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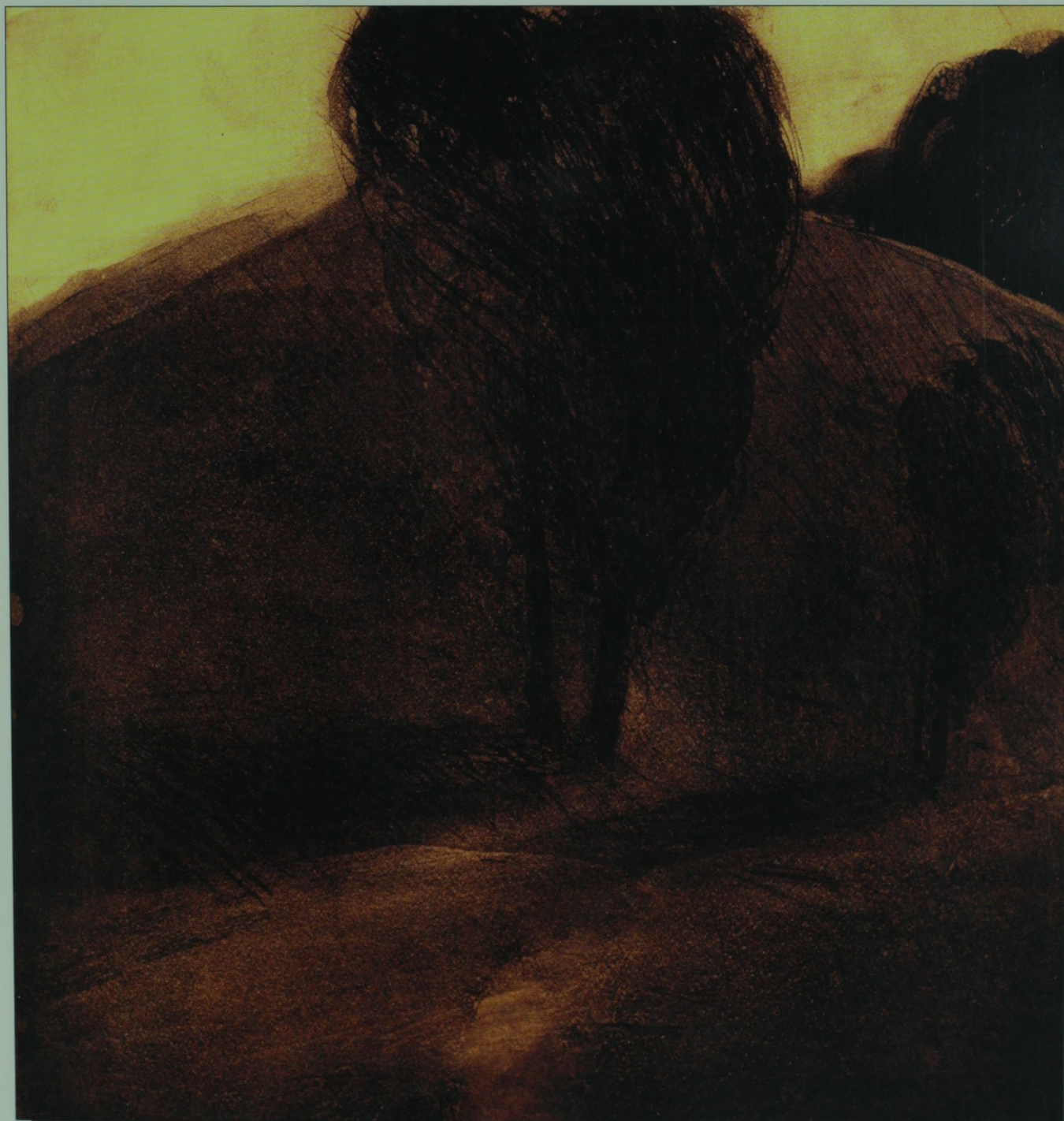
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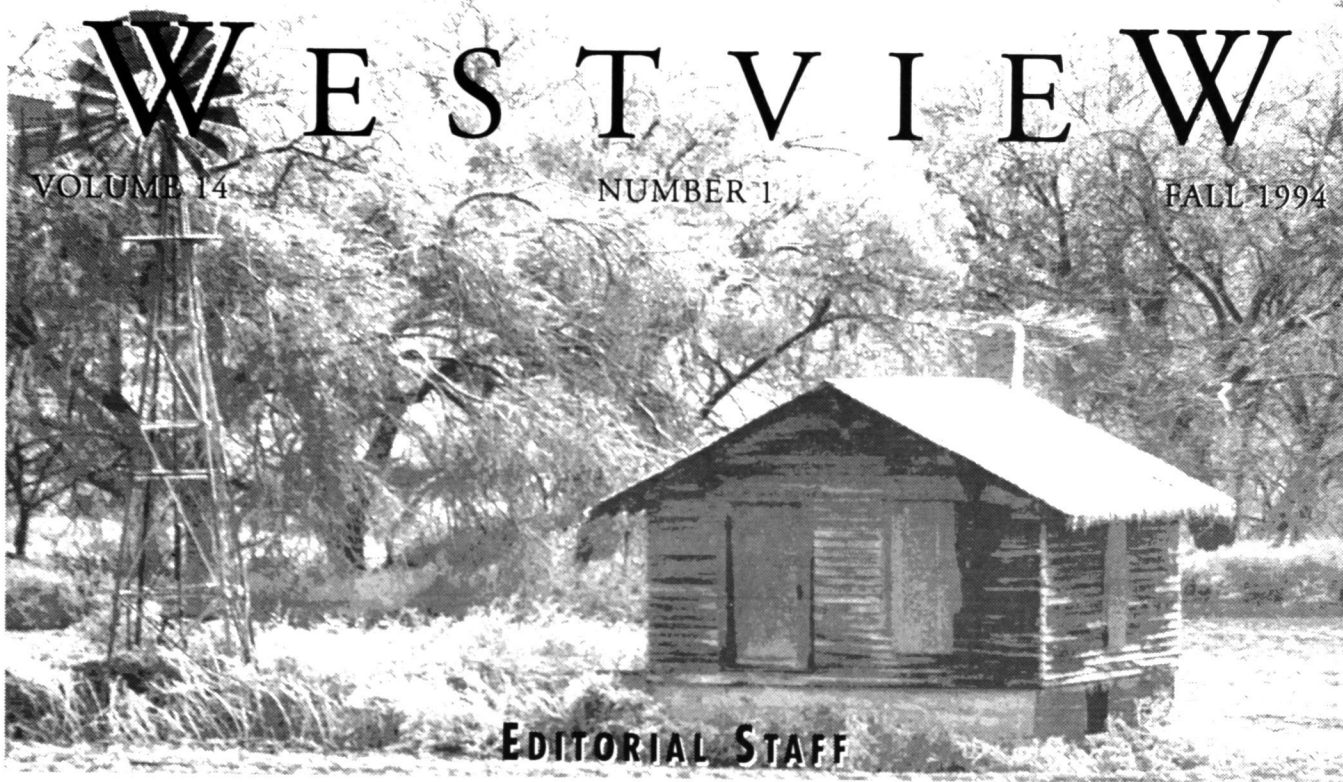


Western Oklahoma

✻ **TERRAIN** ✻

RIVERS, LAKES, AND HILLS

A JOURNAL OF WESTERN OKLAHOMA



VOLUME 14

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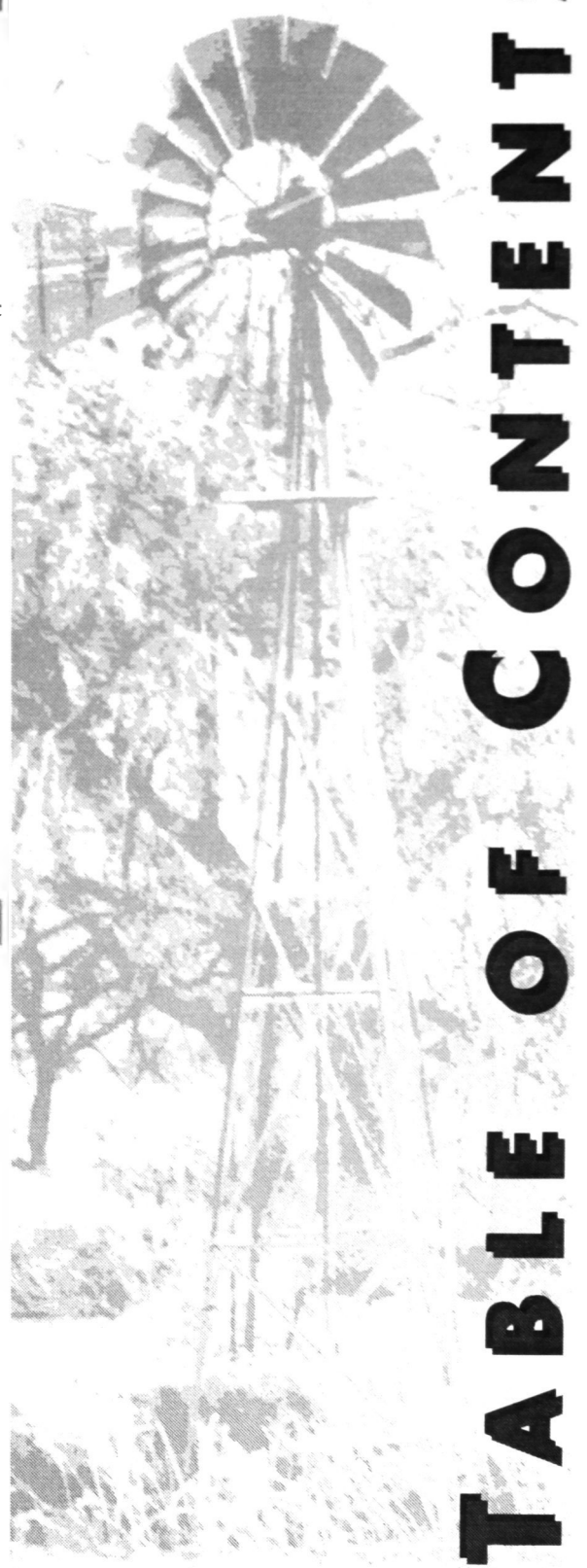
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Illustration by Scott Cummins

The Gleaners

David Drake

I see them harvesting the highway:
the old couple seeks aluminum cans
among the urban flotsam.

Silhouetted against the plains,
they make me think of Millet's peasants
bent to earth inevitably.

Children or grandchildren of the farm,
they do not own this land but at least
someone else sows the crop.

Scott Cummins 1994



Caddo County Geological Surprises

Viki Spencer Pettijohn

I. Dead Woman Mound and Neighbors

Four years ago I came to Weatherford, Oklahoma, for a job interview. Winter had the state in the grip of a nasty ice storm, so I slowly made my way west on I-40. Near Hydro I could see on my left strange knob-like formations rising from the flatland, curious geological phenomena. Every time I have driven east of town since, I have wondered vaguely about the Hydro Mounds, as some folks call them. These northwestern-most Caddo County Buttes, Dead Woman Mound and the group called Six Mounds, are clearly visible from the interstate, but their unique properties are more apparent when one stands quite near them.

Around dinnertime on July 1, 1994, with gusts of searing wind whipping us, a photographer friend and I struck out for a closer view of the mounds. We took the Bethel Rd. exit from I-40, turning south, and then west, passing flat expanses of wheat fields after harvest, and pasturage where sheep and cattle grazed; when the road dipped and willow trees grew thick, we crossed an old plank bridge appropriately posted with a five-ton limit. From the bridge a canyon-like sandstone cut is visible with a slow-moving creek full of frogs and dragonflies, bordered with small animal burrows. Young cottontail rabbits, motionless, startled by our dust and noise, posed by the edge of the road.

We went up a rise and around a bend in the road; on our left loomed the stark skeleton of the old Mound School, just north of Dead Woman Mound. Its storm cellar has no door anymore, and the aggregate mix which once covered the red building blocks has cracked off randomly. One can see more sky through the roof than

wood, and chimney bricks lie in broken fragments on the north side of the building. Only the wind whistles through the one-room schoolhouse now, where once there were shrieks of laughter and hesitant responses to teachers' questions. What a view those schoolchildren had at recess, with Dead Woman Mound beside them!

We drove up the road to the mound, and, thanks to Dr. Mel Fiegel of Southwestern Oklahoma State University, I was armed with photos of Dead Woman Mound and Two Babies Mound just to the southwest to help me identify what we were seeing. The picture of Dead Woman Mound, published in the 1966 *Proceedings of the Oklahoma Academy of Science*, was taken from the south face, and we were approaching from the north. Just the same, the distinctive character of the top of the mound is visible from either side—the mound has a peak-type crest as opposed to the mesa or sugarloaf types. On the north face was a cave or tunnel opening, which my friend investigated; he reported that with its flat ceiling the cave was clearly manmade, and that graffiti writers had been there recently, also that there was a small pool of water in the rock. While he took pictures, I walked through the dry grass at the foot of the mound, where lizards and grasshoppers rustled and flicked themselves about. There was a windmill lying on its side near a large galvanized watering trough. Just past it I approached an unusual outcropping of rock which could serve as a natural pen or protection for a few head of livestock, or a place for weary travelers to rest from their trek. We skirted around the base of the mound to the south face and were startled to see that a small cedar in the 1960's picture had grown tremen-



dously over these three decades. A more singular change shows at the top of the butte, which now has the name "Jesus" in huge white letters with the "J" reversed.

The imposing Dead Woman Mound was a natural landmark of note on the old stage road between Ft. Reno and Colony, as were Lone Mound and Ghost Mound, which are located farther to the south. The mound nearest Dead Woman Mound is Two Babies just to the southwest, no different today that it was in the 1960's, and probably not much different from the way it appeared to tired pioneers and adventurers making their way to the Gold Rush or to a new life farther west. The observer can stand beside the mounds today and imagine how welcome was the sight of a landmark like Dead Woman Mound to people completely out of their element in the wild Southwestern Oklahoma terrain.

The buttes still surprise the tourist lulled by the unvarying flat fields or slightly undulating farmland viewed from I-40, but they are familiar friends on my left when I am driving west. They tell me, as they did the people of the 1800's, that I am on the right path.

Author's Note: The Caddo County Buttes are also referred to as the Whitehorse Buttes or Natural Mounds, and they are erosional remnants. All of the Caddo County Buttes lie in the drainage basin of the Washita River and its tributaries with the exception of Dead Woman Mound, which lies in the drainage basin of Dead Woman Creek, a tributary of the South Canadian River. Most of Caddo County lies in the geomorphic province called the Western Sandstone Hills.

II. Rock Mary

Perhaps the most distinctive Caddo County Butte is Rock Mary, so significant, in fact, that it was routinely shown on early maps of the territory as a landmark to

guide travelers on the California Road. Located slightly west and south of Hinton, Oklahoma, it lies in the drainage basin of the Washita River near the source of its tributary, Sugar Creek. This most eastern of the Caddo County Buttes, as one report describes it, is "almost globular, almost skull-shaped," not easy to confuse with any of the other Caddo County group. Additionally, "...the Rush Springs Sandstone at the top is different from any other exposure of the Whitehorse Sandstone in the Caddo Buttes" (1966 *Proceedings of the Oklahoma Academy of Science*, 174).

What is more interesting than its physical characteristics is the tale of Rock Mary's naming. In the book *Marcy & the Gold Seekers* by Grant Foreman, Capt. R. B. Marcy in his journal recounts the Gold Rush over the southern route. When the travelers reached the area around Rock Mary on Wednesday, May 23, 1849, Lt. Simpson, a part of the military escort with Marcy's party, reports sighting some "hills of a singular shape." He then narrated the event: "Nearing the first of these singularly formed hills, and it appearing more oddly shaped than any of the others, I started off alone to ascend it..." (214). After startling a wild turkey, Simpson moved upward toward the summit.

"The novel character of the hill; its contorted appearance; its sudden emergence from the plain around it; my having reached its pinnacle; it being an object of interest to beholders in the distance; all this had its complex influence upon me and I felt correspondingly elated." (214)

Capt. Marcy saw Simpson near the top of the butte and suggested that he "unfurl...a flag to the breeze." Another traveler, possibly Lieutenant Harrison, a suitor of Mary Conway, suggested that the prominence be named after her. And so it was.

Mary Conway, a young woman from Arkansas, had

commanded the respect and admiration of all the members of the party—soldiers and pioneers—from the outset of their journey. Foreman reports in a footnote that Lt. Harrison and Lt. Burford, both only a year or two out of West Point, were both ardent suitors of Mary, and she finally made her choice of Harrison. The young couple confided their decision to her parents enroute and asked for their blessing. Harrison argued for an immediate wedding; the parents felt that Mary was too young and asked him “to secure leave from his regiment and come to California,” so that they “might be wed in Los Angeles, the destination of the Conways” (215).

Certainly Mary was a stunner. A picture of her in Foreman’s book reveals a seventeen-year-old with pale, perfect skin, raven hair, and dark, direct, intelligent eyes. The set of her mouth shows great determination and spirit.

Foreman also reports Lt. Cave Cout’s reaction to Mary in the fall of 1849 in Cout’s journal. The lieutenant stated:

“Dr. Conway (with his family and ten children) came up on the 24th, and on the 25th, 26th, and 27th I had a delightful time with interesting Miss Mary, for whom I have been saving a bottle of molasses and a lump of sugar since three weeks. I found more than I anticipated, though she had been so highly spoken of by all who passed.” (306)

He marveled at her as an “angel in such wilds.”

Mary and Lt. Harrison were never to marry. Lt. Montgomery P. Harrison was killed by Indians, and Mary married a sea captain, Robert S. Haley, several months after her arrival in California. Her granddaughter later reported that the loss of Harrison grieved Mary, particularly because the young couple had begged her parents to let them wed before they were separated along the route to California, but to no avail. A niece of

Mary’s said that Mary had four sons, two daughters, and “retained her charm and sweetness all through her life” (338).

Rock Mary stands steadfastly in Caddo County, a memorial to a young Arkansas woman of uncommon grace and beauty, and a tribute to the courage and faith of westward-bound settlers like the Conways, who lost most of their oxen from lack of water and grass, and who had to discard most of their possessions on the six-and-a-half-month trek from Ft. Smith to California. But the Conways were fortunate. The account of pioneers taking the Gila River route at that time, for example, is a sobering chronicle; after crossing the Colorado river into California, the travelers faced ninety miles of the Great Desert. One journal-keeper counted 300 dead horses and mules in one valley alone, twenty-seven miles into the desert. Skeletons and shriveled bodies lay everywhere, “scorched by the extreme heat” (report of New York artist James Spencer in Foreman, 310). The emigrants could not safely take the time nor expend the energy to bury the corpses of their less fortunate brothers who had died on the trail. Those people showed a degree of fortitude and hardiness to be wondered at in our time, the very qualities that settled Southwestern Oklahoma. It is well that a unique and startling rock remains to signify their strength, and Mary Conway’s grace.

(For more information on the Marcy party, see Grant Foreman’s *Marcy & the Gold Seekers*, Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1939. Also, there is some dispute locally as to which mound is in fact Rock Mary, but the presence of the distinctive “forked summit” referred to by Edward Beale in 1858 seems to confirm the mound pictured as Rock Mary in the 1966 *Proceedings of the Oklahoma Academy of Science*.)



III. Red Rock Canyon

The Indians called it, among other things, "Sugar Tree Valley" and "Beaver Valley," the former for the Caddo maples scattered throughout the canyon, and the latter for the beaver which dammed up its small streams. Edward F. Beale, laying out the proposed site for a railroad to Santa Fe in November, 1858, reported in his journal that he camped at the head of the canyon; he viewed "a number of fine springs breaking out on all sides," which united to form "a stream of clear, sparkling water." He envisioned the canyon as a perfect place for California-bound travelers to winter their stock before proceeding in the spring. Beale and a companion took their guns and walked through the canyon looking for game that late November day, finding fresh tracks of buffalo, deer, wild turkey, and raccoon. He added, "I decidedly prefer it to any other place we have seen for the location of a military post" (November 29, 1858 entry, published in the *Chronicles of Oklahoma*).

What we know today as Red Rock Canyon has sheltered Indians, scouts, soldiers, surveyors, and pioneers; today it offers shelter and recreation to locals and tourists alike, the California Road to the West having been replaced by Interstate 40. Poet T. S. Eliot in *The Waste Land* says in some very famous lines, "Come in under the shadow of this red rock"—and so people have been doing at Red Rock Canyon for centuries.

Red Rock is the best known canyon of the fifteen-square-mile canyon system and the only one designated a state park. My first memory of it dates back to autumn 1990; a friend had told me to go to the canyon early in the morning, only a twenty-minute drive from Weatherford. The wheat fields around Hinton are flat, relentlessly flat, and as I drove through Hinton I couldn't imagine where such a canyon could be hidden away. Almost missing the sign at the park entrance, I

made an abrupt left turn into the park and suddenly was dropping in a wicked curve toward the canyon bottom. Memories of North Carolina and Virginia came to mind in those thick tree stands. While I listened to the burbling water washing over the stones of the creek bed, finches played and twittered their crisp little calls in the reeds near the water. What a joyous moment that was, finding a pocket of autumnal Caddo maples in their full glory, right below the flat wheat fields around me. I'll never forget the first moment I saw Red Rock Canyon's expanse.

The canyon is a refuge for locals like me and for hordes of tourists who use it as a rest stop, picnic spot, and campsite. According to an agreement executed in 1954 with the landowners, the state of Oklahoma may control the use of the surface acres of the canyon so long as it provides recreational services for the people of Oklahoma. The landowners retain the mineral rights. Currently the state owns approximately one third of the 280 acres, the rest remaining in private hands. According to Marie Main Wornstaff in *The History of Hinton*, the Kiwanis Club of Hinton started a rodeo in the canyon in 1931 as a service project. She writes that on July 27, 1939, Kiwanis bought the canyon from the Gerdes family and began using the funds from the rodeo to convert the canyon into a recreational site for the town. Thus the canyon was known as the Kiwanis Canyon Park until 1955, when it officially became Red Rock Canyon State Park. The park manager reports that prior to 1954 the canyon was also homesteaded, with farmers raising corn and running cattle on the land.

In an interview with Dave Sutton, the current park administrator, I learned much more about Red Rock's unique features and changes over time. Mr. Sutton is a laid-back, pleasant, outdoorsy sort of fellow, very easy to

talk to, and extremely knowledgeable about parks in Oklahoma. He himself came from California as a park manager trainee during the Oklahoma Oil Boom, having worked previously at Pinnacles National Monument and Yosemite National Park. He has worked at three parks and a training park here in Oklahoma.

Sutton's primary duties as a park manager are staff management and management of the users of the park, "giving everybody a fair shake," he says. Sutton points out the irony in the fact that people come to the park to get away from civilization and to enjoy nature, and they end up at campsites where they are closer to each other than they would be in the city, a situation guaranteed to create friction. A central part of his job is to impress park regulations upon park users, and to make sure that people behave toward each other with a modicum of consideration and fairness.

Sutton, his five full-time employees, and temporary seasonal help facilitate all sorts of activities in the park: weddings, family reunions, church camps and retreats, 4-H retreats and other youth meetings, gymnastics camps, and even play performances by traveling companies of actors. The staff members handle 10,000 or so campers annually, and the traffic counters in the park register 300,000 visits annually, although that number is somewhat inflated by campers going in and out of the park on errands, and locals just driving through the park.

Sutton and his staff have quite a challenge; they manage and maintain five group shelters (which can be reserved by fee for reunions, etc.), five modern campsites, forty-nine semi-modern campsites, and forty unimproved campsites. There are modern comfort stations with hot showers, an RV sanitary dumping station, a swimming pool in the summer, and two nature trails. The group camp facility (which can be reserved for April 1-Oct. 31 handles up to 135 people. It has a

dining hall, restrooms with hot showers for men and women, ten A-frame sleeping cabins, and a playing field.

The nature trails are wonderful experiences for visitors interested in flora, fauna, history, and geology. The Rough Horsetail Interpretive Trail is an one-eighth-mile trek into a box canyon located at the north end of the park. It has a dense growth of reed-like rough horsetail, known to Oklahoma's early settlers as "scouring-rush," a sort of natural Brillo pad used in their kitchens. The plant represents a primitive plant family; 200-300 million years ago, an ancestor of the plant grew as tall as forty feet in dense forests along rivers and swamps. Coal deposits are the fossilized remains of these giant rushes, as well as those of ferns. The trail also has what may be the third largest bur oak in the state, as well as Caddo maples, varieties of red cedar, elm, redbud, dogwood, and red mulberry. In the sand near the creek's edge hikers may spot the tracks of quail, raccoons, coyotes, or even those of the reclusive wild turkey recently reintroduced into the park. The shy red fox may even put in an appearance. Forty-five species of birds show up at the park during the course of the year; cranes and geese fly over it every migratory season. Visitors may see a great horned owl, or the more common cardinals and ravens. I inquired of the park manager about fish in the stream, and he said there is a form of darter now, and probably in the past, when the beaver dammed the water into ponds, there were catfish, as well. The water of the stream is not potable now, but there are good wells in the area, drawing on the Rush Springs Sandstone water that Custer County also shares. When one reaches the end of this interpretive trail, one finds the source of the creek, a natural spring flowing out of the bottom of the canyon wall.

The California Road Interpretive Trail is at the other end of the canyon, a one-eighth-mile trail which is a



portion of the old California Road, used primarily from 1852-1888 by pioneers seeking gold or a new life. The wagon ruts of the pioneers still remain on this interpretive trail. The steep incline of the path is a clear indication of the difficulty the pioneers had, moving their wagons upward toward flat land. Beyond the end of the interpretive trail is a cedar post buried in the sandrock, the remnant of a windlass used by the pioneers. Windlasses were barrels wrapped around a post with a roped attached and used much like a winch.

At the end of the California Road Interpretive Trail, I stood high above the canyon floor late one afternoon; suddenly the trill of a bird interrupted the silence and a flash of red caught my eye. Near me on a tree branch sat a red crossbill, unafraid, sharing its evening song. I stood absolutely still, listening to the bird warbling, thinking that from that point on, the wagon trains that passed Rock Mary and the other famous Caddo County buttes would proceed toward Santa Fe and other points west.

Some park users leave carved graffiti on the stone walls, which caused me to ask Dave Sutton if there are any historical inscriptions, say, carved names from the 1800's. The manager, who has been at the park since 1986, replied that the rock is so soft and erodes so quickly, that anything recorded by the pioneers is long gone, erased by nature. I asked him about the geological history of the canyon, so Sutton provided me with a succinct written synopsis of the process of its formation. Following the period of mountain-building in the state (the Pennsylvanian period), the mountains were largely worn down, and eroded mud and sand from the eastern half of the state moved in rivers to the shallow Permian sea covering the western half of what is now Oklahoma. The Permian sandstone formed at that time

got its red color from iron oxide compounds deposited with the sand and mud. Sediments became rock, and millions of years and much erosion later, Oklahoma now has twenty-two geomorphic provinces, the one covering Caddo County being known as the Western Sandstone Hills.

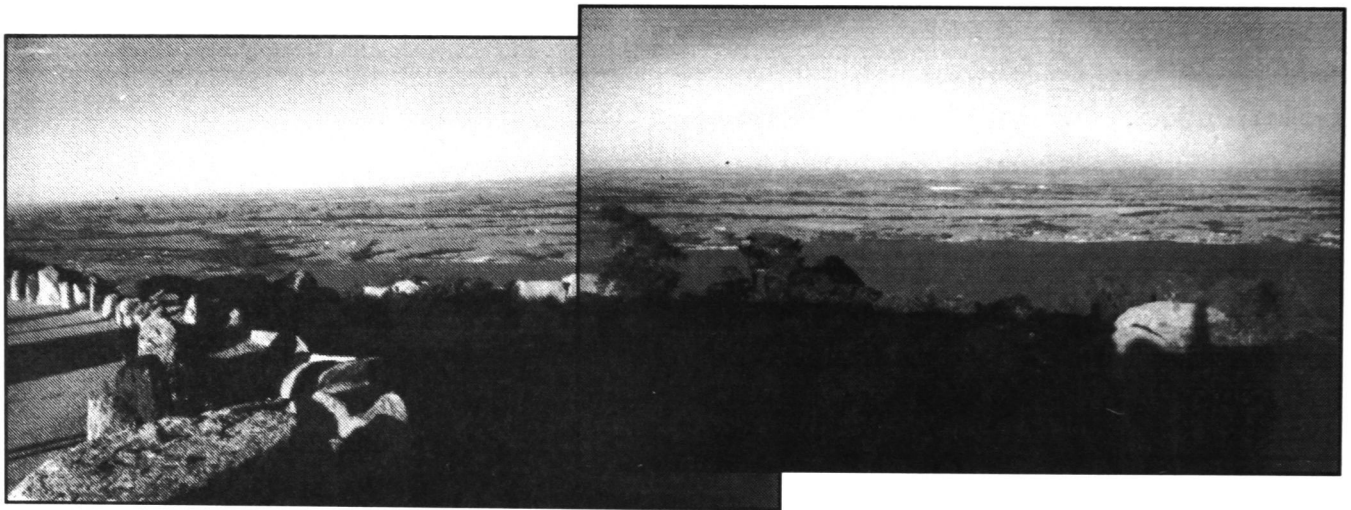
Clearly the canyon is still in process, shaped by natural and manmade forces operating upon it. I have seen the erosion myself during a spring thunderstorm at the canyon, when freshets of rain became mini-waterfalls, creating small rainbows as they poured off the rock faces of the canyon. They didn't last long, but I have rarely seen anything as magical as the small cascades of water and the light playing off them. As a matter of fact, I have rarely seen anything as magical as the whole of Red Rock Canyon, another of Caddo County's geological surprises.

(Author's Note: I would like to express my thanks again to Dave Sutton for giving me an informative interview, along with my brochures and fact sheets about the park which made my job easier. Kudos to the Red Rock Canyon State Park staff.)



Going Up Mt. Scott Again

Alvena Bieri



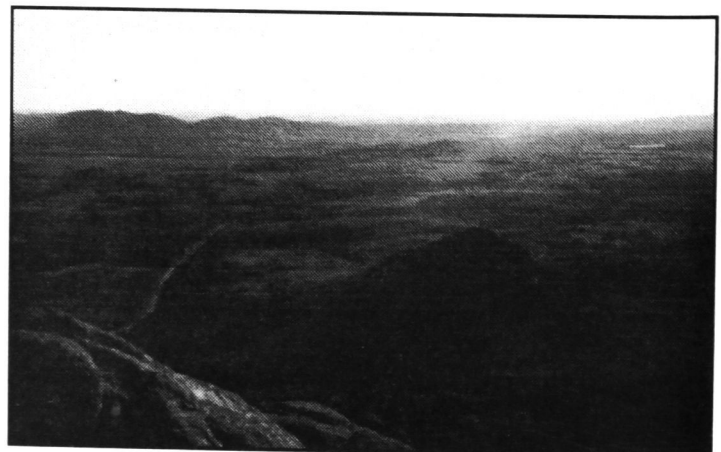
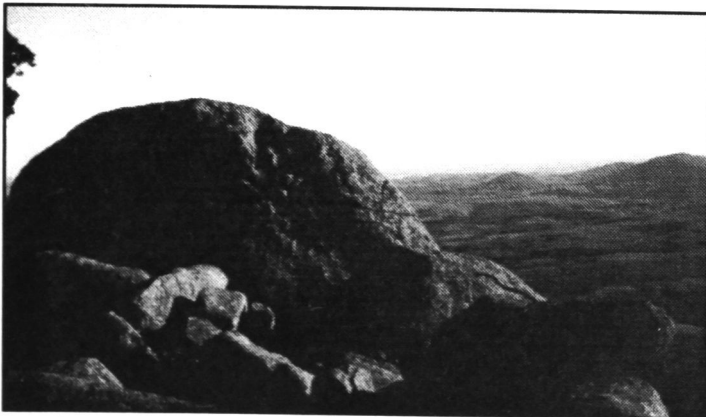
When we spent a couple of days near Lawton recently I realized I hadn't been up Mt. Scott since I was in high school. That was along about the turn of the twentieth century.

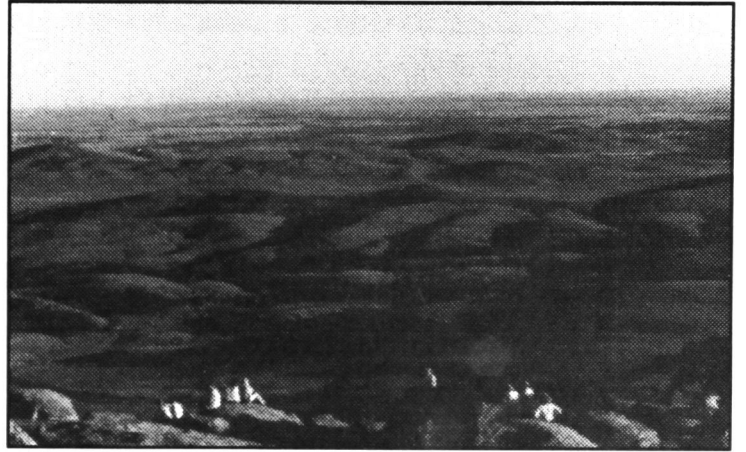
At least it seems that long ago since a group of us, let out of school for the summer, immediately drove to the Wildlife Refuge. Taking a picnic to the top of the mountain we posed for someone's camera as we held high some empty beer cans we found up there. Really wild stuff.

Going up Mt. Scott was sort of a hobby for some people in southwestern Oklahoma in what we now call "a simpler time." Simple or not, it was popular then,

and it still is, to drive through the refuge looking for buffalo and longhorns, camp at Sunset Lake, and of course, go up Mt. Scott. Growing up on the short grass plains, surrounded by miles and miles of flatness, I was fascinated by any hill, rise, or small mountain tall enough to have to change gears as you drove up and down them. I still am.

Up on top of Mt. Scott this afternoon are sightseers milling around. They walk around looking, studying. One young man goes down the mountain a little way, finds a boulder to sit on, and I'm sure, starts thinking deep thoughts. Children skitter around. Parents peer into the distance, the far, far distance. Skies are wide.





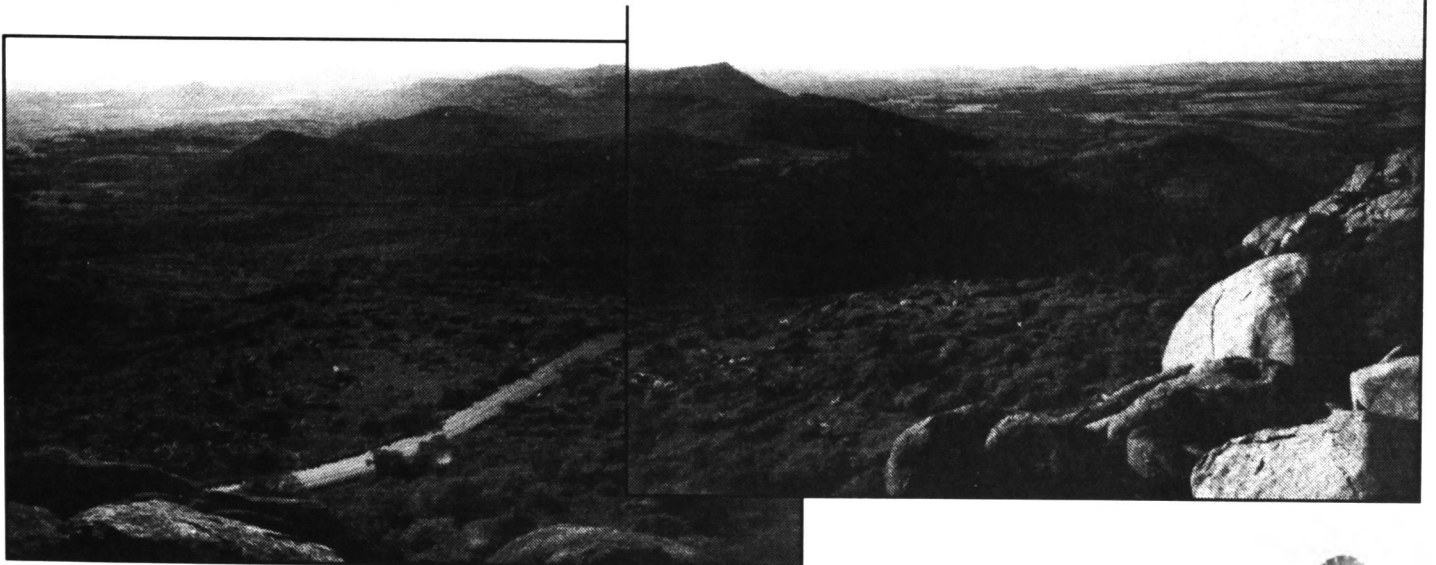
Photographs by Jan Bradfield

Tiny lakes glisten way off. There's the old resort settlement of Medicine Park, very small. But the spectacular part of Mt. Scott isn't just the view. It's the feeling of timelessness that permeates the mountain surroundings. As children we always heard that the Wichitas are "the second oldest mountains in the world." We weren't told what the first oldest are. But the Wichitas go back to the Cambrian Period, 525 million years ago. Compare that age to the Oklahoma's Black Mesa way out in the far northwest corner of the panhandle. At a million years old the Mesa, whose high point is almost 5,000 feet, is a geological baby.

But Mt. Scott at 2,464 feet in elevation is not the highest peak of the mountain range. That is an unnamed mountain a few feet higher, located four miles

outside of Cooperton. Mountain fame, it seems, depends on human accessibility. Many mountains in the southern Rockies are taller than Pike's Peak. But, like Mt. Scott, it's famous because it's the one with a road to the top. Mt. Scott was named way-back-when for famous general, Winfield Scott. It even had its own post office from 1901 to 1914, a couple of miles north-east of the mountain. But those busier days are long gone.

We start down. It takes only a few minutes of trying to keep the foot off the brake, and we're at the bottom. I still like going up and down Mt. Scott. On the earth's big clock that measures in the millions of years, my high school trips here were not so long ago after all, maybe a second or two.



River Moods

Pat Kourt

Personifying moods of seasonal change,
the South Canadian remains mysterious .
unpredictable.

Persistently flowing along egret-lined banks,
the calm current rolls pebbles and sand
downstream . . .
a busy highway for a fresh spring morning.

Lazily trickling with a threat of dormancy,
the hot sandy trail echoes dune buggies
and daring bikes . . .
a haven of fun in the scorching summer heat.

Calmly meandering between evergreen and red-clay hills,
the stream nurtures swaying bluestem
and scarlet Indian blankets . . .
a tranquil path for a quiet fall afternoon.

Violently teeming with a thawing upstream blizzard,
the raging current engulfs bare thickets, banks,
and polished driftwood . . .
a watery threat in the midst of a gray winter.

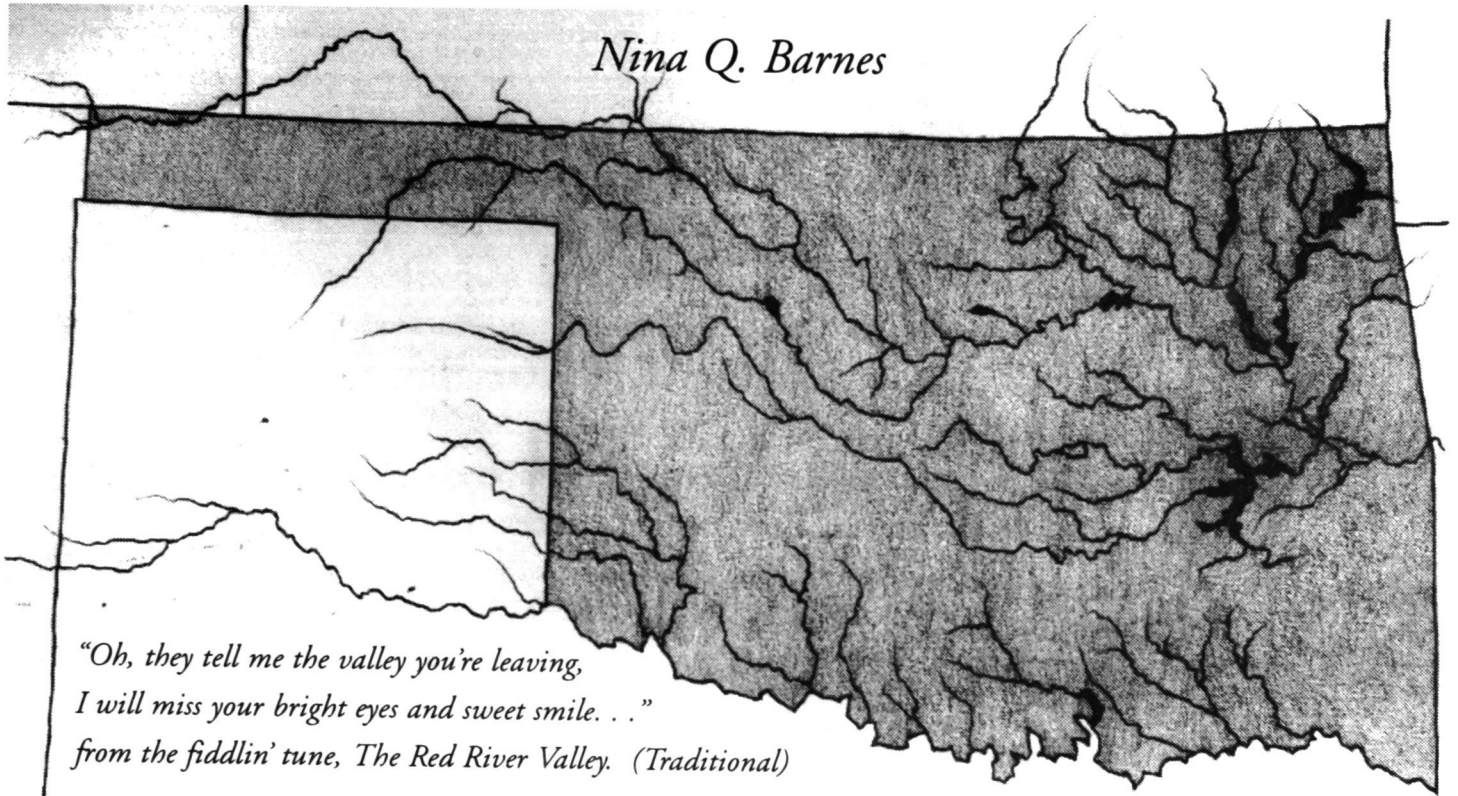
From a soothing stream to a sluggish trickle
to a bustling pathway to a violent current,
the changing moods of the beautiful
South Canadian River . . .

unpredictable.



Oklahoma Rivers

Nina Q. Barnes



*"Oh, they tell me the valley you're leaving,
I will miss your bright eyes and sweet smile. . ."
from the fiddlin' tune, The Red River Valley. (Traditional)*

Oklahoma owes much to the surrounding states: Colorado, New Mexico, Texas, Kansas, where fountains of water spring forth in the high ground, tumble down rocky faces, carve canyons from red sandstone, spread themselves through broad green meadows, and gurgle over riffles and shallows, seeking, *seeking and finding*, the lower ground.

The Arkansas springs up at the Continental Divide near Leadville in Colorado, tumbling down from those pristine highlands to rush past Salida, Canon City and headlong into The Royal Gorge near Pueblo, through Kansas meadows, diving southward at Arkansas City, Kansas, to plunge into the home of the Red Man: Oklahoma. The Neosho and Verdigris enter from Kansas, the Neosho clear and cold in agate bluffs. Washington Irving wrote of their beauty and bounty during his travels by steamboat in the 1800's; the Arkansas was navigable from Fort Smith to mid-Kansas

in that century. One might book passage at Fort Smith, or at St. Louis, traveling first down the mighty Mississippi. Our Alabama ancestors of the Cherokee Nation booked passage at Tallapoosa, traveling up to the Ohio, down to the Mississippi, down river to the Arkansas, west on the Arkansas to Hoyt, Oklahoma. They migrated overland by train and wagon to the West, settling on both sides of the North and Salt Forks of the Red.*

The Cimarron, fabled in legend, story and song: *Cimarron Roll On*, and the movie *Cimarron*, springs up in New Mexico below Raton Pass, flowing easterly. At the time of the Battle for Mexican Independence, settlers traveling the Santa Fe Trail were escorted by U.S. Cavalry units. The trail bosses had discovered the Cimarron Cutoff to Santa Fe, saving days of rough travel into Colorado and over the Raton Pass, a crossing of much danger because of the steepness of the terrain.

Coming *down*, while braking, was the more difficult.

During one crossing, the train made an encampment. Three raw recruits dashed, disregarding warnings, to the Cimarron, plunging into the cool waters, and lolling on the willowed banks. Their blood flowing down the river precipitated many battles between the Indians and trail riders; when their scalped bodies were laid to rest beside the Cimarron, the trail riders vowed revenge.

A shortage of horses in St. Louis would have delayed a wagon train, had not the trail boss been convinced by an entrepreneur to purchase his oxen. Much to the amazement of some, the oxen were much the superior animals for pulling the Conestogas, more amiable, more hardy, more stamina between watering holes. During June of 1849, J.W. McCarty of Boone County, Missouri, was observed driving his oxen and wagon down the Santa Fe Trail, crossing the Cimarron in the majestic high plains of the Oklahoma Panhandle, living his dream of finding gold in California. This determined, the red-headed Irishman persevered in the gold fields until, at last, he had to sell the oxen and wagon in order to eat. He found no gold. He took passage on a freighter at San Francisco, and worked as a deckhand, around The Horn, up the east coast of South America to New Orleans, up the Mississippi past the Arkansas to the Missouri, up the Missouri to a creek where he took a small skiff and rowed back to his homeland, there to marry my mother's mother's mother, his wanderlust cured for all time.*

The North Canadian and South Canadian begin in New Mexico, widely apart. Meandering as many smaller rivers and creeks in and out of Oklahoma and across the Texas Panhandle before their muddy waters unite to form the North Canadian, it flows from the God-kissed buttes of Beaver county into lower Oklahoma, past the

"Glass Mountains," that amazing sparkling micarta caprock standing atop red sandy bluffs, carved against the bluest of skies; in sandy bottoms, thick with wild plum, blackberry, Indian Peach, 'possum grape, willow, soft cedar, and the ever majestic kingly cottonwood. Halving the state as they pass Oklahoma City, today, Lake Eufaula receives their waters, impounded in the Kerr-McClellan Waterway Lock and Dam, before joining the Arkansas flowing into Fort Smith.

The Mighty Red, that snake of a river serving as the total southern boundary of Oklahoma, separating her from Texas, is born of a multitude of rivers, creeks, arroyos, draws and prairie dog towns. Indeed, Prairie Dog Town Fork of the Red is formed below Canyon, Texas, when comes together the waters of Palo Duro Creek tumbling through Palo Duro Canyon, along with Tierra Blanca Creek and Frio Draw, (their headwaters above Clovis, New Mexico) come together. Above, at a point below Amarillo between Claude and Groom, Texas, lie the beginnings of the Salt Fork of the Red. Farther east and north, Sweetwater Creek feeds into the North Fork of the Red below White Deer and Pampa, Texas, rushing easterly into Oklahoma between Sweetwater and Erick, bridged on Highway 30. Passing Sayre, the river plunges southward between Delhi and Retrop, between Granite and Lone Wolf, between Warren and Cold Springs, nearer Snyder than Altus, joined by Otter Creek east of Humphreys, between Tipton and Hess to the Prairie Dog Town Fork. The Salt Fork pushes into Oklahoma in mid-Harmon County easterly until past Mangum, where it plunges southward past Martha, Victory, Olustee and Elmer into the Big Red. The configuration of these rivers suggests a rapid drop in elevation along that portion of Oklahoma once known as Old Greer County, Texas.



Old Greer County**

James Calvin Clark, an opportunist, had taken up an improved claim, abandoned on the north bank of the North Fork of the Red, "improved" with a half-dugout and rude barn structures. He transported his family from the civilized towns of rural Arkansas, by horse-drawn covered wagon, ferrying across rivers. (His wife, Josephine McCarty, is the daughter of the aforementioned James McCarty.) They were between Lone Wolf and Granite, Oklahoma Territory, still about eight miles from their claim. One of the horses was "down," lying on its side, bloated and groaning. Father was studying the dilemma, pondering a course of action.

An exclamation from one of the teen-aged boys startled him, "Papa, look, someone is coming, yonder."

They all gazed toward the east where dust rose from the wagon-track signaling the rapid approach of a horse-drawn buggy driven by a bronzed man with black hair flowing out like a cape behind him. The handsome, strong Indian brought his stallion to a halt, rearing in a cloud of dust, halting as rapidly as he had rushed headlong across the prairie.

"What name?" he said.

"I am James Clark, and this is my wife and children. What is your name?"

"I Chief. Lone Wolf. What wrong, horse?" said the man.

"Well, I don't know. He was fine last night."

The Chief said, "Horse sick. What feedum horse?"

James replied, "Corn."

Chief says, "Show me corn."

James took corn from the gunny sack, and handed an ear to the chief.

The Chief pulled back the husk, rubbed the cob between his hands, and showed it to James. "See. Corn

full of smut. Smut make horse sick. Next time, dry corn, rub corn off cob. Keep dry. No smut. How you use horse?"

James replied, "We use the team to plow the claim, farm the land."

Chief says, "Horse sick. One horse no good." He leaped into the buggy seat, slapped reins, cracked a bull-whip over the ears of the horse, disappearing to the west just as he came, in clouds of dust down the wagon track, his long black hair flying in the wind above his bare bronzed torso.

James and his family slowly made their way to the claim, arriving well past dark. Next day, at mid-morning, the boys were surprised to see two young Indian braves approaching on beautiful spotted ponies, leading a stallion of beautiful proportion.

One spoke, "Where Papa?"

The boys replied, (just a little frightened), "He's out in the fields."

The brave spoke again, "Chief says, 'Take horse, give Papa.'"

He leaned down, placing the reins into the boy's hands. Spinning around, ponies rearing, the two young Braves dashed off eastward.

When Papa came in from his work in the fields, he was alarmed at the sight of the magnificent horse, gift of Chief Lone Wolf. He saddled the horse and rode to the nearest neighbor. After he related the strange events of the past days, he asked, "How should I pay the Chief for this horse?"

"No!," replied the neighbor. "You must not try to pay for the horse. To do that would be a terrible insult to the Chief. Instead, use the horse to raise your crops, then take the Chief part of your harvest."

The beautiful horse worked all summer; the crops



were bountiful. James wondered what he should take to the Chief. There were vegetables, turnips, and pumpkins. James thought perhaps pumpkins would be best. All the children helped fill the wagon box until pumpkins were rolling off onto the field. They were laughing at the golden treasure. The two older boys, Andrew and Hugh, and James rode the pumpkins over to the Chief's lodge at Lone Wolf, Oklahoma Territory.

"We have a gift for the Chief," James said.

The Chief accepted the pumpkins, pleased to hear of their fine harvest. He welcomed them to his lodge.

The Rough Riders and Teddy Roosevelt

Oklahoma Rough Riders were loved and respected by President Teddy Roosevelt because of their bravery during the charge up San Juan Hill. He regularly came to their Rough Rider Reunions, camping in the wilds.

A group of Texans joined with the Oklahoma Rough Riders in organizing for Teddy a wolf hunt. Arrangements were made with Chief Lone Wolf to host the men and assist with the best hunting. Hugh Clark was at the Chief's lodge, observing the banquet from the kitchen door.

Teddy rose and raised a toast to the hospitality of Chief Lone Wolf. The men of the Rough Riders, rose and joined the toast. Teddy toasted the bravery of the Oklahoma Rough Riders. There was cheering and laughter.

The sumptuous meal was of every choice game, fowl, and fish, roasted over open fires, vegetables of every kind, pumpkin pies and berry cobblers, fresh milk and cream. After the meal, the guests were directed to the many bedrooms upstairs in the lodge. The Chief spoke to all to continue to enjoy themselves.

"You find sleep upstairs. Chief go to tipi." Chief Lone Wolf rose from the banquet table, exited the lodge

and entered his tipi which stood nearby.

The next day, Teddy and the Rough Riders made camp on the south side of the North Fork of the Red, directly opposite the Clark homestead. Every morning or evening, a few Rough Riders crossed the river, purchasing bread, 10¢ a loaf, eggs, a quarter a dozen, corn, \$1 a bushel, and filling their barrels with water from the well. Every evening, their talking, laughing and singing floated over the water. During the day, they rode to the hunt, returning at evening.

Following church on Sunday, the Clark family ate a noon meal and rested from their labors. This Sunday, Andrew and Hugh asked their father to be allowed to cross over the river to visit their friends, the Dean and Morris boys. Papa almost never said no, and the boys crossed the river. Near sundown of the most wonderful, sunny afternoon, the boys returned home to find a freshet boiling down the Red from West Texas. Here was the dilemma: Papa allowed them to go, expecting them to return and take up their chores. They dared not try to cross over. So they boldly stepped in and made a swim for it, but they were being carried away, and were yelling for help, when the Rough Riders saw their plight. They had managed to near a bank where the men helped pull them ashore. Two of the men saddled horses, and after waiting a bit for them to regain their strength, carried them safely across the river to the north shore.

Fishing Oklahoma Rivers and Streams

Inspired by the writings of Washington Irving and others, our Kansas ancestors wintered in Oklahoma Territory to take advantage of the hunting and fishing in 1880-1889. A large party of men trailed down from Cowley County to near the Cimarron River at Crescent City, camping near springs. They brought wagon-loads of empty barrels, salt, powder, and lead for the hunting.



When their barrels were filled with dressed and salted game and fish of every kind, one of the older men drove a team and loaded wagon back to the Kansas colony to supply them with meat for the long, harsh winter. There would be sweet bear meat, deer, elk, rabbit, catfish, and bony fishes; it was not unusual to have fishes up to 100 pounds in weight.

In 1940, Garfield County folk spent long weekends on the rivers. There would be caravans of autos pulling boats on trailers, loaded with fried chicken, cakes pies, and perhaps freezers of "cream" to start off the first evening. We would have spent Thursday evening "stubble-fielding, hunting jackrabbit bait," driving across stubble-fields with our headlights scaring up jackrabbits. We all helped cut cubes of meat for catfish bait, packing it into jars. We would already have filled several jars with "dough bait," often known as "stink bait."

After unloading the boats into the river, the trailers were adapted for use as serving tables for the food. We

slept on cots under mosquito nets, outdoors, watching the whirling stars through the leaves of the trees. The most wondrous of times was river fireworks of the 4th of July.

Now, we go to the river in air-conditioned campers, buy bait and licences at the bait-stand. In winter, we rent space in a heated dock; when we bring home our trophies, we say, "We've been fishing! Where? Up on the River!"

**West to the Short Grass*, Arnold Barnes, Richardson, TX 1992

**The McCarty/Clark/Larue; Graham/Rose/Van Horn; Quier/Sipe Families*. Nina Q. Barnes, Tulsa. First Edition, 1988.

**Dictated by Leslie Hugh Clark, age 94, Wilson, OK, 1991; and Naomi Addieline Clark Quier, age 87, Woodward, OK, 1992.

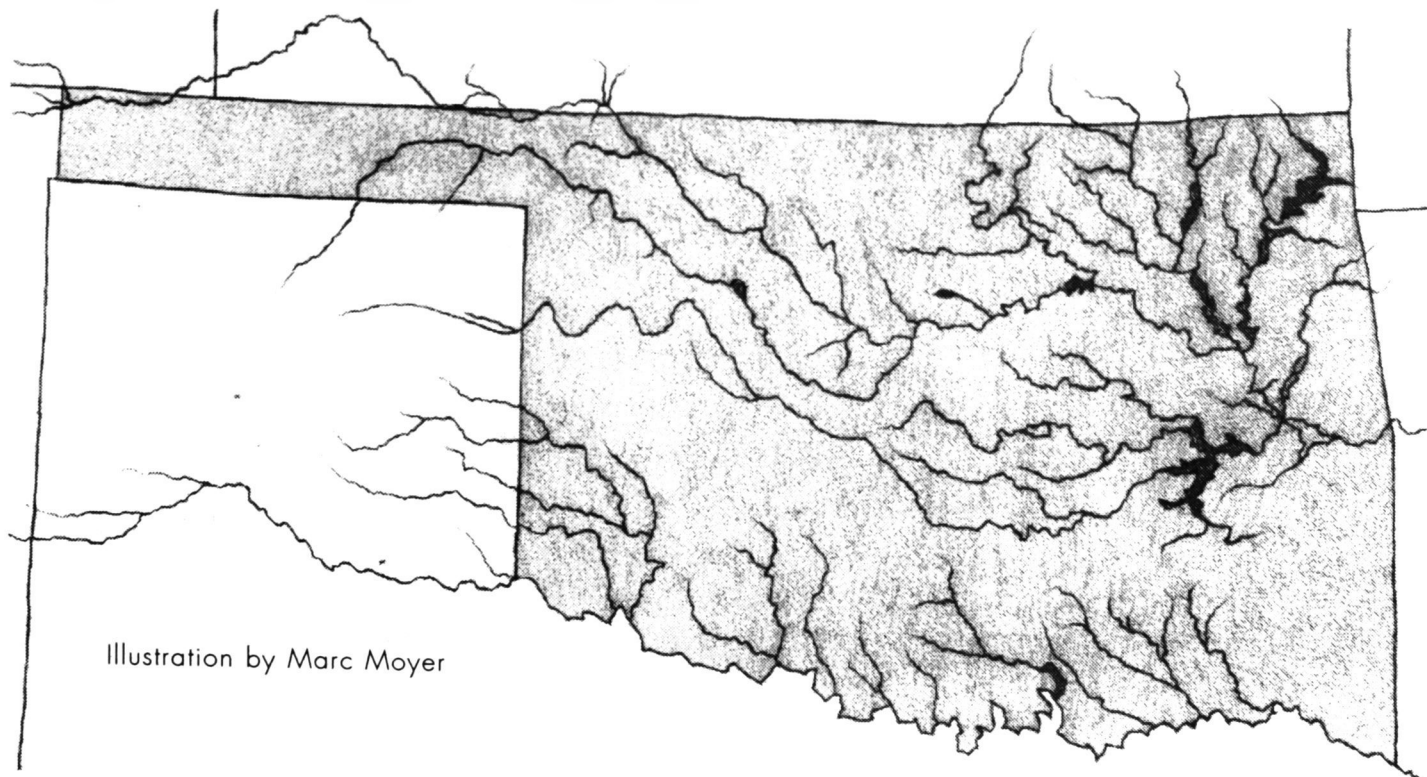


Illustration by Marc Moyer

You Need To Know About Rain

Elmer Suderman

"You need to know about rain," my father
said, not knowing I was not going to be
a farmer, like everyone else in our family
had been for as long as he could remember,

and would learn all I need to know about
rain from the evening weather forecasts.

"Rain isn't just rain and, hard as it
is to believe, drought here more common,

not just any rain is welcome. A pissing rain,
lasting for several days, can like Noah's flood,
drown out everything, especially wheat,
in the Spring, or a strong wind pouring

sheets of rain across the prairie
can — and does — tangle the wheat stalks
in the muddy ground making it almost
impossible for the header to pick up.

That's as bad as the gully washers
which cut up the land and leave gashes
so deep you have to be very careful
when you cross them with the tractor and combine.

What the gullies don't tear away dries so hard
that topsoil blows all the way into Kansas
where they don't need it as much as we do.
Hardest to believe, but it's true, a thunderstorm
roaring in at the end of an afternoon

Illustration by Jan Bradfield



when it's been over one hundred degrees
in the shade, burns the wheat, steaming it
on the stalk so it won't pay to combine.

Most important though, you have to learn,
and it takes a long time to learn,
and some never learn, that it doesn't
do any good to know all this because there's

not a damn thing you can do about rain.
You just have to be philosophical
about rain and learn, the quicker the better,
that the rains start when they start

and stop when they stop; no sooner, no later."



shelter

by

Laura Marsee

when very young, i watched my father build a bomb shelter
in the hillside behind our house. returning ragged from the office
each day, he dug deep into the evening, brow slick, burrowing through
thick red earth, manipulating that hillside to accommodate
the four of us in the event of the unthinkable. he hauled in timber
to erect a sturdy frame, poured the concrete floor and dumped
tons of earth to shield his amateur fortress against the onslaught
of radiation we'd been warned was sure to come. the last thing
he did was construct a trellis, paint it white
and plant a row of red climbing roses, once seed grass invaded
demolished sod, and wildflowers took root once more.
every spring, the black bunker in the hill exploded
in a fiery barrage of color. i played in secret in its cool
musty recess, always mindful of its primary function.

years passed, i grew to adulthood, and still the sky remained
free of invisible death; the long-propheesied apocalypse
had not come. i marched off to college, sold my levi's
to the russkies and began hearing "socialism" whispered
a little louder among my long-haired friends.
i can catch the moscow evening news on c-span, order
red army medals by mail (no CODs) if i want.
my father will be fifty-seven next year, a weary veteran
of the cold war. his shelter still stands, now cluttered with
assorted tools and junk: garden rakes, old paint cans, a rusted
wheelbarrow, and of course his faithful spade and shovel.
his labor was not wasted— it has proven useful during tornadoes.
it seems more of a comfort to me now in this capacity;
a shelter from god's wrath instead of our own.



Faith

for my daughter, who never knew her

William Jolliff

Six months illegal, cramped in a schooner,
a girl with your chin and crippled hip
jostled all the way to Oklahoma. Her father,
too much gambler, too little farmer, drove
her mother mad. Loving him wasn't easy.

Back in Ohio, Faith became a teacher,
and the old sooner cried, "I'm sorry,
I'm so sorry about her," by hitching
the buggy at dawn, wrapping fire-bricks
beneath her feet. Until she married another,

featured like him, but less steelish—
less blue in the mind. What she gave him
honed a sharper feeling, and they had
children, some better, some worse.
One of them had me. And now, daughter,

you have *her* features. It's faded,
but today the face in the frame is clearer
to me than your own. She's in your hip
and chin, leading the faithful, cycled life
of stars, swallowed again by the prairie moon.



Doodle Bug Hill

Maggie Aldridge Smith

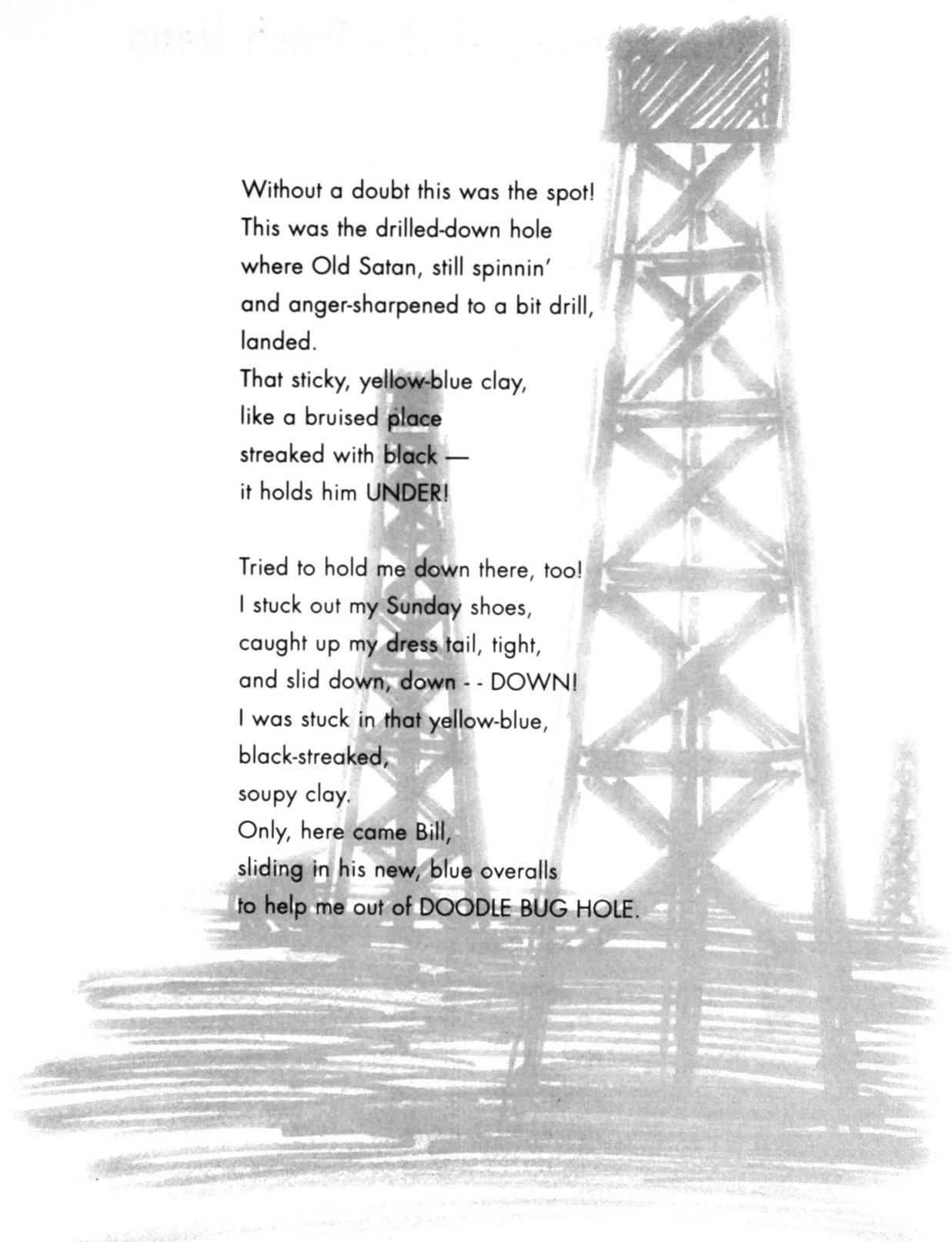
That was the name we shared
about that slip-sand, huge hole.

Just like a doodle bug creates
in a head-down, go-around stance.

You had to climb
high up its fill-sand sides
to see down into its shadowy depths.
From this top
broad fields of rowed cotton,
red-green kafir fields,
tallbroom corn and,
the lacy spread vines of melons
were visible for shimmering-sunny miles.
It claimed the better part
of a quarter-section corner
of Johnson's lease land.
When he erected barb wired fencing,
he left the hill outside.
It was a forbidding spot
anybody could have!

The only growing things
were stickers, goatheads,
nettles, burs, seedticks
and big, white flowers of
rancid Jimson weed, flowering.





Without a doubt this was the spot!
This was the drilled-down hole
where Old Satan, still spinnin'
and anger-sharpened to a bit drill,
landed.

That sticky, yellow-blue clay,
like a bruised place
streaked with black —
it holds him UNDER!

Tried to hold me down there, too!
I stuck out my Sunday shoes,
caught up my dress tail, tight,
and slid down, down - - DOWN!
I was stuck in that yellow-blue,
black-streaked,
soupy clay.
Only, here came Bill,
sliding in his new, blue overalls
to help me out of DOODLE BUG HOLE.

Illustrations by Scott Cummins



The Burning of the Trash Heap

for Marty Pops

Randy Prus

One seldom comes to a fire
without some understanding
of mortality, the clean lick
of flame, the awakened
night sky, the silhouette
of oak trees fully leafed
against drops of moon.

All this is true, yet one
naturally resists the
temptation to stare
the fire down, to look
elsewhere for answers
to a life that is
all too suddenly:
a trash heap, afire.

Tonight, while stepping
from the door, I was struck
by the all-too-familiar,
yet seldom seen, burning
of garbage, lying in a field
down the street, across
some stretch of land,
not distant, but near.
I had come to gaze at Orion,
maybe notch the full moon's
course across backyards,
& to smoke a cigarette.



One's life grows in increments
of petal'd light & smoke.
Flame is quickly engulfed
by the idea of flame, the
measurements of sky erode
in the orange-yellow light
of the burning trash heap.

If it were only fire, the night
would not contest its vigour:
but the burning of the possible,
a trash heap, one's life, calls
even moonlight accountable.



Trying to Forget Our Past—Why Do We Do It?

Alvena Bieri

Many of us Oklahomans have an odd, ambivalent attitude toward studying our state's history. Some of us may feel like the man who refused to study genealogy. He said he was afraid if he looked too closely into his own background that he would discover scoundrels, crazy people, and horse thieves. Or, like many "well-educated" people, we may look with slight disdain on the history of this state because deep down we suspect it's all about dust storms, poverty, hardship, and eccentric governors. But more likely, Oklahoma citizens, like many people everywhere, just don't think in historical terms.

H. Wayne and Anne Hodges Morgan write in *Oklahoma: A History* (1981) that "Oklahomans do not seem conscious of their history. Like most Americans, they are oriented toward the future and appreciate history only in the vivid anecdote or visible relic. They seldom reflect on historic attitudes as shaping the future."

The Morgans' observation is not new. Two earlier writers of the 1920s and 30s, James S. Buchanan, University of Oklahoma president and Edward Everett Dale, professor of history at the same school write in their text of 1924, *A History of Oklahoma* that many teachers and pupils in that time too did not find Oklahoma history "an interesting subject." They wisely blamed poor, dull textbooks and poor, dull teaching. And they set out in what they called their "little book" to help overcome these deficiencies.

Arrell Gibson takes a slightly different view in *Oklahoma: A History of Five Centuries*. Gibson assumes that laying out the myriad facts of Oklahoma history will make it stand bravely on its own. He writes that the

"American West is probably the most popular single subject in history today, and all the fixtures of the American West...are basic in Oklahoma's past." But I'm sure he was thinking mainly of his own circle of historian friends and colleagues, not particularly of high school students and the Oklahoma public.

Given what they're up against—our negative and ambiguous feelings about our history, and perhaps history in general, historians of Oklahoma have bent over backwards to make our past interesting—even romantic. Whether this is actually possible is questionable. Homer Knight of the Oklahoma State University History Department used to tell his graduate students preparing to teach history that there is a distinction between what he called "making history interesting" and, on the other hand, "getting students interested in history." There's a small, but significant difference there.

Trying to make things interesting or not, Buchanan and Dale show a most optimistic view of Oklahoma's history from their perspective—15 years or so after statehood. Being closer to the 19th than the 21st century, they were still bound to the upbeat, optimistic idea of the unfolding progress of humanity. They write of Oklahoma's past: "Through the whole amazing story runs the central thread—Progress. Everywhere and at every time progress is to be noted, in the steady and rapid rise of a vast region from savagery through pastoral life and pioneer agriculture, up through all the states of human society to towns and cities and all the complex organizations of commercial and industrial life. With such a theme and such material, can the history of Oklahoma fail to be interesting?" In their final pages,



these writers are absolutely eloquent about how far the state had come in such a short time since 1907. They go on about orchards with "rosy-cheeked apples," new red barns, beautiful little cities, paved roads and many other artifacts of Progress.

Arrel Gibson, writing several generations later, keeps up the tradition of complimentary references to our Oklahoma settler ancestors. In fact, it would be hard to find a general outline of our history which does NOT contain at least a few adjectives like "vigorous," "ambitious," and "courageous" as applied to our venerable forbears. In his last chapter, Gibson worries about our image problem, that old albatross still hanging around our collective Oklahoma neck, that unfortunate relic of the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl. But then he slips into an almost chamber-of-commerce tone, laying out all the cultural, artistic, and commercial successes of Oklahoma.

The Morgans also express concern, not so much about Oklahoma's image, but about our future and the realities of providing adequate support for education and the arts. They are good at broad interpretations of Oklahoma history, such as their belief that it is the land, the physical land itself, which has defined our history. In their thinking there's also a sense that we may have missed the boat somewhere. They believe we have suffered from lost opportunities as a state: "the road not taken and the ideal not embraced," as they put it.

The study of Oklahoma history in our public schools is still required by the legislature. But here again there's a small ambiguity. The State Department of Education reports that the law itself is a little unclear on the place of Oklahoma history in the high school curriculum. The traditional requirement has been one semester in the ninth grade. But I was told that now it's also possible to incorporate Oklahoma history into another

history course. While that idea might be all right, even good in the hands of a skilled teacher, my suspicion is that it's really a step backward.

Our past really is glorious in many ways. Reading about it might get you, as it did me, in Professor Knight's words, "interested in history."



Illustration by John Peters

Wordless

William G. Feeler

"Men never talk about feelings," you told the sales clerk.
"They can talk for hours about sports or the weather or sex.
Most don't even have any vocabulary for feelings." "Yeah,"
She answered, "I think they think too much—*sometimes*
I think they think too much. Sometimes they don't think
At all. 'Oh, I didn't think—' they say. But what drives
Me crazy is when I ask a man about his feelings and he
Just sits there like the Lincoln Monument—saying nothing.
'What are you thinking?' I ask. 'Nothin'.' And I say
'No, really, what are you thinking?' And he answers,
'Nothin'—just nothin'.' How can you think nothing?
Here's this man who can argue about Joe Montana
Or the stock market or Gorbachev till Jesus comes back—
Go on for hours—but his brain stops altogether when I
Mention feelings." "Yeah," you said, "I know what you mean."

Last night the stars were in your hair, and your eyes
Were diamonds. You left the table to freshen up,
And I breathed in from the wake of your leaving
Enough perfume to drown all thinking. Later, as we danced,
I felt our two hearts beating. That's not so easy
To put into words, it's all been said before.
I just said "I love you" and you answered, "I love you too"
And, crushing velvet against me, kissed me into oblivion.



This morning you were laughing with a man I'd never seen,
Remarking about the pleasures of a really fine wine.
When I walked in, you handed me a half a smile
And went on. He left, and you walked out wordless for coffee,
Bringing me a cup. Setting your coffee on the desk, you sat,
Crossed your arms, crossed your legs, away from me.
"What's wrong?" I asked. "Nothing—just a lot to do today,"
You answered, then carried on with small talk about the cat,
Susan down the hall, a Filipino vegetable market owner.
Like a pot boiled and cooled with the lid on you were—closed.

There is a fish that uses its tongue to mimic a worm
So as to catch and eat other fish, a plant that mimics
The markings of a deadly spider so as to keep away its predators.
So scientists say. And then there's you.

Today you treated me like a water snake. Tonight you want
To know if I love you, only you. I do not answer.
I do not answer fast enough. Feelings are all I have—
Tongue of fish, spider, fooled fish—who am I?
These images go through my mind, and I'm aware
Of their lack of sense. Do I love you? Do you mean 'tonight'?
Or do you mean always? Will you swallow me if I go for the bait?
Did I love you last night, with the stars and diamonds
I don't remember where? When your voice was a balm
And your words a strand of Debussy? Do I love you?

I almost answer, and you ask again and then answer for me.



A-Wreathing We Will Go

Keith Long

Summer ago last, my wife Anna decided we needed more rocks in the yard. Not gravel, mind you, but big rocks we could stack along the flower beds “to bring the eyes to the flowers.”

“But flowers don’t have eyes,” I said.

“I mean the eyes of people passing by.”

To make a long story as short as possible, she and I drove the dirt roads in the county, found a place where some rocks had been graded up, and got out and filled the pickup bed up with them. In no time at all — say four days and four trips — we had enough rocks to surround our flower beds.

I discovered very quickly that I have no talent at rock placement. Everytime I put one down, Anna exclaimed “not like that!” She would then step over, move the rock a millimeter or two, and stand back in satisfaction, hands on hips.

“Oh,” I said.

When we (read: she) were (was) finished, Anna looked around the yard. “We need more flower beds,” she said.

I was able to talk her out of that one, but I’ve found it domestically soothing to go along with her on most of her “crafty” ideas. Like this Christmas season. Last Christmas, because I had my own family and my new in-law family to consider, the Christmas joy went up two-fold, but so did the Christmas bill. Sometime in January, shivering because the gas had been turned off and squinting because of the lack of electricity, Anna and I sat down and computed the cost of Christmas. We figured the preliminary cost at \$800. Sales tax and batteries were not included.

“Well, next Christmas we’ll just make all our presents,” Anna said.

“And what will we make?” I asked. “Rock beds?”

“I have a lot of crafty-type ideas,” my wife said.

And she did.

So we did. Make this year’s presents, I mean.

She created these wreaths, made out of some typical form of stink-weed which literally litters the countryside. I had the task of collecting said weeds. I would go out in a pasture, without permission, and pull these weeds, putting them in a trash bag, while Anna sat on the hood of the wagon and came up with crafty ideas.

“What kind of animal is that?” she called one day.

I looked up from the weeds. “Cows,” I said.

“Will they hurt you?” she asked.

“No, they’re tame.”

The next minute I was hurdling the barb wired fence. Someone was raising untame cows, which, it seemed, were very protective of their stinkweed. I didn’t lose much during the trip, save for the ripped jeans, the 37 stitches, my favorite cap, which was trampled, and a whole trash sack of stinkweed.

When we got home, Anna made a “short list” of the store-bought materials she would need to make the wreaths. The list included hot glue, hot-glue gun, floral wire, floral tape, other floral stuff, 47 colors of ribbon, 23 packages of potpourri, 18 packages of baby’s breath, tiny birds (preferably stuffed), model log cabins, glitter, styrofoam, craft sticks, and one per each of every other article in Wal-Mart’s arts and crafts department.

Anna’s mind ran towards wreaths this year. A week later, she asked me if there were any good grapevines



around. Had I been smart and learned from the untamed cow adventure, I would've told her no. But I said yes, that in fact, I knew where there were jungles of grapevines.

I got to harvest grapevines for the next wreath project. It is a harder task than it might look. I can understand now how Tarzan could swing on them. They are attached, way up in the trees. My job was to pull these vines down, while Anna sat on the hood of the wagon and thought up crafty stuff. I was doing okay until I became a little ambitious and went for a vine about two inches in diameter. I had to put my weight behind it, so to speak, and wound up rolling down an embankment, coiling myself in grapevine, and settling, finally against the front tire of the wagon. I didn't lose much, save for the ripped jeans, the 37 stitches, my favorite cap, which was rolled to oblivion. The vine, fortunately, seemed unbruised.

Anna looked up from her crafts magazine. "Are you hurt?" she asked.

"Not too much," I said. "Just scraped a lot."

"Good, because there's a really good vine over there."

After I collected enough vine, and went to Wal-Mart and bought out the power-tool department, Anna began work on the vine wreaths. She finished the first and

stood back to admire. "Gosh, but I do good work, huh?" she asked.

I moaned something through my bandages, which she must've taken for encouragement because she sat down and made another.

Last week, Anna finally had enough wreaths for everyone on our Christmas list. They took up the entire laundry room.

"How's that?" she said, waving at the stack of wreaths. "And all by our own labor."

"Right," I said. "But I did take the trouble to add up our expenditures."

"And what were they?"

"Well, taking into account my wardrobe, the emergency room, the gas mileage, and the misc. stuff, the cost of the wreaths comes out to \$1,200."

"Well, next year won't be nearly as expensive. I've already figured out what to use for wreath material—cattails."

I moaned something through my bandages that she must've taken for discouragement, because we haven't spoken since.



If I Could Invent a Name

Elva Lauter

Somewhere there's an owl
in flight
even as I speak,
even as I write this poem.
Dark wings hover
over the earth
in the enormous cerulean blossom
of the sky,
casting a shadow
in late afternoon
on the pulsing ground,
over me,
expectant
as Athena
waiting in her Grecian temple
for a final wisdom.
I feel its softness
light as a dropped feather
caressing my hair,
the tips of my fingers.



Not quite twilight,
It hasn't begun the hunt.
I know nature can be cruel
but, also, beautiful
as a wild bird
riding the air.
Perhaps it's not so bad
for death to come
on shadowy wings,
folding us close
until we float up,
up into the endless stars,
carried into their astonishing light.



Illustration by Velvet Rogers



Beholding the Bare Land: A Discussion of Wallace Stevens's "The Snow Man"

Helen F. Maxson

One of the greatest American poets, Wallace Stevens (1879-1955), lived a double life. After studying at Harvard University, he took a job as a journalist on the New York Herald Tribune. From there, he went to New York Law School, and then into the practice of law. Ultimately, he came to work for the Hartford Accident and Indemnity Company, serving the company as vice-president for twenty-one years. It was the career of a successful businessman, a life spent in the world of finance and legality.

However, not many of Stevens's business associates knew that their colleague was writing some of the finest verse in English of the twentieth century. He was a formal and modest man. Intimate with few, he did not discuss his literary life at work. Stevens once told a reporter that "it gives a man character as a poet to have this daily contact with a job" (qtd. in Ellman 244), but he lived most fully when he was apart from the routines of business, working in the world of language, images, and ideas.

That his two lives were so distinct from each other may have shaped Stevens's thinking. Throughout his poetry, he sees the mind and the world as competitors, exploring the ways our imaginations can lighten or transform the difficult realities we live with. From Stevens's point of view, no fatherly God exists to tailor our lives more closely to our needs and desires. Like the many writers of the early part of this century who did not share the traditional religious faith of the previous century,

Stevens turned to art and the imagination to find a way to make sense of life. He believed that if we could first accept reality as it is, our imaginations could then, momentarily, transform it into what we want it to be. This strategy, Stevens thought, is available to us to use repeatedly, as long as we admit to ourselves that it does not have a permanent effect, and that between transformations we must go back to reality as it is without benefit of our imagined improvements. Stevens grants us only brief escapes from the difficulties of our lives, but in the world as he saw it, they are better than nothing.

In Stevens's famous poem "The Snow Man" (1921), the image of a wide, bare land brings to mind the emptiness that can characterize our lives. The poem tells us that we must accept the emptiness, letting the land shape our minds before our minds can shape the land.

The Snow Man

One must have a mind of winter
to regard the frost and the boughs
Of the pine-trees crusted with snow;

And have been cold a long time
To behold the junipers shagged with ice,
The spruces rough in the distant glitter

Of the January sun; and not to think
Of any misery in the sound of the wind
In the sound of a few leaves,



Which is the sound of the land
 Full of the same wind
 That is blowing in the same bare place

For the listener, who listens in the snow,
 And, nothing himself, beholds
 Nothing that is not there and the nothing that is.
 (1921)

The first six and a half lines of the poem tell us that we must take winter on its own terms, assuming “mind[s] of winter” and being “cold a long time.” Once we do, we can appreciate the beauty that winter possesses: the crust of snow, the shagging of ice, the “distant glitter/ Of the . . . sun.” Already, our willingness to accept reality has given us a transforming perspective on it.

Then the transforming accelerates. The poem is one long sentence. In its more slowly-paced beginning, the sentence is broken by two semi-colons, each bringing the reader to a near stop. But once we appreciate the beauty of the January sun, the pace of the sentence picks up to an unbroken flow punctuated only by the brief commas. The flow of the sentence, speeding up as it goes, evokes both the power of the wind that is “blowing in the same bare place” and the power of the imagination that is transforming it so that, for the listener in the snow, it contains no misery. Either way, it is a transforming energy, one unfriendly and one benevolent; the poem’s beauty suggests that benevolence prevails.

In fact, Stevens’s poetry makes the bare land beautiful. The “few leaves,” the “land/Full of . . . wind” the “bare place,” are all clear, elegant images that are somewhat romanticized by the wild scene they are part of,

and they pick up an extra vitality from the flowing, rhythmic language that describes them. Such is the power of poetry, and Stevens is using it to illustrate the power of the imagination that is the subject of the poem.

From the start, the poem has been about perception, using verbs like “regard” and “behold,” and talking about sound and listening. In the last stanza of the poem, the focus shifts from the land to the “listener” in the snow, as though the power of the wind and the imagination leads us, at its strongest, back to the perceiver who, even though he has adopted a mind of winter, shapes the scene in adopting it. He is the focal point of the poem, in a sense its source as well as its climax. Because “the listener who listens in the snow” has acquiesced to the bare landscape, accepting it on its own terms, he is “nothing himself.” He “beholds/Nothing that is not there,” inventing nothing. But when he beholds “the nothing that is,” he is granted a little bonus by the imagination. The phrase can be read in two ways. On one hand, the listener beholds emptiness: the nothingness that is there. But on the other hand, when he beholds this nothingness, he sees it as a presence, and understands, rather than suffers, from it. It is one of the glimpses beyond the empty world that imagination, when it accepts the empty world, can give us.

Not much of an escape, it is true. But this poem emphasizes only half of Stevens’s imaginative strategy: the process of becoming a man of snow when one is standing in the snow—the process, that is, of adapting one’s self to one’s reality. In other poems, Stevens emphasizes the imaginative power one can exert over one’s reality as a result of that adaptation. In “The Snow Man,” the landscape stays empty, even though we come to find beauty in it. But in the two final stanzas of “Tea



at the Palaz of Hoon," the speaker has a much more dramatic effect on his world.

Out of my mind the golden ointment rained,
And my ears made the blowing hymns they heard.
I was myself the compass of that sea.

I was the world in which I walked, and what I saw
Or heard or felt came not but from myself;
And there I found myself more truly and more strange.

The speaker envisions himself as a king, and his mind produces not only the perspective from which he sees his world, but also the royal elements of that world, the golden ointment and hymns. As compass of that world, the speaker is the standard by which all of it is circumscribed and understood. In fact, so much does the world adapt itself to his imaginings, that he becomes the world in which he walked. Everything that he perceives there comes from him—there is no reality outside himself to adapt to.

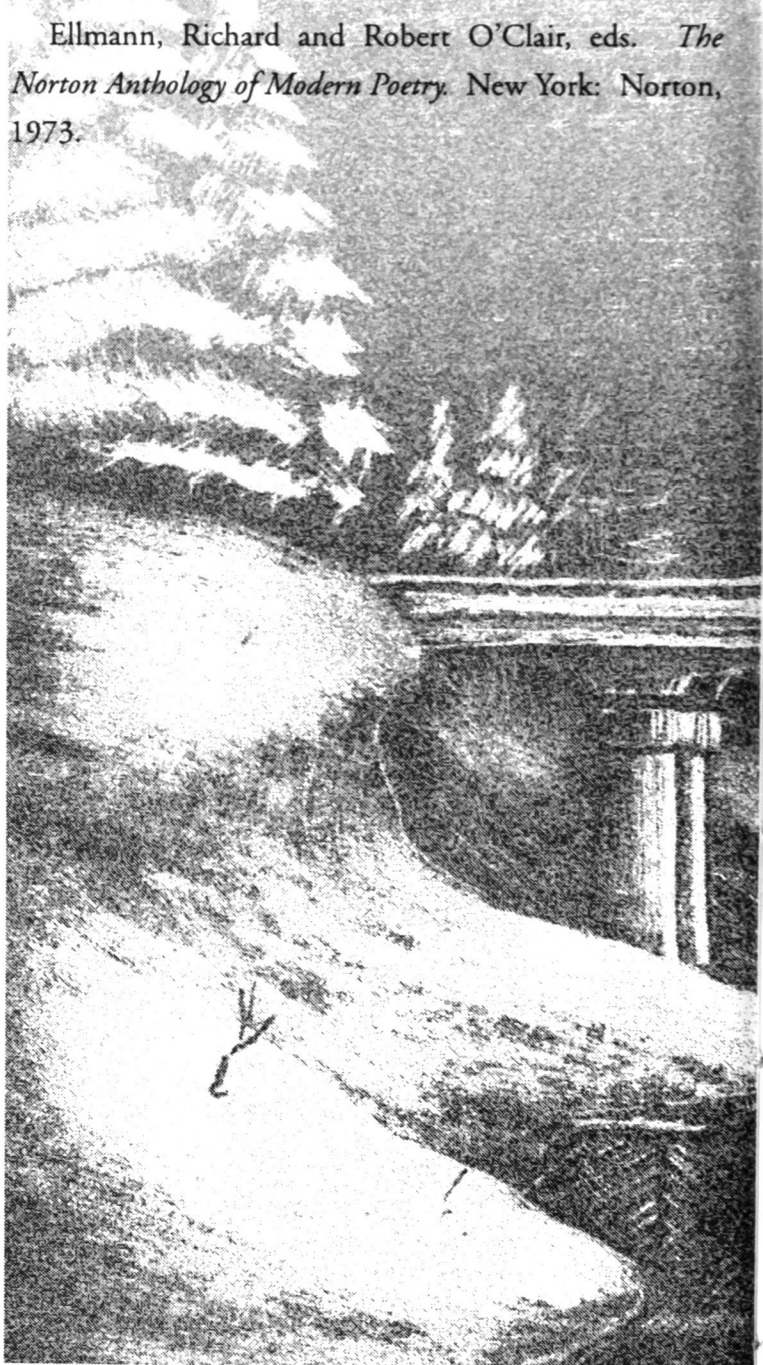
Furthermore, in transforming his world, the speaker transforms even himself. Just as he is the awed audience of the world made by his imagination, he becomes the audience of his new self: "I found myself . . ." He is both creator and created. In a sense, then, he has adapted himself to himself. The changes involved, are both true, in the sense that they impose nothing alien on him, and strange, in the sense that they change him to fit himself better. Thus he tells us that in the world he has made "I found myself more truly and more strange."

The two extremes of adapting one's self to one's world and recreating one's world with one's imagination are treated in countless ways throughout Stevens's poetry, along with countless descriptions of a balance between the two. On one hand, Stevens's view of life is

a bleak one: our deepest desires and needs are routinely frustrated. On the other, in its determination and imaginative energy his verse celebrates the power of desire over life, praising it to his reader in terms of beauty and hope.

Work Cited

Ellmann, Richard and Robert O'Clair, eds. *The Norton Anthology of Modern Poetry*. New York: Norton, 1973.





Written By Pavlov's Few, Sad, Last Surviving Dogs

Susanna Roxman

Aging dogs, shabby dogs,
shaggy and darkened like last year's haycocks,
we cannot forget what we were:
golden tangible proofs;
pioneers of the Surface.

How could we get over our puppyhood
in that garden of pale tiles
and stainlessly spouting steel fountains:
the Pavlovian Institute.

With what nostalgia we remember
the assistants' footfall at dusk,
their friendly bell, the vibrations
of their gong, a brazen full moon,
and all at once
that perfect service, those delicious dishes,
fragrance of porridge and pie,
crunching of toast and rusk.
Our tails were happy then, our ears elated,
our salivation made a lake.

Now not even a bone to split,
not even gristle to chew.



The Master gave up reporting,
became an object himself.
His coat doesn't bulge or billow.
The ghost of sugar clings to its cuffs.

A bell still buzzes, a gong clangs.
but there is nothing to follow,
no footsteps, no key in the lock.
Above all the succulent dinners are gone.
Pathetic, obedient, we sit waiting as before,
conditioned to believe in sequence,
in causality, matter, and motion.
We're caged in a fallacy, *ergo propter hoc*
We dabble in theories, dribble on the floor.
Our silver saliva is creating an ocean.

To stop reacting correctly
must be the last and slowest thing to learn.



Space-Walk

Sam Lackey

At a console, on a listening post in Turkey
Back in '62,
I heard a burning cosmonaut's last cries
Break up and fall like shards of crimson glass
Along the Black Sea coast.

They said this war was cold,
And space was not so dangerous.

Moments after every person's first space-walk,
Someone we've never seen steps through the light
And cuts the cord.
We seem to float; we gasp; we are soon lost.
A silver object turning slowly into space—
Across the stillness and the cold.
Only the liquid moon can draw us back around
To life.

I've watched the children.
They know. Yet some just have no gravity.
While others swim against the solar winds
And nibble all along the edge of
Everything!

My Alice, age 3.75, circles close as breath.
Then arcing out, she grabs her Happy Meal
And moves four tables
Into space.



Out in the horse lot,
She colonizes her bright patch of river sand.
Alone and not alone.
The four moons graze.
Dry Martian rivers ebb and flow beneath her touch.
The impact points are marked where she fell from her
Startled meteor.

She cannot see my line of sight, slenderest of threads
Trigger-ready for the sudden move.
I pivot, bodyguard.

Two days ago she slipped in silence from our porch.
Out through the rondo grass, across the alley
Into the heart of . . . what?
It could have been Brazil!

We launched within a gasp, hailing on all frequencies.
Our circles and our horror grew—layer upon layer/
Block upon block/alley upon alley.

These are a parent's little deaths.
Space-walks that lead us into darkness,
Out to where there is no air.

So I turned back, not daring to draw near . . .
Too soon.
But then I heard the words.
"Lela saw her go into the bush!"



A large hemispheric snowball bush
Wedged between wall and alleyway—a shattered nosecone—
Bright green surfaces ajar.
Scored by shadows black as space.
The green shield fragments held by some dark web
Of ribs and filaments.
It pushed hard against the wall and ground that forms
The impact point.

"She's there. There! See her dog's white fur?"

Out no-real-door she steps. Still as a photograph.
"Siegfried the Silent" at her side, a smiling little ghost with
jet black eyes.

"You said you would not hide!"

"Last time we all got hurt."

"Remember mother's fall?"

Still, we will never know what hatch she found, what
Fold in light, what shadow curtain she stepped through.
I know that they are everywhere;
And space has never been so dangerous.

I, too, would step on through the glass,
Into the hiding place of dark, and free, and back.
But like twin climbers on my line of sight
Alice and I now anchor each to each
Up the sheer face
Of this
Celestial
Craft.



CONTRIBUTOR'S NOTES

Nina Q. Barnes is a native of Garfield County, has lived and traveled over much of Oklahoma, the United States and overseas. She has compiled several genealogies chronologically back to 1500 and 1100 A.D., which take us backward through American history to our beginnings in the North and South American continents, then into Europe and the United Kingdom. Her work has been previously published in *Westview*.

Alvena Bieri, a native of Hobart, lives in Stillwater. She writes frequently for the *Oklahoma Observer* and is the book columnist for the *Stillwater News Press*. She is the author of *Romancing Oklahoma: A Celebration of Time and Place*. She is also interested in Oklahoma humor and has recently published a small collection of cowboy/sooner jokes.

David Drake is a Vietnam veteran who only began writing poetry last year at the age of forty-four. He has been published in *The Lyric*, *American Libraries*, *Tradition*, *Modern Haiku*, *Concho River Review*, and others. A hardback edition of his work will be published in 1995, entitled *Overdue Notice*. He is married to a native Oklahoman and is employed as a college library director.

William Feeler has taught for six years at Midland College at Midland, Texas. He holds a master's degree in creative writing from the University of Texas-Austin. His poems have appeared in *RiverSedge* and *Maverick*.

William Jolliff is the director of writing at Messiah College. His poems have appeared in *Midwest Quarterly*, *Spoon River Quarterly*, *San Jose Studies*, *Cumberland Poetry Review*, and others. He edits *The Rolling Coulter*.

Pat Kourt is the library media specialist for the Thomas Schools and has been writing for *Westview* since it began. Her husband, three sons, and she are all graduates of Southwestern Oklahoma State University.

Sam Lackey is a native of Tulsa and received his Ph.D. from Tulsa University in 1975. He has taught writing and literature at Southwestern since 1970. His poetry has been published in a dozen journals in the U.S. and Canada. His current writing, including "Mother Goose" which appeared in the Winter 1993 issue of *Westview*, is focused on his four-year-old daughter and will be titled *The Alice Chronicles*.

Elva Lauter has published recently in *California State Poetry Quarterly*, *White Sands Poetry Review*, and *Aura Literary Arts Magazine*. Besides poetry, she writes plays and travel articles. In August she will leave for a year in Japan where she will write and teach English.

Keith Long writes a weekly humor column for the *Marlow Review*.

Laura Marsee plans to receive her bachelor's degree from East Central University and hopes to continue studies at the graduate level and to eventually teach college English.

Helen Maxson teaches English at Southwestern. Ever since moving from the Northeast five years ago, she has marvelled at how much there is to see in the apparently empty landscapes of the plains.

Viki Pettijohn has lived in Florida, Texas, Virginia, and now Oklahoma. She has always been fascinated with the connection between people and the land on which they live.

Randy Prus is an Assistant Professor of English and Humanities at Southeastern Oklahoma State University. His poetry has appeared in *Texture*, *intent*, *The Buffalo Press*



CONTRIBUTOR'S NOTES

Anthology, and several poems are forthcoming in *First Intensity*. A chapbook of poems entitled *ICE* was recently published by Shuffaloff Press.

Susanna Roxman, born in Stockholm, received a Ph.D in Comparative Literature at Gothenburg, and writes both in Swedish and English. She contributes reviews and articles to the *Aftonbladet*, one of the biggest daily newspapers in Scandinavia. She also writes for periodicals such as *Artes*, of the Swedish Academy of Letters, and

Medusa, the only Swedish journal for classical studies. Three collections of her poetry have been published, and in 1987 she received a prize for five of her English poems—one of which is in this issue of *Westview*—in Hampton's International Poetry Contest, in New York.

Maggie Aldridge Smith, a retired teacher, has written nine books of poetry and fifteen books on history, biography, music (original words and music), and family genealogy.

Elmer Suderman, born in Fairview, Oklahoma, winner of one of the Seaton Awards of *The Kansas Quarterly* for 1986, has published poetry in *Wind Magazine*, *Descant*, *Forum* (Ball State University), *Cimarron Review*, *North Country Anvil*, *South Dakota Review*, *Midwest Quarterly*, *Loonfeather*, and many others. In addition to poetry he has published short stories, essays, and scholarly articles on American Literature. He is a professor emeritus at Gustavus Adolphus College, St. Peter, Minnesota.

MUSIC, THEATER, ART & LITERARY EVENTS

FEBRUARY

- 1 Show Choir Concert-SWOSU
- 3-4 All Region Honor Band-SWOSU
- 10 1995 Jazz Festival-SWOSU
- 16-18 SWOSU Theater Production- *Godspell*
- 19 Wind Ensemble Concert-SWOSU
- 23-25 SWOSU Theater Production- *Reckless*
- 28-Mar.1 Vocal Ensemble Concert-SWOSU

MARCH

- 2 Band Contest-SWOSU
- 7 "Let's Talk About It"-
..... *The Big Sleep* and *The Long Goodbye*
- 7 Panorama Event-Arkansas Repertory Theatre
..... *The Rainmaker*-SWOSU
- 9 Symphonic Band Concert-SWOSU
- 23 "Let's Talk About It"- *Death in a Tenured Position*
- 28 *Westview Writers' Festival*
- 30 Choral Concert-SWOSU





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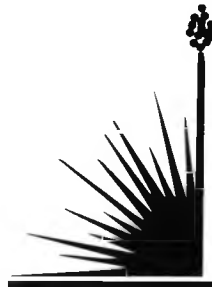


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