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W E S T V I E W

A JOURNAL OF WESTERN OKLAHOMA

VOLUME 10

FALL 1990

NO. 1

\$3.⁰⁰



Western Oklahoma Friendships



Westview



Fall 1990

F O R E W O R D

This issue on the theme "Western Oklahoma Friendships" is our thirty-seventh—our signal that we are now beginning our tenth year of publication. Throughout these years, we have constantly recognized—at least to ourselves—the contributions made by the people who have held the Art Director position. The first three issues were overseen by Pat Lazelle Stewart, SOSU Art instructor who left campus for another position. For the next five issues, the Editor (then called Managing Editor) doubled as Art Director and Managing Editor. After that period, things looked up for WESTVIEW when David Oldham appeared on the scene and served as Art Director for twelve issues. Thus far, the Art Director who has the longest tenure is J. Don Wood, who did fourteen issues. Then in January, 1990, Steven Cost assumed the role and has brought to us the realization that we can become more fully computerized and perhaps better.

Our present plan is to prepare the journal completely from the computer disk done in the Editorial Office. Now that we are using the same kind of program in both offices, it won't be necessary to go through the conversion processes that have been giving us trouble. We have recently learned, for instance, that our converting process somehow devoured part of Sandra Soli's poetry that appeared in our Summer 1990 issue. We now respectfully restore those lines. Readers, please turn to the next page to see what you missed.

Corrected and happy,

Leroy Thomas

Leroy Thomas
Editor



SANDRA SOLI'S POETRY RESTORED

SIGNATURE

I fold stillness like curtains
the heaviest of air
after misty rain at breakfast. It is
a desperate day, as the Irish would say.
A morning to speak to absent fathers,
for walks near a sea. Not this one
or that—any sea will do. But a beach,
a tongue of salt in the wind, the hearing
of lost voices, for the sculpted identity
of one's own name carved with a stick.
Aware of the tide's healing intention . . .
the filling of a damp signature with foam,
a bit of water teasing in, the warning
that this most intimate of moments
approaches, disappears.

HARD TRIP

They refused their lives,
these animals of Mexican provinces,
Bundles of freight stacked near
an air hole; they accepted their deaths
on the Texas rails but went down biting.
This journey was an economic decision;
their deaths were economic deaths.

We had imagined no such possibility.
The indecency of death in boxcars
now forty-year-old baggage,
these eighteen will not rate so much
as a paragraph in the histories.
They weren't even Jewish.

Once you see the faces,
the bruised eyes of lost men,
they stay with you. Your own stigmata.
You cannot get over it. You give up
trying to get over it.

Paying, always the paying.
Good money and fine Catholic sons
melting at two hundred degrees,
one of them just seventeen. His father
says the boy could not have dreamed
such a thing, this crazy death

for a job washing dishes. But of course
dreams of sons extend beyond the fathers.

It is a problem, these illegals.
They knew at the beginning
this consignment was a dirty business,
El Paso to Dallas a really hard trip.
But this one thing. It is not bearable.
It is not to be borne.

WEATHER CHANGE

A cold front
scatters afternoon light;
southwest skies
thread needles with fire.
Past the weather line
you could burn fingers
in so much blue.

No place for illusions,
this porch. The cutting done,
tubs boil on portable stoves
away from women.

One twelve-point buck
comes easily to bone,
muscle melting, flesh
A quick memory. Skull worthy of a fair mount,
decent wood.

Sizzling, the rest of the harvest
percolates through coal. It's only meat
now, like any other.

The buck's eye
watches me,
asks How's the weather
up there?
Seasons change
and the shape of frost
but never the kill. ☘

*(SANDRA SOLI, who calls herself an
English "girl," is a wife and mother in
Oklahoma City. She is also a graduate
student at the University of Central
Oklahoma, and she enjoys writing—as
her schedule allows time.)*

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

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Kulkarni in Seedtime

(A REVIEW OF DR. S.S. KULKARNI'S THE SONG OF SEED AND OTHER POEMS)

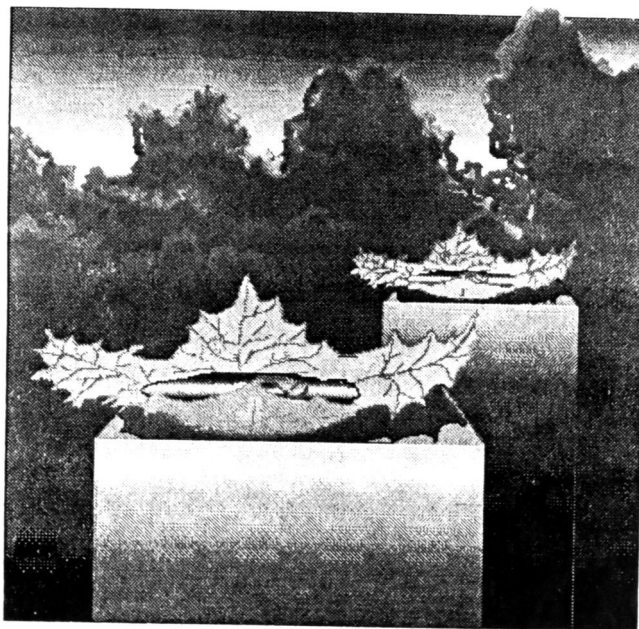
—By Dr. Leroy Thomas

Dr. Shyamkant S. Kulkarni is a family practitioner and surgeon in Watonga; as an avocation, he enjoys writing—especially short stories and poetry. Born in 1937 at Saswad, India, he was educated at Saswad and Pune. He obtained his M.D. degree in 1960 and received post-graduate training in the United States and the United Kingdom.

After twenty years of successful practice in India, in 1987 he moved to the United States in search of new life and new adventures. Even while engaged fulltime in an internal-medicine practice, he finds time to write as well as to edit and publish the literary magazine EAGLE'S FLIGHT.

THE SONG OF SEED AND OTHER POEMS is his first book to be published in English. Many of the poems are from his Western Oklahoma experiences. His subjects are varied—youth, maturing love, death, and fate. Another reviewer, quoted on the book cover, has rightly said, “[The reader shouldn't] pass by the fruit of his [Kulkarni's] genius without taking a slow, juicy bite.”

Kulkarni's attractive paperbound book will make a good addition to anyone's private library, and his poetic thoughts will challenge the perceptive reader. It's a bargain for \$8.00 (\$6.50 + \$1.50 mailing costs), and it may be obtained from the author—203 N. Weigel; Watonga, OK 73772. ☛



*Computer Illustration by
Lisa Bradford*



FUTURE ISSUES

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

SUMMER, 1991 (Western Oklahoma Pastimes/Entertainment; Deadline: 2-15-91)

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

WINTER, 1991 (Western Oklahoma Christmastime; Deadline: 9-15-91)

SPRING, 1992 (Western Oklahoma Relatives/Kinfolks; Deadline: 12-15-91)

SUMMER, 1992 (Western Oklahoma Daydreams/Illusions; Deadline: 2-15-92)

FALL, 1992 (Western Oklahoma Dustbow Days; Deadline: 7-1-92)

WINTER, 1992 (Western Oklahoma Colorful Characters; Deadline: 9-15-92)

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

SUMMER, 1993 (Western Oklahoma Feasts; Deadline: 2-15-93)

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

WINTER, 1993 (Western Oklahoma Youth; Deadline: 9-15-92)

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

SUMMER, 1994 (Western Oklahoma Hard Times\Good Times; Deadline: 2-15-94)

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

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

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

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

STYLE SHEET

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

1. Always mail a submission flat in a 9 X 12 Manila envelope, remembering to include a SASE for possible rejection. Mail to : Dr. Leroy Thomas; Editor, *WESTVIEW*; 100 Campus Drive, SOSU, Weatherford, OK 73096.

2. Use a coversheet that contains name, address, telephone number, suggested issue and date (e.g. "Western Oklahoma Reunions"—Winter, 1990).

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

4. Remember the importance of a clean typewritten or word-processed manuscript (double-spacing for prose and single-spacing for poetry). Use a good grade of 8 1/2 X 11 white paper. Submit pen-and-ink graphics on white paper. Submit 5 X 7 or 8 X 10 black & white photos that may be kept on file in our offices and not returned.

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

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

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

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

9. Accentuate originality and creativity.

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



Illustration by Matt Hechman



Camaraderie

ee'gom'khawa

—By Pam Smith

A ee'gom'khawa is Kiowa for “my friend.” One of the things I was most excited about when my family moved to Oklahoma from Texas in 1967 was Indians. I was twelve, and I was sure that I’d become friends with the Indian people, be invited to their pow wows, and as in the movies be the token white person. After all, there was usually a blonde in cowboy-Indian movies—right?

I was disappointed when I learned I was in the minority of white kids (the only one) who had even considered this exciting scenario. My white girl friends said things such as, “Huh?” It took time with the Indian people too. My motive of course has matured. My Indian friendships seem to grow more dear every year. Just recently, I was waiting in the car for my five-year-old daughter, Mary Grace. She had some grocery shopping to do “by myself.” Suddenly my car door opened,

and it was Jewel Shawnee, an Indian friend from high school. We hadn’t seen each other in years, and we hugged and laughed and talked a little about ex-husbands. After Jewel walked away, I thought about how thankful I am for my Indian friends. Through the years I have danced a few Indian dances, but more important it’s taken time to cultivate this love. I’ve always seen something special in the Indian people, something unique and different. When we look at one another and smile, I feel good because when Indian friends look at you, they look into your soul. We should all only hope that they will love what they see. ♡

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



ON SATURDAY NIGHT

Camaraderie

—By Margie Berry Fowler

On Saturday night, in days gone by,
We would play Forty-two; my how time would fly.
We made plates of candy and popped big bowls of corn.
Bid high, wide, and handsome until the early hours of mom.

Ten children would play, laugh, sing, and shout
Until about twelve they were all played out.
Floyd and Alvin bid high, and then they would smoke;
Jewel just grinned, while Margie told jokes.

Kidd was the first of the gang to go.
Uncle Sam called, so he couldn't say no.
He was sent to Roswell to learn about bombs;
There he had to live with Harrys and Johns.

On Saturday night sometimes he was here;
He'd hitchhike a ride and with no fear.
He would just walk out and say with a grin,
"I hope the captain doesn't see me
When I'm ready to go in."

One day, some literature Jewel did order—
All about Arkansas, just east of our border.
They read it all over and quickly got the fever.
From the way they talked, I knew they
Wouldn't be here long either.

They got a little Ford and packed it high and low,
Said, "We're headed for Arkansas as fast as we can go."
Now they are gone; our gang is all broken,
And do we miss them? Well, I'm not just jokin'.

(MARGIE BERRY FOWLER, who lives in Elk City, enjoys traveling with her husband, Roy, and baking for friends. This, her second WESTVIEW work, was submitted by her daughter, regular WESTVIEW writer Margie Snowden North.)

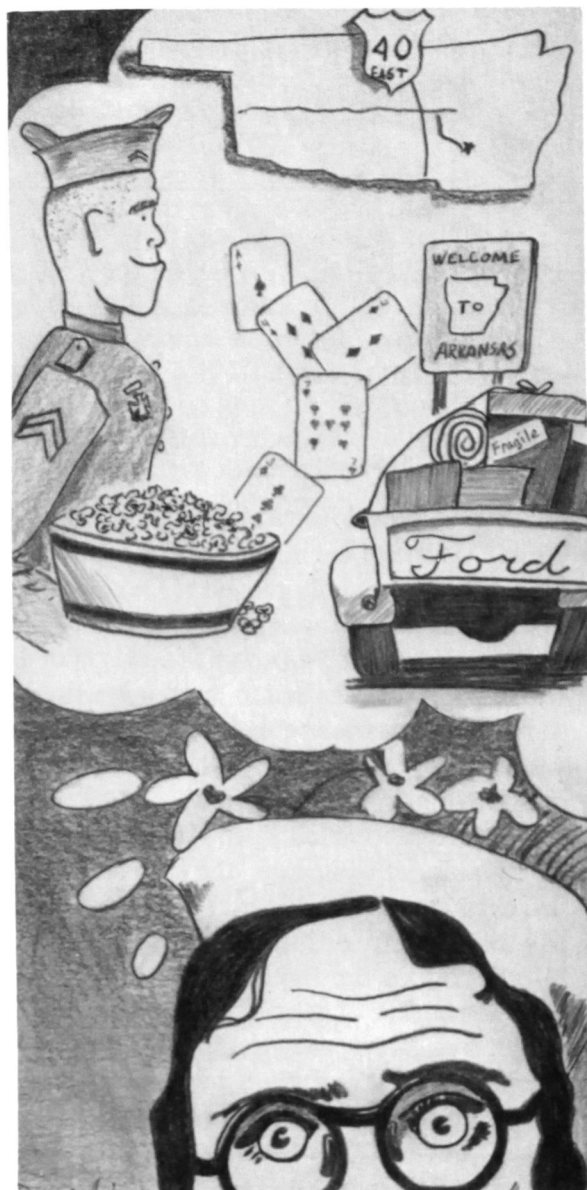


Illustration by Duane Andrews

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M EMORY

Some faces that I chanced to meet,
Perhaps not long ago
Though to our memory they are sweet
Again we may not know.

But may we say when days have passed
And friends have come and gone,
Though they from us long since are cast,
Their memory still lives on.
(written at the end of school, 1915)

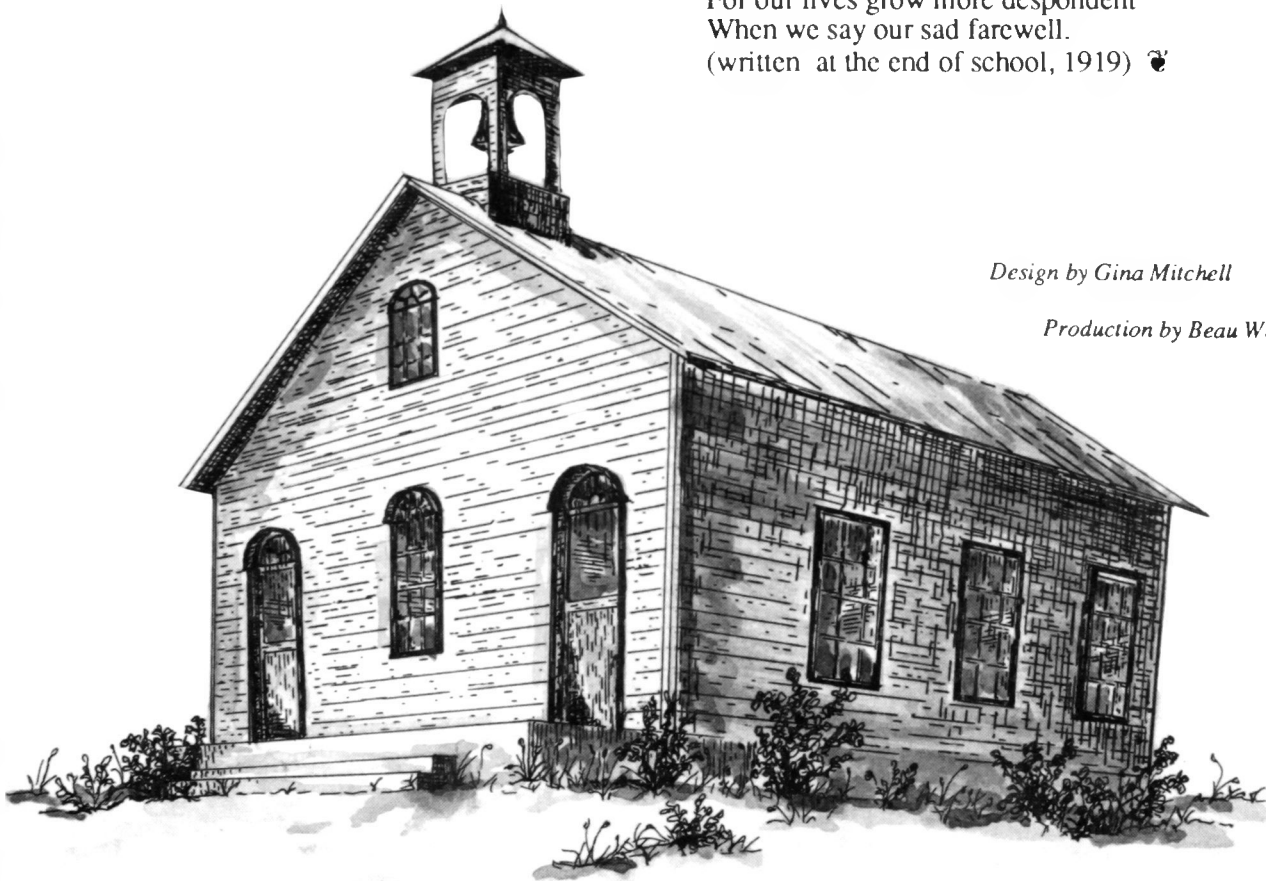
P ARTING DAY

Happy school days soon are over--
Schoolmates part and say goodbye;
Sad eyes tell past friendships' story--
Sad hearts give a parting sigh.

Trembling hands shake with a passion--
Parting thoughts all pleasures quell.
Melancholy preys upon us,
And our souls it does impel;
For our lives grow more despondent
When we say our sad farewell.
(written at the end of school, 1919) ♣

Design by Gina Mitchell

Production by Beau Wade



(EUEN D. ELLIS, who was born in 1899 and died in 1980, wrote during his youth many poems for his own enjoyment. These are his first published works; they were submitted by Margie Snowden North of Texola.)

Illustration by Gina Mitchell

GOING TO ARD

"Mama, can we go to Bobbie and A.C.'s?"

That was a familiar request back in the fifties. Papa worked at the carbon black plant at Borger, Texas, at that time, and as a result we saw him only two days a week. But because we hoped it would be only a temporary position that would support his family until someday the farming would begin to pay off, we stayed on the farm near Erick and tried to keep it going.

The days and nights were long to the five of us kids while Papa was away, especially during the summer months. So about once a week, we would cajole Mama into going to visit our neighbors to the east, Bobbie and A.C.

The Joneses lived about a mile away as the crow flies--or as the Snowdens walked (we were without a vehicle while Papa was away). So after the milking and other chores were done, we eagerly began the trek. It took us across the cowlot where ole Daisy and the other cows stood around chewing their cud and watching us without much interest. Then there was a sandy lane where stickers and sunflowers grew, an even sandier field where were planted watermelons and peas in season, then a shinnery patch crisscrossed with cowpaths we could follow.

In the duskiness we would pick our way across the next sandy patch in which cotton was sometimes planted (yielding two or three bolls per scrawny stalk). The plot lay on the gentle slope of a hill and by then we were getting a little tired as our feet (bare in warm weather) sank into the loose soil.

Next came another strip of shinnery and a rusting barbed-wire fence which indicated we were almost there. The tangle of shinnery was worse on the downhill side, but in the gathering darkness we could see the stovepipe thrusting out from the roof of the little tarpaper shack (much like our own). We could see the lamplight beckoning from a window and we began to hurry, knowing there were light and laughter just inside those walls.

Wanda, the Joneses' daughter, was always as glad to see us as we were to see her. Sometimes we huddled for girl talk; sometimes

-By Margi



Illustration by Olivia Ortiz

Production by Brad Snow

BOBBIE A.C.'S

Snowden North

we all played dominoes or forty-two, and I can still see A.C.--quiet, unassuming, frowning just a little in concentration before he triumphantly slapped down just the right combination of dots to "catch a hand." I can hear Bobbie's laugh and her offer of a bowl of home-canned yellow elberta peaches. Sometimes she pincurled our hair, or we helped her shell black-eyed peas.

"We knew from the start that we were never to mention that war around A. C."

Once A. C. got out his Hawaiian tremola, and we were allowed to strum gently on the strings. How I wished I could take it off to myself and attempt to learn how to play it. A. C. was too shy to play the instrument for us. Bobbie whispered that he had gotten it during the war--a war which he wouldn't talk about. We knew from the start that we were never to mention that war around A.C.

There were often hot tea and popcorn, maybe a puzzle to work, jokes to tell, back-dated magazines to read. Whatever transpired during those frequent visits, we never once questioned whether it was worth the long walk there and the even longer walk back home through the pitch darkness.

We didn't know back then that Bobbie and A.C. were poor--maybe even poorer than we were--because of the wealth of good times we had at their house on many a summer's night. ☘

(MARGIE SNOWDEN NORTH, who formerly lived on a ranch north of Erick, now makes a ranch near Texola her home. Her first book, *TO CHASE A DREAM*, which was reviewed in the Summer 1990 issue of *WESTVIEW*, was recently nominated for the National Western Heritage Award in Literature.)



Design by Cynde Roof

Letter From Home

—Aaron Baker

Dear Goldie,

Tuesday

Yours received Tuesday. Happy about your grades. Proud of you.. Earth frozen and cold.. Snowed again yesterday. Then heavy freeze. About isolated until road is plowed. Icy trees pretty. If didn't have to get out. Wind..chill factor zero. Same old Okla wind. Face and hands turn blue. Everybody stays in except to postoffice. Half the time mail doesn't get through. Neighbor's dogs bark alot. Down wind Not much news Saw one of your old boyfriends picking up mail. Said to tell you "hello". It was Harry Wattles. Received letter from Marvel. Said Elmo had boughtnew Chevy pickup. Hope you wear warm clothes to your classes. Do you see other kids from here. Saw Cambridges Sunday at church in Sentinel Their twins are cute but crying. Frances wouldn't use nursery. Dan Pintar called one day last week. Says Vi is playing in a western band in Lone Wolf. Piano. Cris may be pregnant again. Says you never write. Sarah and Jim McCall plan to move to Texas. Leaves only Gel to farm Springhill place. Be glad to have you home during Christmas break. Papa will come for you in Chrysler. Safely I hope. Swears he can drive as well as ever, but health is not the same. You know Papa. We stayed up late one night to see Johnny Carson. Interviewed a man from Rocky, OK who raises ostriches. Judy Hardman called late during show to tell us Tigers beat Thomas. Jack Nunn, who always had a crush on you, was high point man. Guess some game. Old Dan Hunter passed on. He was eighty-eight. Oldtimers about gone. Always little lonely after Martha passed away. Well, study and stay warm. Wear mittens outside. Sign off. Watch Weatherford traffic. Especially around Highway 66. Stay well. White.

Love, Mom



Design by Mike Sigurdson

DONT TOUCH ME YET, GERONIMO; IM DANCING APACHE ROCK

—By Aaron A. Baker

Weaving spirits of Red Rock Stompers,
bare chests and naked feet,
Mini-skirts and lithesome legs swaying
to psychosomatic sound
of banging drums in hard rock rhythm
of restless hunters with phallic
guitars picking like wildfires
with shifting lights and tilting shadows--
Apaches roll and bruise pungent sagebrush,
weaving spirits and clanging ghosts.

Can't be trusting on video,
If seal is broken,
void the treaty

with laughing paleface turning redface
to baggy trousers of Tipi Tail Twisters,
worldly wise but not wisely.

Choose your band; your TV's showing at 2 a.m.--
or take handy earphones for radio doings
of Dusty Earth Dwellers--

happy hunters shaking, shifting, loving,
night-time warriors digging lightly
hardly listening to fading hoofbeats,
feeling only the soft west wind shifting--sighing
Little papoose, stop your crying--
Geronimo rides again! 🐾



Illustration by Mark Williams

Design by Mike Sigurdson

Production by Sandra Snell

*Dedicated to the poet, Diane Wakoski, and her many
Apache friends living west of Interstate 35.

(AARON A. BAKER, a faithful and prolific contributor to
WESTVIEW, appreciates the Western Oklahoma sense of humor
often expressed following everyday occurrences, though at some
point in time seemed quite serious.)

Camaraderie

A FRIEND WHO STILL LIVES IN THOMAS

—By Margie Cooke Porteus

Together

We sat on little red chairs
At Sunday School,
Shared teenage secrets,
School experiences.

We both

Were struggling marrieds.
My baby's wetness made a stain
On her new couch.
I was mortified.
She was gracious.

Our lives parted.

Correspondence was erratic.
Once, in a note, I told of my
Youthful envy of her family's refrigerator—
indoor bath—her car.
She replied, "I was envious of your
brothers, your sisters."

After forty years

We're states apart;
Contact is sometimes.
Distance doesn't erase the past.
We're still friends. ♥

(MARGIE COOKE PORTEUS, who lived her formative years in Thomas and earned her Bachelor's degree at SOSU, is a retired teacher living in Paonia, Colorado. She is a prolific WESTVIEW writer.)



Production by Colynda Urton

Design by Bryce Brimer

Illustration by Brad Snow

We played cowboys and Indians

*In the hills of Comanche County
And explored mountain streams
In a canoe hewn out of wood.
It mattered not my skin was pale
And his was somewhat darker.
We knew nothing of Sand Creek,
Nor of promises made in vain.
We knew only the love of brothers
And sunshine in the spring.*

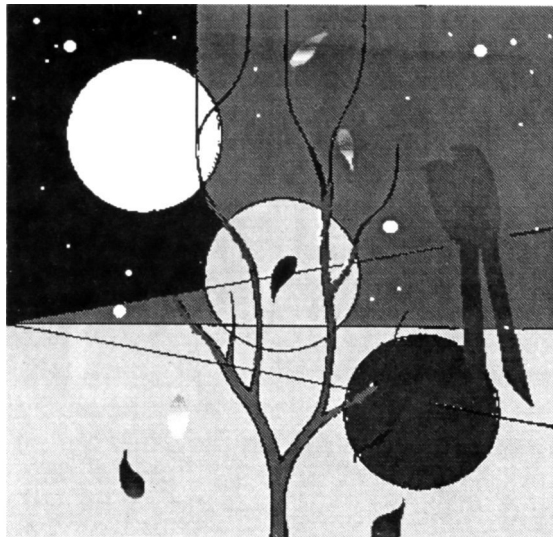
*One fateful day in History class,
Our innocence was shattered.
He stared at me across the room,
Pain in cold, black eyes.
After school, we walked along
Our own dark trail of tears
And talked about the things we'd heard
And mourned the memory.*

*By the shores of Beaver River,
Hands cut and bound together,
We swore to turn the soiled page
of history
And rewrite it if we could.* ☘

*(RICHARD CROW, from Idabel,
a sophomore English major at
OBU, breaks into the ranks of
published writers in this issue.)*

Sunshine in the Spring

—By Richard Crow



*Illustration by Jerry Toppah
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1100 EAST MAIN



R.B. & I

—By Elmer M. Mills

R. B. Hensley was my playmate, and we lived catercornered across the street from each other just three blocks off the business center of Weatherford. The Main Street of America, U.S. Highway 66, ran along in front of our homes. It zigzagged through town, and I even recall it being nothing but a graded road all the way.

Both R. B. and I were about six years old. Most of the time I was at his house, or he was at mine; or we were out in the middle of the road playing in the sand pockets. Well, actually it was pure dirt. Traffic wasn't heavy; therefore, our mothers didn't have much to worry about. The time was 1912.

Roads during those days needed little maintenance—just some smoothing down, thus getting rid of the high centers so the axles of the cars wouldn't drag. Wagons and buggies seemed to be the chief vehicles of the highway, intermingled occasionally with those high-skirted

"The time was 1912"

automobiles. The cars back then, as compared with the ones today, ran on "stilts" in a manner of speaking. Otherwise, R. B. perhaps would never have lived to tell the story. However, he did live to tell it, that is until after he was grown. I hadn't seen him since we were kids when suddenly he, as a young man, popped up at our place, and I hardly knew him. I was still living at home, and he had made it a special point to see me on his way through. My, how we enjoyed our visit! I've never seen nor heard from him since.

Anyway, he and I had lots of fun playing on the "Main Street of America," and we picked the biggest dust pocket or chug hole in the road to do

our wallowing. That smooth, silky dust reminded me of water. Cars were scarce going by, but when they did they were a threat. Of course, our mothers couldn't keep an eye on us, and they got into the habit of letting us go. Anyone who has ever lived in the dustbowl country knows what I mean. The chug holes in the road between our houses got so big they made ideal "swimming" holes, so full of that smooth, silk-like dust. They were just right for guys like us to swim around in. We would dive in and paddle out, cutting all sorts of "die-does."

One day R. B. and I were really in a big way. Both of us were, I suppose, completely submerged when suddenly we heard a rumbling above.

Sticking up my head, I jumped in time, but R. B. was a little slow on the draw and got

"Ole 66... the Main Street of America"

caught in the middle. A Model T ran completely over him. Luckily, the car straddled him, rolling him over and over in the dirt. Up he jumped and all I could see was a streak of dirt shooting full length for home. It looked like a rocket taking off. I was soon in my own front yard looking and wondering.

After the driver of the car had left and R. B.'s crying had quieted down, that feller showed himself looking sound as a dollar—no scratches, no aches, and no pains. From then on, we, with the cooperation of our mothers, rehearsed the situation and decided definitely to close forever those dust pockets swimmings on "Ole' 66, the Main Street of America." ☛

(ELMER M. MILLS spent his early years in Weatherford. He now lives in Neosho, Missouri, where he entertains his children and grandchildren—as well as other WESTVIEW readers—with his anecdotes about frontier Western Oklahoma.)

Production by Olivia Ortiz

Design by Gina Mutchell

Nostalg



By George Levite

Companionship

When

Illustration by Robb Kopp

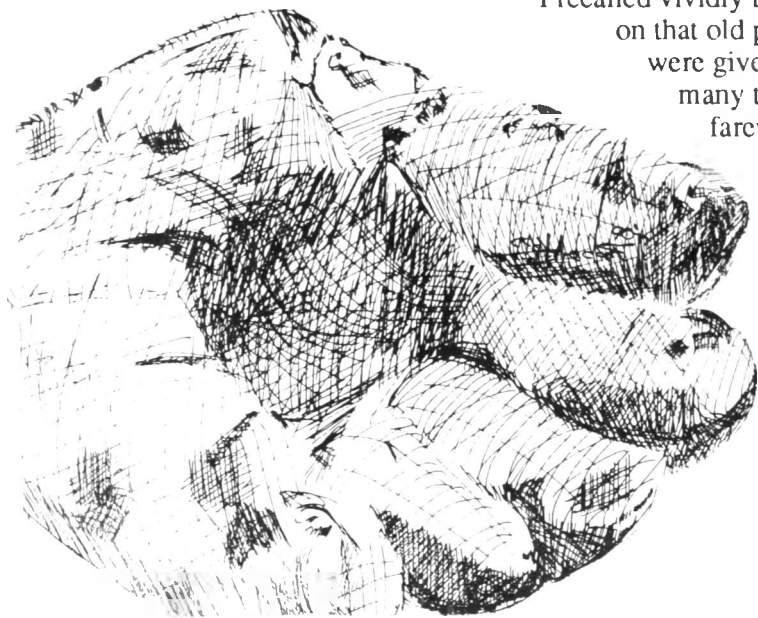
a crew was sent to dismantle the old depot in Apache, I found myself filled with nostalgic memories. The railroad had been the lifeblood of our small community in its growing years, and I suddenly felt the burden of my years as the boards were torn away.

I recalled vividly the many joyful and sad occasions which had taken place on that old platform. Wedding parties and victorious athletic teams were given rousing welcomes from the assembled crowd. And many tears were shed by those who wished their loved ones farewell when they left for military service.

One such departure remains in my mind as clearly as if it happened yesterday. It was the day my friend Jim Amspacher left from that very spot to fight the dreaded Hun in far-off France. I gave him my baseball glove, my most prized possession, hoping he could use it to while away the lonely hours with some other baseball-loving Yank.

"It won't be any time at all," I remember assuring him, "until I'll be coming down to this old station to get my glove back. And to see you, too, of course!" And we laughed as young men do and said goodbye.

But Jim, like so many of America's finest, didn't come home. He died in France in a cause that suspended many a friendship and severed many a family tie. It was a war to end all wars.



ia

"He died in France in a cause that suspended many; a friendship and severed family ties."

Because of primitive shipping methods and the large number of our boys who died, it was several years later that Jim's surprised and then stunned family was called to that same old platform to claim a small wooden crate that contained his effects.

Eager to touch what he had touched last, his folks opened the box right there on the platform and sent for me, the friend who had been like a brother they often said in the sad years following their loss.

When I hurried down the hill from the store to see what had happened, I saw them huddled around the open crate. With tears in her eyes, Mrs. Amspacher handed my glove to me. I had come to that old platform to retrieve it after all. For us that day, that spot became hallowed ground.

Such a place should be dismantled with gentle hands.



(GEORGE LEVITE moved to Apache, Oklahoma Territory, in 1903 at the age of ten with his father and mother, who established Levite's Hand Corner Store. Upon his father's death, George assumed ownership of the store, which he



operated until his death in 1975. He was also a sign painter and a freelance writer for newspapers throughout the state. His autobiography, *GEORGE! FOR LILY*, is in its seventh printing. "Nostalgia" was submitted by his daughter, Molly Levite Griffis, of Norman.)

*Design by Cynde Roof
Production by Robb Kopp*



Companionship

A FISHERMAN'S FRIENDSHIP

—By Dale W. Hill

Hey, Kansas!" the old fisherman said after taking the pipe out of his mouth and tapping out some of the ashes. "If you're gonna do much good in this lake, you better throw away that stringer and get one of these buckets."

"Not with what I caught," I laughed. "What are you fishing for?"

My license plate had given away my 500-mile trek from Northern Kansas to Western Oklahoma, back to my Caddo County roots. An avid fisherman, I didn't waste much time discovering the lakes. Both Chickasha Lake and Fort Cobb Lake were just fifteen minutes from my driveway. The lakes were beautiful—flowing with blue, clear water; they almost begged to be fished.

It must have been the last of September or early October when I first met him; I can remember the nippishness in the air and the wind out of the north. My dog and

I had fought the Fort Cobb Dam for nearly three hours and had come up with only a half dozen or so small bass and a few perch, none of

them keepers. Frustrated, I was calling it a day.

"Sandbass, Kansas. Sandbass."

Sandbass. A fish biologist in Kansas had warned me about the regional name for white bass here in Oklahoma, and I had heard that Fort Cobb Lake teamed with "sandies"—an angler's delight.

I smiled and moved on down closer. A good fisherman will heed the advice of the oldtimers who line the banks of their fishing holes. Another old codger was fishing a little farther down, oblivious of anyone around, as I approached. He too had a five-gallon bucket at his side.

"What's wrong with this stringer?" I asked as I held it up.

"Sandbass don't usually bite until about sundown. If you really get into them, you don't want to waste time puttin' 'em on a stringer. Just throw 'em in a bucket and get your jig out again. Wait around. We might get into a few."

"Naw," I said. "I think I'll call it a day."

The old man reached out his hand, and I took it. Shaking my hand vigorously, he introduced himself.

"Don Jones," he said. "Most folks 'round here call me 'Jones'. I live down there at the Ski Boy Drive-in. I own the place. You ought to stop in sometime; the food is good."

I introduced myself and bade both fishermen adieu.

Friendships are great, but there's something about a fisherman's friendship. Jones' friendship was special. He taught me all about fishing the Fort Cobb Dam—how to catch the fish, when to get out there, when to give up. He even taught me about life.

"Can you think of a better place to be than here, Kansas?" he would ask after an hour of less than productive fishing. "Best place in the world to unwind. Draws you closer to God."

Of course he was correct, and almost any day when the weather was bad, I could be assured that ol' man Jones was out there fighting the wind off the riprap near the east end of the dam, fishing for sandies. It was an unannounced meeting place for us—a place where we could relax and jaw a little. Jones came from Rocky, once the basketball capitol of Western Oklahoma, but now he passed his time operating a small ice-cream shop and fishing Fort Cobb Lake.

"Kansas," he would say. "If you ever want to get a reputation as a good fisherman, never tell anybody about the times you were skunked!" Good advice for fishermen and non-fishermen alike, but that's not all he taught me.

With ol' man Jones, fishing wasn't competitive, though often he would act as if it were.

"When you caught that first bass," he would say, "it didn't make me mad—just made me want to fish a little harder. But when you caught that second one, now that hacked me off!"

Fishing on Fort Cobb Lake had a halcyon effect on troubled minds, especially when the fish were biting. One evening I took a fifth grader who was having difficulty accepting his parents' divorce out to the dam to catch a few sandies and forget about the trials of familial turmoil. The fish were biting.

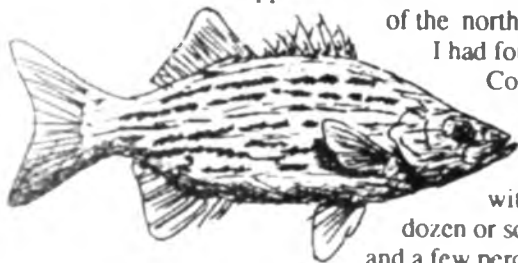
Jones was catching them one after the other, and I was humping it to keep up with him.

Design by Bryce Brimer

Production by Duane Andrews

Illustration by Bryce Brimer

Commonality



"I keep getting bites, but I can't catch any," the lad complained urgently after fifteen minutes without a fish.

"Just keep your jig out there and you'll catch one pretty soon," I yelled excitedly, not wanting to lose any fishing time by checking the boy's line and letting the old master fisherman put it on my head.

Quickly Jones laid down his rod and took the youngster's out of the water as I kept on fishing.

"Hoss," the old fisherman said loudly as he examined the boy's jig, "you need to go home and tell your momma on Mr. Hill. This jig doesn't have a hook on it. Mr. Hill sure didn't want you to catch many fish when he gave you this reel!" Then he stopped examining the jig and looked at me. "Mr. Hill, you should be ashamed!" I was.

"When you caught that first bass, it didn't make me mad—just made me want to fish a little harder. But when you caught that second one, now that hacked me off!"

Embarrassed and humbled, I took time out to put an artificial bait on my friend's line and waited meekly for him to catch his first fish. Mr. Jones always took out a little time for others, no matter how good the going was or how bad.

One late winter day when the wind was just right, I stopped by to pick him up. Ol' Jones partially blocked the door and didn't invite me in. I knew something was wrong.

"Ah," he said with a quiver in his voice that was uncharacteristic of his nearly seventy years of fishing. "I just haven't felt like fishing too much since the woman died." He swallowed deeply and bravely fought back the tears.

I was crushed and speechless. I tried to offer him an apology. Stunned, I drove down to the lake and stared at the water lapping against the rocks. It was useless. I had lost any mood to fish. I found myself driving back home without wetting a hook. It just wasn't the same.

Oh, I did see him out there a few times after that and even fished with him some, but things were different. His smile wasn't as ready, and the loss of his mate seemed to have robbed the old fisherman of his wisdom and humor. No, he just wasn't the same.

One spring day nearly a year later, I was doing the school crosswalk when I spotted ol' man Jones' son. "I gotta get over there and go fishin' with Mr.

Jones," I said.

"Well, it'll be a while," his son broke the news to me. "Dad had a stroke. Bad one. It's not likely he'll ever go fishing again."

I was dazed. The cars blurred as my head spun and I fought back tears. I felt like going home—a semi-state of depression set in. Was my ten years of fisherman friendship over? Could I ever fish Fort Cobb Lake again?

It was my honor to serve as a pallbearer at Mr. Jones' funeral not long after I talked with his son. The preacher talked about fishing and being a part of nature as I wiped the tears away. My mind flashed back to bygone fishing experiences; those days were over for good.

But now, when I'm found fishing along the Fort Cobb Dam, most assuredly my thoughts go back to a better time—a time when ol' man Jones and I shared a fisherman's tale and a fisherman's friendship. Yes, those times are gone. But I'm sure as long as that dam beckons fishermen, it will spawn new friendships. After all, fisherman friendships are eternal. 🐟

(DALE W. HILL of Washita makes another of many appearances in this issue. Mr. Hill is a free-lance writer who enjoys playing guitar and teaching others to play the guitar as well as experimenting with computer programs. He works as an Elementary School counselor in Anadarko.)

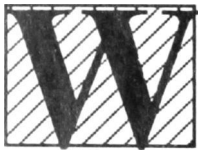
Illustration by Cindy Fast



Commonality

When Artists Meet

—By Betty Brookman



hen two artists' paths cross, something beautiful is likely to occur. That is what happened when Helen Neufeld Coon and Erna Harms Rempel created some lovely masterpieces. Helen does the poetry, and Erna illustrates—and so the piece "When God Made Oklahoma" (printed below) was born.

Helen Neufeld Coon is from the Chicago area, growing up in Brighton Park. She stayed there until graduation from high school and two years following. During one of those two years, she attended North Park Junior College on Chicago's North side and recalls doing her homework on the hour-long streetcar ride. The second year, she enjoyed the role of "white-collar girl" at Scripture Press—then located in Chicago.

Three years at Bluffton College followed. There she met her future husband, Robert Coon. Helen and Robert spent their first six years of marriage in two other Chicago neighborhoods where he finished seminary, she taught school, and they served their first church. They have since served churches in Illinois, Kansas, Pennsylvania, and Oklahoma. In Oklahoma, Helen and Erna started working together; the Coons ministered at the Herold Mennonite Church near Bessie.

Helen says, "Books, libraries, and students have always had a big part in my life from the time a Chicago librarian and a kindergarten

teacher read aloud to me. I can recall almost being hit by a car as I read a book while crossing the street as I came home from the library. The smell of a newly opened book still gives me a thrill."

Helen Coon has published articles, stories, and poetry; her first book is *THE HOUSE AT THE BACK OF THE LOT*. She and her husband now live in Turpin, Oklahoma, and they have three grown children—Russell, Catherine, and Dorothy.

Helen serves on the Beaver County Library Board and does substitute teaching in schools in Liberal, Kansas.

Erna Harms Rempel is from the Clinton area. She has a twin brother, Ernest Harms, and other brothers and sisters. Their parents were J. A. and Eva Harms; like most pioneer parents, they stressed education and work on their farm. Erna has always had her artistic talent. She remembers that in third grade at Bear Creek School she won a blue ribbon for her drawing. She went on to Corn High School and upon graduation learned of her illness which has left her with a physical handicap.

"Helen Coon has published articles, stories, and poetry; her first book is *THE HOUSE AT THE BACK OF THE LOT*."

Erna is married to John Rempel, and they have one daughter, Eva Maxine Jones. The Rempels have farmed all their married life, and Erna has always helped—whether driving a tractor or preparing a delicious meal to take to the field during harvest time.

Erna met Helen Coon when the Coons were ministering at the Herold Mennonite Church several years ago. She has studied art under the direction of Edna Dresser of Chickasha and for several years did portrait painting at Blunck's Studio in Clinton. Now she does her art for enjoyment; her home beautifully mirrors her enjoyment, and her hospitality is most gracious.

The poem "When God Made Oklahoma" by Helen C. Coon and the accompanying illustration by Erna Rempel are presented here with the artists' permission.

WHEN GOD MADE OKLAHOMA



When God made Oklahoma,
I think He had some fun.
I think He used the leftovers
When everything else was done.

When He finished the Painted Desert,
He still had lots of red,
So he brush-stroked Oklahoma
Painting land and riverbed.

When God created mountains,
A pile of stones in His hand
Was stacked in Oklahoma
Making the Arbuckle and Wichita band.

When God built large rain forests
In Arkansas and so,
He had so many extra seeds—
Well, where should the rest go?

So He threw them in a band of green
As thick as one can see;
The Ouachitas and Ozark Plateau
Are filled with many a tree.

When the rivers of many nations
And creeks of many states
Were finished, He just pushed the rest
Into—you guessed the place.

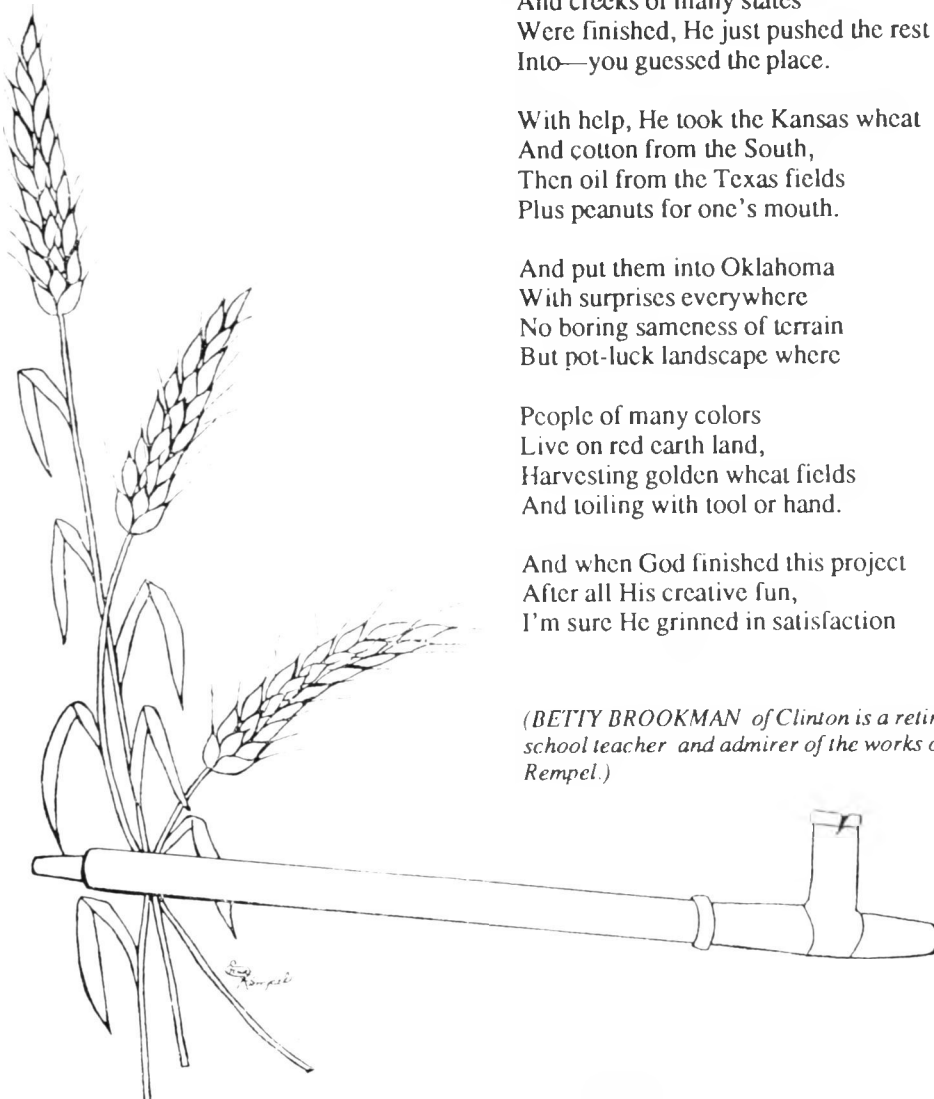
With help, He took the Kansas wheat
And cotton from the South,
Then oil from the Texas fields
Plus peanuts for one's mouth.

And put them into Oklahoma
With surprises everywhere
No boring sameness of terrain
But pot-luck landscape where

People of many colors
Live on red earth land,
Harvesting golden wheat fields
And toiling with tool or hand.

And when God finished this project
After all His creative fun,
I'm sure He grinned in satisfaction

(BETTY BROOKMAN of Clinton is a retired public-school teacher and admirer of the works of Coon and Rempel.)



Geneva Elizabeth

—By Elv

Her name is Geneva Reaves:

A sketch of life would be most appealing
If heard from HER lips with warmth and great feeling.
But second to that, here's a second-hand version
Told with loving respect for a very fine person.

Born near to this century in 1899,
Montague County in Texas near Bowie's town line.
Geneva was three when dad Harvey alone
Came to Lawton and filed a claim of his own.

When the family traveled to reach their new land,
The groups joined together to form a large band
Of covered wagons that crossed an angry Red River.
The memory has lingered with Geneva forever.

She was extremely frightened, the horses even more
As the wagons were ferried to opposite shore.
She held Mother's hand so very tight
And thought she'd die because of her great fright!

Her mother's big fear when Father wasn't home
was that wild Indians would come close to roam
When a red on a rope-haltered horse stopped at her door,
He asked for information--NO MORE!

Once when her father'd been gone in June,
Geneva was singing a gay little tune.
Suddenly not a word could she say:
A little red wagon stood in her way!

Geneva and Dad oft' went out together
To water the horses left close on a tether.
In order to well preserve the wood,
He rolled wheels through the log water-trough "real good."

But once Dad was startled! He heard a big yelp!
When thinking her little hands might help.
The child put her hand onto a wheel.
A broken hand caused the screamly big squeal.

The passing of years brought happy ones
For father, mother, two daughters, three sons.
Years of hard work, often lightened with laughter.
They bought land near Port and settled thereafter.

Walking two miles to a school called Simpler,
The children all carried little pails of their dinner--
Geneva, Wesley, Alma, Lloyd, and Lawrence,
All closely loving and living now since.

Speed Fri



Harvey Reaves:

Deeds

Geneva treasured their time all alone,
While Grandmother read in a reverent tone
In a covered wagon with canvas above.
She learned from the Bible--Geneva's very first love.

Geneva has worked very hard all her life--
When she was a child and later as a wife--
Chopping cotton, then picking to make big bales,
But how thrilling to see her full sack on the scales.

Geneva's husband, Vernon, was her very loved one,
The jolliest man she'd ever known.
When he was older and became very ill,
He was taken to the hospital by R.L.

When the doctor checked Vernon, he said, "Quit smoking!"
Scared Vernon saw at once that the doc wasn't joking.
He quit smoking at once, else the doc'd prove his say.
But he lived fifteen years longer before God called him away.

Though Geneva's been ill many of her days,
She's handled the problems in a positive way.
Her life speaks well of her philosophy.
She says she owes much to her Bible and God's deity.

Though never blessed with a child of her own,
Geneva was seldom left alone.
Children loved her very dearly.
They listened and loved her, smiling and giggly.

This Geneva of ours admits at times
She's been a little bit wicked or more!
When she was younger, she worked in a store
And tried very hard when provoked and sore
To be very kind and even the score.

She's always been honest and gives even more
Of herself than she ever expects to restore.
She has balanced the scales as well as her life
And loved her dear Vernon and made a good wife.

She says that her husband was jolly and good.
He brightened her life as well as he could.
Her cousin R.L. is another good man,
But telling it to him might get a strong hand! 🍷

(ELVA DEEDS is a retired teacher from Sentinel; her poem about Geneva Reaves is her first WESTVIEW publication.)



Production by Matt Heckman

Commonality

Commonality

Should life's troubles bear you down,
And if your dreams abandon you,
For true friends never leave you,
You dwell within an aching heart,
know that I am here.
know that someone cares,
though they may be distant.
yes, your true friend is me.

And the thought that we could grow apart
 as close friends should,
 with laughter through the years.
 Think of me with no regret
 would cloud my eyes with tears.
 when we were still closer
 and the warmth of friendship
 was all we had
 to chase away the chill.

So if you need a friend indeed
or a secret you must share,
Call out my name in glad refrain,
Yes, know that I do care.

Production by Shelly Hamar

WE LIKE THE FRIENDLY WEST

—By C. D. (Ken) Shroyer

We came out West where the wind blows free,
Where people are friendly and easy to see—
Our “little nest in the West,” we claim
Where there are untapped talent and country fame.

A buddy, you know, is the nicest thing;
He’s a living treasure and an uncrowned king.
His valuable gift for us to share
Brings peace and comfort to those who care.

Through tears and laughter he’s by your side—
With patience and courage, not one to hide.
His friendship is something you cannot buy
But in times of trouble one on whom you can rely.

These Western folks make super friends.
Their love and concern never seem to end,
Their home a sanctuary to every need,
A friendly welcome regardless of creed.

These neighbors are special on the Western range,
Knowing the magic of love and exchange.
They see the promise and joy it brings—
Happy in summer, in fall, in spring.

In winter they sit around the fire,
And share their blessings we all admire,
Escaping the pressures of city living,
Knowing the peace of sharing and giving.

Yes, Western friends with their spirit we find—
Adding the comfort and freedom of mind,
Living the silent code of the West,
Who have stood their ground and passed their test.

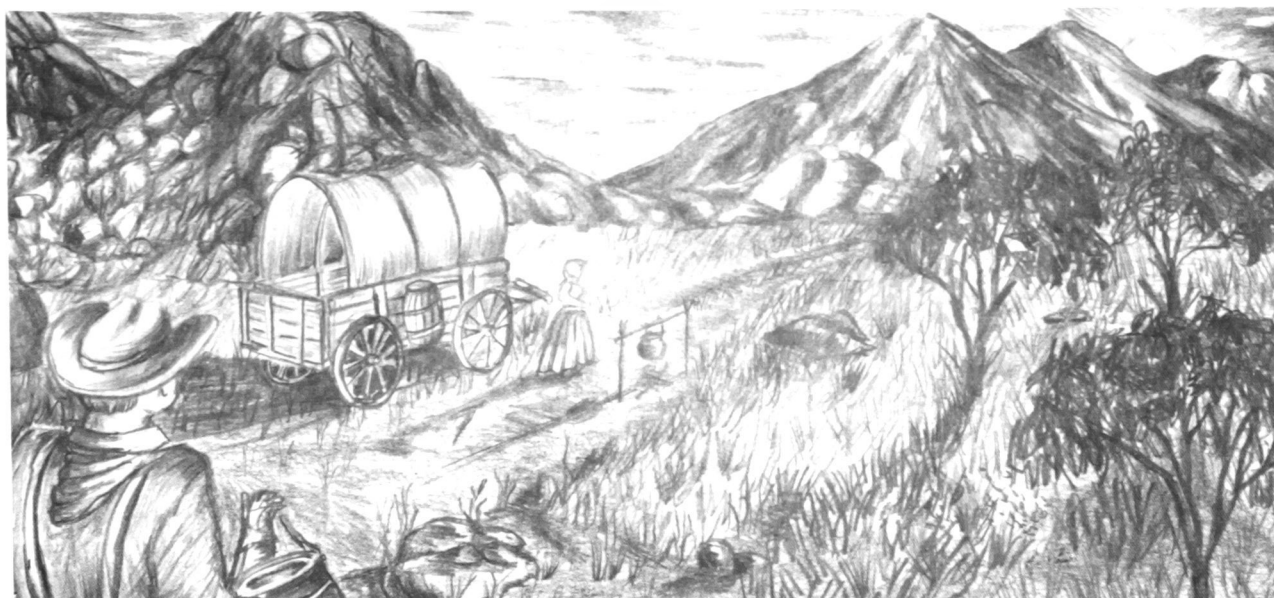
Knowing great moments, reality and fun,
They’ll need no excuse when their work is done.
They’re a different breed that you like to see
And the nicest folks, we all agree.

America’s finest with a grin on their face—
Proud allies indeed, you could never replace.
They help one another in the storms of life—
New dreams every day, in bounty and strife.

There’s a special spirit that you’ll always find
Beneath the Western skies; it’s a peaceful kind.
We love these folks and their peaceful way.
Thank God for the West; we plan to stay. 🌵

(C. K. [KEN] SHROYER is an OU graduate, School of Business Administration, and a retired senior citizen of Weatherford. Shroyer makes his debut as an amateur poet and published writer in this issue.)

Commonality



Design by Mike Sigurdson

THE GREATEST GIFT

—By Orv Owens

passed, dancing at buckets of blood (some dance halls and barns were called that because of the many fights over women), the good times dimmed.

It was lonely on holidays. In spite of earning what he considered good money, there was no one special to buy presents for. If truth were known, he was feeling sorry for himself because no one cared about his single status. People had enough problems without adding his to their list.

He spent some time searching and wandering in New Mexico, Kansas, and Washington State, working at the printer's trade. The ever green hills of home kept calling him back to his beloved Western Oklahoma.

It took a surprise party to settle him down.

After courtship and marriage to a native, he wasn't

surprised to find that family life was better than single life, which had become like no life at all. With this in mind, he ignored all those anti-family and began marriage in debt.

To an outsider it would seem that she had made a poor choice. There were weeks when they had only a few cents left over, and her foolish husband wanted a Coke. He had long ago decided that if he was going to be broke, he was going whole hog and not linger on the outskirts of wealth.

Through some good times

and bad, she stood beside him. She stood firm against all odds, against all surprises, against all sorrows—and remembered the good.

Along came babies two years apart—two daughters and a son. She bore the pain as well as the joy of new life in a growing family. She stayed home to care for and mold her children, not entering the job market until the children entered high school. She started work for the local nursing home and later the hospital. Caring for the old and the sick is an exhausting job, but she remained true to the cause.

She sacrificed for husband and children, budgeting so that the future might have a



New friendships
have rough beginnings
sometimes, and this
one was no exception.

bit of savings against those rainy days which at times came in bunches and so close

together it

seemed as though they'd never survive. She worked hard and long to make family work against overwhelming odds.

From a honeymoon cottage to an old home to a new frame home to another brick home in another town. From renting to owning with joy and expectations of good things yet to come.

They didn't do anything others haven't done before and will likely do in the future. They merely stood together, were strengthened by each other through each day, each year, striving

His opportunity came at one of those surprise birthday parties where hics flowed freely—a time for the sweet red wine.

From that insignificant beginning, a strong oak grew. New friendships have rough beginnings sometimes, and this one was no exception.

She was a brunette with a flair for the dramatic and must have weighed all of 90 pounds. The blood of ancient Scottish ancestors with some Irish thrown in for good measure flowed through her veins. Her brown eyes threw darts of anger when she was angry.

The acorn was planted at the party. To become a sturdy oak they must stand shoulder to shoulder over the years. They must also change in a time of changing morals and values.

He was tired of the single life, tired of looking at bare antique walls with missing family pictures. The single life grew boring. Once the good times called. Once the dance floor called; but as time



toward new horizons—never fearing failure but learning from it and being strengthened by adversity.

They loved to read and spent many peaceful hours reading about conflicts that overshadowed their own.

Subdued colors were best for her: lavenders, beiges, warm browns, and pinks—colors that speak of quality the world over. From multi-colored scraps, needle, thread, and glue gun, creative fingers spun gifts of beauty and worth.

They bickered, quarreled, and at times tears flowed down her cheeks; but as the day ended, they kissed goodnight. Rarely did a dispute last through a sleepless night.

They endured. They conquered. They forgave

when forgiveness was desperately needed.

Their fondest hope now is that they have been the right kind of example for their children, at the same time knowing that family means strength and love and sharing of all things large and small.

Happiness is a walk when the sun sinks into their tomorrow and someone's today on the other side of the world. They watch a squirrel flip its tail and a cardinal with sunshine on its wings flit through the oaks. They smile when the mockingbird sings, knowing full well that it depends upon the talents of others for its song.

They take each day at a time, knowing that bridges are

to be crossed only when they arrive and not before lest they fall into despair.

Within her breast the ghosts walk, the ghosts of a million tears, the ghosts of a million smiles of faith that are part of yesterdays, todays, and tomorrows.

He listens to the soft purr as she sleeps and realizes that along

with companionship and love she gave him a far greater gift: she had become his dearest friend. ♡

...she gave
a far
greater
gift...

(ORV OWENS writes a column—"Reflections"—for the WATONGA REPUBLICAN, does free-lance writing, and started submitting to WESTVIEW beginning with the Spring, 1990 issue.)

Design by Gina Mitchell

Production by Shelly Hamar



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My Friend Opal

—By Mary S. Redmond

Companionship



At my age, I have come to the point that I know I should expect it--but it still came as a shock on August 7, 1983, to learn that my long-time friend, Opal Koeninger LaForce, had died. I had spent the previous day with her, at our Stover School Reunion--and she had been, as always, vibrant and full of life.

The most wonderful thing about my recent association with Opal, as opposed to my long-time association, was that her memory was so much better than mine. More than a few times, as I worked on articles of reminiscence about life in our old community in the 1920's, I found myself reaching for the telephone to call Opal or dropping by her house for a visit. She'd been there, too--and, time after time, she recalled specifically what my mind could only generalize about. I remain in the most debt to her for the information she gave me for my articles on the blizzard of 1929, early-day telephones, and our 1920's pie suppers. But her influence can be felt, I realize now, in everything that I write.

Opal was a true Stover School community pioneer. She was born November 23, 1907, at Willow Point, Texas, and she moved by wagon with her family to our area in 1919. Her name then was Opal Morine Koeninger, and the Koeninger family was most durable stock. Their journey started on December 25, 1919, and, after traveling all day and all night, they arrived at their new land, four miles north of Marlow, Oklahoma, on the next day, December 26, 1919. Opal always said that the main thing she remembered about the journey was what they ate: sugar-cured ham they'd brought with them from Texas to their new home.

They stayed with relatives while they built their house--and it was tough work. Opal remembered the work with plow and horses that had to be done to clear away all that Oklahoma blackjack. But finally they were settled, and I first met Opal when she, along with one sister and two brothers, came to enroll at the Stover School. A friendship developed--and before long Opal was part of a large group of young people who used to come to our farm on

Sundays after the church services, which also were held at the Stover School.

Those Sundays remain among my dearest memories. One, deep in winter, stands out particularly. We'd all been sitting inside for quite a while, complaining that it was just too cold to do anything--when somebody suggested skating. And we skated, just down the hill on Buckhorn Creek. Nobody had more fun that day than Opal did.

We grew up, of course, and Opal married Claude (Skeet) LaForce in June of 1927. They lived first in Chickasha--and I didn't see Opal very much for a few years. Finally, though, they moved closer, to Duncan, and we resumed our close relationship. By 1946, it seemed that much of our conversation had turned to memory: we were getting older. But what memories they were. Opal had attended school at Stover, and she had also joined our church during a revival that had been held there. The preacher had been Brother Scifres, and we never forgot him. Opal was baptized in the West Ward tank northwest of Marlow, and we never forgot that either. We had many shared experiences to recall.

There was reminiscing on August 6, 1983, too--a full, rich day of it. Opal had attended and enjoyed our first Stover School Reunion, held in 1982, but this one was special for her. At this reunion, she got to hear a lovely piece written by Mary Elizabeth Moore Houghton, Fort Worth, Texas, about W. N. Koeninger, her late brother.

Opal attended the reunion in the company of her other brother, Thurman, and her daughter, Jeannine. She was as happy as I had ever seen her, and that's just about what Jeannine said that she told her on the way home that evening. Opal died in her sleep that night.

Ironically, Opal's obituary and the article on the Stover School Reunion would run in the same issue of the same newspaper. Those who knew her describe her now, as they did when she was alive, with terms like "popular" and "hardworking" and sometimes even "the salt of the earth." She once described her earlier days to me by saying, "We worked hard, and we didn't have much." And all those things are true--with the possible exception of the last one. As I'm sure Opal knew, she had all her life, much more than material possessions. She had a lovely family, good friends, and the ability to give as she was still doing on that Saturday of our reunion.

I'll have the memory of Opal and, like the memories of good times we shared, that's to be treasured always. ☺



(MARY STOVER REDMOND, a free-lance writer, was reared on the family farm located four miles south of Rush Springs. She is the author of a book titled *ADVENTURES IN THE FOUR-MILE STRIP: AN OKLAHOMA CHILDHOOD*. "My Friend Opal" is her second work published in *WESTVIEW*.)

Design by Joey Conkin
Production by Beau Wade



Companionship

IN THE COTTON PATCH

—By Pat Kourt

Cotton-country friends depend on each other to . . .
 swap stories about spring plantin'
 chop weeds under the swelterin' July sun
 pull crisp, white bolls on frosty fall days
 wish for spring plantin' days in snow-packed December.

Cotton-country friends are easily recognized by . . .
 faded, striped overalls with worn knees
 smooth, pale foreheads above sun-browned cheeks
 old Ford pickups pullin' wobbly, wooden trailers
 rag-wrapped jars of water to guzzle in the shade.

Cotton-country friends have the same daily schedules as . . .
 an early Monday start a sackful at a time
 a daily trip down 152 to the gin yard
 a Saturday night Western movie in town
 a Sunday rest and renewal for another week
 among friends--
 in the cotton patch. ☞

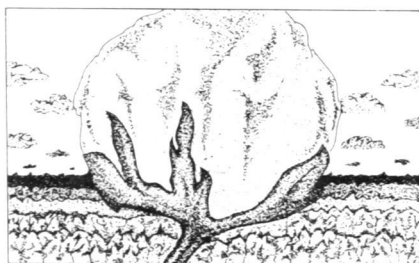


Illustration by Tommy Campbell

(PAT KOURT, a SOSU alumna and faithful contributor to WESTVIEW, teaches and writes in Thomas, where her husband, Randall, owns and operates Thomas Drug and Variety.)

GEE, MISTER!

— Susan M. Cabanis Bradford

They were pioneer kids, isolated on the prairie a bit, sheltered from most of life's hard knocks by loving parents. They knew the drudgery of chores and excitement when they heard the sound of a stranger's horse as visitors approached around evening mealtime or after dark. They knew their parents would provide a meal to guests. Prairie hospitality demanded it, but there were those who would take advantage of the pioneers.

A young girl near Watonga had heard the fear of her parents and neighbors when the night riders arrived. One they knew was Red Buck—a tall, red-haired, cold-eyed man known as a horse thief and rumored to be a killer. "Night after night, I cringed in my bed. I was told by neighbors that thieves must be fed."

Young Dora Boyle's neighbors said,

*"Just treat them right and they won't steal,
Tho they steal your horse and eat their fill."*

Her pioneer parents had been on the prairie claim many months. Sheltered by her Irish mother, the outlaw still caught her interest: "There was Red Buck, who rode like a demon at night. And stole the best horses as he quickly took flight." Her father's best mare was gone the next morning.

His gifts charmed the youngsters, I've heard many say. Did she get a trinket, too, or a gold piece? He would gulp down his meal and then go his way. Sometimes the pioneer mother found a silver dollar under the plate as she cleared plates after the night riders left.

The night thefts and diet of fear led pioneers to form the Anti Horse-Thief Association:



*"Strong were the arms of the AHTA,
And no doubt caused the gradual decay of
the ruthless robbers who rode the plains
Leaving stories that will always remain."*

It fell the lot of the single men to be ready for action, no matter when. Dora said,

*"I loved these men, even as a child,
Who chased the outlaws fierce and wild."*

Dora wasn't the only pioneer youngster fascinated by the surly stranger on the fast horse. Red Buck told young Allen Stevens he would give him a gold piece if Allen could ride Mr. Stevens' "frisky little pony." Allen was "sore for a week" after the ride but felt it was worth it for the gold piece. It was the only gold piece Allen ever saw. The Stevenses were pioneers to Cheyenne and Arapaho country in the Run of 1892. They lived near Dolph Pickesimer. Allen said that Red Buck was Irish—had red hair and beard and mean eyes.

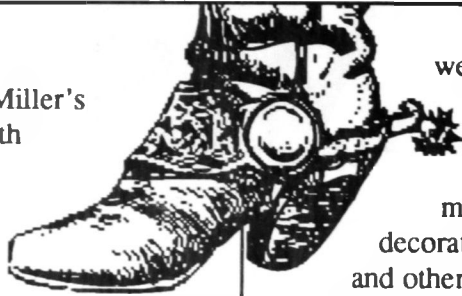
Cowboy bunkhouses were a safe place for an outlaw who could "blend in with the boys." Jack Howenstine's parents lived in Enid; but around 1894, Jack was staying with his brothers (Cy, Joe, and Tom), who had ranches around Arapaho. They had two hundred horses and worked many cowboys. Just a kid, Jack slept late in the bunkhouse one hazy morning while his brothers and their cowboys were working on another ranch. Jack always chose a top bunk to sleep in because the cowboys would throw him out of the lower bunks. When Jack did wake up, he was startled to see Red Buck and his friend George Miller, stretched out sound asleep in two of the bottom bunks. Jack knew who they were and that they were wanted men. He had heard the cowboys say that Red Buck and Miller were good men who "got off wrong."

In 1896, Red Buck and Miller's last wrong turn caught up with them. Near Foss at Dolph Picklesimer's claim on Oak Creek, a posse of lawmen surrounded the dugout. Red Buck Wightman and George Miller shot it out with the posse, and Red Buck was killed in the doorway of the dugout while Miller's hands were shot up. Miller was ever after known as "Hooky."

Red Buck's body and the wounded Miller were loaded onto a farm wagon and hauled through Butler, where a boy named Leonard Kiker asked his dad to heft him up for a look into the wagon at the dead outlaw: "I'll never forget how awful he looked."

The wagon rolled on to Arapaho, where the bloody, bullet-ridden body was photographed and displayed in a storefront window. Pioneers walked by and stared. That's where six-year-old Cordelia saw him. She had come to town with her parents and her eight brothers and sisters to see the corpse of a notorious outlaw. Did she stare or cringe and look away? The body was on display for three days while county officials waited for someone to claim it. No one came forward for the remains. No father, mother, brother, sister, or wife asked for the body to take to burial. So the remains of Red Buck Wightman were buried at county expense in a lonely area of the cemetery south of town.

Cordelia's family lived south of town not too far to walk to the cemetery; the next morning, Cordelia accompanied her strong-willed Irish mother, Sarah Gossett, to the cemetery. the condition of the grave convinced Mrs. Gosset, who had no pity for the evil ways of the outlaw but who had compassion on the unknown mother, that the body had been removed and taken to Texas as the rumor



went. Yet year after year until her mother died many years later, Cordelia and her siblings went with their mother to gather wildflowers to decorate the graves of the family plot and others, including Red Buck's, on Decoration Day. Over the years, a legend about a mystery woman grew about the well-kept grave.

Dora, the Brown boy, Allen, Leonard, and Cordelia remembered the day as pioneer youngsters that the surly, red-haired stranger with mean eyes brushed their lives. They mentioned it to others or wrote it down in later years as part of their pioneer experiences. Pioneering parents no doubt pointed out the error of the outlaw's ways to their impressionable prairie children and made a moral lesson of the meeting. Still, the strange, cold-eyed man made an impression that time can't ERASE. ☘

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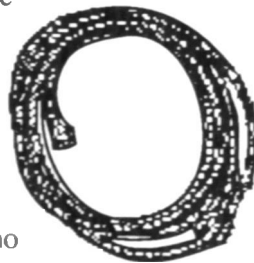
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(SUSAN M. CABANISS BRADFORD spent her formative years in Clinton, graduated from SOSU, and is rearing her family at Russell, which is located southwest of Mangum. She enjoys the territorial history of Oklahoma; this article dealing with children's views of Red Buck is her first published work.)

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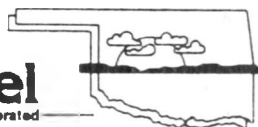
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