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## Westview: Vol. 11, Iss. 4 (Summer 1992)

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# WESTVIEW

A JOURNAL OF WESTERN OKLAHOMA

VOLUME 11

NUMBER 4

SUMMER 1992

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SOUTHWESTERN ROOM

COPY 2

Western Oklahoma  
Daydreams & Illusions

# FEATURES

## FOREWORD

We find it nothing short of spectacular that this Summer '92 issue on the theme "Western Oklahoma's Daydreams/Illusions" ends our eleventh year of publication.

Few people on campus remember the early spring night of 1981 when the five original members of the Editorial Board met in a room on the Third Floor of the Art Building to talk about the task before us and maybe even to plan the first issue. We were three English profs, one History prof, and one Art prof. The only common ground that we had was a job that we had been assigned to do—to keep alive the history of Western Oklahoma through WESTVIEW: a Journal of Western Oklahoma. Tempers flared. The late Assistant Editor Ted Pyle became peacemaker. We worked far into that Thursday night, not leaving until we had thought through our disagreements. WESTVIEW was born and now lives.

Through the years we have made mistakes, but most of our contributors have forgiven us. The present issue is a good example of the kinds of mistakes we have made. According to our promises, two of our writers—Ken Robertson ("The Brothers" in the Childhood Section) and Pat Kourt ("Sistering" in the Miscellany Section)—expected to see their works in our Spring '92 issue. However, we somehow failed to get them in; therefore, we re-scheduled them for Summer '92. Somehow we made them fit our theme. We still maintain that it's a good notion to make our themes flexible.

As we have said often, our contributors continue to be the key to our success—as seen in our addition in this issue of four new themes. We have now projected our themes through Spring, 1996. Margie Snowden North of Erick contributed the first three new ones; Carl Stanislaus of Chickasha gave us the last one.

May WESTVIEW continue as long as there's history to be remembered and recorded, and may our worthy contributors continue to support us.

Still celebrating,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Leroy Thomas". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first letters of "Leroy" and "Thomas" being capitalized and prominent.

Leroy Thomas

Editor

## FEATURES

# WESTVIEW—FUTURE ISSUES

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

**FALL, 1992** (Western Oklahoma Dustbowl Days; deadline: 7-1-92).

**WINTER, 1992** (Western Oklahoma Colorful Characters; deadline: 9-15-92).

**SPRING, 1993** (Western Oklahoma Lawmen and Outlaws; deadline: 12-15-92).

**SUMMER, 1993** (Western Oklahoma Feasts; deadline: 2-15-93).

**FALL, 1993** (Western Oklahoma Farmhouses; deadline: 7-1-93).

**WINTER, 1993** (Western Oklahoma Youth; deadline: 9-15-92).

**SPRING, 1994** (Western Oklahoma Flora and Fauna; deadline: 12-15-93).

**SUMMER, 1994** (Western Oklahoma Hard Times/Good Times; deadline: 2-15-94).

**FALL, 1994** (Western Oklahoma Terrain—Rivers, Lakes, Hills; deadline: 7-1-94).

**WINTER, 1994** (Western Oklahoma's Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow; deadline: 9-15-93).

**SPRING, 1995** (Western Oklahoma's Cowboys and Indians; deadline: 12-15-94).

**SUMMER, 1995** (Western Oklahoma's Separations; deadline: 2-15-95).

**FALL, 1995** (Western Oklahoma's Now and Then; deadline: 7-1-95).

**WINTER, 1995** (Western Oklahoma's Competitive Spirit; deadline: 9-15-95).

**SPRING, 1996** (Western Oklahoma's Animals; deadline: 12-15-95).



# STYLESHEET

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

1. Always mail a submission flat in a 9 by 12 Manila envelope, remembering to include a SASE (self-addressed stamped envelope) for a possible rejection. Mail to: Dr. Leroy Thomas; Editor, WESTVIEW; 100 Campus Drive, SOSU; Weatherford, OK 73096.

2. Use a coversheet that contains name, address, telephone number, suggested issue and date (eg. "Western Oklahoma's Animals—Spring, 1996.).

3. Remember to leave your name and address off the submission itself. We want each contributor to be anonymous during the Board's assessing procedure.

4. Remember the importance of a clean typewritten or word-processed manuscript (double-spacing for prose and single-spacing for poetry). Use a good grade of 8 1/2 by 11 white paper. Submit pen-and-ink graphics on white paper. Submit 5 by 7 or 8 by 10 black and white photos that you will let us keep on file in our office and not return. Please don't send valuable family pictures. Send copies.

5. Be sure to submit material that is related to Western Oklahoma. The geographical boundary is the area lying west of Interstate 35. However, we don't require that our contributors be Western Oklahoma residents.

6. We prefer free-verse poetry that contains no archaic language and negative attitudes. We will seriously consider rhymed poetry that contains no straining or manipulating of meter and rhyme and no syntax inversions. Line limit is 25.

7. We prefer that your prose submissions be no more than ten double-spaced pages, that they be well organized and clear of purpose, and that they express worthwhile, upbeat attitudes.

8. We maintain that our journal will be wholesome to the extent that it can be appreciated by almost all readers.

9. Feeling that your submission will be accepted, you also need to send along a short biographical blurb written in third person. Example: DR. SYLVESTER PERRINE of Current, Ohio, is a retired English professor. Dr. Perrine, a former resident of Western Oklahoma, has made many previous submissions to WESTVIEW.

10. Strive for a natural writing style, good grammar, good taste, correct spelling.

11. Accentuate originality and creativity.

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## CHANGES



illustration by Brad Snow

# DAYS OF THE FIVE AND DIME

by Priscilla Johnson

You know you've heard people say something about the "good old days" and how much they long for them to come back? Generally, that's talk from older people who know that things were better in their day--that things went smoother and cost less. As a child, I used to think only of new things and thought that the old things should be thrown out. Now I'm one of the older generation, and I know that we had things better in those

"good ole days." For instance, I remember cold bottled soft drinks, look-but-don't-touch merchandise, and wooden floors that were as much a part of my childhood as going to Grandma's.

The expression "You're going to nickel and dime me to death" was coined by parents of children who wanted to go to the Five and Dime. Even the names of those old stores like The Variety Store, M. E. Moses, or S. H. Kress evoke pleas-



ant memories. I miss them and their merchandise. There used to be a store in Erick—a variety store now long gone—that brought back the same feelings as the ones in the old days. The atmosphere inside the store itself was dark and comforting on a hot summer day.

Although things were less expensive than they are today, no one had any money. Even children's wages, generally from hoeing or chopping cotton, were put into the family coffers. If a kid had a penny, he could buy something. Pennies used to count for something, and penny candy was just the thing when a penny was burning a hole in a child's pocket. Rarely did anything in a Five and Dime cost more than a dollar or two. Lace-trimmed handkerchiefs or a mirror for your purse were items that were considered luxuries and looked elegant right in that special place in your purse. Children usually opted for a bottle of bubbles or maybe a kite with string. Or you could sometimes read comic books if the proprietor was in a good mood and your hands weren't dirty. Comic books, too, were only a nickel or a dime.

You could read those comics sitting on real wooden floors with your

bare feet folded up underneath. Sometimes you sat there so long that you couldn't walk when you stood up. I miss the wooden floors in those stores. You might say that it's strange, but just think about it. When you put your feet down on the floor, it would spring a little, giving a little spring to your step that concrete can't. Maybe you think I'm waxing nostalgic, and I am. Soon, however, there'll be a whole generation of kids to whom wooden floors mean nothing—spring or no spring. If you were barefoot, the wooden floors felt smooth and cool on your bare feet. I don't remember ever getting a splinter in my feet—a sticker, yes, but not a splinter. The people who worked inside the store knew when someone came in, more than likely because of the floor. And more than likely they knew everyone in town back then and called out, "Hello, Mr. or Mrs. So-and-So."

By chance, that old store might have had a Coke box, and Grapettes were only six cents—five for the drink and a penny for the bottle. Bottles were recycled way back then even before recycling became popular because you could buy another drink if you collected enough bottles. Grapettes were bottled

## CHANGES

magic hidden away in real ice: a cold purpley fluid that slid right down your throat and hit your stomach, sometimes causing a pleasant ache because the drink was so cold. Those old boxes stocked root beer, orange soda, Dr. Pepper, and Coke. The uncola, Seven-up, was new but not very popular. Have you ever tried a bag of salted peanuts poured into the neck of a half-full Dr. Pepper bottle? The mixture of the salt combined with the flavor of Dr. Pepper and the crunchiest of peanuts is hard to beat. Making that delicacy is difficult now if Dr. Pepper is in a can.

In my mind's eye, I can still see a small, thin, dark-haired girl in shorts and a sweat-stained shirt happily sitting on that wooden floor, a ceiling fan droning lazily over her head while she drank a grape soda and read a comic book. For the young, time crawls by and things that are precious are taken for granted or not thought of at all. As you get older, a smell, sound, or name triggers those forgotten memories, bringing those things to mind that you filed away along with your childhood.■

*PRISCILLA JOHNSON*, a SOSU English Education major, finished her Student Teaching at Washita Heights last semester and received her degree on May 8, 1992.

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# WHERE AMBER PLAYS

by *Sheila Cohlma*

My dear friend's baby died today.  
What can I say that will make things better?  
The well-meaning words seem so empty  
sent away in an out-of-state letter.

My dear friend's baby was loved and special,  
although imperfect by earthly measure.  
Now, free of the earth, she is whole and healthy:  
running, giggling among great treasure.

Amber shrieks with delight at a butterfly.  
Waving, she shouts to us, "Watch this!"  
Then she scoops up a fat, loving puppy  
and gives him an exuberant kiss.

Her silken curls bounce wildly as she races  
through the fields of flowers in golden days.  
How glorious it will be to meet together  
in the sunlit place where Amber plays.■

*SHEILA COHLMIA* of Weatherford helps in her family's rental business and enjoys doing free-lance writing as time allows.

## CHANGES

# KIOWA BARBER

by Marj McAlister

Idle behind his chair he stands  
black leather beneath strong brown hands  
his dark eyes pierce the thick plate glass  
oblivious to feet that pass.

I seem to hear ghostly hoofs beat  
see phantom dust rise from the street.  
I feel a chill, though warm the day.  
What would Satanta have to say?  
No paint or feathers to be seen  
but just an apron, sickly green  
No scalp is hanging from his belt  
when hair is cut; no pain is felt.

He earns the white man's money now  
no vengeful thoughts becloud his brow  
there is no glory in his task  
he hides behind a stolid mask. ■

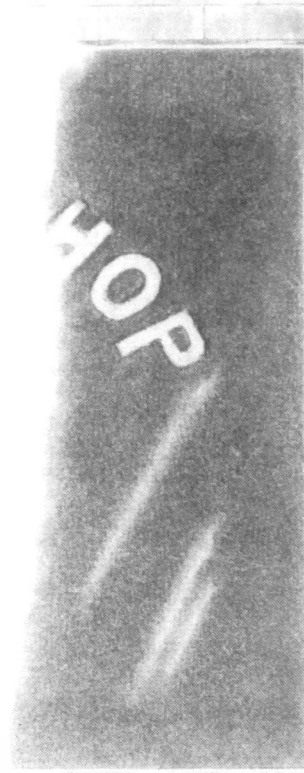


illustration by Scott Otipoby

*(previously appeared in PATCHWORK POETRY (THE WAR CHIEF))*

MARJ MCALISTER of Oklahoma City is a significant participant in the OWFI (Oklahoma Writers' Federation, Inc.) and the PSO (Poetry Society of Oklahoma) as well as a regular contributor of manuscripts to WESTVIEW.



# WHISPERING WATER

by *Michelle Russell*

The water silently, swiftly passes  
the dead, fallen tree that lies broken  
across the water  
trapping debris  
from the crystal, sparkling stream.

The water curls, spills, and splashes  
over the gnarled, broken brown branches  
of the tree, speaking in silent  
whispers  
of the things it has seen,  
the places it has been.

It flows from nowhere  
missing the tired, thirsty little animals  
that take their break at its side.  
The crystal clear image mirrors birds in flight  
in the clear ice-blue sky  
dipping ever so gently to bathe  
in the sparkling water.

The beautiful trees stand guard at its bank  
carefully watching every move made  
around the crystal stream.

The water speaks in a voice  
that can be heard only by those  
who listen.

The places it has been,  
The things it has seen,  
are silent, unknown,  
to those who do not listen  
to the voice of the water.  
The swish,  
the swirl,  
the splash,  
the gentle trickle.  
They are the voices and whispers  
of the water.  
Listen. ■

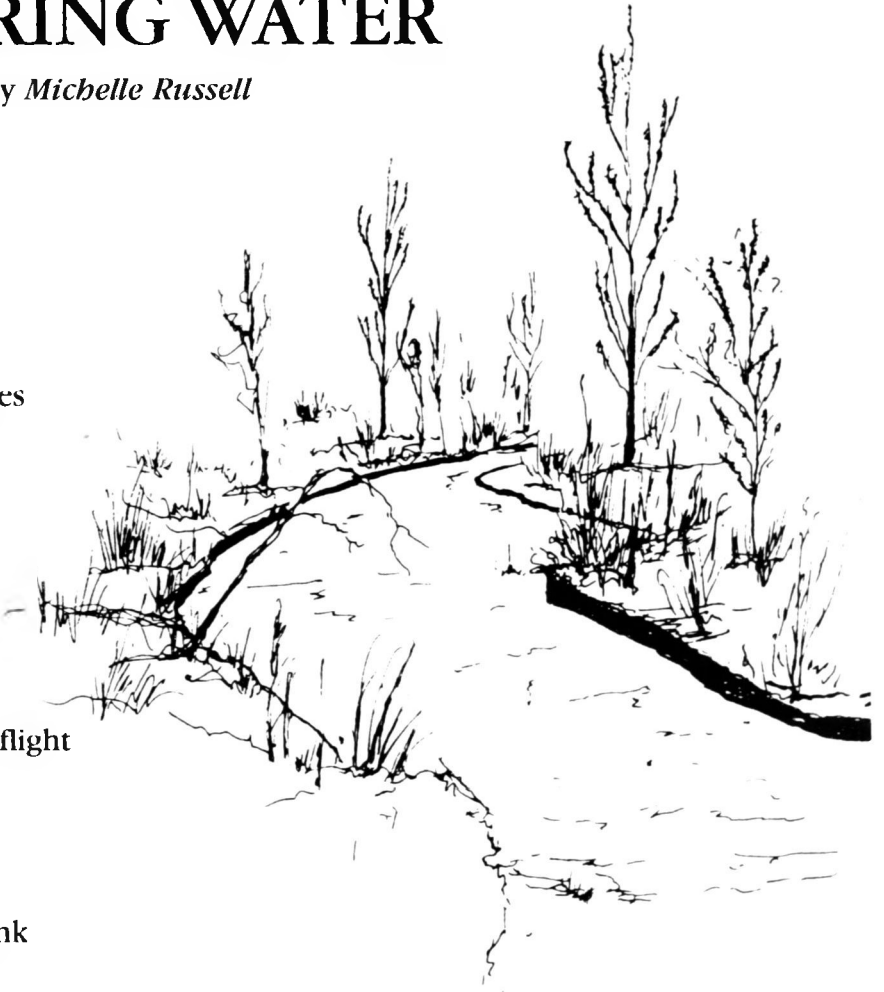


illustration by *Tina Price*

*MICHELLE RUSSELL* of Cordell is a SOSU  
senior majoring in Elementary Education.

# SEARCH FOR BEAUTY

by Irene Easley

*There is the beauty of the mountains  
As they rise to meet the sky  
When the morning sun plays over them  
kissing every peak so high.*

*There's the beauty of the forest  
With its stately trees so tall,  
Whispering its dark secrets  
to all creatures great and small.*

*There's the beauty of the desert  
With its sand dunes bleached so white  
And the giant saguaro sentinels  
watching over it day and night.*

*There's the beauty of western farm land  
When spring rains turn brown to green  
And the promise of a harvest  
in each farmer's eye is seen.*

*But the greatest beauty of this world  
and found by very few  
is the beauty of a soul  
whose faith is shining through.*

*For no matter what befalls it  
nor what the future gives,  
It stays true to God who loves it  
because it knows God lives.■*

IRENE EASLEY and her husband, Arthur, both of whom are dedicated readers of WESTVIEW, live on a farm north of Hydro along with Benji, their pet poodle. "Search for Beauty" is Mrs. Easley's first submission to WESTVIEW.

# ILLUSIONS

*by Priscilla Johnson*

When I was a child,  
I had a real craving for  
Lip pomade and Evening in Paris perfume.  
My daddy forbade me to wear lipstick  
(Even though pomade wasn't really lipstick).  
Mother said I didn't need that cheap toilet water.  
Anyway no one I knew could afford to buy real perfume.  
So I would go to the Five and Dime store  
And look but not touch.

I knew that if I could just buy these items of beauty  
I would be somebody  
Somebody glamorous.  
Say, have you ever smelled that perfume?■

## CHILDHOOD

### THE VISIT

by *CARL STANISLAUS*

I had gone beyond the outer limit  
of merely mortal human kind  
and joined those gone before me  
in a place of grand design.

All love, and joy, and beauty,  
more than I can ever know,  
was in and 'round about me;  
it set my heart aglow!

Friends and family all were there,  
a part of the heavenly host;  
we were all aged at twenty-one—  
T'was the blessing I liked most!

Then I looked upon the face of God  
and what was said was so:  
His face and mine were both the same;  
and life was so my soul could grow!■

*CARL STANISLAUS*, now retired from OTASCO and living in Chickasha, enjoys free-lance writing and the challenge of becoming computer-friendly.

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# A FORGOTTEN GRAVE

by *Sheila Cohlma*

A child with golden ringlets sleeps  
on the monotonous plain.

A little victim of the fever lies here  
by the tracks of the wagon train.

They had a few stones to mark her grave;  
Then her parents had to push on.  
It's a sad thing to search for the site  
and find the little grave stones gone.

The wagon tracks were long plowed under,  
and wheat blankets her resting place.  
I look across the field and imagine  
a laughing baby face.

Can you hear soft giggles in the wind,  
empathize with her parents' pain?  
A child with golden ringlets sleeps  
by the tracks of the wagon train.■

# THE BROTHERS

*by Ken Robertson*

James was surprised when Caleb grabbed his shoulder roughly and said, "I want to wrestle you," as they were leaving the Oakview Community School bus on a windy morning in March. The bus carried students for all twelve grades of the two-story brown-brick school and its adjacent WPA-built auditorium.

Caleb spoke with a guttural voice that carried a lingering speech defect. James remembered Caleb from grade school as a dour-faced kid who became a crybaby when the older boys teased him.

Caleb's father was a tenant farmer who drove a rusty Ford truck that squeaked and rattled about the neighborhood at harvest time hauling grain from the threshing machines and combines to granaries and to the Co-op elevator at the Frisco track on the west edge of town. During the past Christmas holiday, Caleb's family had moved to an unpainted house on a marginal farm covered with sandhills and scrub oaks about a mile from James' home.

James couldn't recall any disagreement with Caleb, who was a year younger and three grades behind him in school, but half a head taller and twenty pounds heavier. James didn't like to fight. He had been in two fights back in grade school. He had lost the

first one, and the defeat had reduced him to a crying, exhausted lump he didn't like to remember. The next time, he won by his determination and by aiming his fists at the soft parts of the other boy's head that were backed by solid bone. He learned that it's better to have skinned knuckles than a split lip and better to have bruised forearms from warding off blows than a bloody nose from receiving them.

James didn't like losing, and he knew that he would be a sure loser if he wrestled Caleb. "Why do you want to wrestle?" he would ask Caleb. "I want to wrestle you" was the only response.

He tried to ignore the challenge, but Caleb persisted with daily reminders that he wanted to wrestle him. At the end of the week, knowing Caleb would brand him as a coward if he didn't fight, James reluctantly offered to box with him instead; Caleb agreed.

James had always been small for his age and small-boned as well. He guessed that Caleb saw him as a short, skinny opponent and not much of a threat at wrestling or boxing either. He concluded that Caleb expected to gain an easy victory that he would brag about to his classmates.

James' congenial demeanor and quick wit made him popular among his circle of friends, but he knew that out-

siders like Caleb sometimes saw him as a smart aleck.

When friends came to visit, James often sparred with them, using the sixteen-ounce gloves his two older brothers had ordered by mail from Montgomery Ward in Kansas City. The gloves provided more padding and protection than bare fists. The sparring matches usually led to each person hitting a little harder until the punches were no longer friendly. And a hard blow hurt, despite the thick padding.

The boxing gloves set the place for the match at James' house. His brothers were men now, and their treatment of him had become like that of their stern and autocratic father before them. They were like second fathers, he concluded, and one father in a household was enough. He tried to allay their orders by avoiding them whenever he could.

On Friday afternoon when he and Caleb stepped off the school bus for their boxing match, James found his brothers relaxing in the front room reading the ENID MORNING NEWS and listening to WKY radio. He asked them to tie the strings of their boxing gloves. They seemed to like the idea of delaying the start of their evening chores in the cattle barn to watch the fight and to call time for the rounds.

James' confidence was at low tide as he pulled on the gloves. He shadow-boxed a few steps and tried to grin

confidently to conceal his anxiety. But his facial muscles were so tight from his fear of losing that only a thin-lipped smirk emerged.

James used the big padded gloves to protect himself from Caleb's furious onslaught of blows aimed at his face and upper body. He retreated in a wide circle that crossed a grassy mound in the dirt driveway. The mound gave him a momentary height advantage. At that point in his circle, he would make a stand, punching for Caleb's nose—or if the nose was covered, Caleb's ears.

At first, he was too busy protecting himself, circling, feeling for the mound with his feet, and directing his punches, to notice that his brothers had begun to cheer for him when he delivered a good blow and when he thwarted a thrust from Caleb.

The unexpected support filled James with a new spurt of determination. His forearms and chest hurt from Caleb's relentless pounding. His mouth felt as dry as the dusty driveway underneath his feet. His nose and lips throbbed with pain. His lungs ached from the exertion, and his arms and legs were nearing exhaustion; but he continued to strike at Caleb's nose until blood began to flow.

When Caleb, chastened by the hostile cheering, saw the blood on his gloves, he stopped fighting. James noticed that Caleb was breathing hard and that his ears were swollen and had

## CHILDHOOD

turned a purplish color. Using his teeth to untie the knots, Caleb slid his hands out of the gloves and retreated down the driveway toward home snuffling and wiping his bloody nose on the sleeve of his faded blue shirt.



Illustration by Jeromie Tate

James felt the joyous relief of victory. His body hurt, and he had a thick lip filled with pain; but his honor was intact and the aggressor had withdrawn. The memory of the unexpected cheers from his brothers glowed inside him, and he wanted to tell them of his gratitude; but he couldn't. He resisted an urge to inspect his swollen lip in the mirror above the wash basin in the kitchen and decided to delay starting

his own chores to help his brothers with theirs.

He held the door open while they herded the six milk cows and two heifers due to freshen soon into the milking shed. Expecting to be fed, the animals quickly arranged themselves in the stanchions in their butting order with the heifers at the far end. James helped mix and distribute the ground milo and cottonseed meal to the impatient cattle and stayed to listen to his brothers' man-talk while the streams of warm milk coursed from their hands into the tinned buckets. ■

*KEN ROBERTSON* was reared in Western Oklahoma, attended rural schools in Blaine County, and graduated from Fay High School. He now resides in Decatur, Illinois. His recent writing has appeared in *OUR TOWN* magazine, the Decatur *HERALD AND REVIEW*, *IMAGES VII*, and *HARD ROW TO HOE*.



# SANDY'S ADVENTURE

by *Priscilla Johnson*

I can do this I said,  
But the pick-up won't start.

I can do this I said  
As I left the gate to the  
Pasture open.

I can do this I said  
As I kept one eye on the cows and  
One eye on the look-out for snakes.

I can do this I said  
As I watched the line of cows  
Going out the gate single file.

I can't do this I said  
Because the cows won't mind me.■



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# BASTILLE

by *Manuel Avila*

Quiet, please! Quiet! The noise pollution is  
about to begin.

Oh, to bask in silence and watch the huge  
waves pound against the impregnable  
rocks—

Then backing up, only to regroup under the  
inspiration of their leader: Moon.

They come again

Pounding and striking the rocks

Again

Wrenching and tearing

Again

With all the might and power of all ever  
refused.

They come again

Pounding and striking the steel doors of  
Bastille

Again

To free all within that they should not  
be refused

Again

And the silence within is slain with  
the bursting of the doors

Again

And all that ever were knew then, at that  
moment, you can't keep these men  
down

For they come again,

Again to be free

Again

To love again

To dream.

If only airplanes didn't fly so low.

Quiet, please—quiet!■

*MANUEL AVILA* of Oklahoma City is a former SOSU student now attending Central State in Edmond and majoring in Communications.

# DOMEBO

(a mammoth kill site in Grady County, Oklahoma)

by *Glen V. McIntyre*

We had been trailing the gray hairy one for three days,  
 our stomachs knotted in hunger,  
 our legs stiff and sore from running  
 our lips so cracked with thirst they bled  
 when we ran thick tongues over them;  
 she was slowing now, as exhausted as we were,  
 tried to sink down, rest a while,  
 but then the wind changed and she scented us again  
 and trumpeted in fear;  
 we saw a dry ravine ahead of us—  
 it was a dry time, had been for many years now,  
 the old fathers of our tribe said the rains no longer came  
 as they once had,  
 summer long and hard,  
 the sun like a thousand campfires in a cloudless sky—the hunt leader gestured and we circled her,  
 Crying and clapping our hands together,  
 pushing her by our noise into the ravine,  
 there she thrashed about,  
 stared up at the sullen sky and our few spears  
 and shrieked her agony;  
 I stood on the bank, stared down at her,  
 awestruck by her size, her nose like a great snake,  
 and her two terrible tusks,  
 she trumpeted again at me and I trembled,  
 though I held my spear tight, angry to show fear before the  
 others,  
 though now the rank smell of her fear came up to me,  
 giving me strength;  
 I threw my spear at her, the spirits were good,  
 it pierced her left eye, the blood gushed over me,  
 hot, warm, and sticky,  
 the others also thrust at her,  
 soon made short work of her,  
 we butchered her there and sent runners to the women,  
 the tribe ate for weeks;  
 it was a good day,  
 they clapped me on the back and gave me a name,  
 Bather in Blood,  
 and called me a man. ■

*GLEN V. MCINTYRE* of Kingfisher is a museum curator vocationally and a writer avocationally.

"Domebo" is one of his many contributions to WESTVIEW.

## MEDITATIONS

# DREAM COWBOY

by Jennifer Chapman Worthy

Dreams of my cowboy,  
riding into town on a  
white horse  
smiling while whistling a  
nameless tune.

Clouds of red dirt  
blow around  
stinging my eyes  
and coating my mouth.

Jumping off his horse  
his spurs twinkle in the  
sun like tiny diamonds.  
Wind whips his hair  
giving him a tousled yet  
irresistible rugged look.

So I, with windblown hair  
and a dirt-streaked face,  
mount his horse with him  
As we ride off into the  
sunset, as most dream  
couples do,  
I wipe the dirt out of my  
eyes and realize  
my dream cowboy  
wears a  
Black  
Hat. ■

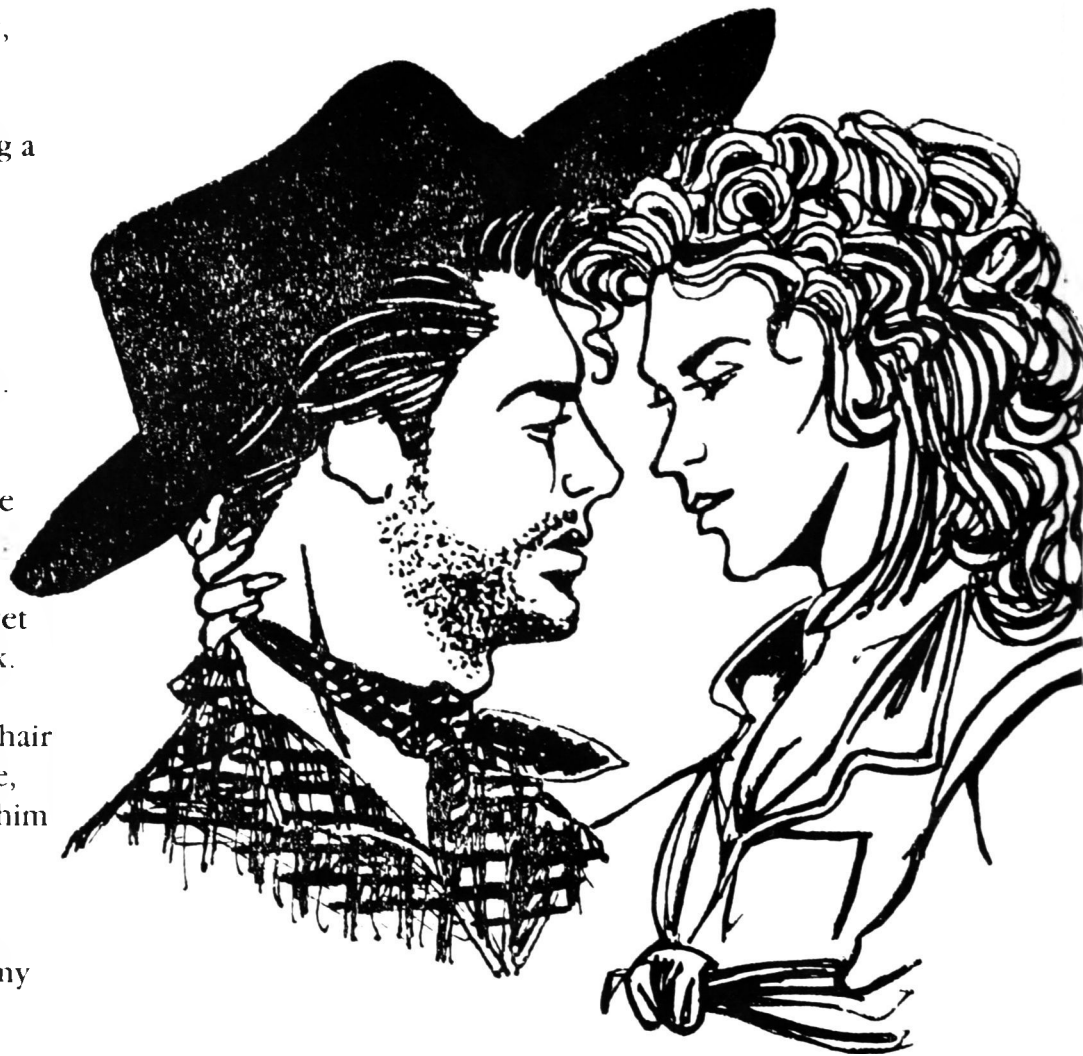


illustration by Mongo Allen

*JENNIFER CHAPMAN WORTHY*, a former SOSU student and Miss Southwestern of 1991, makes her first entrance into the literary world of publication with her piece "Dream Cowboy." She is now attending Southeastern Oklahoma State University in Durant and completing her English degree. Jennifer and her husband, Michael, live in Ardmore.

# THREE BY A WATCHER

by *Ruth Ramsey*

## *MOCKINGBIRD MUSINGS*

### I

A mockingbird woke me early,  
Trilling borrowed songs in the elm tree  
    outside my window,  
Singing borrowed love songs to his mate  
In the soft light of false dawn.

### II

Beware, oh prowling cat,  
Of the fierce and dreaded mockingbird  
Who with raucous warning cries  
Will descend on you with beak and terrible talon  
And all the fury of a Kamikaze  
To make a mock of your slashing claws  
As you, the hunter, become the hunted  
Looking for a bolt-hole.

*continued on page 24*

# MEDITATIONS

## *STICKY WISDOM*

Hot, sweltering day—  
Flies hanging on the walls, the floor, the ceiling,  
me.  
Going to rain, they say.  
Wonder who told the flies?  
They're sticking to everything, as though glued,  
Too lazy to fly in the thick, heavy air.  
I wipe the sweat from my face, flicking the flies  
away,  
And scan the sun-bright sky  
Searching for confirmation of such fly knowledge.

## *COKE SHOW*

On bright summer mornings we'd line up  
In rows front of the Redland,  
Looking for cheap thrills.  
Clutching the Coke bottles that were  
Magic tickets to the world inside  
Where monochromed images marched across the  
screen  
And bedlam reigned in the regimented rows  
As the balcony-confined blacks took revenge  
By raining ice and spit on the whites below.  
And big boys relieved the smaller ones of  
drawing tickets.  
Expectantly we stood there in the bright  
morning light,  
Shifting from foot to foot in the press  
of forward-moving bodies—  
Eagerly thrusting our offerings to  
The keepers of the gate  
To the land of dreams.■

*RUTH RAMSEY*, who finished a B.A. in English Education degree at SOSU, is living in Bar Nunn, Wyoming; writing poetry; and watching wildlife.

## TWO FOR NOW

by *Ethel McInturff*

### THE FLOUR SACK

In the good ole olden days,  
The women baked their bread,  
Used the flour,  
Washed the sacks,  
Went to town and bought some thread.

Made petticoats and panties,  
Bras to hold our bosoms down.  
We must look slim and trim,  
Must never look like a clown.

Fancy tea towels when company came,  
Compliments showered everywhere,  
Showed them my embroidered patterns,  
And told them I would share.

If diapers were in short supply,  
We always found a spare.  
These sacks were unpredictable,  
Could be used almost anywhere.

Flour now comes in paper bags,  
An insult to the sack.  
We oldtimers miss them  
And wish the cloth were back.

Don't try to estimate their worth.  
That can be done no way,  
For in those times of long ago,  
They always saved the day!



# MEDITATIONS

## EASTER

It's Easter and it's springtime.  
New life replaces winter's gloom,  
Symbolizing the Resurrection  
When Christ left the cold dark tomb.

As springtime wakes the sleeping earth,  
We may have life anew—  
With strength and courage from above,  
Our daily labors to pursue.

Re-dedicate our lives to Christ,  
Spread the gospel everywhere  
So people now in darkness,  
This peace and happiness might share.

Prayer keeps the channel open  
As we talk to God each day,  
Asking Him for grace and wisdom  
To do His holy will always.

God really loves this sinful world;  
He sacrificed His only Son,  
Who triumphed over sin and death,  
Brought light and life to everyone.

We too will die, but live again  
In that celestial home above  
The crucifixion paid for this.  
Praise Him, our God of Love!■

*ETHEL MCINTURFF* of Clinton is ninety years old. These two poems are her second and third contributions to WESTVIEW.

# SOUL SEARCHINGS

by *Michael Kelley*

## THE MASTER'S SONG

There  
    is  
    a  
    place  
Behind  
    the face  
        I wear.

No one's  
    ever  
        seen  
with  
    a thousand  
        mirrors  
but no  
    wall  
        or  
    screen  
to hide  
    my dance  
        from  
    the Master's  
        glance.

Where  
    I  
        tap  
    His way  
        into  
        my heart

Where  
    the music  
        never  
            stops  
and  
    freedom's  
        really  
            free

And  
    the only  
        song  
        that's sung  
            is  
The Master's  
    Song to me.

# MEDITATIONS

## OFFERING TIME

I went to church  
the other day  
And listened  
to the pastor  
And got bored stiff

During offering  
A woman  
Wearing  
a mink stole  
kid gloves  
and a four-carat  
diamond pendant  
reverently placed  
her nickel  
in the plate.

PRAISE GOD FROM WHOM ALL  
BLESSINGS FLOW.

AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAMMMMMMMMMMEN

## PIGEONS

A nuisance/bother  
They try  
to kill  
The messy  
Pigeons.

But  
I need  
them  
where the  
road inside  
runs  
Barren  
damp.

Their  
Sunlit  
Iridescence  
wings  
across  
my sight  
Clothes me  
where my sweater  
cannot  
keep me warm.■

*MICHAEL KELLEY* lived much of his life in Weatherford, where he graduated from high school and attended SOSU as a Speech-Theater major. At the time of his death in 1989, he was an actor and writer in Dallas.

# DAYS OF CAMARADERIE

by Elva Howard Deeds

The hot sun beams down on my sunburned neck  
 The sweat's making tributaries under my arms  
 My tongue is thirsting again for cool, fresh water  
 Scratched hands once pretty in cotton pickin' gloves  
 Now full of ragged holes made from sharp spurs on bolls  
 Knees a'crying for mercy from kneeling on the plowed ground  
 To rest a bending upright body—OH MY ACHIN' BACK!

In the twenties and thirties, in Western Oklahoma, schools were allowed a cotton-picking vacation of a few weeks in the fall. Extra help was necessary to save the bountiful cotton crop. Transient workers hadn't begun to trickle in, and able older children were called to the fields.

Results of these recesses weren't all bad, except for inconveniences to school personnel with interrupted plans, schedules, and gaps in the learning patterns. If there were complaints, they weren't heard publicly nor shared with radio broadcasts (no TV at the time). We didn't hear the words **child abuse** either, although there was some of it then. Some cotton pickin' teens might have felt imposed upon, but none griped about it among our cotton pickin' gangs. Surpris-

ingly, there was much camaraderie among us in the cotton patch. Out there, we heard singing, joking, and laughter with very little—if any—complaining. There was also a little "hanky panky" going on too, with bits of serious romance ending in trips down the aisle.

Cotton picking, in addition, had health benefits for restless children and teens. It was our physical education. Our appetites were strong for common foods found in lunch pails and brown paper sacks—pork-and-beans straight out of the can, wieners, loafed bread (light bread) still in its wrapper, an apple or orange and cookies or cake. All of it tasted delicious in the cotton patch. Fresh air and sunshine added to our good-health assets. Sardines from a can with crackers and homemade fried fruit pies were also delicacies.

But of importance during depression years, the extra income was welcomed, especially by large families. The money earned in the cotton patch paid for school clothes and shoes, paper, pencils, and books for school. Some families depended on the income earned in the fall to supplement their year-long food supply.

I was one teenager who benefited in several ways. My father was a salaried railroad section foreman, which I later realized was an asset in a small town that was

## MISCELLANY

dependent upon agriculture. Our steady, secure income was rare in that farming area during depression times. Our status made it easier on my conscience when I plotted my future.

One day, shortly after we had graduated from high school, a group of us teenagers were "pulling bolls" in the cotton patch. I suddenly stood up and resolutely exclaimed, "This is my last fall picking cotton for a living! I'm going to college!"—which I did with much help from the Good Lord, a ninety-dollar loan from a banker friend, and whatever my family could spare. But my immediate ambition was strengthened by that old cotton pickin' work back home—a little money saved, good health, and self-confident enthusiasm for learning.

Since the thirties, cotton "gathering" has undergone some changes. Picking cotton by hand was tedious and slow. Each boll usually had five sections of the white fluff, requiring the full attention of one bare hand, a finger on each section to remove the cotton. Other than using both hands in unison, there was no good way to speed up the process. But hand-picked cotton was fluffy white and beautiful. It was easily cleaned and ginned, with a higher grade than with "boll pulling."

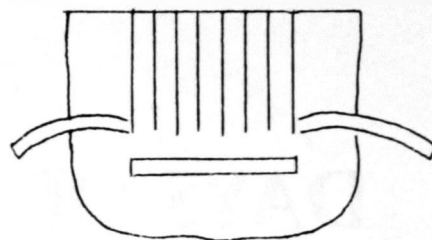
Consequently, most cotton came to be gathered by pulling off the entire boll, separating it from the stalk, with some of the stem and leaves still clinging. Some careful pickers made an attempt to pull away the hangers-on; but usually, the results were messy and dirty for ginners. Many farm laborers

moved into cotton areas and, for unskilled laborers, made good wages. Today, some farmers still use hand labor, especially where the crop grows tall and abundant.

For some years now, cotton picking machines called strippers can cover several acres of cotton in less than a day, leaving bits of white clinging to ugly stalks. Such a sight wouldn't have been acceptable to old-time cotton pickers. Work in the cotton patch remains more than a daydream or an illusion because I can still remember the discomfort of my aching back.■

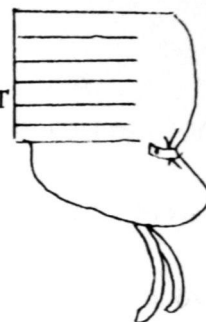
*ELVA HOWARD DEEDS* is a retired public-school teacher who lives on a farm near Sentinel with her husband, Eldred, who is also a former teacher.

COTTON PICKIN' BONNET



SPLINTS MADE OF STIFF CARDBOARD

THE "SPLIT"  
OR  
SPLINT BONNET



COTTON PICKIN' SACK

HEAVY CANVAS  
2 OR 3 YARDS

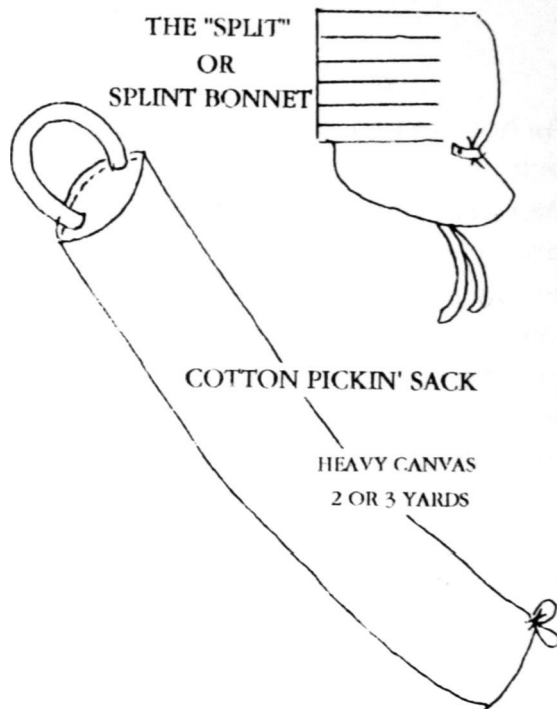


Illustration by Julie O'Reilly

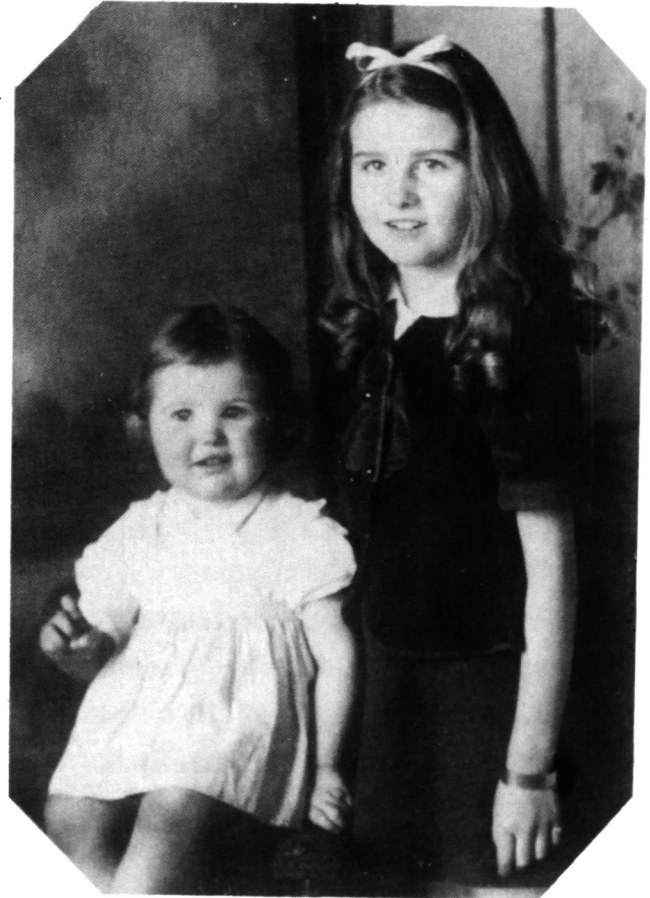
# SISTERING

by *Pat Kourt*

Sharing a room with strained will power  
 Aiming an "Annie-over" ball across the house  
 Watching Saturday serials at the old Rex Theater  
 Counting summer stars from a quilt on the damp lawn  
 Choosing a dime's worth of chocolate at Ben Franklin's  
 Agonizing over unfinished projects for the fair  
 Steering a '44 Chevy pick-up without permission  
 Puffing a nauseous, stuffy pipe in adult mimicry  
 Exploring little Spring Creek for elusive critters  
 Dribbling a half-inflated ball on a cow-pasture court  
 Cheering the Port orange and black on winter evenings  
 Skipping flat stones across Crystal Lake's calm surface  
 Chasing older boys around the busy Tastee Freeze  
 Shooting "donuts" in front of the Farmers' Co-op  
 Giggling in church on crowded back-row pews  
 Singing along with country music on KWFT  
 Scooping golden wheat into the old Ford truck  
 Aching up and down long rows of dusty cotton  
 Fishing for perch from the rickety, narrow bridge  
 Daring friends to drive through the cemetery at night  
 Teasing each other about the latest boyfriend.

...

Moving miles apart to begin new families  
 Rearing children to become cousin-friends  
 Worrying together about aging, dependent parents  
 Growing older with new outlooks on life  
 Sharing favorite memories again and again  
 ...Sibling affection.■



*Gwen Brown, age 11 and Pat Brown, age 3.  
 Daughters of J. Roy and Mary Lee Brown, 1947.  
 (Family photo)*

GWEN BROWN JACKSON and PAT BROWN KOURT are the daughters of Mr. and Mrs. J. Roy Brown, formerly of the Port Community. The sisters are both free-lance writers who enjoy doing historical research. Although Pat is several years younger than Gwen, her catalog of "growing-up" memories is very vivid, especially since she was considered the bratty little sister. Gwen lives in Amber, where she retired from teaching in 1991. Pat lives in Thomas, where she is Library Media Specialist for Grades K-12.

# GEORGIO'S GHOSTS

by Orv Owens

(Author's Note: This story calls for fictional treatment. The details are true; the characters are a figment of my imagination and are real only in the sense that some people do die after abusing drugs.)

The apparition came at 4:13 a.m. to say goodbye.

Forever.

Georgio Carillo knew the moment the apparition appeared that another close friend had died.

It happened every time.

He never understood how the apparition appeared, nor why; but when Mellanie held out her arms for a goodbye kiss and smiled in that old familiar way, he knew that she was going away. Eyes dulled by drugs, she touched her lips and blew toward Georgio.

The next time he saw her would be at a funeral.

He stretched out on the Motel bed and waited for a girl he knew would never come—not the Mellanie of flesh and blood he knew so well.

She floated to a chair by the window. The pale flesh contrasted with flashing blue neon from the Penny Arcade across the street. She sat down on Georgio's Hawaiian shirt and jeans, smiled, and crammed her feet into his brown cowboy boots.

By appearing in this manner, Mellanie had just canceled Georgio's Saturday night date.

The sweet, gentle face—lovelier in life than in apparition—faded into the night.

Georgio knew how she died; but if asked, he could never explain how he knew. He just did. Too many fun-loving, thrill-seeking friends had passed through the portal into another time, another place, another world where (he fervently hoped) there would be peace and tranquility.

The pusher might as well have taken a pistol, rammed it into her mouth, and pulled the trigger. The effect would have been the same.

Georgio slipped into his clothes and went out to a dew-wet street to walk and think. He ignored an occasional passing car, a barking dog, and a disturbed cat prowling during early morning.

Crack went his thoughts.

Crack.

And crack again.

He felt the need press in upon him. He had entered a two-way street of insanity. Death became an avenue of escape into the great mystery of time stacked upon time stretched into eternity.

In the past year alone the specter had called Mary, Mike, Todd, Ellen, and a couple

of eighth graders whose names Georgio hadn't known. Now Mellanie responded to the knell that only she could hear.

A cocker spaniel came barking viciously out of a dark alley—teeth bared, threatening.

Georgio stared at the dog, mentally commanded it to retreat. It went, tail between legs, back to the alley. Georgio breathed a sigh of relief.

Where had it all gone wrong? Where did it end?

They came back now to play around the streetlights. Mary, Mike, Todd, Ellen, and Mellanie. They danced, flung their arms wildly about light poles. They laughed as Georgio had seen them laugh, cried as he had seen them cry, yelled as he had seen them yell. It was a carefree yell full of youthful energy. Their spirits preyed on him, tried to take his hand, pull him toward tomorrow before he had finished living today.

Tentatively, he reached out, pulled back, finally tried to ignore them. There were so many things he wanted to do, so many girls he wanted to date, so many movies he wanted to enjoy, so much success he wanted, so much life he wanted to experience with every fiber of his being.

They floated away, angry at him for not joining their game, only to return after he crossed the street.

Their eyes told him the story. The hunger of their souls cried out to him vividly. They were gone...gone before they had a chance to live and laugh and love all the years through...before they had a chance to be whatever was meant to be.

Wasted lives. Wasted because they could have contributed their uniqueness and special knowledge to a world desperately seeking answers.

What was the reality? What was the dream? What they could have been could never, never be.

Crack went his thoughts.

Crack.

And crack again.

Each time the crack knelled, a spirit crossed the border into another world.

The apparitions faded, returned, faded, returned, laughed, scowled, played tag with Georgio's soul.

Why did they dog his footsteps? Why didn't they let him sleep? Why him of all the friends they had? Because he cared? Really cared about what happened to them?

He nodded, clasped his hands behind his back as he walked, head down, thoughtfully, footsteps echoing down a four o'clock street.

He had walked by their sides, shared his dreams with them, laughed and cried about the same things with them; his goals had been their goals...

Mary's apparition had sat on the casket at her funeral. She laughed, pointed at the blonde version of herself while the corpse, behind closed lids, stared, saw nothing, or did she?

Georgio had gone alone to say goodbye. He had stood, pen in hand at the guest register in that oppressive room, nose filled with death that rose petals couldn't overcome, and stared at the Mary that only he could see.



## MISCELLANY

"You lied, Mary," he whispered.

His gentle gaze looked at a teenage beauty who had walked the last mile in a fog beyond a fog. She never returned.

"You said it couldn't happen," he said to the casket. "You said a high was just a high, but a high was..."

He went to another funeral. This time, Todd. His blue eyes were lidded, lifeless. Todd's time had ceased to be. The place in the sun Todd had planned was never to be.

Brown curly hair contrasted with the antique white lining of a brightly polished coffin.

A would-be engineer (he hadn't completed requirements for a degree) who had engineered himself into a position of no-deposit, no-return.

"You told me," Georgio whispered in what now seemed a long time ago, "that it wouldn't happen. You lied. Mary lied. If it happened to you, it can happen to me."

Todd's taloned fingers curled into a fist. He lifted his fist, shook it at Georgio. Then he grinned that old Todd grin, climbed upon the casket to look down at himself, tried to re-enter his body in the casket, and failed. He opened his mouth to scream.

Only Georgio could hear the scream—the scream of genius gone before his time, before he had a chance to live, before he understood that life wasn't to be lived for a cheap thrill, but for pre-determined purpose.

Crack went Georgio's thoughts.

Crack.

And crack again.

Somewhere in the night on a lonely, sad street, two hands clawed at the sidewalk; and when the fingers stopped bleeding, dark eyes stared at the stars high in the sky. The apparition that was Todd floated away to welcome the crackhead home.

"You could have had it all, Ellen," Georgio said sadly. "You could have been the Sally Field our generation will never know. You could have been the greatest—like Betty Davis, but you, too, didn't think it could happen."

Your father and mother were there, Ellen. Their tears washed away the anger, but the hole is still there waiting for someone to fill it with love. The hole you left them. The hole that will embrace them all their days. Do you care, Ellen? Really care? Why were you so selfish, Ellen? Why did you go? Wasn't life worth living?

They can't have other children, Ellen. They will have to be content with memories—not what was—but what might have been. Such futility, Ellen. To remember the bright teen so full of promise can never fulfill the goals she had in mind—never become the actress she dreamed of becoming. Never, Ellen, never, unless that other world has reality instead of illusion.

Crack went Georgio's thoughts.

Crack.

And crack again.

"I loved you, Mellanie. So much. We could have had it all, Mellanie. The white cottage, the picket fence, the kids you wanted more than anything else. And the fireplace of home. The evenings by the

fire planning the future step by step. It could have been ours, Mellanie. The world could have been our peach and pie. We could have been great together, but you decided to play the game your way. Remember the moonlit lake, the spooky elm shadows all around us? The owl we thought was wise. Perhaps it was, and we were the foolish ones.

"I can see you now as your shadow-self smiles at me. Your pale lips that were once vibrant with life touched mine a thousand times or more. Do you remember? Can you feel in your new home? Is there anything you remember? Can you love there? Feel a warm embrace?

"Can you laugh and cry? Feel pity? Feel pain? Or is it all numb there? Beyond all emotion?

"I just wish you hadn't believed it, Mellanie. I wish you had believed that it could happen—and did."

Crack went Georgio's thoughts.

Crack.

And crack again.

They parted at the lake and gazed at the reflection of the moon and stars in the white-capped lake. Tall elms sighed, leaves rustled in the southwest breeze, and the sound of forever whispered an age-old song.

Sue leaned her head against Georgio's shoulder. He looked into her elfin face, declared it beautiful as she somberly watched white caps race toward the shore.

She knew she was just another plain Jane in the scheme of things without the kind of beauty Mary, Ellen, and Mellanie had. She was just an

ordinary working-class girl with goals of cottage and children and a swing on the porch when they were too old to work.

Georgio grinned at her and sobered when the apparitions appeared, dancing on the lake.

"Do you see them?" he asked.

"Who?" she replied.

"Mike, Todd, Mary, Ellen, and Mellanie."

She was puzzled. "But they're..."

"I know, but spirits live on. They haunt me. They could never enjoy a movie, popcorn, or a soda. They wanted too much too fast."

"I love simple things," she said, with a mischievous glint in her eye.

"You oughta like me. I'm pretty simple."

They laughed.

"Think you can stand a guy who sees ghosts?"

"Are you asking me to marry you?"

"Could be."

"I'll have to think about it." Lordy, went her thoughts.

Lordy.

And Lordy again.

"You'll have to give up your ghosts."

Georgio looked deep into sea-green eyes backgrounded by short black hair. "They'll have to give me up. I've already let go."

Georgio sighed. *They wasted their talents looking for a high.*

Crack went his thoughts.

Crack.

And crack again.

"Let go, Georgio, let go," Sue urged, sensing rather than seeing what he saw.

## MISCELLANY

"It's almost like they were addicted to life and can't let go."

*She would never see the apparitions that came in the night. Would there ever be a time when he was free?*

*It could happen. It did happen. What a terrible waste of flesh and blood.*

"Help me, Sue. Help me give up these shadows dancing in my mind."

The answer was plain in those beautiful eyes.

"We're so vulnerable, Sue. So vulnerable."

Crack, screamed Mary and clawed at Todd.

Crack, yelled Todd, and kicked a wave.

Crack, said Ellen, eyes swimming.

Crack, whispered Mellanie, and reached for Georgio.

Georgio ignored the apparitions and touched Sue's lips with his own. Georgio hoped they disappeared forever. They were yesterdays and dead to today.

"How true," the ghosts said in unison, "and how utterly insensitive to abandon us."

Goodbye, went Georgio's thoughts.

Goodbye, apparitions.

Don't come my way again.

The past dead came to life in their spirit world where angels feared to tread.

The lake gradually became covered with apparitions bumping into one another as they tried to play all the roles they had played in life.

And when they tired of role-playing, they gathered around the car, moaned in mock horror, and pointed skeleton-fingers at Georgio as he bent his head to waiting lips again.

The warmth of Sue spread its blanket of forgetfulness around Georgio. He glanced up but didn't see the growing number of apparitions that numbered in the thousands.

"Hello, my new love. Hello, Sue," Georgio said softly. "Welcome to my ghostless world."

She smiled, snuggled closer, and felt excitement as crack-free lips blended with a future that was denied Mary, Ellen, Mellanie, and Todd. They were lost forever in a land they created from the fabric of myth:

It can't  
happen  
to me.■

ORV OWENS submits often to WESTVIEW and has in the past written columns for THE DEWEY COUNTY NEWS (Seiling) and currently for THE WATONGA REPUBLICAN.

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# THE RELIC OF THE PAST

by Jill Logan

As I stroll along the road, taking in the sights,  
 I notice a tattered, weathered shack,  
 beyond the ditch on my  
     right.  
 Piqued by curiosity, I venture over that  
 way,  
 Scooping up leaves with the toe of my  
 shoe, and crunching  
     them under my weight.  
 As I reach the shanty, I hesitate, contem-  
 plating whether  
 To go in, despite the fact that the wood  
 has started to  
     rot.  
 However, the voice of caution in me  
 gives in to that of  
     adventure,  
 And in through the splintered, crude  
 wooden doorway, I,  
     quietly, venture.  
 Beams of light are streaming through the  
 holes which are  
     worn in the wall,  
 Lighting the flecks of dust in the air and  
 warming the  
     spots where they fall.  
 In one corner of the shack, a solemn  
 broom sleeps away,  
 Although the cobwebs gather in corners,  
 and dust blankets  
     all in its way.  
 As the leaves rustle outside these walls,  
 a strange  
     feeling comes over me.  
 Though I know I'm alone, there seems  
 to be a presence in my  
     company.  
 I hear the echoes of young children ring  
 out through the air,

But the children are of long ago and no  
 longer frolic there.  
 Scents of dumplings on the griddle,  
 transparent as they are,  
 Bring in the specters of tired men who  
 labored yonder far.  
 The wind brings sounds of joy and  
 laughter, tunes of familiar  
     songs,  
 That christened the day with their happi-  
 ness and shortened  
     the work so long.  
 This one-room house in which I stand  
 was once one of many,  
 Back in the days when, in this area,  
 labor positions were  
     plenty.  
 Back in the days when these streets  
 were filled with the  
     hustle and bustle of towns,  
 Back in the days when this house was  
 filled with all  
     of life's ups and downs.  
 But slowly, slowly, things just died, work  
 grew less and  
     less,  
 And one by one the families left, leaving  
 only their houses  
     to rest.  
 And rest they did—they slept away till  
 nothing was left but  
     decay,  
 And some mushrooms and moss on  
 chunks of wood, except for  
     this house here today.  
 This house is the only tangible relic of  
 that life which  
     vanished so fast,  
 Except for the ghosts which still linger  
 here, mourning  
     their home of the past.■

JILL LOGAN, daughter of Dr. and Mrs. Jim Logan of Weatherford, is a junior at Weatherford High School where she's an honor student and a participant in Cross Country and Track. "The Relic of the Past" is her second WESTVIEW publication.

# THE MOCKINGBIRD WALTZ (A FANTASY)

by George L. Hoffman

While I walked late one night through the park all alone,  
I was charmed by an old mockingbird;  
The melody he sang was the MOCKINGBIRD WALTZ  
And the sweetest that I ever heard!

As he poured out his tune to a big yellow moon,  
A ghost-lady came out of the night;  
Frothy white was her gown and her hair spilling down  
Was as gold as the yellow moonlight.

She spoke softly one word to that old mockingbird  
As she raised up her arms to the moon;  
And she smiled all the while a sad, misty-eyed smile,  
Keeping time to the mockingbird's tune.

Then she nodded to me and she held out her hand—  
Like a zombie, I stood in a trance;  
When she lifted her hem and curtsied to me,  
It was plain that she wanted to dance!

So we wheeled and we whirled to the MOCKINGBIRD WALTZ,  
While the waterfall gleamed like a flame;  
When I looked in her eyes, she smiled boldly at me,  
But not once did she tell me her name.

Very late was the hour when the clock in the tower  
Gave the time as a quarter-to-one;  
With a tender caress she brushed me with a kiss—  
In an instant that lady was gone!

Many times late at night with the moon full and bright  
I have searched for that lady in vain;  
And though often I've danced to the MOCKINGBIRD WALTZ  
I have not seen that lady again!

No, I have not seen that lady again!■

*GEORGE L. HOFFMAN*, formerly of Custer City, now lives in retirement and does free-lance writing in Clackamas, Oregon.

# VANITY

by Elva Howard Deeds

VANITY!  
AH! VANITY!

I am vain.  
I admit it!  
How could I have lived one hundred years  
Without Vanity?

Vanity!  
It is good to be vain!  
How else could I have endured the pain  
Of rejection or loss that touches us all?

Pride!  
Sustains my weakened efforts  
to lift my face to the sun;  
Pride encourages my flagging efforts toward movement.

Vanity!  
My hair is my "crowning glory";  
In the twenties, long and abundant,  
Brushed often, "combings" saved in my boudoir jar.

HAIR!  
Styles changed;  
Long, lovely hair bobbed off  
And waved with a marcel iron—"gone with the wind."

Vanity  
Remains within me,  
Strong until time attempts to take it away;  
Even then I shall hold it closely  
Reluctant to let it go.■



*Bertha S. Bolton and Elva Spurlock Sholes, 1924.*

EDITOR'S NOTE: The author wrote "Vanity" through the viewpoint of her 100-year-old aunt Elva Spurlock Sholes of Phoenix.

# THE SCAB ON THE WOUND

by *Dr. Shyamkant S. Kulkarni*

(Author's Disclaimer: "The Scab on the Wound" is fiction. Any resemblance to a living or dead person is by chance and is regretted by the author.)

I was working on a few old charts at the Nurses' Station. "She shot herself," a nurse rushed in and told the doctor working beside me. She left without saying anything further.

"Is she badly hurt?" I asked.

"I don't know. Probably not. Weather seems cool." He replied without looking at me. I got up. I was off duty and had promised Rekha, my wife, to take her to Roman Nose Park in the evening. It was seven o'clock already. I came out and started toward the door. The Emergency Room was at the other end of the corridor.

I approached the door, and I could see a woman lying on the high and narrow bed in the Emergency Room. I wondered who she might be. I opened the door, but some unexplained curiosity stopped me. I walked back and entered another way.

"What's your name?" the nurse asked the patient, whose blouse was stained with bright red blood. On the right, there was a patch of black caused by the gun powder. Her face seemed familiar. I was trying to recall who she was, but for a moment I couldn't remember.

"Peggy Sue," I heard her say.

I turned away and then suddenly remembered her. I had seen her just a few days ago. She was my patient, and I was right there on the spot.

"She's my patient. Could you get the x-ray tech to come in? Start an IV. Let it run as fast as possible, oxygen at four liters, CBC, Chem 20, ABG, stat," I said mechanically as I rushed toward Peggy.

I took my stethoscope out of my pocket.

She was breathing all right. The wound wasn't bleeding. She wasn't in any distress.

"Peggy, what happened?" I asked  
"I was checking my pistol when it accidentally fired."

"Where were you when this happened?"

"In the bedroom standing by my bed."

Peggy smelled of alcohol. It was obvious that she had had many drinks. Surprisingly, she was alert.

"Then?"

"I came outside and called Harry. He was working at the farm." Harry was her ex-husband.

"He brought me here," she now started crying.

"Do you stay with him?"

"No, he does my farming. He was working on the tractor." She owned eighty acres of land and was staying at the farm house.

"Did you want to hurt yourself?"

"No. Why should I? I was cleaning the gun."

"How many times did you fire it?"

"Only once." She had two entry wounds on the chest just below the right breast and one small exit wound. Compared with the blood loss, she didn't appear to be in much danger.

The x-ray technician still hadn't arrived.

Outside, Elmer, a police officer, was speaking with a rather fat man of about sixty who was about five feet three inches in height, almost bald with very thin hair in front. His face was red, and a few drops of sweat stood on his forehead. There were a few stains of soot on his chin and upper lip.

"He's Harry Bolton, her ex-husband."

"How do you do? I greeted him. 'What happened?'"

"I don't know. She came out calling me. I jumped out of the tractor. 'I shot myself' she said."

"Do you stay with her?"

"No. Sometimes she might come to me for a few days, but she stays by herself."

It doesn't look like an accident, Doc. She hid the gun under the mattress of her bed. It was a point twenty-two. It could fire twice, once cocked." Officer Elmer interrupted.

I again returned to Peggy.

"Did you drink?"

"Only two vodkas."

"Do you drink often?"

Her old records revealed that she had been admitted previously for alcoholic intoxication and delirium on several occasions, twice for drug overdose, and once for shooting herself. Of course this was several years ago. "I stopped drinking five years ago. I just had a few drinks today after five dry years."

"Why today?"

"I don't know."

Outside, Harry had told me that she had been terribly depressed for the last two days.

The nurses took her cart to the X-ray Department. By now, the technician had arrived. The x-ray showed that the bullet had gone through lungs and diaphragm and was embedded in the soft tissue near the spinal cord. She was lucky enough; it had spared vital blood vessels and the heart and hadn't produced much damage in the lungs.

Peggy Sue obviously needed the attention of a thoracic surgeon and perhaps a neurosurgeon. I placed a call for a thoracic surgeon. He wanted her to be transferred to a hospital in Oklahoma City. I made the necessary arrangements; in a few minutes, she

was in the ambulance on her way. Her daughter arrived a few minutes after the ambulance left.

I had seen Peggy in my office the day after Tom Jones died in the plane crash after his magnificent dive in an air show while thousands of spectators were watching.

"She was crying all the while," Rekha told me afterwards. "Her only son met death several years earlier in a similar accident. He dived from thirty thousand feet in a training mission at Tinker Air Force Base, and the plane blew up."

"He ran away from home and joined the Air Force," she had said in the end.

The tragic death of Tom Jones in the Soviet Mig at Will Rogers Airport brought back memories of her son. Her only son! She had to postpone her trip to California. With that heavy burden, she couldn't go on vacation.

"Do you know who called just now?" As soon as I entered the office next day, my secretary asked.

"Who?"

"Peggy Sue! She's coming to see you."

"What's going on? I sent her to the City last night. She had a gunshot wound." I was puzzled.

"She signed out against medical advice."

"How could she? Why didn't somebody call me? She needs to go to a mental institution," I exclaimed.

Since she was due any minute, I needed to do some homework. "Will you get me the Sheriff's Office and maybe the Welfare Office?" I asked my secretary.

By the time Peggy got into the office, we were ready. The surgeon had decided not to remove the bullet at the moment as it wasn't causing any harm and probably because Peggy had no medical insurance.

Harry came in with Peggy, who had spent the night with her daughter. Harry bought her a carton of cigarettes



## MUSINGS

Harry came in with Peggy, who had spent the night with her daughter. Harry bought her a carton of cigarettes to last for several days. She had to wait in my office for a while that morning since many formalities had to be completed. All that time Peggy was in the room with Rekha and was talking continuously. I wondered what she might be saying.

Later, Rekha told me, "She doesn't own eighty acres; it's just a few acres, and she said that she doesn't get much from it—just a third. Harry used to beat her, so they separated. They used to quarrel all those years. He was her third husband, and he used to drink quite a bit. He was drunk most of the day. Her son couldn't stand that, so he ran away. He was handsome—just like Mike, his father. Whenever she looks at his photograph, those moments come alive to her...that midnight of forty years ago...their prom night. She has two daughters who have their own problems. She sometimes stays with Mike, and at times he comes to her house."

"Still I don't understand what precipitated this. For seven years she was all right," I said.

"How do you know she was okay?"

I had no answer except her medical records. For her, those seven years were unusually quiet.

Miss Jones was to arrive at twelve. She was an officer from the social institute. I wanted to send Peggy to the mental institute for a few days...compulsory detention! She might have harmed herself again...by slashing her throat with a knife, hanging, or anything. I had to tell Peggy what I was planning for her, but she knew what I was going to say. "I'm ready for anything you say, Doc. I just don't want to go to that house." She paused and then started again, "Glass pieces are still scattered everywhere."

"What glass pieces?"

"Harry was drunk. We both were, and we had an argument. As usual, he insulted me. He called me a whore and I rebuked him. I shouted and told him his mother was too. Then he threw the photograph of my son on the ground with such a hatred and stomped over it. It broke into pieces. I couldn't stand that," she said further.

At that moment, Miss Jones arrived and took over.■

DR. SHYAMKANT KULKARNI has lived in Oklahoma since 1987. Several of his previous works have appeared in WESTVIEW. He strives to depict ever-changing life through the short story and poetry genres.

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# HOLDING YOUR HAND

by Glen V. McIntyre

Holding your hand,  
fragile, deeply wrinkled, skin translucent  
like fine alabaster,  
I remember  
fireflies at night coming up into the yard,  
catching them in my hand,  
the church bell ringing on Sunday  
clear and distinct across the small town,  
iris of many colors in your front garden,  
fruit trees and vegetables in back,  
moonflowers and their strong perfume on summer nights,  
sleeping on the mattress in the open air,  
and lion dens in the dirt,  
Baltimore oriole nests on the clothes line,  
the taste of well water in a tin dipper,  
dozing fitfully before a water-cooled fan;  
all this I can remember, Grandma.  
If you don't,  
let me hold your hand.■

*GLEN V. MCINTYRE* is a museum curator and free-lance writer in Kingfisher; he has submitted many manuscripts to WESTVIEW.

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## *Introduction to Poetry*

by Dr. Robert Sam Lackey

Poetry is pudding.  
My father used to warn me,  
"Don't argue with people over  
Matters of taste.  
You can't talk them into liking  
Tapioca  
If they don't."

Who said what?  
What color is the wheelbarrow?  
Data.  
The part of poetry beyond the data  
Is style, music, chocolate or vanilla,  
A counterpoint of carmel,  
An ironic crunch of cone.

Poetry is dance.  
Sure, nobody has to dance.  
We can step, step, step, step,  
Solid, sane, even heel-to-toe,  
Steadily covering the ground  
From "A to B to C to C."

But when our spirits carry us  
Out of the endless lock-step lines  
And shuffling cardboard crowds,  
And we make a move  
With energy and grace,  
When our words leap and climb,  
When they sing and swing  
And sting—  
And the listeners start  
To sway and feel  
The waves of energy and light,  
The beat, the swirling sound,  
The heat

Then  
Poetry  
Has  
Happened...  
Whatever poetry might be.

We know the pudding from the Lo-Cal soup.  
We know that dancing makes  
A deeper sense, a higher leap,  
A jump that clears the fence  
Of Taste-Free, plodding, practicality.

Most practical of all,  
I say,  
Is to catch the words with wings

and soar

Beyond the edges of ourselves  
Into the space  
That lets us live  
Like sparks across the gap  
Of time or race or sex  
Or sensibility.

Spock-like, we link  
Through the alien rock-like skin  
The visions join  
The nerves entwine  
The lives transfuse

And we have tasted others'  
Joys and tears...  
Perhaps across a thousand years  
Of silent dust  
And tombstones blown  
To sand.

What else can speak to us—  
Who want to straddle both the future and the  
past—  
But codes that lock our essence out of time?

The spiral language of the  
Cell  
And the spinning crystal of the  
Rhyme.■

DR. ROBERT SAM LACKEY has been a member of the SOSU Language Arts Department since 1970. He teaches Philosophy and a variety of courses in the field of English, including Introduction to Poetry.

## Artistic Statements from the Fringe

by *Claude D. Kezer*

"Hey! OK. Play like you're the bad guy, an' I'm one of the Ninja Turtles, an' you're the girl that the bad guy kidnapped, an' I come an' rescue you an' tie up the bad guy for the cops."

"Now ya'll are the Indians, an' we're the calvery [sic], an' you're attackin' the wagon, an' we come an' kill ya'll, an' we're the heroes."

Does either example sound familiar? Children of all ages pretend, play like, fantasize, or imagine. Many people make their living "playing like"—people in all elements of the performing arts, inventors, computer programers, etc. etc.

Creativity, imagination, invention, and wonder are all integral parts of the "mind of a child," and unfortunately many adults/parents strive heartily to inhibit these aspects in their children. At times the public antics of children embarrass their parents.

True, mature individuals should be wise enough to know when they may not let the child in them come out to play; however, a person should never seek to put "childishness" away permanently.

Strange, isn't it, that many people denigrate performers, inventors—in general, people who are creative—as being weird, strange, antisocial, or peculiar; yet they would complain bitterly if they didn't have movies, TV, or live entertainment to enjoy.

The Romans' ancient tradition of killing the messenger who brought bad news is at play here, except now the public kills the ones who bring them joy, relaxation, empathetic fulfillment, and vicarious experiences.

We may vaguely understand such an approach in that people who are in the public eye, who maintain high profiles, are certainly more vulnerable to attack than those who aren't necessarily newsworthy. Such an understanding of the situation, however, still doesn't in any way justify it.

If adults, who internally keep the child alive, wish to alter the public's concept of them, they must recognize their responsibilities to the creative arts—thus the reason for this article.

Shakespeare suggests, in Hamlet's speech to the players, that the Arts hold a mirror up to nature "to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of time his form and pressure." Or, the Arts reflect life as an illusion of reality. I propose that the Arts are not just a mirror, that they have more than mere power to reflect. The Arts also mold, push, affect, and effect, in active ways, those who experience them.

From the play OMEGA, I excerpt the following:

Why is it that good literature isn't commercial and strictly base writing is quickly bought? Why is it that so many writers/philosophers take the easy route of addressing topics of the highly unusual and call them usual, when the real challenge lies in addressing the commonality of the world and making it appear unique?

The Arts have been many things to many people.

In the beginning, the Arts were an important part of the ritual and adoration of

## OPPORTUNITY

the gods. This aspect of the Arts has continued into the present time. The changes we perceive in the history of the Arts becomes evidently not a change in the Arts but a change in the gods.

From the Greek and Roman gods, through the Judeo-Christian God, to the reflective nature of humankind, into the gods of national propaganda, and finally the gods of finance, the Arts have been used and/or abused.

Some factions of the Arts and artists have struggled and strived for qualified recognition, and the hue and cry "Arts for Art's sake" has been the explanation for battle.

Sadly, every movement by any group, no matter how worthy the cause, attracts members of the "idiot fringe." They jump on the moving wagon and attract a great deal of attention. They pull the movement down toward the appealing mundane. Thus, pseudo Art and pseudo artists become the rage of the masses who understand little and desire not to learn appreciation through nuance. The wish to be "entertained" only by the blatant and strident appeals to their base instincts, never to have cause for use of an intellect which is outside their scope.

How sad that mediums which may be used to raise the consciousness of humankind are used rather to bring them to the bottom of the human scale. It's not enough for Art to reflect life as it is. Art and artists have a responsibility also to project life as it should be in an ideal world—a world where love, peace, understanding, forgiveness, and beneficence are the primary goals of humankind. ■

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CLAUDE D. KEZER, Assistant Professor of Speech-Theater, has been a member of the SOSU faculty since 1969. He has sought to upgrade SOSU Theater by writing much of his own material and by challenging his actors and audiences with Shakespearean productions.

# FOOTPRINTS

by *Marianne McFarland McNeil*

One hundred years ago at noon,  
wave-rippled grass was lush and green;  
by night, light of cloud-cradles moon  
showed gaping ruts at trampled scene.

Wave-rippled grass was lush and green  
When the Run began,  
showed gaping ruts at trampled scene  
where eager men and horses ran

when the Run began  
Those thousands gained historic name  
in thrilling race of pioneers  
for hundred-sixty-acre claim;  
for right of land and pride and tears

in thrilling race of pioneers,  
thunder of hooves, whistles of trains.  
For right of land and pride and tears  
men settled Oklahoma plains.

Thunder of hooves, whistles of trains  
proclaimed new opportunity;  
Men settled Oklahoma plains  
in seas of grass where land was free.

Proclaimed—new opportunity—  
by night, light of cloud-cradled moon  
in seas of grass where land was free,  
one hundred years ago, at noon.■

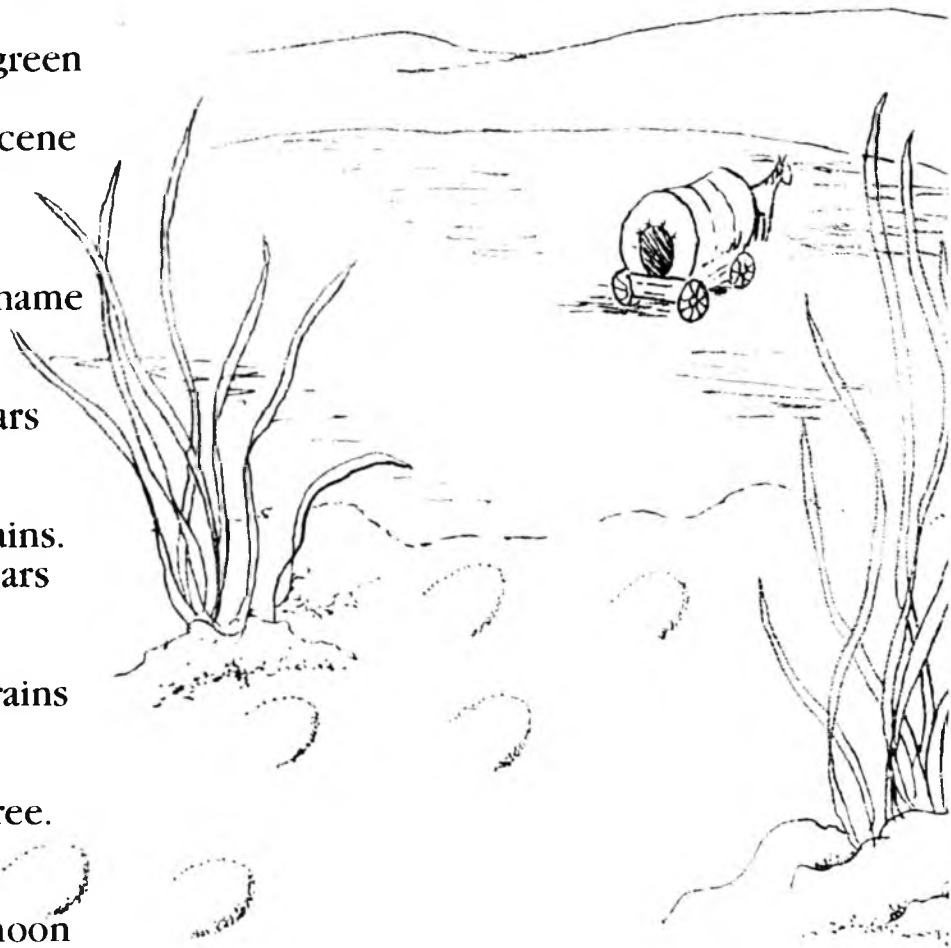


illustration by *Julie O'Reilly*

*MARIANNE MCFARLAND MCNEIL*, formerly of the Dakotas, is now a prolific writer living in Amarillo. She enjoys experimenting with various poetic patterns such as the Terzanelle, in which this poem is written.

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