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WESTVIEW

A JOURNAL OF WESTERN OKLAHOMA

VOLUME 10

NUMBER 2

WINTER 1990

\$3.⁰⁰



WESTERN OKLAHOMA REUNIONS



foreword

We have a better understanding nowadays of what we're supposed to be doing. About ten years ago, we members of the WESTVIEW Editorial Board went into a huddle in a room on the third floor of the Art Building and discussed our dilemma. We knew that we had a job to do; however, it was new to most of us, and we didn't know how to set ourselves on a good course.

But we rallied to the cause, and—voilà!—before long we were excited to see the Premiere Issue of WESTVIEW in October 1981.

Actually, truthfully, the excitement has never waned. As each issue appears, we're excited to look at what has come forth.

Almost always these days we know almost exactly what we're doing (but the Editor occasionally wonders when he doesn't know why the margins keep sliding off his computer screen).

WESTVIEW has never been a one-person show. If we hear that it keeps getting better (and we like to hear that), we know that there are many people to thank—our Publisher, our printer, our Editor, our Art Director, our student artists, our writers, our advertisers, our patrons—the list goes on. By the way, we are happy to announce that we have some new members of the Journal Task Force. Beginning with the Fall, 1990 issue, the University Press of SOSU began printing WESTVIEW. We look forward to a long, happy association with Bettie Ainsworth and her Press staff.

This journal of Western Oklahoma has always been and hopefully always will be a joint, cooperative effort. We gratefully acknowledge everyone's contribution. For an issue whose theme is "Western Oklahoma Reunions," it's fitting to ask that we remember our friends and hope that the Spirit of Christmas will prevail during this Winter Season and forever.

Cheerfully,

Leroy Thomas

Leroy Thomas



WESTVIEW

WESTERN OKLAHOMA REUNIONS

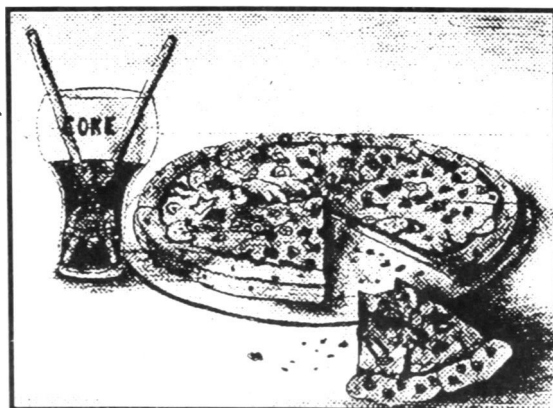
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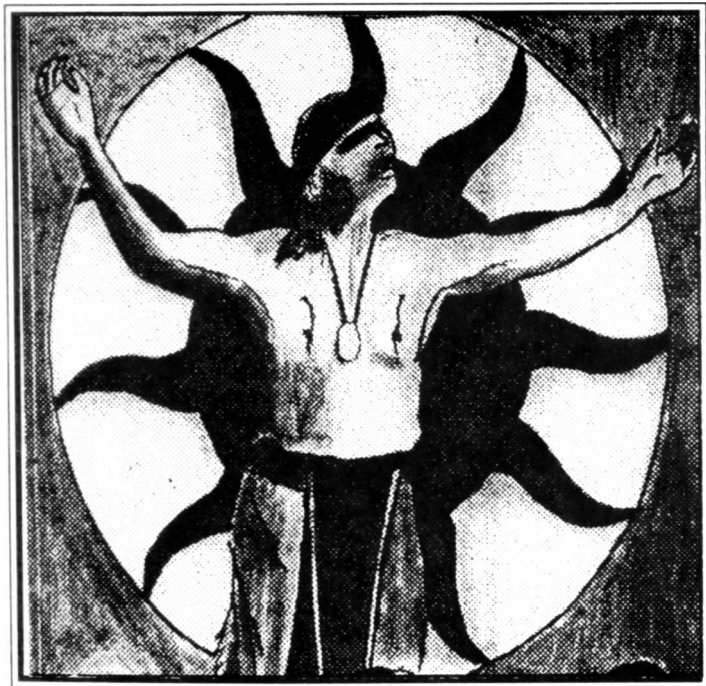
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Corrections for omissions:

The cover of the Summer 1990 issue was created by Advertising Layout student **Erin O'Connor**.

Colynda Urton, General Illustration student, was the illustrator of the portrait drawn for the article, *When Artists Meet*, by Betty Brookman, page 22-23 in the Fall 1990 issue.

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

To Subscribe send Name and address with \$8.00 (\$20 outside the USA) to Dr. Dan Dill, Dean, SOSU, School of Arts and Sciences, 100 Campus Drive, Weatherford, Oklahoma 73096

FUTURE ISSUES

- SPRING, 1991** (Western Oklahoma Romance; deadline: 12-15-90).
- SUMMER, 1991** (Western Oklahoma Pastimes/Entertainment; deadline: 2-15-91).
- FALL, 1991** (Western Oklahoma Seasons; deadline: 7-1-91).
- WINTER, 1991** (Western Oklahoma Christmastime; deadline: 9-15-91).
- SPRING, 1992** (Western Oklahoma Relatives/Kinfolks; deadline: 12-15-91).
- SUMMER, 1992** (Western Oklahoma Daydreams/Illusions; deadline: 2-15-92).
- 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).

We prefer 5 x 7 or 8 x 10 glossies to keep on file (not to be returned except by request)—also clear, original manuscripts (no unclear copies, please).

STYLE SHEET

Being published in *WESTVIEW* is mission possible if a writer follows these guidelines:

1. Always mail a submission flat in a 9 X 12 Manila envelope, remembering to include a SASE for 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 (e.g. "Western Oklahoma Reunions"—Winter, 1990).

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 X 11 white paper. Submit pen-and-ink graphics on white paper. Submit 5 X 7 or 8 X 10 black & white photos that may be kept on file in our offices and not returned.

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 Oklahoma residents.

6. Feeling that your submission will be accepted, you also need to send along a short biographical blurb written in third person. Example: MORTIMER MULDOON of Weatherford is a SOSU senior majoring in English Education. Mortimer makes his debut as a published writer in the present issue of *WESTVIEW*.

7. After your manuscript is accepted, please provide changes in status and address as needed.

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

9. Accentuate originality and creativity.

10. After you have made your submission, sit back, relax, and expect the best.

Hatchett

—By *Doris Hatchett Beverage*

My grandfather, John Crittenden Hatchett, and his wife, Julia Brown, had twelve children. He was the first judge of Washita County after Oklahoma became a state, and the county seat was then Cloud Chief.

My dad, John Edgar Hatchett, next to the youngest of Grandpa's children, had ten children. He had nephews who were only six or seven years younger than he was. All the Hatchetts, or most of them, had from two to seven or eight children. My grandfather died before I was born, but I'll never forget our family reunions. Most of my memories about the reunions were good, but not all.

One year, in about 1926 on the Fourth of July, the Hatchetts had a reunion on the old Murphy Ranch about five or six miles north of Foss. That year, Indians came from Caddo County and slaughtered a couple of buffalo and butchered them to barbeque for the crowds. We ate our lunch early and then went into town to watch the buffalo rides.

At that time, Foss had a rather nice park; therefore, many people from Butler, Stafford, and Clinton came to the Foss Picnic. I had saved sixty-eight cents in an old snuff can that my uncle, Bill Hollis, had given me. We had much overnight company from Missouri and Illinois.

Everyone was ready to go to the celebration, but I couldn't find my snuff can

and money. Knowing I wouldn't have any money at all unless I found the can, I ran upstairs and prayed, "Dear Lord, help me find the money." Immediately I remembered I had set it in the kitchen window while Mom was cooking breakfast. Sure enough, that's where I found it.

Cold, pink lemonade made in a big stock tank was five cents a glass; an ice cream cone was also a nickel. I was scared to ride the Ferris Wheel, so I had several rides at ten cents on the Merry-Go-Round.

Our old dining room table seated twelve—five on each side and one on each end. Many Sundays there would be two or three tables full of relatives. Children always ate last. I vowed when I was a child that if I ever had children, I would feed them first. Sometimes there would be only chicken wings or backs left by the time the children ate. After our meal, we children played many kinds of games.

We would play "Hide and Seek," "Go Sheep Go," or roll around barrel rings with a stick. One time we were playing "Hide and Seek," and we couldn't find our little cousin. We yelled and yelled for her to come in free, but she didn't come. Later she was found dead in the back seat of a Model 2 touring car. I am sure that all of us felt a little guilty and couldn't understand. She was a twin, very small for her age, and the doctor thought she

Reunions

FAMILY

might have had a congenital heart defect or just got too hot. That reunion was the only sad one that I remember. All of the other ones were happy.

My mother could make the best homemade ice cream ever—with eggs, rich, separated cream, and a junket tablet. Every Saturday night, we invited some family over for homemade ice cream. We kids loved it. We looked at the Big Dipper and the man in the moon and competed with one another to determine who could catch the most fireflies in a jar.

What wonderful memories we had with all the cousins, aunts and uncles, brothers and sisters, and our family at family reunions! *

(DORIS HATCHETT BEVERAGE of Anadarko was a Registered Practical Nurse during World War II. This article is her first publication in WESTVIEW; other articles have appeared in CAPPER'S WEEKLY and FORT SMITH TIMES. Now seventy years old, she enjoys reading, writing, and keeping up with Western Oklahoma events.)



Illustration by Richard Alsobrook

Design by Bryce Brimer

A

"Who is that?" I whispered to my uncle, as a semi-teenager barreled around the edge of the kitchen area. We were attempting to play a game of horseshoes among

Closer

the rampaging feet of playful children and had shooed off several of them to a safe distance. We knew of most of the young faces, but this one was new to me.

Look

"I was going to ask you the same question," my uncle puzzled softly. "I figured the kid must belong to the grounds keeper."

The horseshoe was tossed, and I watched it turn one and a half times in a flat rotation to open up just as it hit the ground in front of the stake. It was a little too far to the left, although perfect otherwise. I'm sure my opponent felt cheated while I was struggling several points and a ringer behind.

The forceful adolescent then came running up behind us with an abrupt stop. My uncle and I strode to the other stake and retrieved our shoes, readying ourselves to take aim again at the forty-foot stake. My confidence was eroding under the pressure of incessant near-misses and close one-pointers with which my elder was subjecting me. All the while, the unfamiliar face's interest had obviously been piqued.

"Can I play next? That looks like fun, but I've never played that before."

To be honest, I was emotionally drained for the moment and welcomed the offer. A general rule-of-thumb for younger participants at a reunion should be to stay away from the horseshoe pits. I hadn't.

"Sure," I said gratefully. "You play him a while."

This get-together, the first "Cook Family" reunion on my mother's side in over a decade, was being held at Camp Sooner, near Pink, Oklahoma, which is nestled in the trees next to a sprawling meadow. The sign-in activities were taking place in the cafeteria/kitchen building, and

B y D a l e W. H i l l

we were struggling with our horseshoes next to the swimming pool.

"What's your name?" I asked. The kid quickly told me and then retrieved the horseshoes.

I turned toward the kitchen. A large family tree had been postered, and I wanted to see if this kid's name was on it.

The roots of the Cook family grew out of the sandy cotton soil where I was born—around Broxton in Caddo County, and where my grandpa had bought his stake for \$500 from a disillusioned landowner who had drawn the land from a lottery. I couldn't help but remember all of the reunions that we had had, usually around the Fourth of July, while I was growing up. The reunions back then were scheduled about every two years or when my uncle came in from California. My grandfather's death broke up the family and moved Grandma. The farm house was eventually sold, and the reunions stopped.

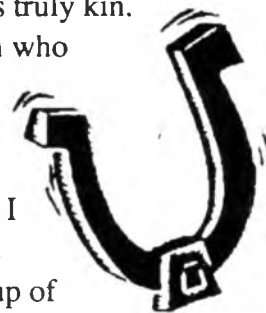


I grinned as I thought about the time that my brothers, uncle, and I went down the road to explore the haunted house. We were probably about the same age as the youngster who had taken my horseshoes. The night before, plans had been made, and now we bravely forged up the road to our destination.

The door creaked as we opened it and moved in to explore. Hardly had the exploration begun when we heard movement up the stairs. Things began to

fall down the stairway, making eerie noises. Fear overcame reason, and we scampered back to the house, only to find out years later that our older uncle overheard our plans and hid in one of those rooms waiting for his victims.

I found the family chart and began to follow the lineages. Sure enough, there it was. The boy was truly kin. His father was my cousin who had died in a car accident. Since he hadn't arrived with his parents, we didn't recognize him. I was dumbfounded by the revelation. I grabbed a cup of iced water and went out to watch them play.



Why hadn't I recognized him? Should I have taken a closer look? As I watched, I could see his dad's facial features and many other family traits that I hadn't noticed when I had looked at the boy earlier. We had all suffered through his family's tragedy, and the thoughts were painful. The game ended.

"Let's play partners. I'll get a partner, and you play with your uncle.," I suggested. The boy smiled, feeling the warmth of acceptance.

"Sure! Sounds fun!" *

(DALE W. HILL lives in Washita, Oklahoma, with his wife, Marcella, and their four children. Besides serving as an elementary counselor in the Anadarko School System as his wife works at Grady Memorial Hospital in Chickasha, they also open their home as a Temporary Juvenile Shelter for Caddo County.)

Design by Gina Mitchell

The Cousin Reunion

—By Dr. Karen McKellips

Madison and Edna Belle Carter were the parents of nine girls and twin boys. The boys were the youngest, and they died before their second birthday. Madison had received damage to his eyes in the Civil War, and his sight grew steadily worse until finally he became totally blind. The family moved frequently, seeking a way to make a living. From their original home in Missouri, they moved to Colorado, several places in Kansas, and finally, when the Cheyenne-Arapaho reservation was opened to white settlement, they moved to a farm west of Arapaho. Only the oldest daughter stayed in Missouri, and all the other daughters lived for a time in the Arapaho area. Edna died there in 1906; Madison, in 1916. The family had experienced great hardships; with only one man in the large family and he too visually handicapped to do much work, life for the sisters was often very difficult.

They were, however, a very close, loving family and remained so as, one by one, the sisters married and had children. These children, first cousins, were very close and frequently visited and thought of one another moreso as brothers and sisters than as cousins. In turn, they had children, and gradually

members of the family began to move away—to Kansas, to Colorado, to Wisconsin, to California. The first cousins kept in touch, however, with letters and visits as often as possible. Eventually, they decided to gather annually with one cousin finding an appropriate place for what they began to call the cousin reunion. Everyone was invited and eventually dozens of cousins of several generations gathered.

Two big Carter-cousin reunions were held at Roman Nose Park in the mid 60's, with arrangements made by two of the cousins—Alice Mae Martz of Watonga and Lorene Sweeney of Thomas. They rented the youth camp. People stayed in the cabins, in mobile homes, and in campers. Large quantities of old family recipes were prepared and eaten. Younger, distant cousins became acquainted.

By the time of that reunion, only two of the Carter sisters were living—Charlotte Laughlin of Wichita, Kansas, and Alcie May Rowland of Thomas. Charlotte (Lottie to the family) was not able to attend; but as the family poet, she wrote "The Cousin Reunion" and sent it to be read at the reunion:

THE COUSIN REUNION

*The cousins got their heads together
And said, "Let's have a lark."
They chose their meeting place to be
Out to Roman Nose Park.
The mamas weren't invited—
They considered us too old.
But there should have been chaperone
From the things that I've been told.
They talked and smoked; their cameras
clicked.
They would eat until they'd moan
But yet go back for a chicken leg
And gnaw it off the bone.*

*Some pictures that were taken
Would make the camera buzz.
But really there was not much proof
Of who the likeness was.
I bless you all, dear cousins;
I love you everyone
And will forgive your little pranks
You all did just in fun.
I am glad you got together—
Glad your day was full of bliss.
But if there had been no mamas,
There would've been none of this!
(Aunt Lottie, one of the mamas)*



Illustration by Olivia Ortiz

Sadly, there are no longer any Carter cousin reunions held. The sisters and most of the cousins are dead; the third and fourth generations do not keep in touch.

Another of Aunt Lottie's poems expresses well the passing away of the older generations.

When one of her sisters died, she wrote the following poem; it was also read at the funerals of the rest; it was read for the last time in Thomas at the funeral of Alcie May Rowland, the last sister.

SISTERS

*Six sisters out of nine are left;
And if I should be the next to go,
You must not grieve for me
Because you will understand
That God has willed it so.
Just have a spray of flowers
Gently placed upon my breast
With these words—"The Sisters"
Written on the card,
As we did all the rest.
But should I be the last to leave
This earthly home of mine
And join the rest in glorious realms above,
Please send a message down from heaven
To a flower shop and say,
"Have 'It's from the Sisters' written on a card"
And tie it to my spray. **

(DR. KAREN MCKELLIPS is the great-granddaughter of Madison and Edna Carter, the granddaughter of Alcie May Rowland, and the daughter of Lorene Sweeney of the preceding article.)

Design by Joey Conkin

Oklahoma Reunions Are Fun Out West

—By C. K. (Ken) Shroyer

It's called a reunion, a collection of friends, who brag and spin yarns—the tales never stop.

We come from all over in singles and groups—we huff and we puff all the strength we can muster.

Maybe it's family, or it could be a class; we gather out west to recall past times.

We're thinking about watching for folks we remember and wondering if they'll look as they did long ago.

There are dear Sister Ann (she's put on some weight) and old Uncle Joe (he can't get around)—

Then sweet Auntie Bess (her memory is bad) and poor Grandpa Scott (his hearing is gone).

With scrapbooks, photos, and home videos too, we reminisce about past Oklahoma reunions.

There are cookies and cakes and Mom's favorite pie. If we eat all these goodies, we'll roll out of here.

It's just like a rally—a roundup of cronies, some classmates, some buddies, and some mere tag-alongs.

We brag on our children but mostly grandkids; we crow that our kin are one in a million.

Then soon our chairman tries hard to call order; while some are still yacking, she borders on panic.

We know we've got rules (we must pay our dues), but what about bylaws (our do's and our don'ts)?

She tells us there are plans and then reads the minutes, while some of the magpies still aren't listening.

They're chatting and buzzing and telling their troubles, while others complaining are counting the money.

Then all of a sudden, the picture comes bright—we've overspent the budget clean up to our ears.

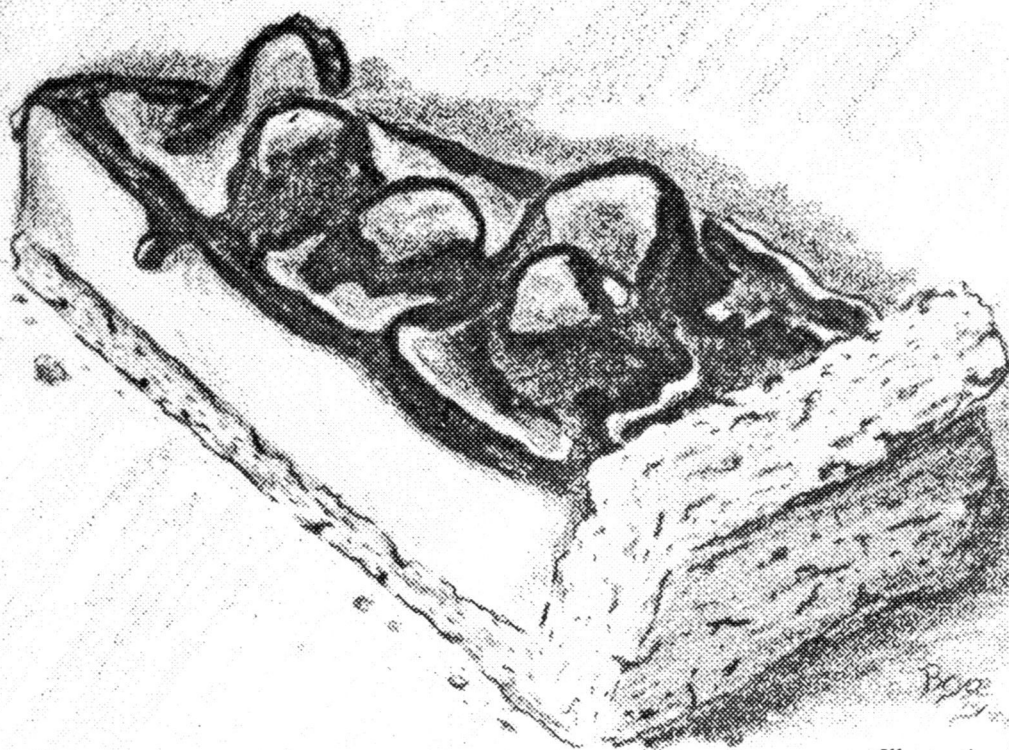


Illustration by Bryce Brimer

There are groaning and moaning and trying to make clear—it's all our fault; there's no one else to blame.

If our dues go up, we take in our belts; most of us have been there before.

We need to suck in and then analyze—these times aren't the same; it's time we make changes.

We're all getting older—our aches and our pains keep adding up costs and taxing our budgets.

So we exchange our gifts and try just to laugh and just take for granted reunions are here to stay—thank goodness.

Our lives are examples for all to see—the future is now for you and for me.

Let's thank our Dear Lord for blessings He gives; it's He who'll decide if we meet here again.

We should be thankful, be helpful, try not to complain, suggest without bossing, say no unkind things—

Take pride in reunions, enjoy and relax, sit back and be happy—it's time to face facts. *

(C. D. [KEN] SHROYER, now a retired senior citizen of Weatherford, is a graduate of the OU School of Business Administration who made his WESTVIEW debut as a poet in the Fall, 1990 issue. He has just been acclaimed by the World of Poetry and received the Golden Poet Award at the organization's sixth annual poetry convention in Las Vegas.)

Design by Gina Mitchell

A Remembering Time

—By Orv Owens

THE BUILDING WAS CROWDED. EVERYONE WAS talking at once about those days of youth and roses. We poured some coffee and sat down at a table in the cafeteria to greet old classmates, watch, and listen as they eagerly reached out for yesterdays.

The girls had improved with time. Those smooth, lovely faces remained frozen in the glory of youth. Their hair was as luxuriant as ever, and lips looked as sweet as they had been a million kisses ago.

Buddies of that long-ago time were still as handsome as ever. We had traveled Western Oklahoma streets together in cars as battered as the time that bred them.

Many were the nights we had sat and talked and once had driven out to steal what we thought were watermelons. We tried to burst them only to have them bounce on the local park grass. We found it impossible to burst a pie melon. The image of delicious heart of melon vanished as we laughed at our foolishness.

We remembered moving Case equipment down to the John Deere dealer and vice-versa on those glorious Halloweens while dodging the local marshal who came hunting us down as though we had committed a felony.

Although we were mischievous, we did not wantonly destroy property or go out and shoot someone simply because we weren't in the best of moods. We were always doing something, while not constructive, not destructive either—just enough so that our parents and friends would recognize that we weren't neutered.

We often drove to neighboring towns to see a movie. A carful of carefree boys, happy to be going somewhere, and free of restrictions. We tried to return the misplaced trust. At least that's what we thought.

On one of those trips just as the driver topped a hill, a semi's lights blinded him, and the perfectly good Mercury's driver side was bashed in. After the driver finished trembling at the thought that six

boys could have gone up in smoke, he helped pull out the fender from the front wheel and continued on home as sober as a judge.

At the reunion we remembered first loves. One couple had been dating and had married after graduation, happy and content in what they had found in each other. They had spent their childhood as well as their adulthood together. That it had lasted surprised no one. They were well suited to travel life's road hand in hand. Another might have remembered first love and wondered why it died aborning.

It had been exciting, those long summer evenings of swimming in a farm pond and kissing while muddy water ran down their chins. The mystery of what they were tugged at them, tried to give purpose to their lives, only to fade as emotions faded. There would be no warm fireplace on winter evenings as they watched their children grow. A decision had been made that it was not to be.

Classmates smiled at one another in remembrance of fond yesterdays. Warm feelings returned as memory came out of hiding: playing hookey by going to the river to walk barefoot down the sandy bed with a warm sun adding to their comfort. They were not disturbed by the thought that there was a penalty to pay or that someone might come hunting them.

The mixed group sat on a log, idle-talked, and kissed in front of all the wild animals while God kept watch overhead. In those moments, they lived for the momentum, not realizing they were building memories for some distant tomorrow.

Someone might have remembered the hay and sleigh rides and that our laughter caused our mouths to shovel snow. The pain came later when swollen tonsils had to be lanced because there had been more snow than thought.

Memory always brought back the laughter as time dragged its heels against the foundation during a youth time.

Never had the roses smelled sweeter or the nectar of honey tasted more sublime.

The restroom was a favorite place to sneak a smoke between classes. We hoped that a breath mint would kill the smell.

And there was the shop with the pile of scrap iron behind it that the class had to move from one spot to another as punishment for making too much noise when the teacher had to leave the room.

Our favorite English teacher who had a sense of humor put up with us when we raised our hands to ask permission to leave the room. When she asked why we wanted to leave the room, she laughed when we told her we wouldn't ask her that!

Those were the days of great dreams, great ideals, great promises. The world was an apple, and we thought we knew what the core was like—only to find out later that we knew nothing at all. The apple was much, much larger than we thought and much more complicated than we had ever dreamed.

The crowd multiplied as classmates came from near and faraway to sup once again and remember the urges of that glorious time when youth ruled in

that fantastic illusion of power and grace from which we could never fall.

Proving that we were the greatest ever to venture forth was impossible. It was only when we realized that every other person we met also deserved the love we had reserved for ourselves that we grew up and became responsible citizens. We learned to share ourselves with others who also waited for some light in a world that seemed filled with darkness.

We gave memory meaning when we took our place in society as adults doing some small task contributing to the whole.

Our responsibility also included a reunion with classmates and a look at the care lines of those beautiful faces out of our past that helped shape what we are today. *

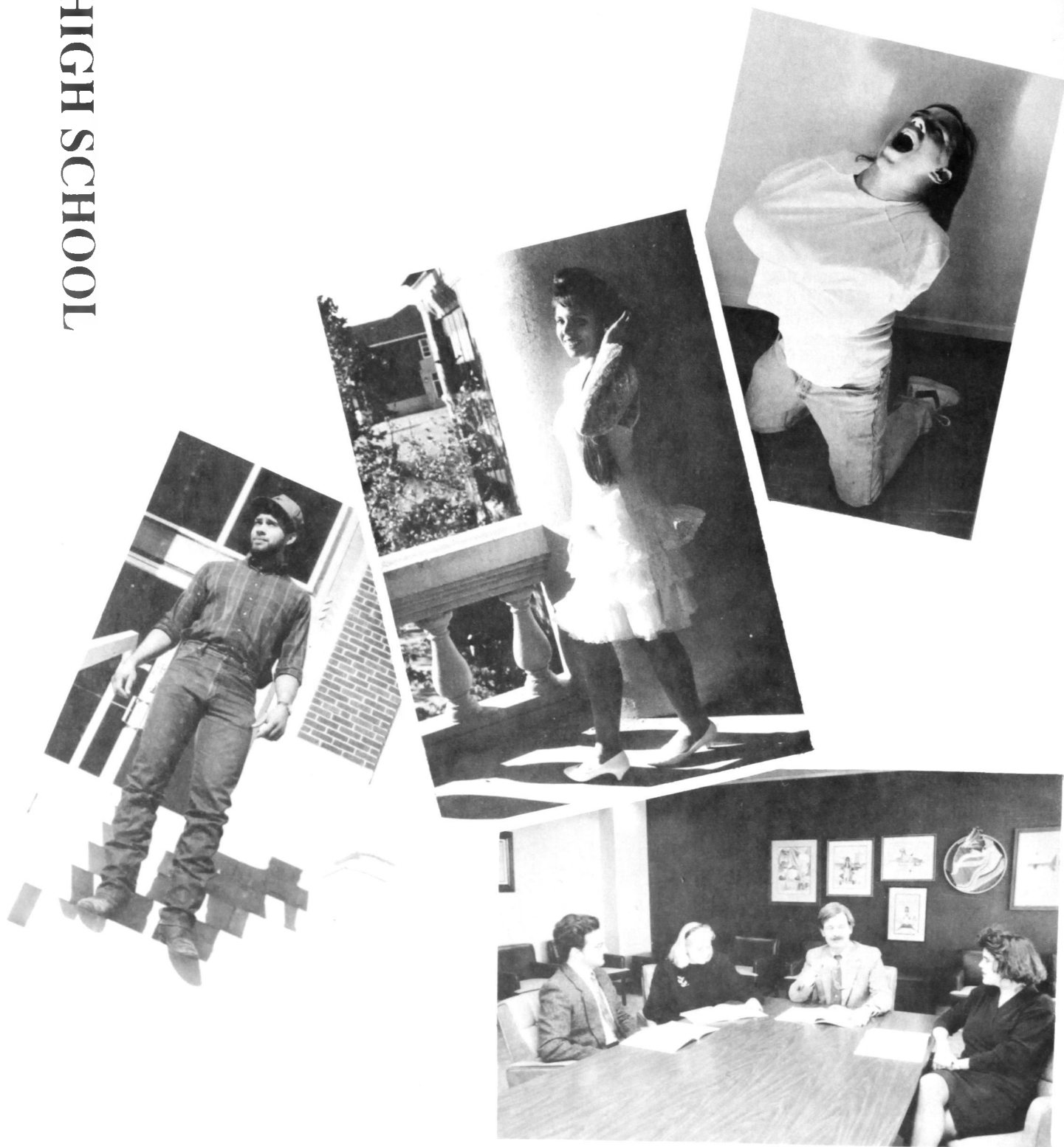
(ORV OWENS of Watonga does free-lance writing and has submitted to WESTVIEW before, beginning with the Spring 1990 issue.)



Illustration by Matt Heckman

Design by Bryce Brimer

HIGH SCHOOL



Photography by Colynda Urton

Design by Cynde Roof

Twentieth Reunion

HIGH SCHOOL

—By Carl Stanislaus

They may say pictures don't lie,
But we could never have been that young.
We couldn't have been that crazy,
Or sung those silly songs we sang.

We couldn't have eaten all that pizza
At our drive-in afternoon delight.
How could we have loved those awkward boys
And stayed out so late at night?

Remember the ones we voted most likely
To succeed at a chosen endeavor?
Most didn't turn out that way at all,
And we thought we were so clever!

Now poor little Sue has all the money;
Nancy sits on an executive board.
Farm boy Roy is a prominent lawyer,
And our smart Bob is in a mental ward.

Her big girl looks like Jim,
Who was her high-school preference.
Of course she married Larry Joe,
Who refuses to see the difference.

We thought that Ellen wasn't very bright—
Now she has a best-selling book.
Very proper Trudy became a hippie,
And handsome John became a crook!

Well, we didn't turn out so bad—
Doctors, writers, bankers, and dancers,
Mothers, builders, lawyers, detectives.
Thank you, teachers, for some of the answers!

Let's have another school reunion,
But let's don't wait so long,
Or we'll all be grandmas and grandpas
Who can't chew the steak or remember the songs.

"We're true to thee, our Alma Mater—or
Was it We're loyal to you our—
Oh little Johnny, don't pull Nana's dress..
I'm already late for my spa appointment! *

(CARL STANISLAUS of Chickasha, age 60, retired from OTASCO after 36 years. He started writing and submitting poetry at age 56. His credits include MATURE LIVING, RURAL HERITAGE, SPOTLIGHT, GOOD OLD DAYS, a few others, and now WESTVIEW.)

3R's+1=

Reunion

—By Ida Vowell Robertson

It is the afternoon of September 2, 1990. A white-haired lady, leaning on a walking stalk, approaches the desk of the Holidome in Elk City to check on her reservation for the Port High School Class of 1940 reunion. The desk clerk pages "Come to the front," and promptly two smiling senior citizens, one in conservative business suit and the other in striped overalls, white shirt, and big red bow tie, step up to greet the guest.

They quickly park her car, collect her luggage, and take her to her room. From there they take her down the hall to a party room. There she is greeted with laughs and hugs by a room full of her "kids" and their spouses who are celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of their graduation from Port High School—the school that at one time rated as the largest, strictly rural consolidated school in Oklahoma.

The reminiscing begins and the celebrants start a long weekend of jogging down Memory Lane.

It is a hot August morning in 1936. Forty-five boys and girls, dressed in their new school clothes of striped overalls and bright percale dresses, fidget and giggle in the freshman section of the auditorium of the old Port High School. Their big day has arrived—the day they have looked forward to since four years before when they moved over into the lower floor of this big building from the adjoining grade school.

Their fluttering and chattering instantly subside as a dignified gentleman in his late thirties steps onto the stage. To these youngsters, he seems almost a patriarch as he has headed their school system most of their school days. This gentleman is Jesse M. Welch, a man of vision—a man to whom an education is a must for every child, a man worthy of the title Educator.

Mr. Welch addresses the patrons, teachers, and students explaining his plans and expectations for the new school year. Then he instructs the students to pass to their first-hour classes. This will be a full day of school—no time to waste.

Hurrah! At last these freshmen get to go up the stairs to the new world of the high-school department. With them goes their young, new English teacher. Her goal is to teach them the fundamentals of grammar, the correct forms of oral and written expression, and an appreciation of literature. In addition to these big curricular goals, she is also to sponsor their extra-curricular activities for the duration.

It is now May of 1940. Twenty-two of the original group stand expectantly at the head of those now familiar stairs. Their striped overalls and percale dresses have been put aside for formal gray caps and gowns. In the joy of this moment as they wait to start their long march down the stairs to the auditorium to the solemn strains of "Pomp and Circumstance," they miss

many of their friends. Because of the great economic depression of the thirties, some students had been forced to leave school to help on the farm, take low-paying jobs, or move with their families to greener pastures. But these twenty-two have made it.

As these seniors, the last class to graduate from this old two-story building constructed in 1923 and now outgrown, they carry memories quite unusual for students of the era. High school had not been a run-of-the-mill experience because Mr. Welch had set a high goal for them in their sophomore year. Now they had achieved that goal—a senior trip to their nation's Capitol through thirteen Southern and Eastern states.

Mr. Welch had both admonished and promised: "Work hard." "Make your grades." "Stay out of trouble." "Make your money and we'll take a trip you'll never forget."

They kept the faith and so did Mr. Welch. Three years of selling magazines, providing many forms of paid entertainment, staging the biggest school carnival ever, and, most of all, pulling cotton for the cause several days each fall—they had earned the money; and now Mr. Welch had the big yellow busses ready to roll south come next Tuesday morning.

"Goodbyes are said and with promises of 'See ya around,' these classmates part"

Their three years of planning for this trip have been coordinated with their class work. In history they have become enthralled with digging deeper into the historical events of the Southern and Eastern states because they are going to see many of the cities, the historical shrines, the mountains, the rivers, and forests. In English they learn to write business letters to

Chambers of Commerce asking for brochures on the regions and for guides for sightseeing. In business classes they learn to type these letters, set up a budget, and plan an itinerary. Best of all, in Home Ec they learn to plan a tour wardrobe. From all this learning and working together, they have become a closely knit group—"friends forever."

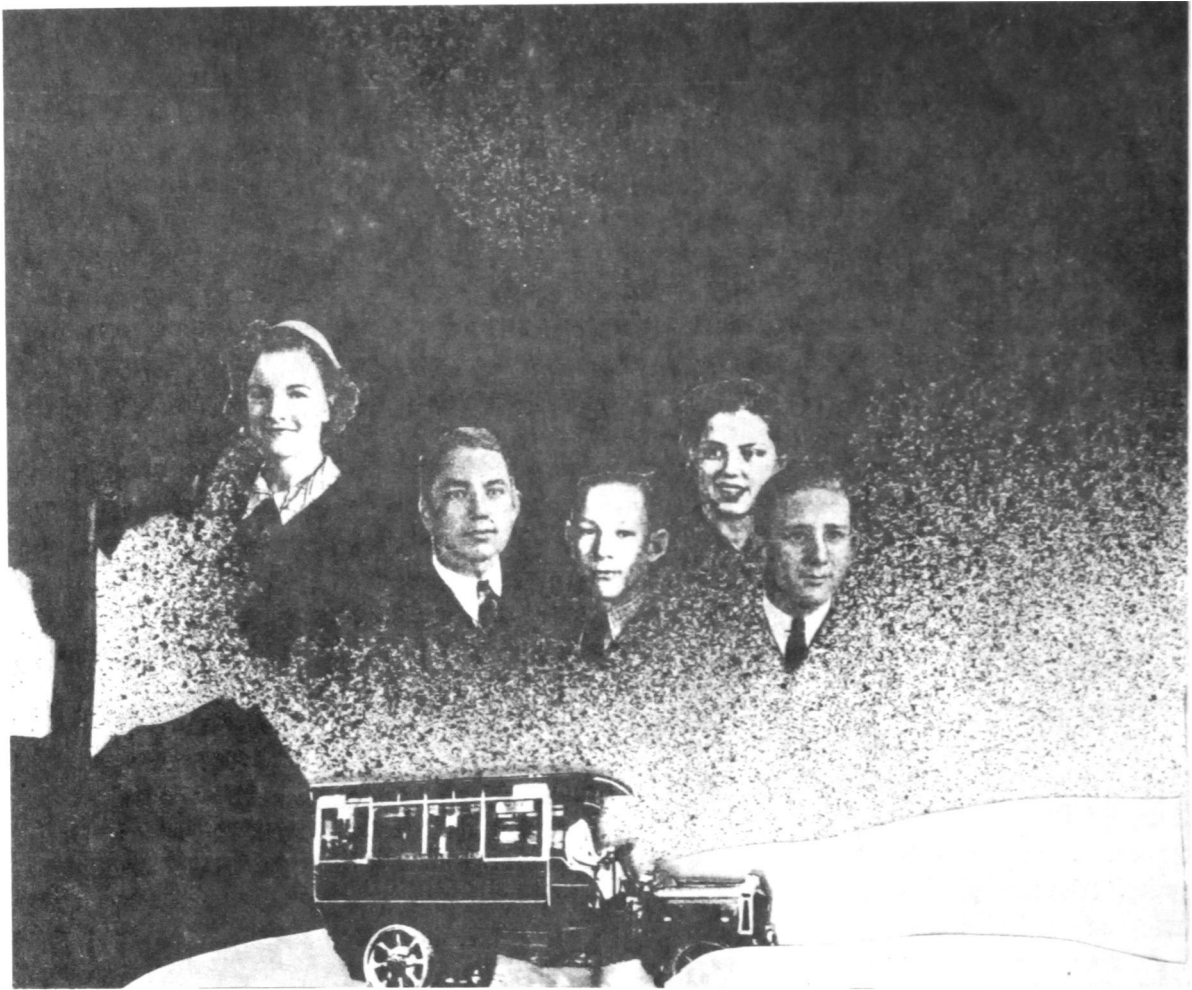
It is June, 1940, almost four weeks later when the graduates, well-seasoned and well-tanned travelers, get off the bus onto the home turf of old Port High. Happily they rush into the arms of their parents, but sadly they can see only a bare plot where once that dear old building with the inchoated upper level had stood. It has been razed to make way for progress in the form of a new modern building.

Goodbyes are said and with promises of "See ya around," these classmates part—some to meet now and then through the years, some to meet at this fiftieth-anniversary reunion, and some never to meet again in this life.

It is September, 1990; swiftly and eventfully a half-century has passed. A small remnant of that band, so closely knit in their youth by shared experiences, gathers for a weekend of togetherness. Through the afternoon, a dinner, and until midnight, they relive their long-gone youth at old Port High. Also, they relate various careers—as ranchers, teachers, postmen, beauticians, businessmen, Bell Telephone operators, and military personnel. Most of the males served in the military during World War II, and one is even a retired Colonel!

The most vividly remembered and most discussed event during our reminiscing was the unexpected, terrific, and devastating blizzard and snowstorm which struck on the afternoon of April 8, 1937. It came suddenly after a full week of warm, balmy spring weather. Everyone recalled a near tragic experience, and many stories circulated.

"It was nice and warm that morning, and I wore my brand new toeless sandals. I ruined them and nearly froze my feet getting to the house from the bus."



Design by Mike Sigurdson

Illustration by Robb Kopp

"I think we were running twelve busses back then, and only a few were able to complete their runs that day. Our bus got stuck just a mile and half from school. The driver, a teacher, and the biggest kids managed to get us up a long driveway to the Wrights' big, two-story house. Mr. and Mrs. Wright took all thirty of us in and kept us warm and fed from that Tuesday until Saturday morning. Only a few parents learned where their kids were and came after them."

"My sister and I were among the five children left on our bus when we could get no further. Our driver's clothes were frozen to him from having worked so hard to get the bus started, but he got us to a little two-room shack and saved our lives. The family had only a little food and not enough fuel for much heat.

Snow drifted through the cracks onto our bed. Daddy found us after two or three days."

(today a gentleman who had been the school-boy bus driver sat silently with no comment)

"I was on one of the five busses that turned around and came back to school. Mr. Welch took care of all of us in the gym. He kept us busy playing ball most of the time. He made stew for us with supplies from the school lunchroom. The girls were taken in at nights by families on the campus. It was really one big picnic for us. Then on Saturday the sun came out; Mr. Welch and four teachers walked seven miles with us over to the highway where fathers on horseback and tractors picked us up. No one but Mr. Welch could have handled all that."

"Just think—all the phone lines were down and many parents couldn't find out where their kids were! But one good thing came out of it all; always after that if Mr. Welch saw a cloud in the sky as big as a hanky, he'd roll those busses and we'd get out early."

After a night's rest from visiting, the group gathered at a long table for a real, old-time farm hands' breakfast accompanied by much horseplay, visiting, and picture taking.

Later, they went back to the party room for "church"; these are sons and daughters of rural Methodist, Baptist, and Church of Christ families. A once-shy boy offered a prayer of thanksgiving, and another not-so-shy led in meditation. Then there was real old-fashioned hymn singing which revealed that some high-school voices had matured beautifully.

Then there was lunch, followed by the only really organized event. It was emceed by the person who been head of the arrangements for this big weekend. Following an invocation, the emcee read a touching memorial tribute to Mr. Welch. The tribute was written and mailed in by the class salutatorian who was unable to attend. She was one of Mr. Welch's students who later, after finishing college, returned to teach with him at Port.

A tribute to the eight deceased members was presented by the class sponsor, who closed with four lines from "The Gift":

*There is a harmony in things
That only growing older brings.
Happiness is learning how
To value what is here now.*

Letters touching the high points in their lives since Port High were read from three absentee members; and then, one by one, each of those present came to the microphone and gave his or her resume of the past fifty years. Laughter and tears were shared as they once again felt that old camaraderie of their youth. Each had experienced the struggle of "getting started," love, marriage, and death of loved ones. Now they are still close, confiding friends; and if one burst into tears at the mike, arms enfolded him.

The mood changed to fun as the class cut-up gave his version of how they made-do for the lack of today's wonders.

"There was no McDonald's, but Williams Store had great five-cent hamburgers."

"Our drive-in theater was a drive-in into Sentinel in the family Ford to the Rex Theater."

"No teen town or youth centers, but we had better. There was never a place like the back room at Pat's Cafe where we jitterbugged to a nickel nickelodeon."

"As for the Atom bomb—the blast that came from our English teacher when we neglected our memory work would have made an A-bomb seem a mere toy."

After he had made an appropriate toast to the sponsor, he presented her with a big red apple of potpourri from the class. "An apple for the teacher." They could never have afforded even a green one "back then."

The meeting closed with the talented one singing "This Is the Day" even more beautifully than they remembered.

Climaxing the weekend was the showing of the hour-long color film Mr. Welch made of that famous senior trip. It was a silent version, but the "stars" present kept a running commentary of "I remember that," "Oh, there's Huey Long Bridge," "There we are at Mt. Vernon"—and "Oh, there's Mrs. Welch upchucking on our deep-sea fishing trip." Ad infinitum.

The film ran out. . . the spell was broken . . . goodbyes were said. . . promises were made to meet again at the all-school reunion next July Fourth in Sentinel.

Yes, the Port High Class of 1940 had had its fiftieth. The class members had mastered the three R's of life. They had come back for a reunion spelled with a big R. *

(IDA VOWELL ROBERTSON, 81-year-old resident of Clinton, is a retired teacher and social worker. Her hobbies are her volunteer work at a retirement center and the training and nurturing of a Calico Cat. Mrs. Robertson, the Port English teacher referred to in the above article, makes her second appearance in WESTVIEW; her first submission appeared in the Fall '89 issue.)

PORT'S ROCK OF GIBRALTER

—By Doris Walker Casey

(a tribute in memory of Superintendent Jesse M. Welch of the Port Consolidated School District No. 5)

In thoughts and memories of many students and faculty members having attended and taught in the Port School during the tenure of one Mr. Jesse M. Welch, his name and the name of Port School seem somewhat synonymous.

Who was

This personage of renown in the hearts and memories of the Port School Alumni?

This "Rock of Gibraltar" standing firmly against all obstacles that would have caused the weak to falter?

This "Standard of Principles," holding to firmness, integrity and fairness, fighting for the best in these he led and guided?

This Leader, loving his school, his students, his teachers, and his community—backing their endeavors in work, in play, or in other performances?

This Perfectionist, believing every student should strive for the best within himself, to be the best of whatever he was to be?

This Educator, holding no interest in making a name for himself with new theories of education to be tested, but desiring to teach each student the fundamentals of book learning?

The Superintendent, after 4:00 p.m., picking bushels of black-eyed peas, free for the picking, to help eliminate the financial crunch of the School Lunch Program?

This Father Figure, knowing each child should have a hot lunch even though he could not pay the three cents a day, and feeding him anyway?

This Algebra and Geometry teacher, teaching with authority that a straight line is the shortest distance between two points and that the longest way around is the sweetest way home . . . and eliminating gum-chewing in class by threatening to tell his "Cud-Chewing Cow" story?

This leader in Team work, whether it be leading classes to cotton patches to aid the farmer in gathering his cotton crop, cheering on a basketball team, giving full support to a dramatic production, or coordinating details for a wonderful Senior Trip to Washington, D. C.?

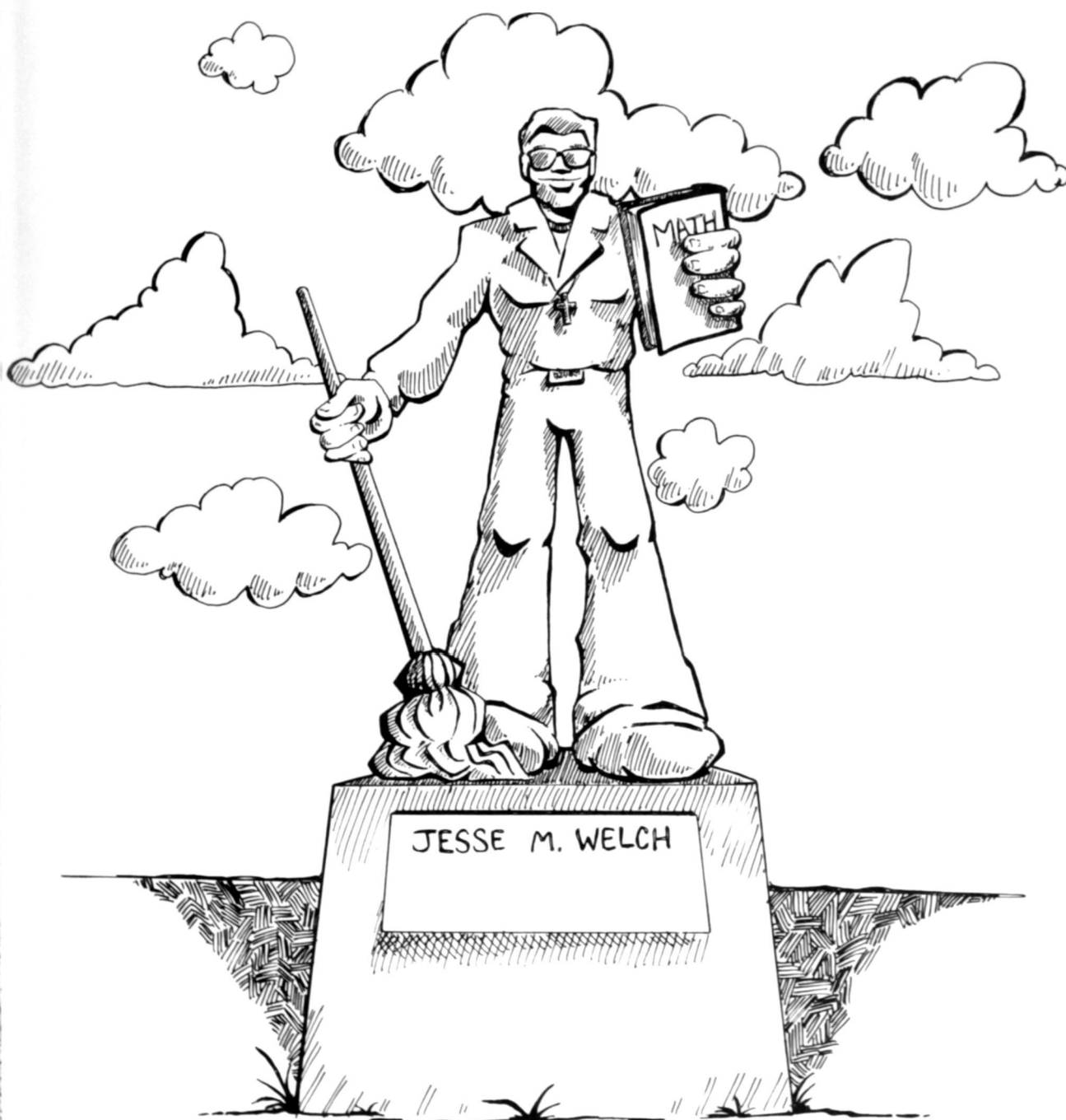
This man, finding no task too small or too degrading if it helped his fellowman, especially those students in his school?

A Man of Stature, living these Christian virtues of hope, faith, trust, love, and honesty looking for the same in others?

This man was Jesse M. Welch, Superintendent of Port School. He was mighty enough to demand respect without effort, yet humble enough to see the needs of those around him and give his service to benefit the cause.

Now Mr. Welch has gone to a better land. Can't you see him with Saint Peter within the Pearly Gates standing by that golden vat of heavenly ambrosia—ladle in hand—shouting "Come and get it, or I'll throw it out!"? *

(DORIS WALKER CASEY, member of the Port High School Class of 1940, is a retired high-school English teacher and librarian in Waco, TX. She and her husband now live in Troy, TX where she does free-lance writing and serves as an active member of her church.)



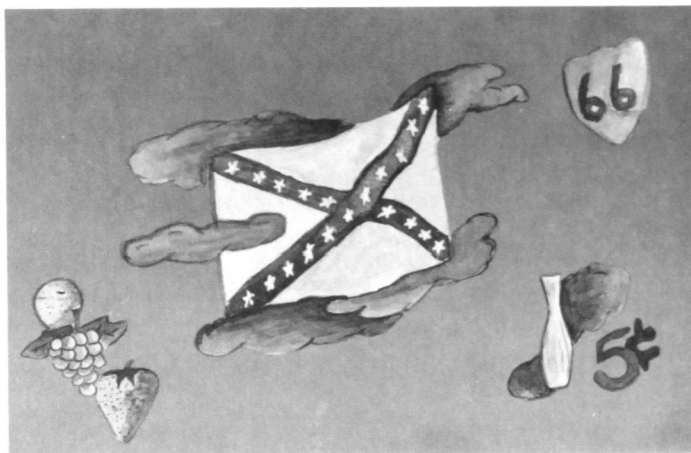
Design by Mike Sigurdson

Illustration by Brad Snow

Old SOLDIERS DAY REUNION

—By Pam Smith

THE LITTLE TOWN OF Bridgeport sits just north of the famed Old 66 Highway. All my life, Bridgeport has held a special place in my heart. My mother was reared there, and



my grandmother lived there for many years. The end of the road to Grandmother's house meant love and perhaps fried chicken, mashed potatoes, and garden tomatoes and okra. I spent many summer evenings on my grandmother's front porch gazing across the riverbottom, listening to stories about mad dogs, cardboard-lined shoes, or the wagon ride to Oklahoma from Missouri. Most evenings the Rock Island train wound its way through that beautiful valley. Coyotes howled through those peaceful, lazy summer evenings.

Sometimes she told stories of the Old Soldier's Day Reunion. It sounded like another world, and indeed it was. It was a world of lanterns hanging from summer trees, of passenger trains, and of town bands playing "When It's Springtime in the Rockies." Recently I visited Bridgeport again. My grandmother

is gone, but Aunt Cuba still lives there in that place rich in history and Oklahoma folklore. She shared with me these pretty memories of the Old Soldier's Day Reunions.

THE HOME OF THE BLUE AND THE GRAY

(as told by Cuba Cauthron)

I'm not sure what year the reunions began, but I remember that the last Civil War gathering was in 1917. We looked forward to it for weeks.

My grandfather, Joseph Wilson Kerr, was a veteran of the Civil War. He picked us up in his buggy and took us to Bridgeport Park, which lies along the river bottom southeast of Bridgeport. It was a real treat to eat at the cook shack. It was a large tent kitchen set up by Minnie Grey and her sister for the old soldiers. The Civil War veterans camped out all weekend, and the soldiers and their families ate at the cook shack. We felt special eating there. The park was lined with horses, buggies, and wagons. A passenger train ran at 9:00 in the morning and again around 3:00 in the afternoon.

You'd see the old soldiers in the Civil War uniforms. I remember Georgia, my sister, and I had pretty princess-style dresses. Hers was silk and mine a pretty cotton print. They were tight-fitting in the style of the day. Our hair was in braids. Mother wore her hair in a loose bun, and she put two whisps in it by pulling it in a light twist. Yes, I think we were pretty.

Oh, goodness, there was so much fun to have. There were game stands all decorated in red, white, and blue bunting. There were baby contests and horse races of course. The swimming pool was open all afternoon. George Clark and his wife, Martha, ran the pool. They kept a big tank

of cold drinks—strawberry, grape, and orange for 5 cents. No diet drinks either. Goodness, I don't suppose anyone dieted in those days.

Every afternoon a club or church group would put on a skit at the auditorium. It could be funny or serious. Then each night there would be dances. Why, we'd dance to "The Red River Valley," "Carolina Moon," and "The Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia." There would be lanterns hanging in the trees; people seemed happy and peaceful. Groups of old soldiers sat around campfires telling stories and laughing and maybe shedding a tear now and then. I just know it was great fun to be a young girl. It was a happy time for all.

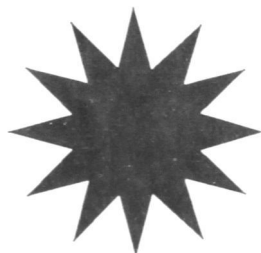
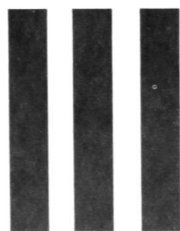
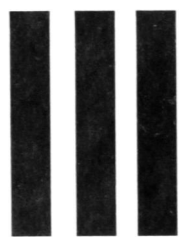
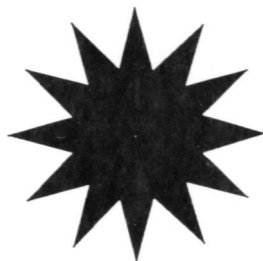
COME WITH ME

Can you imagine walking toward this gathering on an August evening? You'd hear laughter and music from the bandstand. You'd see lanterns shadowed by trees and campfire smoke. Some would be packing up picnic baskets and sleepy children for the wagon ride home. And you'd hear crickets, of course. Yes, the most glorious sound of Western Oklahoma evenings must be summer crickets.

Just across a wash and up a hill, east of the Bridgeport Park and Arena, you will find the remains of the old swimming pool. Many times I've sat on the edge of this pool, eyes closed, listening, just listening for the voices of Western Oklahoma. *

(PAM SMITH lives in Geary with her two children, Adrian and Mary Grace, and operates an antique store. She received a degree in English Education from SOSU and is currently working toward a Master's degree.)

*Design by Cynde Roof
Illustration by Tommy Campbell*



Meeting an

—By Dr. Shyamkant Kulkarni

A wreath of leaves to crown—
 Clad in silken cloth brown,
 Face and chest painted
 With black, green, and red.
 He is dancing
 On the rhythm of ancient beat
 Waving hands in the air
 Along with others in the circle
 Around the spirits and souls from the
 unknown.
 Shrill shrieks and tender voices
 Whistle from an eagle bone—
 Tender touch of a brown piece
 Leading through the time to
 Reach eternity
 Underneath an ancient cliff
 With bare skin, offering and praying
 Voices traveling along the drift
 To a distance far
 Like this Sundance
 Throwing everybody in the stance.
 Makes me wonder
 Why I am here—
 Why do I compare
 When heart is thumping, pulse bounding
 To catch up with the beat.
 My face is wet with the sweat
 Like all others around
 Standing in circles in a daze
 Watching this Sundance.
 This sweat is proud
 Making and reaching beyond oceans great
 To meet an unknown threat. *

(DR. SHYAMKANT S. KULKARNI, age 52, is a physician in Watonga. He recently published a poetry collection titled THE SONG OF SEED AND OTHER POEMS, and others of his works have previously appeared in WESTVIEW. His compelling urge as a writer is to portray ever-changing life through poetry and fiction.)

Design by Joey Conkin

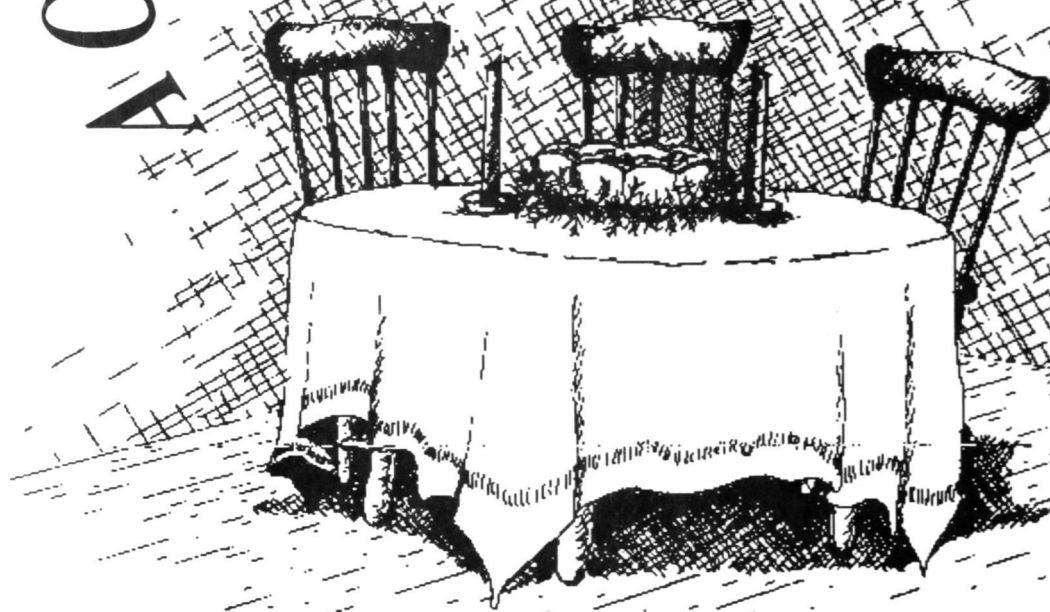
Unknown Threat

SUNDANCE



Illustration by Duane Andrews

A Christmas Memory Shared



—By Vera Holding

Designed and Illustrated by Gina Mitchell

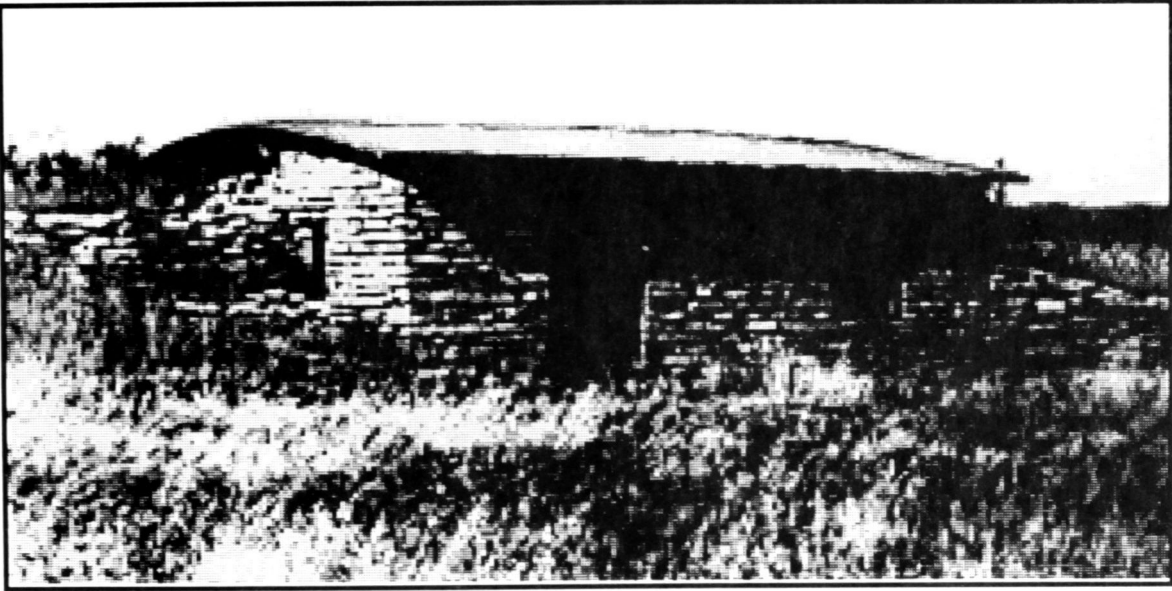
We were a large family in a raw new country—Indian Territory. There were no government handouts, no children on relief; and although we were bone poor in worldly goods, we were rich in love and family togetherness. Christmas was something particularly special.

In the corner of our large one-room dugout home there was always a cedar tree, selected and chopped down by our father who had led us children on the day before Christmas on search of the just-right tree—not too tall but tall enough to reach from floor to ceiling. It must have thick branches, which made it a thing of beauty, because of its dark green color and symmetry.

A wood fire on the hearth brought out the spicy fragrance of the tree—an unforgettable memory. From the pine-log mantel hung a row of long, black, ribbed stockings to be filled later with oranges, apples, nuts, and popcorn. Oranges were our special Christmas treat.

Two hairy coconuts squatted on the hearth and would be broken into edible pieces by Father's hammer blows. First, though, the eyes were gouged out with Father's Barlow knife, and the luscious milk poured out and shared with those who cared for it.

When the blows finally came, coconut pieces would fly, and we would scramble for them. The boys would remove the



meat from the shell on one of them and divide it with all of us. We would squat there on the sandstone hearth munching with delight.

The other coconut was given to Mother, who took the rich white meat and shredded it to make what, to us children, was the most delectable centerpiece in the world—AMBROSIA! Ambrosia included both of our most “Christmassy” specials—coconut and oranges.

Above the dining room table, hung from a rafter, was Mother’s milk-glass hanging lamp with crystal prisms. It had been one of her wedding presents and was our one note of prairie elegance. She had carried it in her lap during the long journey from Texas to our dugout prairie home. It became so much more than mere light; it was our faith, our hope; and when the firelight caught the rainbows in the crystal prisms, every hardship of a new land disappeared as we joined hands to sing the old loved

carols. I felt very sure that a kind God listened.

The centerpiece—on the table—ah, that was something else! In a large crystal bowl, thin slices of oranges were layered with the fresh coconut. It remained the centerpiece under the light from early morning until every last morsel was eaten.

Memory is a wonderful blessing. And now on our special family day—with my children, grandchildren, and great-grands gathered around it—Mother’s lamp, which picks up the gold and snow of Ambrosia in a large crystal bowl, hangs in a proud place of honor.

Through misty eyes, I see the family joining hands to send a circle of prayer Heavenward: Thank you, God, for memories. They keep all our hearts singing, regardless of time. *

(VERA HOLDING, now deceased, was the official “Sweetheart of the Oklahoma Writers’ Federation, Inc.” For several years, Mrs. Holding, of Tipton, was instrumental in the success of the OU Professional Writers’ Short Course.)

GLOOMY CHRISTMAS CAROL EQUALS RED BICYCLE



—By Kyle Moran

FOR AS LONG AS I CAN REMEMBER, my parents always sang the same carol beginning around December 1 each year: "Well, Old Santa Claus is gonna be mighty slim around our homestead this year."

By the time I was 12 years old, all of my siblings were already away from home. My two sisters had married, and my only brother had died in World War II; therefore, when my parents began to sing their carol that winter of my twelfth year, I felt more alone than ever with no one else of my age around to share my despair. My special problem was that I so badly wanted a maroon Monarch bicycle that I knew that I must have it. In fact, even in the middle of the carol one day I had blurted out my wish. I felt that I deserved it. After all, if I hadn't been expected to help them get their cotton pulled during my Harvest Vacation, I could have made some money of my own and bought that coveted maroon Monarch in the window of the OTASCO in town.

My older sister, Jeanette, lived in town, Arnett, a few miles away; I often visited her and her husband, Jerry, each time I was in town. Her husband had in a sense taken the place of my dead brother, and those visits were special to me.

I also liked to visit Emie, a boy my age who lived in Jeanette and Jerry's neighborhood. Although Emie was a town kid and I was a country boy, we got along very well together.

One day on one of my routine visits, I walked unannounced into my sister's kitchen. The room was a mess. Papers were spread all over the place, and Jerry was on the floor painting an old bicycle red. Thinking back later, I remembered that both of them looked flustered and Jeanette yelled at me, "Now you have to help us keep a secret. Grace bought this bike for Emie, and we're helping her out by painting it and keeping it for her until Christmas Eve. If you breathe a word of this, you'll have me to pay, Little Brother!" I promised to say nothing, and I kept my promise.

As Christmas Eve approached, excitement was afloat as usual, but I promised myself not to mention to my parents again what I wanted for Christmas. After all, wasn't that the price of martyrdom? And wasn't I a martyr?

It was our custom at that time to go to Jerry and Jeanette's house on Christmas Eve for a Christmas gift exchange. That year I received various gifts—socks, pajamas, gloves, a shirt or two, a winter hat and scarf, and a few other things—even shaving lotion not to be used for at least a few more months. And that seemed to be the end of the matter.

Suddenly Jerry said, "Excuse me. I'll be back in a minute. I need to take care of something outside." In a few minutes he came back into the living room pushing the most beautiful red bike I had ever seen. It was even equipped with speedometer, reflectors, a front light, and a horn.

My dad said, "Well, Son, it's not the maroon Monarch from OTASCO, but it's the best we could do this year. I hope you like it, and you need to thank Jerry and Jeanette. They're the ones who really made it possible."

I hurriedly thanked everyone, put on my hat and scarf, jumped on that bike, and rode out the front door oblivious of steps. I rode all over town stopping to tell every friend and relative I could find about the gift I knew I would never forget.

Secondhand bikes don't last very long, though, and two years later I was riding a souped-up version of the maroon Monarch at the OTASCO—bought from my very own money that I had saved from farm jobs.

There have been many materialistic highlights in my life since that Christmas of 1946, but none has quite equaled the joy I felt when I first realized that the red bike was really mine. *

(KYLE MORAN of Weatherford is a regular WESTVIEW contributor.)

An Original

—By Doug Larson

One day in recent years, shortly before June, I was in my vegetable garden putting wire cages around my tomato plants. I looked toward the house next door and noticed that a cattle truck was being backed up to the garage. My first thought was, "My word! The wealthiest woman in Grimes is using a cattle truck to move in to a \$70,000 house! Such an abysmal lack of taste."

Miss Addie was a mystery to everyone in Grimes; and from what I had heard, she had been a mystery all her life. For the past several years, she had lived in a drab upstairs apartment in a downtown store building that she owned.

When I heard that she had bought the house next door, I didn't know how to react. I had been so conditioned by what the townspeople had said about her that I didn't know how I would like such a looney woman as a closeby neighbor.

Not everyone felt the same way I did about Addie, however. Some of my fellow townspeople worked their way into her acquaintance to get monetary handouts. She was always surrounded by opportunists who were willing to do her bidding, whether that meant cooking for her, driving her red Cadillac places for her, or handling her correspondence. In exchange, she paid their medical bills, set them up in business, or helped them out financially in other ways.

"She was tall, angular, and a bit stoop-shouldered."

I had heard many stories, so I was expecting her move next door to be handled by her pseudo-admirers; but I wasn't expecting it to be done in a cattle truck.

As I craned my neck toward my neighbor's house, I saw at least twenty people—boys, girls, men, women—alighting from cars parked on the street and going to the truck to begin to unload the furniture and household goods.

Overseeing the whole operation was a strange-looking woman who had ridden to the house with the truck driver. She might be 60 or 80. She was tall, angular, and a bit stoop-shouldered. As I walked nearer the chain-link fence that separated our property, I could see that she was wearing a purple dress whose hem struck three or four inches below the knee. She had fuzzy-looking orange mules on her feet, and her pink slip was showing at least an inch. I was to learn that the too-long slip was one of Addie's trademarks. For one so old and of such withered and spotted skin, the blackish-red hair showing underneath a rakishly tied multi-colored kerchief seemed a discrepancy. I mentally set her age at 80.

I wanted to meet this woman I had heard so much about, but yet I was hesitant. Was it because I didn't want to interrupt her work, or was I afraid. I had met many interesting types in literature and life, but subconsciously I wondered whether I was ready for the Addie Harp experience.

Actually I knew very little about her that I could put any stock in. I decided to barge right in and introduce myself. I could hear her saying, "Now, Honey, be careful with that violin. Momma and Poppa gave that to Genie on her tenth birthday; and when Genie died, I got it." I was to learn that **Honey** was one of her favorite vocatives.

About the time her cautioning words were out, she turned and saw me but didn't lose her train of thought. "Oh, hello, there. You know, Genie was my little sister. Bertie was first, I was second, and Genie was the baby. Everybody just loved Genie to pieces. She was the charmer from the first. When she was about nine years old, a Chatauqua program came to town and there was a violinist in the group. As you know, Poppa was always as active as could be in all the city's doings. So he brought the violinist home to stay in our spare bedroom. Since he was an old man away from his own grandchildren, he took an immediate liking to us girls—and especially Genie. He taught her some

of the basic fingering on the violin, and she caught on very fast. By the time he left our house a week later, Genie was hooked—as the kids say today—on the violin. So what brings you here?”

I was about to answer, but she interrupted and began to talk again—“Well, by going all the way to Yukon, Momma finally found a teacher for Genie, and boy she passed all of us in our music accomplishments. I had been taking piano lessons for years, and I wasn’t setting any records. But poor little Genie! Everyone said she had the talent to be a concert pianist, and she probably would have made it too if she hadn’t got married, started a family, and then died at a young age.”

Finding an opening, I plunged in. “I’m your next-door neighbor. This probably isn’t the best day for calling, but I have wanted to meet you for a long time. So I took the chance to come over.”

“My, what a nice neighbor I already have. You must be that sweet Mr. Norwood I’ve been hearing about. Ever since I bought this house from the Overbys, people have been telling me about you and your little family. So you teach English up at the college. My I think English is a good field for a man. Sometimes the kids just won’t listen to a woman; that’s especially true of the boys, you know. Ha! Listen to me—a former English teacher—saying ‘you know’.” I detest that expression. I suppose you know I taught English close to three hundred years over at Locono High

“As I left Addie’s yard, I thought, ‘So what?’ ”

School. Yessir, and the last ten years I was there, I was head of the department. But if I had it to do over again, I’d stay in the classroom. I liked the teaching better than the administrative work.”

“May I call you **Addie**, or do you prefer **Miss Harp**?” I asked, jumping in again.

“Everybody in town except the Negroes who work for me from time to time calls me **Addie**, so you may call me that, too.”

“Well, we don’t stand on formality either, so you may call me **Doug**, and I want you to drop in when you get settled so my family can meet you.”

“Well, that goes for you too, Doug, and I hope to see you again soon.”

As I left Addie’s yard, I thought, “So what? Maybe she is a little eccentric, but we need some local color in this neighborhood.” I enumerated all the ordinary people in that section of Grimes, including the Norwoods.

Addie moved in next door toward the first of

June. Then Summer School started, and I had lost awareness of time until one evening in late June I received a telephone call. “Doug, this is Helene Goltry. Have you met your new neighbor yet?”

“Well, Helene, I haven’t talked with you since Mark and Cathy’s wedding.” Mark was one of my undergraduate classmates; he and his mother had befriended me when I first arrived in Grimes to attend college. “Yes, I met Addie the day she moved in, but I haven’t been a very good neighbor. I have been very busy this summer with my teaching and other activities.”

“Well, I understand that if anyone does, Hon, because I know how busy Mark stays. Of course over at SIU he’s mostly in research and doesn’t teach much. But the reason I called is to tell you that today is Addie’s 75th birthday. I’ve been talking with Betty Hanks today about a celebration. As you probably know, Addie and Betty have been good friends through the years. And each time Betty is back from New York City—you know she’s an off-Broadway drama coach—she always tries to get together with Addie. So I have made a birthday cake, and Betty has mixed up some punch. Will you help us surprise Addie? Will you and your family be our escorts?”

“Sure thing. That sounds like fun. The children will enjoy an outing, and Laura probably will too. Are you ready now? I’ll come after you.”

Being assured that Helene and Betty were waiting for me right then, I told Laura and the children about our plans for the evening. I suggested that they go over to Addie’s house for a casual drop-in visit and that they do their best to prepare her for the surprise without telling her the whole thing. I also asked them to try to keep her away from her front windows since her first hint of company should be the ringing of the doorbell.

With all the arrangements settled, I headed across town to pick up the revelers. True to Helene’s word, the two of them were waiting on Helene’s front porch. Both of them seemed as excited as two young girls headed for their first date.

When I looked at Betty, I could understand why she and Addie would be drawn to each other. I discerned immediately that Betty believed that all the world’s a stage. As I drove up, she was practicing “Happy birthday to you” somewhere far above middle C in the treble clef while at the same time pirouetting and flinging kisses at the wind. I considered her actions rather odd behavior for a woman in her late sixties or early seventies; but then I looked closer at her “costume.” As a little girl going to a birthday party might have been decked out, she was wearing silver ballerina slippers and a red-and-white-checkered pinafore

held out by numerous petticoats. Her brownish-gray hair was in ringlets; her make-up was smeared. Beside her, the dumpy, garish Helene Goltry, who tried in vain to stay young, seemed normal.

Seeing my strange companions, I began to wonder if the birthday party would ever come off. It was obvious that each one wanted to be the star of the show and that neither was willing to bow into the wings. Betty was arguing that she had known Addie longer and that she should be the one to lead in singing "Happy Birthday." Helene insisted that she had known Addie more recently than Betty had. Finally, they agreed to let me do it since they might start the song too high for me.

As I parked my little VW at the curb in front of Addie's house, Betty and Helene were still quibbling over some minor detail concerning the party. Treating them like the little girls they were, I said, "Now, Girls, this may very well be the only birthday party Addie has ever had during her adult years since the people of Grimes have treated her like a second-class citizen. So let's not let pettiness ruin it for her." They took my remonstrance fairly

well, but I could see the beginning of a childish pout curling around Betty's lip. I wanted desperately to say, "Betty, can it! You're a grown woman. Why must you try to be a character like Addie? She's an original. She can't be duplicated." But what good would it do to tell a woman of her age something like that?

So I picked up the cake, the jar of punch, and the party ice and started toward the house. My Southern belles followed safely behind, free of any load. The sounds that came from the living room and the sight I viewed through the open drapes heightened the excitement of the evening. Addie was sitting at the piano playing "The Church in the Wildwood," and my little family was gathered around the piano singing at her direction. Her face was radiant; it was obvious that she was thoroughly enjoying her time with Laura, Steven, and the twins, Larry and Jennifer.

Betty rushed ahead of me and rang the doorbell three or four times. I had lost control. When Addie opened the main door, Betty started grabbing at the storm door trying to get it open. Addie seemed dismayed. When we finally got inside, Betty threw



Design By Mike Sigurdson

Illustration By Matt Heckman

herself upon the stunned, unsuspecting Addie and began singing in a shrill, almost macabre voice some childlike words of "Happy Birthday":

Happy Birthday to you!

Happy Birthday to you!

You act like a monkey,

And you smell like one, too!

Betty had evidently decided that she would be in charge. She undoubtedly missed her work in New York; she set about planning the party. She looked at Laura, whom she had never met, and said, "Now, Sug, you go into the kitchen and get the refreshments ready. Norwood, you carry them in there for her."

"Why don't we have some group singing? I'll play the piano."

By the time I arrived back to the living room, Betty had the children, Addie, and Helene playing charades. I stifled a devilish impulse to ask, "Bettykins, will you-ums let me play too?" I didn't have to ask; I was immediately drafted.

If it hadn't been for Helene, Addie's suggestion—"Why don't we have some group singing? I'll play the piano."—would have been brilliant.

But Helene countered, "No, I'll play." And that turned out to be a failure. Helene had once been told by a visiting singer at her church that there was nothing more commonplace than a pianist who played just what was written on a sheet of music. He had shown her how to add flourishes. So now Helene's playing was almost all flourishes—with little incidence of a discernible melody. Singing something even so simple as "Beautiful Dreamer" was difficult with Helene's accompaniment. But the important thing was that Addie was having fun; and, after all, who should be having fun?

Laura broke up the Hellenic flourishes with the announcement that she was ready to serve. By the time the ladies had dawdled over cake and punch and each ancient woman had told one girlhood story, the clock showed midnight. Although the next day was Saturday, I excused the Norwoods by saying that Steven and the twins needed to be put to bed.

With no little effort, I was able to conduct Helene and Betty home, grateful that the evening was over and that I would probably never have to endure another one like it since I now knew better than to let myself be vulnerable to that kind of thing again.

I was barely awake the next morning, and everyone else in my family was asleep, when the doorbell rang. When I opened the door, there stood Addie in her "uniform"—purple dress, pink slip showing, orange mules, and multi-colored kerchief. She was holding behind her a bouquet of field flowers. Although she was trying to look cheerful, I could tell that she had been crying.

In a cajoling tone intended to cheer her, I queried, "Well, Miss Addie Harp, to what can I attribute this pleasant Saturday visit?"

"Mr. Norwood—Doug—I felt that I should thank you for last night. Momma always said that a lady never made an unannounced visit without taking along a gift. I thought of pretty flowers, but I didn't have any; so I went across the street to the vacant lot and picked the best ones I could find. I hope you like them."

"Well, they look fine to me, Ma'am, but the best part is that you brought them."

Evidently not accustomed to male flattery, Addie muffled a sob and said, "I'm not myself today. I shouldn't have come over here at all."

"Of course you should have, Addie. What's the problem?"

"Oh, it's nothing new. It's this town and some of the people in it."

"What happened?"

"Well, Mr. Norwood—"

"Doug—"

"All right—Doug—last night was one of the happiest nights of my entire life—to think that someone was doing something nice for me and not expecting anything back from me."

"You've known?"

"Of course! I've known all these years. And then this morning, one of those people called to act snooty about my birthday party. How she knew, I don't know. It was probably that stupid Betty Hanks who told her."

I was glad that Addie's assessment of Betty jibed with mine. "Yes, who is the woman?"

"I won't—can't—tell, Doug, but she has a high position in this town; and she came from dirt! Her old daddy used to beg or steal or do anything to feed his family. She knows that I know that, so she's always taking it out on me. She did even when we were girls. She had a way of somehow turning her poverty into my richness and my richness into her poverty."

"Addie, I've heard the whole schmeer on you, but I think you're a great lady. And I've known you only a month."

Addie Harp, unaccustomed to any outsider's sincere kindness, sat in my house and wept. *

(DOUG LARSON is a *nom de plume* for a regular WESTVIEW contributor.)

Grandma Zacharias' Peppernuts

Grandma Marie Zacharias and her husband, Frank, formerly of Weatherford, lived the last few years of their lives at the Corn Home for the Aged. Before the move, Grandma Zach enjoyed sharing her peppernuts—especially at Christmastime. Ladies such as Grandma always took pride in the smallness of their peppernuts, some of which were no larger than large peas. Some ladies would painstakingly cut their peppernuts in perfect little circles using a sewing thimble for a cutter. Here's a recipe (sometimes called a **receipt**) for peppernuts (supplied by HELEN BROWN, retired chairperson of the SOSU Home Economics Department):

*3 cups sugar
1 cup oleo
4 eggs
1 cup milk
3 t. baking powder*

*a little salt
1 t. cinnamon
1 t. cloves
1 t. nutmeg
1 t. black pepper
3-4 cups flour to make very stiff dough*

Cream oleo and sugar until fluffy. Add eggs, one at a time, beating well. Add the milk. Sift the dry ingredients with spices and flour. Add half the amount of flour, mixing well. Add remaining flour and knead thoroughly. Store dough in tightly covered container in the refrigerator overnight or longer, which helps the dough to season and spices to blend. Roll dough into thin ropes and slice with sharp knife dipped in flour or cold water. Pieces should be about the size of a hazel nut. Place pieces separately on a greased baking sheet. Bake at 350-375 degrees for 7-10 minutes or until golden brown. Different degrees of browning change flavor and texture of peppernuts. *

DESIGN BY CYNDE ROOF

A REVIEW OF MATTHIAS SCHUBNELL'S
N. SCOTT MOMADAY

—By Dr. Leroy Thomas



The name N. Scott Momaday is well known in Western Oklahoma; therefore, Matthias Schubnell's **N. SCOTT MOMADAY: THE CULTURAL AND LITERARY BACKGROUND** (O.U. Press, 1986) will be of interest to WESTVIEW readers.

Schubnell is a native of Breisgau, West Germany; but he now lives in the United States. He earned a Ph.D. in American Studies from Oxford University.

In his study of Momaday, Schubnell concentrates on the complex literary and cultural influences that have shaped Momaday's works. Among the works reviewed are **HOUSE MADE OF DAWN**, **THE WAY TO RAINY MOUNTAIN**, and **THE NAMES: A MEMOIR**.

Early on, Momaday is quoted as saying that he is deeply aware of American folklore in his works. Schubnell's approach is sensitive and comprehensive—two characteristics that make the book one that's worth owning. The price is \$19.95; the book is available at the University of Oklahoma Press (1005 Asp Avenue; Norman, OK 73019-0445).

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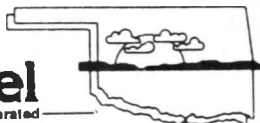


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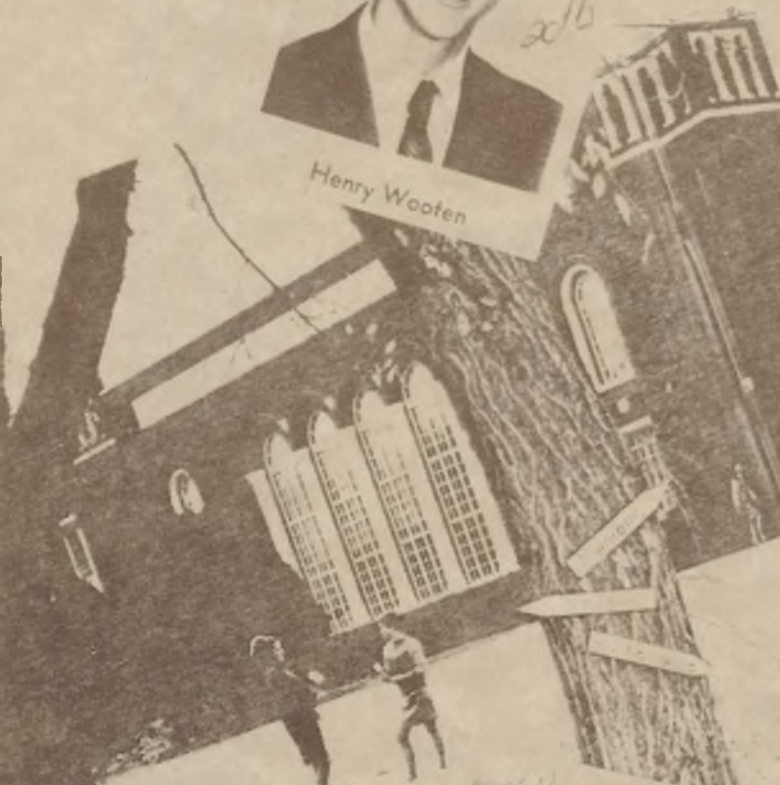


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