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WESTVIEW

A Journal of Western Oklahoma

\$2.50

1985

FALL



ARTISTS,
WRITERS,
AND
MUSICIANS
OF
WESTERN
OKLAHOMA

FOREWORD

As we begin our fifth year of publication, we find that we have an unexpected problem: at times, our supply has exceeded our demands.

In an effort to have more control over things, we request that our potential contributors query us first from this day forward.

If we had employed the system earlier, we might have produced a Fall 85 issue that would be more pleasing to all our readers. Think the best of us anyway.

Here are some ideas for the future: Query us about submissions on Susan Powell (Miss America from Elk City), Jane Jayroe (Miss America from Laverne), Roger Miller (pianist from Erick), Judith Anthony (former Metropolitan Opera star from Weatherford).

On our Future Issues page, we have projected our themes up through the Winter, 1989 issue. We hope that there will be many possibilities for all potential contributors and that we will receive adequate queries for interesting submissions to fill all of our issues.

Leroy Thomas

WESTVIEW

Weatherford, Oklahoma

Published by Southwestern Oklahoma State University

Fall

Volume 5 Western Oklahoma Artists, Musicians, and Writers Number 1

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Editor	Dr. Leroy Thomas
Assistant Editor	Dr. Christopher Gould
Assistant Editor	Dr. Roger Bromert
Publisher	Dr. Donald Hamm
Staff Writer and Advertising Representative	Donita Lucas Shields
Art Director	David Oldham

COVER

by David Oldham

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. All works appearing herein are copyrighted by the Southwestern Center for Regional Studies of Weatherford, Oklahoma.



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— ATTENTION —

The 1986 Southwest/Texas Popular Culture Association will hold its annual conference at The Museum and Ranching Heritage Center at Texas Tech University, Lubbock, Texas, February 13-15. Anyone interested in presenting a paper on "Oklahoma Popular Culture" please contact Roger Bromert, Department of Social Sciences, Southwestern Oklahoma State University, Weatherford, Oklahoma 73096 — before December 15.

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AUTHORS WHOSE WORKS APPEAR IN THIS ISSUE

Evelyn Bachmann, a Tulsa freelancer, is a prize-winning OWFI poet whose work has appeared before in WESTVIEW.

Tena Bailey, freelance writer from Hammon, is a real-estate agent in Elk City.

Jane Beckman is a freelance writer who lives in Walters. She has published fiction and non-fiction in ELLERY QUEEN'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE, FOREIGN SERVICE JOURNAL, and OKLAHOMA TODAY. Her romance novel WINDS OF LOVE, set in Western Oklahoma, is a recent release of Avalon Books, New York.

Yvonne Carpenter, a freelance writer from Clinton, is currently trying to get her first novel published.

Olive Dewitt, a poet from Tecumseh, is a member of Shawnee Writers and the OWFI.

Lois Flowers, columnist and housewife, lives on a farm near Sweetwater in Roger Mills County. She sends her news and views to the four newspapers in her neighboring towns.

Diane Glancy, a prize-winning poet from Tulsa, makes her first WESTVIEW appearance in this issue.

Ernestine Gravley, no stranger to WESTVIEW's pages, is the OWFI's leading contest prize winner.

Linda Korbelen, formerly of Sentinel, is a senior art student at Southwestern OSU.

Pat Kourt teaches English and Creative Writing at Thomas High School, where she is also school librarian. Several of her non-fiction articles have been published in national magazines.

Kate Jackson Lewis of Purcell is one of our most prolific writers. Although she presently lives east of I-35, she has in the past taught several years in Western Oklahoma public schools and is thus "one of us."

Randy Morrison is a fourteen-year-old freshman at Weatherford High School. His main interests are youth church work, baseball, and writing.

Margie Cooke Porteus, a regular WESTVIEW contributor and SOSU alumna, is a retired teacher. Formerly of Thomas, she now lives in Paonia, Colorado.

Dee Ann Ray, one of WESTVIEW's most valued freelancers, is director of the Western Plains Library System. She shares both her writing and photography with us.

Steve Robertson is a staff writer for the LAWTON MORNING PRESS-CONSTITUTION.

Bob Turpin, produce manager of a grocery store in Davis, has published widely in Western magazines. Four of his Western novels are currently being considered by publishers.

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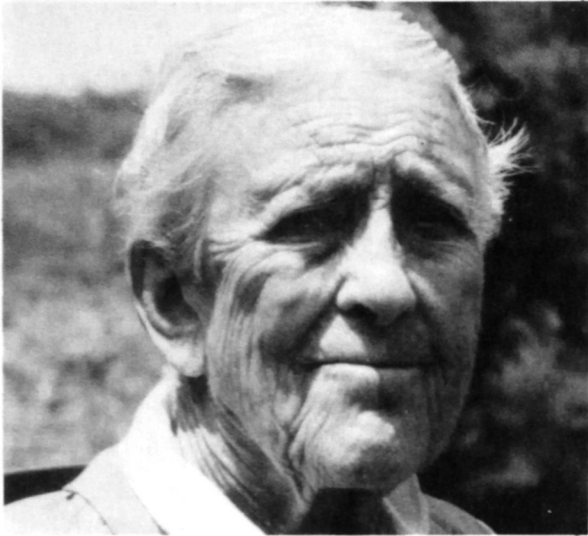
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Oklahoma's Sagebrush Artist: Augusta Corson Metcalfe

by Linda Koebelen

The paintings and drawings of Oklahoma by its first artists are important historically and in some cases provide the only visual information concerning the country and the people before the invention of the camera. Art, a personal expression and interpretation of one's world, is viewed by artists through their genuine reality and by their most personal experiences and interests. Reality is the artist's way of identifying the most common and superficial experiences of life.

One artist who provided visual interpretations of the early period of Oklahoma's history was Augusta Corson Metcalfe, a pioneer woman who lived in Western Indian Territory. Born near Vermillion, Kansas in 1881, she was brought by her parents to "No Man's Land" in 1886. Seven years later her family moved to a homestead on the Washita River near Durham in the Antelope Hills Country of Oklahoma Territory. There on the Metcalfe ranch, Augusta would live for more than seventy-five years (Melvin Harrel, "My Life in the Indian Territory of Oklahoma," *CHRONICLES OF OKLAHOMA*, 33 [Spring, 1955], 50; Frederick A. Olds, "Historians and Art: An Oklahoma Case Study," *CHRONICLES OF OKLAHOMA*, 52 [SUMMER, 1974], 204.)

Augusta Corson Metcalfe never attended public school; but her mother, a former Philadelphia teacher, provided her with tutoring and quality reading material. The youth's talents, however, didn't seem to require formal schooling. Augusta was endowed with a natural ability for art; she never had a lesson. She used painting and drawing to "kill time" ("Brush of Painter Stilled by Death," *THE CHEYENNE STAR*, May 13, 1971, p. 1). Being ambidextrous, she roughed in pastures with her left hand, put in details with her right, and signed with a brand mark. Augusta passed the hours while herding cattle by cutting pictures into rocks.

Horses and sagebrush ranchland, which she knew so well, were her favorite subjects. Metcalfe paid careful attention to detail, reproducing everything as it was — a perfect painting from nature ("Cowboy and Lady," *LIFE MAGAZINE*, July 17, 1950, pp. 70-72.). The style was her own, reflecting her life and history of the region in which she lived.

In 1905, Augusta Corson married James Metcalfe. A few years later, her husband left her with a twenty-five-acre farm, some feed cattle, and a young son (Harrel, p. 60).

Despite these personal hardships, she continued painting and soon acquired fame in several states.

Metcalfe's first recognition came as a blue-ribbon winner at the 1911 Oklahoma State Fair. Nearly four decades later, a newspaper article brought her to the attention of Nan Sheets, director of the Oklahoma Art Center from 1935 to 1965. Sheets arranged for her to have a one-woman art show at the Municipal Auditorium in Oklahoma City in 1949. Following the show, Roy Stewart of the *DAILY OKLAHOMAN* dubbed her the "Sagebrush Artist." In July, 1950, a feature article in *LIFE MAGAZINE* brought Metcalfe international fame. Since then, her work has been on exhibit in the Grand Central Art Galleries in New York City ("Augusta Metcalfe Dies at Age 89," *DAILY OKLAHOMAN*, May 11, 1971, Sec. N, p. 9, cols. 1-2.).

Throughout the years, Metcalfe's native state continued to bestow honors upon her. In 1959, the citizens of Durham procured the services of an Oklahoma City artist, John Metcalf (no relation), to paint a portrait of Western Oklahoma's "Grandma Moses Painter" which hangs in the Cheyenne Room of the Black Kettle Museum in Cheyenne, Oklahoma. Under the direction of the Oklahoma Historical Society, Metcalfe and seven other artists were inducted into the Oklahoma Hall of Fame in 1968. That same year, she was the subject of a documentary presentation by WKY TV of Oklahoma City ("Brush of Painter Stilled by Death," p. 1).

Augusta Corson Metcalfe died May 9, 1971 at the age of eighty-nine. Fortunately, Western pioneer life has been preserved by her brand of realism. Ranch life, the working of cattle and horses, frontier times, pioneer people, and the scenes and background of their lives, work, and play were the images she painted in "Homestead," "Country Doctor," and "Prairie Fire 1890" ("Augusta Metcalfe, November 10, 1881-May 9, 1971: A Tribute," *OKLAHOMA TODAY*, 22 (SPRING, 1972), p. 11; Irene Lefebvre, "Painter of the Prairies," *OKLAHOMA'S ORBIT* in *THE SUNDAY OKLAHOMAN*, November 14, 1965, p. 6.). In these works she sought to retain the basic impression of visual reality by interpreting the universal meaning that lay beneath the surface appearance of natural forms. Her vivid memory and skillful touch preserved an era, a place, and a colorful record of Western Oklahoma's heritage. ■



A Man And A Museum

This dialogue came from an interview between Fred Olds (FGO) and me (KJL).

KJL: Several articles about you and your work at the museum have been published. Can you suggest an area which you would like me to explore?

FGO: Yes! Write about the museum and the town--their historical attractions. We want people of Oklahoma to know more about what the place has to offer.

By Kate Jackson Lewis

I found it difficult to separate the man from the museum; therefore, I am including a brief biography which may be beneficial to people who are unacquainted with Olds.

The man, Frederick G. Olds, was born into an Ohio physician's home when times were hard and doctors' services were paid with produce, livestock, or promises.

Unable to send his sons through college, yet wanting all of them to study medicine, he encouraged Fred to take a proffered football scholarship and, at the same time, a job delivering ice.

During Fred's youth, the Olds family moved into Indiana not far from the university; so soon after high-school graduation, the young man found himself enrolled

at IU. Having no desire to study medicine and burdened with too strenuous tasks, he soon became a dropout. His dollar-a-day job at the iceplant offered no way to fill his lifelong desire to go West and be a cowboy, so Fred ran away from home. Having been offered \$35 a week for sketching for Disney Studios, he set out for California with meager funds.

The disillusioned fellow was "broke" by the time he arrived in Amarillo. He hired out at a dollar a day building fence on a West Texas ranch. "Cowboying" soon lost its allure for Fred, and he began thinking of another occupation. He enlisted in the Army Air Force where he served for three years; there he matured and formulated his future plans.

After the war, Olds returned to IU and this time stayed on to graduate. He later taught music and art, coached football, raised horses, and of course found time to draw and paint. By this time, he had married Flo, who turned out to be a versatile helpmate. She knew and loved horses, drew plans for houses, and was a skilled interior decorator. As soon as Fred had an accumulation of paintings, the couple took a few choice ones and some horses to a San Antonio stock show where they sold twelve paintings and two horses, winning some prizes on



Olds' painting "Frontier Cowboys Live It Up." (detail)

the animals.

On their way back to Indiana, they made a down payment on an Oklahoma ranch with the money made at the show. Next, they moved their four children, some horses, chickens, and household goods to their new place near Wynnewood. Before long, Flo had designed a cedar-log house, which they built and moved into.

Fred had always liked this part of the country, where his mother had lived with her family during territorial days. Fred said, "As we sat around the fire at night, my granddad's accounts of life farther west sowed seeds of desire in my mind."

With a family to support, Fred took on a teaching job in the local school where he drove a school bus. At the

ranch, he raised thoroughbred Appaloosas, did the chores after running his bus route, and still found time to paint at night. The beautiful Appaloosas made good subjects for painting. He made many of these for neighborhood people.

The reader will note that Olds' dream of becoming a Western artist—painting cowboys, horses, and Indians—came nearer fulfillment with each move the enterprising fellow made. Even the stint in the Air Force had given him opportunity to see the great art works of the world and inspired him to return to college to study architecture, painting, and sculpture.

After a year's teaching at Yukon, he moved to Weatherford where he taught at Southwestern Oklahoma State University. His older children now had access to



Fred's "Victorian Street Scene as Viewed Through the Sugar Plum Windows."

SOSU, and the family lived just outside of town where they could enjoy country living. Olds built a roping pen where college youth could practice their rodeoing skills, eventually establishing a team.

Six years later, the Oklahoma Historical Society hired Olds and his wife to take over the opening of the new Territorial Museum at Guthrie, where Fred is presently employed.

Now that the mists have cleared away and Olds' dream has become a reality, would the multi-talented man do anything differently if he had his life to live over? "I don't think I'd change a thing," he replied. "I do wonder how different life would have been if I had gone on to Disney Studios."

The Museum

Have you ever wished you had been around for the famous Oklahoma Land Run of 1889? Or for that matter were privileged to witness any of the many colorful events of the state's history? The next best thing is to spend some time in Guthrie. That's where Oklahoma really began!

Before the sun had set on that fateful day, Guthrie had sprung to life with a population of 15,000 people—all anxious for the chance of a lifetime. Whether the opportunists came for wealth, fame, or both, many left their trademarks. One—Joseph Foucart, a Frenchman—is still lauded for his castle-like buildings, which, still structurally sound, adorn Guthrie's streets, drawing thousands of tourists each year.

A first-time visitor to the famed town may wish to seek out Frederick G. Olds, artist-director of the Oklahoma Territorial Museum, adjoining the Carnegie Library, on whose steps the symbolic wedding of two territories--Oklahoma and Indian--took place on Statehood Day, and where the state's first governor took oath of office on the same day--November 16, 1907.

Olds has sculpted a statue depicting the wedding of Oklahoma and Miss Indian Territory which stands at the entrance to the museum as a welcome to all who cross its threshold. Just inside the door, a giant wall mural captures one's attention. It so realistically portrays an early Plains Indian buffalo hunt that the viewer can almost hear the animal hoofbeats and the shouts of the hunters. As he moves along, he sees a second scene that represents the great Land Run. Fred said that the individuals pictured are descendants of the people who actually participated in the land opening. A frontier farm scene--with complete soddy, plow, and period-dressed



This bronze bust of Will Rogers was presented by Olds to Governor Nigh.

frontier people--is equally as intriguing as the first two murals. Last is a much smaller representation of the "Nativity"--had it occurred on the Great Plains.

The 67-year-old artist, who admittedly wears many hats but says he's down to eight at the present time, refuses to take credit for the transformation of the museum from a bare, spacious building to the attractive showplace it has become. He explains that it all came about when, in 1973, the Oklahoma historical Society asked him and his charming wife, Flo, to take over the task of readying the museum for opening to the public.

"Flo deserves the credit--the museum is hers--I'm just a helper," the soft-voiced fellow said. He went on to tell that his lady with the brown eyes and beguiling smile had studied design in Eastern art schools. "She planned the interior layout for the placement of exhibits and the location of the murals, antiques, portraits, and collections. At the time I was out scouring the country for something

to exhibit."

Now, a decade later, Olds is still as busy as a robin with a nestful of birds. On Monday afternoons at the museum, he becomes an art teacher for the town's school children. On the same day, an adult group of art-minded people from all over the state spend the whole afternoon under the mentor's tutelage. In turn, these students assist in selecting a theme for the '89 celebration held in April.

Each chooses and develops a project relating to the theme for the yearly affair.

In April of 1981, "The 100 Years of Medicine" theme captured the interest of the area citizens. Olds said, "People from all over the state got involved in painting pictures of pioneer doctors, midwives, and Indian medicine men or did whatever they could do to help. Some researched for forms of medicine practiced in early Oklahoma. Others contributed financial support for certain materials." Olds and one student sculpted a statue of a frontier doctor on horseback.

But the show doesn't stop with one presentation. It travels to the state capitol at Oklahoma City for a showing--thence to Washington, D.C., ultimately returning to the museum.

Olds shares his work with other museums, institutions, and schools within the state. The statue of the frontier doctor was presented to Logan County's Medical Center, where it will be permanently located.

Busts of Will Rogers may be seen both at OTM and at the state capitol.

Once an individual sees firsthand the sculptures, portraits, and exhibits housed at the museum, he will agree with the Chinaman credited with discovering that a picture is worth more than a thousand words. Too, it is predicted that all who visit the place will return for a second look.

Reminded that he was building a legacy to leave Oklahoma people, Olds remonstrated, "But think of all I've learned from the people! They come in here and tell me how they were born under a wagon or lived in a soddy or some other experience they've had." Continuing, he told of a farm woman who said, "I've always wanted to learn to paint. Will you teach me?" Without asking if she could pay, the generous man with a special love for his adopted state told her, "I will if I can." Addressing me, he said, "It's all for the people of Oklahoma."

Olds suggests that viewers find their way to the "Sand Plum," a quaint dining room, for lunch. Located in the Victor Building constructed by Foucart, it was recently renovated and decorated by the Olds husband-and-wife team.

Through a long row of windows to the left as one enters, there's a huge Victorian Street Scene with a "3-D" look that is mystifying. The people painted into the scene were Olds' friends who happened to be around at the time. One person related that if you don't want to be painted into one of Fred's pictures, you'd better keep moving.

After touring the Victor Mall, the usual spectator wants to see the rest of the historical landmarks around town.

Kent Ruth, author of the OKLAHOMA TRAVEL HANDBOOK, recommends the use of an illustrated Green Line map folder, which is available at the Guthrie Chamber of Commerce. Ruth says, "It's a helpful map which gives much background on the state's first capitol."

Dolman, Flack, and Wells:

A Trio of Western Oklahoma Women Artists



Loreta Flack, LaMonte Dolman, and Joyce Wells

The connecting link between the art of LaMonte Dolman, Loreta Flack, and Joyce Wells is a stretch of rock-patterned Armstrong Treadway running from my hallway through the kitchen and out toward the utility room. LaMonte, Loreta, and Joyce are the three Western Oklahoma women artists whose work I own and hang in my home.

I bought LaMonte Dolman's ink wash of the First Presbyterian Church in Walters. Loreta Flack's oil of a lonely windmill was a gift from the artist. And I acquired Joyce Wells' painting of a family gas well by conning an instructor of the (then) Southwestern

State College into giving away college property.

LaMonte Dolman has lived in a variety of locations throughout the United States and Europe. But she felt no urge to put brush to canvas until she returned to her native Walters in Cotton County sixteen years ago. As she became reacquainted with this region where she had grown up, she felt compelled to paint what she saw around her — even though she realized the frequently bleak and plain landscape offered a particular challenge.

LaMonte paints largely Western Oklahoma subject matter. She has

never studied formally, she says. But she has taken classes through the sixteen years of painting; the most interesting was a live model drawing class that she, Leonard Riddles (the Indian artist Black Moon), and Thelma Cunningham and Leola Kerr, two other prize-winner Walters artists, attended one winter.

LaMonte has won a passel of awards for her paintings. Which was the most special? Without hesitation, she answers, "Best of Show in Walters' annual Gallery on the Green," which she won several years ago. Then she amends with a wistful note in her



Drawing by Joyce Wells

voice: "Maybe my first ribbon."

Oil, pastels, charcoal, acrylic, pen and ink, watercolor, landscapes, still life. LaMonte has done them all. The ink-wash technique which she used on the old gable-roofed Walters Presbyterian Church with its spired belfry is almost abstract in rendering. And yet she has captured the essence of that building in which I have spent so many Sundays.

LaMonte's philosophy of art is that you have to paint what you see. You put into your work what you see with your eyes. She sees the Western Oklahoma fields and towns around her and turns them into art.

Like LaMonte Dolman, Loreta Flack paints largely Western Oklahoma subject matter. And like LaMonte, she really didn't begin to paint until she moved back to her hometown — Hollis — after living more than 25 years in Dallas.

Loreta has always liked to draw. She remembers the annual county scholastic meet held in Hollis when she was growing up. Each year she would draw the required cup and saucer and a map of the United States (in her high-school years, a map of Europe replaced the map of the United States). Did she win in those contests? "I might have won Third Place once or twice," she says, and laughs.

In 1979, Loreta didn't mess around with cups and saucers and maps of Europe. She began to study painting seriously. She studied with Evelyn Byrd in Hollis, an "excellent teacher who inspired me to go afield." She also studied with Danny Gamble, a Texas Panhandle artist, and with J. D. Keele

in Ruidoso, New Mexico. It was from Keele that Loreta learned to paint the dark, leafy verdant greenery, what Keele calls "the old master's technique."

Loreta began painting in oil, but she is doing more watercolor since she began to suspect that her respiratory problems are either caused or aggravated by the fumes from the oil paint. But if she is working in oils, Loreta likes to do so in a class. She says she has more confidence when she has a "coach," that is, a teacher who will critique as she works and offer suggestions as she paints.

Loreta's favorite subject matter is what she sees around her in the landscape of Southwest Oklahoma. And she is finding many friends who enjoy painting this type of art since she moved to Walters in January 1985. Loreta likes to paint the old barns, windmills, hills, and Southwest Oklahoma scenery. Why? "Just nostalgia," she thinks.

And a strange thing happens when she paints the old barns and windmills and farm buildings. As hard as she tries to paint them as she sees them, her brush and paint restore them to their appearance in better days. Loreta says, "I try to paint them worn down,

but they end up looking new. I don't know what a psychiatrist would say about that." But she thinks her feelings of nostalgia about the buildings and locations are what cause her involuntary restoration of the scenes.

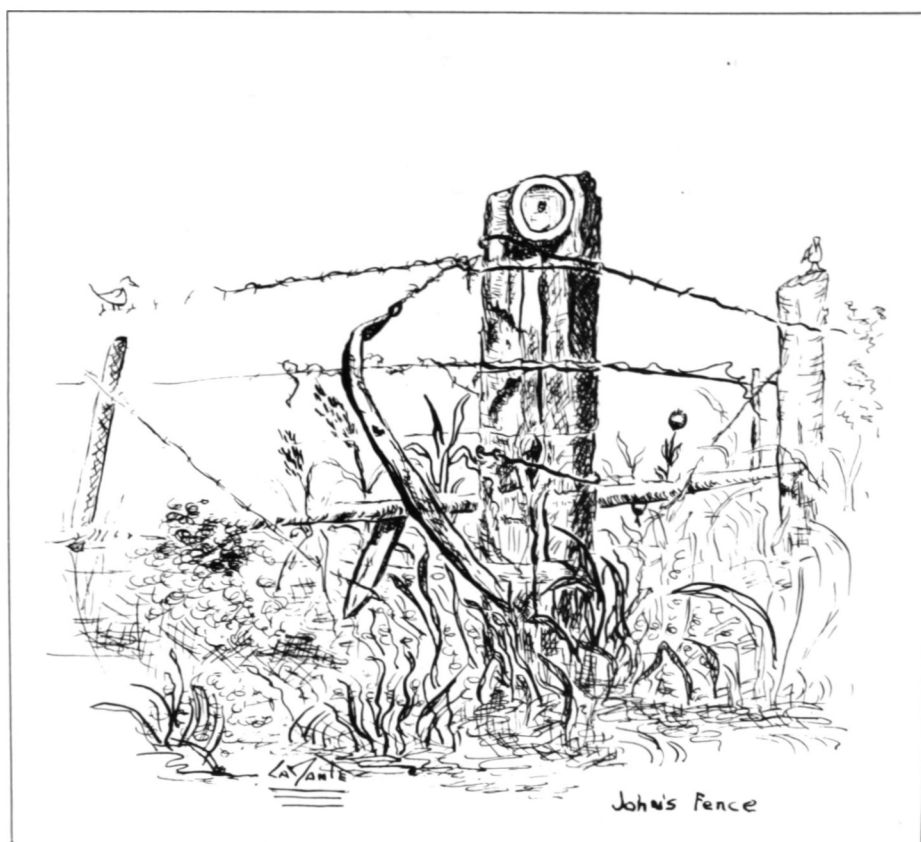
At art shows Loreta gets a kick out of people who look at her paintings and say, "Why, that looks **just** like our old home place."

Joyce Wells, who lives on a farm in the Griggs community of the Panhandle's Cimarron County, often painted scenes from her family's "home place" when she studied art at Southwestern during the 1960's.

Southwestern's Art Department had begun to expand and attract more students with the arrival of Ken Watson, an instructor who had previously been a commercial artist. Watson, along with Richard Taflinger, taught the classes in watercolor, perspective, ceramics, art appreciation, and commercial art which Joyce took. When she graduated in 1967 with a double major in Social Sciences and Home Economics, she had almost enough hours for a minor in Art.

Joyce says that Ken Watson was a great inspiration. There was one major disagreement between teacher and

Drawing by LaMonte Dolman



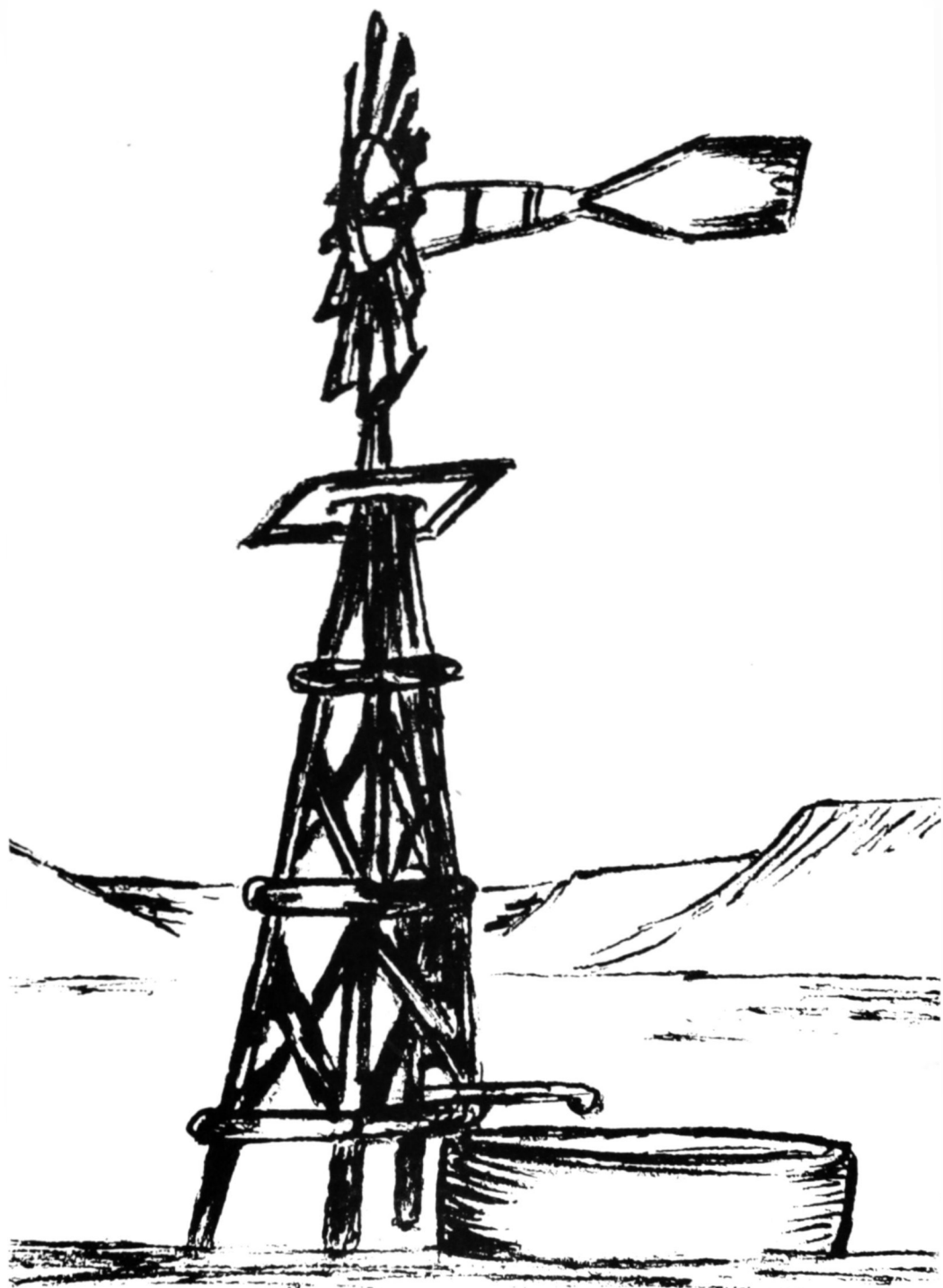
pupil, however. Joyce painted the flat Oklahoma Panhandle landscape as she saw it. Watson insisted that for good composition, mountains should be added to the background. A quiet but constant battle raged between the teacher's rules of composition and the artist's need to paint her land as it was. Since visiting Cimarron County in the fall of 1984 and seeing the table-flat landscape, I've had an overwhelming desire to blue out the mountains in the background of Joyce's water color that hangs in my hallway.

There was a reason it was necessary to acquire Joyce's painting through some fast talking: at the time Joyce was taking art classes at Southwestern, a policy was in effect that all student art became the property of the college. Joyce and I were roommates in Stewart Hall, and day after day, I watched her doing her painstaking detail work on her watercolors (her ability to do tiny tracery of bare tree branches is exceptional). I wanted one of her watercolors, but they were all class projects. I won't say which instructor capitulated to my arguments and let me have the gas well scene (the statute of limitations of student art might be longer than I think). But I suspect he let me have it because he decided if he didn't give me a painting, I'd steal one.

Joyce no longer finds the time to paint. Her job as elementary teacher at Plainview School keeps her too occupied for easels and brushes. her art has moved into other channels. She has completed a number of quilting projects that are true works of art in their exceptional detail. In fact, everything she does — from a letter written to a friend, to an embroidered towel, to a table setting — is an exquisite, careful artistic arrangement that gives pleasure to anyone who sees it.

Dolman, Flack, and Wells. A trio of Western Oklahoma women artists who find their inspiration in the sometimes hauntingly barren, sometimes evocatively beautiful land around them. In our Western Oklahoma landscape they have found line and color and form and beauty. And they have captured it in their art.

I am honored I can enjoy their work every day. ♡



Drawing by Loreta Flack



Effie Sorrells

She Gives Away Her Art

by Randy Morrison

All her life, Effie Sorrells has been a giver and not a taker. Therefore, it was no surprise to her friends when she became an artist and started giving her art away.

Effie Travis was born in Manitou, Oklahoma, on January 3, 1916 — the last of nine children born to Mr. and Mrs. James A. Travis. When Effie was three years old, she and her family moved to the Rush Springs area because her mother had had a long bout with pneumonia, and her doctor recommended the better water in the Rush Springs area. As things turned out, the prescription worked, Mrs. Travis recuperated, worked hard, and lived to be 80 years of age.

Effie began her education at Oakdale, a small country school near Rush Springs. She graduated from high school at Ninnekah, a small town between Rush Springs and Chickasha. She worked a year at anything she could find — at a restaurant, at a five-and-dime store, at housekeeping work — before going to Oklahoma College for Women (OCW) at Chickasha. While in college, she worked for the J. C. Penney Company. She never finished college, however, instead, she began a new life as the wife of Willis J. (Pete) Sorrells.

Pete and Effie were separated for four years by World War II. During that time, the County Superintendent of Schools, Joe Mosley, who was also one of Effie's former teachers, called upon her to teach at Cottonwood, a school near Cement. She had grades one through eight in one room, but

she was unable to teach there the next year because her father was ill, and she wanted to be closer to him.

Fortunately, there was a school, College Mound, near Rush Springs, where her father lived, that needed a teacher. There, as at Cottonwood, she was teacher, janitor, and coach. Although Effie knew nothing about baseball and basketball, she was called upon to be the coach of both the baseball and basketball teams. Being a resourceful person, she went to Chickasha and bought a rule book for each sport. She memorized both books, and during recess the students studied the books like regular subjects. Although the students knew the procedures and the rules, they hadn't been properly trained; therefore, they weren't very good players. During the time Effie was teaching there, a one-eyed man who had once been a professional player came into the community. He saw the students playing baseball and noticed they weren't playing very well, so he went to the school and helped Effie with her coaching. The players learned how to run, jump, hit, and catch better than anyone else around.

When time came for the County Tournament, the team members knew they could win; but on the day of the big game, the mother of one of the children jumped into a cistern and killed herself. So Effie's team didn't play that day. A few weeks after the tragedy, her team challenged the winning team, Oakdale, ironically the school at which she had begun her education. The College Mound team was beating Oakdale so badly that the Oakdale

coach called the game off about halfway through.

After the war, Pete and Effie moved to Western Oklahoma where Pete began work with the Soil Conservation Service, and Pete was called back into service for two years during the Korean War. In 1960, a few years after he was discharged, he moved his family to Weatherford. A special tie that bound Pete and Effie together was their interest in and love for education. They availed themselves of many learning opportunities by taking numerous college courses — mathematics, accounting, whatever had a special interest to the two of them.

The year 1967 was a sad one for Effie Sorrells. After several weeks of illness, her beloved Pete died.

Effie also began to take art lessons that year. Actually, she needed the lessons only in order to allow to surface the artistic talent she had always had. She started with private lessons from Evelyn Diffendaffer of Rocky and then took courses at Southwestern from George Calvert and Fred Olds. One of her classmates was Brent Gibson, who also gave her private lessons later.

Until 1980, when she had to have two heart by-passes, Effie led a very active life as an artist. She was slowed down by surgery but only for a while. After the surgery, she began an exercise program in which she is still involved. She remains active in her church, First Baptist of Weatherford, and is there for every service unless she's out of town visiting her children.

Pete and Effie had three children. The oldest, Harlene, was born in 1937. Jane was born in 1947, and Joan in 1950. Jane and Joan are both public-school teachers — Jane in Western Heights of Oklahoma City and Joan in Fort Collins, Colorado; Harlene works for the Federal Government in Arlington, Texas.

In Western Oklahoma, there are many people who consider Effie Sorrells their friend. They are the better for it because when there's a good deed needed, Effie is there to do it. When transportation is a problem, Effie provides it. When someone has sagging spirits, Effie is there with good words. And as she approaches 70, she keeps on giving away her influence and her art. ♡



Helen Deming

Art Kept Her Going

by Margie Cooke Porteus

During the late 1920's and the 1930's, many children in the Thomas area had special moments of happiness learning basic painting techniques from a dedicated teacher. It would be interesting to know how many of the students used their teacher's paints and brushes because their parents couldn't afford to buy supplies for their children. Oftentimes the parents paid for the lessons with milk, eggs, or vegetables.

The teacher made arrangements with the owners of the local dry goods stores to save for her the heavy cardboard that fabrics were wrapped around. These rectangles were used as horizontal or vertical

canvases; consequently, hundreds of simple sunsets and mountain scenes on identical shapes decorated the walls of many Thomas homes. There were some paying adult students, but the teacher showed interest mainly in children and young people.

This art teacher was Helen Deming. She grew up in the Thomas area, attended Southwestern Normal School in 1911, and did work at the Chicago University Preparatory School in 1919-1920.

In 1921, Miss Deming was head of the Art Department at Northern Oklahoma College in Tonkawa. A dedication to her in the 1921 yearbook read: "Miss Deming has great ability in her chosen line. There has been much work accomplished under her direction." She taught at Northern six more years before returning to Thomas.

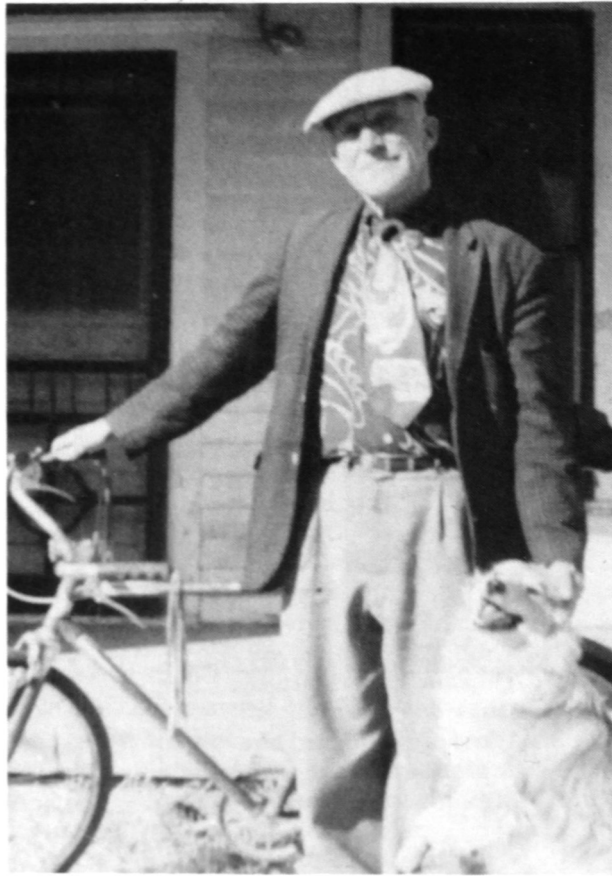
Why did Miss Deming give up her career as a successful college teacher? Her stepfather, R. R. Cooke, was becoming feeble; and her mother had had a stroke which confined her to a wheelchair. So Helen returned home to care for them. She nursed Mr. Cooke through a long illness until his death and learned the care needed for a wheelchair patient.

How did she keep her creativity alive? Once she enrolled in an art correspondence course but didn't finish it because her mother objected to the nude drawings she was asked to do. Painting was her therapy. She painted on anything — canvas, glass, velvet; she painted flowers on silk for headscarves, painted flowers on little girls' dresses, painted designs on crib covers. She painted and taught painting.

Because Helen's mother couldn't be left alone and since Helen loved children, she encouraged her students to come to her home. She taught them how to mix paints, how to hold a brush, and how to paint simple scenes; most important, she taught them an appreciation of art. If they showed talent, she encouraged her young students to do more ambitious projects.

She gave holiday parties for the children; she had the first private kindergarten in Thomas in her home, complete with caps and gowns for graduation. Since she couldn't leave the house to teach a Sunday School class, she had a missionary society for children in her home. In all of these activities, art was an important part.

Through all of these years, she and her mother kept a positive attitude and wonderful sense of humor. It must have been because of the children and, of course, the art. ❧



"JACK" FROST, 1964

FROST ON THE WINDOWS

By Pat Kourt

“Welcome, Alumni”; ‘Howdy, Folks”; ‘Merry Christmas”; or ‘Happy Holidays” are just a few of the numerous greetings that Western Oklahomans enjoyed for more than half a century. These colorful phrases adorned the windows of almost every business in several friendly communities, and they were the freehand artistry of a gnome-like, stoop-shouldered gentleman affectionately known as “Jack” Frost.

Mr. Frost, whose given name was Willard, became known as “Jack” when he started transforming colorless storefront windows in 1928. Like the legendary sprite after whom he was named, Mr. Frost enjoyed surprising and pleasing people with his unique lettering and scenes that fitted the holiday or celebration. “Pleasing folks is just more important than charging high prices,” he chuckled jovially.

The eighty-three-year-old fellow related that his initial interest in his unusual illustrations began in the late twenties when he watched a neighborhood grocer paint prices on his store window. “The brushes are the key — red sable’s the best,” he said.

So Jack acquired a few basic supplies — brushes and colorful tempera-paints — and began his lifelong vocation.

Although he was born in Iowa, he moved with his family to Fargo, Oklahoma, where he attended school through the tenth grade. It was in Fargo that Jack labored in his toughest situation — lettering the town water tower that was 117 feet high!

Going from Fargo, he busied himself in Enid and Watonga and eventually settled in Thomas, where he resided with his wife, Marian, until his death.

In his home, he had a collection of more than fifteen antiquated mirrors, his most valuable from the old Chicago Theater. Also, in his backyard he had bicycles from many eras; in fact, he learned to ride one of the high-wheel bikes at age 70.

Many Thomas residents recall that

Jack used his antique collections for everyday living as well as for enjoyment. Often perched on his nose was a pair of double-lensed spectacles, and a slate-gray derby of rabbit fur covered his yellow-white hair. The hat, along with Jack’s shaggy white beard, was as historic as the man himself.

Daily routine was the key to the Frosts’ active lives. Probably the octogenarian’s most dominant physical feature was his strong, agile hands, made so from years of lettering and painting.

When Mr. and Mrs. Jack Frost climbed into their small car each morning, their destination was no more than thirty or forty miles away and was repeated each day except Sunday. Most of the art jobs paid from five to twenty-five dollars, most of which was put away for further traveling. Through the couple’s frugality, they migrated across the United States four times, and Jack was especially happy that he had been baptized in the Jordan River during one of their trips to the Holy Land.

Additionally, Jack loved to tell stories about the numerous celebrities he visited during his painting and traveling ventures. They included at least six governors from different states; “Spanky” McFarland of the “The Lil’ Rascals”; and “Oh, yes, the American Party presidential candidate Sheckleford is my wife’s first cousin!”

Although childless and with no close relatives, Jack and Marian enjoyed meeting people together and felt “the folks of Western Oklahoma are the salt of the earth, and we’re proud to be thoroughbred ‘Okies!’” Active in the Thomas Senior Citizens Club (for which Jack lettered the building front), the Frosts enjoyed group singings and outings. During the 1979 Pioneer Days celebration, the Senior Citizens dressed in authentic early-day fashions, and Jack was voted “Most Original Beard.” He said, “I was so flattered by the honor that I just decided to keep it!”

Not only did his mischievous eyes sparkle when he related the beard

incident, but the little window painter also sincerely beamed when he remarked that his greatest accomplishment was “my decision to become a Christian as a young man.” That decision influenced him each day since he and his wife became ordained ministers of the gospel. Although they didn’t actively preach sermons in a local church, both were called “avid Bible scholars” and attended church services several times a week. Jack loved to play the piano at revival services — “all by ear too!”

Busy — and only once in his eighty-plus years did he remember not painting. “During the Depression, store owners didn’t have any extra money for my kind of work so I just did what I could get — pitching bales, street work.”

“But those days are past,” reminded the positive-thinking fellow. “Our country, especially Oklahoma, is one of surging progress, and the people here maintain a great ‘Okie’ spirit of moving ahead.” Consequently, the optimistic painter, collector, preacher, and people-lover talked of planning to write a book about his life, traveling to new places, and, above all, making someone’s hometown more colorful. However, Jack wasn’t able to realize the dream of his book before his death in 1981.

Perhaps the Canadian poet Bliss Carman was speaking of the Jack Frosts of the world when he penned: “Set me a task in which I can put something of my very self, and it is a task no longer; it is joy; it is art.”



WILLARD “JACK” FROST AT HIS SHADE TREE EASEL.



Artists and Misfits

By Yvonne Carpenter

*Eccentric people grow
From misplaced centers, cores
Unequidistant from their
Parameters. They roll
In off-balanced motion --
Erratic loping paths
Opening new ruts*



HELP NEEDED IN COLLECTING STATE RECORDS

The Central Okla. Chapter of AMERICAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF GERMANS FROM RUSSIA (AHSGR), is involved in a statewide project of collecting, pre-statehood to about 1920, obituaries abstracted from newspapers, funeral home records, church records, etc. THESE ARE TO INCLUDE ALL PEOPLE, NOT JUST GERMANS FROM RUSSIA.

For each 2000 names received, they will print an index volume with birth, and death date, and place, if listed in the record.

These index volumes, LEST WE FORGET, are for sale for \$5.00 each. Complimentary copies are sent to any group that sends information for the project. Vols. 1, 2, & 3 are now available; vols. 4 & 5 should be ready by late fall. A copy of the obituary or death notice may be obtained by sending 50¢ each.

A book of Oklahoma State naturalization records has also been started. Copies of all records of naturalizations, citizenships applied for, or petitions are desired for this project.

A cemetery file has been started for all state cemeteries which will be indexed at some later date. AHSGR is especially anxious to obtain material on the small rural ones which are disappearing so fast.

This chapter of AHSGR is trying to do its part in preserving early Oklahoma historical records. They need all the help and support available.

For more information, please contact JO FERGUSON, 3105 HOLMAN CT., MIDWEST CITY, OK 73110.

When ordering the Index Volumes, LEST WE FORGET, please make check or money order payable to: AHSGR, Cent OK Chapter, and mail to Jo Ferguson.

THANK YOU FOR ALL THE HELP AND THE ORDERS!!!!

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"Growing By Helping Others Grow"

The Music Of Life

By Olive DeWitt

*I love music, the music of life,
The music of happy chortling infants,
the melody of joyous children playing.*

*I love the music of autumn leaves,
as they rustle and skip
under the foot of man and maid.*

*I love the syncopation of raindrops
on roofs
and raincoats
and gutters.*

*I love the bass voice of the angry sea
breaking over the rocks
and caves
and cliffs.*

*And the sacred hymn in minor chords
of the silent cemetery
where loved ones sleep.*

*I love the unheard tones
of growing grass
and tiny seeds
bursting forth in spring.*

*I love the instrumentation of the woods,
with leaves
and birds
and bees
and brook,*

*and jumping fish
and squirrels
and the intermittent
chords of frogs.*

*My heart responds to the harmony of God,
as my anticipating ear
listens to the music of life.*

The Prisoner

By Evelyn Bachmann

*He was ringed in and walled
By rocks and hills,
Pines, cedars, circumstance
Ignorance.*

*Out there somewhere
Was another world.
He knew it must be
Because he had glimpsed it in his schoolbooks
Not long ago.*

*Now,
He must plow, plant,
Tend the critters,
Chop wood;
For Mom and the little'uns
Depended on his young strength
Since Pa died last spring.*

*Sometimes,
He watched a plane fly over
Coming from somewhere, going to somewhere,
As he followed the slow miles through corn and thistles
Below in the torpid heat.
He hungered so for the outside
And the ache inside grew so large
That sometimes
He wept like a little'un,
Cursed Pa for dying
And leaving him among the sullen stones.*

FIDDLING AROUND

By Lois Flowers



Music of many sorts appeals to residents of Western Oklahoma, but the music that really tugs at the heartstrings of the people of this area is the good "old string music" brought by our forefathers across the prairies. We call it many things — blue grass, folk, country, western, homespun.

One of the masters of old-time country music is Joe Flowers of Sweetwater. He can charm the birds from the trees with his violin, and he is equally adept with the guitar. In fact, he never saw a stronged instrument he couldn't play.

Actually, he wasn't born with a fiddle in his hand; but by the time he was four, he was playing tunes on the harmonica and mandolin. Now at age seventy, he knows a thousand tunes by heart plus the hymns he leads at church services.

One of ten children, he never had a chance to take music lessons, but his parents taught him what they could about chords and such. He was also permitted to visit other musicians in the community and learn what he could. His only formal training was the occasional singing school where he was taught to read shaped notes.

Joe played for dances around the country and presented programs on the local radio stations. After he married, he quit the dances. He said that he would rather play for fun and work for a living. Besides, he thought his children deserved a father who was at home.

He dairied, farmed, and held down a steady job. For twenty years, he farmed a half section and drove twenty-eight miles to Cheyenne where he worked for the Roger Mills County ASCS. Of course, I was his willing — though rather inept — plowboy at home. However, many nights he plowed until midnight doing jobs that I couldn't.

But Joe never dropped the music. He might play only a couple of tunes after supper, but still he practiced. Usually, there was a musical or program on Friday nights.

When the immigrants came to America, each brought his own music. By the time the pioneers crossed the plains, that music was a happy blend of Irish lilts, Scottish laments, sailor hornpipes, German polkas, English ballads, and good old American tunes. Music was the golden thread that made the fabric of everyday, hard living endurable. If disaster struck, they made music to forget their troubles. If God smiled on them, they used music for thanksgiving. Songfests, musicals, and dance drew the community together.

The pioneers pictured the events of their lives in song. They told of the big events and the little ones. The farmer and his boll weevil ranked right along with the sinking of the Titanic.

Joe Flowers knows most of the songs. His music spans the history of the country and is a panorama. He knows "Yankee Doodle" from the Revolution, "Battle of New Orleans" from the War of 1812, "Dixie" from the Civil War. He knows girls from songs by the dozens — Sue, Sal, Dinah, Clementine, Fraulein, and Margie. He's acquainted with scores of Indians — Red Wing, Kaliga, Snow Deer, Arawana. He knows the hoedowns from "Wagner" to "Devil's Dream," "Eighth of January" to "Cotton-Eyed Joe." Schottishes, waltzes, one steps, two steps, polkas, and spirituals are up his alley.

Joe has made thirty-six one-hour tapes of himself singing while playing the violin and two guitars; he labeled them "the All-Joe Band." A professor in
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A HARPIST WHO CALLED HERSELF A "GYP WATER PRODUCTION"

The Roaring 20's:



Mignon Faith Laird

When A Western Oklahoma Broadway Star Shone Her Brightest

By Donita L. Shields

Memorial services were held on Monday, May 27, 1985, for Mignon Faith Laird at the Mignon Laird Airport west of Cheyenne, Oklahoma. Many early-day Western Oklahomans remember Mignon as the beautiful, talented daughter of Dr. Henri C. and Elbertine Hutcheson Laird, who lived and traveled in their private Pullman car "Mignon" during the early 1900's. WESTVIEW readers may also remember the article about the Lairds that was published in our Premiere Edition back in 1981.

Dr. Laird was widely known as a pioneer doctor of chronic ailments as well as for his painless pulling of teeth. When the family's "Mignon" pulled onto the railroad siding at a prairie town's depot, people from miles around came to enjoy the Lairds' entertaining shows which were a prelude to the doctor's medical feats.

Even though the Lairds spent most of their time in numerous small towns, they also proved homestead rights on a quarter section of land 1½ miles west of Cheyenne. Mignon sold this property to the Town of Cheyenne Airport Authorities in 1967 to be used for the airport named in her honor. She made plans then that her remains would be scattered across its surface by a Cheyenne Indian chief riding horseback at full gallop.

When Mignon made her last pilgrimage to Western Oklahoma in April, 1982, she finalized these plans in her Last Will and Testament. The Town of Cheyenne elected Reverend Lawrence Hart of the Kiononia Menonite Church east of Clinton to fulfill her last wishes.

Ms. Laird bequeathed all her real and personal property to the Mignon Laird Airport, the Minnie R. Slief Library, and the Black Kettle Museum in Cheyenne. She also requested that a six-foot-tall red granite monument be erected at the airport in memory of her father, mother, her brother Clifford Irl, and herself.

W. W. Jones, the mayor of Cheyenne, proclaimed May 27, 1985, as Mignon Laird Day. During the commemorative services, members of the Cheyenne Airport Commission unveiled this Memorial. Both the library and the museum opened their doors during the holiday for a two-hour showing of Mignon's harp, her jewelry, and other personal possessions. (Many of the Lairds' memorabilia are on display. Other materials will be added at a later date as space is made available.)

Mignon Laird will always be remembered as a talented musician, a dramatist and singer, and a solo harpist and acrobatic dancer in the Ziegfield Frolics and Follies, the famous Strand Theater Roof, the Billie Rose Supper Club, the Everglades, and the Public Theater Productions of New York City. She was a member of the Board of Directors of Ziegfield Club, Inc., for several years after her retirement.

Mignon was born in Oklahoma City on April 7, 1904, and began her theatrical career when she was twenty months old. Her parents billed her as "Baby Mignon," and she immediately became a sensation in the Laird Refined Repertoire Show. According to early-day newspaper clippings, Mignon may have been a child prodigy.

She could count and knew most of the alphabet when she was sixteen months old and entertained her au-



diences by reading the alphabet and picking out letters. According to Mignon, her father, who was skilled in sign language, communicated with her with his fingers and hands. It can be surmised that Mignon was indeed a bright two-year-old, or she wouldn't have responded to this type of communication.

When she was three years old, Mignon became the star of Lairds' traveling show with a wooden shoe dance, a buck-and-wing dance, and a butterfly song and dance complete with colored spotlights and beautiful costuming. At age seven, Mignon was described as the most accomplished child of her age playing in vaudeville at that time.

During her childhood years, Mignon's parents taught her singing, dancing, and dramatics as well as reading, writing, and arithmetic. Her brother, a professional harpist trained in St.

Louis, was her first mentor on the harp and piano. Prior to moving to New York in 1921, Mignon attended the University of Oklahoma one semester where she made A's in two courses of vocal training.

It has been said that Will Rogers introduced Mignon to Florenz Ziegfield in 1921. Mr. Ziegfield was impressed with her beauty and childlike innocence and hired her immediately for a solo part in his Ziegfield Frolics. Mignon took pride in the fact that she was always a Ziegfield solo star. She was too small ever to become one of the "ponies" in dancing chorus lines.

Soon after her arrival in New York City, Mignon became a student of Theodore Crea, the master of Terpsichorean dancing. In September, 1923, she was recognized as Crea's most outstanding pupil in acrobatic dancing. New York's THEATER AND DANCING magazine described Mignon as having "a wonderful ability as a high kicker" possessing the rare accomplishment of being able to kick straight up while holding her body in a perfectly straight yet graceful position.

In 1924, Mignon signed a two-year contract with the Strand Theater. Her brother provided harp music to accompany her unsurpassed acrobatic dancing act. NEW YORK TELEGRAM called Mignon one of the most talented dancers seen on Broadway. She was a "comer" in all respects--appearance, personality, and genuine talent and beauty.

The following year (1925) Mignon developed a solo act with her harp and dancing. Her presentation, the "Pirate Dance," held her audiences spellbound with acrobatic specialties. She became a full-fledged Broadway star at this point, and her name flashed in sparkling electric lights above the renowned Strand Theater Roof.

Within three years she had made it to the top of Broadway with her high-stepping, classical, acrobatic evolutions. Her original twelve-minute act was distinctive and difficult to duplicate. She tied herself in knots, came out of them successfully, and then played the harp for relaxation.

BILLBOARD MAGAZINE, the best-known publication of theater and dancing, described Mignon as taking New York by storm--as one of the best and most attractive dancers that ever appeared before footlights--and as the highest paid star in the show's cast.

VAUDEVILLE NEWS wrote that

she broke the record for consecutive performances--"As of May 18, 1925, Mignon Laird celebrated her 60th week without a layoff--double dating Paul Smith's 'Keep Cool' Company and Earl Lindsay's 'Folly Girls' in addition to her nightly duties atop the Strand Roof."

While receiving raves and roses, Mignon remained the unpretentious and simple girl from Western Oklahoma prairies. Her advice to those wishing careers in acrobatic dancing was merely

"start young, work hard, and be graceful."

She often said, "My head is as busy as the rest of me when I'm dancing. Those who say a dancer's brains are in her feet don't know what they are talking about. I must think of my audience and what pleases them. I can't let my doubt of a certain step show. I must show assurance. An audience likes to think everything is easy for the dancer."

Mignon made her Metropolitan Debut as Premier Dancer at Billy Rose's new

Supper Club in January, 1926, where she entertained for seventeen consecutive weeks. During this period, she registered her original "Harp Dance," a novelty creation, with the NVA (National Vaudeville Association) Protected Material Department.

The billing registration explained that her act consisted of playing a concert-sized harp while standing and doing a contortionist Oriental Dance in front of and around the harp. She used the instrument throughout the dance



as a pagan object of worship. Her only prop consisted of an idol fastened to the crown of the harp.

Then came John Murray Anderson's Publix Production "The Grecian Urn" in which she starred with her harp solo and original dance. This presentation was based on John Keats' poem "The Grecian Urn" and was heralded as the most beautiful of Anderson's brilliant stage creations. The press acclaimed Mignon Laird as one of the country's most talented dancers and as one of the

most prominent dancers in New York City.

However, "The Grecian Urn" was doomed to be short-lived. VARIETY took a critical stand, saying that the entertainment was not the type to provide an audience with novelty and joy. Critics stated that it did fairly well at the opening, but then the orchestra got lost. VARIETY called "The Grecian Urn" a weak sister for the simple reason that the average audience cared little about Keats.

Before "The Grecian Urn" faded away, Mignon stepped into the Everglades nightclub with some real novelties and unusual costuming. In 1927, New York's MORNING STAR said she would be mistaken for an angel if she were equipped with a pair of wings, and that she was "capable of dancing and playing the angel's music box with the best of either class." In addition to her dancing and music at the Everglades, Mignon, a natural-born actor, began staging remarkable impersonations. Her versatility in the portrayal of Madame Nazemova in "A Woman of the Earth" became an overnight success.

Even when the nation's economy took a turn for the worse in 1930, Mignon's star continued to glow. She was a member of an entertainment troupe that toured all the largest cities in the United States and Canada. She constantly received top billings. Critics from theatrical and music circles lavished compliments such as:

BROOKLYN DAILY EAGLE: "She dances well and is the nicest to look at."

NEW YORK SUN "an extraordinarily incongruous novelty act."

NEW YORK EVENING GRAPHIC: "Mignon plays the harp well and dances even better...and offers an eccentric bit of acrobatics in her worship of the harp."

NEW YORK EVENING WORLD: "...a lady contortionist who plays the harp as it has never been played before."

Then the Depression hit. Mignon Laird became its victim as did many other stars—and never recovered. Her days of youthful beauty and supple dancing were lost forever. She became a member of Lamb's Club, a group organized to assist unemployed artists who produced their own show.

Her theatrical group, which was known as "The Satirists," came up with the smartest thing to hit New York that season, a production called "Who Cares." BILLBOARD described

COMING! HERE!



DR. LAIRD

TONIC FOR
HE ROUBLED
EALTH AND
appetite for the
heart sick
entertainment
that makes the
soul glad

Laughter
and Joy
Life's Panacea
An avalanche of
artistic
achievements
In the
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Century
Record of
Doctor
Laird
Don't Miss Our
Daily
Performances
Skilled
surgeons of the
southwest

ANNUAL ENGAGEMENT OF THE LAIRDS

Eminent Entertainers

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Dispensers of Joy

LAUGH AND GROW FAT

IF YOU ARE SLY OR ADIPOSE TISSUE
TAKE OUR UNFAILING CURE

THROW DOPE TO THE DOGS!

OUR PERFORMANCES ARE A DEAD
SHOT FOR THE "BLUE DEVILS," AND
FOR WORSE DISEASES SEE THE
DOCTOR.



MRS. LAIRD

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Spirit Manifestations, Jokes, Farces, Ventriloquism

THIS IS THE ATTRACTION OF THE SEASON



BABY MIGNON

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LIMITS HIS PRACTICE TO CHRONIC
DISEASE AND SURGERY AND WILL
OPEN AN OFFICE HERE

We Will Remain here
Several Nights

Don't Miss It

ADMISSION

10 CTS

MOUNTAIN VIEW

MONDAY EVENING

Poster from an early Lairds
show

"Who Cares" at Chanin's 46th Street Theater as lacking Flo Ziegfield's lavish costuming and John Murray Anderson's beautiful sets but making up these deficits with bright material and unusual talent. The press complimented "Who Cares" for attempting a daring experiment and succeeding. It was a success because it went a long way toward solving hardships resulting

continued on p. 39



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3 MINUTES FROM SOUTHWESTERN STATE UNIVERSITY

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Compulsion

Emotion courses through

Me like the steam

Rising in a pressure cooker,

And the only escape valve I have

Is the written word.



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Arm yourself with a box of freshly sharpened pencils, at least ten thousand research cards, a dozen notebooks, a tape recorder, camera, chewing gum, and a good stock of analgesic. Don't forget the headache pills before you leave for the nearest historical society and library.

You're met with a big smile and a "May I help you, please?" By the time you finish telling about your best-selling book you're there to research, the smile is gone. The comment is either a snarl with burning, hate-filled eyes or a disgusted, tired, ho-hum grunt. Right away, you know the thrill is gone, for you have said something wrong. It will be very hard to find someone when you need the help so freely offered a few minutes before.

Two weeks later when you arrive, you're met with an "Oh, it's you again." You're told how busy they are and that they can help you very little today. You nod your understanding, feeling a bit sick to your stomach. Later you saunter by the desk as lost as you can be and find the clerk quietly nibbling on a candy bar and reading yesterday's newspaper. You decide that it's going to take longer than you had expected to do your research.

After a hard day's work, you drive ten miles home at twenty miles an hour because your carburetor has a problem that you haven't taken the time to repair. Besides, you're a writer — not a mechanic. You growl at the dog, yell at your wife, and gripe about the kids. As you look over your day's work, you find half a dozen cards, two of which you throw away because they are repeats of others

you have done.

The next day is the same, followed by several more just like it. You're beginning to feel that your idea wasn't very good after all. You can't find half of what you need; and suddenly you realize that the names, places, dates, and everything else are changing. Maybe it never even took place — it's a work of fiction, not fact.

Finally, after forever, the research is done — all you're going to do anyway. After all, you have half a dozen versions; surely you can come up with one that makes sense. A few days later, it's panic time again: you need sixty thousand words; but you may come out with forty thousand if you're lucky. Instead of the thirty-five pictures available, you have six good ones.

With everything together, you're ready to do your first draft. It looks better than you thought it would. You probably won't need anymore than one draft; it looks so good.

After three weeks of sweating over the typewriter, you're thumb sore and eyesore; but you're ready to mail the manuscript. You reason that there's no sense to insure it; after all, the first editor who reads it will be overjoyed. You decide even to send it first class — go all out.

For the next week and a half, you dream about what you will do with the money. Of course there will be parties, promotion trips, a paid vacation of sorts — business and pleasure.

One morning, you're having your third cup of breakfast coffee when you see the postman coming up the walk. It's too soon to be hearing from the editor, so you relax and eat another breakfast roll with coconut and raspberry coating. The doorbell rings; you open the door to face the mailman, who has a broad smile on his face. The brown package he's holding appears to have come straight from the trash basket. It even has tire marks across one corner. You stare in

disbelief at your manuscript, while you fumble in your pockets for \$2.82 additional postage due. You don't even receive overdue bills so quickly.

Back at the table, you open the package with shaky fingers. You find a printed slip inside that tells you in effect thanks but no thanks. You feel numb. You have been out three months of research, nineteen dollars of postage, three weeks of typing; and now you find that they didn't even sign the rejection slip. Even the signature was printed.

After two weeks of brooding and feeling sorry for yourself, you decide to try it again. Probably a woman editor — what does she know about Western history, you rationalize. You say that you bet she has never even seen a horse and probably doesn't even know the difference between a cow and a bull.

This time, you make sure it's a male editor and that he publishes Western history. You're smarter this time as well and send the manuscript book rate and insure it. Typing is expensive.

Three weeks pass — then a month. Things are looking good. You're thinking about starting research on your second idea. Two months go by; the last one seems like a year. The market guide says the longer it's gone, the better chance it has. Eight weeks have passed, and you know the book's as good as in print. You're considering a call to the editor to ask him how things are going and when you can expect to receive the contract.

Again you see the postman coming; only this time, there's a feeling of dread. You meet him at the door. There it is — a letter from the editor right on top of the bills. You can't wait to close the door and open the envelope. You turn pale at the first few words: "Sorry; unsuited for our needs at the present time; better luck elsewhere." This time, the rejection is signed personally — not printed. You'll be receiving your manuscript
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An Act Of Translation

By Diane Glancy

*What can I give you? I have nothing
to give. You enter my hands;
words are born. I send them to you,
but my handwriting is like the flight
of a small flock of birds.
High on muted Western Oklahoma plains, north
to gyp hills,
grasses wave like feathers or stand
silent as haystubbles after field-
flight.
A chickenhawk rises in the hush. I have
nothing but the inarticulate grasp of it.
What can I give?
Words are what you have been to me:
a circling flock of geese
above the cornfield. But they change
when I give them back to you.
A white dog rides in the back of a truck,
the tail-gate down; he holds himself
stiffly.
How can I give my words to you?
He gave them first to me; your meaning
stirs within. What can I give?
A child not of bone nor ear
but one of words and duration. A vision
of white-tailed geese
in the winter haze between us.
I see your world as whole and
give it back to you in different form as
an act of translation.
Decipher the stubble of my words.
Bring flight up unfamiliar steps.
Pull roots of our being
as though the moon twirled in the sky
like a slow dancer or a white Brittany
dog.*

*My words follow as you hunt in fields.
Cover my pain with your love,
flush quarry from the dogwood bush,
rise to flint hills.
Old council ground for Indians wreathed with fiery
vowels burned of their consonants.
Blackened fields: my words are the
remains of cornrows.
I walk on wounded leg, interpret the under-
growth of fences.
The lines of words I give you
wobble like tread-marks of tires in mud.
Fields smell of black powder
with the recoil of rifle.
White dog in the cratered field looks
back to moon with distant,
similar face.
Somewhere in the void I scrape hollow hills
with the gnawing heat of motion,
hold you on the hunting knife with quarry.
I relate to the space between us,
reach to you with separation scraped clean.
What can I give you? I have
nothing but words.
They dance steady and distilled as the hawk
that circles above the road.*

Primitive Customs

By Yvonne Carpenter

*Sahara's Wodaabe women measure their wealth
by the number of ceremonial clay pots
carried through the desert for display once a year.
How foolish! Everyone knows wealth is measured
by the number of circles of yellow metal
which encompass the appendages of your body.*

“DOCTOR”

By Leroy Thomas

My association with Mr. Crouch spanned a bit over three decades. We were first merely acquaintances, then student and teacher, afterwards friends and colleagues, and later neighbors for a time.

Up to this past Monday night when I was told that he had died, I had realized many things that he wasn't; now I know some additional things that he was. That statement will hopefully become clearer as this tribute develops.

From the first, I knew that he wasn't slipshod in anything he did. He was a meticulous writer, a faultless grammarian, and an inspired, inspiring teacher. In the classroom, he used a technique of quiet, relaxed intimidation which always created amazing results. He wasn't one of the best; he was THE BEST.

I soon learned that he wasn't a Walter Crouch hornblower. There were many things that he could have touted because his accomplishments were diverse; however, anyone who brought those accomplishments to his attention was sure to get reciprocal comments. It wasn't the man's nature to accept compliments without returning them.

He also wasn't a fair-weather friend. He always looked for the best in others — especially those who had few redeeming points in their favor. Even during his last years, while obviously weak and ill, he was willing to help a friend during the lift-off stages of a writing project.

*And he wasn't easily impressed. I always called him “Doctor” because that was the first name I ever heard him called - the name my boss, Ivan Cates, called him. Mr. Crouch seemed to delight in that bit of presumtuousness on my part (after all, I wasn't a member of the Cates-Crouch “fraternal order”), but I would never have called him **Walter**, as I won't now. For me to do so would be like calling my own parents by their first names.*

The last time I saw Mr. Crouch, I went to his house to deliver some complimentary copies of an issue of WESTVIEW in which one of his articles appeared. He insisted that he should be paying me for the honor of being published in SOSU's journal. I insisted that I should start paying him for the thirty plus years he had given me. He insisted that I was already trained when I was dropped on his academic doorstep and therefore owed him nothing. I insisted that I was just a farm kid in need of help at the time. He insisted. . . I insisted. . .



Mr. Walter Crouch

And then last Monday night I found out that he had requested that at this service I read Saint Francis of Assisi's “Prayer for Peace” and make other appropriate comments. The prayer tells us much about the man Walter Crouch:

**Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace.
Where hate rules, let me bring love.
Where malice, forgiveness.
Where injury, pardon,
Where doubt, faith.
Where disputes, reconciliation.
Where error, truth.
Where despair, hope.
Where sadness, joy.
Where darkness, THY LIGHT.**

So now we know many more of the things “Doctor” was.





***Angie Debo:
First Lady of
Oklahoma History***

By Ernestine Gravley

Eighty-six years ago last fall, a covered wagon creaked across the plain and into a raw little frontier settlement in Oklahoma Territory. The village of Marshall drowned in an early November sun surrounded by greening fields of winter wheat. Edward Peter Debo, his wife, Lina Elbertha Cooper Debo, and the children lumbered along to the farm Mr. Debo had bought on land opened to white settlement. The spot was in the extreme northwest corner of Logan County.

Nine-year-old Angie looked from the wagon with lively interest at a land later to be known as the home of one of the foremost author-historians of Oklahoma and nationally recognized authority on Western and Indian history—Dr. Angie Debo.

"Miss Angie," as she is called in Marshall, where the 95-year-old scholar still lives, says she never particularly intended at the beginning to be a champion of the Indian.

"I have had only one goal," she commented. "And that is to discover truth and publish it. My research is objective, but when I find all the truth on one side, as has sometimes happened in my study of Indian history, I have the same obligation to become involved as any other citizen." That was putting it mildly. She has devoted a very long life to being involved.

Angie Debo was born January 30, 1890, near Beattie, Kansas and attended one-room country schools in Kansas and Oklahoma Territory. "There was no library," she said. "Never a library. No magazines, and only the one book our parents managed to buy for each of us children as a Christmas present."

She waited—and waited—for a high school to open—"The most anxious time of my life," she declared.

Meanwhile, at sixteen, she passed a Territorial examination and got a position teaching in a rural school near home. And then it happened. The small town of Marshall opened a four-year high school, and Angie enrolled as a student. In 1913, at the age of 23, she received her diploma. She served as principal and history teacher of a small school in Enid for two terms and then went away to the University of Oklahoma where she earned a B.A. degree in 1918. Six years later, she was awarded a Master's degree from the prestigious University of Chicago. There, she was a well-known student at the top of her classes and looking forward to a career teaching history on

the college level.

"I was in for a dreadful shock," she says. "I discovered that the history field was strictly off limits to women—the old discrimination syndrome even then." Thirty colleges applied that year to the University of Chicago for history teachers; all but one said that they wouldn't accept a woman under any circumstances, and the other college indicated that it would take a woman instructor only if no qualified man could be found."

That was when she turned to writing. "I found no sex discrimination against scholarly books, and I've been writing them ever since."

She credits Dr. Edward Everett Dale with steering her toward the topic of Indians. "I was looking about for a

"I have had only one goal," she commented. "And that is to discover truth and publish it."

subject for my doctoral dissertation at the University of Oklahoma when my mentor suggested I write a history of the Choctaws." The result was *THE RISE AND FALL OF THE CHOCTAW REPUBLIC*, a book so successful that she left the classroom for fulltime authorship, except for summer terms teaching history at Oklahoma State University and acting as OSU's curator of maps for eight years to the mid-50's. Her "fulltime writing" didn't totally eliminate academe. She taught briefly at West Texas State Teachers College (now West Texas State University) while curator of the Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum of Canyon, Texas, and one summer at Stephen F. Austin State Teachers College.

Angie Debo was the logical choice for state director of the Federal Writers Project in Oklahoma during which time she was editor of *OKLAHOMA: A GUIDE TO THE SOONER STATE*.

Dr. Debo's devotion to duty blossomed during the Second World War when most men of her town went into the armed forces. She consented to teach at Marshall High School and to fill the pulpit as minister of the local Methodist church, though her religious affiliation is the United Church of Christ.

A lifetime Democrat, Angie Debo has the courage of her convictions, especially when it comes to the Native American. "I simply report facts based on careful

research," she says with a smile. She is a member of the Association of American Indian Affairs (and member of the board of directors from 1956-1966) and the American Civil Liberties Union (board of directors, 1973-1977).

Highlight of her life? There are so many highlights, and Dr. Debo could never play favorites among the organizations that have honored her. She was inducted into the Oklahoma Hall of Fame in 1950; received the John H. Dunning Award from the American Historical Association in 1935 for *THE RISE AND FALL OF THE CHOCTAW REPUBLIC*; the Alfred A Knopf History Fellowship, 1942; fellow of the University of Oklahoma, 1946; extraordinary service award from Navajo Community College, 1972; Henry G. Bennett Service Award from OSU, 1976. In addition, she is an honorary life member of the Oklahoma Writers' Federation, Inc., the Oklahoma Historical Society, and the Stillwater Writers.

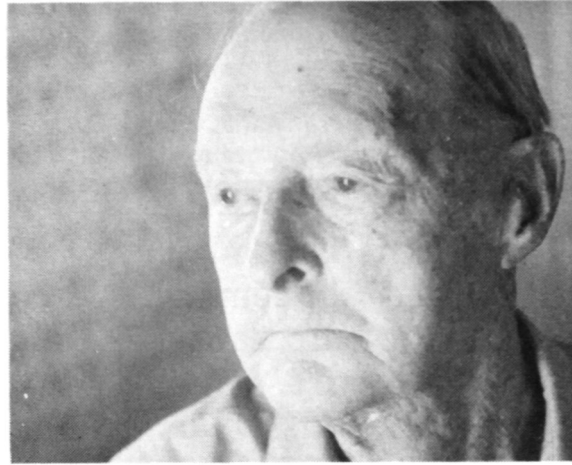
Yes, and the Rebekkah Lodge and Marshall Women's Club. This little five-foot-two, 110-pound dynamo is loyally proud to include even a small local club.

Connie Cronley said in an *OKLAHOMA TODAY* article a few years ago that Miss Angie sometimes smiles at her fame as an Oklahoma historian and quoted Dr. Debo as saying, "I've told more unpleasant truths about Oklahoma than anybody else who ever pecked out the name on a typewriter." A powerful case in point was her book *AND STILL THE WATERS RUN: THE BETRAYAL OF THE FIVE CIVILIZED TRIBES*. With typical candor, the author told the story of the liquidation of the Five Civilized Tribes in Oklahoma and disclosed the corruption she found in governmental, social, and religious organizations.

Everything about that story was slimy," Miss Angie told Cronley. "It was so unpleasant that it might have destroyed the University of Oklahoma Press had they published it." So she withdrew the manuscript. Four years later, the expose was published by the Princeton University Press.

This brilliant and energetic historian has written and edited 13 books. Other titles are: *THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE AMERICAN POLICY OF ISOLATION*; *THE ROAD TO DISAPPEARANCE: A HISTORY OF THE CREEK INDIANS*; *TULSA: FROM CREEK TOWN TO OIL CAPITAL*; *PRAIRIE CITY: THE STORY OF AN AMERICAN COMMUNITY*; *OKLA-*
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DICK CHAPMAN FINDS GREEN PASTURES IN POETRY



I HAVEN'T EVER SOLD ANY OF MY POETRY. I HAVEN'T EVER THOUGHT TO TRY TO DO THAT. I JUST SHARE IT WITH PEOPLE WHO LIKE POETRY. THERE AREN'T MANY FOLKS WHO REALLY ENJOY POETRY ANYMORE.

By Dee Ann Ray

Although Dick Chapman didn't discover he was a poet until he was 83, he's still going strong at 97. Always a reader of books, Dick didn't ever have much time to reflect and write what he thought. He was busy working and making a living. When he was recuperating in the old Oklahoma General Hospital in Clinton in 1970, he decided to write his first poem, a tribute to the nurses who had cared for him. The inspiration for his poem came to him late at night and he began to write.

Dick's poetry has been published in WESTVIEW and in the CLINTON DAILY NEWS as a part of the Arapaho Column written by Helen Gossman. "I haven't ever sold any of my poetry. I haven't even thought to try to do that. I just share it with people who like poetry. There aren't many folks who really enjoy poetry anymore. I just send my poems to friends," smiles Dick, speaking softly.

One of the sad things about living to the age 97 is that many of one's friends pass on to eternal rest. Of his brothers and sisters, Dick says, "They're all gone now except me." When Nina, his wife, died in 1970, it was a difficult year for Dick. "I've lived alone now for

fifteen years, which is too long for anyone to be alone," he says.

Perhaps the nicest thing about living to the age of 97, being healthy and able to care for oneself, is that there is time to think and reflect and write as Dick does now.

His eyes are clear and rested. His skin is age-marked, but he has few wrinkles and is very healthy looking. Dick keeps a clean house and a neat yard. He retired from painting, which was his last occupation, only about twelve years ago; so he is just now getting good at enjoying his golden years. He has made peace with God, and he says, "The Lord has been merciful to me — much more than I deserve. I am now thankful to him, but it took me a long time to come to my senses."

Dick's memories are of Arapaho as the major town in Custer County; of squirrel hunts; bobcat hunting, breaking horses; and moving frequently. His father, he says, was a green pastures seeker — always looking for a better place to locate. "Dad was a born mover, and he never quit looking for the right place to settle down. My folks lived in seven states or territories before moving back to Oklahoma for a second time. They also lived a second time in Iowa and Missouri. Both of them were natives of Illinois. They lived in Iowa and Missouri before moving to Western Nebraska where I was born," relates Dick.

Dick's father was James Chapman, and his mother's name was Clara. Since he was the next to the last child born to his parents, Dick is unsure how many brothers and sisters he had. Some of the other children died before he was born. He knows that some of the children died in Iowa and some in Nebraska. Only one sister, Nellie, came to the Cheyenne-Arapaho country with the family. There were three boys — Avery, Dick, and Paul, the youngest child.

Both Avery and Nellie married into the E. D. Dunn family. They married a brother and sister in a double wedding held in the Dunn Family dugout. Dick has four living nieces from those two unions — Gladys Snider, Nellie Stocks, Mable Snider, and Viola Goss.

Dick was born on June 24, 1887, in Cheyenne Country, Nebraska, about twenty-five miles north of Julesburg, Colorado. He remembers from his family's stories the scarcity of water and fuel of any kind on the high



A COWBOY, A HORSE BREAKER, A TRAPPER AND A HUNTER. DICK CHAPMAN AS A YOUNG MAN AROUND 1910.

plains. Cow chips were frequently used for heating and cooking. "We would have used buffalo chips, but the buffalo were mostly gone then and we seldom saw any in the breaks or canyons along the North and South Platte rivers.

There was other game, however. "Antelope were about as common as range cattle and we saw the gray wolf often."

The Chapman family moved to Northern Kansas from Nebraska and settled in Clay County for several years. Dick attended five terms of grade school during that time.

"Three wagons of us came to the Cheyenne-Arapaho country in the fall of 1898. We were twenty days on the trail. We began the trip on October 11, my mother's birthday. A young couple named Carl and Jennie Eads accompanied us. They had just married on October 10. They settled three miles southwest of Weatherford, which was a new town with a railroad just appearing on the horizon. We came west and settled nine miles southwest of Arapaho.

"Our first Arapaho home was a half-dugout twelve by twenty feet. We dug into the bank of a small canyon so we could keep warm in the winter and cool in the summer. Our

dugout wasn't completed during that first winter, so Avery and I slept outside."

Dick was able to attend three more terms of school at Union District No. 3, Custer County. He was taught by three different teachers — two of them men and one a young lady. Of those school years, Dick says, "That finished my schooling except what I have learned during the last eighty some years."

The early settlement years were work-filled. People didn't take vacations. They didn't have many rest breaks. At first, they didn't even have a church to attend on Sundays. Later, church was infrequently held when there was a preacher available. Often he was shared with other churches. A celebration was a picnic with other families. A good meal was the main attraction. "If we got a few sparklers or firecrackers, we really had a big time," laughs Dick.

Although there were stores in Arapaho, James Chapman and one or two family members usually did their shopping every two months in Weatherford. That way, they could visit friends who settled there and perhaps stay two or three days with them. Neighbors were scarce on the prairie.

Dick killed his first bobcat with a

double barrel muzzle loading shotgun which was longer than he was tall. He learned to ride a horse soon after that. He broke horses for many owners before he hung up his saddle for the last time. "The easiest one I ever broke was a five-year-old the owner said couldn't be broken. He was glad to turn her over to me because he had tried to break her and had failed. She never bucked a buck for me. I soon had her ready to ride and use with a buggy. I always worked with horses and cattle when I could get that kind of job."

There were adventures for any traveler on the prairie, as is proved by Dick's memories. In the fall of 1904, he and Avery made a freight-wagon trip to Missouri. Of course, Dick also took a saddle pony along. Their first night out, they camped in the Hydro wagonyard. When they started the trip, the weather was clear and warm. During the night a Northerner blew in and when they crawled out of the wagon the next morning, there were four inches of snow on the ground. The traveling conditions dictated that some of their freight load be shifted. They crated some items to send on the railroad. The delay shortened their traveling day, and they made it just to Bridgeport that night. The next morning at the river crossing, they found a man with a four-mule team and a heavy trail wagon turned over. The vehicle was blocking the road. Dick and Avery helped the man get his wagon righted and across the river so they could make the crossing themselves. That night, the travelers camped near one another. During the night, the Chapman boys were awakened by loud noises. The other man was trying to care for one of his sick mules. The mule kicked the man, breaking the man's leg. The Chapmans helped the man get to Medford, Oklahoma, cooking his meals and hitching his mules to the wagon. The man did drive, but he had to be lifted onto the wagon seat.

"We didn't see the ground without snow the entire trip," says Dick. We wore our clothes to bed. We took off our boots but slept with them to keep them from freezing."

The journey to Missouri was made through Kansas to avoid the horse thieves and outlaws who menaced Northeastern Indian Territory (now Eastern Oklahoma). There was also

danger of holdup in Kansas, where horses were often stolen. The Chapman boys made the trip safely, however. Avery did lose a horse out of a stable and was never able to recover it.

In 1907, the three Chapman boys went with their father to Beaver County in the Oklahoma Panhandle to look for land. They found that the prices were too high for them. A quarter section was selling for \$500.

The year 1907 is memorable for Dick because he saw his first circus that year. He and a girl friend rode their horses to Clinton where they caught the train and went to El Reno to see Ringling Brothers. They made the return trip that same evening and got back home about three o'clock in the morning.

In 1911, James, Clara, and Paul decided to go to Arkansas, and Dick went with them to see the country but not to stay. He met Nina, his wife-to-be, on that trip. They were married in 1912 in a buggy parked at the edge of Beebe, Arkansas. The minister walked out to the buggy to perform the ceremony.

After moving back to Arapaho, the young couple began to rear a family of whom Dick happily says, "They are all an improvement over me." Four of their five children are still living. The only deceased one is Nora Lue Nonast, who lived in Bessie. Lucille Langley lives in Arapaho. Irene Chapman is an x-ray technician in Houston. Elvin, a retired mechanic, lives in Arkansas. Raymond, a teacher for many years and later registrar for Cameron College until his retirement on May 1, 1984, now lives in Lawton.

Dick was employed in many different jobs during his working years. He continued to work as a cowboy and often trapped during the winter, selling the furs. He painted houses for many years. During the Great Depression, he earned \$18 a month as a laborer for the WPA. When he was advanced to the job of painter, his pay increased to \$35 a month. His last job, painting a house for Mrs. Bill Lacey in Arapaho, was twelve years ago.

Although many years have passed, Dick recalls clearly the early days of Arapaho — for instance the debates between Democrat Wadsworth and Republican J. W. Lawton, editor of the ARAPAHO BEE. He remembers that they were friends in their discussions until they got into politics.

Then voices were raised and anger was evident.

"I wish we had had cameras in those days the way we do today. One time a cousin of ours from Kansas came to visit and he had a camera. He kept the photos he took, so we didn't get to have any of them," Dick recalls.

Having lived in Arapaho for eighty-one years, Dick has had ample opportunity to watch the development of the town. "The town hasn't changed so much, but the people have," he says. "When I first came here, the town was about the size it is now. But we lost population until a few years ago."

Dick is glad to see the courthouse renovation and addition. "I helped to tear down the old Coleman Hotel after it was no longer the Custer County Courthouse," says Dick. The old Coleman Hotel was the most infamous courthouse Custer County ever had and served for many years as the home of county government. The stories of its inadequacies as a courthouse are legend. When the present courthouse was constructed in 1934, the Coleman Hotel was used as a community building for a short time and then torn down.

"I helped paint the inside of the old county jail too. It was located across the street to the east of the present courthouse," recalls Dick.

Dick is currently working on re-copying his poetry. He has written between 100 and 150 poems and continues to write. He wants to get them in good shape in one or two notebooks. His penmanship is excellent and easy to read. All of his writing is done in longhand. His formal education may have been sparse, but evidently the lessons were of quality.

Dick Chapman is a remarkable man at 97. His hearing is somewhat impaired, but he has a clear memory. His voice is gentle and low-pitched. He enjoys each day as it dawns. His poetry reflects on nature and the pioneer days. One poem is about saddle sores, which were an everyday experience for the oldtime cowboy who rode hundreds of miles on cattle drives. Using his poetry to share his feelings and memories, Dick is recording his life and with it 97+ years of history. (Editor's note: Since this article appeared in the September 2, 1984 issue of the CLINTON DAILY NEWS, Mr. Chapman has observed his ninety-eighth birthday.)

In the sandy sage country north of Woodward, Oklahoma, a professional writer nestles in her underground home and researches the history of her beloved Oklahoma.

She's a native, Louise B. James, who grew up on a dairy farm near Norman. Although she has graduate degrees in history, Louise insists that she is "very country," and her non-fiction productions express rural America, its history, and its people.

She has one published book to her credit, and her stories have been featured in many magazines, including *CHRONICLES OF OKLAHOMA*, *TRUE WEST*, *OLD WEST*, *OKLAHOMA TODAY*, *COBBLESTONE*, *FARMJOURNAL*, *FAMILY CIRCLE*, *COUNTRY PEOPLE*, and *WESTVIEW*.

Her book, *BELOW DEVIL'S GAP*, was published in 1984 by Evans Publications, Inc. Authorized by the Plains Indians and Pioneers Historical Foundation of Woodward, the book unfolds the breath-taking history of Woodward County.

Joining Louise in this journey through the annals of history, the reader views the earliest settlers of Western Oklahoma, the Indians, as they are confronted by the white pioneer movement in their land. The ranchers are observed as they drive herds of cattle into Indian Territory to take advantage of the rich, high grass. The reader watches the influx of frontier farmers and the development of Western Oklahoma society.

Louise has an office in her home where she writes from 8:30 to 4:00 p.m. She believes it is important to keep regular office hours and be available to her editors.

"I always knew I would write when I grew up," the brown-haired lady said in an interview. "Seven years ago, I decided it was time."

When she wrote her thesis for a Master's Degree in 1967, *CHRONICLES OF OKLAHOMA* printed two chapters of it. "It was a thrill to break into print," she said. The thesis was about the Chickasaw Indians. She received her first check for writing in 1978 when the Woodward Daily Press published her humorous version of a Santa Claus parade. Since then, she has written consistently and earned a steady income.

After completing college, Louise was employed as an Oklahoma History teacher at Guthrie Junior High School. She taught for thirteen years, and she prepared her own teaching materials during her last eight years in the classroom. She found the textbooks boring, and she delved into books and records to obtain material that she copied and presented to the students. The blue-eyed teacher spent much time in the archives of the Oklahoma Historical Society in Oklahoma City, where she obtained treasures of information.

"I really wanted to do a book of compiled history," Mrs. James said. "After we moved to Woodward in 1977, our tiny daughter seemed to need me at home. I made a conscious decision to give up teaching and write. I started working on that book."

Still, Louise hasn't seen that particular book, which contains historical plays and skits, published. Instead, she began research for *BELOW DEVIL'S GAP* in 1979 and

LOUISE B. JAMES

Teacher

Non-Fiction Writer

Mother

by Tena Bailey




Louise James and Arabian gelding, Bozzarus.

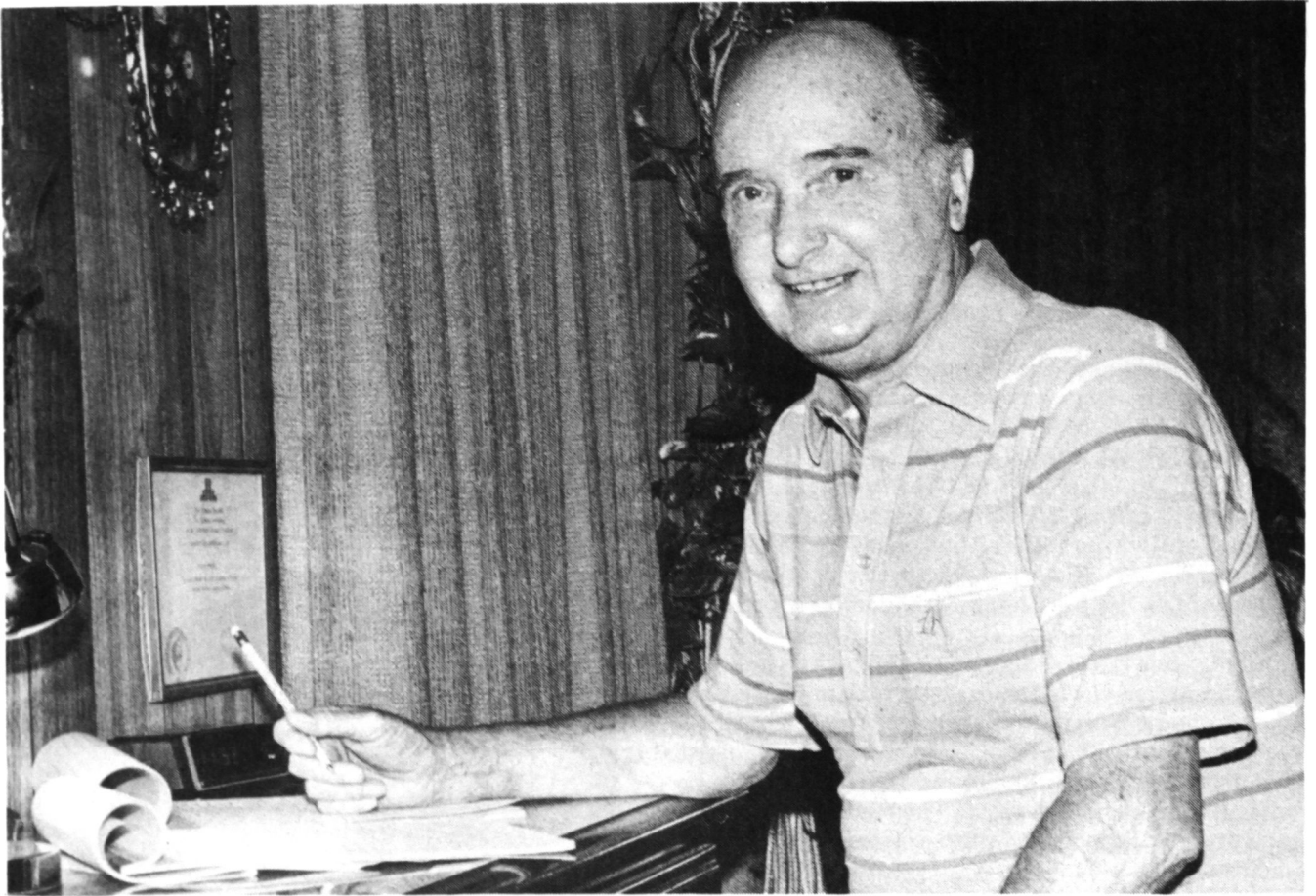
completed the manuscript in December of 1982.

"It took longer than I had expected," Louise lamented. "I was reaching back farther than I had planned with the Indian history. There was just more available than I had anticipated when I started investigating."

She laughed about coaxing her family along on a historical expedition to find the confluence of the Beaver River and Wolf Creek. Dick, her husband, who is a game ranger, and children, Mark and Barbara, followed innocently when she left their vehicle to walk a bit to the crucial point of water ways.

"It was a hot, muggy day," Louise moaned. "It was ninety degrees, and there was no wind. Barbara was wearing her sandals, and we didn't take any water. Really, I had thought it was just a little way, and I was doing research for the book. Even now, my family has not forgiven me."

Research is exciting to Louise, whether she is looking for information about people or information about history. She enjoys interviewing ranchers and other individuals, getting acquainted with unique personalities. She sticks to non-fiction, and she hopes to write another book on history. At the close of the interview, she said, "I never run out of anything to write about." 



Travis Anthony composing yet another story.

Writer Proves Teachers Wrong

By Steve Robertson

It took a while, but Rush Springs writer Travis Anthony has finally discarded advice from his teachers who thought his oratorical skills outshone his writing ability.

"I always wanted to write, but my teachers always told me 'Forget it; you're terrible'," he said.

Anthony, now 70, decided to ignore his

former teachers only a few years ago after he retired from teaching.

He mused, "To heck with all of them; I'll write for my own amusement if nothing else." And so far he has produced a flood of materials, including stacks of newspaper columns and two full-length books.

Most of his work is autobiographical. CLIMBING THE MOUNTAIN, his first book, deals with his first two years as a teacher in Southwest Oklahoma while SUNSHINE AND SHADOWS, his second book, is his life story from birth until his high-school graduation. He also writes a weekly column for the CHICKASHA EXPRESS called BLACKJACKS, SANDHILLS, AND WATERMELON — which

"I always wanted to write, but my teachers always told me 'Forget it; you're terrible.' " "I decided to ignore my former teachers." "To heck with all of them." Anthony decided. And so far he has produced a flood of material.

covers his teaching career in Lawton and his attempts to farm near Rush Springs. He hopes to whittle the columns into a third book.

He began writing his first book about five years ago and had it finished in two or three months. That was the easy part.

"Getting it written is one thing. Getting it published is a horse of a different color," he said. "I never knew you could say no in so many different ways."

He said one publisher liked his book but said it had three problems — no sex, drugs or violence.

The rejections annoyed him. "I'm not trying to get rich. I've just got the bug, and I want to see a book," he said.

Finally, he decided to publish the book himself, using his own savings. He was delighted when his first book was published and the 1,000 copies were delivered to his door. He stacked them in a closet, and his sales career began when his wife told him to get rid of enough books so she could hang clothes in the closet.

So far he has been a fairly successful salesman; his books are now found in 147 school libraries, as well as college and public libraries in Oklahoma and several other states.

He worked his way through the University of Oklahoma and then began teaching, which he continued with a few breaks until his retirement. He was also a Boy Scout executive and an insurance salesman for a while.

Anthony's experiences are not unusual for people who grew up during the Depression, although they may seem whimsical to younger readers. He believes that readers have responded well to his books because they recognize the situation

he describes as something that could well have come from their own lives. He's often called by readers with whom a story has struck a familiar chord, and they call him to talk about it.

"They say, 'I think you're telling my life,' and they get started and want to tell me their life," Anthony said, adding that he listens as long as the long-distance callers want. "It's their nickel."

Anthony swears that all the stories are true, including those about swimming in the sewer lagoon, using rocks and .22 caliber shells as a gun, and burning down the family's home while trying to get rid of some weeds.

"I didn't have enough sense to be scared of anything," he said.

His beginning as a teacher in 1940 was less than auspicious. He hitchhiked around the state looking for a job and was finally hired as a seventh and eighth grade teacher for \$80 a month (nine months a year) at Bradley, on the condition that he stop smoking. He found, much to his surprise, that he was also high-school girls' basketball coach for a brand-new program.

That job lasted only a year because the school board cleaned house at the end of the year, sending the superintendent and every other employee packing. Later he was rehired at Bradley, and the school had a Travis Anthony Day last year to honor its fired and rehired teacher.

After leaving Bradley, he taught at Stafford and Fairview-Cement; then he became a Boy Scout executive for Tillman and Comanche counties. He liked the job, but it kept him out of town while his daughter was sick, so he moved to Lawton Junior High for four years. He then moved to Cameron Junior College, where he was an English and speech teacher; and he became head of the Speech Department. He also set up the counseling program at Cameron before health problems forced him out of teaching.

He moved to a 160-acre farm northwest of Rush Springs, where he hoped to make a living despite lack of money and equipment.

The farm made an impression on his daughter. There was no indoor plumbing, weeds had grown up around the farm, and city noises were replaced by oil wells booming in the distance.

"It kind of shook her up," Anthony said. "She asked, 'Dad, does the Lord know we're way out here in the middle of these

trees and sandhills?'"

He was trying to burn off a patch of weeds near the house for a garden when the fire got out of control. He called the operator to get help, and within minutes people from miles around were at his place to help him put out the fire. "I met all my neighbors in one afternoon," he said.

He later went back to teaching in Carlsbad, New Mexico, and then in Blanchard. He ended his teaching career as a basketball coach, counselor, and principal at Liberty School.

The teaching profession has changed a great deal since he began. On his first job he was reprimanded for not wearing a tie while shopping on Saturday, and he lost his second job for being out of town too

often on weekends.

One reason for his book is to show teachers as "normal human beings." He said people in his own community, especially older people, still are reserved with him when they find out he was a teacher. "I guess it's a carryover from their own teachers," he said.

Anthony enjoyed teaching, and he found that humor and engaging illustrations can break the tedium of the classroom. That was driven home in his own school days in his memory of one college professor who droned all hour without looking up. "What I learned in that economics class, besides wearing out the seat of my pants, you could fit in one eyeball."

His writing has followed the same logic as he has kept a homey style full of anecdotes and the flavor of the times.

He's thinking about publishing his third book, but he writes other stories and is enjoying his long-running serial in the Chickasha paper, which he is now writing so that readers have to wait for the next installment to find out how the story ends. He said he often gets telephone inquiries about what will happen next in a story. "It's got to be like a soap opera," he said.

To promote his books, he has taken to the road to lecture history classes, review his books for professional organizations, and to conduct writing classes. The lecture circuit has proved to be rewarding both personally and financially, although he has slacked off lately. "It's kept me from realizing that I'm 70 years of age and realizing I'm waiting for the friendly undertaker to haul me off to the boneyard," he quipped. (first published in the LAWTON MORNING PRESS-CONSTITUTION for August 8, 1984)

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under separate cover.

Sick at heart, your mind a blank, you stagger into the den and slump into your chair; the ragged envelope seems to mock and laugh at you.

With an explosive curse, you grab the envelope and fling it across the room where it bursts open spilling out a shower of white pages which float down around you like snow. Your wife rushes in to see if you have hurt yourself. But the only thing that's hurt is your pride.

With a knowing nod, she retreats and quietly closes the door behind her. After a few tears of disgust and two full glasses of a cold drink, you feel somewhat better.

The time has come to get an agent. Why go through all the torture of rejection? After all, let him do the worrying; he gets ten percent. You pick a good-sounding name from a list of over two hundred and off your query goes.

It comes back to you six times in a

row with one of two excuses. It sounds too much like something else that has been done, or they don't accept new clients unless they have sold ten thousand dollars worth of work. You're furious again. If you already had ten thousand dollars from sales, why would you need an agent?

Finally, one agent agrees to have a look. Your hopes soar to the heavens; this is your big chance. He'll have connections and make a sale right away. You pop a fresh copy in the mail and dive into your work with better feelings.

Almost before it has had time to reach the agent, it's back. He's got to be the quickest reader you've ever seen, and he did it without denting a sheet. The note enclosed tells you it's pretty good but nothing he'd care to handle — maybe one of the small publishing houses would be interested. By now, you're a nervous wreck of a person; you're worrying too much; your ulcer is threatening to

burst, and your wife's considering an extended vacation with her mother.

You calmly pick up the wrinkled package and drop it into the waste basket along with the notes on your latest idea. You wash your hands of the whole idea of becoming a writer. It's a quick way to starvation and to getting rid of your entire family.

The only job available is frying hamburgers at the local diner. You grit your teeth and tackle it. You feel that you'll never be able to wash the smell of fried onions out of your skin, and you never did like hamburgers anyway.

A few weeks later, you happen by the typewriter. The manuscript still lies in the waste basket. Maybe the small houses would be interested; just to get the book published would be a start — you have to crawl before you can run.

What do you do now? Will you try that small house or simply give up in despair? ❧

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HOMA: FOOT-LOOSE AND FANCY-FREE; THE COWMAN'S SOUTH-WEST: BEING THE REMINISCENCES OF OLIVER NELSON; THE FIVE CIVILIZED TRIBES OF OKLAHOMA: A REPORT ON SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CONDITIONS; HISTORY OF THE CHOCTAW, CHICKASAW, AND NATCHEZ INDIANS; A HISTORY OF THE INDIANS OF THE UNITED STATES; and GERONIMO: THE MAN, HIS TIME, HIS PLACE.

Dr. Debo was a contributor to *ENCYCLOPEDIA AMERICANA*, wrote a column, "This Week in Oklahoma History," for the *OKLAHOMA CITY TIMES*, 1952-1954, and published a great many articles and reviews in magazines and newspapers. Debo's historical works are so numerous, in fact, that five years ago Oklahoma State University produced a complete bibliography of her published books and articles. She continues in an advisory capacity for the Nebraska Educational

Television Network on Indian-white relations in the settlement of the Northern Great Plains, as told by Indian participants.

One might assume that the Debo style is altogether too stiff and scholarly for the average reader. Not so. She is a masterful storyteller whose writings entertain with warmth and homespun philosophy while incorporating results of her exacting research. She says she did research in Washington before the National Archives were established. When researching, she does nothing else. She stays at it eight hours a day, six days a week, writing in longhand on half sheets of paper. The result is such meticulous organization that she can use whole blocks of these half pages as chapters in her books. She used original notes from interviews with the Apaches made many years earlier when writing the Geronimo biography, adding later research as needed. This is her most recent, and possibly last, book, an award winner

published in 1976 when "Indianism was a popular social issue and turquoise jewelry one of the best selling items in America."

Angie Debo has a special feeling about her *OKLAHOMA: FOOT-LOOSE AND FANCY-FREE*. When Greenwood Press reissued it from the 1949 release in time for Oklahoma's Diamond Jubilee, she said, "I have a special affection for this evaluation of the Sooner spirit, but it marks the golden anniversary of the day I became an Oklahoman. It never occurred to me that one day I should be asked to write an interpretation of the society I entered. . . Many outward changes have come. . . but here are the roots of the past, present, and future. The Oklahoma spirit is ever the same. This work is not a history nor a description of the physical background of the state but my definition of the special quality of its people."

A quality exemplified by Angie Debo, First Lady of Oklahoma history. ❧

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California heard him play and made tapes to put in the Folk Music Department of his college. Tapes of him and his band were sent to the Smithsonian Institute on request. On a visit to Hollywood, he played in a talent show and was offered a job on the spot, but Western Oklahoma was home.

For eight years, he has played with a group of retired people who entertain all over the country. They go regularly to four rest homes and occasionally to two more. Recently

they also played at a SWODA meeting in Hobart and at Cars Unlimited in Elk City.

If you knock on Joe's door, he's likely to greet you with a fiddle in his hand. He plays through his little black book of tunes once each week. Besides, his six fiddles need a regular workout. His prized possession at present is a five-string violin that Santa brought him.

Joe Flowers' music has been a pleasure to him and brought joy and inspiration to thousands. ❧

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from the extended period of inactivity and unemployment in legitimate theater.

Mignon helped make "Who Cares" notable by offering a dramatic presentation, a sort of female version of Harpo Marx, who was the non-speaking, harp-playing Marx Brother. As the season progressed, she also played the leading lady in a sketch called "Action." Her other dramatic roles included parts in "Daughter" and "A Big Surprise."

Mignon Laird took work when and where she could find it. She was a member of Shubert's cast of "Artists and Models," which made tours to Toronto, Chicago, and San Francisco. She signed a special contract with Florenz Ziegfeld and made another short run to major cities in cities in Canada.

However, the best opportunity that knocked on her door during the Depression was her winning three scholarships at the New York School of Music. The scholarship assistance allowed her to study harp with A. F. Pinto, the foremost harpist in New York City.

Her greatest problems at that time were food and transportation. More often than not, she had to walk miles for private lessons. Every penny was necessary for food for her mother and

herself. Riding the trolley was a luxury she couldn't afford. If she were lucky, she found dinner engagements in exchange for their meals. No one had extra money to pay salaries.

Even though Mignon's star may have dimmed on Broadway, she continued to be recognized by the press in classical music production. She and nine other brilliant harpists received their fair share of bookings. One of her most important engagements during the Depression was aboard the British BRITANIC on a cruise to the West Indies, Nassau, Kingston, and Havana in 1932. Mignon was the BRITANIC's highest paid musical artist. She and her mother were allowed to travel as first-class passengers. The thirty-day cruise was truly a paid working vacation far away from the dreary, dirty, and hungry streets of New York City.

During the 1930's, the theatrical world changed forever. Flo Ziegfeld's Frolics and Follies closed in 1932--never to reopen. Those nights of glitter, glory, and free-flowing money failed to return. Because of her multi-talents, Mignon usually found work; but her glorious ten years of fame and fortune became memories and yellowed clippings in meticulously kept scrapbooks compiled by Elbertine, her mother, and herself.

During the 1970's, she was among

the last of the Ziegfeld Girls who founded their Ziegfeld Club, Inc., in 1936, four years after the Follies ended on Broadway at 55 West 42nd Street. Of the original 2,000 girls, only 304 of them were still living in 1978, and they were scattered throughout the world.

Mignon Laird lived in the fourth-floor "Penthouse" at 19 West 46th Street in the heart of downtown New York City for sixty-three years. Her studio-apartment was fifty-five steep steps upward, and there was no elevator. It was here that she died alone on August 21, 1984. Her only known living relatives were two distant cousins in upstate New York. During her last lonely years, she always carried with her a favorite quotation written in her own spidery handwriting: "God be between you and harm in all the empty places you must walk."

She had no fear of the streets of New York City. New York had been good to her during the sparkling years of her stardom. Yet her deepest love was for the memories of her parents and her childhood when they traveled from town to town across the spacious, scenic countryside of Western Oklahoma.

Mignon called herself "A Gyp Water Production," and to the peaceful Western Oklahoma prairies she chose to return for her final performance. ❧



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