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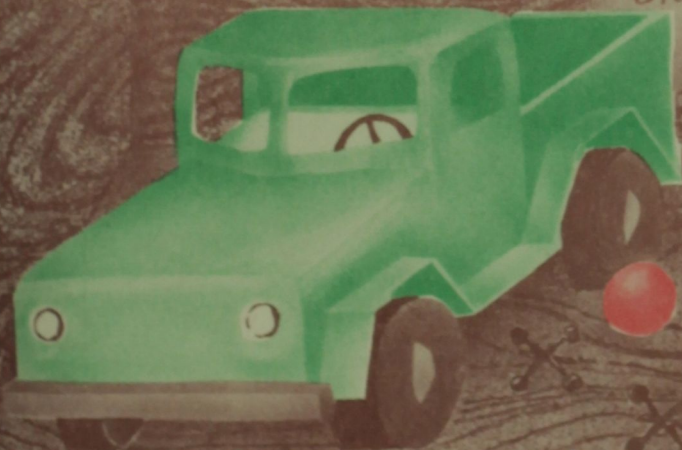
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*Western
Oklahoma's
Children*



FOREWORD

What can we say? For sure, the New Year's Resolutions couldn't have been in effect yet. Therefore, there were some typos in the Winter '89 issue that managed to slip by. The most upsetting ones were a instead of an before adobe (all of us know better) and the spelling artisian for artisan (after all, the issue was on artisans--not artisians!).

But that was last year. This is a new decade and a time for better things. Someone wise once said, "Most people are so concerned about themselves that they pay very little attention to others." Are we so naive that we think that no one else noticed our ten-or-more typos? It's something to hang hope on anyway. We resolve . . .

From the time it was announced, this issue, Western Oklahoma's Children (please don't let it come out childern), has been a popular one. With the exception of a few entries, all of the submissions are exactly on the topic.

Why? The main reason is that our free-lance writers responded and flooded our market with manuscripts.

As 1990 turns into 1991, 1992, and 1993, we hope that all of our themes will be equally as popular. It's pleasing to us that many of our writers this time are students and are WESTVIEW first-timers (with no lack of appreciation for our old-timers intended, of course).

We also hope that all of our readers and writers will enjoy their association with us during the nineties as we will enjoy ours with them.

Speaking of new directions, in our Summer, 1990 issue, we will introduce our new Art Director--Mr. Steven Cost. Suffice it to say for now that Mr. Cost is a Computer "whiz" who is sure to add an important dimension to our journal. Mr. J. Don Wood, whose contributions to WESTVIEW these past two years have been much appreciated, will help the new art director become accustomed to us.

Friendly-like,

Leroy Thomas
Leroy Thomas
Editor

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WESTVIEW
Table of Contents
Western Oklahoma's Children
Spring 1990

Volume 9

Number 3

FOREWORD	Leroy Thomas	1
-----------------------	--------------	---

FEATURE

Chasing Dreams (Book Review)	Leroy Thomas	3
------------------------------------	--------------	---

BASTIONS

Comrade, a Pony	Claris Robinson	2
Selected Poetry	Aaron A. Baker	5
After-Dinner Affliction	Margie Snowden North	7
A Teacher's Leaven	Dale W. Hill	4
Peeling Memories	Michelle Russell	10
My First Day at Prairie View	Inez Schneider Whitney	11
Gems from Cherubs	Opal Hartsell Brown	13

BOYHOOD

Incident at Simpson's Gulch	David Burlison	16
-----------------------------------	----------------	----

GIRLHOOD

Friends Forever	Marcia Trent	20
Law and Order Come to Prairie View	Inez Schneider Whitney	23
Succession	Margie Cooke Porteus	26
Summer in Exile	E. Ruth Ramsey	27

REFLECTIONS

Childhood	Leroy Thomas	30
To My Granddaughter	Margie Cooke Porteus	31
Two Thousand Miles from Home	George L. Hoffman	33
One Step from Childhood	Bill Males	34
Three Rewarding Years	Kate Jackson Lewis	36
A Child's Alphabet of Western Oklahoma	Pat Kourt	39

FEATURES

Future Issues	40
Westview Stylesheet	40

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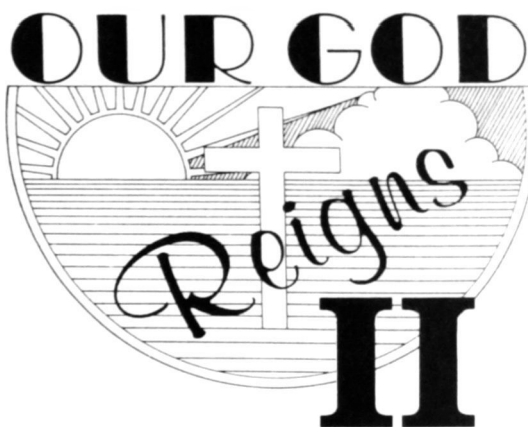
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CHASING DREAMS

Book Review
by Leroy Thomas

One of WESTVIEW's leading, most cherished contributors— Margie Snowden North of Erick— has endured and has been able to get a book published under contract with Evans Publications of Perkins, Oklahoma.

TO CHASE A DREAM, Margie's piece of autobiographical fiction about a family of tenant farmers, is set in Tecumseh first and then in Western Oklahoma— Erick— in the 1940's and 1950's. The family name used is Eason, but the plight of the Easons contains many thinly veiled references to the Snowdens, the author's family.

Publisher Bob Evans says, "It is the type of book to be read both with a smile and an occasional tear--tears of sadness and joy. Most of those who have worked with the manuscript say they are faced with a touch of *deja vu* as they relate so easily to the plight of the Eason family."

Those who are interested in superior writing and in Western Oklahoma nostalgia will do well to buy Margie Snowden North's TO CHASE A DREAM. For an autographed copy, send \$18.00 (\$14.95 plus tax and postage) to the author (Route 1, Box 87; Erick, OK 73645). It will be a wisely spent \$18.00.

COMRADE, A PONY

as told by Helena
Bergman Holliman to
Claris Robinson

The first prize for taking a newspaper subscription was a horse, saddle, bridle, buggy, and harness. I won second prize consisting of a Shetland pony, bridle, and saddle. I don't remember the name of the newspaper; I was nine years old and living in Minneola, Kansas.

Comrade, my pony, already had that name when I got him. He came in a crate in the baggage car on a passenger train from Minnesota. He had very long hair of a beautiful black color in the winter and very short hair in the summer.

I was born a mile north and one-fourth of a mile east of Korn (that's the way Corn was spelled then; it was changed when the United States entered World War I in 1916). When I was five years old, my family moved to Kansas in a covered wagon, and we lived in Western Kansas where my dad homesteaded. The closest town was Lakin, which had a post office and a grocery store. The largest town near us was Syracuse.

And in 1915, when I was eleven, my family wanted to move back to Oklahoma; in fact, my father wanted me to ride Comrade all the way into Oklahoma. When I got tired of riding my pony, I would ride for a while in the covered wagon. Now I wish I had stayed on Comrade so I could say, "I rode my Comrade all the way into Oklahoma!"

My father's name was Henry, and my uncle's name was Jake. Jake bought me a buggy. I had sent subscriptions from Kansas before I came to Oklahoma and the money to Jake. He bought me a small buggy and harness (he may have made the harness).

We lived just two miles from town. I would drive Comrade, leaving home about 8:00 and then paid to put my pony in a shed at the Clarks' place across from the school.

I would bring feed, hay or fodder, for Comrade and my lunch too. I would unharness my pony so he would be in a dry place and out of the wind, and I would put the buggy into the shed. When school was out, I would water and harness Comrade, hitch him to the buggy, and drive home.

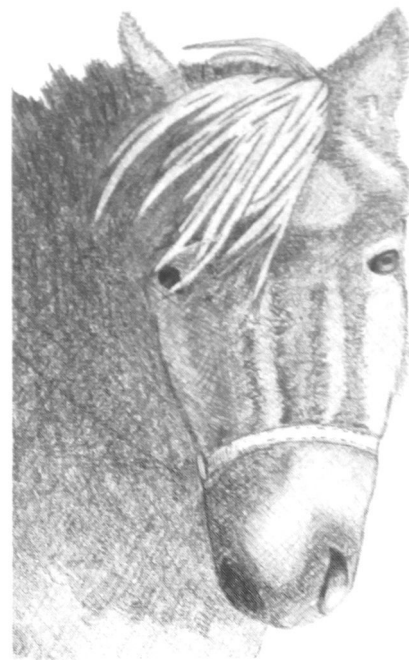
When I first started hitching Comrade to the buggy, he was afraid of cars; I would have to whip him to get him to pass the cars. But he soon got used to them.

Until I finished the eighth grade in 1919, I continued to ride in my buggy. Later, many classmates told me how envious they were of a little girl who had a beautiful Shetland pony to pull her carriage to school.

When the harvest hands were here, they would try to ride Comrade; but I was the only one whom Comrade would let ride him. He always bucked off other people, especially adults.

Those good days came to an end, however. We traded Comrade to Jake for a touring car. I didn't want to part with him. Later, Jake sold him but never could collect the money. So he took Comrade back and put him out to pasture, where he eventually died. ☹️

(CLARIS ROBINSON was born in Weatherford in 1906. It was at her family residence that Mrs. Holliman as a girl left Comrade during school hours. Mrs. Robinson has five children and seventeen grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Her interests are many: she's a writer, an artist, gardener, and a spectator at several Weatherford events, including SOSU theater productions.)



SELECTED POETRY

By Aaron A. Baker

A MOVIE IN OUR TOWN

The street lights made an amber glow
on old buildings on that last night
they made a movie in our town,
which they called Stony Flats,
and almost everybody on Main Street
was dressed like a pioneer.

Old kerosene lanterns and candles
shone in the doors and windows.
The town lawmen wore their bright stars,
and people on the sidewalks stepped
around the Comanches who had blankets
wrapped around their shoulders
as they sat flat on the ground

There were a wooden Indian and candy-colored
barber pole, and peanut vendors, and a little
crowd of boys and girls chasing one another
in the roped-off street while waiting
for the action to get underway.

Suddenly, a bright spotlight made
the children leave the street.
Then Rex Allen, the cowboy star,
came out of the darkness--and like
Will Rogers began to twirl a rope
into a large and larger circle. Now his girlfriend,
Clara Bow, stepped into the light, and Rex
circled her with his rope as she kissed
his horse, which had followed her.
The horse knelt in thanks, and everybody
and his dog clapped hands.
The director nearby hollered, "Cut!"
It was a sound picture and he didn't
want applause just yet.

My father thought the whole business of movies
was a fake--especially after he found out
much of this scenery was taken around Medicine
Park in the Wichita Mountains. And, believe
it or not, as far away as Turner Falls in the
Arbuckle Mountains. Rex Allen and
Clara Bow had spent a honeymoon there.

Or maybe that was Roy Rogers and Dale Evans?
Anyhow, sometimes when I see a full moon
over the prairie, I think of that old western movie
made PARTLY in my Oklahoma hometown.

HOW SUDDENLY AN OUTSIDER, RUNNING

Stark and blank
the old house
stands without doors or windows
letting the wind sweep through the empty
rooms.

A dog has left mud-caked tracks
across the front porch where he had
detoured during a sudden
spring shower running ahead of a quail hunter
with shotgun. My mother's ghost may have
chased the dog away with a broom as she stood
in the doorway.

All the other floors are swept clean
on this early, windy morning. I see my father
talking to strangers as
the old family farm fades away
like the end of a silent movie and the
red dirt country road can't take me away
fast enough to erase
childhood memories.

THE WINDMILL

I saw it in a lone windmill: Another time,
another place. The broken windmill stood on a
lonely horizon on a windswept prairie. The wind
used to turn the metal blades to lift the water to a
parched land and for drinking water for the
white-faced cattle and their owners and hired
cowboys; the cool, hard water almost just
dribbling at times into the metal stock tank at
the base of the windmill tower; sometimes the
water splashed over when full, making a little
oasis of green grass around the tank.

Sometimes ranch-hands, stripped to their bare
skins, would jump into the tank to bathe on
evenings after work, especially on Saturday. I
had never seen naked men before--white bodies,
brown faces from the sun. The windmill creaked
and groaned, and the men laughed and splashed
like little boys and threatened to throw me into
the water with my clothes on. I saw it today in a
lone windmill now broken

Another time, another place, and a small boy's
eyes.

BASTIONS

THE PROFESSOR

He gets his room and board at our house. There he is in deep study (For a moment you might think he's asleep.) His finger is following the last lines Of a page of poetry: His head bends close to the lines As the light is dim in the room. Perhaps he is reading of an adventure, Or an account of a love affair, Pondering a phrase, "Oh, God I love her." Dreaming of a personal experience In Oklahoma, absorbing a neat phrase-O- A warm word spoken by himself: Oblivious to the humdrum task of grading Papers, or of having to meet an eight o'clock Freshman English class in the morning.

THE TORNADO

This tornado . . .

I see it drop from the clouds while I am looking northwest toward Mount Scott in the Wichita Mountains. It, I mean the tornado, is a twisting white funnel, white because the sun came out behind it, as it moved across the plains toward our house. No birds are singing this April afternoon. The thunder has ceased as the tornado sweeps along destroying a vacant farm house, knocking a large cow pond completely dry: frightening horses in a pasture as I watch with my parents standing at the door of a storm cellar. Trees are uprooted in its path like spindle-sticks. A man comes along our road in an oilfield dray wagon, unhitches the big-footed team, and joins us at the cellar door. The tornado suddenly lifts as it turns north of us in a wheat field. There's a flash of lightning with the late sun still shining, and faraway we hear a calf bawling in the sudden, earthly stillness.

THE QUILTERS

It is a pretty quilt.

Clean. Framed. Little stars pieced together
With bits of colored cloth from dress scraps.

And the four women sitting at the quilting
frame,
Two on each side, making tiny hand-stitches,
And talking about friends and neighbors.

Occasionally, one of them gets up out of her
chair,

Walks over to get a drink of iced tea,
Then sits down again.

I see my mother with a thimble on her finger.
She squints as she threads a needle.
I remember Mom with her hands in the air.

WHEN I WAS LEARNING GEOGRAPHY



Time seemed endless, and the world appeared
cozy, as the lady teacher turned
the globe of the earth on her desk, asking
questions; and with the open windows, the
room smelled like April that day
when I learned geography in the seventh
grade.

I was the only boy in a class of girls, surrounded
by desks, maps, erasers, pencils, chalk. The
teacher pointed out places of green,
yellow, blue, and red--places in Europe.
The United States was a jigsaw puzzle of color.

Oklahoma was pink or pale red like
an Indian blanket, and water on the globe was
always

blue. Sometimes the girls laughed when
there were dumb answers given the teacher.

Yes, the buds had burst in the trees outside,
and I didn't know where in Africa
that the children were slaves, or why a president
was dying in North America, or cared
much,
as a little girlfriend passed me notes. Her eyes
were deeper than the color of oceans
and her hair was a rich blond like Idaho, or
the Gobi Desert.

Suddenly, everybody was looking
at me, for the teacher was asking me a question,
which I had her repeat, about the Bering
Strait and the

Little Diomed Island or something,
and the girls giggled, except my little Marie.
The teacher had seen her pass a note, which I
slipped

into my mouth, and chewed up the secret
quickly. I blushed with the good feeling of an
international

spy destroying the evidence, and was saved
by the school bell, though there was a formal
scolding later,

on that day I was learning geography--
along with the first pangs of love, when I was in
the seventh grade.

GRAND DADDY FISH

A memory I have of being eleven is following the footsteps of Old Les as he carries a mammoth catfish, which bumps against his legs, as he trudges down the railroad tracks on a shortcut for home.

I heard them call Old Les a simple man. He was getting along in years--about 49, and lived with his brother's family after his mother and father died. They were good friends of my parents. We often went fishing together. Old Les had been trying to catch the grand daddy of all the catfish, he said, that summer in the lake above Eagle Creek.

Now he had the stinking old king of a fish, and it weighed him down like a sack of gold or potatoes. It was a king and Old Les the slave. I lagged along away behind that August day, knowing that my friend would get his picture taken with the fish probably in THE CLINTON DAILY NEWS, and maybe even THE SUNDAY OKLAHOMAN, and some would say a simple fisherman outwitted a lot of wiser anglers.

I was proud of my friend, except this trip meant that summer was over, and school awaited anybody who was eleven "Hey, kid, come on!" Old Les called, "You and me, we did it!" I shouldered my fishing pole and stepped up my pace. It kind of made me feel grown-up and important. 🐾

(AARON BAKER, although he has been a frequent WESTVIEW contributor, ceased writing for a time because of the serious illness and subsequent death of his wife. He is a poet and a retired teacher and newspaper editor. He is a graduate of OU, where he was influenced by the late Dr. E. E. Dale--noted Oklahoma historian and poet--and by Weatherford native Dr. Walter Campbell [Stanley Vestal, English professor who wrote about the Old West]. Aaron has written two books of poetry--MAKE ROOM FOR THE INTRUDER and SOMETHING WILL COME TO YOU--and is currently working on another. Although he is now living in Shreveport, Louisiana, he remembers with much nostalgia his growing up in Southwestern Oklahoma.)

AFTER-DINNER AFFLICTION

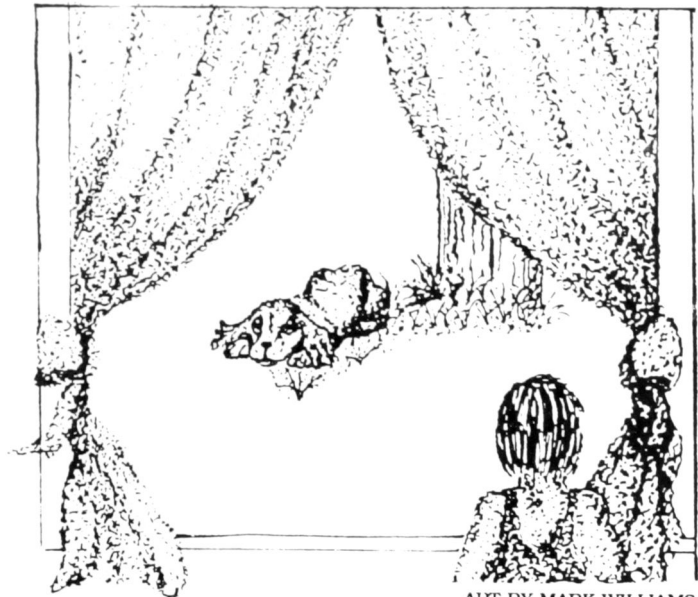
By Margie Snowden North

Ole Rattler was lazy,
as dogs are in the swelter of summer,
and he spent his days stretched comfortably
under the Paradise tree by the house.

Mama, little Ransom said,
how come Ole Rattler lays around so much?
Oh, guess he's got spring fever, son.

Papa in the fields since sun-up
comes into a dinner fit for a king:
beans and cornbread and chow-chow,
a big slice of onion, a quart jar of iced tea.
Stretched out on the floor afterward
without his shirt he goes sound asleep.
Mama keeps the flies shooed off
and listens to Hank Williams
singing blue love-songs on the radio.

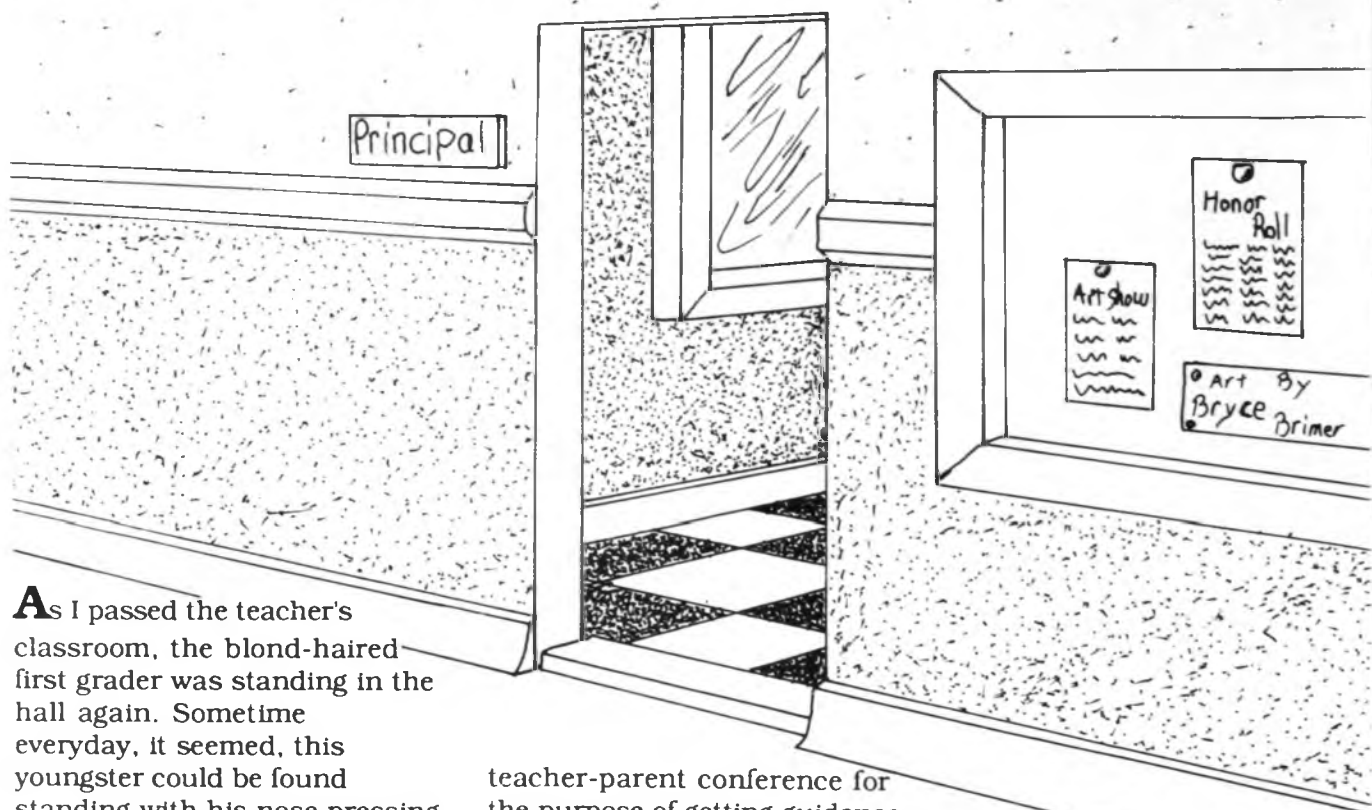
Mama, little Ransom asks, pondering,
How come Papa lays down so much?
Does he have spring fever
too? 🐾



ART BY MARK WILLIAMS

(MARGIE SNOWDEN NORTH of Erick is a loyal WESTVIEW contributor. Her novel, TO CHASE A DREAM, which deals with the same Western Oklahoma setting as this poem, is available from the author: Route 1, Box 87; Erick, OK 73645.)

A TEACHER'S LEAVEN



As I passed the teacher's classroom, the blond-haired first grader was standing in the hall again. Sometime everyday, it seemed, this youngster could be found standing with his nose pressing against a nonexistent spot just outside his classroom; and the school year had just barely begun. I cringed.

Public-school teachers teach children--not just the academically ready child or just the student whose parents can pay, but every child who meets enrollment criteria. That's the beauty of public education for America's children. Teachers are expected to produce results, too--even when the student may not be capable of keeping up with his classmates.

The student in the hall was one of the difficult ones. His parents would never attend a

teacher-parent conference for the purpose of getting guidance for the child; thus, a free public education was the only hope for the boy to be able to discover at a young age the joys of literacy.

Poor social skills, poor academic skills, and poor developmental readiness characterized this difficult first grader. His parents were functionally illiterate and had moved to the Anadarko Basin, lured by the big money that could be made from the deep, rich gas fields beneath the Western Oklahoma location. During the Boom, there were times that we could spot five to ten working rigs in any direction almost any place we stood in Caddo County.

As I stopped to talk with the youngster, the teacher stepped outside the door and pulled me aside.

"He's terrible today," the teacher whispered. "His clothes are slept in, his hair is uncombed, and he's emotionally not ready for class this morning. He's had my class in turmoil ever since he walked through the door. Will you take him to the bathroom and spruce him up a bit and see if you can settle him down?" With twenty-four other six-year-olds, her class was cramped to overflowing caused by the natural gas bonanza.

Therefore, one difficult student could alter a teacher's daily lesson plan -- as well as her psyche--appreciably.

The teacher, a veteran of the classroom, who had no children of her own, adopted every child in her room. Approaching instruction with a missionary zeal, this educator didn't need formal, Biblical in-class instruction to spread God's message of acceptance; nor would this professional ever consider pushing her specific Biblical interpretations onto her students. Every child assigned to her class was loved and respected while her church activities played an important, albeit extra-curricular role, in the community.

A comb and a wet paper towel did wonders for the youngster's disposition. We wiped away last night's sleep as well as a this morning's breakfast, and combed the rats from unruly hair. Having a clean face seemed to wash away some of his nasty demeanor.

"I didn't have time to wash my face this morning. Daddy worked 'til late on the rig, and we stayed up to meet him," the lad explained. "I almost missed the bus."

As we left the restroom sinks to go to my office, I couldn't help but admire the child's enthusiasm. Once inside, I discovered that this first grader had mastered few if any of the pre-requisite kindergarten skills. No wonder the struggle in First Grade.

"I can't write my name," he apologized and then refused to draw a happy face on the chalkboard.

"What can you draw?" I asked as I forcibly handed the reluctant boy a piece of chalk.

The labored efforts of the

first grader to draw were obvious. Most six-year-olds could draw and cut with little difficulty, but not this young man. His scribbles were reduced to a mishmash of unsuccessful attempts to reproduce on the chalkboard what my client saw in his mind.

How can a child be expected to achieve in a classroom when he has few if any related experiences at home? Paper, pencil, and reading were obviously foreign to this little one's home environment. Maybe television had taken its toll, or maybe the constant moving, or just the struggle of familial survival in a tough world had robbed this youngster of [pre-academic] experiences so vital for his elementary success.

With a sticker and a pat on the back, the broad-shouldered student expressed to me a determination to stay in his classroom the rest of the day. And I too shared the student's excitement as I escorted him to his room.

"I don't know how I'm going to make it through the year with this child. I've never disliked any of my students before, but this one is a close first," the teacher whispered as the youngster found his seat. With the sprucing up, the youngster at least looked better, and the teacher was appreciative.


I checked the hallway several times that day but didn't see the troubled child. The next day, though, would be a new day. The lad could just as easily begin any tomorrow as he had this day. As the bell rang and hundreds of students excitedly exited to their buses, the boy's teacher stopped me in the hall.

"I've decided to really think about that boy tonight and find something good about him. If I can't find something good about him soon, we won't make it through the rest of the year," the boy's mentor expressed.

I marvelled as I watched the teacher ready her classroom for the next day. Elementary teachers play an integral part of every student's success but are often forgotten as the youngsters grow older and experience other teachers who seem to play a more significant role in their lives. I couldn't help but wonder what the morrow would bring.

The next morning, I found the teacher as she prepared the morning lunch count.

"I'm ready for my difficult child this morning," the teacher smiled. "Last night I realized how cute this little boy is and how much I appreciate his obvious enthusiasm even though it's generally misdirected. We'll make it through the year," she said with determination.

I felt good--no better--as I left the room that day. Every school day, public education offers non-readers a chance to read, the downtrodden a chance to rise up, and the unaccepted a chance at acceptance. As I think back about that experience, I know that teacher isn't unique--not in America. 

(DALE W. HILL of Washita is becoming one of our regular contributors. An Elementary Counselor for the Anadarko Schools, he earned a Bachelor's degree at OU and a Master's degree at Hays State University. For avocation, he has taught guitar at a vo tech school the past twelve years.)

BASTIONS

They sit
rocking,
thinking,
silently
on the front porch.

The wood floor beneath them
creaks
with each rock back they make.

"Hand me my specs, dear,"
says Grandma.
"I wanna finish my embroidrian."

The fall leaves rustle crisply in the wind
that blows back the air on my face.

"Gonna be bad weather,"
says Grandpa,
"The cows' hair thick, thickest I've ever seen it in a long while.
The corn, it's got heavy silks. Yup, it's gonna be a bad one."

We smile
thinking
they are so content in their old ways.
I wish I could stay forever.
I'd stay forever.
Everything is so peaceful,
so calm,
so quiet.
The farm is wonderful.
The old rusted tractor sits in the field
over there.
It's hard to see with all the weeds around it.
But I know where it is--
Grandpa showed me.

The white, cracked, peeling fence that guards the house that is in
the same condition gives you a sense of security.
It all fits, though.
It's just right.
Grandma and Grandpa's is--
just right.

We leave.

Next week I call.
I have to thank Grandpa for the sled.
I played all day,
in the worst snowstorm ever.

*(MICHELLE RUSSELL of Cordell is a senior at SOSU majoring in
Elementary Education. "Peeling Memories" is her first published work. Her
grandparents' farm is located just west of Bessie, Oklahoma.)*

PEELING MEMORIES

By Michelle Russell

MY FIRST DAY AT PRAIRIE VIEW

By Inez Schneider Whitney

My introduction to formal education was my first day at Prairie View, District 56, a one-room school in Western Oklahoma near present-day Custer City. Holding tightly to Papa's hand, I walked beside him down the dusty road. Mama had combed my red hair in two long braids, put on my hair ribbons, and tied my best sunbonnet under my chin. I was proud of the new percale print dress that Mama had just finished the day before.

Prairie View stood on the corner of Papa's farm a short distance down the road. It was September, 1912. I had just turned six. The thought of being away from home frightened me.

"Don't make me go to school," I had kept telling Papa. "Oh, you'll like it," he would say. "A lot of your friends will be there."

The playground was crowded. Boys and girls ranging in age from six to their late teens were

racing everywhere. Like me, all of them were barefoot. When the weather began to get cold, everyone would start wearing shoes. Money was scarce, and letting their children go barefoot was one way for the parents to economize. Like me, the other girls had on homemade dresses and sunbonnets, and the boys wore blue bib overalls and wide-brimmed straw hats.

Some of the older boys had tied a rope to the seat of the broken

recitation bench and were pulling it around and around in a circle. They were yelling, "Who wants the next ride?"

"Don't you want a ride?" someone called to me. "No," I said and held Papa's hand all the tighter. "Oh, look; there's Renie," Papa said and pointed to Lorene Buntley, a neighbor girl I often visited.

She came running over to us and grabbing my hand said, "Come on, Inez. Let's play tag."

Off we went. "Oh what fun," I thought. I forgot



ART BY KATHY SCHMIDT

"Money was scarce, and letting their children go barefoot was one way for the parents to economize."

"She lifted me onto her lap and started picking the sandburrs out of my feet."

all about Papa; and a little later when I went to look for him he was gone.

"Renie, I don't see Papa," I sobbed. "Don't cry. He's probably gone home. Big people don't go to school. Listen! Mr. Varner's ringing the bell. We have to line up and go inside."

What else could I do? In we went, and Renie found a small double desk near the front of the room.

"See. We'll be seatmates," she said. I don't remember much about that morning except I thought it would never end. As Papa and I left, Mama had said, "We live so close, you can come home for your lunch." That had helped persuade me to go.

Finally, noontime came. When we were dismissed, I started running right down through the field. What a terrible time I had! The sandburrs stuck in my bare feet. How they hurt! Then I kept tripping over the cornstalks and falling down. Mama heard me crying long before I reached home; she came to meet me.

"What a sight you are! You're all dusty and so dirty!" She lifted me onto her lap and started picking the sandburrs out of my feet.

"Why did you come through the field? Why didn't you go out and come down the road?"

"I didn't think about it," I said. She cleaned me up, gave me lunch, and then walked me back to school.

"Now," she admonished, "this afternoon, come down the road. You can walk with Opal Tennison."

That afternoon I reached home safely. A few days later I asked, "Mama, will you fix my lunch in syrup bucket like Renie's mama does? Then I can stay all day and have fun playing at noon."

That's what she did, and from that time on I spent all day at Prairie View.

So I had my introduction to many years of educational efforts at Prairie View, District 56, which will always be a vivid memory for me. ❧

(INEZ SCHNEIDER WHITNEY--now of Arlington, Virginia, and formerly of Custer City--is in her eighty-third year on earth and in her tenth year as a loyal supporter of the WESTVIEW effort.)

GEMS FROM CHERUBS

By Opal Hartsell Brown

PREFACE

"Gems from Cherubs" is Chapter 8 from a book-length manuscript, *THE CHALLENGING 5'S TO 50'S--AND POLITICS*, which covers my forty-year career (mostly teaching). This chapter begins in January, 1947, at Emerson Elementary School, Lawton, and extends to 1962. At that time, I switched to junior high and then to high school.

Interspersed between junior high and high school are chapters on moonlighting at the Army Education Center, Fort Sill. Earlier chapters are on prior work. *AND NOW THE CHAPTER...*

I was supervising the playground at Emerson when a first grade boy dashed up and tugged at my skirt. "Come quick, Teacher!" he panted. "A boy over there is taking God's name insane!"

I burst into laughter. Little folk were forever spouting gems of naivete, simplicity and misapplication, yet appropriate enough to remember. Movie makers were missing choice lines--even scenes--by not focusing on the nation's schools. Events were challenging, even when not funny or inspiring.

A few days before, for instance, Louise Scott, first-grade teacher, was discussing titles of school personnel. Every child understood Mr. Howeth, the custodian, was a man, but Mrs. and Miss puzzled them. Scott wrote the two words on the board.

"Now, Mrs. Brown, the second-grade teacher, and I are M-r-s." she pointed and spelled. "The principal



ART BY LEIGHA HELT

is Miss Collins, M-i-s-s. What is the difference?"

"I know! I know!" Rodney volunteered, waving his hand. "All right, Rodney," Scott said, "tell us." "Well," he hummed, "Miss Collins is a lady. You and Miz Brown ain't."

My children were reading silently the story of big strong "Katy Kangaroo." When they finished, I asked Tommy what he remembered about Katy.

"She was a lady kangaroo," he answered. "All right," I said. "What else?" "She had a little boy." "Yes," I nodded. "Describe her, as if she were a man." Tommy ducked his head. "She wasn't married." My delight in children's witticisms was so infectious that other teachers shared their students' gems with me, which led to a column in the school newsletter. Orvella Littlefield told of watering her house plants on the window sill, while Danny and Eddie watched.

"That one is about dead," Eddie observed. "Yes, Eddie," Littlefield agreed. "It has lived its life and is ready to die."

Danny stepped nearer. "Why don't you pray for it, Miz Littlefield?" he asked.

October 12, special recognition was being given Columbus for his

discovery of America. "I don't see what's so great about that," Steve commented. "If he hadn't, somebody else would have."

Janie, age seven, was reporting on her trip through the Crazy House at the fair. "And when the whistle blew," she giggled, "my aunt's dress tail flew over her head. But mine didn't. I had on jeans 'cause I'm proud."

A first-grade class was reading about cotton. "You know how my uncle gets cotton," Leland asked.

"How?" another student asked. "He gives his sheep a haircut; then he gets cotton." Nine-year-old Kathy was walking across the street with her mother, Rosemary Kane, a teacher, when she noticed a sign: "Look out for pedestrians."

Kathy looked up at her mother. "Why do they want us to look out for Presbyterians?" she asked.

Fay Click's's first graders brought pictures of objects beginning with H. Dewayne's pictures were a hill, a horse, a head of hair, and some soldiers crawling from a trench. Click studied the soldiers for a moment and then said, "Good, Dewayne. You thought of the helmets, didn't you?"

"No," Dewayne frowned. "That's to hell and back." A first-grade boy

BASTIONS

in Bea Hoover's room approached a girl on the playground. "Will you marry me?" he asked.

The girl pursed her mouth and said, "No, I won't marry you." "Well," the boy said, skipping away, "that's one more out of my system."

Jesse, an Indian boy in my primary music class, asked to be moved. "Why do you want to move?" I asked.

"I can't sing by Tod." "Why not?" "He gets me off. He's singing dark." Tod sang off-key, once tagged monotone. Near Christmas, Virginia Siering closed the BIBLE STORY to question students. "Now, who remembers what the wise men brought to Baby Jesus?"

Jerry raised his hand. "Gold, Frankenstein, and myrrh," he said and reared back proudly.

On another occasion, Jerry grasped Siering's hand. "Did you see the ring I give Wanda?" he asked. "Me and her's goin' to get married."

"You mean I gave Wanda," Siering corrected, "and she and I are going to get married."

Jerry repeated correctly, "I gave Wanda. She and I are going to get married."

"That's better," Siering said, "but you and Wanda are going to have to do your courting away from school."

"Courting?" Jerry asked. "What's courting?" Glendell, who was listening nearby, guffawed, "Goll-ll-lee. You in the second grade and don't know what courting is?"

My students were discussing problems of the handicapped. "If blind people can't see," I asked, "how do they read?" "I know, I know!" Jack sputtered. "Their books have bumps on them."

The spelling lesson had the word kill in it. "Kill," Paul repeated. "That's easy. . . d-e-a-d."

Paul had a habit of yelling, "What page?" every time his group gathered for recitation. He never listened when I announced it.

Neither did he look at the board, where it was written. One day I kept him in at recess.

"You stand here," I said, indicating the blackboard, "and say what page until we come back inside. Maybe that will remind you to pay closer attention."

I left and in a few moments looked in at a window. Paul was chanting, "What page, what page, what page. . ." I smiled and walked away.

Paul refrained from yelling What page several days; then habit overcame discipline. He sat down in the reading circle and began flipping through the book. "What page?" he yelled, then gasped, slapped his hand over his mouth, and looked guilty. I clenched my teeth, tightened my lips, and pretended not to hear.

Joanne's mother wrote a note about the child's absence. "A swing in the park hit her on the head, requiring a shot and three stitches on her ear."

Thinking that Joanne would like to talk about her experience during SHOW AND TELL, I asked, "Joanne,

"What makes thunder?" Pat asked. "It's God," Tommy said, "dragging a heavy load across the sky."

what bad thing happened to you this week?"

"My daddy had to go to France," she said. "I didn't know that," I sympathized. "I'm sorry. What else happened to you?"

"My mother came home with a new baby." "I'd think that would be good," I said. Frowning, Joanne glared at me, and I called on another student.

Melody was engrossed in an encyclopedia. "Mrs. Brown," she called, "is a whale a mammal?"

"Yes," I answered. Melody turned the encyclopedia upside down. "I don't see how it can be," she said. "I can't find its milker."

A third-grade music class was studying composers. "Jimmy," Mrs. Southern asked, "what have you learned about Haydn?"

"I remember he wrote 104 sympathies," Jimmy replied.

The words girl and girls were on a second-grade spelling lesson. A small boy from across the tracks wrote gal and gals.

Every child knew "Mary's Little Lamb," but Mamie Giles' first grade at Will Rogers met its cousin. Settled for a morning of work, the children were divided into three groups: two busy at their desks and one in a reading circle up front.

Suddenly, someone shouted, "A billy goat! A billy goat!" Children jumped into their chairs; others got under tables.

A few brave ones started toward the goat. The disturbance drew other classes into the hall.

By then, Mamie was weaving toward the animal, swishing the tail of her dress, as if she were shooin' chickens. The custodian appeared, grabbed the goat's tail and ordered him to "hoof it away from here!" The children had big news when they arrived home that evening.

My class was reading about skyscrapers, far from Lawton's three- and four-storied buildings.

"What's a skyscraper?" one of them asked.

"It's what they use to clean the sky," Charles blurted. "You're dumb," Sherry said in disgust. "No," I interceded, "just mistaken. If you know, Sherry, tell him."

She did, and then the discussion changed to thunder. "What makes thunder?" Pat asked. "It's God," Tommy said, "dragging a heavy load across the sky."

The science lesson was "How Animal Mothers Protect Their Young." Choosing an animal in the picture, I asked Mike, "How does a skunk protect her young?"

Mike ducked his head and looked up from beneath his brows.

Well, when anything gets near the babies, she sprays it with disinfectant perfume."

George volunteered, "She goes to the bathroom on it." Victor, Aline Lowry's third-grade boy, was talking across the aisle to Rosemary.

"Victor," Lowry said, "do you need some help?"

"No," Victor answered. "Then get your work finished," Lowry said; "it's almost recess."

In a few minutes, Victor was talking again. "What do you want?" Lowry asked.

"I want Rosemary to go to the show with me," he answered.

"Aren't you a little young," Lowry asked, "to be making a date with a girl?"

Victor leaned forward and scowled, "Well, I'm nine!" At Roosevelt School, a first-grade patron approached speech therapist Clarice McMillion on the playground and asked, "Can you direct me to Mrs. Sheep?"

Puzzled, McMillion answered, "We don't have a Mrs. Sheep here."

"Oh yes," the man insisted; "she's my child's teacher."

"We have a Mrs. Lamb," McMillion told him. The man blushed, then grinned. "That's probably it," he said. "Jackie must have got the name confused."

Seven-year-old Jerry was playing Mr. McGregor in the story "Peter Rabbit." His only dialogue was, "Stop, Thief!"

Dressed in overalls and a straw hat, Jerry came on stage to hoe his "garden," which was rows of little girls hunkered on the stage and wearing fluffy, green-crepe-paper dresses. Timothy, in a white suit that had long, floppy ears, was the rabbit. He nibbled at a cabbage. Jerry raised his hoe and then looked out into the auditorium filled with students, teachers, and patrons. He froze.

The rabbit continued to hop and nibble. Jerry looked at his teacher

in an opening of the curtain. She nodded, smiled, and whispered, "Stop, Thief!"

He frowned and turned his head sideways for her to repeat. She motioned for him to go ahead. He raised his hoe and started after the rabbit. They raced across the stage several times, and then Jerry's hat fell off. When he stopped to pick it up, the rabbit disappeared behind the curtain.

Jerry threw his hoe at the place the rabbit had disappeared, shook his fist, and shouted, "I'll get you next time, you robber!"

The audience exploded with applause and laughter. After the program, Eva Seigler complimented Jerry on his performance. "Over at that other school," he beamed, "I played Dopey in SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN MIDGETS!"

One day, when I was not on duty at recess, I sat at my desk grading papers. Ronald and Tommy dashed in. "You know what Tommy just said?" Ronald asked.

"No," I answered. "What did Tommy say?" "He said he's going to marry you." "She's my pal," Tommy laughed in spite of his blush.

"Tommy had better wait," I suggested, "and marry my daughter."

His gray eyes negated the idea. "You don't have a daughter."

"Maybe I'll adopt one," I said, "just for you." Tommy kissed my hand, and the boys skipped out. Sometimes, little folk spat gems, which didn't mold into anecdotes. Examples: If a hen isn't married, she won't lay. A date cake is a cake you take on a date. Is it against the law to kiss a girl? How does nature know how to give some people one child and some eight or ten?

I had amonia last night, and if I go out in the cold today, I'll get amonia again.

Linda is better. She let her fever down last night.

I'm bleeding. I'm not

minstrating. I just cut myself.

My mother doesn't work. She's just a plain woman.

If chickens don't have hair, why do they have combs?

I put my money from the tooth fairy in the plate at church. I thought Jesus needed it.

That bird is cackling.

There's a gorilla in my apple.

Rain comes out of the clouds when it knocks on their doors.

You hear thunder when the clouds run into something. It lightens when God strikes a match.

Will you enroll me out?

Don't have a fight with Friday.

I picked eggs on the farm and got cackleburs in my hair.

She's wearing a skinny (checked) plaid dress.

To stop a fight, just shout, "At ease! Crime doesn't pay!"

I was tardy because I had to get a hairshot.

I'm one-fourteenth Cherokee. I'm about a pint Indian blood.

He undigged a hole.

Was that a missnake?

If just one of the Chinese brothers took the whole ocean in his mouth, looks like he'd pee the bed.

I ain't learned my bowels (vowels) yet.

Dale can't write. His paper's too tough. (His pencil had hard lead.)


D is for Danny, Daddy, dog, and damn.

When I say my ses plain, a whistle comes out.

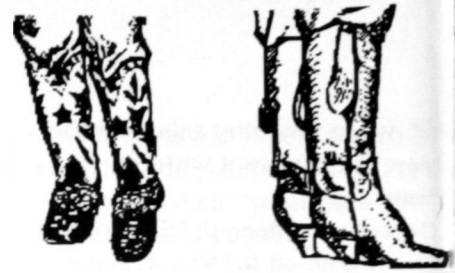
Hey, Sarah, quick up your reading. He didn't drop off his reading when he came to that cliff (period).

I'm sick. I swallowed up my breakfast.

When my daddy snores, he sounds like a lawn mower.

I went to the country, and guess what I saw--a calf gnawing (sucking) on a cow. 

(OPAL HARTSELL BROWN now lives and writes near Davis and continues to serve as encouragement to all other writers with whom she has communication.)



INCIDENT AT SIMPSON'S GULCH

BY DAVID BURLISON

A frigid northern wind blew frozen raindrops against Allan's window as he put on his riding jacket and searched hurriedly in the cold darkness for his leather gloves. He opened the door on the cast-iron stove to warm his hands, but only a flicker of a flame remained; so he placed several pieces of kindling into the belly of the stove and blew gently into the coals. The wood ignited, and he warmed himself.

From the warm glow of the fire, Allan found his gloves, food pack, and western boots. He knew from last night's weather report on the shortwave radio that an unexpected arctic cold front could reach Independence Pass by noon today; and from the sound of the frozen moisture tapping steadily at his window, he realized that it had arrived hours early.

As he tugged at his boots to pull them on, Allan thought of how his father normally supervised the cattle drive from the meadow in the high country to the warmer winter pastures in the valleys below Nelson's Peak; but unexpectedly, he had become ill with appendicitis. Allan knew the importance of moving the cattle from the mountain ranges soon--they could never survive a blizzard in the high country. In order to save the herd, Allan had volunteered to drive the cattle himself.

Allan pushed open the door and hunched forward as the sting from the intense cold



wind pierced his face. While saddling his sorrel gelding, Mike, he contemplated the consequences of not making it past Simpson's Gulch before the storm covered it with ice and snow. As a boy, he had heard men--seasoned men--talk of fierce winter storms that showed no mercy to the men or animals caught in their lethal grasp.

The sorrel bowed his back as Allan tightened the cinch up on the saddle and placed his weight into the stirrup. Nudging Mike forward toward the twenty-five head of steers, he shouted, "Move your hairy carcasses before we are all snowed in." Allan made his first cattle drive when he was six years old, and he had made ten since then. So he knew the trail, but he had never traveled it covered with snow and never without his father.

As the sun's glow shone through the metallic glaze, Allan pondered the ironic beauty of such a treacherous storm. Majestic white pines bent meekly as thousands of ice pellets blanketed their limbs. Because of the snow and sleet, the cattle slipped, and one fell down the icy slope.

"We must make it past Simpson's Gulch before the south slope becomes completely covered with ice," Allan said as he patted Mike's neck. Allan had overheard men grumble about the south slope that overlooked the gulch. He remembered what old Fred Picker once said, "Yes sir, I near lost my life on that there slope moving a mule train, and I did lose my saddle horse. Fell

clear to the bottom. Never did get my saddle back. That ravine's just a mite too deep for a man to wrestle out of."

The long shadows of morning shortened as the sun rose higher in the cloud-filled sky. "Mike, just a little farther, old boy," Allan said as he dismounted; Mike nuzzled Allan's side coat pocket searching for sugar cubes. Allan took off his glove and placed two squares of sweetness in his hand, and Mike devoured the cubes as he stomped back and forth. "This is it, Mike," Allan said while he studied the light reflecting off the icy slope. He planned every move. He decided to take the cattle down the west end of the slope. The trail was more narrow, but the outstretched limbs of an aspen grove kept the ice from accumulating on the trail. Allan mounted Mike and attempted to drive the lead steer down the steep trail, but the steer bolted to the left. Mike lunged forward and cut the steer back toward the trail. Allan positioned Mike on the left side of the steer. On the right side of the maverick, there was only a steep cliff. The steer bellowed in protest but sauntered down the slippery trail. After circling to the back of her, Allan began to push the rest of the cattle down the rocky path.

The aspens screeched as the wind blew their heavy, ice-laden limbs. Suddenly an ice-encumbered branch made a thunderous crash onto the trail directly in front of Mike. Spooked, Mike leapt sideways sending Allan tumbling



BOYHOOD

downward onto the ledge. As Allan landed, he grasped for a hand hold--anything to stop his downward slide. The slick ice-covered trail provided no hand holds, but Allan's right foot caught on a sandstone rock, stopping his fall to certain harm. Allan listened nervously as rocks separated from the bottom of his foothold and crashed on the snow-covered rocks below. He listened nervously as rocks separated from the bottom of his foothold and crashed on the snow-covered rocks below. Allan attempted to pull himself up onto the trail; but without a sturdy handhold, it appeared useless.

The sun began to sink slowly behind the ridge; and across the gulch, he could see the warm glow from a light in the Ranger Station. As Allan thought of the warmth and safety that was

only a short distance away, his hands began to ache with numbness from the intense cold.

He knew he must climb out before he froze or slipped to his death. In desperation, he called out to Mike, "Here boy--come here, boy." He tried to talk Mike over to the edge so he could grab onto his bridle and pull himself to safety. But Mike looked puzzled and didn't move. Allan reached into his coat pocket and pulled out his last two cubes of sugar. "Come here, boy. I have some sugar for ya. Easy, boy. That's it--reach out." Mike stretched out his neck and nibbled at the sugar cubes. Allan quickly grabbed for the bridle and startled Mike. Mike attempted to dart backward, but Allan's weight prevented him from moving. "Easy--whoa, boy," Allan said, trying to calm Mike. "Back,

back -that's it, boy. pull me up. Only a little farther," Allan said calmly. He reached solid footing once more.

Allan decided to walk to the Ranger Station instead of riding because his legs ached from the cold, and he felt that

Mike deserved a rest. He had earned it. The cattle had tramped their way down, down to safety and feed at the Ranger Station. As Allan entered the yard at the Ranger's Station, he could smell fresh coffee; that meant warmth, safety. ☺☺

(DAVID BURLISON, a former SOSU English major from Tecumseh, now lives in Moore where he works as a professional photographer and free-lance writer. This story about Allan is his second work published in WESTVIEW).

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The doorbell rang tonight. It would have been a normal occurrence if someone had been there. No one was; there wasn't anyone hiding in the bushes either. I felt as if only one person could have been there--one person, Amy, who would know that I would recognize her presence, dead or alive. She was my best friend who had been dead for nine years. As I tried to concentrate on my homework, my thoughts kept drifting back to her.

I met Amy in the second grade, thanks to my other best friend Melissa. The three of us were soon inseparable. We were together so much of the time that people began to think we were sisters. We weren't, of course; our coloring was too

that they just wanted to keep us apart so that we couldn't cause any more trouble. The next thing we knew, Amy started chemotherapy and radiation treatments. The three of us were walking home from school one day when the startling announcement was made.

"Guess what, guys!" Amy's blue eyes sparkled with excitement.

"You're going to Europe for the summer!" Melissa squealed. She was the dreamer of the group.

"No, not quite. Kayla, it's your turn," Amy laughed. "The cancer is gone! Wait, fat chance, right? Let me see."

Ashley is going to boarding school!"

"Now look who the dreamer is," Melissa intoned. I ignored her.

"Ashley is only four years old! Try to be serious, Kayla." Amy wasn't one to be serious. I just looked at her and shook my head, having a hard time believing that statement.

"Do you two give up since you'll never figure it out anyway? Good! I'll tell you my news."

Melissa and I looked at each other, rolled our eyes, looked back to Amy, and smiled. She was looking at us disappointingly.

"Now if you're through acting like children, take a look at this." The next thing we knew, Amy reached up to pull her long brown hair loose from her scalp.

She laughed at our shocked faces. "You should have heard my mother! She couldn't stop screaming! 'My baby's losing her hair! My baby's hair is falling out!' It was all I heard for ten minutes."

Melissa and I were speechless for a few minutes. Then: "How did this happen? How did your mom find out?" I had finally found my voice.

"This is one of the nasty side-effects of my chemotherapy treatments. Mom found out because of my hairbrush. I asked her to watch me brush my hair. When she saw what was happening, she started screaming," Amy stated simply.

We began walking again and suddenly realized that Melissa was still where we stopped and was still staring at us. We ran back to get her, and she surprised us by saying, "Wait 'til you start wearing wigs! You can wear the latest styles!" Melissa was our fashion consultant even then. "Kayla and I will be able to wear them, too! Then

FRIENDS FOREVER

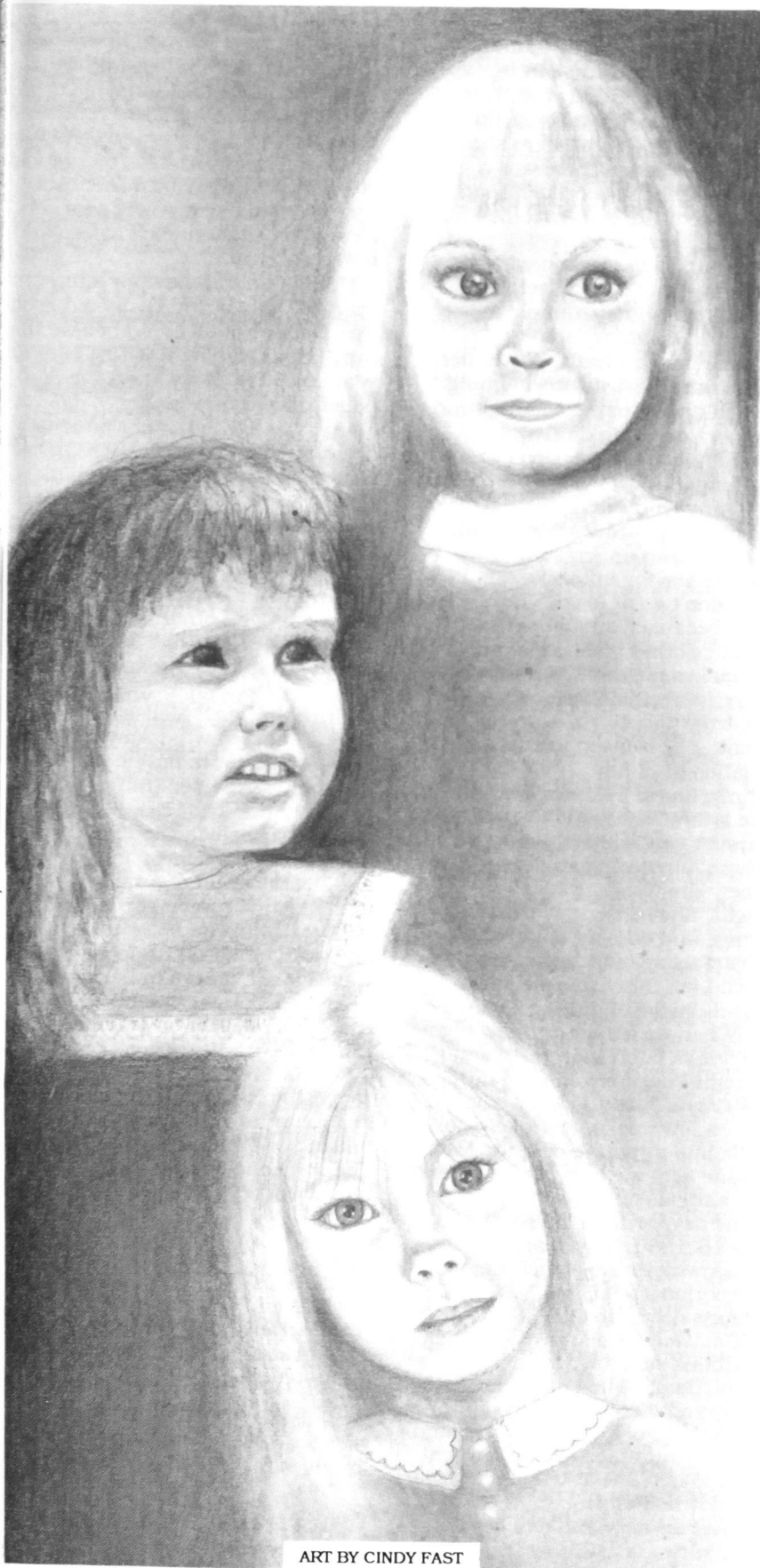
By Marcia Trent

different. Melissa and I looked very much alike: blonde hair, green eyes, pale skin. Amy resembled us only in the paleness of her skin.

Our personalities were similar, but also not exactly alike. We were quiet when we had to be, but most of the time we were playing practical jokes on everyone. One trait that set us apart was the fact that Melissa and I could read each other's minds, to a certain extent. We couldn't read Amy's mind, nor could she read our minds. That was one of the many things she was able to tolerate. Her high tolerance level was only one of the things that made her special.

When she was two years old, Amy's parents discovered that she had diabetes; at age five, the diagnosis was cancer. Amy never let any of it depress her. Even when her body was reacting violently to the medication she was taking, she kept up her spirits and tried to make things seem normal for the rest of us.

Life went along smoothly for about two years. In the fourth grade, Melissa, Amy, and I were suddenly separated into different classrooms. The teachers said it had something to do with ability level in schoolwork. We decided



ART BY CINDY FAST

we can play some fantastic jokes on everyone." We did as Melissa predicted, but soon we realized that the situation we were in wasn't a joking one.

Amy grew weaker. The cancer was eating her alive. The diabetes had somehow stabilized and wasn't as much of a factor as before. During the fifth grade, Amy spent some time in the hospital. She had to have three ribs and part of a tumor removed from her chest. The surgeons couldn't remove the entire tumor, and it began growing at an even faster pace. From then on, no matter how hard she tried, Amy wasn't quite her usual, spunky self.

As time went on, things began to look worse for Amy. She began losing weight and strength rapidly. When we started attending middle school in the sixth grade, she came to school in a wheelchair. Every Tuesday, Melissa and I would see her in the lunchroom. Amy was always quiet and seemed tired by lunchtime. By Halloween, it was obvious that she could handle school for only half a day. After Christmas, she quit coming to school altogether, but she continued her lessons with the help of a private tutor.

Christmas was terrible. Amy's physical state was only one of the reasons I hated Christmas that year. The other reason was supplied by my parents; we were moving from Southwestern Oklahoma to the Panhandle. The idea of leaving my best friends was hard, but it was even harder considering one of them was dying.

"You're moving? Kayla, you can't! How am I supposed to deal with Amy and everything she's going through?" Melissa was clearly distraught.

"First of all, I am moving, but that doesn't mean I have to like it. Second, you can deal with this. 'You'll be able to keep me updated on her condition. Besides, you are just as strong as Amy and I are, maybe even stronger. We have to face one terrifying possibility: I may never see her again. This news won't do her any good, but I can't keep it from her. She has every right to know about it!' I hated to be blunt with Melissa, but she took it better than I expected.

"I guess you're right. What are you going to tell her?" "The truth. I can't lie to her about this," I said in a

GIRLHOOD

matter-of-fact tone of voice. "After that, I don't know."

The next afternoon, Melissa and I went to Amy's house. She was sitting in bed surrounded by books. She looked better than she had in weeks.

"Gee, Amy, we never realized you were so busy. Melissa and I could come back later if you wish," I said sweetly.

"Don't leave! Sit down and talk to me!" It was a command, not a request. Amy's sarcastic personality was in perfect working order again. "My tutor has given me all of this, and it's due tomorrow!"

"Amy, how long have you had this work? If you've had it for a long time, I won't feel sorry for you. If not, then I'll try to help," I replied. Amy was a procrastinator when it came to anything, especially homework.

'Remember me always. Not as I am now, but as I used to be.'

She didn't answer my question; instead, she changed the subject.

"So what brings you two over here on such a," she looked out the window, "gray but otherwise lovely day?"

I told her the reason for our visit. She was stunned, of course.

"Moving! Why? That's not fair." But before I could say anything, she rushed on. "We have to make plans for your departure--going-away parties, things like that. But first, I need help with my homework. Understand?"

Melissa began to panic. "Don't look at me! I know nothing about homework!"

"Yes, we know, Melissa. All you know are boys and fashion!" Amy grinned. "I only trust Kayla to help me with my homework."

Amy and I started to work while Melissa read a magazine. She looks so wonderful, I thought. Melissa looked at me and nodded.

Things were fine for about three months. Then Amy was in the hospital for a routine check-up when she found out that the cancer had been in remission. Now it wasn't, and her doctors said that she didn't have much longer to live. I went to

see her soon after she returned home.

I walked into her room and was shocked by the change in her appearance. She had always been thin, but now she was only skin and bones. The veins were showing through her skin. There was a slight patch of fuzz on her head that looked as if it used to be hair. She was wearing an oxygen mask hooked up to the tank next to her. There was a television set that was turned to a Shirley Temple movie. Chills ran down my spine.

I had no idea what to say to her. The situation was overwhelming. I sat in a chair, just looking around the room and thinking.

"Well, just sit there. Don't say anything. I know what you're thinking--'Amy, you really need to clean this place up.'" She always knew what to say.

"We're leaving in two weeks. I really don't want to go." "Because of me or because you just don't want to go?" "Both, I guess. This scene just makes me think." "At least you're honest. Melissa only talked about the

past. She refused to deal with the situation at hand."

"Amy, I have to know. How much time is left?" "Not much for me, but years for you and Melissa." I hated to hear Amy sound so defeated, but I knew she was

right. She sensed my mood change and quickly changed the subject to try to lift my spirits. When I left, Amy was sleeping peacefully, but I didn't feel any better. When we left for our new home two weeks later, I felt the worst I thought I possibly could. I never saw Amy again.

For a few weeks, I managed to settle into a routine of sorts. My routine kept me busy, but my mind was always on Amy.

One day, Melissa called. It was July 16, 1980. "Kayla, are you sitting down? I have something very important to tell you."

"She's dead, isn't she, Melissa?" Instinctively I knew she was. Neither of us said anything for a moment. Then: "When did it happen?"

"Around ten o'clock this morning. She asked for a piece of paper and a pen about nine. When I brought them to her, she asked me to write this down: 'Remember me always. Not as I am now, but as I used to be. The two of you have been there

for me throughout everything. This is the only time I'm glad that I'll be alone. We have learned many things from each other, and we have taught each other some things as well. I will miss you, Melissa, and you, Kayla, and I'll never forget either of you. Don't forget me either. You are my best friends! I love you two like my very own sisters.' After that, she fell asleep and never woke up."

Melissa and I talked for a few minutes longer and then said good bye. Neither of us could believe that Amy had died. She was just twelve years old. Two days later, the disbelief turned into reality.

Amy was buried in her favorite dress made of pink lace. The church was decorated with pink ribbons and pink roses. At the cemetery, everyone was crying. When the coffin was lowered into the grave, Melissa and I realized that the end of a life had come. We looked at each other and knew that the friendship we had with Amy would go on forever, as would our own.

Since that day, Melissa and I have wondered what Amy would think of life as we have come to know it. We decided that she would probably think the same things we do. It's basically a good life. However, at times it's depressing, morbid, and death oriented. Amy would manage to keep going. She would fight for what she believed in, and she would make those people she was against believe in her and that her way was right. Amy just had that kind of effect on whomever she touched.

Now, every time I hear a doorbell ring, I think of Amy. No one in the flesh may be at the door, but someone in the spirit is always there. The someone is always Amy, my best friend.

82
G-O

(MARCIA TRENT is a SOSU senior English Education major from Weatherford. "Friends Forever" is based on a true story and is her first published work.)

LAW AND ORDER COME TO PRAIRIE VIEW

By Inez Schneider
Whitney

From the very first day of school, Miss Bessie Campbell made it clear that she was in charge and would countenance none of the disruptive behavior that had been going on at Prairie View, District 56. Prairie View was a one-room country school, three miles from the pioneer town of Custer City in Custer County, Oklahoma. The year was 1915. Oklahoma had been a state only eight years. A succession of teachers, all men, had been unable to control the older boys.

Edd Schneider, my father, was serving on the schoolboard with two other neighbors, Mark Newton and Sam Agan. One summer evening, Papa said, "I'm off to a meeting at the schoolhouse. Sam and Mark will be there, and several applicants who want to teach at Prairie View next year will be there too."

"I hope you will find someone who can keep the boys and girls quiet enough to get a little book learning," Mama said.

It was late when Papa got home.

"How did the interviews go?" Mama asked him when he

came in.

"Great! Can you believe it? We have hired a teacher for next year."

"What's his name and where's he from?" Mama queried.

Papa paused before answering. "Er-r-r, it's not a he. It's a she, a young woman."

Mama's mouth dropped open. "You can't mean it! Who is she? Where did she come from? Has she taught before? What's her name?" Out poured one question after another.

"Her name is Bessie Campbell. She lives somewhere on the other side of Thomas with her parents. She's taught two years in Kansas and brings a good recommendation," Papa answered.

Mama slowly shook her head. "I can't believe it. Whatever were you three men thinking of? Look what a time Mr. Garlow had last year. Run out before he finished the term, and you know all the trouble the others had before that. If they couldn't make the big boys behave, what can you expect of a woman?"

"We'll see. Anyway, Bessie Campbell said, 'If I can't keep order, you won't have to pay me a penny!' We thought it was worth a try."

Unable to contain her curiosity, Mama asked, "What does she look like, and how old is she?"

"She's twenty-four--a pretty little thing. Her hair is red--just the color of yours, honey," he said as he patted me on the head.

The news spread rapidly through the neighborhood. How the tongues wagged!

"Those three men must have been out of their minds! A woman--of all things! She'll be



run out in a week!" were a few of the comments.

"Where will the new teacher live?" Mama asked Papa one day.

"She could never drive from her parents' home. Someone said it's about twenty-five miles."

"M.I. Nehr and his wife have agreed to let her board and room with them," Papa said.

"That'll be a nice place for her. They're almost as young as she is, and Mrs. Nehr's a good cook too. It'll be easy enough for her to walk the two miles."

At last the first day of school arrived. More than fifty boys and girls had gathered on the schoolground to welcome the new teacher. Since grades one through eight were taught at Prairie View, the pupils ranged in age from six to late teens.

The girls had on sunbonnets and bright print calico dresses. The boys were blue denim overalls and blue or white shirts. Boys and girls alike were all barefoot since the weather was still warm.

My best friend, Edna Reimers, and I stood side by side holding hands. We were eight years old and ready for third grade. "I hope we can be seatmates like we were last year," Edna whispered.

"So do I," I answered back.

"The teacher should be coming," she said.

No one's walking down the road yet," I told her. "We can see almost to the Nehrs' house."

Just then a cloud of dust appeared.

"Here comes someone riding down the road," one of the boys called out.

How amazed all of us were when the rider turned into the schoolyard and pulled up sharp. We were even more amazed to see that the rider was a young woman astride the horse and that she was wearing a habit.

"Hello! I'm Miss Bessie Campbell, your new teacher." Jumping off the horse, she hitched it to a tree.

"I'll be right back, boys and girls," she said as she disappeared into the coal shed.

***"I can't believe it.
Whatever were you three
men thinking of?"***

All of us stood speechless, "Women don't wear pants," someone finally said. Just then,

Miss Campbell emerged wearing an attractive print dress. It had long sleeves, a full skirt, and it came to her ankles just as our mothers' dresses did.

Holding a schoolbell in her hand, she walked to the front door of the schoolhouse, turned, and rang the bell vigorously..

"Boys line up on the right and girls on the left," she called.

"Let's do just what she says for now," one of the big boys whispered.

When we were all in line, Miss Campbell said, "Now march in and find a seat."

Edna and I were pushed aside as the older girls and boys rushed to find desks at the back. Many were triple desks, but we sank down at a double desk near the front.

"At least we're seatmates now," I whispered.

"I only hope she leaves us together," I whispered back.

"We'll just be real good and extra quiet," I said. In spite of the confusion, the young teacher stood calmly by her desk until everyone became quiet.

"Boys and girls," she said, "when your name is called, come to the front, and I'll give you a list of the books and supplies you'll need to begin school. They can be purchased at Harmon's Drug Store as you have done in the past. I'll begin with the first grade."

When each pupil had a list, Miss Campbell announced, "You're dismissed."

Early dismissal was customary at Prairie View the first day of school. It gave the parents the afternoon and evening to purchase what their children needed.

"I'll expect everyone on time tomorrow ready for work," Miss Campbell said as we filed out the door.

Not a single pupil was late the next morning. When Miss Campbell rang the bell, all of us marched in and took our seats. A United States flag that hadn't been there before was hanging in the front of the room.

After everyone was seated, Miss Campbell said, "I understand you haven't been having opening exercises, but from now on we'll start each day with an opening exercise."

She had us to repeat the flag salute, read a short selection from the Bible, and asked us to join in repeating the Lord's Prayer.

"Now we're ready for work," she said. "Easy lessons for today are on the board for each grade. I'll call classes one at a time, and we'll talk about your homework for tomorrow."

The day went by in a hurry.

"How was school?" Papa asked when I got home.

I started to cry. "It's too hard. Look! I have to learn sixteen spelling words. Mr. Garlow always gave each one of us a word to learn, and that one was the only one he asked us to spell the next day.

Papa said, "I'll go right up and tell that teacher off."

"You'll do nothing of the kind," Mama said. "Inez is smart.

The list isn't hard. I'll help her after supper."

How proud I was to be the only one in my class of seven who didn't have to stay in at recess and study spelling.

After a day or two, some of the older boys who had caused so much trouble the year before began to rebel. When they didn't have their lessons and were asked to stay on, they walked right out saying, "Miss Bessie, I need a little exercise" or "I have to be excused to go you know where." Or they would put their heads down and say, "I'm jes' too tired to finish my work."

The situation gradually got worse and worse. The boys began to stay out longer and longer when Miss Bessie rang the bell to come in from recess. Finally they were spending almost as much time on the playground as they did inside. Miss Bessie would get the group together and talk to them; but the next day, things would be just the same or a little worse.

One day, she said, "Boys, I'm afraid you'll regret this. You're not learning anything, you know."

"Aw, what can she do?" we'd hear them say under their breaths. "She's only a woman."

Parents began to talk. They were shaking their heads and saying, "She's going to be run out just like the men."

But Miss Bessie hadn't been idle. She was reporting daily to the County Superintendent of Schools. One evening, she told him, "The situation is really becoming unbearable. It's a real problem. They not only care nothing about learning, but it makes it hard to work with the others."

The next morning about eleven, here came the county superintendent accompanied by the county sheriff. The superintendent asked Miss Bessie to come outside after he and the sheriff had rounded the boys up.

"Are these the boys who've been giving you trouble?" the sheriff asked.

"The very ones," she replied.

"Boys," he said, "you are now expelled. You can no longer attend this school. Never at any time must you set foot on this school ground or linger near it." The sheriff added, "If you do, you will be arrested and taken to jail."

"Aw, we were jest havin' a little fun," one boy said.

"Yeah," the others chorused.

"You're not here to have fun," the sheriff replied. "The superintendent tells me that every one of you should have passed the eighth-grade examination some time ago and be going to high school in Custer. Now all there is for you to do is go home and help your fathers on their farms."

The sheriff went in with them to get their belongings. "Miss Campbell," he said, "if these boys give you one bit of trouble, just give me a call and I'll be right out to take them to jail."

He took the boys outside and started them home. How dejected they looked trudging down the road.

The rest of the school year

was uneventful. If anyone became a little unruly, all Miss Campbell had to say was, "Is it going to be necessary for me to call the sheriff?"

On the last day of school when Miss Bessie announced that she would see us in September, there were clapping and cheering.

What a change took place during the summer. How

"Are these the boys who've been giving you trouble?"

different the first day was when Miss Bessie started her second year at Prairie View. Besides the boys who had been expelled, several had passed the eighth-grade examination and were starting high school in Custer. Also, during the summer, three families--the Allens, Buntleys, and Reimerses--had moved, taking a dozen or more of the pupils. A school picture taken that year shows Miss Bessie with only seventeen students.

A smaller enrollment wasn't the only change. Miss Bessie had convinced the schoolboard to go along with the new trend in school furniture. What a surprise! All of the old double and triple desks were gone. In their places were shiny new desks that seated only one. Most of us didn't like them too well; it was more fun to have a seatmate.

By Thanksgiving, Miss Bessie had prevailed upon the schoolboard to buy some books to start a school library.

"That's all we need to pass the requirements for a model school," she told them. "I hope you men will come and build some shelves."

The schoolboard went several evenings after dinner. One night when Papa came home, Mama said, "That

teacher has you three men wrapped around her little finger. Whenever she says 'frog,' you all jump!" I think she was a little jealous.

But how wonderful it was to have some of the classics to read. The first one I checked out was DAVID COPPERFIELD, and how I enjoyed it. Although I was only nine, I was an excellent reader.

At the middle of the term, Miss Bessie told Mama and Papa, "Here's a list of books I want you to get for Inez. I'm putting her in fifth grade."

I still have my report card for that year. On it is written: "promoted to fifth grade Jan. 1 and promoted to sixth grade May 2, 1916."

The school year was an enjoyable one for all of us. There were no more behavior problems. Miss Bessie taught us many games to play at recess. Every Friday afternoon, we chose up sides for a spelling bee, geography match, or ciphering match. What fun it was to go to school!

On the last day of school, Miss Bessie announced, "Boys and girls, I won't be back next year; you'll have a different teacher."

Someone said, "Oh, please come back" and everyone said, "Yes, please do!"

"Afraid I can't. I'll be thinking of you, and I know you'll do your best."

How we idolized Miss Bessie! I'm sure that I wasn't the only Prairie View student who cried herself to sleep that night.

The news soon came that she was marrying a young farmer in the community in which she grew up. I never saw or heard from her again, but the two years I spent with Miss Bessie at Prairie View are very precious memories.

Succession

By Margie Cooke Porteus

1890-

With her parents, eight-year-old Frankie
Came to Indian Territory.
For entertainment she rode her pony,
Picked wild flowers,
Played with her corn cob doll.
She learned to twist a coon from a tree
Attended school in a dugout,
Married at sixteen.

1904

Lillian, Frankie's oldest,
Was born in a one-room cabin,
Played with one small doll,
Walked to a one-room school,
With responsibility she did her chores,
Helped with younger ones,
Married at nineteen.

1927

Margie, Frankie's youngest,
Was born in a hospital,
Owned several dolls,
Played hide-and-seek with neighbor kids
Under the street-corner light,
Was spoiled by older siblings,
Married at twenty-one.

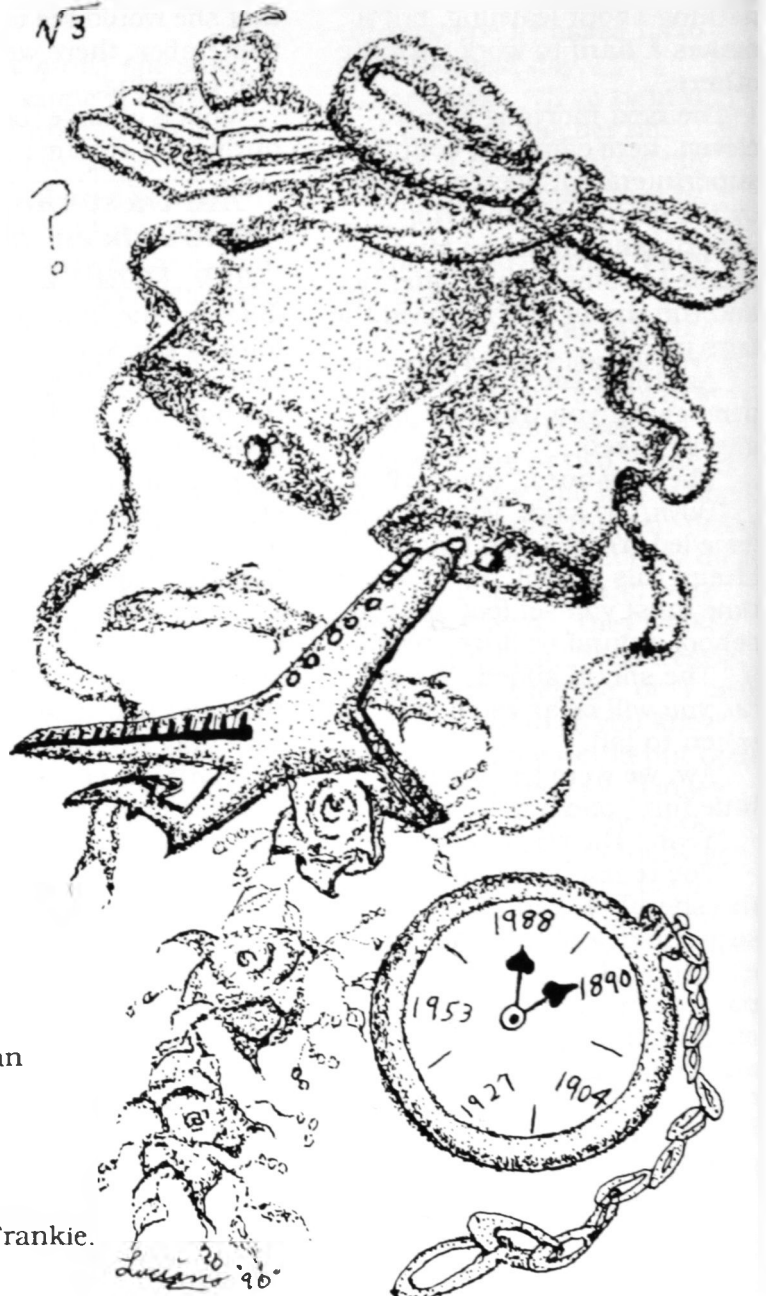
1953

Six-year-old Ann, Frankie's grandchild,
Flew to Oklahoma for a visit.
Seeing the Amish, exclaimed,
"Grandma, there are Pilgrims here!"
Having seen too many cowboy movies,
Asked if friendly, blanketed Ethel Littleman
Was a good Indian or a bad Indian.
Loved hearing stories of olden times.

1988

Cindy, Frankie's great-granddaughter,
Muses, "You say I look like Grandmother Frankie.
I wonder if I could
Endure her hardships?
Love as she loved?
Change with the times?
Understand my children as she did?
Wish I had known her." 🐻

{-8} 2+3=5 CAT

 $\sqrt{3}$ 

(MARGIE COOKE PORTEUS--
formerly of Thomas and a SOSU
alumna — lives in Paonia,
Colorado, following an extended
teaching career.)

ART BY LUCIANO CERDA

SUMMER IN EXILE

e. Ruth Ramsey

Today's headlines count the mounting toll of the AIDS epidemic. Stories tell of families who face the loss, the suffering, and the ostracism engendered when a family member contracts the disease. As I ponder their plight, I am reminded of an earlier time, a no-less-dreaded disease, and the ten-year old child whose life was affected.

On the south edge of Clinton there looms a building that played a pivotal role in my life during that summer of 1962. Known today as the Veterans' Center, it was then known as the Western Oklahoma Tuberculosis Sanatorium, a place where those who had contracted tuberculosis went to be treated until they either recovered or died. Prior to that summer, it was, to me, merely the place where my father worked as a nurse. The check-ups he underwent were merely a part of everyday life--until the day he came home and told us that the tuberculosis in his lungs, long inactive, had flared once more and that he would have to enter the sanatorium for treatment. A subsequent examination revealed that my mother had been stricken too. She also entered the sanatorium, and I was sent to live with Aunt Virginia and Uncle Herbert on the farm they rented near Laverne.

Looking back, I can appreciate the risk of infection that they took in letting me live with them. Since both of my parents were in the active stage of the disease, a real possibility existed that it was infected too.



ART BY MIKE SIGURDSON

A large bottle of I.N.H., a drug used in treating the disease, accompanied me, and I was dosed daily until I developed an allergy to the drug.

In consideration of the risk factor, it's essential to realize that in the early sixties tuberculosis was feared as greatly as AIDS is today. Certainly tuberculosis was more easily spread; and although it could be effectively treated, the disease was still a killer. Those who recovered from a first bout with the disease lived with the constant threat that it could erupt again at any time when their resistance was low. Few people were willing to risk exposure. In my case, the ties of kinship outweighed the risk of infection.

Although the possibility of my parents' dying was also real, it wasn't mentioned to me. At the time, I was ignorant of the potential of the disease to kill. My enforced exile seemed merely a long visit that I had to make so that I wouldn't be sick too. The shadows thrown by death and disease were swallowed up in the bright sunlight of summer days spent playing and squabbling with my cousins.

Life on the farm was radically different from what I had previously known. It came as a major shock to me, a cosseted only child, to be told by my rough-and-tumble cousins to "stop being a sissy!" I spent the rest of my stay trying to prove I wasn't--no mean task for someone as small and frail as I was. Trying to live up to new expectations wasn't the only difference I experienced. I also had to adjust to new circumstances.

The farm sat on the county-line road between Beaver and Harper counties, surrounded by rolling, sandy, sagebrush-covered prairie land different from the gentle red-clay river valley that was my home. The farm consisted of the house, a chicken and brooder house, the garage, a barn, and Uncle Herbert's shop--all places for a curious city child to explore. At night, the black sky covered the prairie like a hood, and the stars and moon took the place of city lights. The nights were often cool, and we slept rolled in blankets while a clean, sage-scented wind blew in the open windows and coyotes howled in the distance.

Aunt Virginia, already busy with seven children of her own,

GIRLHOOD

had her hands full that summer with the addition of a niece. Eight is a "quiver-full" by any measure, and all of us were under fourteen. Work in that size household was endless, and she saw that we older ones did our share. Nelda and I were given ironing, babysitting, and dishwashing chores. We also gathered eggs, a task I enjoyed since each day's gathering seemed to me like an Easter egg hunt with the hens doing the hiding. The older boys did the milking and cared for the cow.

Life wasn't all work, though. We spent many hours playing and not a few scrapping. Herbie and Lennie, the two oldest, took an unholy delight in teasing us younger ones; and the teasing sometimes escalated into all-out war. More often, we younger ones would avenge ourselves during a rousing game of "Coyotes and Dogs."

The rules of the game were simple: the older boys were the "coyotes," and we were the "dogs." The coyotes were hunted and "killed" by the dogs who hurled soft, partially inflated balls in the hope of killing all the coyotes before the dead ones were resurrected by a touch from one who hadn't been downed. We worked off quite a bit of aggression that way, and it was more fun than fighting.

Farm life proved physically beneficial to me. I became brown and lively from days spent in the sunshine and from trying to keep up with my healthier, stronger cousins. I also learned a number of skills I wouldn't have learned otherwise--skills such as plucking a chicken, churning butter, cleaning a fish. Aunt Virginia also gave me my first cooking lessons, and I learned something about babies from caring for the baby, Robert. Yet, despite these activities, I

missed my parents.

Although letters passed back and forth regularly that summer, I was able to visit my parents only once--when my Aunt Ruth came from Colorado for a visit and took all of us to Clinton to visit them. Because children weren't allowed on the ward, my mother met us on the grounds; her tuberculosis testing was negative at the time. I don't remember being allowed to see my father; the visit itself was short.


As we were leaving, I started to cry from the injustice of it all. I didn't want to go back; I wanted my mother and father. Aunt Ruth started to comfort me; but Aunt Virginia, wise in the ways of children, said, "Leave her alone. she'll only get worse if you pet her." I remember feeling indignant at that remark. After a few more experimental sniffs, which were ignored, I subsided.

I was often unhappy that summer--particularly after fights with my cousins. I would concoct wild schemes to hitchhike back to Clinton and live somewhere else--anywhere else. Fortunately I was a practical child and realized that my plans weren't feasible. I would have to wait to end my exile until my parents were released from the hospital.

Summer came to an end and school began before my mother was released. My father, much more ill than she was, would stay nearly six months more in the sanatorium. I came home to a fatherless household which subsisted on a welfare income barely adequate for our needs. Although I was unaware of it then, the events of the summer would shape my life for years to come in the form of regular visits from the county health nurse, frequent check-ups, and enough x-rays to make me glow

in the dark.

There was also shunning I experienced as a child of tubercular parents. I wasn't a total pariah, but the avoidance was definitely, subtly there. Long after my parents were declared free of the disease, the parents of my friends refused to let their daughters spend the night for fear of "catching a bug." Nor was I invited to stay anywhere. Unfortunately, fear is an intense, unreasoning emotion not always allayed by reason.

Miraculously I came through the exposure to tuberculosis unaffected. However, I can't say that I was unaffected. Life is a fabric of many weavings, and for good or ill, the experiences arising from my parents' illness provide the warp and woof of what I am. The pain of separation and being "set-apart" has been muted by time, but gives me insight into the feelings of those who are experiencing similar situations. Ironically, today's AIDS scare gives me insights into the workings of my own fear and the fear of those who do the setting apart. I find myself squarely planted in both camps, a musing member of humanity. 

(E. RUTH RAMSEY, recent SOSU honors student, after finishing a Bachelor's degree in English Education, now teaches English in the Vici Public Schools. Of this piece, "Summer in Exile," she says, "It was typed with the assistance of a small brown canine that has insisted on sitting on my feet all evening and growling at any interloper. Since all three children have been hovering all evening, I leave you to imagine the climate in which this piece of writing was produced.")

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CHILDHOOD

By Leroy Thomas

CHANGES 1941:

A rich kid, a bully, a second-grader,
Taunts,
Makes fun of,
Picks a fight with, and
Bloodies the nose of a Poor White first-grader
Wearing sandals because
He has nothing else to wear.

1971:

That same rich kid, the bully,
Now an older undergraduate,
Wearing styles of the forties,
Approaches the once-poor White, A well-dressed professor
Wearing sandals Because it's the "in thing" to do,
And asks for help on the English Proficiency Examination. The professor laughs loudly in
His Composition Lair.

PRIDE

Male-heir:
Inspiring, self-assured.
Boasting, helping, loving.
How difficult to say no to that charming child!
Pride.

OUTSIDE LIMITS

Batterbatterbatterbatterbatterbatterbatter! Hecklethatbattersondontlethimgetahit!
Stompthatkidformamasondontlethimgetarun! Hitithitithitithitithitithitithitithitithitithit!
Goodsportsmanshipcouldbetaught Onlittleleagueteams.
Butwherearetheparents
Whowouldletitbedone?

(LEROY THOMAS, WESTVIEW Editor from
the beginning of the journal in 1981, has
taught English at SOSU since 1956.)

To My Granddaughter On Her Tenth Birthday

By Margie Cooke Porteus



DEAR CINDY,

In the late 1930's, when I was your age, Grandmother gave me three bowls. Although they aren't fancy and may have come in boxes of cereal, I want you to have them.

Grandmother may have given the bowls to me to start a hope chest. I want you to have them, not to start a hope chest, but as a tangible way to help you realize the importance of family love as it goes from generation to generation. Maybe that love is why Grandmother gave them to me. She was poor and didn't have much to give except love; maybe she thought the bowls would remind me of that love--as they have these many years.



Grandmother's life was interesting and often sad. Her mother died when she was thirteen; soon after, her father disappeared when he went West, perhaps to search for gold. Sarah Rebecca Abshire, that was her name, was left to care for the three younger members of the family. Later she married John Wesley Speelman; they had eight children, including my mother, Francis (Frankie). When

Frances was eight, the family left Missouri by covered wagon to seek a new life in Oklahoma.

I remember Grandma as a rather small woman with gray hair pulled into a bun. Her long dresses were drab, but she wore a long apron that she had brightened with a bit of lace or embroidery.

Grandma and Grandpa Speelman lived three miles east of Thomas in a small house that had two main rooms: a bedroom and a kitchen-dining-living-wash room. The bedroom had a bed, a dresser, a chair, and Grandpa's trunk--all brought from Missouri when they moved.

Down three steps was the other room, which had a dirt floor. I thought it funny that Grandma swept the floor, but it was so packed that it was as hard as a rock. At one end of the lower level room was a permanent bench that had been built against the wall behind the dining table. That bench was where I slept when I visited. By the outside door was a table that held the wash pan and a water bucket with a dipper. The pan, which was used for the washing of faces and hands, and the dipper, which was used for the drinking of water, were for the entire family and guests. At the other end of the room was a door which led to a tiny shed room where Uncle Bill, the bachelor uncle, slept and where I wasn't allowed to go. Also, at the end of the room were the wood cookstove, the cream separator, and the cupboards. I don't remember much about the cupboards, but there couldn't have been many because there wasn't much space.

Because there wasn't much storage, Grandma couldn't have

me the bowls to get rid of extra dishes and not for my hope chest; I still think it was because she wanted me to have a tangible proof of her love.

Space was so limited that Grandma stored the eggs under the bed until she took them and the cream three miles to town once a week to sell. She drove a horse and buggy on these trips, even after most farm families had cars. Sometimes I would go home with her, but I only vaguely remember the rides; after all, I wasn't very old. Grandma died soon after she gave me the bowls.

I started to tell about those bowls. If I don't stop, I'll write a book.

With all my love,

Grandma 



TWO THOUSAND MILES FROM HOME

By George L. Hoffman

He drew his first breath from the prairie wind; He
was nourished by the red-earth loam;
He walked unseen through his hardscabble youth
In the place that he called home.

But spirited was the song of the mockingbird,
And defiant was the redhawk's scream;
Benign was the shade of the sheltering oak
Where he first dared to question and dream.

But the days fell away like the leaves of the oak,
And like leaves they piled up to make years;
The oak tree withered and the red earth wept,
And there was blood in the red-earth tears!

So he plucked from its place a seedling oak.
And with its roots in a handful of loam
He traveled west to an alien place
Two thousand miles from home.

And they thrust their roots into the alien earth,
And they reached for the alien sky,
But he heard no more the mockingbird's song
Or the redhawk's piercing cry.

But they survived and grew strong in the alien soil,
With its handful of red-earth loam,
And he learned to trust and to dream again
Two thousand miles from home!

(GEORGE L. HOFFMAN, a retired teacher, graduated
from SOSU in 1939. Formerly from Custer City, he now
resides in Clackamas, Oregon. This article is his
second WESTVIEW publication.)

ART BY CYNDE ROOF

ONE STEP FROM CHILDHOOD

Something's wrong with childhood. I don't care how many grown-ups carry on about it, you don't see any kids doing so. Childhood's a thing you want out of when you're in it, and the sooner the better.

I tried to end my childhood by moving away from it. I was seventeen. It was an age when I was looking for signs of adulthood in myself. And what better sign than to look out my window each day and see that Western Oklahoma--where I had passed my childhood--was gone.

What I saw, instead, was the courtyard of a college in New England. And that courtyard was my vision of adulthood.

It wasn't something I participated in. It was something I observed, studied . . . tried to understand, from my window.

This was a boys' college, or men's college I guess you should say since we're talking about adulthood. And I could see young men crossing the courtyard in a steady traffic from morning to late evening.

They were wearing what might be considered sloppy clothes. But that was all right. Word had gone down that it was proper to wear sloppy clothes that year. It was the year of 64-

65, and everything was different from earlier times in the history of hummans/humankind. It was OK to wear jeans with your tweed jacket. It was even OK to say ain't and talk country.

But it wasn't OK to be country, which was my problem. I kept to my room and kept to the conservative clothes I'd brought with me from home. I thumbed through my dictionary, searching out the meanings of the odd words my classmates uttered between their ain'ts.

I was an outsider--watching the tropical fish in the bowl. I observed adulthood, as it was being presented to me, and wondered how I'd ever get to be a part of it.

That was the fall of my freshman year--and the winter. But by and by came the spring and with it a ray of hope. It was now time for the Easter Egg hunt--the seeking out of our first real grades. They were posted on teachers' doors, hidden all around the college, and it was an all-day job--at least for me--to find them.

But I looked forward to that day, nevertheless. I had a feeling in my bones that said that grades might very well be my ticket. If anything could ever make me a part of the college, as opposed to merely being present on campus, it would probably be my grades. This is what my feeling said, though not so articulately. It was a feeling, not a thought.

There I said campus, but there was no campus, actually. And if the college was disappointed in me for how I looked or spoke, then I guess I was a little disappointed in it. I had expected rolling hills and maple trees. Well, this was the

land of the Ivy League, after all. Was I so wrong in expecting ivy?

What you got was an archipelago of tiny college blocks--small campuses, if you please. They were cut apart by city streets. And buses and vans and trucks and townie cars roared by on these streets--like sharks, out to get you if you got too cocky or too wrapped up in your own thoughts.

And certainly I was getting pretty cocky as I discovered first the one good grade and then the other. It hadn't really dawned on me that my hermit life, spent in quiet desperation and involuntary celibacy, might be good for something--namely, for making grades. I had simply aspired to being average, but my grades were telling me I was superior. And this sudden shift in my fortunes made me drunk with pride.

(Pride, as we all know, is a deadly sin. And with Pride cometh the Fall. I wonder how this story will end, don't you?)

Well. I had this ruler with me, to convince me that my unbelievable grades were real. And at every teacher's door, at every new list of grades, this same dialogue was repeated--between me and my ruler:

"No," said I, "that grade couldn't be mine." "Oh, but yes," the ruler would say. "Look here!" And then it measured off the grade across from my name, proving beyond a doubt that the grade was mine.

I would read each grade, from left to right, and then from right to left. And after awhile I'd say, "Yes, it's mine."

The grades were cookies, just like the ones Alice ate in Wonderland. Each one said, "Eat me!" And every one I ate

By Bill Males

made me grow a little taller, until finally it was everything I could do to huddle myself together enough to make my way through the maze of medieval walks and archways and winding staircases that led to my English teacher's rooms. There I bided my time, giant that I was, waiting for the corridor to clear. I knew that my procedure with the ruler was a little queer, and I didn't want anyone to witness it.

"Pretty good grade you made," said a guy from my entryway. He was in my English seminar, too, and here to check his grade. But he didn't have to come up on me like that. I had almost cried out.

I tried to respond to him. I said "Uh" or "Yeah" or something like that. I struggled in that tight corridor, trying to hide my ruler, and my surprise, and my pride.

"You must write a lot better than you talk," he said. "Shall I squash him?" was my thought. "Shall I devastate

him with my grade in French?" But no. I kept my peace, itching to get to the list and compare his English grade with mine. I hoped he had flunked.

"I'm on my way to do my wash," he said, looking at his watch. "Can't afford to waste time, you know. Can't spend all day just checking your grades."

He was trying to deflate me. I was working to push my ruler up under my shirt.

He glanced at his watch again, as if he had seen it the first time. "Well, Berry," he said, "it's been fun talking with you, but I've gotta run. Road trip this evening, you know. Bunch of us going up to Conn College."

That was a girls' (women's--if we were talking about

adulthood!) school. Now was he going to ask me if I'd be there.

"Been there yet?" I shook my head. My head wasn't quite as big as it had been.

"You ought to get out a little, Berry--move a little." Please, God. Send this person away. "Speaking of being on the move, I made the crew team," he continued. "Found out yesterday. Isn't that fantastic?"

I nodded. "Yes, it is," he said, as he turned to go. "It's pretty fantastic."

I imagined him telling himself how fantastic he was, all the way down the stairs. I heard his footsteps disappear, anyway. And now I was all alone with the list on our teacher's door. I could confirm, with my ruler, that I had done well in English and that he, in fact, had done rather poorly--considering what a fantastic achiever he was.

I now had all my grades and could work out my average. My average made me worth three or maybe four of your regular freshmen. And since each freshman was worth around a half dozen applicants to the college--only one in six being admitted--my arithmetic led me to believe that I was worth at least a couple of dozen regular folks back home.

I was now growing in stature again. Was I Alice in Wonderland or Frankenstein's monster? Anyway, I had to hurry to get out of the college buildings before I got stuck.

I emerged into the city street, in all my greatness--feeling almost immortal. I was a butterfly, leaving its cocoon. I was a man in my own right, breaking free of the confines of childhood. From being a nobody and a hick, I was


emerging as a somebody and a scholar.

I was in love and longed to proclaim my love to the whole world. "Whatever I look like or sound like," I longed to say, "I am, in fact, among the best in my class. . . maybe among the best in the whole country, when it comes to grades. . . possibly among the best in the whole world!"

But then I resolved not to be humble, but to play humble. I wouldn't force myself upon others, like that twerp I'd just met at the teacher's door. I would let people find out for themselves how fantastic I was. The truth would come out, sooner or later. That was my last thought, as I took what might have been my last step.

A squeal of brakes and a two-ton truck came to a dead halt right in front of me. . . or rather I was right in front of it.

"You crazy college creep!" the truck driver shouted. "Why don't you look where you're going!"

I backed up onto the curb and watched the truck start off again. The driver shook his fist at me out the window. 

(BILL MALES was reared in Cheyenne and graduated from high school there in 1964. He now resides in Sweden.)

THREE REWARDING YEARS

By Kate Jackson Lewis

In early July 1964, my husband, F. C., got a call from Chauncey Barrett, School Board president at Martha, asking us to move to the small Southwestern Oklahoma town to teach. From a financial standpoint, we would profit; and, with three sons in college, we needed an increase in salary. My pay would be the same; but as superintendent, Dad would make considerably more money.

Vividly, I remember driving across the railroad track shortly after noon one hot summer day into Martha. The sun was bearing down so bright that not one person was on the street. Even the lizards had sought a shade to escape the heat. I thought of the movie scenes so often used for establishing the typical Western setting and mood for the story about to be depicted. I even wondered if any were awake that time of day or if they were all enjoying a siesta.

F. C. parked our car under a shade tree in front of the school. Entering the front door, we walked down the hall and into the gymnasium where a man in overalls was painting the walls.

Dad introduced us to the fellow, who told us he was the custodian, then began apologizing for the appearance of the building. With the opening of school just two weeks away, it would take a miracle to get the building painted and restored to orderliness.

I felt only despair at the magnitude of the task we would face if we took the job. But my optimistic husband seemed to enjoy the situation. "It will look so good after it's cleaned up," he said.

Old-fashioned, deeply carved desks, torn maps hanging from their cases, and a scantily equipped science room didn't appeal to me. Of course, I wouldn't be using it much, so I crossed the hall to the combination study hall-library. It contained outdated encyclopedias and fewer than a hundred fiction books, and some of the books had missing pages. A hodgepodge of biography, social science, and language arts books needed repairs, classification, and letters and numerals redone.

The teacherage across the street from the school presented a picture of years of negligence just as did the school building. Stained, torn papered walls, faded carpeting with a dirty, footwide streak extending across dining room and living room, made by the bursting of a water pipe, made me unhappier by the moment. A new sink would be the only plausible solution for the chipped, corroded, rusted, once-white one.

A dusty unceiled attic would be worthless except for storage, though I visualized a future for it if we lived there long enough.

Had I followed my heart instead of my husband, I would have left Martha and headed back to Purcell without even reporting to the school board. The thermometer must have

registered 102 degrees in the shade that afternoon, so after we had inspected the premises, we drove back to Altus to try to find a cool place to talk things over. Dad convinced me that we should wait until after the board meeting that night to make a decision.

Since the window fans weren't in order, Dad and the Board had their discussion outside. I chose to wait in the nearly vacant science room where a piano had been temporarily placed. My piano playing is a step below mediocre, but I needed something to make the time seem short. As I "plunked" aimlessly over the keyboard, recalling memorized bits of mostly gospel music, a dreadful thought presented itself to me--what if I had to play for the church or school assembly as I had done in times past if no one could do better. I couldn't imagine anything artistic or cultural at Martha. I had things to learn, as will be explained later.

In the backyard session that night, Dad told the Board the salary figure we must have before accepting the school. With the school opening very near, they weren't really in a position to remonstrate. They didn't. It was unanimously and instantaneously settled without discussion.

We took only a few pieces of furniture from our new home, bought a few second-hand pieces, and set up housekeeping at Martha. We had too much space to fill for our skimpy furnishings; but we did have two window coolers, comfortable beds, and a place to cook and serve.

Our 22-year-old son, Joe, stayed with us a month before

because they gave so generously of their time, talent, and love.

My first year at Martha had its "highs" and "lows." I had taught in elementary grades for the past eight years. Now I was to take four high-school and one seventh-grade English classes. The texts had changed, including literature classics I hadn't read for many years--some I had never read. I perhaps studied much harder than did my students.

The Junior Class and its money-making activities became my lot along with a three-act play, their banquet, a "Hootenanny," Sunday community dinner, and the popcorn concession at ballgames as well as the selling of candy door-to-door. Of course the class members worked, but I had to keep it going even if school closed.

In addition to the already scheduled projects, I chose to teach speech fundamentals and give students opportunity to practice good speaking. Finding some talented students, I wanted to see how well they would perform publicly and even took some to a speech contest. A few students did extremely well, considering all the other activities they entered into.

The month of March was so heavily scheduled that I hardly had time to do anything but extra-curricular activities. The stress broke me to the point that I was over-emotional and nauseated most of the time. My migraine headaches became intense even though I took a prescribed barbiturate. It was difficult to desert the youth who had followed in the footsteps of classes that preceded them, but my doctor

returning to college. Dad gave him a job helping make the teacherages livable. Since he would need spending money for school at Southeastern in Durant, he welcomed the chance to earn. A flurry of paint brushes manned by men teachers and custodians went into use. Dad traveled in a hurry to buy new equipment, books, repair materials, and gallons of paint. The Board had given him the authority to buy whatever was needed to make the school plant meet the standards set up by the state's education officials.

Many surprises were in store for me. My "nothing good can come from Martha" attitude became humble; and I must say, I was elated at finding so many bright and talented pupils in a place that had been allowed nearly to disintegrate. Although the school had sunk to a low level, in contrast the homes of these cotton-farming people were well kept, furnished beautifully, and gave evidence that the people maintained high standards. Pianos displayed lesson materials on their racks. Baby Grand pianos graced several homes in the community.

In school, church, and many homes, it was no problem to find a pianist. David Barrett, a high-school senior, played piano or accordion for all of our Christmas programs. His sister Dana could both play and direct when we needed her. Other community people came to help us. Nelson Doughty always managed the lighting for programs and plays.

Instead of a dearth of talent, as I had forethought, Martha community offered a wealth of accomplished people whom I labeled "salt-of-the-earth"

almost demanded that I resign for the remainder of the year.

After a few days of bed rest, I began to feel well enough to help with some banquet speeches. Too, there were two interested speech students whom I just couldn't give up. David Barrett came to my house before school or when he could possibly find some time. He had prepared a cutting from THE ROBE and was advanced to the state tournament. The morning Dad drove him to the meet in Norman, David came by before I got out of bed to show me the improvements he'd made since I had last heard him. I listened as the talented young man re-enacted Marcellus' speech before the emperor declaring that he chose to die rather than to deny that he had become a Christian. David's accomplishment represented much time and effort. He had come so far because of his determination to excel. Whatever he won doesn't matter; or if he didn't win against the state top contestants, he was a winner. It was a thrill to me to see such a wholesome youth perform. He had been taught good basic values by Christian parents and had learned that hard work is rewarded.

I spent the next two years teaching first grade. I immediately loved the Latinos. Such beautiful and fun-loving children! So anxious to learn. Their parents had engrained a desire for learning into them. 🐻

(KATE JACKSON LEWIS--after a long, interesting, and varied public-schools teaching career--now lives in retirement in Purcell. This article is one of her many contributions to WESTVIEW.)

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A CHILD'S ALPHABET OF WESTERN OKLAHOMA

By Pat Kourt

Alfalfa sweetness scenting the air,
Bolls of cotton for clothes to wear.

(PAT KOURT is an alumna of SOSU and a resident of Thomas, where she teaches Creative Writing and oversees the library.)

Coyote cries wailing through the night,
Daily chores in dawning light.

Evening breezes quenching the heat,
Fields of golden, waving wheat.

Grassy pastures with trickling creeks,
Hills with rocky, sagebrush peaks.

Indian blanket spreading wild,
Jagged mountains, granite-styled.

Kaleidoscopic evening skies,
Lightning sparked by fireflies.

Mistletoe of living green,
Native American dancing scene.

Oil wells with a beating sound
Prairie dogs hidden underground.

Quiet rivers running deep,
Red-clay canyons, narrow and steep.

Scissortails flitting from tree to tree,
Tornadoes threatening severity.

Untamed winds of raging ire,
Vibrant flaming creek campfire.

Windmills whirring with soothing lulls,
X, a brand burned onto bulls.

Yuccas in the burning sand,
Zeal for living in a wonderful land! 

A a Aa Aa

b Bb Bb

c Cc Cc

ART BY ERIN O'CONNOR

FEATURES

FUTURE ISSUES

SUMMER, 1990 (Western Oklahoma's Diverse Voices; Deadline: 2-15-90)

FALL, 1990 (Western Oklahoma Friendships; Deadline: 7-1-90)

WINTER, 1990 (Western Oklahoma Reunions; Deadline: 9-15-90)

SPRING, 1991 (Western Oklahoma Romance; Deadline: 12-15-90)

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FALL, 1991 (Western Oklahoma Seasons; Deadline: 9-1-91)

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FALL, 1993 (Western Oklahoma Farmhouses; Deadline: 7-1-93)

NOTICE: We prefer 5 x 7 or 8 x 10 b & w glossies that we can keep - also, clear, original manuscripts (no copies, please).

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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 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 (e.g. "Western Oklahoma Friendships"--Fall, 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 b & w 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 ~~first~~ person. *third* 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.

9. Accentuate originality and creativity.

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

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