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A JOURNAL OF WESTERN OKLAHOMA

WESTVIEW

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Western Oklahoma

FEASTS

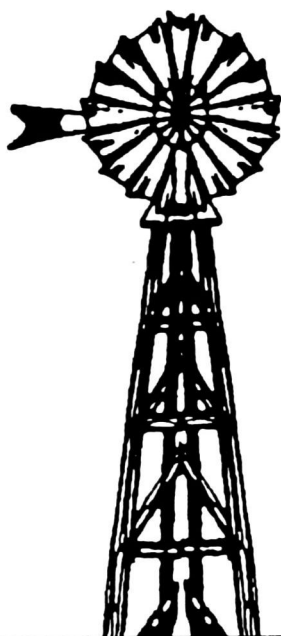
Westview

A Journal of Western Oklahoma

Volume 12

Number 4

Summer 1993



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STYLESHEET

1. Mail submissions flat in a 9"x12" envelope. Include a SASE for possible rejection.
2. Submissions should be typed; prose double spaced and poetry single spaced on 8.5" x 11" white paper. Artwork: graphics—pen and ink on white paper; photos—5" x 7" or 8" x 10" black and white. Send copies of photos since they may not be returned.
3. We use themes related to Western Oklahoma, as well as non-thematic work of high quality by writers from elsewhere.
4. We accept and enjoy both free verse and formal poetry.
5. Please limit prose submissions to 10 double-spaced typed pages.
6. Include a brief biographical sketch.
7. We welcome submissions on a 3.5" disk formatted for WordPerfect 5.0, IBM or Macintosh. Please also include a hard copy of your submission.
8. Address all submissions and correspondence to:

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Weatherford, OK 73096

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Western Oklahoma Farmhouses: Fall 93.

Western Oklahoma Youth: Winter 93.
Deadline: 9-15-93.

Western Oklahoma Flora and Fauna: Spring
94.
Deadline: 12-15-93.

Western Oklahoma Hard Times / Good
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Deadline: 2-15-94.

Western Oklahoma Terrain—Rivers, Lakes,
Hills: Fall 94.
Deadline: 7-1-94.

Western Oklahoma Yesterday, Today,
Tomorrow: Winter 94.
Deadline: 9-15-94.

WESTVIEW *Spring 1993:*

WESTERN OKLAHOMA FEASTS

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Learning from Mother



BY HOLLY HUNT

I will tell you that my mother was smart,
a wire-cutting wit that could snap everything
midair and bring pause to all voices there.
And in that pause would form a certain space
in every thought, when she would say something
so accurate that all ears would leap,
heads tilted to the Common Philosophy Lady:
listen. . . did we hear the delicate click
of the Wheel? Hush. It was truth and heaven
in her words and the exact colors of all birds
that made everyone barely smile
even though life is not really funny.
And sometimes she was a cat holding truth
by the tail so softly in her mouth
and then she kept a silent distance
the way some people do after they softly lie.
And this is not disgusting, so the cat rides.

There was always near the middle of my mother's
sight some little explosion in the air.
So fast it flashed that she could never really swear
that it was there, but this was followed
with some catchy solid notion
that could hang for years like a dangling
holiday ornament, maybe one made of sequins
and straight pin eyes,
looking like it escaped from the state asylum.

I will say my mother made me smart
for that is what she'd tell me to tell you.
For every moment she batted away my hand
from the electric sockets! Teaching me
things on a long term scale.
How immediate came the longtime lesson,
advanced with her hovering promise of truth.
She might command me to Jump! Learn by chance
because there are steps, whole flights of them,
that are often leaped.
She could also lay a featherweight measuring stick
across the top of my head so I could feel balance.

Teaching was her profession. The complete statement.
The icicle facts of sharp quick-melt Comedy,
or Tragedy never crumbling but slicing

like the guillotine dropping down through her class
as she stood in her classroom
made serious by Juliet or Hamlet:
you knew that prince had arrived
by the utter following lack of sound.

From only my heart I recall her earliest lessons to me:
words of love spoken to brilliant living things
that a higher spirit made: the azaleas, the trees,
the wind, the snow, the falling leaves.
And I would have a cymbol of leaves
and we would dance many unplanned steps,
and then a hop or two would come at the break
of thought. My mother was Helenic
in her father a herdsman
and in my father a fisherman's day.

And now. She is the sharp timeless needle
filed by way of a hardwon beauty.
She can step down and mend me
and rise into heaven again.
The sight of her is clearer and closer to me
even than was the practical work of her mind.
Her logical voice grew closer, then farther,
then closer again, and way out again
swinging on her own trapeze, her trick.
When she died, I saw her let it go.
What she knew about giving up life
was that it is hard sometimes, that's all,
with not one friend from earth or heaven
to be with you and then you fall into the dark
where other lessons are learned.

Some of us will live knowing nothing,
no helpful recollections of a Heaven
will ever stretch between, but if one
will believe, as she would insist,
always believe, such a cord of remembering
might stretch to you
once or twice in your life.
And even though she knew enough
to teach me this by talking to the grass,
some things happened to her that were unfair,
like dying too early in the middle of a happy life.
When healthy death came, she only gave him one helping.
He was not allowed dessert, yet he was not full, either.
He was only an authority figure in grey and black.
Give him his minute of respect, and then leave.
Oh do not treat him without a measure of sympathy.
Because there are angels that can blow him away
by holding to their mouths wooden duck callers
or by howling into the mountainside,
and they help us out often enough.■

Glass of Wine for a Moonchild



My husband has gone off
to talk to the woman he loves.

I am hanging on the silk
threads of heaven because
they are all I have left.

The television off,
radio off,
my mind off.

I am the small pool of water
shimmering and rolling
on the thick felt pad
of the water lily.

I close my eyes.

Then the thunder begins.

Somewhere up there above me,
the clouds come crashing into town.

The lightning flashes
one thousand one
the thunder comes.

Oh yes, part of me is whirling
up there somewhere.

My darling, leave if you so desire
for I am centered so far above
you may never find me again.

This night I have been torn
apart and forced to say:

Whatever makes you happy,
whatever makes, whatever makes.

At the mercy of the planets,
when I am powerless over my own life,

I find my fingertip on hydrogen
that could burn up the sun.

This thunder and careening columns of lightning
endless chains of rain knocking upon my roof
is lifting me into the huge peace.

My thunder, my lightning, my flood.

It gives me a dream;
unfinished play I've often dreamed:

I come to the cool night window.
There is no screen.

The window of life is raised.

A huge hand appears
from out of the darkness.

The hand of hands offers me
a glass of red wine.

Every other time I have
reached for his offering

he sweeps it away
and a curse remains.

But on this night

I step forward.

I take the glass from his hand.

Finally the glass is mine.

I turn inward toward my future.

Another glass of wine comes
from somewhere into my other hand.

My delight floods
into all dark space.

Your footsteps are coming up the steps.

The key turns and you open the front door.

You would have left me on this night,
but the woman grew timid

to risk so much under sudden thunder.

The storm quite ruined her nerves.

You hate it. But I will always be
a weatherchild. Big rain comes for me.

My apologies, but I was born to a mother
who left me for heaven when I was ten.

That made me take over the atmosphere.

I say nothing but sweetness to you
as you disgusted fall into our bed,
but this night has been a warning.

I don't have any control over it.

I tell you the hurt center

just flew out of me.

I give my worst fears to the clouds.■

Riding into Spring

Through the side portals
of the state hospital,
she takes a step into a grassy season,
to test the whole shifting world
as if the ground could bottom out
and she would find herself
inside a cave and be again
a slave of winter for years.
Then her feet leap with good reason;
she flies with bones of light
like the dark blue doubtless jay
flashing a clever secret of white.
In her heart, she darts against a cat
like the sharpest master-lure,
steel-hooked feather on a fly-rod eternal,
snapping back at the beast for the times
a tender wing was severed,
for every time her kin was swallowed whole.

This woman in yellow will unreel
in a penetrating kiss of solar light,
purely circling on her simple on her oldest
axle through the sun. Around her waist
the gathers levitate, a yellow halo.
With winglike levers in her knees
she floats down to land in Augustine.
She is now the bed-doll of the Common;
her dress is now a thousand yellow petals
as she sits atop an invisible convertible
in a stalled parade of giant white oak trees.

In the distance she doesn't see the hovering
faded druids in pajamas bleached and blued
into the color of the sky or juniper.
They see her blooming in an old Easter dress:
woman planted hipdeep in the ground
riding along on the back of the world
with the top of the afternoon down.

And from a barred window on an upper floor,
against the clear, the unbreakable water,
presses a spreading white palm
waving Hello, hello
to the spot of gold
lost in the lawn of the green hours.■

H O L L Y

Interview:

Holly Hunt



BY MELISSA BRUNER

"My dreams and otherworldly visions have always influenced my poetry," says Holly Hunt, a poet whose work follows the tradition of other mystical poets including William Blake and Walt Whitman. Three of Hunt's poems included in this issue of *Westview* bear evidence of that influence. Hunt has much to say about the current position of poetry in our culture, writing and publishing poetry and fiction, and her own imaginative projects.

Q: *When you browse through a bookstore, you find walls filled with fiction, and entire sections devoted to true crime, travel, history, and psychology, to name a few. The poetry sections, if present at all, are usually quite small, perhaps indicating that there isn't much demand for poetry from the general population of readers. This hasn't always been the case; in the past, poetry was read and enjoyed by most people. Why are people now less interested in poetry than people of previous generations?*

A: Poetry today is submerged as a medium for communication. At the turn of this century, before the advent of film, people read quite a bit. That's how they got their entertainment. They often read poetry aloud to each other. Poetry was one of the ways people entertained themselves. Today, I don't think that people have been taught to read poetry, and I don't think that they have been taught to be open to the medium.

Poetry hasn't been promoted as a medium of expression as it should be. Poetry could sell just like anything else, but editors don't believe that it could. They think—many people think—that there is some mysterious, closed-school spell because one has broken one's lines on the page. Well, there *is* a spell that comes with breaking lines, but any person who's ever sung "Here we go round the mulberry bush" can hook into it with delight.

The school systems have fallen short where promoting writing as an art is concerned. A child may take music or dancing or painting if that child is talented or has a desire to learn that art. But there is usually no outlet for a child who has a gift for writing.

H U N T

Writers in any field, whether creative or academic, struggle with finding a market for their work. Since poetry is, as you say, submerged, how difficult is it for a poet to publish her poetry?

Publishing poetry is quite difficult. When I set about to submit poetry for publication, I usually submit around forty poems to various publications. About two poems out of those forty will be accepted for publication somewhere. And that, of course, is luck if you have two poems accepted like that. Fiction is twice as publishable as poetry. One thing that's hard for a poet is that the poet is interested in designing a career around the medium of poetry, but they may not have easy outlets for publication. It's easier to shoot in the dark with fiction than it is with poetry. My first and second novels are now with an agent. I wasn't schooled to write fiction like I was poetry, but I read a lot of fiction and that's how I learned how to do it. The novel is not a very difficult medium, not nearly as difficult to write as poetry. It seems to be less compacted.

Other than a desire to find another outlet for publication, what motivated you to begin writing fiction?

In South Carolina I took workshops with James Dickey and the fiction writer William Price Fox, and that's when I began to write novels. Dickey was primarily a poet, but he'd written very successful novels, and it just occurred to me that there was no reason why a poet shouldn't be able to write anything a poet wants to write. I like writing novels, and I can tell different stories with that medium.

You began writing poetry when you were 15. What writers influenced you as a beginner?

I was first influenced by Rod McKuen and Khalil Gibran, because I got their books at K-Mart. When I first read Rod McKuen I thought "I can do that," but anybody half breathing could write like Rod McKuen. During the next two years I read the poetry of William Blake, William Wordsworth, and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and it occurred to me then what poetry was really all about. That was an exhilarating jump, and one which I was prepared for by my parents, who were both mystics. Mother, who died when I was ten, taught me to believe in fairies, and I still do. I don't see them anymore, but I believe that that force exists and that it's personified by the human imagination.

My second influences, the 19th century Romantics, believed that you could get to heaven through poetry, and I thought that was a wonderful shortcut that was to be trusted. William Blake, especially; he had the ability to see angels, and I really admired that ability, and did everything I could to mimic it. I found out that it could be done.

The next group of people who influenced my writing were the Confessionalists Sylvia Plath, Anne Sexton, and Robert Lowell. At first I was really attracted to Lowell because I couldn't understand him, and I knew that he was working an intense mystical spell with his work that I loved but couldn't understand at first. So I kept digging. The two women writers were very easy to understand and I learned to appreciate them for their clarity and lack of confusion. Then, in graduate school, I

was influenced by James Dickey because he writes from a traditional lyric power. Today, I am influenced by the voices in contemporary fiction and poetry, which I read a lot of. I like Louise Erdrich, Sharon Olds, and Amy Clampitt. Those are the voices I really love.

Some writers find that particular places or environments inspire or motivate them to write. Is this true for you?

For some writers, artists, or creative personalities, it's very important and necessary for them to be in a metropolitan area such as New York or Boston or San Francisco; they feed off of the society and enrich themselves by being in a highly cultured area. But for other artists, it doesn't matter where you are. If I was writing poetry at age 15 in the middle of Bismark, Arkansas, I can do it anywhere; it doesn't matter where I am. James Baldwin says that the home you really have is the home you carry with you, and that's where my home is. It's on the inside.

Is there any particular writing technique that works well for you?

I prefer short poems. The short lyric is usually written from an emotional high point. I like to write from that crest. If I can make a feeling last for 20 minutes, I can usually complete a first draft. I can come back to that poem at a later draft and regenerate that spirit and find a conclusion, but it's as hard as finishing a dream that's been cut off in the middle of the night, and it sometimes takes years to finish those dreams. With "Glass of Wine for a Moonchild," it took me at least a year to realize I'd been dreaming that dream over and over again, and then finally had a conclusion come to me. Poetry is synonymous

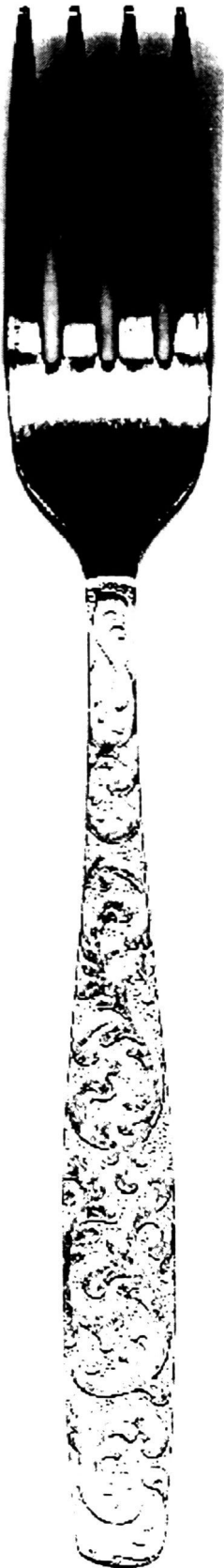
with those kinds of dreams. It works on the same level. "

Hunt is currently printing a collection of 14-line quatrains. It is not unusual for a poet to print her own work, but it is rare for a poet to make her own books, accomplishing nearly every step in the printing process herself.

"I'm using an old press from the art department here at Cameron. I've learned my leading and monotype composition, and have everything set out in my office. Every now and then it hits me like a bolt of lightning that I may have to publish my own books of poetry, and I'm not averse to that because that's what William Blake did as a book artist, and that's what Kenneth Patchen did in the 20th century. I've made my paper for the cover; it's all been hand-torn. All I have to do is the composition of the type, which takes a great deal of time. It's not really muscle work, but it's hand work, like building houses out of toothpicks.

"The book's title is *Tramp Art for the Walls of Purgatory*, and it's a surreal collection of poetry written by a persona who's trapped in a flea market. She describes all the strange things she sees, the spiritually empowered items, and she realizes that she will not be able to escape the flea market until she learns to accept all of the broken-down things in the world. She finally does escape.

"The final poem came about two years after the conception of the original poem, so it took me a while to get out of the flea market through the medium of poetry. This will hold together as a piece of book art, and it's an exciting thing. I know when I make this book, it will change me in some way. It will be a great positive change. I've always thought of myself as an artist with words, but not with physical art. This book will open up a whole new world of experience for me." ■



REVIEWS...

Canyon Road Steak House

BY VIKIA. PETTJOHN

It was a late winter evening, early evening, when my friends and I arrived at Canyon Road Steak House in Hydro. One member of the party almost lost a good shoe in the muddy slush in the parking area; snow still lay on the margins of the lot, and the waitresses were bemoaning the fact that the Christmas lights outside would not come on. No one wanted to do battle with the lights because of the possibility of shock. I could not help thinking of the difference in the appearance of the steak house at that moment compared to the lazy late spring and early summer evenings when wildflowers border the lot and rabbits frolic around the edges of the canyon itself. In the summer hummingbirds come to the jewel-like nectar in the feeders on the porch, and one can hear all manner of birdsong. It is precisely the restaurant's location out from town, perched on the edge of the canyon, that gives the place its distinctive flavor, and draws local regulars along with curious travelers in a constant stream.

We were promptly seated downstairs that evening where we could see the vestiges of snow on the grassy area outside the window; the trees were dense even in their bareness just beyond a fence on the rim of the canyon. Inside the diners are always surrounded with homey, country decor—a deer head, pelts, a black iron stove, an old saw with a design painted on it, a chuck wagon ladle, old crocks, and a coal oil lamp. A huge saddle hangs suspended over one part of the dining area downstairs; silver belt buckles won at playdays and other similar events, paintings of windmills, colorful bits of rug—perhaps Indian—and cow skulls remind the traveler that this is, indeed, *Western* Oklahoma.

The management also adds seasonal embellishments, such as the Christmas lights, and that Friday evening saw an unusual fusion of Christmas poinsettias, angel hair, and red ribbons with the Valentine's touch of red vases containing satin hearts at each table. This reviewer had a similar reluctance to relinquish the remaining signs of a well-loved festive season, and a real joy at anticipating the next holiday, so the mix

was pleasing to my eye. Besides, all the red went well with the red bandana napkins!

Fortunately, the service at Canyon Road is attentive but not stifling. The members of our group ordered broiled quail, steak, chicken fajitas, and grilled pork chops. The steak was pronounced tender, as were the pork chops, the latter being a bit bland, however, for one customer. The chicken fajitas had an interesting savory seasoning, and the quail was positively succulent. In fact, I would go frequently to the restaurant strictly for the quail. All members of the party said that the baked potatoes were large, firm, and appropriately mealy—an improvement over a previous experience with a less than satisfactory potato. One misses the twice-baked potato of the past as another potato alternative, but the fries are fine for non-baked potato lovers. We did not try the chicken-fried steak, but reports suggest a more than respectable entry from Canyon Road in the race for the ultimate chicken fry.

Our meal was unhurried, relaxing, and filling. We had coffee and watched night falling about us. I remembered a previous outing when I had watched squirrels coming at dusk to the feeders, but I knew nothing along that line would happen on such a cold, slushy night. We paid the bill, got into the car, and drove up the dirt track which leads back to the paved road. In the gloom I suddenly noticed movement along the edges of the trail. Three little brown rabbits had come out to play after all. The sight of them was better than dessert, and it reminded me that you always get a bonus at Canyon Road Steak House. ■

Hold The Pickles

BY MELISSA BRUNER

It is June. Saturday afternoon sounds—lawnmowers buzzing, basketballs thumping, children laughing and splashing in a neighborhood pool—drift into your backyard with the occasional cool breeze. And from your backyard drifts that smell, the ultimate smell of summer: the grilling of hamburgers. And as that smell reaches your next door neighbor, she speculates and wonders, hoping to guess your secret. Is it the marinade? Seasoning salt? Special charcoal? And throughout the summer, as smells of distant burgers drift into your own backyard, you will try to guess the secrets of your neighbor. Is it the grind of the meat? The brand of the grill? For, as all creators and consumers of burgers know, there is always a secret involved in the production of a truly good burger.

Busy lifestyles, vacations, and change of season often force the quest for the perfect burger from the backyard to the restaurant. A fast-food, chain store burger may eliminate physical hunger, but presents no pleasant challenge to the consumer. We may wonder about the ingredients of such a burger, but will probably be happier if we don't know. A good burger, a burger worth traveling for, leaves the consumer trying to guess the creators secrets. Two Oklahoma restaurants that have achieved burger excellence are Murphy's in Bartlesville, and the Meers Store in Meers.

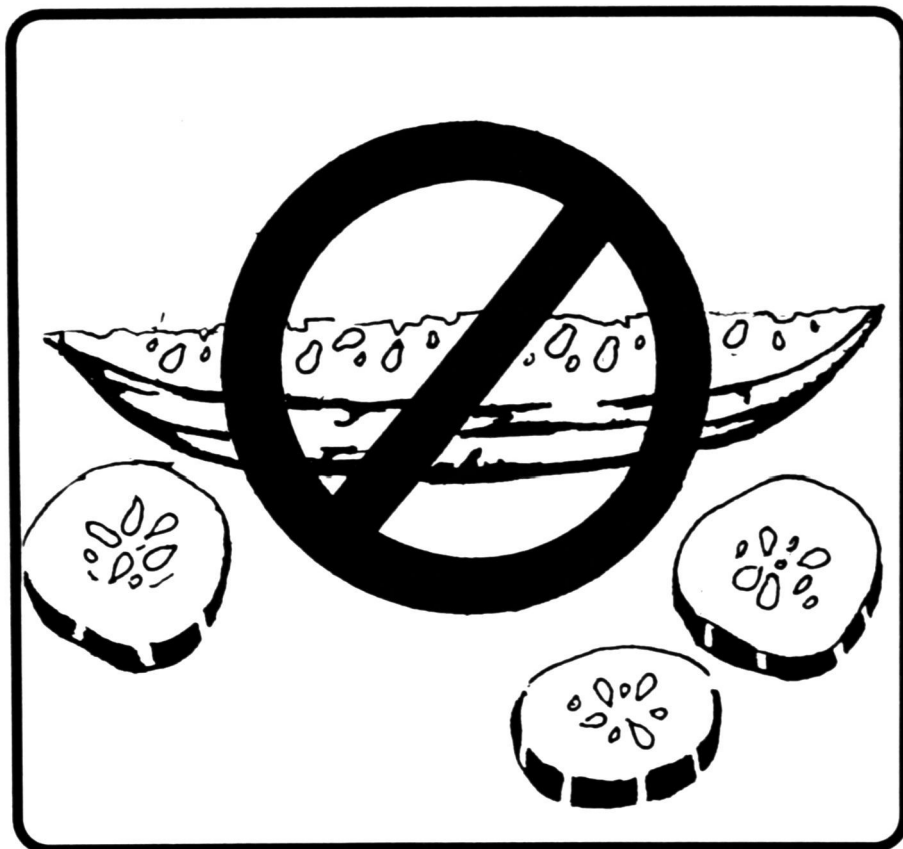
As you pull into the parking lot at Murphy's, you see nothing that brags of great burgers or great prices. There is nothing flashy about Murphy's. The building is plain and old, with only one tall sign to announce its presence. When you walk into the building, you usually have to take a seat in the small, crowded waiting area; if it's after 6:00 on any night of the week, especially Saturday, you will have to stand. If you are alone, or if you are with a friend, you'll probably get a seat at the counter fairly quickly. If you have a large group, you'll have to wait for one of the big corner booths. There is no hostess to put your name on a list or to guide you to your seat: waiting customers keep track of who's next, and the person closest to the doorway usually announces vacant booths or seats at the counter.

Once seated, you quickly receive a plastic laminated menu and a glass of water. The menu includes steaks, a pork chop dinner, and the house specialty: the Hot Hamburger. Unlike traditional burger sandwiches, the hot hamburger is served open-faced. Burger and bread are covered with smooth brown gravy, and you can get onions if you wish. If you are eating light, you can order the Junior Hot Hamburger. Included with the hamburger—in fact, often spilling over to share the gravy—are the best fries in the state. Hand cut, thick, the color of honey with crisp brown edges, these fries are always served hot and fresh. You can dunk them in your gravy or you can drown them in ketchup. Or you can salt them lightly and enjoy them straight. Forget about diet or cholesterol or virtue. Just think of these fries as mental health food.

Ask anyone in Western Oklahoma where you can get a good burger. The almost unanimous reply is "Go to Meers." The legendary Meers Burger is not for the faint of appetite. These burgers require two-handed eating. Seven inches in diameter, this burger covers an entire plate. Fortunately, the meat patties are fairly thin, so you can aspire to eat the whole thing. Perhaps one of the secrets of the Meers Burger is that it is made of ground Texas Longhorn beef, which is leaner than plain ground beef of unspecified breed. The burger is served cut into quarters, but since they are dressed with pickles, tomato, lettuce, and mustard, you will need plenty of napkins. (Point of etiquette: no one here eats a burger with knife and fork.) The Meers Burger is cooked just right. Medium rare, it has a hint of pink and is juicy without being greasy. My

friend managed to eat all of hers; I only finished half of mine because I sampled the homestyle french fries, cooked with skin on. Since both of us were stuffed, we took a few minutes to talk and look out the window as we gathered energy to return to the car. Two cats played on

with a wrought-iron base. Every inch of wall space is covered with business cards, outdated calendars, newspaper clippings, and advertisements, the most interesting of which extolled the wonders of an inflatable plastic bosom. An autographed black-and-white 8 x 10 features the star of a



the porch outside the window, and a number of lazier felines napped in sunny spots. As we watched a group of rappellers waddling from the restaurant, we wondered how they would manage to get off the ground, let alone ascend a mountain after such a meal.

The setting of The Meers Store is nearly as interesting as the food. The seating area is multi-level, and the tables and chairs are of various styles. You can pull up a bench at a small picnic table, or you can be seated in a metal chair at an old sewing table

local truck commercial. High on the wall are antlers, and a colorful collection of baseball caps hangs from them. The menu is posted on the wall in the middle of the seating area. Choices listed below the Meers Burger include chili, grub steak, fried okra, and cobbler.

Whether you eat a Hot Hamburger at Murphys or a giant Meers Burger, you benefit from two kinds of burger-making secrets. Now if you could just figure out what they use. . . .

A Feast Of People

BY HELEN MAXSON

It is true that the food is good at the Butler Dairy Boy. Unusually good. A visitor several times, I stayed one afternoon for a few hours, and heard departing customers say both "Those were the best french fries I ever ate," and "Generally, you don't get a good hamburger out like this." In many restaurants, one could visit for several hours, and not hear either. I ate the chili: Huge chunks of burger, topped by crunchy pieces of onion and substantial gratings of cheese. The peach pie: crust—crisp, thin, light. A thick ridge of pastry encircling the pie. It was a meal of irregular shapes reminding me that this was home cooking, not fast food. The menu on the wall read "Dinners \$3.95," and listed chicken fried steak, chicken fillet, and catfish. The special that day was hamburger steak with fried onions, cheese potatoes, ranch style beans, salad, roast. "Sometimes I make a hot steak sandwich," Connie, the owner, told me, "and serve it with mashed potatoes, gravy, and salad." On Friday, she serves steaks and baked potatoes. Pies include peach, pineapple, cherry, coconut, chocolate, and pumpkin. "Sometimes Grandma makes cinnamon rolls, and brings them when she comes in to talk," Connie explained. The items on the menu are not unusual, but the sure touch that prepares them is. The food is good. And plentiful. I saw one of the specials being served. As the waitress carried it to the table, the food was heaped over her hands, the plate lost from view. One woman complained repeatedly, savoring her meal, of too much food.

But the owner said to me, "If I had to write an article about this place, I'd write about the people, not the food." I saw her point, in more ways than one. I am one of the people, and I know that a big part of my attraction to home cooking, to family restaurants in general, lies in how they make me feel as one of the people, not in how the food tastes. After a series of meals at McDonald's and Hardee's, walking into the Butler Dairy Boy has the feel of walking into my own kitchen through the back door. The pace slows, the muscles relax. And then, nourished in this way, I take the time to notice the other customers I am eating with. I become part of a group. Even though the restaurant has no

contrived atmosphere, its customers make one together. They needn't conform to plants and music. They need only conform to the tone they have helped to create themselves. It's like coming home from college to a family one's been missing.

The signs on the wall do set a mood, I suppose, but more as quick interjections than as general ambiance. Connie gave me permission to quote them.

"Caution: I can go from 0 to bitch in 4.1 seconds."

"Open: when I get here."

"Okie spoken here."

"Help! I'm trapped in the establishment!"

"If God had wanted me to cook, he wouldn't have invented restaurants."

New customers notice the signs during reflective mouthfuls, during perfunctory mouthfuls, during unconscious mouthfuls that are only brief lapses in conversation. But since the place derives its tone from the customers themselves, they quickly forget the signs. The regulars, of course, stopped seeing them a long time ago, but they haven't stopped noticing the people they're eating with.

To understand this fact about the Butler Dairy Boy, you have to understand, too, that it sits on route 33 between Arapaho and Hammon. There is nothing but rolling plain for miles in any direction out from Butler. Journeying to dinner there is a feast in itself, comprised of dishes that vary with the season—the emerald green of spring wheat, the mustard yellow of fall weeds. Knowing I can achieve that fullness on the way to the chili makes the chili even more of a draw before I leave home. And growing full of all

that spaciousness empties me of lesser things, making me hungry on arrival.

But I am prepared by the trip to be nourished by folks too. There is no other restaurant nearby, only a Kwikstop. I have the impression, when I'm headed for the Dairy Boy, that all roads lead there, converging on the only fellow humans in the hemisphere. I am hungry to see them when I arrive.

A feast of home cooking. A feast of people. These are home-grown people, the owner explained. In here, they are never vulgar, never critical of others. Husbands and wives come together. During my visit, I saw one middle-aged couple share the same side of the booth, leaving the other side

empty. There is an elegance to the women who come here. In jeans and flannel, they are ladies, restrained and courteous. Often a bracelet, a ring, or the angle of a cigarette in their fingers gives them away.

At ten and four, the regulars come in for coffee. From 4:30 to 5:30 or 6:00, the county workers—on road crew, say—are there. One

woman, 61, from England, comes in every Friday night with her husband, a local. They met in England during the Korean War when she was in the Royal Air Force. In the Dairy Boy, they discuss religion and politics. Sometimes, she plays casino with

room is alone, thoughtful, silent, enjoying an unhurried cigarette. She meets no eyes when she leaves, taking her leisure on the way out. You know she's been here before. One pair drops in to chat with someone whose car they saw parked outside.

"Caution: I can go from 0 to bitch in 4.1 seconds. "

"Open: when I get here. "

"Okie spoken here. "

"Help! I'm trapped in the establishment! "

"If God had wanted me to cook, he wouldn't have invented restaurants. "

The talk, which can include everyone there, as the place is small, runs to crops, the prices of wheat and cotton, local ballgames, local humor, local tragedies. The weather, tires, diets, talk shows, blood pressure. The local exchange student from New Guinea. The ones in Sentinel from Holland and Czechoslovakia. What it must be like to live in a Communist country with no knowledge of Jesus Christ. The voices of the men who are talking

the owner.

There is a sense here of not needing to explain. The owner answers the phone in the back room. When she returns to the front, one of the regulars already knows who has called and what the conversation was about. She continues the discussion with the owner, off-hand, adding her two cents. Another woman in the

among themselves are low, emphatic, musical. You cannot hear all they say—it is a tone that emerges, as much as content. A father, grandfather, and teenage boy eat and talk together.

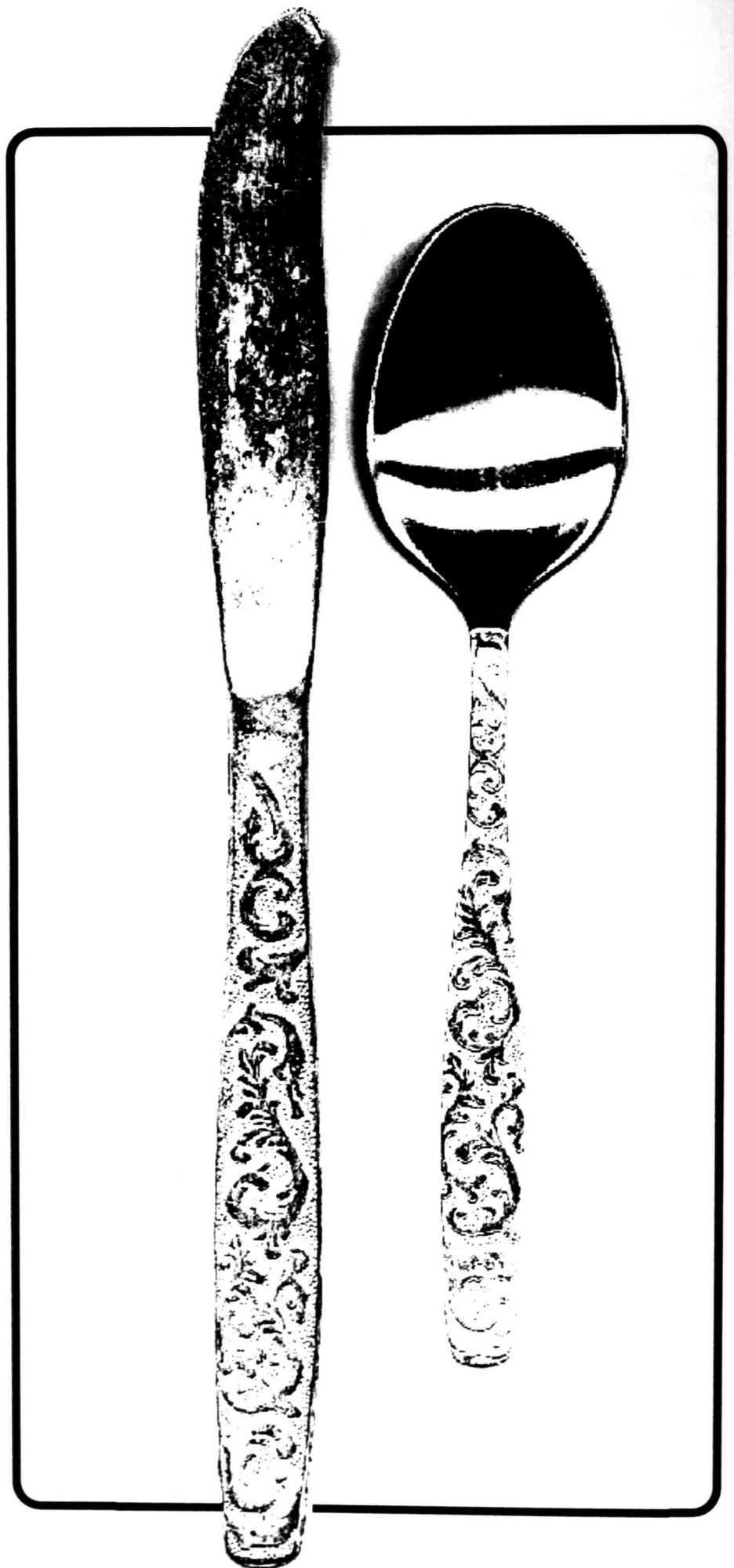
—They ain't no way you can drive.. .pick-up. . . they ain't no way.

— . . . it's got a twelve-foot bed. . . all the pullin' power he needs. . . a

400. . . . a half-ton pick-up. You can put. . . a half-ton pick-up. . . The talk is easy, courteous. "Yes, sir": the soft, fluid punctuation of the boy's words to his elders. All three laugh quietly together. Then silence, while the thoughts gather for the next exchange.

The male voices across the room are lower, less intelligible. The conversation is private, more heated, voices rising and falling, a sharp laugh breaking the hum. A family comes in, girl, say 14, boy, maybe 16, father and mother. "John said he wanted to eat out tonight. I said he'd better go see if Connie's cooking supper."

Connie can remember when Foss Lake, a few miles down the road, was a river, before they put the dam in. Many of the locals bring the history of the place in with them when they come, one kind of continuity that holds Butler together as a place on the map. In the Dairy Boy, they remember back together, back to high school, back to childhood. Out the window, horses run around in the field adjoining the Butler school across route 33. The sky is grey, the trees bare. No kids in the playground today. Trucks towing horse trailers pass back and forth. When they've finished their food, the customers disappear into the pockets of this shared life, another kind of continuity that, despite the stretches of land that separate them, makes them a group when they eat together. ■

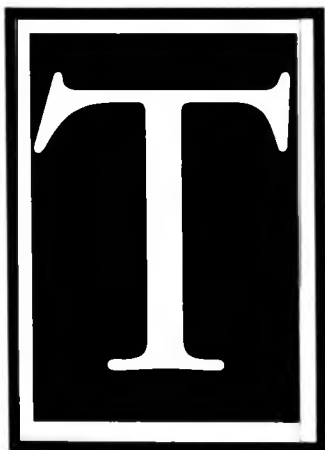


Marquis James

The Cherokee Strip:

A Tale of an Oklahoma Boyhood

BY ALVENA BIERI



he young Marquis James, growing up in Enid around the time of Oklahoma statehood, describes a valuable lesson he learned from his newspaper editor boss. One day two men were electrocuted. James saw it happen, and he reported the story to his paper. The editor wanted more details. But everyone in town already knows the facts, the cub reporter said. The editor's advice stuck with him—the very people involved in any happening are always the ones who want most to read all about it.

Following this logic, Oklahomans and especially those living in the old Cherokee strip and in Enid will be the most interested in re-living the settlement and early days of the Strip as seen through the eyes of an imaginative writer. The OU Press has recently reissued in paperback the James book, *The Cherokee Strip: A Tale of an Oklahoma Boyhood*, written in the 1940's when James was at his height as a writer, winning Pulitzer prizes for his biographies of Sam Houston and Andrew Jackson. This recollection is his memory of growing up in Enid and is a perfect mix of time, place, and personal impression. He was born in 1891, came to the Cherokee Strip with his parents at age three, and grew up in and near Enid. He became a widely-roving newspaperman, and then a free-lance writer in the mid 1920's. He died, laden with honors, in 1955.

Historian Henry Steele Commager called James' book part history, part poetry, and part imagination. Markey, as James was called, was a boy into everything: farming on the family claim, soldiering in the militia, reading, writing poetry, dating girls, hanging out at print shops and newspaper offices, and, in general, enthusiastically savoring what life in Enid had to offer, which was a lot. James' dad was both a struggling farmer (for a time he was raising the only tobacco in the Strip and sugar cane as well) and a struggling lawyer. The younger James tells how his life changed and became more exciting when the family moved into town. His social forays keep us smiling as he tried to learn sophisticated ways of living. He takes as his model for such sophistication Enid's West Side where he was convinced

that at social gatherings everything was either witty or worldly.

James' early familiarity with every nook, cranny, alleyway, street, and building in town makes us feel at home as he lives these precious years. Like everybody else, he took pride in the town. He admired the new brick and limestone courthouse and writes that its beauty was never mentioned to a stranger without naming the cost, which was \$100,000. In fact, the entire Square was a wonder, called the White Way as soon as street lights came in. It boasted not just lights but two skyscrapers of five stories each, three movie houses, and Delmar Garden, which was called the roofless summer theater. There were also Parker's bookstore, the Peerless (a high school hangout), the Loewen Hotel, and, on the east side, the Cogdal-McKee Building on Grand Avenue.

Many of James' happy reminiscences are of working on papers. Amazingly, at that time Enid had five newspapers—three dailies and two weeklies. He worked at almost every one of them, ending up at the Eagle. Here the editor emphasized local news so much that he would trim an AP report of President Taft's cabinet troubles to make room for a four-line item about H.H. Champlin's hunting trip. . .

Not everything was perfect in James' life. One time an editor advised him to quit the paper business and just go to the A&M over in Stillwater for a couple of years, hire out on a farm, marry the farmer's daughter, and raise Poland China hogs.

I for one am glad Marquis James did not follow that advice.■

Sentinel of the Plains

BY RICHARD GARRITY

Cattle were quietly standing around the brimming stock tank. Their restless hooves churned the damp earth caused by the overflow. The wheel of the Aermotor windmill was slowly turning in the spring breeze, each blade reflecting the early-morning sun. Rural sound of the groaning mill and the chug of the plunging sucker rod sounded as it lifted water from the depths of earth. Windmills were a gift to the dry prairies.

When the early homeseekers staked their claims during the numerous Runs of Oklahoma, many locations were without water. Wells were dug and windmills erected to use the everlasting wind.

Windmills have been operating since the twelfth century. In Holland they were used to pump water, saw lumber, grind wheat and spices. Some of the structures provided living quarters for the miller. Massive, cumbersome, and with fixed canvas sails, the entire unit was turned by oxen to keep it directed into the wind. In 1693, the Dutch erected windmills in Albany, New York.

In the 1930's David Halladay of Ellington,

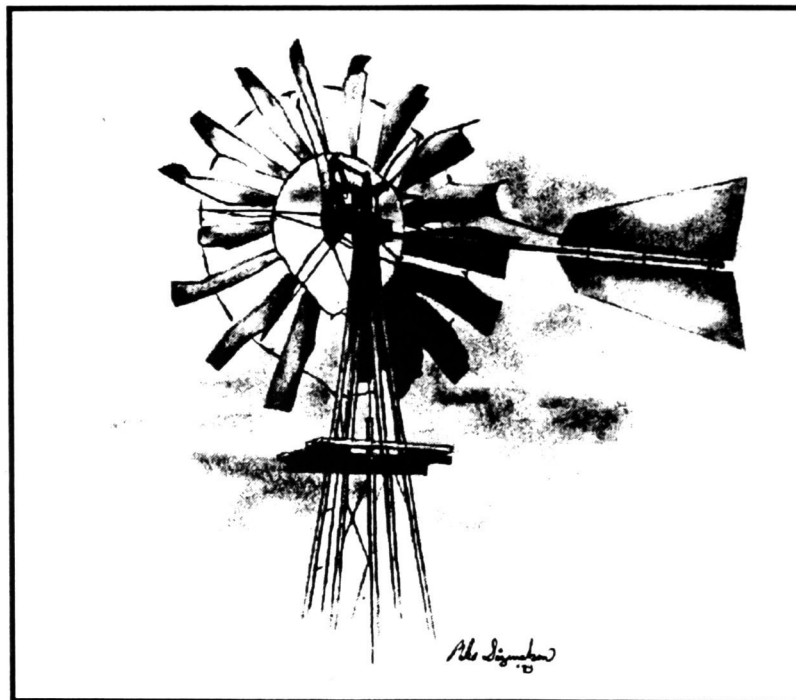


ILLUSTRATION BY MIKE SIGURDSON

Connecticut, invented the first windmill in the United States. A new principle of a wind-controlled tail determined the speed and kept the fan pointed into the wind. With their famous Eclipse of 1876, Fairbanks-Morse introduced wind power to the plains. Other well-

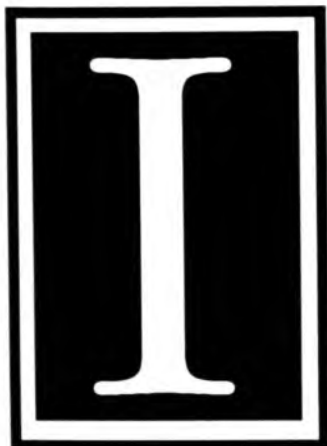
known units included the Perkins, Baker, and the Dempster.

The Sears-Roebuck catalog of 1902 listed an eight-foot Kenmore wheel for \$15.05 and a complete unit and tower for \$60.00. Some farmers purchased the wheel only and built their own wooden tower. After the mill was assembled on the ground, the wheel was attached. With aid of guide ropes, the entire unit was raised by horses. The wheel was tied to prevent it from turning in the wind. The legs were set into prepared holes in the ground, the sucker rod connected, the wheel freed, and the machine was ready to pump water.

The plains of Oklahoma still have many of these vintage structures. Some of them are in ruins, their usefulness ended. Others are steadily pumping, a task which they have continued for years. The wind is their companion. ■

Feasting in the Good Old Days

BY SHARYL M. SCHATZ



I can still remember the 'good old days' when we used to go to Grandma and Grandpa Cook's farm in Caddo County. There was nothing more than we looked forward to than those long, wonderful visits—unless, of course, it was those times when other relatives were to be there at the same time.

One summer in particular comes to mind. It must have been more than thirty years ago when we were just kids. How exciting was the news that all the relatives would be in that summer—even the 'California Cooks' and the 'Southern Cooks'! Those were the cousins we heard a lot about, but seldom had an opportunity to see.

That big old farmhouse was bustling with activity even before long-distance families began to arrive. There were linens to find and plans for sleeping arrangements to be made. My three brothers and I couldn't understand all the worry; we looked forward to sleeping out on the wrap-around porch with all the other cousins. Nevertheless, Grandma was a worrier when it came to guests in her house.

We waited impatiently for relatives to arrive. Would we recognize who they were? What kinds of cars would they be driving?

We counted on our fingers, and probably our toes, how many children there would be to play with. Uncle Ralph's three children—but they lived

in Caddo County, so we saw them more often; Uncle Leo's family from California; Aunt Pansy's boys. The list went on and on, but we knew everyone's names and felt as though we knew them almost as well as we knew each other.

The parade of cars finally began. Was that Uncle Leo and Aunt Mable? Their car had a California license tag. Mickey and Trudy waved eagerly, but Vicky was a little more reserved.

A small trailer home being pulled in from the South—Uncle Charles and Aunt Darline. (I can still remember being fascinated as a young girl by the pictures of Darline's exquisite wedding dress.)

Excitement mounted as the driveway began to fill up with cars from all over the country. Cousins gleefully chased each other around the yard, stopping occasionally to compare heights or shoe sizes, or just to stop and look at each other.

But the best was yet to come. It seemed that whenever the Cook Clan got together, food was in abundance. (Quite often, it still seems that way!)

Chickens had been readied for the kill, and some of us braver children tried our hands at wringing the necks of the chosen birds, definitely not a skill we carried with us to adulthood. As we eagerly plucked feathers, we could almost taste the fried chicken that Grandma made so well.

As evening time drew closer, aromas of good old farm cooking permeated the air. Fried chicken, mashed potatoes, thick white gravy, corn on the cob, and, of course, those marvelous homemade rolls that Grandma loved to bake. Filtering its way through the other aromas was the distinct aroma of apple pie. From within the depths of the old freezer came Grandma's hidden treasure chest of

wonderfully plump, juicy blackberries to be made into a cobbler. I can almost close my eyes and smell it all now.

How everyone put up with all of us children was beyond me. We kept darting in and out of the kitchen, most assuredly getting into everyone's way. The aunts would only take so much of it, then send us on our way, occasionally hollering for an uncle to come and take charge of us.

Of course, the uncles were so busy playing horseshoes, or sitting idly on the porch enjoying one another's company, that they seldom intervened for too long.

I can almost hear the stories being bandied back and forth—stories of those days when our parents were young. "Do you remember when" stories were always fascinating to me. Maybe because it was hard to imagine my parents as ever having been young.

Finally, at long last, the table was set and food was ready. The grownups sat at the massive old pedestal table in the dining room, while all of the children sat at folding tables or anywhere possible. I didn't care. I would have eaten outside by myself, just as long as I got my share of the feast we had smelled all afternoon.

"More food? How about more chicken?" One or another of the adults would occasionally break the grown-up conversation to check on the children.

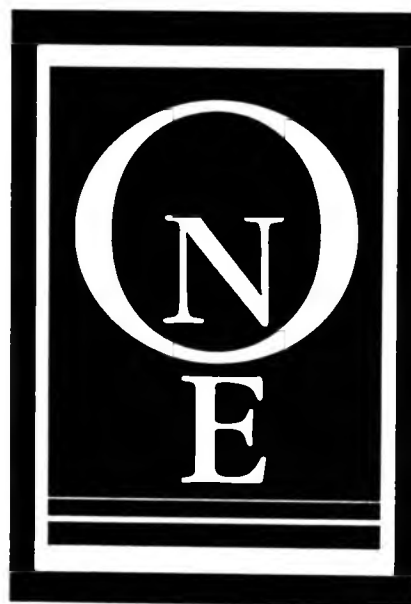
The whole house seemed to buzz with happy conversation. These were, after all, families who seldom got to see each other—once every few years, if that. There was so much to catch up on: job changes, household changes, and, of course, "I can't believe how much your children have grown!"

The meal finished, uncles wandered outside to continue earlier-begun games of horseshoes, or just to sit and relax. Children were given the dubious honor of clearing the table. Aunts crowded into the kitchen under the guise of washing the dishes, but I always thought more talking went on than work.

How many times do we all look back fondly on our childhoods and wish for that carefree, better life? Families were closer, love seemed deeper, and to say the least, food tasted better. The Colonel has nothing on the fried chicken family feasts we had in 'the good old days'. ■

The Feast of Saint David Pendleton Oakerhater

BY ALVIN O. TURNER



of the
most
unusual
festivals

in the state takes place late each summer in western Oklahoma. The unusual elements consist of: tribal ceremonies containing most elements of a typical pow wow combined with traditional Christian symbols; a church's recognition of a man whose

early promise was never fulfilled and whose achievements were then abandoned by his church; and, the recognition of a former Cheyenne warrior and prisoner of war as a saint in the Protestant Episcopal Church of the United States.

This unusual event has taken place for the last six years at Roman Nose State Park on the weekend closest to the first Sunday in September. That is the date set aside by the church for recognition of the sainthood of David Pendleton Oakerhater who was added to the Episcopal calendar of lesser saints in 1986.

Oakerhater, whose name meant Sun Dancer or Making Medicine, first gained notoriety in the 1870s. He was regarded as a leader among Cheyenne who continued their struggle against the white man. His activities in the Red River War, 1873-74, caused him to be imprisoned along with seventy-three other Plains Indian warriors at Fort Marion, Florida.

The Army originally intended to imprison the warriors for life. However, Captain Richard Pratt took charge of the prisoners and began introducing programs to produce their rehabilitation. Oakerhater and others responded to Pratt's efforts and were soon recognized for their mastery of basic education skills and in other endeavors, particularly art. Pratt supplied the prisoners with paper and other materials which they used to create drawings that depicted their lives on the plains as well as their experiences at Fort Marion. The Cowboy Hall of Fame in Oklahoma City recently featured an exhibit, "Beyond the Prison Gates: The Fort Marion Experience," which illustrates continued scholarly interest in the prisoners' art. Besides their value as cultural-historical documents, many scholars argue that the drawings represent the beginnings of the traditions and forms reflected in the subsequent development of Native American art of today.

The most important immediate result of the drawings was attracting public attention to the prisoners and to Pratt's rehabilitative efforts. Pratt used such publicity and other evidence of the Indians' achievements to promote further educational efforts among the Plains tribes. His efforts eventually led to the establishment of Carlisle

Institute and subsequent expansion of Indian education.

Upon their release from prison in 1878, many of the Fort Marion prisoners served as the nucleus for Pratt's first official class of students. Oakerhater and three other former prisoners—Okestehti, a Cheyenne; Zotom, a Kiowa; and Taawayite, a Comanche—continued their education in New York. They had converted to the Episcopal faith while at Fort Marion and were to spend three years in acquiring additional learning and in training as ministers for that church. Their sponsors then expected the four to return to Indian Territory and lead their tribes into Christianity and the white man's way. One symbol of the former warrior's commitment to this new way was the taking of new names; Oakerhater thus became David Pendleton Oakerhater.

Oakerhater and Zotom completed three years of education under the tutelage of John Wick, rector of St. Paul's Church in Park Hill, New York, and were ordained as deacons in the spring of 1881 shortly before their return to their homes. Taawayite completed additional studies at Carlisle with the other former prisoners and was trained as a lay reader. Okestehti died from tuberculosis before completing his education.

In the summer of 1884, Wicks led Oakerhater, Zotom and Taawayite to Indian Territory where they planned to establish ministries among the Plains tribes. Oakerhater initiated the work among the Cheyenne and established the first Sunday school in western Oklahoma. His other efforts met with comparable success and seemed to encourage the hopes of his sponsors who expected the conversion of the Plains Indians to be completed within a generation.

This hope was doomed from the start. The eastern humanitarian and religious groups that supported assimilationist efforts among the tribes overestimated the appeal of the white man's way to many Indian groups. More importantly, much of their program was never fully implemented or did not meet the Indian's needs. Despite demonstrated successes at Carlisle, funding for Indian education never approached adequate levels. Those who managed to acquire an education found that there was little demand for their skills in Indian Territory.

Similarly, the government encouraged the development of farming as an alternative to dependency, but much reservation land was unsuitable for farming. Or, when good land was available, the government failed to supply equipment or even the seed necessary for farming.

Such problems ultimately debilitated the tribes and directly affected Oakerhater's ministry. When he returned to the Cheyenne reservation in 1881, his people welcomed him as the symbol of their hope for the future and responded accordingly to his teaching and example. Three years later he became the symbol of another failed promise. In 1884, John Wicks returned to New York following a bout with illness and increasing discouragement over the church's support for the Indian ministry.

Wicks' departure left Oakerhater and Zotom without a priest to supervise their work. Zotom soon drifted from the ministry but Oakerhater persisted for ten lonely years, continuing to teach his people by precept and example. He concentrated his efforts among students in the Cheyenne and Arapaho boarding schools near El Reno and the Darlington Agency, and had a lasting influence on many young people. However, his authority was limited and did not permit him to offer communion to any converts. His only contact with his church during this time was in one brief return visit by Wicks and occasional correspondence with Wicks and others.

The appointment of David Sanford, an El Reno priest, to head territorial Indian work in 1895 revitalized Oakerhater's ministry, but new problems prevented lasting gains. Oakerhater was particularly productive in his work with students at the Whirlwind Day School near present-day Fay. The government established a school there in 1897 in an effort to replace boarding schools on the reservation. Four years later, federal policy shifted again and the government abandoned the site. Sanford then secured permission for the Episcopal church to maintain a school at the location. This seemed to assure continuation of the church's Indian ministries, but Sanford had also gained the enmity of the local Indian agent.

Work at the school suffered for three years as agents of church and government struggled for control over various localized issues. The Bishop finally dismissed Sanford in 1907 in the hope of ending the dispute. He was partly successful but was then unable to find a reliable priest to replace Sanford. Deaconess Harriet Bedell launched a new ministry in 1911 that lasted for six years. Her efforts enhanced Oakerhater's leading to significant growth of the Cheyenne ministry and continued success at Whirlwind School.

The apparent vitality of the church's ministries to the Cheyenne ended abruptly in 1917. Bedell, like Sanford, had opposed a local Indian agent; more importantly, the government had now decided that its best policy was to encourage the enrollment of Cheyenne students in public schools rather than day schools. The resultant closing of Whirlwind Mission also marked the end of Episcopal ministry to the Cheyenne and Oakerhater's retirement. He then moved to Watonga where he continued to preach in his home and similar locations until his death in 1931.

As he had from the beginning of his ministry, he continued to win a few converts even under these conditions. His remarkable story and example were largely forgotten for more than thirty years. Then an Episcopal family moved to Watonga and attempted to establish a congregation there. They contacted a priest from Woodward who agreed to assist them and placed an announcement in the Watonga paper inviting interested parties to attend a meeting. All were surprised when over thirty Cheyenne attended, the remnant of those who had been ministered to by Oakerhater and the lay ministers he had trained. This event triggered a new Indian work by state Episcopalians and the effort that led to recognition of his sainthood.

The unusual features of the annual celebration marking his recognition by the church express the uniqueness of the man and his story. The admixture of Indian and Episcopal symbols is a most appropriate reflection of a man who so successfully combined the virtues of two different ways of life. His recognition rightly honors his faithfulness as the measure of his accomplishments. The continuing celebration of his example by his people and his church is the best measure of his significance. ■

The Creighton Pool Hall

BY MARK SANDERS

The smoke here is friend. The break of the rack
quiet conversation. Along the brown-gray walls,
where wood benches sit in the haze, cue sticks
stand their silent guard. Today no one speaks,
not the old farmers with sun burned dull
on their faces, nor the smart-mouthed kids
who fool with snooker, smoky silence
held in their lungs. Whatever is cool works hard
to stay that way. The squat Coke machine sweats
in its sun-dusted corner. A pin-up selling cement
ashens with age, her wax-smooth body scarred
where someone put out his cigarette.
A box fan shivers at the alley door,
an old dog noses out a space of shadow. ■

The Corridor

BY ROBERT L. SPENCER

I wake in an exquisite Old-Paris
mansard-roofed, colossus hotel.
Gold-gilded window frames, purple awnings.
The porter folds back the cage door,
the elevator opening to the Sunday morning lobby.

Three American girls with the exchange program,
their dark-haired French friend, his brother
introduce themselves, and coax me to follow.
The girls want the brothers to talk,
so I am silent as we spiral down
a stone corridor beneath the street.

The corridor ends at a huge oaken door
that opens to a basement room
and the boys' Jewish grandmother.
There is a fire blazing in a stone fireplace,
a great library of oversized books,
framed photos, signed, of opera stars,
wine glasses on a mahogany table;
a music box turns a ballerina.

The grandmother commands the girls
to laugh, the men to speak elegantly.
This meeting, which she has arranged,
is an opera stage. A curtain of shadow
hangs over her face.
Any moment she will sing
to avert tragedy. ■

Kate Barnard

1875-1930

BY CLAUDE D. KEZER

*With thanks to Deena Fleck for
research assistance.*

Kate Barnard came upon the political scene in Oklahoma at a time when women didn't have the right to vote. Her destiny, unrelated to her size, her looks, and her demeanor, was to be the voice of the poor,

the downtrodden, the incarcerated, the disenfranchised.

Her rise to prominence was based on her commitment to helping others, her logically reasoned oratorical capabilities, and her wise and powerful use of the press.

She became the bridge between the haves and the have-nots, between the rich and the poor, between the emotionally stable and the emotionally bankrupt.

When she asked the rich to help the poor, she was successful. When she challenged the rich for robbing the poor, she was destroyed. Asking for help, she appealed to their guilt. Challenging their abuse, she threatened their power, and powerful people will do anything to maintain their power base.

So, she was attacked. They cut her support. "Kill the legs of the runner and he can't run." They cut her retaliatory capabilities. "Keep the orator from addressing the people, and they're talking to the wind." They killed her spirit. "Make a person feel like a failure, and you create a loser."

They were successful.
She died of a broken spirit.

(Sitting in a chair with a lap robe covering her. She reaches up and rubs her eyes, scratches her arm, scratches her head, rubs her other arm briskly, then speaks as a tired, beaten woman.)

My little room. . .

I don't really need more space. . . I only need someone to fill part of the space I have.

God. . . I'm lonely.

I'm so tired.

I hurt all over.

. . . Old maid. . . alone. . . a total failure with my life. No family. . . no friends. . . living in the poverty suite of the Black Hotel, downtown Oklahoma City.

But I brought it all on myself. Nobody forced me to do what I did, make the choices I made. It's too late to cry over the milk I've spilled. . . The life's blood I've spilled. (A wail.) Failure.

I had what I thought were friends. . . what I hoped were friends, from the time I first set foot in Oklahoma City. (She gets up, lays the lap robe neatly on the chair, and her youthfulness begins to return.. the flicker of the flame before it dies.)

I was born in Nebraska in 1875. My mother was a beautiful lady. . . I've still got a tin-type of her. I never got to know my mama. She died when I was a year and a half old. . . I wish. . . Oh, how I wish I'd got to know my mama.

Papa. . . Papa had to be

gone a lot. . . He loved me. He told me so once, when he got to come see me. He was gone a lot.

I had to stay with my aunt and her. . . husband. My aunt was really nice. She taught me to sew and cook, and saw to it that I could read and write. She saw to it that I had a full education clear through the eighth grade.

My un. . . her husband wasn't a very nice man. He scared me a lot.

For three years I was a store clerk, a tutor, and a helping hand around the house. The house. It never was a home.

I never felt that I was good enough to marry. . . (Big break). I don't know why, but I never had any boys calling on me. Maybe I wasn't pretty. . . or maybe I lacked charm. . . or maybe. . . Oh, my, "spilled milk" again. Too late to cry.

I made a big decision. Papa said I could come to Oklahoma City and live with him. . . If I wanted to. So, at seventeen years of age, already on my way to being an old maid with nothing to gain or lose, I got on a train and left for Oklahoma.

I'd heard and seen trains whistling and rumbling along, but never had I ridden on one. I was full of excitement and nervous anticipation when I handed the porter my bag and stepped on that train. Goodness! It was beautiful inside! I experienced something that I'd experienced before at times when I was really nervous. I had to go to the necessary room. So I found the door marked for ladies, and went in to take care of my. . . business. (She takes off part of her garment—possibly a shawl—to reveal a change in attitude. She pours and splashes a bit of water on her wrists.)

My, that was refreshing. . . a little splash of cool water on my wrists always makes me feel better.

I returned to take my seat to find a most handsome gentleman sitting where I belonged. I excused myself to him and told him he was sitting in my seat.

Well, what did he do but tell me I could find a seat somewhere else. He wanted to sit by the window.

I put on my sternest face, looked him right in his eyes and said, "Sir, I paid for that seat, and that seat is where I'll sit." He didn't even budge. So I said, "I'll just have to get the porter to move you."

He said, "Ain't no black boy porter got the gall to try and move me."

What I didn't know was that the conductor was standing just three seats away collecting tickets. He'd overheard our exchange of words and came directly to my rescue.

"Sir," said the Conductor, "you sit in your assigned seat and don't cause trouble for this little lady, or I'll stop this train right here and put you off myself."

I got my seat. . . by the window. . . How glorious the scenery became as I sat in MY seat in victory over a crude man. Maybe the world was finally changing. Maybe a woman could have a place after all.

There was a lesson here for me to learn. What you've legally bought and paid for is yours, and no one has a right to try and take it from you. No one!

That train clackity-clacked along at breathtaking speed between stops, but there were so many stops it seemed it took forever to get from Nebraska to Oklahoma.

The wide open spaces of Nebraska, Kansas, and Oklahoma were dotted with farmsteads, crop lands, grazing lands, clusters of trees along creeks and washes, cattle, and finally. . . Indians! I'd seen an Indian at a Medicine Show once, but he was dressed fancier than the ones I saw when I came to Oklahoma Territory. I couldn't help wondering just how dangerous it was going to be living in the middle of the Territories. . . Oklahoma on the west and Indian on the east.

I was somewhat afraid of the Indians. We always tend to fear what we don't know about, and I did fear the Indians.

Papa had some acreage near Oklahoma City, and I was so anxious to start raising chickens and a garden. How I had planned and dreamed of this new start, a real home, a daddy who loved me. How I fantasized about doing wonderful things to make him proud. . . truly proud of me.

The train pulled into the depot at Oklahoma City. I saw him waiting on the platform. I waved excitedly. He saw me. I got my bag, hurried off the train, ran to him for a welcome hug. . . but he said, "Not here Katie, gimme yer bag." Well, he never was very expressive of his love. At least I was here with him and we'd live in a nice home on the farm, and maybe I'd meet some nice folk, and. . .

What we did was get in a hired hack that eventually stopped in front of a shack that was surrounded by junk. . . filthy junk, in a neighborhood of shanties peopled by poor, dirty, hungry and ragged adults and children. . . Children with no shoes, dirty empty faces, rags on their bodies that they called clothes, foraging in trash cans for scraps of food.

"Papa, what's this place?" I asked.

"Home, girl. This is home," he said.

I didn't want to get out of the hack. I wanted to cry, but my good manners wouldn't let me.

Sadly, I got down, took my bag and trudged disappointedly to the door. Opening the door, new assaults pervaded my senses. The evident smell of old foodstuff molding, the rancid smell of decay, the sickening smell of cooking grease that stuck to the walls, the smell of dirty clothes filled with sweat, the musky smell of a man in the unmade bedcovers.

Well, at least he cleaned up to come meet me at the depot.

"Papa, what happened to the hundred sixty acres?" I asked.

"Lost it," was all he said, and I never learned how.

Papa was a surveyor. He'd always traveled a lot, and that didn't change. He'd always return with enough money to feed us.

I spent a lot of time alone in that smelly house, until I realized that my life could be wasted if I didn't do something.

I really didn't know what to do, but one thing I missed was laughter. Even among the children there was no laughter in this poor part of town. Nothing to lift the spirit or feed the soul.

I had recited pieces at our Literaries in Nebraska. We all enjoyed the Literaries, so I decided to organize one with our neighbors. I invited people by word of mouth. I didn't expect many to show up, but was I ever surprised. I ran clean out of lemons. I had to make four buckets of lemonade to give everyone a drink. We had religious reading, beautiful pastorals and love poetry, and funny readings. People cried, and smiled as they dreamed and laughed. Ah, it was a wonderful time. . . Laughter! What beautiful music.

The Literaries became a much looked-forward-to weekly event, and every family brought two

lemons—occasionally some shared their sugar too to take the burden off of me. . . the hostess. I worked for this. I earned it. I had found a place.

Hostess of hobos! Well, it was a start, and everyone—especially the down-and-out—needed spirit, beauty, and laughter in their lives. I was helping them to find it.

Thinking about the good feeling I had one night after our Literary, I wondered what it was that made me feel so good. Being important, making something of myself wasn't it, and this puzzled me.

I thought and thought, and suddenly it hit me. "Do unto others as you would have them. . ." That was it. Doing for others, making other's lives better, giving of yourself, making the world (my world) a better place in which to live, that's what everyone's purpose is. Some just never realize it, but I did.

It was like a spiritual birth, an awakening, a quickening of life. My heart pounded in my chest as a plan began unfolding. . . but the plan. . . it was like a command from God. It held my destiny. It was my reason for being.

When the emotional flood of this awakening started to subside, I began—as though guided by some great power—to establish a step-by-step outline for achieving the plan.

Before the next Literary, I got word that the parents should come to our yard thirty minutes before the children. When they arrived, wondering what was in store, I asked a simple question, "What do you want for yourselves and your children?"

Well, you'd of thought there was a fist fight going on at the rabble that they raised when they all started yelling their answers. "Jobs," "Education," were the most dominant demands.

"Do you folks mind if I write to the newspaper and ask for help for all us poor folks?" I asked. Needless to say they all agreed that I could speak for them, but they all felt it would do no good.

The children came. We had our entertainment and lemonade, but throughout the evening all I could think of was writing that letter.

It was just a few days later.

Praise the Lord, there is power in the word. Food, clothing, even some cash money came

pouring in. I got some of the women together. We sorted clothes and gave them to all who needed. We divided the food as far as it would go. With the money, we bought books and sent the children to school.

Some of the ministers of churches in town decided to form a mission to help us poor people. They called it the Provident Association. They even hired me to serve as "Matron" of the organization.

Things were looking up for the children, and the help from the churches was a blessing for entire families. But something was still needed.

So I called all able bodied men and women to a large meeting. We met in the street 'cause our yard was too small to hold the number. I was a paid "Matron" but too many others who wanted work couldn't find it.

Papa came straggling in when the crowd was gathering, asked what his "crazy daughter" was up to now. He looked so tired and old. He went into the house and laid down while the meeting raged outside.

"I called you people together this evening because something has to be done in this town to make things better, to make things right.

"Many of you people came here to find new hope, and all you found was no hope.

"You all have skills, trades, talents that you could use to do a job of work. . . if you could find the work. Well, I've thought of a way to let the work find you. (She acknowledges the cheers.) I know! I know it sound great. To some it sounds like it won't work. But I think it will.

"I think we can form a workers union, where you all sign up your name and your skills. We'll make a list of all trades by name and make that list available to a job market every day down town. Then, those that need your labor can find you."

Well, everyone went for the plan, and sure enough, it worked. We got jobs for over four hundred members in practically no time at all.

My big plan, my GRAND PLAN, was working. I didn't have to look for my place any more; people were putting me in it. These workers of our union decided I needed to be their representative to the State Federation of Labor meeting at the Shawnee Convention. All of us delegates or representatives were from Farm and Labor organizations, and we

were going to have some say in who was going to write the Oklahoma State Constitution.

I'd learned sometime back not to be shy, to speak my mind, and say what I had to say with conviction. So, I got permission to talk, and what I talked about was what I knew, and what I knew was there was a whole lot of good people who had been exploited. Exploitation isn't fair, and sometimes it's downright cruel.

I demanded compulsory education for our children, abolition of child labor, and the state government creation of a Department of Charities and Corrections to help the poor, the orphaned, the insane, and those accused of crimes.

I'm pleased to say I articulated the needs and the programs well enough that all three were included in the platform of the Democratic Party.

And, included in the language of the proposed Department of Charities and Corrections, I made sure that these words were used in describing the office of the commissioner as being "his or her" office.

Furthermore, my grand plan continued to work. Those people nominated and elected me as Commissioner of Oklahoma's first Department of Charities and Corrections. I heard it said that my popularity and my "gifts as a public speaker" are what got me elected. . . I figured it was just hard work to benefit others, to fill a need, was what did it. Of course a little bit of the aggressiveness and blarney of the Irish didn't hurt either. Besides, men don't rightly know how to think of a small and prim woman who's as tough as a boot underneath her woman's charm. (She laughs.)

Now these first Oklahoma politicians didn't know that I was a statesman who knew how to play all their political tricks. I've read about it in history, and I've seen it happen in my own time. You put a statesman, a person who truly cares about and works for the general good of the country or the state, in a politically powerful office, and some fur is going to fly.

Well, it didn't take long for me to skin the cat.

I pulled in experts to work in my office. Experts in the areas of reform schools, insane asylums, training programs for the handicapped and medical

aid for the poor. When I got all their experience working for me, I went hunting a cat to skin.

I'd heard lots of talk about Lansing Prison up in Kansas. We didn't have a prison in Oklahoma, so we had to contract with Lansing to take all our prisoners at a cost to Oklahoma of forty cents a day per man or woman.

Well, what I'd been hearing was that our Oklahoma prisoners, many as young as seventeen years old, were being badly, no, horribly mistreated up there.

So, what did I do? I went up there unannounced, paid my admission fee, and took the public tour of the prison. What I saw was bad enough, but when the tour was over I went to the warden—Warden Haskell. He wasn't any kin to our governor Haskell, and after identifying myself, I demanded to be taken on a complete tour of the facility and its factory and coal mine where the prisoners were forced to work.

Now Warden Haskell was not pleased with my little deception. He was downright angered at my demand for further inspection, and chose not to allow my investigation. He strongly challenged my "right" to, as he called it, "spy" on his prison.

Well, let me tell you, I let him know I would see "all" or be "ordered out" by him. He knew what problems that would cause. . . so. . . I got the full tour. I crawled through the mines, saw the punishment chamber (the crib where men were shackled hand and foot behind their backs and placed in a coffin-like box), saw the "water cure" pit, saw the dungeons with men chained to the walls.

Oklahoma had at this time five hundred and sixty-two men and thirteen women prisoners in Lansing. They were fed on 10.9 cents per prisoner per day.

Goodness, I could go on and on about that terrible place, but what is important is the last line of the story. After my report to our governor Haskell, a plan developed and we came to its conclusion in January of 1909. We removed all Oklahoma prisoners from Kansas and reinstituted them in Oklahoma's brand new and most modern prison in McAlester.

With the prison battle won, I was in demand at many places around the country to lecture to various clubs and organizations. My office was well staffed

and running smoothly, and I was trying to decide what the next project would be, when in 1910 the decision was made for me. We'd already got compulsory education for our children, safety standards in mines and factories, education programs established for the handicapped, and prison reform. These were all programs in place and being well cared for by the capable people I'd hired to oversee them.

Isn't it strange how, when things are running smoothly, we become somewhat complacent? We feel comfortable and tend to rest on our laurels, our accomplishments.

That's the time we should all learn to be wary, for that's the time when if anything is going to go wrong it will.

One of our field representatives got a report that first amused, then intrigued, and later created great anger in me. He told the story as he'd been told, that three "elf" children were living in a field nearby. They slept in the hollow of a tree and begged food from nearby farm houses.

Elves? In America? I could believe the story in Ireland...but America? In Oklahoma?

Realizing there had to be some validity in the story, I sent some of our people to catch the "elves."

What they found were three Indian children. We learned that their parents had died. They were sick, filthy, hungry, and scared. Once cared for, we learned from them that they had been set under the care of guardians who had "thrown them away." Further, these children owned very valuable land in the Glenn Pool Oilfields, and the guardian was collecting their money. Under close scrutiny, we discovered this "guardian" had fifty-one other minors assigned to him, for whom he was collecting money from our state government, and their money from property. . . and, he had, as he claimed, "lost all track of them." Lost all track? No! This man was nothing but a cunning thief! Well, he was certainly prosecuted by our office and made to pay his due.

But, was this an isolated case? I asked myself.

I set our investigators to work, and I was shocked, no, horrified at our findings.

This was a widespread practice. What we discovered made me sick to my stomach, and I

ordered an attack on the problem with no holds barred.

Oh my, oh my, oh my. The Scots have a saying, "The best laid plans of mice and men gang aft astray," and this was the beginning of the end of my GREAT PLAN.

Our systematic investigation began producing some very familiar names. . . some very powerful names. . . names of wealthy local businessmen, names of lawyers and powerful politicians.

When these names kept coming up again and again, the politician side of me urged caution. "Be careful," it said. "Give them the benefit of the doubt," it pleaded. "You can use this information to your own advantage," it tempted. Then, my stronger nature, the statesman side of me said, "Justice is blind," and "Equal prosecution under the law," and . . . we drew prosecution orders against them all.

I thought that my good work, my successes in so many programs, and the fact that I was well liked and highly respected could carry us through. But, politicians and statesmen make strange bedfellows, so they say.

I didn't realize the power of combined political character assassination. Oh, it started softly. They reduced my proposals such as the one where I asked for the responsibility of overseeing and ensuring Indian rights. Well, they allowed our office to oversee the affairs of orphaned Indian children, but we were told "hands off" of any representation of the uneducated Indian adults.

I asked for the opportunity to create an office of Public Defender to handle Indian claims, but the Governor himself vetoed this proposal. However, sometimes, "when there's a will, there's a way." I asked for and received a larger budget for my Department, and I had control over the spending of my Department, and I assigned twenty-five hundred dollars a year for legal fees, which we spent helping the Indians. J.H. Stolper was our lawyer, and he did his job quite well. He brought to trial and prosecution over a hundred of those unscrupulous "guardians" of Indian's property and money. In one year he recovered over nine hundred thousand

dollars to give back to the Indians who had been cheated. Why, one of Oklahoma's Washington Congressmen even called me "a fearless defender of the weak and helpless." I still had a few friends in high places.

Of course our state politicians couldn't attack me personally yet. I was still too well thought of by the public. So, they went after Stolper. It took them until 1912 to do it, but they trumped up some minor charges and got him dismissed. They wanted me to replace him with a lawyer of their selection, but I wouldn't do it. I knew full well what their intentions were, so I refused.

They know how to create pressure, and finally, here it came from the top down.

Those. . . well, I'm not going to call them what they are, those. . . politicians cut my budget; not just a little. . . not just in half. . . they cut the whole thing out. I had no way to pay my staff or myself. They teamed up with some local newspaper publishers and started a regular smear campaign. They just tarnished me at first, and I tried to fight back. But, I couldn't get access to the newspapers to take my fight to the people. They'd cut the legs out from under me. I had no public platform to use to state my case.

I paid some of my staff out of my own savings, but that wasn't enough. I just couldn't hold the department together anymore. Dust collected on all the files. Spiders spun their webs all over my office as deftly as the unscrupulous politicians had spun their webs for me. This office, where good, caring Christian men and women had worked diligently to overcome the dishonesty of a few greedy people, this office was dying.

One by one, all my staff had to leave to find gainful employment at other places. They, after all, had to support their families.

The dead petals dropping from the trees of winter reflected the dropping, no, the dead hopes and dreams that had so recently been vitally alive in this office.

(She picks up her discarded shawl and puts it back over her shoulders. She begins to age again.)

I guess I must have thought I was the Ghost Dance Woman. Invincible—invulnerable to the

politician's bullets.

But I wasn't.

They won.

They destroyed my Grand Plan. . . They made me a failure. (Getting a bit stopped up with hay fever.)

If I just hadn't been so stubborn. . . If I'd of just played politics. . . If I had just compromised, I could have. . . No. NO! What's right is right, and graft and corruption is not right. . . and truth, and justice (deep breath—five beats) don't always win. . .

I tried. I tried so hard, Papa. I wanted you to be proud of me, and I've been nothing but a failure. (She starts rubbing her skin.) This dry skin disease will drive me to total distraction. And the hay fever is getting me all stopped up. My lungs feel heavy and hurt.

Sometimes I just wish I could die. I'm 'bout out of money. . . completely out of friends. (Angry.) I did so much for so many, it seems like someone

could do something for me for a change. (Pause as she sits down and replaces her lap robe.)

No. . . I guess that's not the whole truth. Most of what I did for others was mostly for me. For my satisfaction. I wonder if that's good or bad to feel that way. . . I just don't know, God. I just don't know.

I sure came into this world of public life a lot different than I'm leaving it.

No power.

No money.

No family.

No friends.

(Tearfully.) All alone.

Fifty-five years old and . . . all alone.

Fifty-five years old and . . . a failure. . . forgotten.

I (She grabs her chest with both hands.) Oh, Jesus! Oh, Jesus. . . Papa. . . Papa. . . (A wail.) Mama? ■

Prairie Monument

BY NORMAN ARRINGTON

Dark monolith of a strong man's passage
marks slow turning of dim stars

Gnarled timbers engrave splintered visions
of bone and vein
pierced by memory of rain

A scorpion pauses
between iron bedstead and shadow fragment
cast by waning moon

In the yard
wind rattles a rusting pan ■

Onion Sandwiches

BY BARRY PHILLIPS

My great-aunt Mary died about a fourth of a century ago, and except for an occasional browse through the family photo album, I hadn't much thought about her for years. Not, that is, until last night when I was sittin' in a corner booth at the He Ain't Here bar in Manor, Texas, tryin' to decide if I should spend the night with Camille North, R.N., who had just finished her evenin' shift on the pediatric neurology floor at St. David's hospital in Austin.

For you Yankees, Manor is a wide spot on U.S. 290 with nothin' to recommend it but so-so barbecue and mediocre quarter-horse racin', but it happened to be where Camille lived, and where she had agreed to meet me. My name's Jake Mahoney, and I'm a jobber for National Medical Electronics, which means I spend most of my time on the road sellin' monitors and probes and overpriced computer programs to every hospital I can wheedle an account with between Santa Fe and Baton Rouge. Bein' as hospitals are where I mostly hang out, and nurses are mostly who I hang out with—professionally, that is—my social life on the road naturally gravitates toward those angels of mercy.

'Course they can sometimes be mercy-less, as evidenced by the fact that I'm single again for the third time since college, cut loose like an unwanted stray calf only four months ago, and the spot on my hide where the brand was burned off ain't healed yet, if you know what I mean.

But despite the fresh and painful scars from that recent flashfire of human intercourse, there I was sittin' in the He Ain't Here, lightly strokin' a soft warm female hand that was wrapped around a cold beer mug full of Michelob Light, tryin' to decide if I should, on the one hand, beat it on back alone to Room 844 at the Riverside Holiday Inn, or on the other hand, back my bull-headed butt up to the fire one more time. So naturally, Aunt Mary and her onion sandwiches came to mind.

"Jake, why are you looking at your hands that way?" Camille asked, reaching over to massage a fingertip in little wet circles around my palm.

I guess my mental decidin' between the "one hand" and the "other hand" vis a vis Camille was an

idea that had worked its way out of my brain and down my arms, because when she mentioned it, I became aware I had my palms up in front of me, shiftin' my gaze from one to the other and back again.

Now, I'm nothin' if not quick on the uptake, though, so I said, "I was just wonderin' what it is about touchin' somebody else's skin that feels so good to your fingertips." And I reached out and drew a soft line from one side of her mouth to the other. Camille didn't pull away. She turned her head and caught my finger with her teeth.

"Oh, my God," I said, still thinking of Aunt Mary. "You are a truly magnificent onion sandwich, you are. Do you suppose there's a People's Drug Store anywhere around here?"

Now most people you've just met, when you say somethin' totally incomprehensible, will just let it go as if you hadn't said it, and that's just what Camille did. But I knew those onion sandwiches had a rightful place in this discussion.

My Aunt Mary was near old as God when I was just ten. She lived alone in an ancient townhouse in downtown Alexandria, Virginia, survivin' on Social Security, the good will of her children, and onion sandwiches. Her doctor claimed that last item was gonna kill her, on account of her stomach ulcers, but she claimed it was the onion sandwiches that made life worth livin'.

I dunno where she got a taste for onions. Grew up a farm girl, so I suppose she had learned to eat 'em fresh and juicy and she swore they tasted sweet to her. I thought that was about the dumbest thing you could say about onions, but I loved my Aunt Mary, so I took her word for it. She'd eat onion sandwiches until her ulcer couldn't stand another bite, then leave 'em off until the pain subsided enough to not seem so important any more, leastways not as important as enjoyin' the taste of more onions.

And you gotta remember, this was in the days before Tagamet, so when those onions went to work on her stomach, the best she could do was pour down Maalox and hang on. Durn near every time I visited

her, she'd have those sandwiches for lunch. She'd sit there eatin' 'em and smilin' and actin' like heaven itself had set her dinner table. And about an hour later she'd hand me a dollar and say, "Boy, you run down to the People's Drug Store on the corner and get me the biggest bottle of Maalox they got. Go on, now. Aunt Mary's gonna pay for them onions tonight!"

On one occasion I worked up the temerity to question her about why she did what I thought was a pretty stupid thing to do: indulge in somethin' you knew in advance was gonna hurt like hell. I never forgot her answer. She took a long swig straight from the Maalox bottle I had just brought from People's Drug, hugged me up against that big old calico-covered bosom and looked off into the corner of the room with a kind of faraway look and a tiny little smile on her face that made me feel she was seein' some place I'd never been.

"When you love somethin', boy," she said, "you don't let the fear of pain stand between you and having it."

So twenty-five years later I'm sittin' at the He Ain't Here, lookin' at the cutest, curviest, warmest, juiciest, sweetest onion sandwich you ever saw and thinkin' about the one hand and the other hand and Room 844 and Aunt Mary and the price of things that make life worth livin'.

Camille leaned across the little table and took my beard in her two hands. She pulled my mouth against hers, gently at first, givin' me the opportunity to stop her gracefully, but when I didn't, she kissed me harder and with her mouth open and with her tongue doing things that made the hair stand up on the back of my neck.

When she stopped, I took a long breath and let it out real slow. "Well, that decides it," I whispered, mostly to myself, but lookin' straight into Camille's eyes. "Kiss me again. And order another round of Maalox."

"Round of what?" she whispered back, opening her mouth and leaning forward.

"Michelob," I corrected, still quick on the uptake. "Another round of Michelob." ■

Jake the Snake's Dogs

BY MARK SPENCER

Texas, 1962

Jesus H. Christ. That's who Samson thinks he sees for a moment as he barrels down the highway at four-fifteen in the morning after the worst fight he's ever had with Candy. No woman has ever really loved him. His Cadillac's high beams catch a thin, bearded, hollow-eyed figure in baggy clothes holding up a hand, beckoning. But it's just a hitch hiker, a bum.

Even if he were in a better mood, Samson wouldn't stop for him. Stink up the car. Talk about how he once met some president or used to be a millionaire.

Samson is on the road a lot because he's a professional wrestler. He used to pick up hitch hikers, but he learned his lesson. They're almost always bums who will talk your ear off with crazy crap. Met President Roosevelt. Was good friends with Gary Cooper in high school. Killed seventy Japs single-handed in one day on an island in the Pacific and escaped just before a volcano erupted and the island sank into the ocean. Screwed Doris Day in high school. Screwed Betty Grable in high school. Screwed Debbie Reynolds in high school. Screwed Rosemary Clooney in high school. Rosemary Clooney—Lord, who would want to? But Samson once picked up a guy who claimed he did. One old bum claimed that he was Ty Cobb, the baseball player, and that he had a million dollars in the paper bag he held on his lap; he also said he had a German Luger in the bag and wasn't afraid to use it if some bastard got ideas about his money.

Samson barrels along at eighty, ninety, ninety-five. When he stormed out of Candy's house a couple of hours ago—her having shouted "Larry!" in the heat of passion—he left Dallas in the direction of Donie with the idea of going to his mama's house for breakfast and then on to Houston for his Texas Cage Death Match tomorrow night, but after a few miles, he saw a sign for the road to Potosi, and now he's on it. He's not sure yet of exactly what he's going to do, but making this morning a day of vengeance seems like a good idea. Vengeance overdue.

Jake the Snake lives in Potosi.

Samson drives faster, faster. He has to beat the dawn. He fiddles with the radio, but decides all he wants is the whistle of the wind and the rush of the air conditioner turned on high.

He glances over at the passenger seat and sees in the dim green glow of the dash lights the new issue of *Goliath* magazine. Iron Man Mike is on the cover, a cocky red-headed kid in his mid-twenties whose head is way too small for his body. He looks like a carnival freak. In the picture he wears a cocky grin and the world championship belt of The World Wrestling Association. Samson opens his window and tosses the magazine out.

Samson has been on the cover of *Goliath*—four times in fact—but not since 1955. He picked up the latest issue of the magazine at the Dallas Gardens last evening and glanced through it before his bout, looking for any mention of himself, but there was none.

This latest issue contained yet another story about the late great Bobby Morris. The son of a bitch. An anonymous source contacted the editors of *Goliath* with the amazing story that Bobby Morris faked his death in 1954 so that he could become a secret agent for the United States government and help defend the country against the Communist threat. The White House, the FBI, and the CIA refused to respond to the questions posed by the editors of *s*, thereby raising suspicions that the anonymous caller's allegations possessed more than a little validity.

Samson, watching the needle of the speedometer flirt with one hundred and thinking about the Bobby Morris story, gets even madder than he already was. Morris is dead. Dead. Rotted in the ground. "I work my butt off," Samson says aloud. "A cocky kid and a dead man get more attention." He slaps the dashboard. Shit, his hand hurts. And his foot. His nose. Too many bouts for too many years. Also, the top of his ear, the one mutilated by Jake the Snake. The part that hurts is the part that's gone. Phantom ear.

Samson knows that Jake had a match in Altus, Oklahoma, last night. Today, he'll be in Lawton for a bout with Ed Powers, the former lineman for the Chicago Bears. Jake's house will be empty. Samson will probably be able to do whatever he wants to the place.

Jake used to be married, but his wife got smart years ago and walked out. He never mentions her, but he's always standing around in locker rooms before bouts, stinking up the place with his cigars and talking about some whore and every little thing she did to him or about his dogs. Jake has two hound dogs, a male and a female, to keep him company. He brags about what good hunting dogs they are, what good watch dogs they are, how they can do all kinds of incredible tricks (turn somersaults, count to seven). He claims they like to drink beer (they prefer Lone Star over all other brands), he wishes he could teach them to play poker, and if he could get the one that's a bitch to give him head he'd be content to avoid all contact with human beings.

Samson decides he'll kill them. He'll take the jack handle out of his trunk and smash their dog brains all over Jake the Snake's house.

He touches his ear. From the start way back in 1945, Samson the Strong Man's opponents have often tried to cut his hair. He got scratched and stuck slightly with a lot of scissors over the years before the night Jake the Snake decided a pair of shrub shears would be more dramatic than scissors, like a big gun as opposed to a little gun. Baby Bruce—who was sometimes Jake the Snake's partner in tag-team bouts and whose gimmick was that he sucked giant lollipops before matches and wailed like a baby whenever an opponent hurt him—stood by the ring and handed the big black-handled clippers to Jake while Samson the Strong Man lay unconscious from Jake's sleeper hold.

Jake has claimed that the accident was actually Samson's fault because he started to regain consciousness a moment too soon and turned his head just as Jake was going to snip a little lock of his hair off. It was going to be just two or three inches that Jake would hold up proudly and show off to the TV announcer after the match.

There was a grating, squeaky sound of the blades sliding against each other. Then a sharp, burning pain. Samson jumped up screaming, clutching the side of his head. His hand came away red. Blood ran down his face, his neck, his shoulder, his arm. At the sight of that sad little hunk of meat, a half circle, lying on the canvas, he fainted.

Samson has never been to Jake the Snake's house, but he knows Potosi is not a big place. On the outskirts of town, he stops at a phone booth and looks up "Jack Hinterlong" (Jake's real name) in the phone book to get the address. He asks for directions at a gas station that has just opened for the day's business.

By the time he finds the place, the sky is starting to lighten. Jake's house is at the end of a dead-end dirt lane. Railroad tracks run a couple of hundred feet behind it. Samson parks in the road, keeps the engine running. He looks around. The windows of the neighbors' houses are dark.

Jake's house is made out of white-washed concrete blocks and has a flat tin roof. Three rusty old cars—a Studebaker, a Plymouth, and a Buick—sit in the front yard. The driveway is empty. The grass is dead. The neighbors' places look pretty much like Jake's. Samson thinks about what Jake spends money

on: a new Lincoln Continental each year and expensive suits and a lot of booze and five or six whores a week.

Samson opens the trunk and takes out the jack handle. It feels heavy. He's sweating, and his heart is thumping. Goddamn dogs. Goddamn Jake. Goddamn Candy. Goddamn Larry—whoever the hell he is.

Son of a bitch, his gut suddenly hurts, and he thinks he might puke. His chest hurts, too. Heart attack, he thinks. Like his daddy. "Please, God, let me kill the dogs first."

His heart burns with hate, with envy, with frustration. *He* should be the world champ, not Iron Man Mike.

The back yard is full of dog turds. Two dog houses stand in the middle of the yard. They're big clapboard constructions painted white with green trim around the doors and around the little windows each dog house has on its sides; the roofs are peaked and have green shingles; there's fancy gingerbread trim above the doors on which the dogs' names are painted in red: "Mona" and "Ralph." Samson remembers Jake saying he named his dogs after his brother and an old girlfriend. The fence around the yard is just a rusty wire thing three feet high. The dogs are asleep inside their houses. Samson sees their rear ends sticking out the doors.

He will wake them up. He will stay outside the fence. When they run over to him, he will raise the jack handle over his head and then bring it down. Crunch. A few more hits. Splat. Simple enough.

Samson looks around at the house next door. A black joy fills his chest. The ground is shaking. At first, he doesn't know what's happening, then realizes a train is coming. The train's roar builds as he glares at the dogs' rear ends and slaps his left palm with the jack handle. The roar builds until his whole body vibrates with it. His teeth rattle.

Then the roar fades, and he whispers, "Here, doggy, doggy. Here, Mona. Here, Ralph."

The dogs stir. He expected them to race at him, leap onto the fence, let loose with growls and a bark or two before he killed them. But they heave themselves up slowly, crawl backwards out of their houses, and amble over to him. A couple of old hound dogs with sad, droopy jowls.

Except for the husky breathing of the dogs, the morning is silent now. The sun spies on Samson from the edge of the earth. The sky pales above his head, is a dozen colors on the horizon. He stares at the dogs' big watery eyes. He can't believe these humble, decrepit, gentle things are connected with Jake the Snake. Samson stares at the fancy dog houses. Jake truly loves these animals. And they probably love him.

Samson hears the squeak of a screen door and turns toward the next-door neighbor's house. A wiry man in boxer shorts and cowboy boots stands on the stoop of his back door, squinting at Samson. "Hey. Hey, you. What you doin'?"

Samson drops the jack handle and bolts. His chest aches. His head fills with a roar. Another train. But when he looks back he doesn't see one.

To his horror, the Cadillac has stalled out. He turns the key, pumps the gas pedal. He looks over his shoulder and sees the wiry man coming after him with the jack handle. The engine turns over but doesn't catch; it grinds and grinds.

"Hey, you. Hey, stop, you."

The engine finally catches, and the Cadillac's tires dig into the dirt; the car shimmies, then shoots forward.

Samson's chest hurts like hell. His stomach churns. His foot hurts. His hand hurts. His nose hurts. His ear hurts. Oh, he deserves to hurt. He is a son of a bitch. God is punishing him for being evil.

Samson has sense enough to watch his speed. He wonders whether the police will check the jack handle for fingerprints. He doesn't know why he dropped it.

The wiry man probably read his license plate. Lord.

But a few miles down the road, with no sirens approaching, he tells himself he did nothing. Only if someone could read his mind would anyone know that he was guilty of attempted premeditated dog murder.

Jake loves those dogs. The jerk loves them. Samson shakes his head, thinks of Candy.

He sees a hitch hiker, a bum, up ahead, beckoning. And Samson slows down, puts his turn signal on. The guy's grinning a crazy toothy grin, limbering up his mouth to do some serious yakking, but Samson has already made up his mind that this time *he's* doing the talking. ■

The First Snowfall

BY C. MICHAEL MCKINNEY

The young boy plowed through knee-deep snow stretching his legs full-length to reach his father's last footstep. The large hunting boots left chasms into which he could step securely, keep his head bowed, and avoid the cutting wind that burned his cheeks and the tip of his nose.

Matt Jensen paid strict attention to the snow holes left by his father, calculating when and where to move behind him to stay warm. Seven hunting seasons earlier, when he was five, he could lag four steps before the wind would swirl the snow around his father's large frame and cover up his trail. But Matt was taller now. His longer stride made it easier to stay closer to his windbreak.

"How are you doing back there?" his father's voice broke the gray silence.

"I'm okay. Wish the sun was out, though. My face is cold," Matt said.

The cold wind stung his eyes, and he blinked rapidly trying to clear the protective film of tears that was blurring his vision. A double barrel shotgun rested on his father's right shoulder, pointing skyward over Matt's head. He knew that as long as his father carried the gun this way nothing was happening, but he asked anyway.

"Are the dogs finding anything?"

"Spot's acting a little birdy, but there won't be any birds out in the open in this wind. They'll be down in the bottom, holding cover," his father said. "Is that new gun getting heavy yet?"

"A little," Matt replied.

"Well, make sure the safety's on."

He became aware of the death grip he had on his twelfth birthday present. The muscles in his hands and fingers were cramped closed and resisted

opening, like rusty hinges on an old door. Slowly the tension released through his fingers, wrist, and halfway to his elbow before he got his numb right hand completely open. His fingertips tingled with the warmth of returning circulation. Matt shifted the forestock into the crook of his left arm, opened and closed his left hand several times, then checked the safety. He scorned himself for not being ready to shoot if the dogs found some birds.

Matt's father stopped to relight a stubby cigar butt and turned to look at him through a cloud of gray smoke that curled away with the bitter wind.

"Do you think the dogs are smelling good?" Matt asked.

"They probably stink," his father said with a grin.

Matt laughed at his father's joke, and then scouted down the draw they'd been hunting to locate the dogs. He scanned the creek bottom at the end of the draw watching for movement; it was nearly three quarters of a mile away. But all he saw were the bare willow saplings poking through the white blanket beneath the giant cottonwood trees. The leafless branches blended into the gray sky. He could see patches of red shale beneath the north edge of the deep canyon where the walls were vertical, and the snow could not accumulate.

He knew the next rest stop would be in the canyon, where it was warmer and out of the wind, unless the dogs found something before then. Halfway down the hill he could see a plum thicket that resembled a black stain on white carpet. The thicket was massive, blocking the way to the canyon, and stretching from one side of the draw to the other. Matt shivered at the sight, and turned to stand in the warmth of his father's wake.

"It's colder than a well digger's ass," his father said, and continued down the draw.

Matt winced at his father's cursing and followed, thinking the only time he cursed was when they were away from his mother, around men, and especially around guns and dogs. Matt always knew when his father missed a quail, because the roar of "Aw damn" rang louder in his ears than the blast of the mis-aimed gun. Matt cringed at the memory of his mother washing his mouth out with soap for saying "damn." Saliva flooded the space between his cheek and gums

and washed over his tongue. He spit the foul taste into the snow.

Matt wondered why men said and did the things they taught their children not to say and do. He thought about the dead coyotes hanging on fenceposts he'd seen along the highway last summer. Fresh tan ones that still looked alive, then skinny gray ones that looked dead, and more at the crossing that were just skeletons. Even in the pickup, he could hear the flies buzzing around the carcasses, smell the gut wrenching stench of rotten flesh, and see the white maggots squirming in and out of bore holes they'd eaten through the dry leathery skin. His father had given him and his cousin, Freddy, a lesson about useless killing. Freddy had killed a jackrabbit with his pellet gun, and Matt's father had scolded the boys over the incident. Freddy said that there wasn't any difference between him killing a "jack" and Matt's father killing a quail.

"You don't kill nothing you don't eat," Matt's dad had told them. "That's the difference. Cows die so we can eat; jackrabbits die so coyotes can eat."

Matt tugged at the drawstrings of his parka hood and made the face opening smaller. He wondered if anything but flies ate dead coyotes. He wished the clouds hadn't covered the November sun this morning, and spoiled his chance of maybe seeing a coyote running down the crystal white creek bottom. He didn't want to shoot it; he wanted to see it alive while he could feel the warmth of the sun on his face.

Matt hadn't shot anything but clay pigeons and tin cans with his new twenty-gauge. He saw a ring-tailed hawk circling the hilltop to his left and hefted the gun to his shoulder, placing the brass bead sight just in front of the soaring bird. The checkered walnut on the forestock felt firm in his grip. The cold blue steel of the receiver gave him a foreign sense of power. He noticed how easy it was to lead the smooth-sailing hawk; following the dodging and fluttering quail would be more difficult. He shot the hawk three times in his mind and imagined the bird folding up in mid-air before dropping to the soft snow. The hawk disappeared behind the hill, and Matt shifted the heavy gun to his shoulder the way he'd seen his father do.

"Get up here Matt," his father said sternly but quietly. "The dogs are on to something."

Matt had fallen behind while he was daydreaming, and now both dogs were on point just ahead of his father. He took the gun from his

shoulder, grasped it firmly with both hands, and began plowing through the snow as fast as he could. He frantically sucked the cold air through his nose, chilling the back of his throat and burning it deep into his lungs. He could see Spot half crouched, like some sculpture, pointing into the sand plum thicket. He knew Sal would be on the other side, in the same frozen position. His heart was pounding, leaping with anticipation.

When the covey rose, Matt knew he had to single out one bird, lead it with the gun barrel and squeeze the trigger. He didn't want to mess up this first chance, and yet there was so much he had to remember, particularly where the dogs were so they wouldn't get peppered with stray bird shot, and, even more important, where his father was. Hunting accidents were common in these parts.

The muscles in his forearm were shaking so badly he didn't know if he could hold the heavy gun steady in the wind. But his father had said that hunting over dogs on point allowed more time for preparation, unless the ground was dry; the dogs lost the scent, and they busted open the covey, which was why his father always anticipated the first snowfall. Dogs could smell better in the snow.

Matt came up alongside his father, placed his left foot forward for balance, shifted most of his weight to the right, shouldered the gun, thumbed the safety switch to "fire," and waited. He stared at Spot standing chest deep in the snow. The dog's head, body, and tail formed a straight line like the needle of a compass. Nothing moved but Spot's nostrils, which opened wider to confirm the scent that had caught his instinctive attention.

"The quail may be running on us," his father said after a long wait. Matt knew that sometimes quail would run ahead of the dogs without their sensing it, especially in the snow.

"Put your safety on and ease up to that thicket." Matt felt the pain in his arms and shoulders subside as he lowered the gun and looked toward the ominous circle of sand plum bushes. He had been hunting with his father since he was five, and on many occasions had played "bird-dog" by going into a thicket or deep grass cover to kick out the birds when the dogs wouldn't. He began walking, staring blankly into the brush, while trying to catch a glimpse of brownish-gray movement on the white snow, but he couldn't seem to focus on one specific point. Even

though the plum bushes were winter bare, the gray tangle was so dense he could see only a few feet in front of him. He pulled the gun tighter to his chest. The cold steel warmed him like armor protecting him from the unknown. At the front edge of the thicket he was parallel with Spot. Together, they inched forward in a low crouch as they had done many times before.

On his right, the tan and white spots of Sal were still frozen in space. He peered deeper into the tangled brush, looking for differences in pattern and texture in the snow. There were shallow crevices in the snow where the wind had cut small drifts around the base of each bush. A small sparrow huddled near a clump of grass feeding on sumac berries blown to the ground by the winter wind.

The stiff branches noisily scraped Matt's nylon parka and grabbed at his thin wool shooting gloves. His eyes glanced rapidly over the area before him. He remembered his father talking about birds being so cold you nearly had to kick them out of their nests to get them to fly. Sal had broken her point and was now gradually creeping next to him, unsure of the scent. A sparrow jumped into flight ahead of him. Matt was sure the quail were gone, which was just as well since he couldn't have seen the covey rise from deep within the thicket, much less shoulder his gun and shoot.

Spot was weaving in and out of the cover ahead, nose to the ground, searching once more for the scent. Sal joined him as Matt continued, a bit disappointed, but feeling almost relieved. Then, near the middle of the tangled bushes, he found a depression in the snow littered with sumac berries. He took off his gloves and bent down to examine the nest area. The quail had been there and gone, leaving small tracks going every direction in the snow to mark their escape. Matt stood up and stuffed his gloves into his coat pocket.

"They've been here," Matt called out to his father, who was still out of sight.

"They've run out on us all right," his father replied. "Come out of there; the dogs'll find them."

Matt leaned toward the sound of his father's voice but it died in the wind behind him. He imagined his father crouched on a small hill, lighting a cigar, and watching the dogs work the creek bottom. But when he looked around to them, all he could see was plum thicket, and all he could hear was the gusting wind.

Quickly, he turned to retrace his route, but his empty footsteps in the snow had disappeared amidst the gnarled gray tangle of bare plum and sumac bushes. He was deep in the middle of the thicket, deeper than he'd ever been. He began to panic, and lost his sense of direction. The wind burned.

He positioned his shotgun vertically in front of him, and moved left, plowing into the snarl. Suddenly the short bushes in his path exploded with the flutter of flying quail, and in one smooth motion, he tucked the butt of the gun in his shoulder, saw his father appear on the slope to his left, heard the dogs running to his right, caught a good lead on two quail flying close together, picked out the first and gently squeezed the trigger. The automatic twenty gauge boomed, ejected the shell, and rechambered a new one while Matt drew a bead on the second blur moving in a gentle arc ahead. He shot off another round and the blast made him numb.

He tried to move, but he was spent. He felt as though he were standing in a vacuum, where sight and sound did not exist. He hadn't seen the first bird fall, but he knew the second one had folded like the hawk he had imagined.

Sal picked up the quail, wings beating the dead air around the dog's mouth and pranced back, head held high and proud, as if she had done all the work. He could see his father taking the bird from the dog, smiling, the way his mother said he did when he saw Matt for the first time.

He lowered the gun slightly, his vision blurred from the excitement and the cold. The smell of gun powder hung in the air, and blood raced through his body, tingling his cold toes. He heard his father coaxing the dogs to work. Matt stared at his shotgun. The heat from the barrel had formed the oil into an odd moire pattern. A dullness had spread over the receiver from the spent powder, and sweat from his left hand had displaced the oil on the forestock, leaving his handprint on the finish. The receiver, hot from the burning powder, warmed his hands as he caressed the cordite from the steel.

D-e-a-d, he thought, dragging each letter apart, stretching the victory across the prairie for every living thing to hear. The tension and the cold he had felt were gone, a peaceful calmness had settled over him. He took two shells from his breast pocket and loaded them gently into the magazine, noting how smoothly they slid forward, how securely each one locked into place ■

Building the Thanksgiving Plate

BY KEITH LONG

If in the deep, dark future, archeologists dig up the remains of my family photo album, they'll probably remark at the regularity with which we ancient peoples ate so much. I cannot remember a time when more than eight members of the Long family sat down to a meal together that somebody didn't get up and take a photo.

So there we are, strung throughout the album, woofing down mashed potatoes, chasing black-eyed peas around the plate, and smirking over strawberry shortcake.

Archeologists will point to the photo album as solid evidence that 20th-century humans spent 97 percent of their time eating, and the other three percent of their time unwrapping gifts while sitting by some tree they killed.

They will establish a number of theories on the evidence: 1) that ancient peoples had a higher metabolism rate; 2) that ancient peoples didn't have many hobbies; 3) that ancient peoples stayed continuously around a food-laden table for protection against wild, carnivorous beasts, and 4) that ancient peoples competed fiercely for the title of "fattest of the tribe."

Maybe the archeologists will find another family album of those kids in the Mountain Dew commercials, and see that humans had recreational activities other than eating. I know for a fact that some families go skiing, some go golfing, some go hiking, some go spelunking, some go shopping.

But not us. We eat.

If it's a Fourth of July photo, then we're cooking hamburgers and hot dogs on the grill. If it's New Year's Day, we're doing glazed ham and the black-eyed pea thing. If it's Christmas, the photos are of a table stocked with quail, potatoes, biscuits, and gravy. If it's Ground Hog Day, we probably sent out for pizza.

But the feast of feasts in the Long archives is Thanksgiving. Thanksgiving lasts four days, and, besides the objective of giving thanks, eating is number one on the agenda.

The traditional turkey-laden banquet intimidated me as a kid because there was so much to eat and so little plate space. I had this fetish — up until the time I entered college and partook of cafeteria gruel — of letting my food, or should I say foods, rub up against each other.

"Yuck," I complained, "my green bean fell into my mashed potatoes."

"Eat it," my father said, "it's all going to wind up in your stomach, anyway."

I knew he was right, unless I could manage to dribble most of my green beans onto my shirt, my pants, my socks, and the kitchen floor.

Even worse was the green-bean juice slipping all over my other foods. The mere idea of green-bean juice and spuds made my stomach flip. Then, in college, I got to observe the football team at the dinner table every evening, and nothing has been able to turn my stomach since.

I began to get elaborate with food organization, studying the various food groups' structures and tensile strengths. The Longs' Thanksgivings began to take on a much more interesting and satiating aspect.

I was lucky enough to sit directly across the table from my Uncle Haskell Long during a very impressionable age. I took lessons from him in plate-building, an art he perfected way back when he was under 260 pounds. I haven't perfected some of his more refined skills, but I'm still young and have good intentions.

One of his favorite moves is to tell a joke at the table, and then make off with the dressing dish while everyone else's grip has been feeble with laughter.

I'm not quick enough for that yet, but I've picked up some things, which is good, because plates don't seem to be getting any bigger these days.

Inflation never hits where it's really needed.

Haskell's plate-building effort begins even before the meal is ready. It's best, I've found, to follow Haskell into the dining room and watch him orchestrate the seating places and the setting down of the food so that he can obtain optimum reach and elbow space.

Elbow space is important on Thanksgiving, because there's always a big crowd and the place mats are squeezed tightly together. Space would be no problem if everyone were right-handed. That way, we could all protect our territory with our left jab and shovel the food with our right.

But I'm left-handed and have suffered minor cuts and abrasions when improperly placed at the Thanksgiving table. The obvious answer for me is to

settle onto an appropriate corner of the table, thereby providing me with full flapping power but limiting my reach capacity.

Consequently, during Round Two, I can either disturb everyone by asking that stuff be passed my way or I can get up and mill around the table, forking and spooning stuff over relative's shoulders. Neither is very satisfying.

The most important steps to plate-building involve the first few items, and after saying grace, Uncle Haskell begins building his plate with a slab of white turkey meat, and then borders the inside with the biggest chunk of dark meat he can uncover. Then he spoons a heap of dressing on top of the white meat, building it up so that the lump of dark meat looks puny by comparison.

Then he ladles on the gravy, generously, thus putting together the infrastructure of the Thanksgiving feast without taking up more than a quarter of his plate space.

Next come the vegetables. The order of appearance here is significant and I have a difficult time getting stuff passed around in the proper order, but that is never a problem for Hack. He merely holds up the line until he gets what he needs.

Corn comes first, because it stacks well against the stuffing. The green beans, although tending to sprawl, come next, against the corn, and spilling all the way over, if necessary, onto the dressing.

Hack anchors the green beans with a slab of cranberry sauce, and then stacks in the leafy vegetables, most of which I still don't know the names of.

Then there's the miscellaneous veggies, consisting of whatever was in the cupboard that year: hominy, peas, okra, etc. With a flourish, Haskell closes the remaining plate space with the saladry: pea salad, carrot salad, raisin salad, and maybe even salad salad.

These last items, because of their sporadic nature, must be applied with a mason's touch to allow for the hot rolls and/or biscuits. For Haskell, there is never an "or" situation. Only "ands," as in "Please pass the rolls *and* biscuits."

If, after all this planning, there is a crunch on plate space, I've noticed that it's perfectly fitting to Uncle Hack to just let the rolls and biscuits ride alongside the plate, provided they don't get bumped by a tea glass into someone else's territory.

I've never heard Uncle Hack complain about plate size, although I have witnessed mutterings from the table about his plate's height.

But the man's a genius of the first rank. Ah, the things he's taught me about dessert. ■

CONTRIBUTOR'S NOTES

Norman Arrington was born in Colorado in 1941. He was raised in New Mexico, Texas, and Oklahoma and has traveled extensively throughout the Southwest and Ozark regions. He holds a Masters of Fine Arts degree from the University of Oklahoma and has done post-graduate study in Maine and Arizona. He has taught art in a small college, was an Artist-In-Residence with the Oklahoma State Arts Council and has run a pottery studio and a small town newspaper. Norman currently lives and works in Roger Mills County.

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Holly Hunt's work has previously appeared in *Southern Review*, *Florida Review*, and *Christian Science Monitor*. She teaches at Cameron University in Lawton, OK.

Claude D. Kezer, performer, playwright, and teacher (among other things), received his M.F.A. from the University of Oklahoma. He is an active participant in a number of capacities with theatre productions across the state and elsewhere.

Keith Long, 36, is an instructor in Language Arts at Southwestern

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Helen Maxson is a Yankee who teaches English at Southwestern Oklahoma State University. In the summer of 1975, she was living in the small town of Northfield in western Massachusetts, waitressing in the Main Street Cafe. She knew exactly how all the regulars took their coffee: they never had to order.

Michael McKinney grew up in Beckham and Roger Mills counties of western Oklahoma. He earned a B.A. in professional writing from the University of Oklahoma and a Master of Fine Arts degree in Creative Writing from McNeese State University. McKinney teaches Language Arts at Southwestern Oklahoma State University at Sayre and spends summers as Poet in Residence for the Louisiana Division of the Arts.

Viki A. Pettijohn teaches English and Spanish at Southwestern Oklahoma State University while finishing her doctorate at Florida State University. She is no stranger to the Southwest, being a sixth-generation Texan whose great-grandfather rode the Chisolm Trail through Oklahoma.

Barry Phillips is a physician, lecturer, and writer who spends his time roaming around central Texas in search of perfect Health, perfect Truth, and perfect Verbs. Once a year he makes a pilgrimage to Quartz Mountain for the Oklahoma Summer Arts Institute—the perfect Writing

Conference. This is his first published story. Hi, Mom! I told you so!

Mark Sanders is a Nebraska native whose poems, short stories, and essays have been published in journals in the U.S., Canada, and Great Britain. He is the editor and publisher of the Plains Poetry Series and Sandhills Press.

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Robert L. Spencer is a recent graduate of the M.F.A. program at Virginia Commonwealth University, where he has taught English composition and literature for the past 3 years. His poem appearing in this issue of *Westview* is a selection from his master's thesis, titled *Images of Absolutes*.

Alvin O. Turner is Dean of Social Sciences at Northwestern Oklahoma State University. A frequent contributor to historical journals, he has published a larger study of Oakerhater in the Summer 1992 issue of *The Chronicles of Oklahoma* and is at work on a full-length biography.

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