

A JOURNAL OF WESTERN OKLAHOMA  
WESTVIEW



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Issue 4 Summer

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# WESTVIEW

A Journal of Western Oklahoma

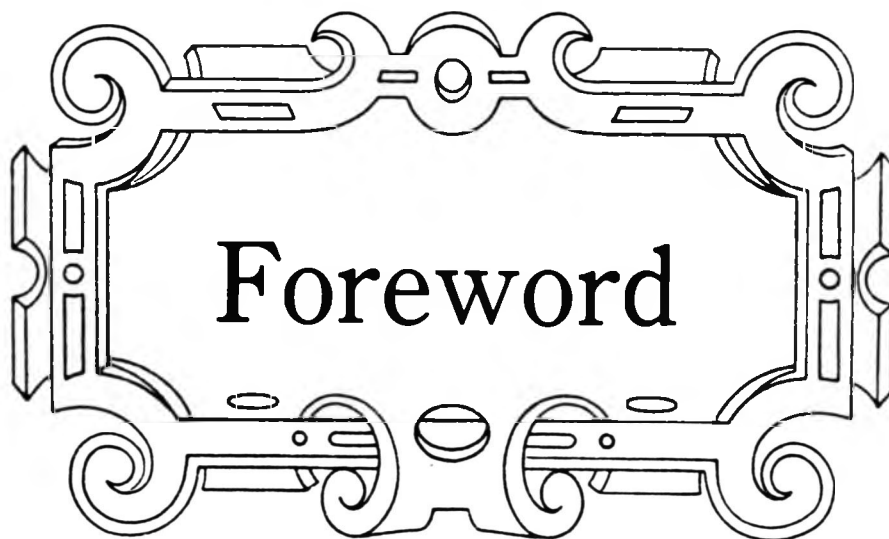
VOLUME 6  
NUMBER 4

SUMMER 1987  
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WESTERN OKLAHOMA WEATHER





# Foreword

Before long, we'll be entering our seventh year of publication. This may be a good time to step aside for assessment.

We're always interested in watching the way certain issues develop. This one, for example, was popular with our contributors. Evidently most people have something to say about the weather--especially Western Oklahoma weather or Oklahoma weather. Only one thing would have made this issue better for us. We wanted and even tried to solicit an article on some of the tornadoes that have devastated Western Oklahoma. Hopefully, our contributing writers will also help us fill up all the projected issues from Winter 1987 on. The Fall 1987 issue is already full.

We surely do rely upon our contributors. Editorial Board members have come and gone, and we have always learned to adjust to life without them despite difficulties.

But there are two other people--Jack and Margaret Shelton of Weatherford Press--who have been with us all along and without whose help we would have gone under long ago. Anyone who has good thoughts about the appearance of WESTVIEW needs to know that *quality printing* is always available at Weatherford Press.

Margaret, for instance, is a calm, cool person; and she's an outstanding typesetter--to a great extent because of her calmness. With Margaret setting the type for WESTVIEW, there's no cause for concern. If an error ever sneaks in, she's

willing to correct it quietly with no overtures over whose fault it was.

And Margaret's main helper, Jack, has been a true friend as well as a concerned professional. He's always on the search for a better grade of printing materials and a less expensive printing job.

During our early, struggling years, for four issues we were without the services of an Art Director. The Editor tried to do his job in addition to the work of the Art Director without the benefit of training and talent.

Without much extra work and guidance by the Sheltons, the quality of the journal would have suffered appreciably.

At a time that many businessmen and their workers are more concerned about the ALMIGHTY BUCK than about performing services for their customers, Jack and Margaret Shelton stand with the good guys, those who are dedicated to giving two dollars of service for each dollar spent. We appreciate them.

Just to keep the emphasis in one of the places it belongs, we should mention that we also appreciate our readers. Since we rely on them, they should keep us informed of their likes and dislikes. For instance, is it better to devote one page to a list of our authors in each issue or to do as we have done for the first time in this issue and include a biographical blurb after each author's work?

GRATEFULLY

*Leroy Thomas*

Leroy Thomas  
Editor



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# WESTVIEW

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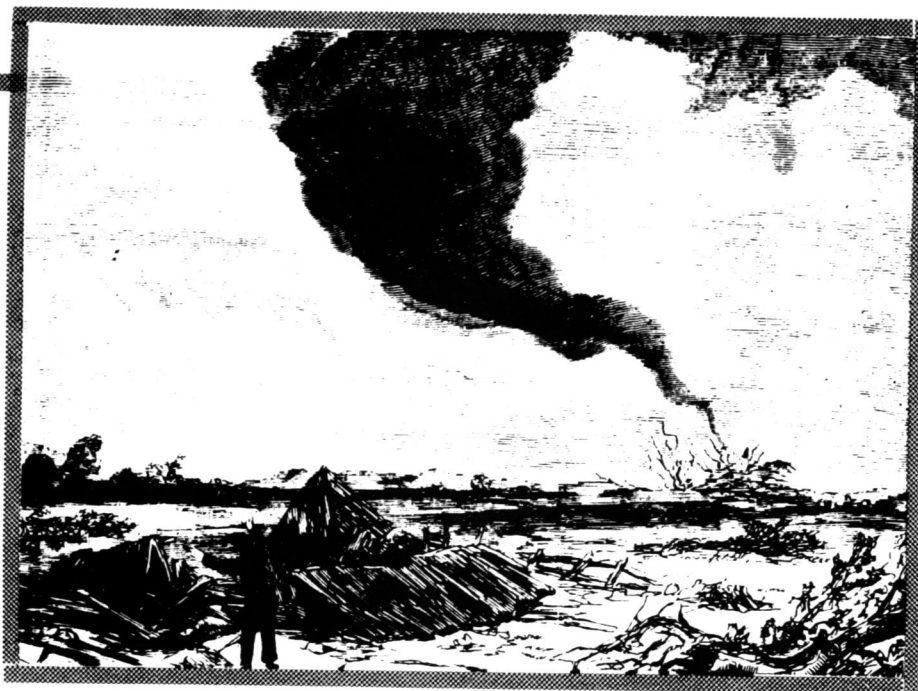
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## WESTERN OKLAHOMA WEATHER

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Cover design by Jerry Rappe', commercial art student at Southwestern Oklahoma State University.



## News Release From The Western Oklahoma Historical Association

PRAIRIE WEDDING, a 448-page history of Western Oklahoma, is going to press soon and will be available in a limited edition in May. The edition is selling for \$50.00 before the volume is received and will be \$60.00 thereafter.

The full book includes 600 stories and some 900 pictures depicting Western Oklahoma history, families, communities, and churches. This book is a sequel to the popular PRAIRIE FIRE, published in 1976, which sold out and has been in high demand since.

Only 2,000 copies are being printed this time, as compared with 2,500 eleven years ago. Advanced sales have progressed, and this edition is expected to sell out during the immediate time ahead.

The new volume is edited by Jerry Dickson, who put together the original PRAIRIE FIRE. Augusta C. Metcalfe's painting "Prairie Wedding" is reproduced on the cover, courtesy of her son Howard Metcalfe, of Durham.

The book is being published under the direction of the Western Oklahoma Historical Society, headed by Jo Grubitz and closely associated with the Elk City Old Town Museum headed by Pat Baker.

Orders may be made at the Old Town Museum, P.O. Box 542, Elk City, OK 74648. Inquiries can be made at the Museum from 10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday and on Sunday from 2:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m. during the museum's open hours. Telephone number is (405)-225-2207.

"We fully expect to sell out of this volume, and we encourage those who want to be certain they reserve volumes to do so at this time," Mrs. Grubitz said.

She added, "The Historical Society board has decided to allow the \$50.00 pre-publication price to be continued until the new volumes are received."

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# They Came With The Wind

By Margaret Friedrich



Illustration  
by Mike Harves

"If you don't like the weather in Oklahoma, wait five minutes" became almost a maxim among early settlers in Oklahoma Territory. The vagaries of the weather provided a ready topic of conversation for the strangers who flooded the land on each opening day when the United States Government permitted white settlers to file claims to farms in Western Oklahoma. At no time was the effect of the weather more noticeable than on the days of the Runs.

Five times would-be Oklahomans waited at the borders for the gunshot at noon. That signaled the start of the race. Each person held a strong stake with his name carved on it. With that stake and a fast, long-winded horse, every man or woman in the lines hoped to claim 160 acres, a quarter section for his/her family. The potential for quarrels, accidents, even killings, was acute. On April 22, 1889, the first of the Runs took place. The prizes lay in the Unassigned Lands in what is now Central Oklahoma. Few of the expected tragedies occurred. In their *HISTORY OF OKLAHOMA*, Dale and Wardell attribute the comparative peacefulness of the day to two factors. One was the weather; the other was the character of the racers themselves who were home-seekers with families, not speculators.

That April morning was bright and clear. Spring had come to Oklahoma. The new grass was delicate green all across the land. Leaf buds were opening on the trees. Redbuds were radiant against a deep blue sky. Wildflowers were in bloom. Both blue and white daisies peeked through the short grass. Taller blue flags (wild iris) mimicked the color of the heavens. The red poppy mallow was beginning to break into bloom everywhere. Over all, a gentle south breeze blew.

The opening of the Unassigned Lands was, on the whole, a strenuous but a happy day. Afterward, to say "I'm an eighty-niner" was a mark of distinction

in Oklahoma.

The opening of the Sac and Fox, Shawnee-Pottawatomie lands was by Run on September 22, 1891. That was a small acreage. Likewise the Run for Kickapoo Lands on May 23, 1895, stirred little enthusiasm. Apparently no written records of the days were left by participants. Only official government proceedings survive. They do not mention the weather.

Two other Runs involving vast acres and thousands of participants were the third and fourth openings. The Cheyenne-Arapaho Country opened on April 19, 1892; the Cherokee Outlet race came on September 16, 1893.

The Cheyenne-Arapaho Country's 4,300,000 acres were ready for claimants the third Tuesday in April. Only 25,000 contenders ran for farms of 160 acres each. Two million acres were not claimed that day. Tales of the weather and the desolate areas frightened away some people that April 19, 1892. Left unclaimed were some of the richest wheat-growing farms in Oklahoma—if it rained. The weather on the day of the Run was apparently "so-so" as the pioneers stated it. It was the weather after they moved into their crude dugouts or sod houses that frustrated or discouraged them.

It was the wind, always the wind, that swept the prairie. It dried the skin and filled eyes, ears, and noses with dust. It bent young saplings along the creeks and the Washita River so that they grew leaning toward the north. Then in winter the southwind sometimes became a vicious north wind, bringing a blizzard. The wind chill often froze cattle. Their owners were almost helpless to protect them. In the few frame houses, the wind seeped in every crack or seemed to come directly through the wood siding. Mothers kept their children in bed all day, for the floors were icy. Fortunately, such days were few.

Tornadoes were more frightening

than destructive. Each family had a dirt "cellar" in which they stored the potatoes, cabbages, and other vegetables. The cellars were also the havens in case of dangerous storms. Very few human lives were lost, although buildings were sometimes destroyed.

Even though the constant Oklahoma wind was a scourge, it was also a blessing. It powered the windmills that pumped water for the cattle. Most farmers also became ranchers in a limited way. They never could have survived the years of crop failure if it had not been for their cattle.

The biggest Run of all came on September 16, 1893. This fourth Run opened the long-disputed Cherokee Outlet. Called "the World's Greatest Horse," this race involved 100,000 persons and about 8,000,000 acres. It stretched 220 miles along the south border of Kansas. My Great Uncle John J. C. (John Charles) Major made that Run.

Many times as an eight-or nine-year-old child, I tried to make myself small, sitting on a stool in the Major home. I wanted to listen to the grown-ups discuss Oklahoma politics and Oklahoma history. The politics went over my head, but I loved the history told

firsthand.

It was Saturday that sixteenth day of September. At six o'clock in the morning, the runners were lined up on the south, the east, and the north borders of the Outlet. Most, however, occupied the north border with the largest concentration near Arkansas City. It was here that the most famous photograph of all the Oklahoma Openings was made from the top of William Perryman's buggy. He had come to get pictures, not land. Most Oklahomans are familiar with that panorama of racing horses and vehicles with the dust rising from the many hoofs. Perryman shot that picture the moment after the guns fired at twelve noon (this I learned later, not in my uncle's house).

September 16, 1893, was preceded by months of drought. The temperature was burning hot, hotter than August. Canteens of water on saddles or in wagons were exhausted long before noon. Some Kansans were selling water at a dollar a cup. When the gunshots rang out at noon, the horses, mules, wagons, buggies, and the runners on foot tore into the land. They dislodged much of the short buffalograss, sending thick clouds of dust into the air where

it was picked up by the burning south wind.

Streams were few and dry. If there was an occasional water hole in the Cimarron River, it was concentrated salt or gypsum-filled water. Neither humans nor animals could drink it. Horses dropped dead at their owners' feet.

Uncle John came in from Caldwell, Kansas. He was familiar with the terrain, for he had helped the cattlemen round up their herds to move them out of the Outlet before the opening. He had in mind a farm in a small hidden valley. Therefore, he rode his bay mare at an easy pace. He also knew where sweet-water springs were located on the north side of the Cimarron, only a few miles from the land he claimed.

The crush of many riders, tales of lost children, lack of water, and the terrific heat caused some racers to turn back to "civilization." But for the most part, the hardy pioneers overcame all obstacles, even the weather, to become useful citizens of their brand new state, OKLAHOMA.

*Margaret Friedrich, now four score, keeps giving WESTVIEW better things. Her works have appeared often in this journal. ♡*



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# Hold On To Your Hats

By Launa Coe


As humans, we are all allowed to ask stupid questions. How many times have we asked what time it is while standing directly in front of a clock? Maybe while admiring a baby, we ask what *his* name is before being informed that he is a *her*. A stupid question often asked in this part of the state is "Does the wind always blow like this?" All of us know the answer to this question because all of us know about the wind in Western Oklahoma. Instead of just chuckling and letting the inquirer die of curiosity, we should answer this question by revealing the several ways high winds affect Western Oklahoma.

It really perturbs many Western *Okies* that the credit for all the new styles in hair and clothing that come out is given to New York or California. This feeling is aroused because they know that many styles were started right here in this part of the country. The wind-blown hairstyle, for instance, wasn't started in some New York boutique. It was started right around here by these Oklahoma winds. Where else could we get a better excuse for wind-blown hair than to start a new style? Another example is the short, straight skirts women are wearing nowadays. Californians claim to have started the trend to show off their legs, but Western Oklahoma women know where it really got started. They got tired of fighting down their long, full skirts everytime a gust of Western Oklahoma wind caught them, so they said "to heck with this." They sewed them up and cut them down. Now isn't that practical? Men in this part of the state had a similar problem with neckties, so who but Western Oklahoma men could have come up with the bow tie?

Not only do these winds affect the way we dress, but they affect the way we live too. Experts say that some of the best drivers come out of Oklahoma's West, and this is no accident. It takes great talent to buck those fifty- to seventy-miles-an-hour winds while driving along a road. Western Oklahomans also use fewer clothes driers than any other place in the United States. After all, who needs an expensive clothes drier when he has absolutely free hot and high winds right outside his door (by the way, the clothes pin industry is booming in our locale)?

Anyone just passing through can see other effects of the high winds in Big W Country just by observing the natural environment. Our birds, for example, are much larger than those in other parts of the country. This, of course, is due to their fighting those high winds while flying from tree to tree. And speaking of trees, our Western Oklahoma trees are much shorter than those in other places. Their structure occurs simply because if these trees grow too high the winds will just snap them off. The same is the case with other vegetation as well. Even our weeds are bigger around and

tougher than those in less windy environments. So Mother Nature has ways of adapting to high winds.

The winds in Western Oklahoma do more than just blow. They affect us in many ways. So the next time someone asks a stupid question about Western Oklahoma, we shouldn't just laugh or act perturbed; we should point out our clothing or show him a bird. 



*Launa (pn. Lonna) Coe is an eighteen-year-old from Hydro. A peanut farmer's daughter, she has lived all her life ten miles south of Hydro. She is attending her first year at SOSU; and this essay, a prize winner, was written as an assignment in a SOSU English Composition class during the 1986 Summer Session.*



# Orchestration

By V. N. Severs

The wind played a concert last night.  
It whooshed around the corners,  
Whispered in the tree tops.  
Whooshing, whispering, whistling wind.

Then

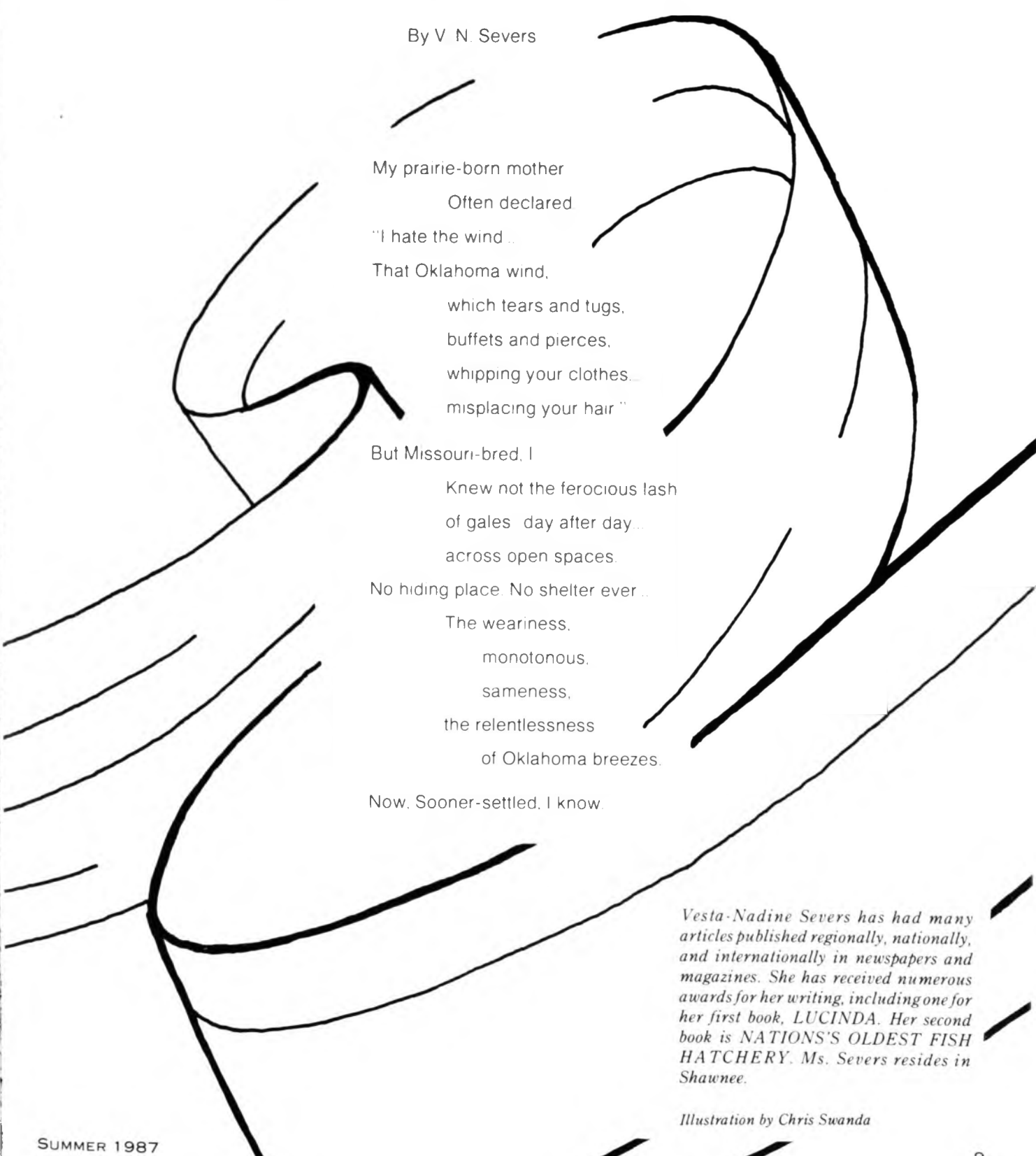
In angry crescendo buffeted the windows,  
And all the while, murmuring like  
Old ladies in a concert box,  
Each part separate and yet as one whole,  
Whistling pianissimo under the eaves.

Now FORTISSIMO!

Wooing, whistling, whooshing wind.  
Whistling, whispering, whooshing wind.

# Sooner Settled

By V. N. Severs



My prairie-born mother  
Often declared  
"I hate the wind...  
That Oklahoma wind,  
which tears and tugs,  
buffets and pierces,  
whipping your clothes...  
misplacing your hair."

But Missouri-bred, I  
Knew not the ferocious lash  
of gales day after day...  
across open spaces.  
No hiding place. No shelter ever...  
The weariness,  
monotonous,  
sameness,  
the relentlessness  
of Oklahoma breezes.

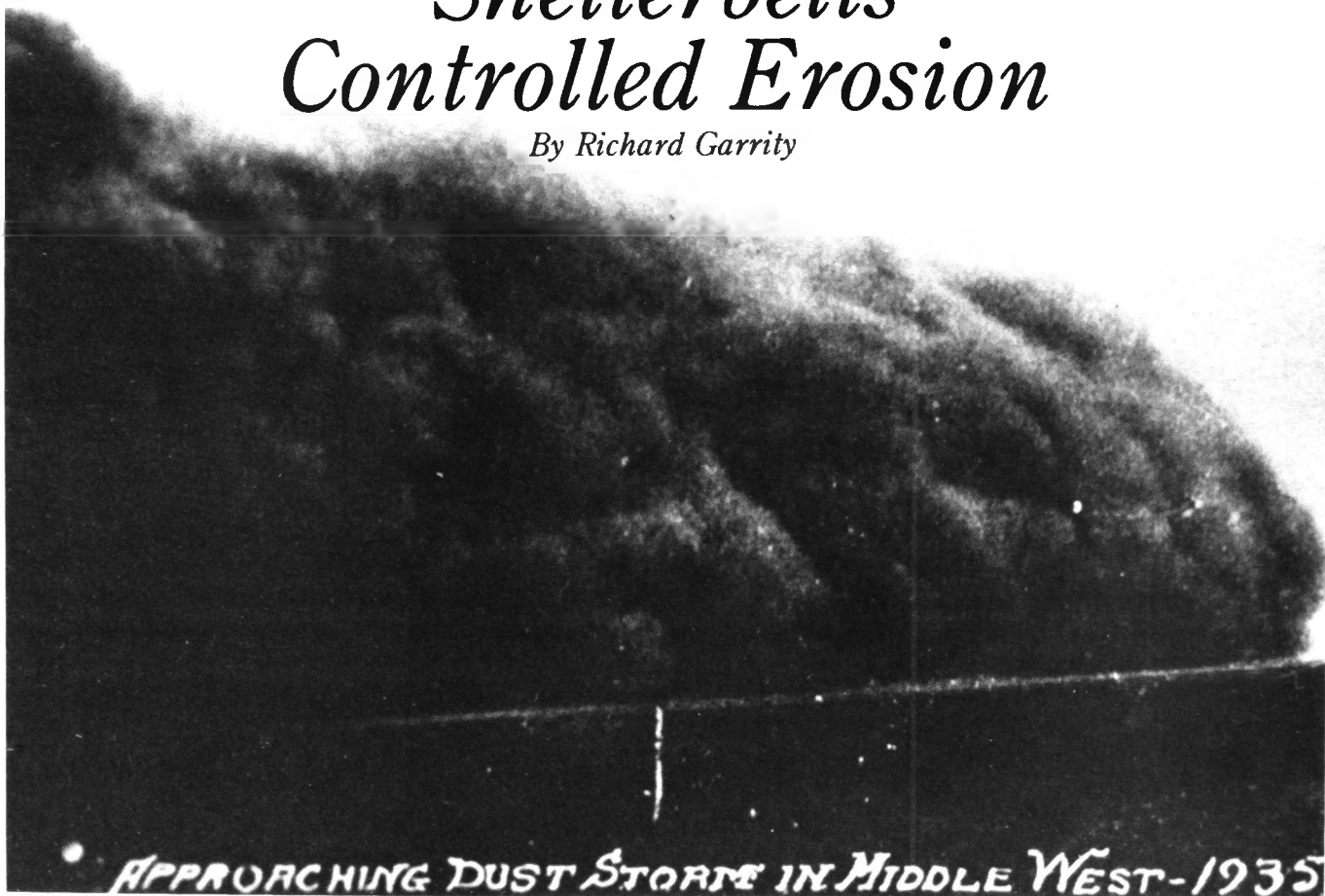
Now, Sooner-settled, I know.

*Vesta-Nadine Severs has had many articles published regionally, nationally, and internationally in newspapers and magazines. She has received numerous awards for her writing, including one for her first book, LUCINDA. Her second book is NATIONS'S OLDEST FISH HATCHERY. Ms. Severs resides in Shawnee.*

*Illustration by Chris Swanda*

# Shelterbelts Controlled Erosion

By Richard Garrity



A rumbling, rolling black cloud towered on the western horizon. Another dust storm was approaching. Inhabitants sought a quick refuge in their homes to escape the sudden fury. Fine drifting sand filtered through the openings to film the furniture. Then the gloom of the storm was gone, leaving a dusty track in the wake.

This was the "Dirty Thirties" of the Great Plains. A wind-blown shifting pall raced across the parched fields. Tumbleweeds rolled to finally lodge against barbed wire fences. When halted, the constant dust piled until only the tips of the posts were visible. Sand dunes moved across the farmyard. As the wind changed directions, the house steps would be above or below the ground level. Silt blown from the apex of the dune entered the house or covered farm implements. Empty fuel drums, unless placed upright, would be blown away.

In the late 1930's Benjamin Denman, near Hooker, Oklahoma, farmed this unstable land with the help of itinerant laborers that drifted in seeking the

seasonal harvest.

At the maize harvest, the John Deere tractor labored across the field as it towed the header, elevator, and barge. Front steel wheels of the tractor were encased in old tires. They were secured



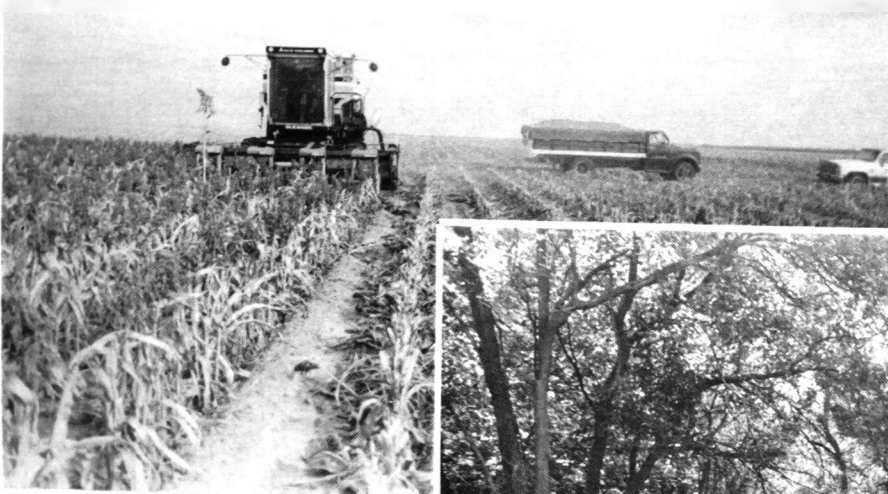
with baling wire. The deep sand or wind-cleared ground taxed the driver and "Poppin' Johnny." Elevators became clogged, slats were broken, the canvas torn, babbitt bearings failed, or the tractor bogged down in the deep sand. It was impossible to relax. All repairs were made in the field.

Broomcorn was the next crop. Each individual head had to be hand cut from stalks which ranged from two to five feet tall. Once topped, the heads were placed in small stands beside the rows. Busy gophers had pitted the field with burrows to trap the unwary.

After the broomcorn was cut and gathered, a custom threshing crew arrived. This group worked through the area to process the farmer's crops. Seeds were separated from the heads and the cleaned product baled. There's little good to be said about threshing broomcorn. Seeds and dust made a mighty itch. The noon meal was a memory.

At that time the ladies arrived with a bountiful dinner. It seemed as if they were attempting to surpass one another





Combine heading maize.



Shelter Belt at the farm of H. E. Curtis, Mangum, OK

with their farm cuisine. The harvest hands were the beneficiaries.

At the end of a long, dusty day, the threshing crew left. Dirty farm hands returned to the barnyard for a quick wash in the stock tank. Above, the wooden windmill protested as it turned.

Sudan was the final crop of the season. As the bundles were dropped from the binder, impatient sand hastened to cover them. Downwind from the feed, a lister raised a ridge to check the blast.

When all the crops were gathered, the migratory labor left for another harvest, taking with them recollections of wind, dust, and unending labor.

These were the problems which confronted the farmers in Western Oklahoma when Franklin Delano Roosevelt became President in 1934. On June 18, 1934, he proposed a plan: "...for the permanent benefit and protection of the Great Plains Belt, but also as an immediate drouth relief." It was recommended that tree strips one hundred feet wide and not more than a

mile apart be planted in a hundred-mile area from the Canadian border to the Gulf of Mexico. From this recommendation the shelterbelt program was developed. It encountered difficulties.

Some members of Congress opposed it. They argued that tree planting would not provide relief for several years. Critics doubted that the trees would survive. Tree farms objected to government nurseries. Despite the lack of stock to supply the demand, they didn't want federal management.

Others, though skeptical, were willing to endorse the program. The Shelterbelt Headquarters was established at Lincoln, Nebraska, on August 8, 1934. The first shelterbelt was planted near Mangum, Oklahoma, on the H. E.

Curtis farm. This was March 18, 1935. It was to be the test of the undertaking.

In the fall of 1986, I visited Benjamin Denman's farm in order to see a contrast in crop production. Ben was comfortable in the air-conditioned cab of a combine which headed, cleaned, and dumped the maize into a contained hopper. His harvest, dry-farmed, was about double. At the end of the round trip, the grain was power-unloaded into a waiting truck and transported to a nearby elevator. The hobo farm hands were absent.

Steve York, Jr., District Conservationist from the Soil Conservation Service in Mangum, provided a field tour to explain the value and results of the shelterbelts.



The trip started at the H. E. Curtis farm. This installation was a half mile long, 170 feet wide with 15 rows 12 feet apart. It contained a mixture of Austrian pine, cottonwood, Siberian elm, honey locust, black locust, cedar, and mulberry. It was a test that worked. Between the tree strips, protected crops were produced.

During the years, conservationists learned that five or six rows were sufficient. Intermediate installations were sometimes planted between the original rows. The government provided the trees free of charge. During the early stages of the project, CCC and WPA labor was used.

Once the program was started, it

quickly proved its worth. It protected the soil from water and wind erosion. Farmsteads within the zone were sheltered. Farming was stable and scarce wildlife returned.

York said that dead trees were removed for firewood and young trees were planted in their place. Brush was piled to provide shelter for deer, quail, rabbits, turkeys, and other game. Unfortunately, some of the earlier plantings had been removed.

In 1985, the Fiftieth Anniversary of the first planting of a shelterbelt was held on the H. E. Curtis farm. During that time, a marker was placed on the highway commemorating the historical event. Descendants of the Curtis family

attending the celebration stated that the trees would never be removed. They know why.

*CREDITS: Steve York, Jr., Soil Conservation Service, Mangum, OK; F. Dwain Phillips, Soil Conservation Service, Stillwater, OK; SOIL AND WATER NEWS, publication of the Soil Conservation Service, Washington, D.C.; excerpts from the bulletin THE GREAT PLAINS SHELTERBELT PROJECT, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, NE; Benjamin Denman, farmer near Hooker, OK.*

*Richard Garrity of Oklahoma City enjoys free-lance writing and photography, but he has enough additional interests to fill two lifetimes. He's a special WESTVIEW supporter and friend. ♡*

# Southwest

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### SENTINEL, OKLAHOMA



# The Dreamer

By Sheila Cohlma

They call me a dreamer:

A romantic who hears wind words  
and sidesteps reality.

I yearn for echoes of yesterday  
and murmurings of tomorrow.

Today's breeze soothes my heart.

My soul aches for God's good wind:

The mad fury of a Western Oklahoma storm  
and the rare silences of calm.

If you must repeat yourself,  
please forgive me and understand:

I am distracted by the wind.

*Sheila Cohlma, one of WEST-VIEW'S earliest contributors, enjoys writing and helping in her family's equipment rental business in Weatherford.*



# Traditional Patterns

By Mary Ann Osmus

Isn't it wonderful to be in a place where the weather changes at a drastic pace? There are many places or climates that always stay the same or require a long period of time for change to occur. The saying in Oklahoma is, "If you don't like the weather, hang around and it will change." Although Will Rogers made that statement about Oklahoma in general, it also applies to Western Oklahoma. As in other places, in Western Oklahoma there's usually a series of events which occur to bring about a weather change.

Usually in the event of weather patterns, the wind comes first. It will start gradually and work itself up to wind gusts that seem to blow us away. When the wind begins blowing in Western Oklahoma, all of us may as well be prepared for

the wind to last a while. When I first moved here, I found the weather to be a little different from the weather in Mississippi, my home state.

The weather doesn't just happen there as it does here. I used to wonder why Western Oklahoma trees look so strange; I soon discovered that the strong winds caused the trees to bend and stay bent. Also, there's seldom wind here without accompanying dust.

My first experience with Western Oklahoma dust occurred about three years ago. I was driving home one day from shopping about forty miles away from where I live, and the dust started blowing across the fields into the highway so thick I couldn't see the road. So finally I had to pull off the

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road for about an hour until the dust settled. Such dust storms are one of my big dislikes about Western Oklahoma weather.

The wind and dust in the air usually mean that there's rain somewhere in the forecast. There are two significant factors concerning Western Oklahoma rain—Either there's no rain, thus creating a drouth, or there's a downpour. I have seen the times that the grounds would crack and form small craters because of the lack of moisture. That's usually the time that farmers worry about their crops and gardens. Then again, they worry when there is rain. When the rain starts here, there's rain until we're tired of it; or there could be enough of a sprinkle to settle the dust.

So the weather in Western Oklahoma may be consistently different, but at least it's consistent. There are always many factors that relatively affect the weather. The patterns set by the weather are usually a sign of what's expected to happen next. When a person plans things around here, he should be willing to postpone or cancel because of weather changes. Weathermen predict the best they can, but such predictions often fail. 

*Mary Ann Osmus moved from Greenville, Mississippi, to Okeene about ten years ago. She is presently an Elementary Education major at SOSU with later plans of teaching at the Okeene Gospel Academy.*

*Illustration by Jerry R. Johnson*



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# The Mitchell Tree

a favorite Weatherford sight--now gone

*By Katherine Dickey*

The last day  
of July, 1986--"the  
eighth day of 100-degree  
weather!" Tom Brokaw said so on the evening  
news; he said there was no relief in sight. But people in  
Weatherford knew better because as Mr. Brokaw spoke, the  
temperature was 68 degrees here. It had been 102 degrees earlier  
in the day, but an unexpected rain and wind storm hit Weatherford  
about three o'clock that afternoon, and the temperature dropped  
30 degrees. Sixty-five-miles-an-hour winds ripped a seventy-five-year-old maple  
tree out of the ground at Sixth and Huber streets. Many memories were uprooted  
with that tree. Mrs. Mitchell, owner, who remembers back before I can, recalls that  
her father-in-law, Brother Mitchell, "sat under that tree with me for many an hour forty-five  
years ago." Ross Flood, former Southwestern coach, rented the home and would  
remember his preschool children entertaining their neighborhood friends in the shade of the old maple.  
Several years later, Joe Bailey Metcalf, former Southwestern football coach, lived there with his  
family. His daughter Meredith enjoyed good times with friends under that tree. The past twenty-  
five years, as I have visited my parents, Claude and Ann Foreman, on Sixth Street, I have loved  
that tree. In the Fall, its leaves covered the yard, and the neighbors'  
yard, even the street. Its bare branches in the winter were beautiful. The sentiment  
of the block was: "The neighborhood just won't be the same." I wonder if Walter and  
Opal Crouch (both of whom died recently) would know their house  
without that maple  
hanging over their  
drive? How did  
Mrs. Mitchell feel about  
her beautiful tree?? "I'm  
thankful that it didn't fall on someone,  
or the car, or the house...but why that tree!" How much we take for granted until it's taken from us!

*Katherine Dickey, formerly a teacher in the SOSU School of Business, now spends a great deal of her spare time on free-lance photography and writing. WESTVIEW is one of her favorite "charities," and WESTVIEW considers her a favorite benefactress.*

# THAT STRANGE OAK TREE

By Marsha Crouch

That strange oak tree  
on the old creek bank  
has weathered the test of time.

I remember when Pa  
took me by the hand  
and told this tale to me.

There was a strange storm  
way back in 1906  
the worst they could recall.

It rained so hard  
the creek o'erflowed;  
it rolled for hours, Pa said.

When the sun came out  
the creek had moved  
flowing right beneath the oak.

The tap root was bare  
where the bank washed away,  
why did the oak still stand?

Bark grew slowly upon the root  
while deeper still it went  
and held firmly upon the bank.

Well, son, I learned  
a mighty lesson from that oak  
as my pa did before.

We all face floods  
and when the sun comes out  
there are new banks within our lives.

Will we topple in  
or grow new bark  
and send our roots on down?

Remember, son, how  
that strange old oak  
has weathered the test of time.



*Photo by Ruby Bell*

*Marsha Crouch, a resident of Custer City, where her husband pastors the Nazarene Church, teaches First Grade in Thomas. Crouch's first work published in WESTVIEW was a poem titled "Picture Day" that appeared in the Fall, 1986 issue. Writing and reading are two of her main interests; but she also enjoys several thread arts, including quilting and x-stitchery.*



# FENCE-ROW SUNFLOWERS

By Pat Kourt

*Pat Kourt directs Creative Writing activities at Thomas High School. A devoted SOSU and WESTVIEW supporter, she and her husband, Randall, Thomas pharmacist, are parents of three sons: Mark, Todd, and Brent.*

Fence-row sunflowers

Clustering thickly without direction  
Reeking strangely of bitterness  
Bending downward with restless breezes  
Crowding closely in competition

Fence-row sunflowers

Seldom noticed  
Often despised

But...

Delicately formed  
in

Sharp contrasts

Perfect sun-yellow petals

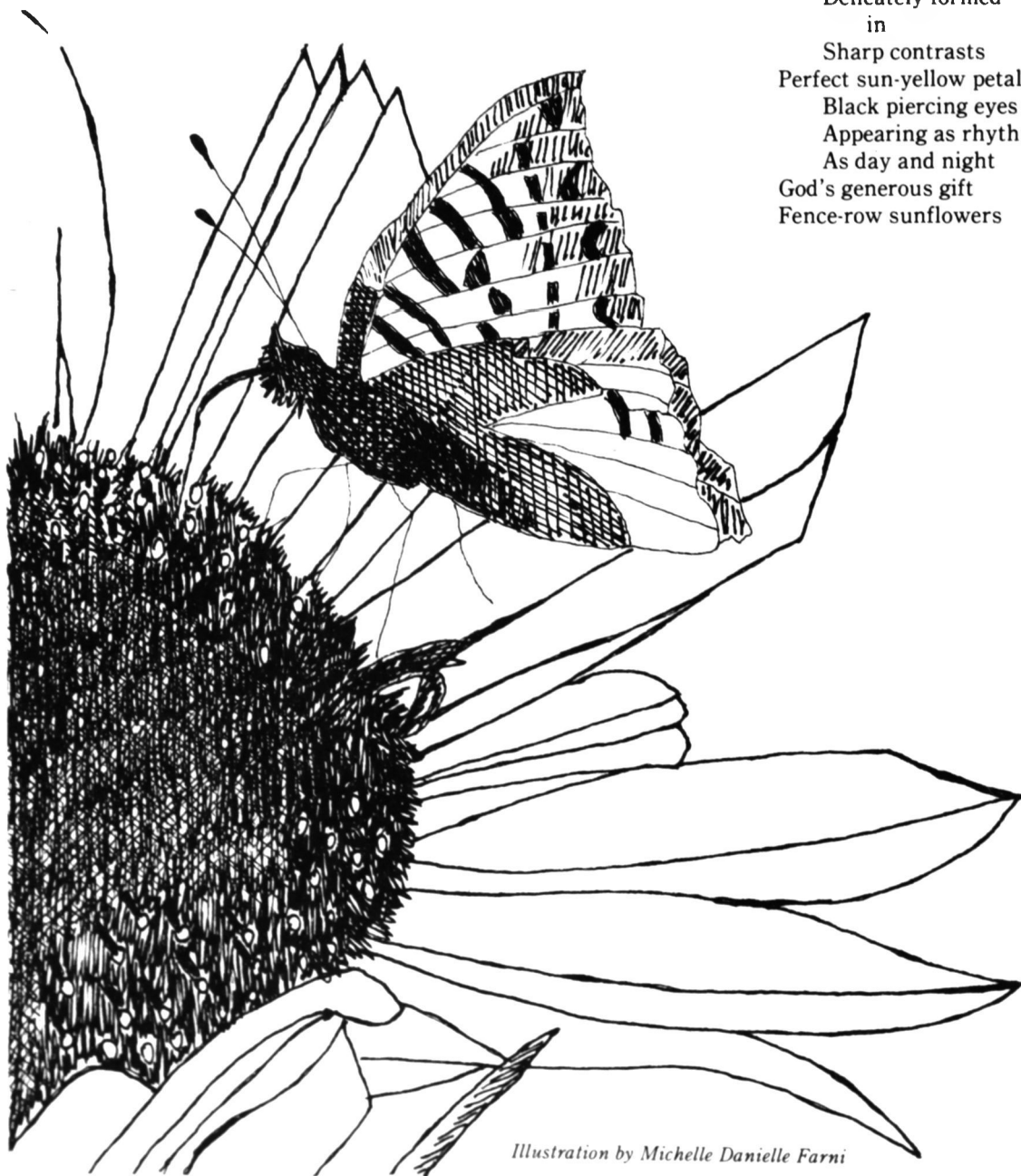
Black piercing eyes

Appearing as rhythmically

As day and night

God's generous gift

Fence-row sunflowers



*Illustration by Michelle Danielle Farni*

*Ava Snowden Sailors, now a free-lance writer living in Pueblo, Colorado, was reared in Western Oklahoma--near Erick.*

*a discerning papa*

Papa's blue eyes had such a bleak, worried look that a pang of fear clutched me as I watched him surveying the cotton that was rapidly shriveling and turning brown in the fields.

For weeks, there had been no rain. Only the relentless sun blazing overhead each day, making freckles ridge my nose and the sand sear my bare feet as I went skimming over it.

We had all worked so hard to clear the shinnery from our land. Our land, bought after the last trip back from California where Papa had worked on the 99 Highway and we seven had lived in a homemade trailer house parked down by the creek near Gorman. There, we had saved every dime to be able to move back to Oklahoma where Papa bought a few acres of land near Erick and we moved into the little two-room shack that came with the land.

We were so proud to have a place of our own and as we worked, cutting down shinnery and digging the deep, tangled roots from the sand (saving the roots to burn for warmth that winter), we scarcely noticed our raw, bleeding hands and aching backs because we knew we were definitely going to be rich--just as soon as we cleared the land and the cotton was planted, hoed, and harvested.

We talked excitedly about new clothes and shoes and the frequent trips we would make into town to see a Roy Rogers movie and a Three Stooges comedy, with the grand finale being a chocolate Skipper at Bennett's Ice Cream Store. How perfect our life would be!

There was a joy so intense it bordered on frenzy as Papa began early one morning to plant the cotton. The old Farmall tractor moved slowly but steadily day after day making long, straight rows.

Each morning, after the planting was finished, I would go with Papa to check the progress of the cotton, until one memorable morning there they were! Tiny green shoots poking tentatively through the sand, almost as if to ask "Do I dare come out?"

I raced back to the house, taking joyful leaps as I ran, and yelling loudly, "Ya'll come look! The cotton's up!"

"We sure need a good rain now," Papa said seriously, and we all knew it would come any day. Each afternoon, clouds began building and lightning flashed in the distant sky.

The cotton struggled and grew for a while; then with an almost audible sigh of despair, it wilted and dropped beneath the scorching sun.

"Is it too late to save the cotton if it rains tonight?" I asked each evening as I stood with Papa, watching his eyes anxiously searching the southeast sky where another cloud bank was forming.

"I don't know, Sweetie. We'll just have to wait and see."

I prayed, "Please, dear God. Please let it rain tonight. I can't bear that worried look in Papa's eyes."

The money for pinto beans and cornmeal to feed five children was nearly gone, and without cotton, what would we do?


"Please," I begged again in silent agony. "Please let it rain."

# Western Oklahoma, 1950

By Ava Snowden Sailors

I tried to stay awake so I could hear the rain when it began, but my eyes were heavy and my body was tired.

Always, I awoke with a start in the morning. Rain! Rain! Had it rained during the night?

But the sun would be blazing in the bright blue sky, and the dry sand burned my feet as I ran to find Papa. I clutched his arm and he patted my shoulder, swallowing hard as I said in a shaky but hopeful voice, "Don't worry, Papa. I just know it'll rain tonight." 



*Illustration by Lisa Lowry*

# SUNFLOWER SUMMER

By Glen V. McIntyre

Walking with my shiny  
coal black dog  
in emerald fields gleaming with  
unexpected rain;  
Overhead transparent blue sky  
like fine lead crystal;  
Surrounding us tall fairy towers  
shouting their yellow praise to God;  
my little dog nuzzles her furry face  
against my leg, urging me on  
but I stare entranced  
and like a butterfly go from flower  
to flower  
in a world poured full of gold.



Glen V. McIntyre is curator of the Chisholm Trail Museum in Kingfisher. A native of Kingfisher, he enjoys free-lance writing.

Illustration by Mike Harves



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# DUSTY DREAMS

By Alma Barnes

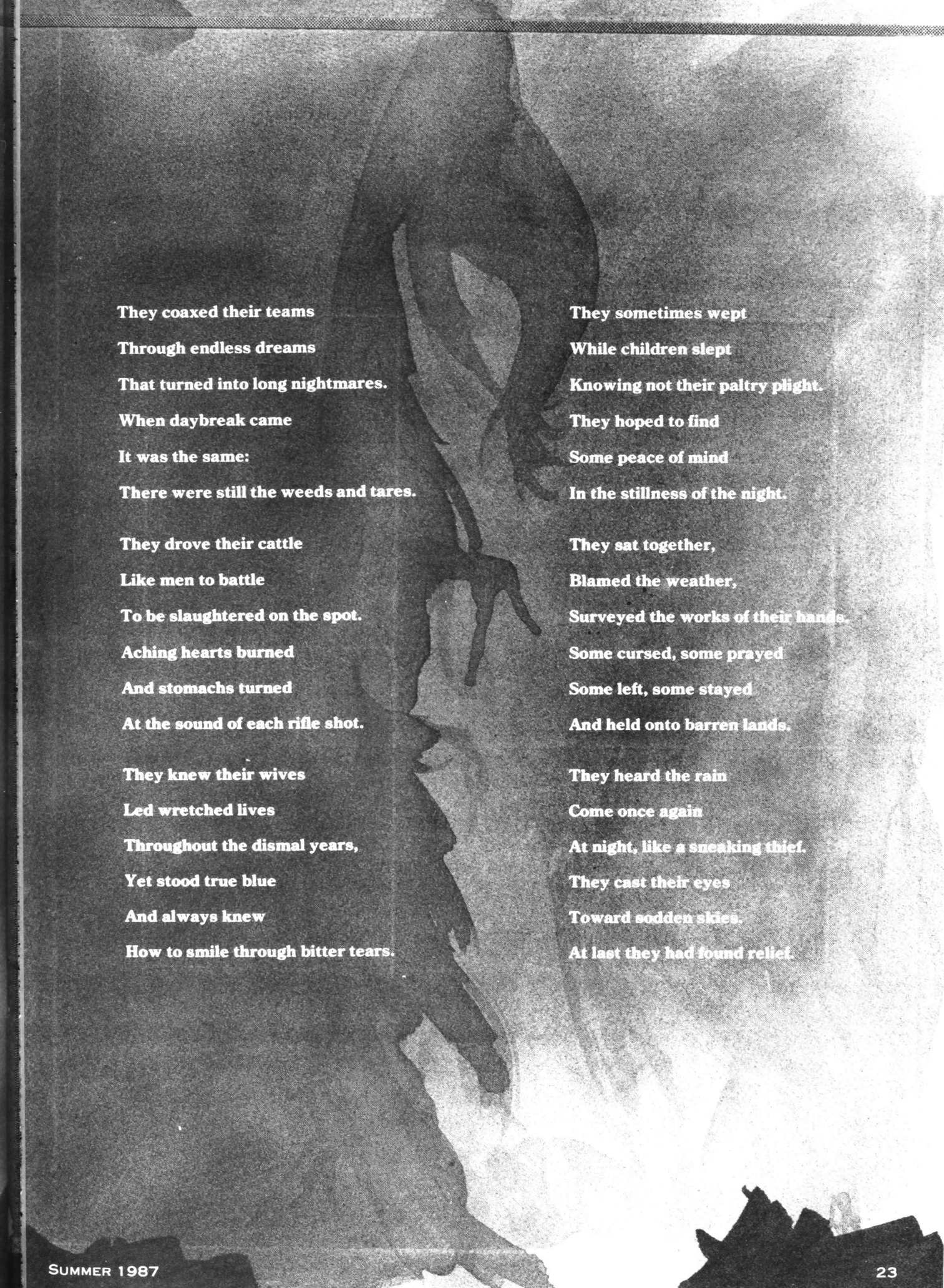
They scanned the skies  
Through squinted eyes,  
Buried deep in leather faces.  
They looked for rain  
To come again,  
But still there were no traces.

They fought the dust  
And cracked the crust  
Of their once-fertile soil.  
They planted seed  
And knew the need  
Of hope and sweat and toil.

They tossed and turned  
As their crops burned  
In the fields, by night and day.  
They worked and tried  
And sometimes cried  
For help to come their way.

**Alma Barnes, an active member of the Tulsa Nightwriters, is a formidable opponent in writing-contest competition. "Dusty Dreams" is Barnes' first work in WESTVIEW.**





They coaxed their teams  
Through endless dreams  
That turned into long nightmares.  
When daybreak came  
It was the same:  
There were still the weeds and tares.

They drove their cattle  
Like men to battle  
To be slaughtered on the spot.  
Aching hearts burned  
And stomachs turned  
At the sound of each rifle shot.

They knew their wives  
Led wretched lives  
Throughout the dismal years,  
Yet stood true blue  
And always knew  
How to smile through bitter tears.

They sometimes wept  
While children slept  
Knowing not their paltry plight.  
They hoped to find  
Some peace of mind  
In the stillness of the night.

They sat together,  
Blamed the weather,  
Surveyed the works of their hands.  
Some cursed, some prayed  
Some left, some stayed  
And held onto barren lands.

They heard the rain  
Come once again  
At night, like a sneaking thief.  
They cast their eyes  
Toward sodden skies.  
At last they had found relief.





# The Raging Washita

By Tena Garrison

The clouds were unusually low and ominous, with scooped dark circlets, like lavender puffs of cotton, bubbling angrily in the sky, and the wind was whipping the horizon. This was the tornado season in Western Oklahoma, and Mark Hobbs stood in the door of his prairie shack, licking the blowing dust from his suncracked lips and observing the sky. A funnel cloud had been seen near Cheyenne, and the young, muscular farmer was scanning the sky for a storm.

He jumped when the telephone rang, anticipating an alarm. If a tornado was sighted in the valley, Mr. Flood at the telephone office in town issued a warning with numerous short jingles.

He glanced at his blonde wife, sleeping peacefully, breathing a bit hard, burdened by the weight of her overdue baby. Her curls sprawled across the feather pillow, damp with perspiration. "Gee! She looks young," he thought. She hadn't heard the telephone.

It wasn't the alarm. The bells sounded twice, and Mark, recognizing his signal on the party line, moved quickly to the phone that was fastened to the living room wall. He yanked the receiver from its cradle before the phone could sound again.

"Hello," he answered.

"Mark," Mr. Flood's bass voice sounded over the wire. "We just got a call from Elk City. Arnett had a heck of a cloudburst and got ten inches of rain. You better get them Angus away from the river, cause she'll be outta her banks by mornin'."

Murmuring his thanks, Mark replaced the receiver. He heard Anita's regular breathing and peeked at Little Jean asleep in her reserved corner of



the living room. Opening the door quietly, he stared into the thundering night, his six-foot frame filling the gap.

He looked toward the Washita River that formed a U around his farm, and he remembered the flood stories of 1934. It had not rained in the valley, yet rolling water had engulfed the lowlands, and neighbors had awaked too late to save their lives. Mother Jeanie had lost her grip on the back porch and disappeared in the sucking water, while Daddy Ed handed his infant son to Uncle Jim Bob on the housetop.

Daddy Ed wouldn't talk about it, but one time when some coots in town were reminiscing, young Mark saw his daddy cry, and time hadn't completely erased the fear that had filled his heart. His wide farmer's hand wiped a tear from his lean cheek, and he roughly smoothed down his raven-colored hair. Daddy wouldn't sell the farm at any price. It was full of beautiful memories, and he hung on stubbornly--regardless of drought, depression, and low prices. Father and son worked hard, paying off loans and remodeling the old homestead. Someday they hoped to build a modern brick home for Anita with the cattle herd that grazed the river bottom.

Any extra profit was used to increase the herd of Aberdeen Angus, with registered cattle lines: "Katinkas," "Maid of Bauner," "Witch of Indors," famous Angus names with dams that produced magnificent stock. Mark felt his thick chest expand as he thought about them. There were sixty head with short, compact bodies and soft, brilliant black hair. Excellence in breeding had developed heads that were wide and short, with bonny eyes, and ears that reminded him of giant, fanned-out leaves.

"Twenty-five years of sweat is in that herd!" he said aloud.

Mark had made these midnight roundups before, but this was the first time that his father wasn't around to help. It took teamwork to find cattle in the dark under a spreading of trees and work them out of the river bottom and toward higher pasture. He dreaded riding alone, and he wondered what kind of mood Champion, his cow pony, was in.

He wondered whether he should wake Anita, knowing how she worried about him. She would be frightened if she awoke and missed him. He couldn't leave a note because the electricity was

off.

"Goes off ever time there's lightning," he growled.

His disposition was as rumbled as the shirt he pulled tight across his shoulders as he fumbled for grippers on the front. A small, wiggling form crowded against his back and instantly an intense blade of fire stabbed his shoulder. He bounced about trying to rid himself of the shirt and the scorpion that he knew was nestled inside.

"Lord Amighty!" he howled.

Anita had leaped to her feet, and she was searching the shirt with the beam of a flashlight. She shuddered as she observed the three-inch insect with its long, venomous tail.

She sighed. "There was one in Jean's crib when I tucked her in tonight. Thank God, I found it! I don't suppose we'll ever get rid of them. They seem to move into the walls of the house whenever the weather's dry."

When Mark rode past on the palomino, a lightning flash brightened the yard and revealed Anita at the gate. He felt comforted and spurred the pony down the driveway and toward the river. The cool breeze tickled his ears, and his eyes searched ahead for new gopher holes or other obstacles in his path. The moon was hidden by clouds, and the trail was obscured by darkness. Approaching, he slowed Champion and let him pick his own way.

He spoke softly to the compliant pony. "I believe we've got time, Boy. She ain't singin yet."

He slapped the horse's rump and hung on while he bounded, almost straight down, into the Washita bed--still bone dry, and the sand felt firm. The wind had filled it some, and when that water came it wouldn't soak up. It would keep on rolling downstream and then spill over into the valley.

Mark leaned forward over Champion's shoulders, helping bear his weight up the steep bank, where the lowland was dry and dusty, minus its normal johnson grass crop. He waited for the lightning to distinguish a path among the dead limbs that had fallen from thirsty elm trees. Intently, he listened for the lowing of cattle, but he heard only wind and the distant rumble of thunder. Apparently the herd had taken the trail leading to the back boundary of the property, and they had bedded down in scrub timber, a half mile upriver. The sky was clearing, and a few stars peeked down as the

clouded moon sent beams of golden auras through the dissolving clouds, and weird shadows flitted across the vale. Hearing the faint rumble of water, the determined man set a rapid pace.

The first wall of water splashed against the river bank as the young cowboy kicked several cows to their feet. Bedded down and sleepy, the animals moved groggily as Mark ran from one animal to another, gouging with the toe of his boot. In the saddle again, he started the herd down the narrow land that circled the acreage. He nudged the pony with his heels, causing him to bump into the rear of the lagging cow. The dam squealed and shoved the animals ahead of her, and the slow moving silhouettes picked up speed as he guided them into the lane where they couldn't turn back into the trees.

A dozen yearlings broke away and scattered like wild rabbits. The man let them go and pushed the cows farther down the trail. They knew where they were headed now: the old ones would move on to the river; the calves would follow.

Mark turned back to find the lowing bull. Quality Prince of Sunbeam had been purchased from Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College, and he was the farm's most valuable asset. Now he was belligerently answering the bellows of a Guernsey bull on pasture a mile away. As the rider approached, the two-ton bull eyed him suspiciously; then he chose to ignore him. This dark hulk wasn't mean, but he was stubborn and not about to lose an argument. He stomped and jerked as Mark tugged at the nose halter. The man pondered, hearing the voice of the thirsty river.

"Really, Prince! I don't have time to drag you in! I gotta get those cattle across!" He hit the bull, hard, across the rump with his quirt and reached for wire cutters in the saddle bags. He was running out of time as he cut four barbed wires that would allow Prince to climb a bit higher on a neighbor's land.

"I'll be back for you at dawn," the frustrated cowboy shouted. "Even now I gotta swim these cattle across."

At the first hint of daylight, Mark pulled on his boots. That bull had to be found and taken to higher ground--if he weren't drowned already. Anita was feeling bad, he knew, and he wished his

father would return from his cattle-buying trip.

"Okay, Baby," he spoke firmly to his wife. "Listen to me. I gotta go after that bull. You watch the water and get out in time. You have never seen an overflow, and it may scare you to death. If the water starts in from the east and circles around the house over the alfalfa, you head for higher ground. You won't make it out by car. Climb the hill, then cut over high above the road. I'll find you there."

As the sun arose, it cast brilliant rays into the valley. Champion set a smooth gait across the alfalfa field, kicking up dust as he moved across the stunted, dried plants. There had been too little rain for the deep green stalks to flourish and make hay after the last cutting. Splashes of red earth of Western Oklahoma were vivid around the shriveled stems of the alfalfa.

The river had filled and spilled over on the south side. The torrential water was tinted an orange red, dyed by the elements of the soil that it had swept over. The rushing water was swirling with logs and debris. The gaited gelding slowed, cautiously, as he approached the fierce current, and Mark slipped his feet from the stirrups to plant them high upon the horse's strong shoulders, across the cantle of the saddle. As the current struck the palomino's legs, he shuddered a moment, walked in deeper, and started swimming. Mark could feel the stress of the animal as the fingers of the river tugged to submerge him. Because the water was so deep and the valley so flooded, Mark wasn't sure when they cleared the channel, but finally Champion gained his footing, and they aimed for Prince's meadow.

Prince wasn't there. Mark guided the pony through the gap made by his wirecutters the previous evening, but there was no sign of the bull. He entered his own property again, noticing the ground had become damp with the swelling water. Mark pulled Champion to a stop, and he listened. The muted sound of the river was growing louder. He was reminded that the narrow, shallow channel had a vast watershed and many tributaries. Just a few miles upriver, White Shield and Quarter Master Creeks emptied their contents into the inadequate riverbed. The sounds of rolling water were reaching a crescendo accompanied by the cracking sounds of large logs bowling over huge

trees.

As the water rolled over the meadow and began swirling under Champion's feet, Mark spurred the mount. Champ jumped forward and galloped toward the crossing. Six young heifers broke out of the trees and moved along ahead of them, seeming to sense the danger. The angry river was covering the meadow, and debris was beginning to float among the trees. Guiding Champion to the highest spot in the riverbottom, Mark reached for the binoculars that were in the saddle bag. Focusing through the glasses, he could see the swollen, copious liquid etched across the wheat field that stretched a half mile east of the channel. The water level was rising rapidly, wiping out fences as it progressed. He would need to cut back south to an old crossing and get out immediately, or he would be caught in the Washita basin when the heavy drifts washed through. Something caught his attention as he started to swing the binoculars away from his face. With dismay, he focused in on a tiny, distant figure trudging up the hill, above his house. It was Anita, dragging little Jean. Something was dreadfully wrong with the way she moved! While the water was stretching its expanding fingers and filling the lowlands beneath their home, Anita was moving with a visible effort, entirely foreign to her. It had not occurred to Mark that Anita would not or could not get out in time, but she was moving so slowly. A horrid thought touched his brain as he screamed her name.

"Anita!" His cry echoed dreadfully across the travailing river, the haunting cry of an animal that was losing its mate.

"Anita!" The cry came again. Mark knew that his wife was in hard labor.

Champ leaped forward, shocked at the deep, unique rake of his master's spurs. Heifers scattered before him as the half-crazed man goaded the powerful animal forward.

Limbs bobbed about in the water at the crossing. They would float atop the rotating flood, then be sucked under in a gulp, only to resurface downstream.

A twenty-foot log, eighteen inches in diameter, came floating down the channel and caught upon a tight braid of limbs. The drift groaned, heaved, and was finally broken apart by the force of the water. Innocuously, the

limbs unraveled and moved along with the spinning trash, but the heavy, lumbering log was swept sidewise, and it blocked the channel. It was jammed tightly against the trunks of cottonwood trees on opposite sides of the Washita. The river formed a bend there, and the obstinate log was backing up loppings and changing the course of the stream. Rushing water, with its collection of limbs and farm crucibles, began surging by the palomino's legs, and a large corner post knocked him off balance. Mark knew that if he crossed and the barricading log broke free, he would be killed.

A vision of Anita flashed through his mind, and he forced the horse toward the river. Hearing the surrendering splintering of the roots of the cottonwoods, the horse reared and almost toppled backward. Desperately, Mark brought his quirt down, severely, upon Champion's head, and he spurred him forward. The animal moved ahead slowly, then with increasing momentum. Suddenly, his feet slipped on the muddy land, and Champion fell. Slipping his feet free from the stirrups as the pony rolled, Mark fell into the icy torrent. Cold saturated his body as the water closed over him, and he manipulated his limbs to keep from being trampled by the horse. He fought for footing on the soggy terrain and ultimately leaned against the trembling gelding.

Standing in waist-deep water, muddy and miserable, he put his head on the pony's shoulder and cursed loudly. Having spent his wrath, he spoke softly, "Partner, one of us better use our heads or Anita won't be the only one in trouble."

Refuse had stacked eight feet above the jammed log, and the top of one giant tree swayed and jerked downward. The tree creaked and splintered under the pressure of the drift as Mark turned away from the crossing. Suddenly the jammed log tore loose, and the drift untangled slowly as its varied contents were forced downstream. Mark watched as a half dozen fence posts, with some barbed wire intact, moved past him. An unpainted barn door drifted by, followed by loppings of trees. As the crossing cleared, the impatient husband urged his steed ahead, muttering encouragement. Inching ahead into the channel, the gelding started swimming. When they reached the road, Mark saw his



father's car ascending the north hills, and he turned the sweating animal toward Anita.

Later at the hospital, he tried to smooth Anita's tangled hair. He felt a combination of pride, relief, and guilt as he watched her. She was relaxed and smiling, still exhausted from the birth of his son.

"I don't know about ladies who go into labor during floods and then insist on giving birth in an automobile," he teased. "But you gotta admit he is one good-looking boy, just like his Daddy."

The events of the day overwhelmed him. There had been one crisis after another, then the glorious miracle of Marcus Andrew Hobbs. He envisioned the farm, sitting under a foot of smelly water, drinking up the needed liquid.

"Wow!" Mark drawled. "Today we hit the jackpot! We got our boy, and we got an overflow that will provide months of moisture. We'll have a great alfalfa crop. You know, we could afford our house now if I hadn't lost that bull."

He watched Anita's eyes widen. "You lost the bull?" she said.

Mark felt a wave of depression, thinking of the magnificent animal. "Yeah, I lost him. He wasn't in the back meadow, and I looked as long as I dared. Thunder! I wish I could have found that bull! I won't find another one that will mix as well with my herd and throw such good calves—even if I could afford another Quality Prince."

"Old Prince?" Anita laughed delightfully. "When your dad drove across the field to pick me up, Prince was crossing up to the north pasture. He got to safety before you did, and he had eight heifers with him." ❧

*Tena Garrison is a real-estate agent and owner of a uniform and maternity-dress shop in Elk City. Free-lance writing is an avocation for her.*



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# CHASING RAINBOWS

By Fanny Dodgen

Contentment comes from  
Accepting  
God's plan  
and knowing  
rainbows bloom  
without help of man.

*Fanny Dodgen, a longtime resident of Weatherford, enjoys free-lance writing and photography as well as the pursuit of her many other, varied interests.*



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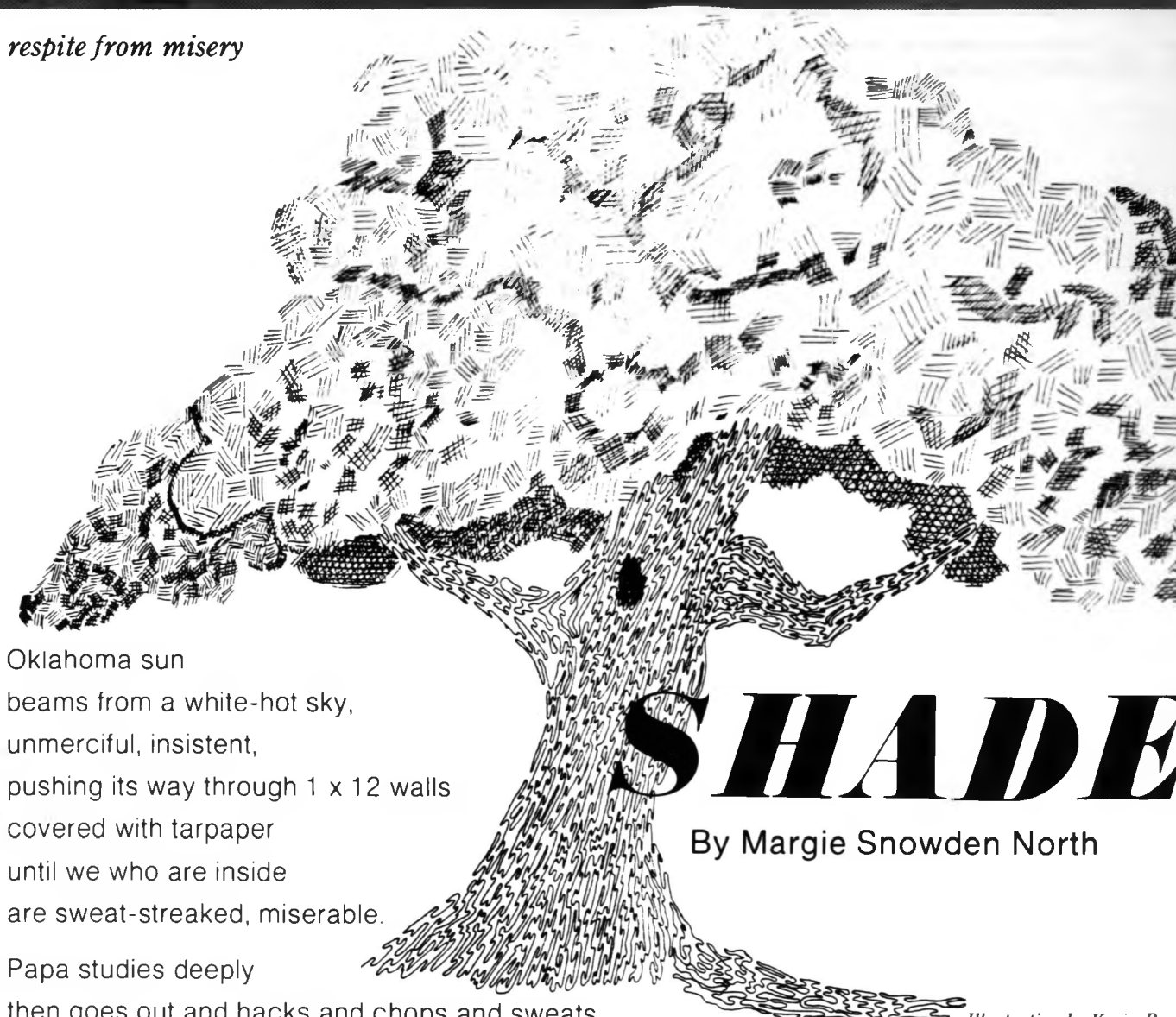
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Oklahoma sun  
beams from a white-hot sky,  
unmerciful, insistent,  
pushing its way through 1 x 12 walls  
covered with tarpaper  
until we who are inside  
are sweat-streaked, miserable.

Papa studies deeply  
then goes out and hacks and chops and sweats  
some more in the torturing sun,  
plants posts, stretches wire, lays branches.  
We kids help,  
intrigued by growing shadows  
along the house-front,  
looking up into green leaves  
and shade and protection from burning rays.  
Marveling because Papa always had answers.

Finally Papa stands, leaning on his ax,  
face and shirt damp,  
smiling a little to himself  
in the tranquillity and cool  
of what could well have been  
the only porch arbor shade  
ever made.

# SHADE

By Margie Snowden North

*Illustration by Kevin Bay*

*MARGIE SNOWDEN NORTH has been a free-lance writer for over two decades. A regular WESTVIEW contributor, she is joined in this issue by her sister, Ava Snowden Sailors.*

# Laughable Weather Tales

By Maxine Wilhelm

One day a couple drove in to our Honey Farm near Erick. The wind was blowing about normal. The young woman took a deep breath and said, "You sure have a lot of air here!" I started laughing, and she explained that they were from Pittsburg, Pennsylvania, and because of the refineries the air was always polluted there.

Many people comment on the weather; it's a natural way to start a conversation, and I catch myself doing the same.

Some people ask, "Why are the trees along the highway leaning to the north?" I bite my tongue to keep from answering, "They're leaning off the highway, too." But I patiently explain about the south wind.

"Does the wind blow like this all the time?" "No", I answer; "sometimes it blows harder." Then I think about the tale that has been repeated for so many years.

The wind was blowing and storm clouds were rolling across the sky when a tourist stopped at a farm house. He jumped out of the car and asked the farmer, "How do you know when to go to the cellar?"

The farmer pointed to a log chain tied to the top of the fence post in the yard.

"See that chain? When the wind blows hard enough to straighten the chain straight out from the top of the post, it's time to start thinking about going."

"When the wind starts snapping the links off, it's time to go!"

We laugh at our weather jokes because we know we can't do anything about the weather; besides, if we don't like it, there'll probably be a change tomorrow anyway.

During a sandstorm, people have asked, "Was it like this during the Dustbowl Days?" Local housewives after a sandstorm say, "I've got to shovel the dirt out of my house today."

One man from the East Coast asked us during a very hot, dry summer, "Is this where the desert starts?"

Sometimes it's so dry when the mud swallows return in the spring, my husband, Olin, has to make mud so they can build their nests. This is really true!

Being farmers, we sometimes don't realize how much we talk about the weather. Conversations begin with, "Do you think it's ever going to rain?" The logical answer is "Of course; it always does."

My father, George Martin, used to say, "I've plowed, planted, and done all I can; now it's up to the good Lord to send us rain if he wants us to make a crop." My first memory of prayer as a child was praying for rain because Daddy told us to.

Have you heard "it's hotter than Hades today" or "You can fry an egg on the sidewalk in this heat" or "It's so hot that spit dries before it hits the ground"? These are all a part of laughable weather tales.

*Maxine Wilhelm of Erick is becoming one of our regulars. In addition to writing articles such as "Laughable Weather Tales," she has also published a recipe storybook of the depression era titled SMIDGEN OF HONEY. More information may be obtained from Mrs. Wilhelm by writing to her at Route 1, Box 80 in Erick (73645).* ❧

WESTVIEW

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Illustration by Kelley Doyle

## Grandpa's Surprise

By Inez Schneider Whitney

*Inez Schneider Whitney has lived in Arlington, Virginia, since 1943; but she was born and reared on a farm south of Custer City. There have been few issues of WESTVIEW without an Inez Whitney work.*

It was a sultry Western Oklahoma afternoon. My mother, baby brother, and I were in our farmhouse with my Irish grandfather, Robert Chinworth Provines. He had arrived from Indiana the day before and was telling Mama the latest news about the relatives.

After a few minutes he paused, looked around, and then asked my mother, "Where's Edd?"

"He went out to help Bill Daley get in the horses. He thinks it's going to storm, and he's watching the clouds."

Papa was terrified of storms. He was sure that a tornado was lurking in every dark rolling cloud. Because of his influence, I shared the fear and have never been able to overcome it. Mama always seemed quite unconcerned but never refused to seek shelter if Papa thought it was necessary.

When I was older, Mama once said, "Before your papa and I were married, he made me promise to go to the cellar when it stormed. I said, 'All right, if you will dry the dishes' and he said he would."

I can see my father now standing by the kitchen table wiping the dishes as Mama washed them.

Every Oklahoma pioneer believed a storm cellar was a necessity and with reason. Tornadoes swept the open plains every year, destroying life and property.

Most of these caves were dug out of the ground and reinforced with sod, but my father had recently built one of cement. He feared that the sod dugout might collapse during a heavy storm.

"Well," Grandpa said, "that's quite a storm cellar Edd built. I believe that's the first cement one around here. He says he even put hogwire inside the arch over the top to strengthen it."

Just then my father rushed in the door, frantically shouting, "Hurry! Hurry! Come to the cellar. The storm is about to break. It looks like a twister. The cone keeps dropping down a little closer to the ground and it's headed this way."

There was a flash of lightning and instantaneous thunder, which meant the storm was upon us. My father picked up my brother, all of us grabbed our old coats that hung behind the kitchen door, and rushed outside and down the steps into the cave.

Bill Daley, the hired man, was already there. Papa gave my brother to Mama so he could let down the cellar door. He glanced around and then turned to Mama.

"Where's your pa?"

"Why I thought he was right behind us."


There were more crashes of thunder.

"I'd better go up and see what happened to him," Papa said. Just then Grandpa appeared at the cave door and started down the steps. What a grand entrance! He had changed to his best clothes. In one hand he held an umbrella, and in the other he carried his suitcase.

Bill Daley let out a guffaw. "Look at the dude!"

Everyone joined in the laughter.

"Pa," Mama said, "why on earth did you put on your good suit? And you're even wearing your Stetson hat!"

"Well, you came down here expecting everything to be blown away by a tornado, didn't you? I wanted all my belongings with me!" (first appeared in "Voices from the Past," THOMAS TRIBUNE, April 1, 1981) 



# Outline For A Biography

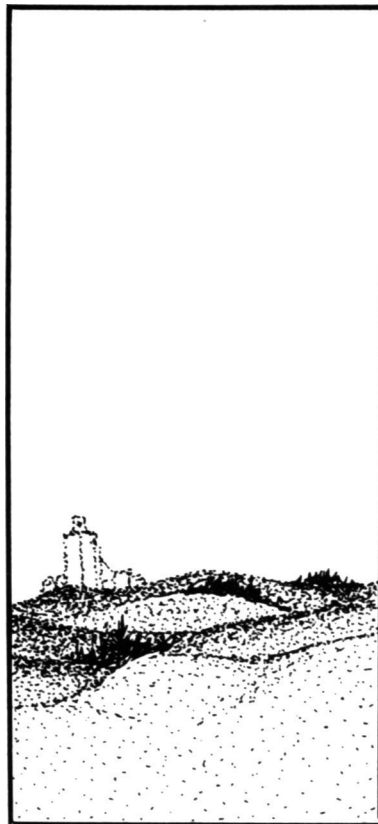
By Margie Cooke Porteus

She stood at the open kitchen door and looked west past the edge of town, the railroad, and the wheat fields to where the sky touched the ground. When she had asked grown-ups how far away was that sky-earth line, she had received only vague answers. She had watched red dust storms roll in from that direction; often there were vivid sunsets, and once she had seen a tornado touch ground. But that proved to have been only two miles away.

If she looked a little to the left, she would see the dirt cellar where there was the damp dirt smell and where the family sometimes went during a storm. Past the cellar was the swing in the grape arbor that led to the outhouse, but her eye always returned to that mysterious distant line that was the cause of longing.

Years later when her father was buried on a hot windy day, she had stood in the cemetery, and that same vague mystery returned to haunt her.

As a teenager, her dreams were often focused on the scene out the window of the second-floor Study Hall



in the high school. She would look over the town, watching the train as it slowed past the new grain elevators and stopped at the station. Farther on was the mound, really a large round hill that stood a landmark on the flat land.

Family--births, deaths, celebrations; friends--parties, conversations, secrets; school--teachers, classes, activities; weather--blizzards, hot muggy days, gray dust storms; Sundays--church, Sunday School, Sunday clothes; depression, war; and over all these the lure of that distant earth-sky line.

Each of these, my memories, could become a chapter in a book; and with slight variations, many who grew up in Western Oklahoma could use the same outline.

*Margie Cooke Porteus received her public-school education in Thomas and her higher education from Southwestern. Now a retired teacher, she lives in Paonia, Colorado. As one of WESTVIEW'S earliest contributors, she is also one of the most valued.* ♡

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# Spring Storm

By Richard Garrity

A depthless amber glow  
Filters across the field  
Crackling in intensity  
With pent fury to wield.  
Rolling black clouds,  
Strutted with a lesser mass  
Flee before the wind  
And thunder resonance.

From the sullen gloom,  
The driven blast of rain  
Gluts the creeks  
And pummels the plain.

Thin shafts of light,  
Golden, moist, probing,  
In a cloud-filled sky  
Searched for an opening.

In the west,  
On the horizon,  
Entirely freed,  
Is the setting sun.

Against the eastern clouds  
A rainbow is formed.  
Arched against the sky,  
A sign if the rain's end.

In the pasture,  
Every depression is a pool,  
Sparkling in the sun.  
Each blade of grass a jewel.

In the newly filled ponds,  
A frog chorus is heard.  
From the wet tree  
Sings the mockingbird.

Tiny leaf buds  
Stir restlessly  
In their husks  
As they open noisily.

A second rainbow  
Doubles God's promises  
As in the beginning  
This is Genesis.



# Watching The Cloud

By Margie Snowden North

In the night the wind gets up  
It whistles through the Paradise trees and  
around the corners of the house  
Lightning like a million candles light the sky  
Thunder pops,  
cracking the heavens in two

I scoot farther into the covers  
hands clenching the sweaty sheet,  
unable to sleep.  
Papa gets up, his feet swipe  
down through his pant legs,  
his belt rattles,  
he pulls his shoes  
out from under the bed

When he slips out the door  
to watch the cloud  
I relax, released from fear  
and drift into sleep.



*Illustration by Sandy Wymer*

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*In Memory of  
John W. Ivester  
Family*

*Sayre, Oklahoma*

# Cyclone Weather

By Ava Snowden Sailors

The sun has been blazing and torturous all day  
causing heat to shimmer in golden waves before us.  
We chop endless weeds in endless rows of cotton  
and wish for a cloud to float overhead  
to offer a brief respite from the dizzying rays.

I awake in the night to the roar of thunder and  
zig-zag flashes of lightning illuminating the sky.  
The Oklahoma wind is shrieking wildly,  
threatening to snap our new fruit trees like twigs  
as they sway and bend double, beaten by blowing sand.

Papa had said it was cyclone weather that day,  
and in swift panic, I spring out of bed  
ignoring sore muscles and sunburned legs and arms.  
A tornado is coming and I am the only one who knows  
we're about to be swept into an angry black funnel!

I step quietly, heart pounding, into the front room.  
There in the darkness Papa stands at a window,  
keen eyes searching the sky for any sign of a treacherous,  
ugly thread that could suddenly drop out of the clouds  
to tumble and scatter us all into oblivion.

Relief floods through me, leaving me weak and trembling.  
I turn silently to crawl back into the warm bed,  
now eager to escape into a deep, dreamless sleep.  
It's all right now because Papa is awake and watching  
so I know I don't have to be afraid anymore.

*Illustration by  
F. Bennie Nossaman, Jr.*





By Teresa Avery

*Illustration of the author by Becky Bond*

# Blowing Across The Skies

amazing in variety

**T**raveling across Oklahoma, we notice extreme differences between Eastern Oklahoma and Western Oklahoma. In Western Oklahoma, it's noticeable that the land has few trees and that the area is rather flat except for a few hills. Another difference is the weather. At times, it seems that there's some type of storm in Western Oklahoma almost every day; in actuality, there are many storms. Oftentimes a person will notice that the sun is shining beautifully when he gets up in the morning; then by noon the sky is dark and it's beginning to rain. The rain may last all afternoon and then clear up, or it may continue for a day or two. Just when it seems that good weather is coming, the whole process of storms starts again.

Rain and thunderstorms aren't the only type of storms found abundantly in Western Oklahoma. In the winter, many of us find that the snow gets extremely deep for this part of the country. Snowdrifts are very bad because they sometimes can't be seen. A person will go through a drift and suddenly discover that he's up to his waist in snow. Snowstorms are much like the thunderstorms in their deceptiveness: just when a storm seems to be ended, the snow will start again. Also, about the time the snow begins to melt and everyone gets "Spring Fever," spirits are burst by a resurgence of snow and freezing weather.

Bringing in these storms are the exceptionally strong winds found in Western Oklahoma. There's seldom a day that the wind isn't blowing at least hard enough to shake the

tree limbs. The wind blows hard enough some days to make a person feel that he can just pick up his feet and blow to his destination. The wind can be nice in the summer to help cool off the hot, humid atmosphere; however, in the winter, the wind makes the temperature seem even lower. On some days, the real temperature may be fifteen degrees, but the wind chill makes the actual temperature seven degrees.

The strong winds and the many storms found in Western Oklahoma cause the temperature to be changing constantly. A person can go out during the morning and feel as if he's going to freeze, but by afternoon it can be "shorts" weather. No one ever knows how to dress for the weather in Oklahoma. The temperatures change from week to week and day to day. Just as it seems time to put away summer clothes, the weather turns warm again.

Umbrellas, coats, and warm-weather clothes are needed year around in Oklahoma. Knowing the type of clothes to keep available is something no one can ever determine ahead of time. Living in Western Oklahoma, everyone learns to be prepared for anything.

*Teresa Avery, daughter of Don and Deloris Avery, is a sophomore Business major from Ponca City. She is a member of Alpha Gamma Delta, and she wrote "Blowing Across the Skies" as an assignment in a SOSU English Composition class.*



Illustration by Lisa Lowry

# The Storm

By  
Charlotte Draper Wafford

*Charlotte Draper Wafford teaches all forms of poetry to her students in Wilburton. She recently helped promote and compile her school's first anthology. Selected from a field of five thousand teachers, Wafford was Oklahoma County's "Teacher of the Year" in 1980. "The Storm" is her first published poem.*

a neophyte reads  
revealing innermost thoughts  
achilles' heel

fear winds  
blast  
rip her cloak  
bone-chilling gales encapsulate

kind connoisseur  
encourages

blanketed in warmth  
she sees tranquillity clouds

winds die  
sunshine envelopes

# FUTURE ISSUES

# Fall 1987

## Western Oklahoma Memories

WINTER, 1987 (Western Oklahoma  
Success Stories; deadline: 9-15-87)

SPRING, 1988 (Western Oklahoma's  
Pacesetters; deadline: 12-15-87)

SUMMER, 1988 (Western Oklahoma  
"Stars"; deadline: 2-15-88)

FALL, 1988 (Western Oklahoma Politi-  
cians; deadline: 7-1-88)

WINTER, 1988 (Western Oklahoma  
Landmarks; deadline: 9-15-88)

SPRING, 1989 (Western Oklahoma  
Festivals; deadline: 12-15-88)

SUMMER, 1989 (Western Oklahoma  
Celebrations; deadline: 2-15-89)

FALL, 1989 (Western Oklahoma Ceme-  
teries; deadline: 7-1-89)

WINTER, 1989 (Western Oklahoma  
Artisans; deadline: 9-15-89)

SPRING, 1990 (Western Oklahoma's  
Children; (deadline: 12-15-89)

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

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