the anticipation of hunting Easter eggs in hillside pastures and green wheat fields? That same thrill occurs every spring for many folks who live near the South Canadian River. No, decorative eggs are not the treasures they seek, but they are even tinier treasures known as morels, a variety of wild mushrooms (they aren’t poisonous!).

These tan, spongy, honey-combed plants are the prey in a frenzied search which is signaled by one of Oklahoma’s favorite sentinels—the redbud. When the drabness of winter has vanished, small, clustered, pink flowers cover the redbud branches like popcorn. Spring showers, followed by a sunny, windless day, which warm the ground, are favorable conditions for morels to begin popping up.

Then, families affectionately called “river rats” wander along the riverbanks with grocery sacks or gallon buckets and are the first hunters of the morels. Soon, they are joined by hunters of all ages from nearby communities. Also, former river-community hunters who have moved away come back home just to enjoy a weekend of mushrooming.

As the redbuds bloom, mushroom magic continues:
“Here’re two!”
“Mom, I can’t find none!”
“Move closer to the cedars, son!”

As the bags are filled, taste buds tingle as thoughts begin about the savory fried mushrooms.

Precisely where are these sought after delights? No one can really tell or show someone else exact mushroom spots. Only hints can be given of their whereabouts.

“Check the ravines through the brush and the river bottom land. Look for the cedars. Most generally they’re around the fall line of cedar trees. They’re hardly ever in the same place year after year; that’s the fun of hunting ‘em. Morels are almost the same color as the dried, dead, grayish-tan leaves under the trees. It takes a keen eye to spot ‘em. And a few will have a splotch of red.”

“Pull ‘em up carefully by the lower part of the stem. Gently shake the sand out and add ‘em to the mess in your sack,” advises Mutt Rymer, a veteran mushroom hunter of rural Thomas.

Most morel hunters have their own special method for preparing the mushrooms, but they generally agree on the basic steps:
First, split the mushrooms lengthwise and soak them in cool salt water for several hours. The fine river sand is stubbornly imbedded and will cause the mushrooms to taste gritty if they aren’t soaked.
Next, rinse the plants and drain them on towels; turn them once so that all drops of water are gone.
Dip the mushrooms into beaten egg and milk; roll the pieces in crushed saltine crackers.
Fry the coated mushrooms in one-half inch of corn oil in a cast-iron skillet until the morels are golden brown.

Although many people eat morels plain for snacks or in salads, there is no danger of accidental poisoning. Of course, if a cook is in doubt, he should simply throw the mushroom away. It should be readily identified. Too, most mycologists suggest that all wild mushrooms should be cooked.

Need an adventure? Remember the redbuds in the spring—from early April to early May. They may lead you to a special afternoon of treasure hunting—perhaps a Western Oklahoma first for you!
Oh, Ye Fickle English!

By Maggie Culver Fry

Why do we say he knows,
he knew, and always
he has known
Yet never follow snows
with snew and never it has snown?

Now of a dog we say, he bites, he bit,
and he has bitten
Yet never follow fights
with fit and never
he has litten.

I'm glad I learned
these things in school
I'd sure be in a pickle
to have to learn them
by myself... for
English is just too fickle.

Lines To My Daughter

By Ernestine Gravley

When you were small
You ran to me
For I was tall
And motherly

Your sea-blue eyes
With searching trust
Saw Mom as wise
As small girls must.

The years have flown
As Time will do
Now you are grown... I turn to you.

Beloved child
With sage advice,
Our "motherhood"
Has happened twice
A poetic thread of life

The Swan

By Yvonne Carpenter

Graceful beauty
cost her freedom
flight exchanged
for free meal.

and compliments.
From migrant to ornament
and a rotten disposition.
But art needs an affirmer

To attack the keeper
requires a tough bird.

Miracle

By Yvonne Carpenter

Cocoon delivers wet insect.
Moth emerges incubator.
Light licks afterbirth from wings.

Is metamorphosis more awful in
a monarch than in an army cutworm?

The Weaver

By Yvonne Carpenter

The woman weaves by the stream.
She gathers strands of wisdom,
Divides them in her hands,
Combs them with solitude,
And, with strong twists and knots,
Binds them firmly to the earth,
Wisdom, solitude, and soil,
Ancient plaited pattern.
An anniversary approaches

Black Sunday, April 14, 1935

By Donita Lucas Shields

With all the good rains during the past weeks, it is unlikely there will be a repeat performance of Black Sunday, April 14, 1935. Yet it might be interesting to reminisce about the nation’s largest Black Duster that struck the Midwest exactly fifty years ago this coming Sunday.

Back in those days there were no sophisticated nerve centers or sky-scanning satellites for forecasting inclement weather. However, there was a “Weather Bureau” that must be commended for being on its toes. Early that memorable Sunday morning, the National Weather Service put out calls from Bismarck, North Dakota, that winds were picking up and local dust was swirling on the ground and in the air.

By 10:00 a.m., the front began moving out of the Dakotas. Before noon, winds in Nebraska were recorded at 100 mph speeds. Sometime between noon and 1:00 p.m., the Black Duster formed along the Kansas-Nebraska line and quickly spread from Denver to Southwestern Iowa.

Black Sunday was officially off and roaring. Cyclonic winds hurled Dakota dust into Nebraska and then surged southward to combine it with Kansas topsoil. Kansas became the epicenter of the devastating turbulence. Most people thought that the dust cloud seemed to be coming from the northeast, but actually the roller continued in a southerly direction.

Killer winds picked up loose, dry soil from bare fields and hurled it 20,000 feet into the air where it boiled amidst the 100-plus mph winds. At the same time the roller churned ground soil in a cylindrical manner which most local observers described as a “sidewinder” or a “horizontal tornado.”

The Black Sunday roller broke all records as it created dust blackouts throughout Kansas, Eastern Colorado, Oklahoma, Eastern New Mexico, Texas, Western Arkansas, Missouri, Nebraska, the Dakotas, and the lower half of Iowa. All in all, this “horizontal tornado” spread itself into a 1,000-mile width and traveled some 1,500 miles before blowing itself out and disintegrating in the Gulf of Mexico.

Reporters who came on the scene to collect stories and do photography work encountered problems they hadn’t expected. When they were ready to leave Western Oklahoma, the two—Bob Geiger and H. G. Eisenhard—discovered that their car wouldn’t start because of the static electricity caused by the duster. This was a common auto ailment in those days unless the owner tied a length of chain to the rear exle of the vehicle. Geiger and Eisenhard hired Asa Pitzer, a local farmer, to take them back to Denver. Pitzer gladly accepted their $50 offer to get them back home with their scoop.

That night the three men successfully fought their way through the howling winds and blinding, boiling dust to the Mile High City. Eisenhard is still remembered for his uncanny photography of Black Sunday. Geiger became famous for his coinage of the term “Dust Bowl,” which became popular immediately to describe a part of the nation where nothing seemed to be going right. (first appeared in the April 12, 1985 edition of the SENTINEL LEADER)
Awakening beauty

SprinG GaLa

By Rosemary Gibson

Winter draws its dark curtain when spring equinox has passed.
Then in every orchard of the land, fruit trees at last
Are limbed with shining wands atip with white and pink.
I relax and watch them wave the wind and think.

I see fairy wings unfolding, gaily dancing
Through sunsprays to shed sweet fragrance in their prancing
Over pristine air so newly washed with snow,
Seeming to linger fluffy white among the blossoms as though slow to go.

Birds orchestrate their ruby throats with melodic quintets,
Fluttering, sky dueling in romantic pirouettes.
Tulips and violets peek up from the emerald grass,
Flashing bright color like the skirts of a gypsy lass.

Memories--dreams of love

River Coffee

By Evelyn Bachmann

Once we camped
On a gravel-bar island.
A rocky bed, passion-pillowed in pearly moonlight.
I have not forgotten those gelid pebbles
That brushed my bare feet
As nature insistently called
(I should have slept in my shoes)
Or the feeling of shared aloneness
Adrift in midnight river mist.

Morning came crashing,
Ricocheting sun shafts shattering my eyelids,
Birds, piercingly sweet, staking territorial claims.
The incredulous smell of your caffeine-laden river coffee
Stirred with a stick and settled with egg shells
(I didn't know you could even boil water).

I have not forgotten that island.
It is gone now--
Drowned in a man-made lake.
But it is still there, an unseen Atlantis.
Though my old bones now seek softer love and less,
I still remember
That rocky bed
And the smell of river coffee.
And the status quo returns

Surviving The Gas Boom

By Cathy Rutledge

Over the past few years, we have seen big changes in our lives and town. We experienced something similar to the madness of the early Gold Rush days. Our town, Elk City, was fairly much like any other small town—clean and calm with everyone knowing one another. Suddenly, hoards of people moved in. The population jumped from 9,700 to 15,000 within a few months. Some of the people we had known all our lives changed and became greedy and bitter. No longer were they willing to do neighborhood deeds for one another. People became distrustful and were aware that they didn’t always know their neighbors. The landlord who once understood your problems suddenly didn’t understand why your rent was late, and like a charging bull he came to evict you. The dollar sign had become the important factor.

What had happened to cause all this? The gas boom!

We’re in the Anadarko Basin, which means we’re rich in gas. In the 1970’s the oilfield gradually moved in. In the late 60’s, men had gone to work on seismograph crews. They worked ten to thirteen hours a day making good money at the time. In 1970, men started working on oilrigs as roughnecks. At first they drove sixty to a hundred miles to work. Gradually over the years, the rigs moved in closer. Then in 1981 and 1982, the gas boom peaked; what happened in Elk City, as in neighboring towns, was unbelievable.

The land mushroomed in every direction from Elk City with the oil rigs. There were over two hundred rigs within a fifteen mile radius. It was a spectacular sight to drive at night along the highway and see the lights from the oilrigs.

The money earned during those days was staggering. Roughnecks, common laborers, brought home $2000 to $3000 a month. Drillers earned much more, even more than professional people. People spent hundred-dollar bills as if they were ten-dollar bills. Businesses thrived; prosperity was abundant, and we began to pay the price for it in several ways.

How was a person treated upon going to a store or restaurant? Rudely! Many business people were overworked from all the business they received, and they didn’t even care if customers came back.

Because there was so much money, businesses raised their prices. Motels, for instance, became extremely high. It wasn’t at all unusual to pay $65 a night for a room that was formerly $20. Workers rented motels by the month. They were willing to pay the price because they couldn’t find housing. Local people who weren’t in the oilfield didn’t make the high wages of the oilfield; therefore, they had it tough paying oilfield prices for everything.

Three or four families would live together in one house or apartment. Renters tore up houses, and most landlords were unwilling to make repairs. People were desperate for places to live. Unable to find houses, they lived in cars, vans, or makeshift tents by the lakes. They even lived in old abandoned railroad cars, anything to give them shelter. At one time, the city park was lined with tents.

The arrangement didn’t work well. The ducks at the park were killed and eaten. People living in the tents were robbed and stabbed for their money. The police finally banned people from living there.

Repairmen’s housecalls were out of the question. The best a person could do was to take an appliance into the repair shop and maybe get it back in a month or so. Getting a plumber was also totally impossible because most plumbers were working in the oilfields.

All of the pressure caused by the boom had a detrimental effect on homes and marriages. The environment became demoralizing. Liquor, drugs, and women were easily accessible. Products were neglect, arguments, alcoholism, drug addiction, and cheating in marriages. The divorce rate was high, but many families stayed together experiencing difficult times in their marriages and lives.

In the last year of the gas boom, people moved to Elk City to start new businesses. They borrowed huge sums of money for equipment, not realizing that the gas boom would die suddenly.

They believed that prosperity was here to stay. Land was bought to build on; people thinking they would make a fortune. Motels went up; restaurants were built. Beautiful homes were constructed in every direction. People bought these $100,000 homes, thinking the money was here forever. All they knew was that they were making big money, and they spent it quickly. They didn’t realize the gas boom would die to the extent it did.

It totally died by the end of 1982, and there was mass unemployment. Men and women stood in line at the unemployment office for hours everyday. Many of them lost everything they had.

The picturesque homes sit empty now. There aren’t enough people here to patronize all the new businesses that were started too late. Motels, restaurants, and stores are still closing their doors every month.

How did local people feel about all this? Angry. It wasn’t uncommon to hear people say, “I’ll be glad when it leaves.”

Many wish it were back. Most never want it to come back on the scale it was. How do you survive a gas boom? By realizing it won’t last.
**Unifying experiences**

**Old Mother**

By Diane Glancy

There is unity in these fields.
Bunches of alfalfa, ragweed, kafir corn
cross each one.

The slope of hill rises under your head,
weeds wave along the road.
The sky spreads a blue cover above us.

Your bladder swells like a pond after rain,
surgery just ahead will be like pulling weeds
and tying-back tomatoes.

We always knew grace came with the swish of a cow’s tail
and black flies leave,
though harpsichord and graveyard sometimes hymn the church.

Buck up, old mother. It starts to get dark.
These wire fences are lines of music flying by the car.
Notes gone.
Hold the bucket of field weeds to you
now that shadows extend across the road.

**Heart-stirrings**

**Supremacy**

By Olive DeWitt

Over snow-capped peaks,

Over desert,
canyon,
plain,

The golden eagle appears,
rising,
gliding.

He is supreme
in atmosphere’s circlet.

An arrow shoots straight,
higher,
higher it flies;

The invincible falls,
circling,
screaming.

And in death it adorns
a chief’s feathered bonnet.
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