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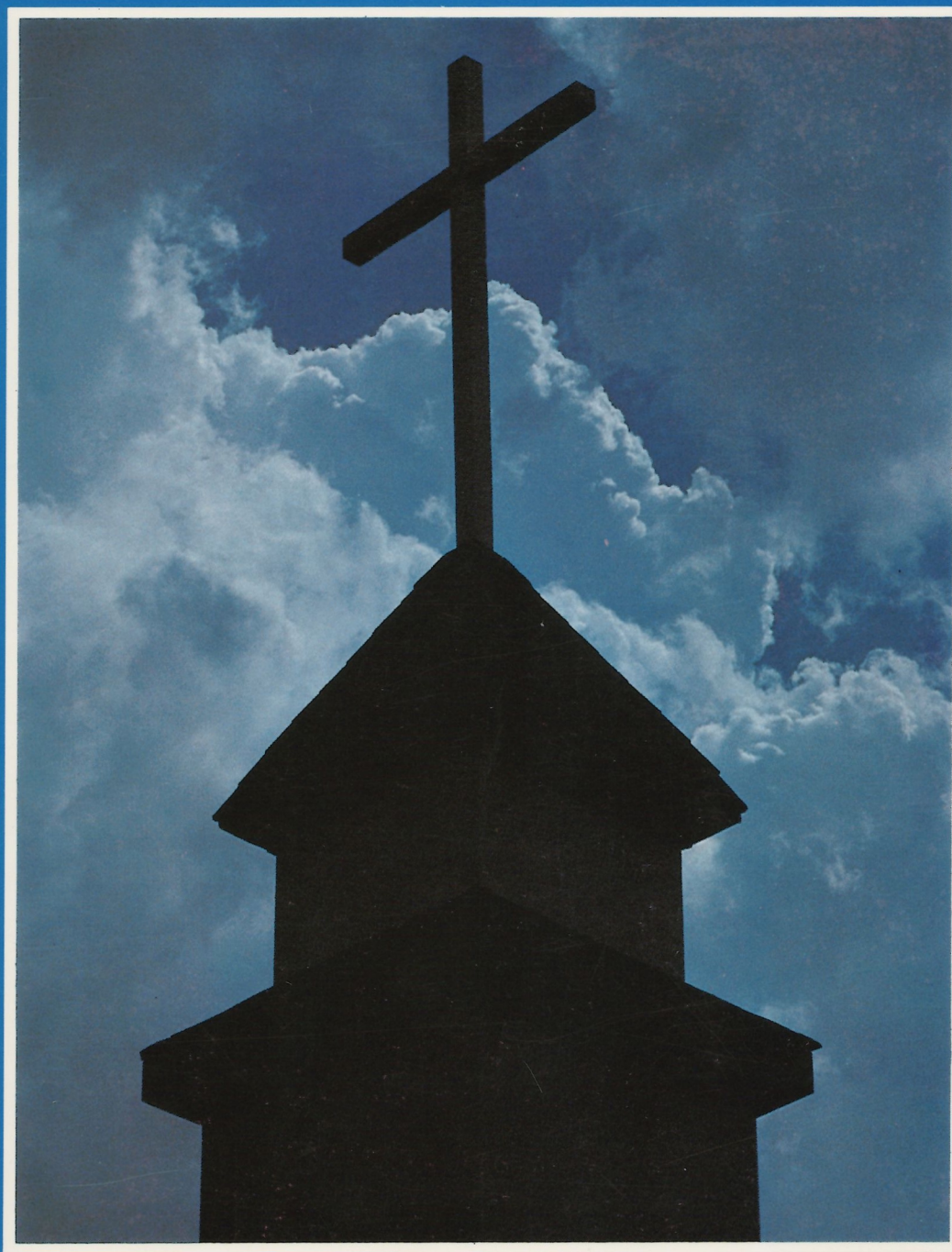
# WESTVIEW

A Journal of Western Oklahoma

1984

SUMMER

\$2.50



Western Oklahoma Religion

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## FOREWORD

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**T**he date is April 9, 1984--time to get the copy for the Summer, 1984 issue of WESTVIEW to the Art Director. The early date explains why deadlines are set. Our special issue on Western Oklahoma Religion, this one, won't reach our readers until late July; but much of the work has been done during March and April. Such is the pattern of a publication of this sort.

We're coming along. This issue contains works from some new contributors. As we make our further appeals, we hope to uncover even more new talent and to get further involvement from SOSU\* students. Thus far, we have published the works of only seven SOSU students. That's not a highly commendable record, considering that this is our twelfth issue.

We continue to appreciate your kind responses to our efforts. We even appreciate those readers who occasionally question our judgment.

Why did we use the cover picture of the young child (Jay Evans--now age 3½) for our Spring Issue? To show that education begins early in Western Oklahoma. Any further questions? If you think of something, tell us. It could be for WESTVIEW's good.

*Leroy Thomas*

— Leroy Thomas  
Editor

*\*Southwestern Oklahoma State University--Weatherford, Oklahoma*



# WESTVIEW

Published by Southwestern Oklahoma State University  
Weatherford, Oklahoma

## Summer

Volume 3

Western Oklahoma Religion

Number 4

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#### EDITORIAL STAFF

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Magazine Pasteup by:	Southwestern Oklahoma State University Design I students.		
	Jana Lee Alvis	Rosemary Harvick	J. VanOrsdol
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#### COVER

Photo 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.



# AUTHORS WHOSE WORKS APPEAR IN THIS ISSUE

**Randy Beutler** is a graduating senior in the Social Sciences Department at SOSU\*. Randy's article on Canute Catholics is his third submission to WESTVIEW.

**Dr. Tal D. Bonham** is a 1952 graduate of Clinton High School. After serving as pastor of churches in Oklahoma and Arkansas, he is now the Executive Secretary-Treasurer of the Ohio Baptist Convention in Columbus, Ohio.

**R. R. Chapman**, 97-year-old poet from Arapaho, has lived in Custer County since his adolescent years. Mr. Chapman is appreciated as one of WESTVIEW's principal supporters and encouragers.

**Olive Dewitt** is a new contributor. She is a member of the Shawnee Writers and lives in Tecumseh. She has produced several award-winning poems.

**Margaret Friedrich** of Clinton is an alumna of Oklahoma Baptist University. She is in the process of correcting the final copy of a book tracing ninety years in the history of Peace Lutheran Church in Washita County.

**Opal H. Brown Garrity**, a native Oklahoman, attended state schools and colleges and did graduate work at OU and CSU in East Africa. Her writing includes a three-year stint for the LAW-TON MORNING PRESS, numerous articles, and five published books. Her latest book, NIGHT-SHADES OF HARAN, a novel about the patriarch Jacob, was released in March, 1984 by the Menonite Press.

**Connie Higgins Gass** lives on a small farm just outside Hammon with her husband and three children. She devotes much time to church and civic activities.

**Cille Gates** was born in Cloud Chief and lived all her childhood in that Southwestern Oklahoma community. In August, 1980, she completed a Federal Civil Service career with the U.S. Air Force. She has a B.A. from OCU and now lives in Oklahoma City.

**Kathleen Gould**, now a lady in waiting until mid-August, completed a Master's degree in English Education at SOSU and did post-graduate work at Texas A&M.

**Jane Janzen** lives on a farm near Bessie. When she isn't writing or working for the Western Plains Library System in Clinton, she's mothering, homemaking, and helping her husband with farming.

**Kate Jackson Lewis** is one of the most prolific writers among WESTVIEW's list of active contributors. Now retired after almost a half century of public-school teaching, she stays busy wifing, mothering, grandmothering, and writing in Purcell.

**Helen Thames Raley** is author of nearly a dozen published books, including ANGELL!. She now lives on the campus of Oklahoma Baptist University, the honored widow of President John W. Raley.

**Bernadine F. Wells**, formerly of Hydro, is a freelance writer who serves as president of the Oklahoma City Writers organization. She is consistently a prize winner at writers' contests.

**Della Barnwell Whisenhunt** is an Associate Professor Emerita of the SOSU Language Arts Department. She has been a regular contributor to WESTVIEW these first three years.

**Inez Schneider Whitney** has made creative writing her hobby since she retired from teaching a few years ago. She received an A.B. degree from what was then Southwestern State Teachers College. After moving to Arlington, Virginia, where she now lives with her husband, a retired attorney, she earned an M.A. degree from George Washington University.



*(Grandma Higgins is immortalized  
by yet another of her grandchildren,  
Connie Higgins Gass of Hammon)*

## The Last Mile

*by Connie Higgins Gass*

My heart and mind wage war against each other  
To determine whether I should cry.  
I know there are people around me,  
But I hear little of what they say  
As thoughts of her consume my day.

I visited her old home place this morning  
For the first time in a long while.  
It seemed lonely and so much smaller  
Than when I was a child.  
The whole south side of that old house  
Used to be covered in trumpet vines.  
She liked to tell me how much cooler  
They made it in the summertime.

Most folks considered her mighty stubborn  
Because she refused to let go of the old ways.  
Well, Call it what you may.  
Her determination provided me with memories —  
Outside my own —  
Of a life where pioneers were at home.  
A home where there were nails in the kitchen wall,  
A home where my dad and his brothers hung their overalls.  
(Seems in those days a boy had only two pairs of pants--  
one for school, one for Sunday meeting, or a Saturday  
night dance.)

Because of her, I know what a harness and reintree are for —  
How to use a crank phone and-oh-so much more.  
Like how to keep cream and eggs cool  
By lowering them halfway down a cistern.  
Why castor oil is good for what ails ya —  
How to milk a cranky cow,  
And how to use a butter churn.

She kept her wood-burning stoves;  
She claimed it wasn't so much the fire  
As it was the sound of crackling wood,  
Or the smell of burning coal--  
That could warm a body all the way to his soul.

She used to tell me about coming to Oklahoma  
When she was just a girl,  
About how her papa died and where they buried  
Him on the trail.  
How folks would work so hard  
Clearing the land, and planting the crops  
Just to have them swept away  
By too much rain or hail.

## POETRY

She told me about box suppers and courting on horseback.  
She had her own code on respectable young ladies and  
How they ought to act.  
I can hear her still--  
Giving a detailed description of her courtship with Will.  
He died some fifty years before,  
But his memory lived with her--  
Because she loved him so.  
She wrote a poem about him  
Not long after he died.  
To read it fills me with love and a special pride.

She sometimes talked to me about God.  
She told me if I wanted Him to hear what I say,  
It was best to get on my knees to pray.  
And as I watched her kneel by her bed,  
I was certain He heard everything she said.

Her favorite hymn was "The Last Mile of the Way."  
She traveled that mile today.  
As I stand on this lonesome red hill--  
Trying to accept God's perfect will--  
The battle rages still.  
My mind tells me not to cry--  
That she was old and ready to die.  
I know she is with Will where she longed to be,  
But my mind can't control the hurting in me,  
So the battle ends with my heart having its way,  
And I cry as we bury Grandma Higgins today.



Grandma Higgins (lower right) and her 3 daughters



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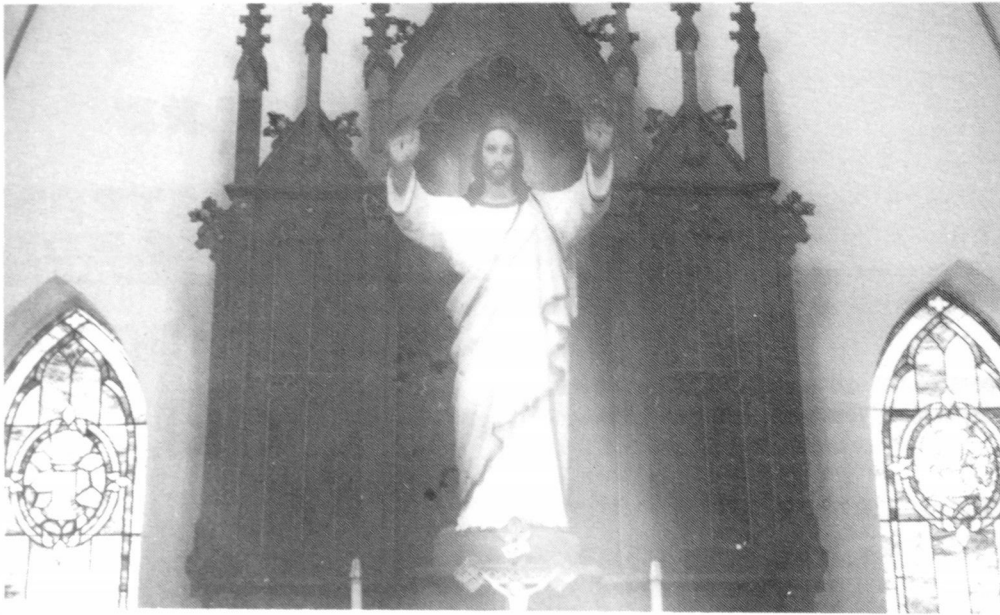


Weatherford, Okla.

Member F.D.I.C.







*Pictured are the nine-point reredos backing the altar and the statue above the altar, a gift in 1907, from Pastor Gemaehlich. Notice the built-in halo.*

# Rural Religion

by Margaret Friedrich

Western Oklahoma has had a rich heritage of religion. The opening of the Cheyenne-Arapaho Country on April 19, 1892, brought a variety of people from the North, the South, from back East, and from Texas. Every small community was settled by a mixture of families with their own traditions. One of the strongest among those traditions was their religion. Hardly a neighborhood existed without a church -- perhaps two or three churches. Or at least there was a union (nondenominational) Sunday school. The pioneers longed for religious training for their children.

Almost every rural community built much of its life around its churches. Those country churches formed a strong adhesive influence during horse-and-buggy days. The coming of the automobile slowly affected the religious life of the farm communities. People drove to nearby towns to attend the services of their choice. Rural churches often merged with their sister churches in town where there were modern facilities and additional activities for all family members.

Today the completely rural church has almost disappeared from the countryside in Western Oklahoma, according to some observers. Not true. Washita County has several outstanding examples of active rural congregations. One of these will serve to show the tenacity of the rural

church.

A large brick building stands beside Highway 183 midway between Clinton and Cordell. To a passing motorist the bell tower distinguishes it as a religious edifice before he approaches near enough to read the sign which identifies it -- Peace American Lutheran Church. A strong country congregation has flourished for more than 90 years at this location. What is the secret of its longevity? In an attempt to answer that question, I attended the Morning Worship Service one Sunday.

As I walked up the front steps, others who were arriving greeted me with "Good morning" and a smile or a handshake. An usher opened and held the door for me. "We're glad to see you," he told me. Somehow I believed him. A lady welcomed me, handed me the morning bulletin, and invited me to sign the guest register. At the door to the sanctuary another usher asked me where I would like to sit. Since I wanted to observe the people, I asked for a place near the back.

The Service was probably not typical of many country churches because these worshippers followed their ancestral tradition of form. Organ music surrounded those attending as they assembled. They seemed to observe an unwritten rule that the sanctuary is for worship only. No conversation disturbed the peace that flowed softly with the music. People

entered in family groups; parents and children sat together. Teenagers and college-age young people sat with a few friends scattered throughout the audience. Farmers made up about half of the congregation. Almost indistinguishable among the flock, these farmers were well dressed and well groomed. Their faces were wind tanned, but so were the faces of the golfers and boat enthusiasts. Only by their hard, work-worn hands could the farmers be identified. Farm wives and children bore no outward distinguishing characteristics at all. Perhaps half of the persons attending, I knew to be business and professional people. I saw a banker and his wife from Clinton, a lawyer and his family from Cordell, a college professor and his wife and daughter from Weatherford, an Oklahoma City accountant who has retired to his farm but continues his business, and so many other nonfarm members.

Some people bowed their heads in silent prayer as soon as they were seated; others simply opened their Books of Worship and marked the hymns listed on the hymn board; still others sat as if in deep thought.

The organ music became livelier and then ceased when Pastor Don Brewer entered and opened the Service in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. The Confession followed, led

by the pastor. The congregation responded together in words worn smooth with time. Yet there was no sense of rote response. The worshippers spoke sincerely with meaning. After the choir anthem, directed by Dr. Don McGurk, and the reading of the Bible lessons, the people sang "Amazing Grace."

It was time for the sermon. Pastor Brewer spoke that day on "Sermons We See." He dealt with a religious philosophy expressed in action -- feeding the hungry, housing the homeless, clothing the needy, and loving others.

When the formal Service was ended, greetings and conversation took place in the narthex [vestibule] or outdoors, never in the sanctuary. It was obvious that his people loved their pastor and trusted him to lead them in spiritual endeavors. He is young; Peace Church is his first parish. He is a product of Western Oklahoma. He grew up in Gotebo and attended Southwestern Oklahoma State University in Weatherford. Like all 15 pastors who preceded him, he is college and seminary trained with a year of internship before he actually became a pastor. No Lutheran minister can be ordained without those prerequisites. Brewer is not a pusher, neither of people nor projects. He is a leader. Talking with him reveals a high degree of dedication and a deep prayer life.

But the influence of Peace Church cannot be attributed to any single pastor nor to all 16 of them combined. There must be something in the character of the people themselves to account for 90 years of active participation in their Christian Faith and in devotion to their Lord and to their church.

This led me to a study of the history of this rural church. I learned that the lay leaders of today are often the third- or fourth-generation descendants of the founders of Peace Evangelical Lutheran Church (the original name). The original members were immigrants from Russia who came to the Cheyenne-Arapaho Country to find a place where they could worship God in freedom. They saw signs that the Russian Government would destroy their churches. This calamity did indeed happen a few years later.

In February of 1893, twelve German-speaking families came to County H (later Washita County), Oklahoma Territory, and filed on land not claimed by anyone in the Cheyenne-Arapaho Run on April 19, 1892. Among the group were ten farmers, a physician, and a schoolmaster. Included were the families of George F. Dick, Conrad Keil, John Friedrich, George Koch, Henry Arndt, John Bolinger, Philipp Frick, Gottfred Fritzler, Philipp Keil, Dr. Jacob Schneider, Schoolmaster Gottlieb Goeringer, and the doctor's son Alexander Schneider.

Immediately after a half-dugout shelter was provided for each family, the first activity of the newcomers was to begin

religious services in one another's homes. Schoolmaster Goeringer led the group by reading the Bible lessons and a sermon. All joined in the prayers and sang the hymns without accompaniment. A daughter of the Conrad Keils, Sophie Intemann, 84-year-old Oklahoma City resident, recalls stories her parents told of crowding into the tiny rooms, sitting on packing boxes or trunks, and sharing the meager books they owned. By the end of that first year her father had given a small part of his farm for the construction of a little sod church. All the pioneers joined in building their house of worship. Thus the precedent of devotion and every-member participation was set in the beginning of their life in the New World.

The little sod church blew away in a tornado on March 28, 1901, but even before that the membership had more than tripled, and they had built a larger wooden building in 1896. That building became the parochial schoolhouse when it was replaced by a much larger building with a 60-foot spire in 1906-07. This landmark building was replaced in 1942 by the present brick church. A new brick parsonage was dedicated in 1954. An educational wing as well as a complete air-conditioning and heating system were both dedicated on December 18, 1958. And improvements continue every year. All these buildings were largely the work of the members themselves, created by their own hands. They always quickly add, "by the help of God."

Amateurs, however, did not attempt to install any of the art objects inside the building. The altar, the stained glass windows, and the organ were all gifts of individuals or extended families and were installed by professionals. The altar is comparable to the exquisite wood carvings in some of the European churches.



*This sign identifies Peace Church on Highway 183 near the small town of Bessie.*

There is nothing else like it in Western Oklahoma. A gift of Pastor John Gemmaehlich about 1907, it has been carefully preserved and moved from one building to the next. The stained-glass windows are rich with brilliant color on a sunny afternoon. They too are outstanding examples of ecclesiastical art usually not seen in this part of the West. The donors were several families, some of whom did not want their names recorded. The Reuter pipe organ was given by the two Baumgart brothers when the present church was built. With its carved console and its set of 21-note Deagan Chimes, it is a fitting instrument on which to play the great classical Lutheran music of Bach, Brahms, Luther, and other composers.

Surprising as it may be, Peace Church has never lacked for organists. At any one time there are usually several young persons vying for the honor of playing the organ. The church itself encourages this by setting high but not unattainable requirements. Then they give everyone who is capable a place on the list and rotate the privilege of playing. Although the organists are paid a minimal fee, it is the joy of serving that counts.

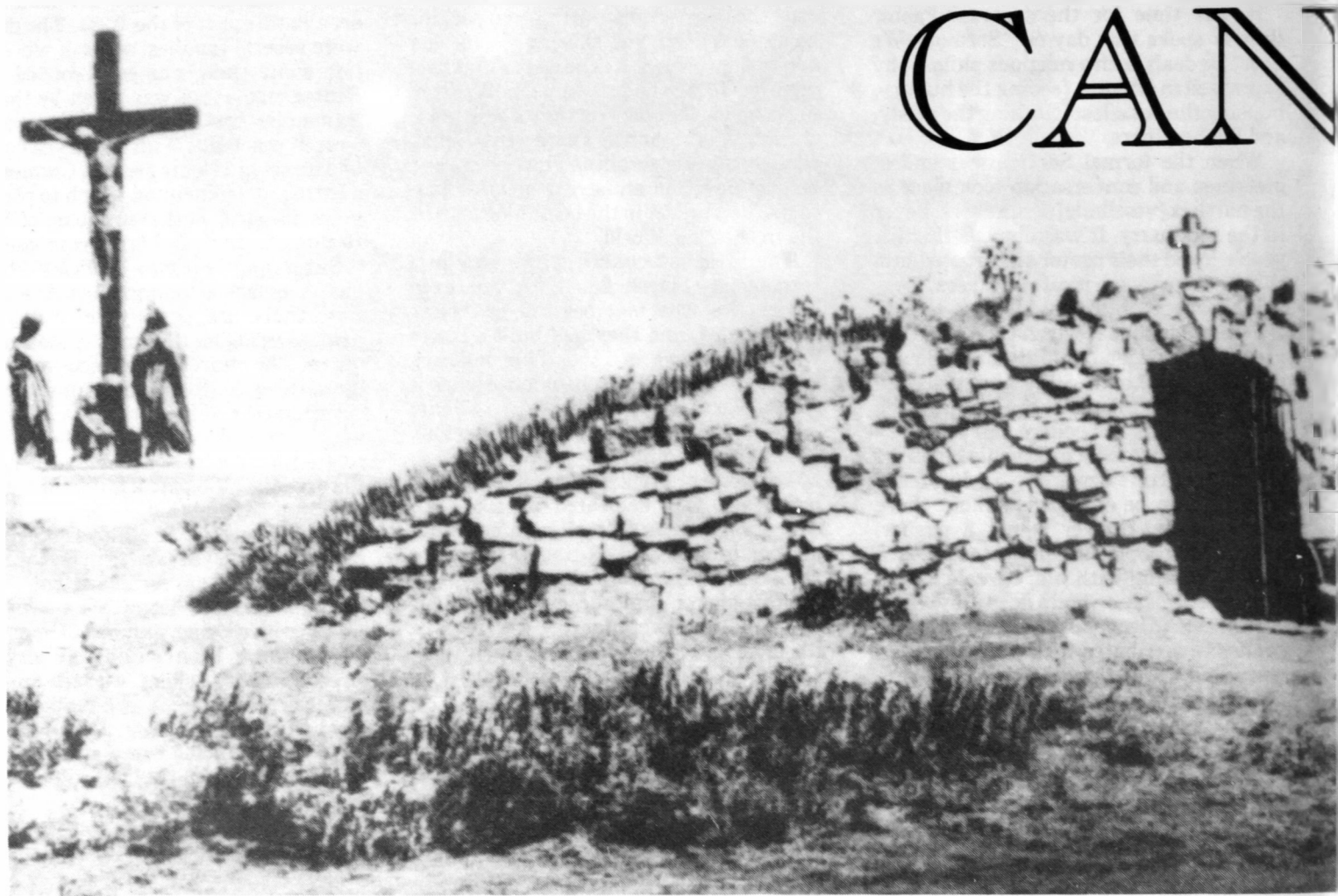
Activities and auxiliaries keep the members involved and interested. The Sunday School was established on July 7, 1895, and classes began one week later. An ever-increasing number of men and women have been willing to serve as directors and teachers. Classes are now maintained for ages pre-kindergarten through the oldest adult. Vacation Bible school is conducted every summer. Acolytes come from the pre-high school group.

Women's work includes Bible study, mission support, Oaks Indian Center, altar care, and other groups that come and go as the need arises. Tabitha Circle, the oldest of the auxiliaries, is especially well known for lovely handwork -- quilting, embroidery, crochet, and the like. In November of each year the circle sells at auction all the creations the members have crafted during the year. The auction has become a community affair. Money raised is used for missions or occasionally for a local church project.

Few people want to miss the supper served in the dining room after the sale. The widespread reputation of the good food prepared from German family recipes attracts dozens of friends. Feasts are also served on other special occasions, such as anniversaries in the church's development, when new equipment or gifts are dedicated, or at Mission Festivals. All these are joyous events. Then too, out of love and a desire to comfort those who are bereaved, a meal is served to the family and close friends of the deceased.

Just across Highway 183 is Peace Lutheran Cemetery where 450 of her dead lie buried. Love and concern is especially

# LANDMARKS



Along Interstate 40 in Western Oklahoma, halfway between Clinton and Elk City, lies a small community of 500 people which has a long and rich Catholic history. This town, Canute, and the surrounding area could quite well be called the center of Western Oklahoma's Catholic heritage.

This heritage was started in the late 1890's at a small settlement four miles southeast of present-day Canute. The community, known as Scheidel, was established in 1898 when a store and post office were built by Joe Scheidel.

Most of the people who lived around the Scheidel area were of the Roman Catholic faith. Since the country was very isolated, these people could not attend church regularly because the closest parish was in El Reno, almost 80 miles away.

In May 1898, a Catholic priest, Father Zenor Stebler, traveled from the Korn Valley (present-day Corn, Oklahoma) and visited the families of this area. He conducted the first Mass in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Ed Tuck. Thereafter, he returned once a month to hold Mass in different homes of the area.

The next year in December, Father Stebler advised that the community should build a church nearby. The residents agreed, and Phillip Schones gave 5 acres of his homestead allotment for the new parish to be built upon. The lumber for the church was hauled from Weatherford and construction began immediately. In March 1900, the building was completed and later in December, Bishop Meersor blessed it with the name St. Francis. This church was also called "The Mother Parish of Western Oklahoma."

The congregation at St. Francis began to expand rapidly and in October 1906, a newer and larger building was erected. Later, in March 1927, a school and rectory were built and served the community until 1960.

From the time Canute was established in 1902 until the mid 1920's, the Catholics of this town traveled to St. Francis for Mass and sent their children there for education. In 1926, permission for a Catholic church in Canute was granted, and in September of that year Holy Family Parish was constructed with Father P. P. Schaeffer as its first pastor.



# UTTE: A Long Catholic Heritage

by Randy Beutler

*The tomb and cross at Holy Family Cemetery.*



*Old Holy Family Church in Canute is now privately owned.*

The next year, Holy Family School was built and classes began that November. The church, school, rectory, and convent at Canute were dedicated by Bishop Campos, an exile from Mexico, in 1928.

In 1959, the grade school at Holy Family was combined with the school at the St. Joseph Parish in Elk City. The next year Bishop Reed dissolved the Catholic high school in Canute, and the education part of Holy Family ended.

December of 1970 saw the close of St. Francis, Holy Family, and St. Joseph churches. These three parishes were combined to form the St. Matthews Parish, which is today located on Interstate 40 just east of Elk City.

One of the most famous landmarks of the area is associated with the Holy Family Parish. It is the Grotto, which is located on the east side of Canute along old U.S. Highway 66. Here at the foot of a small knoll is a man-made, cave-like structure which holds a life-size figure of Jesus Christ encased in glass with two angels standing guard. Below this, inscribed in the wall with colored rock and glass, are the words

"Christ Died For All." Entombed inside the Grotto are the remains of Frank Flies, who financed the construction of the memorial.

At the top of the hill above the Grotto stand three statutory figures surrounded by cedar trees. These statues stand in somber silence of the crucifixion of Christ.

The Grotto was built with local labor in 1928. In 1954, the State of Oklahoma designated it as a tourist attraction because of its locality next to the nation's main thoroughfare, U.S. Highway 66. Today, with Interstate 40 bypassing Canute, the Grotto is barely visible and fairly neglected by tourists.

In later years, the old Holy Family Church and surrounding buildings were sold. A monument, erected in 1983, is now all that stands at the location of the old St. Francis Church.

Gone are the buildings of the early-day Catholics of this area. But, there is a Catholic heritage that remains... a heritage that still endures.

## Country Church

by Cille Gates

From the turn of the century  
The white frame building  
Had remained on an  
Obscure corner of prairie  
Reserved for it by  
A western Oklahoma pioneer.

There was no painted sign,  
Nothing on the outside  
To indicate it was the  
Valley View Missionary Baptist Church  
A "Landmark" Baptist Church,  
Whatever that meant.

The grounds surrounding it  
Boasted only occasional  
Sprouts of waving native grass that  
Had survived the continual parade of  
Wheels, and feet of every age  
Through the years.

The red dirt was packed hard  
From Progress ranging the span of  
Saddle horses, horse-drawn carriages  
And wagons, to early Model T's and Model A's -  
An occasional Dodge or Packard with  
Crystal flower window vases.

Inside, the building was equally as  
Sparse and totally unadorned  
Except for bouquets cut  
Hurriedly on Sunday mornings from  
Someone's clump of iris, rose bush,  
Or old-fashioned country garden.

Over to one side of the pulpit  
Was the floor furnace, and  
Beside it sat a  
Captain's chair, always  
Reserved for the old cold bones  
Of Grandpa Treadaway

Who sat attentively,  
Head slightly lowered,  
Walking cane beside the chair  
With his fingers intertwined,  
Turning his thumbs first  
One way, then the other,

And wore neat gray serge suits,  
Starched white shirts and a black  
String tie that somehow complimented  
A silver mustache, beard,  
Piercing dark eyes,  
Validating a Confederate heritage.

It was he who homesteaded  
The Church land.  
His son Charlie  
Had overseen building of the  
Church, and right well he did,  
To withstand violent prairie winds.

The congregation was an  
Unusual mix of hard-working  
Country folk; gentle and kindly  
For the most part;  
Unpretentious but unrelenting when  
It came to the wiles of the devil.

Locks on their doors or locks on  
Anything else in that community  
Were unthought of.  
Wordly ways and pleasures  
Were totally unacceptable and,  
Once indulged in, never quite forgotten.

A man's word  
Was his bond and he  
Matter-of-factly was  
Responsible for his actions  
As well as those of all  
Members of his family.

A community where  
Parents, aunts, cousins,  
Runaways from the city or  
Even broken down cowhands who  
Came to "visit" and stayed for weeks  
Were never turned away.

In that Church  
One piano served  
The early community  
Musical needs albeit  
There were others  
To be sure

In almost every home.  
Why Aunt Mary Brence even had  
An organ with a bouquet  
Of paper flowers on top,  
Exciting foot pedals to be pushed  
And glorious knobs to be pulled.

"Mis" Maude Fletcher played the Church  
Piano for twenty-five years  
In every type of service, guiding  
The fledgling singing groups  
That more or less were the center  
Of much social activity.

Unusual "singing schools"  
Met there and taught the  
Do - re - mi - fa  
So - la - ti - do  
Method of singing and  
Reading music;

Music written with  
"Shape" notes rather than  
The very complicated  
"Round" note theory used for  
More sophisticatedly  
Written song books.

Singing Schools conducted by  
The preposterous Old Man Kays  
Who wore tiny wire-rimmed  
Spectacles on the very end  
Of his nose and seemingly  
The same black serge suit

With a watch chain across his  
Vest and said repeatedly  
"Hold that lawhst note!"  
Which was silly and made  
Everyone snicker because  
No one talked with such put on.

Church singing conventions  
Usually lasted for days  
When people from all  
Denominations far and wide  
Came to sing those  
Wonderful Gospel songs -

"Are You Washed In The Blood,"  
"Standing On The Promises,"  
"Amazing Grace," always sung acappella,  
"I Am Bound For The Promised Land,"  
"When the storms of life are raging,  
Stand By Me. . ."

Songs that resounded  
Across a countryside  
Subdued and brought to order  
And production by  
Gnarled hands, strong backs  
And determined wills.

Church conducted funerals,  
Always a community affair, were a  
Combination of eulogy,  
Evangelistic plea for souls  
To be saved, and a  
Simple time of celebration;

Visiting and sharing  
Hearty food with  
Friends greeting each other,  
Especially those who  
Were not seen often or  
Lived far away.

A people who did not  
Consider funerals with disgust,  
Scorn, or horror, but simply  
An honor, tribute and respect  
Given to one going -  
Going on to rest.

Never overlooking, however,  
The sobriety of the burying  
Or the feeling of loss -  
The diminishment - as red clay  
Covered a lowered casket  
And flowers

Often handmade from crepe paper  
Were awkwardly left  
As mute, lonely testimony  
Of a worthwhile person,  
Regardless of status,  
Who had once lived.

Then there were the  
Sermons of the Church,  
Those uncompromising sermons,  
The likes of which are  
Almost a thing of the past.  
"Fire and brimstone"

They were called and  
People don't want  
To hear that anymore.  
It's too abrasive, unpopular -  
Too strict, so they say.  
A real bore.

Splendid preachers they were,  
Transformed from toil and struggle  
With weather, seed and soil.  
Who took wisdom from one book  
And, with peculiar eloquence,  
Never spoke from a set of

Notes. No, not ever.  
Who broke the Word of Life  
That could break the  
Hardest heart and open  
The most stubborn mouth  
To repeat the sinner's prayer.

Frontier preachers,  
Who sometimes hadn't even  
Laces for their shoes;  
Uneducated, but who could do  
No less. On and on they came,  
Those soldiers of the Cross.

Cunning men, knowing  
Exactly welcoming kitchens  
With coffee strong and black;  
Platters of fried chicken,  
Golden corn and "okry" -  
Peach cobbles and chocolate cakes.

Bounty from the land, combined  
With conversation and good humor.  
Lively but uncomplicated.  
Hospitality given and accepted  
And no feeling of ever  
Being the lesser for it.

It was a plain country Church  
With noisy youngsters who  
Often got taken outside by  
Parents and spanked  
When they misbehaved.  
"Younguns" who sat together

On the front row -  
When they were good -  
And sang along with  
Everyone regardless of  
Whether they knew  
The words. Strange lyrics -

Shrilled in high childish trebles,  
Prestigious songbooks held upside down,  
"When the roses crawl up yonder  
I'll be there. . ."<sup>1</sup>  
Or, exhausted after playing  
All afternoon; an exciting Baptising

At the Swafford place  
In their meandering creek;  
Lulled by distant sounds,  
Special smells and vapors  
Wafting through windows opened  
To soft summer nights.

The children wilted into sleep.  
Some mothers would take pity,  
Placing them on pallets  
Made from handsewn quilts  
Brought from home  
For just that purpose

To be spread on the bare wooden floor  
Within easy reach of a waving fan.  
A place envied by many.  
Later, lifted by strong arms,  
Daddy's arms, sleepy children were  
Carried out into cool darkness.

The Church is no longer there.  
Even the building is gone.  
The only reminder is a carved stone  
Anchored in the red clay,  
Surrounded with the eternal waving  
Obeisance of native grass

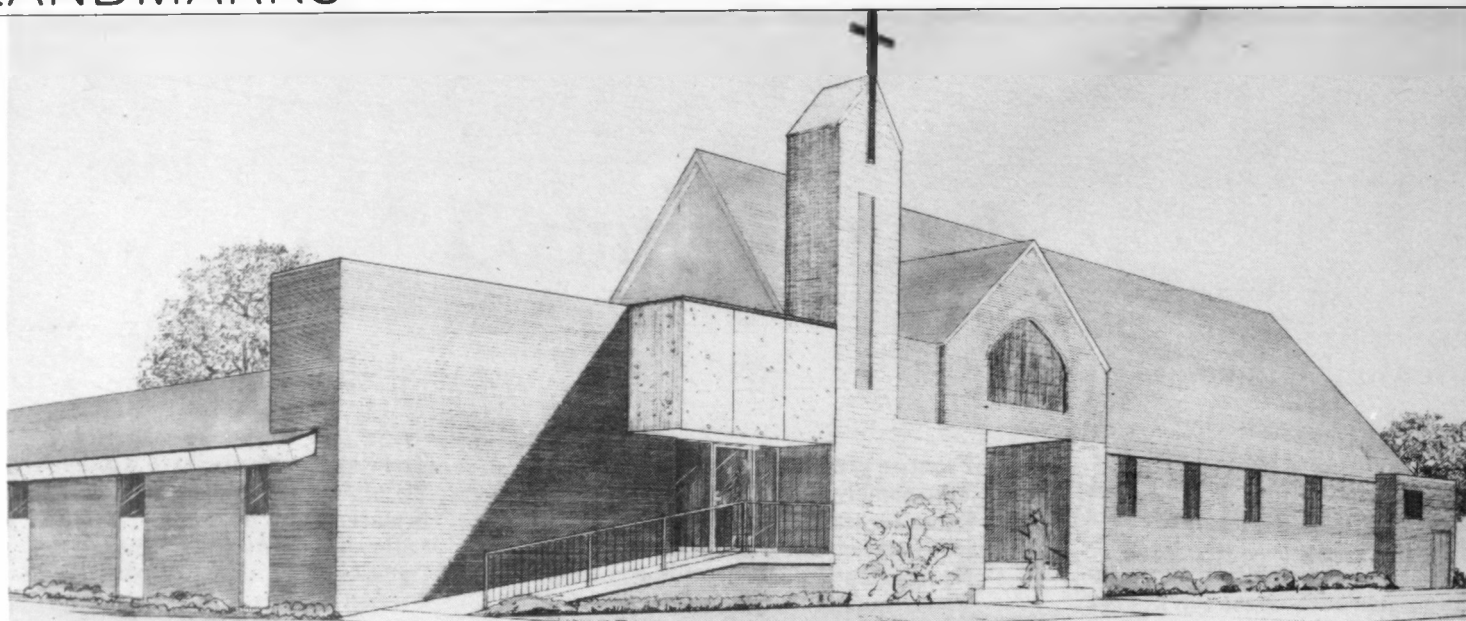
Canopied in splendor by a  
Cornflower blue sky,  
Billowing white clouds, or  
Scarlet and golden sunsets  
That still fade into vistas  
Of lavender and rose afterglow.

The only sounds now are those  
Of restless wind sweeping across the  
Land once prairie; a mockingbird  
Singing from a high wire;  
Mysterious sounds of nature  
In concert - the lowing of cattle,

A rush of birds on the wing,  
Thunder rumbling in the distance,  
An occasional engine.  
Peace prevails. A happy lonesome -  
An expectant calm -  
Seems to be waiting. . .waiting.

<sup>1</sup>"When The Roll Is Called Up Yonder,"  
Gospel song written by J. M. Black. 1921





# Weatherford Federated

The first building of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Weatherford, Oklahoma Territory, was constructed in 1898. It was the first church in the town, which boasted 14 saloons at that time. It is also interesting to note that the first Congregational Church in Weatherford was organized the same year.

Furthermore, it was a part of the Ecumenical Movement, even though it did not become so close to us out here on the Western plains until one century plus 18 years after it began and until a few weeks before the Armistice was signed ending World War I. It was on Sunday, September 23, 1918, that the local Congregational Church joined forces with the local Christian (Disciples of Christ) Church. The state of Oklahoma was only 11 years old when this union of the two churches took place; thus, the Federated Church has grown right along with the young 46's state.

The Articles of Federation were drawn up (by members from both churches), and each congregation ratified the Articles which have formed the basis of the mutual agreement throughout the years. As the need arose, the Articles were amended. . . and more changes updated them about a half century after the original federation when the local congregation of the Presbyterian Church USA joined the two-church federation (in 1968). The Rev. Tom Jolly was instrumental in bringing the Presbyterians into the fold. With the three churches in one, the name continued to be the Federated Church; the Articles were expanded to include the Presbyterian contingent.

Each of the three churches has maintained its own denominational organization. The governing board of 20 members is chosen from all three groups; the monies are divided equally, including the outreach money, which is sent through the proper channels to each church benevolence.

The following is from the Statement of Beliefs as printed in a recent church brochure:

The Federated Church believes in the Bible as God's teaching and His revelation to newness of life in Christ. We believe in Christ as God's Son, the Trinity as God's expression of Himself to man, and the celebration of two sacraments: the Lord's Supper, which we celebrate each Sunday, and baptism. Individual interpretation of the Scripture and freedom of expression are encouraged in all areas of faith and practice.

Membership in the Federated Church may be received by a person's own statement of faith or by a letter from another congregation.

At the present time, most of the members are from one of the three churches in the federation; however, there also are members from the Lutheran, Methodist, Episcopal, Catholic, Baptist, and Church of Christ. Some of these people joined before there was the church of their choice in town. After their churches did become a reality, most of them chose to stay where they were.

*by Della Barnwell Whisenhunt*

From the beginning, the financing of the Federated Church has been under the control of the official board. As an aside, we think we should say that financing the Federated Church has not been the major problem. Several of the ministers have from time to time also commented on this observation.

In the early years of the federation, the board had general supervision of all Sunday school work and teachers; however, that duty somewhere down the line was done away with, and the teachers since then have been appointed on the basis, more or less, of whether they would be able to serve.

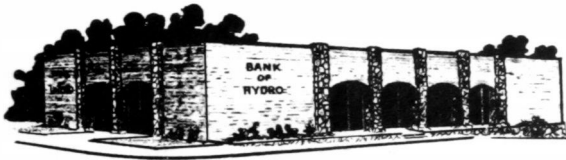
The Federated Church works with both the large churches and the small ones and takes an active part in the inter-church work and in civic responsibilities. For example, the minister takes an active part in the City Ministerial Alliance; the Chancel Choir sings in all inter-church and community-sponsored activities; the members cooperate in the World Day of Prayer, and the men play inter-church softball in the summer.

Besides the Sunday school, the auxiliaries of the Federated Church are about the same as they are in any other Protestant church. The women are organized into the Christian Women's Fellowship of which there are three circles. The men call themselves simply the Federated Men's Club; there are different interest and age groups among the youth. Even the adult singles have their organization.

The Federated Church is a living, loving, and growing church. We welcome visitors.

(From THE OKLAHOMA CHRISTIAN — December, 1983)

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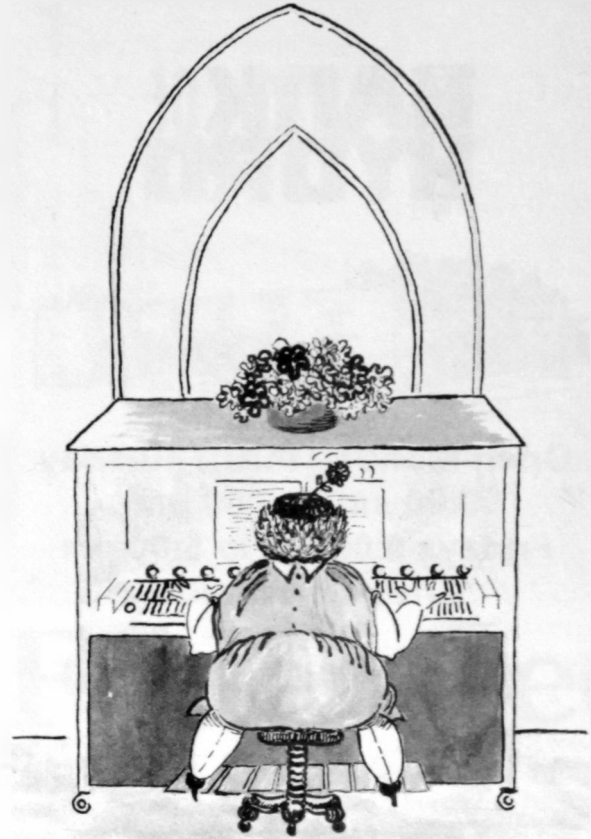
*Blunck's*

*of course*

Clinton  
Elk City  
Weatherford

# When Mom Pumped The Rafters Rattled

by Bernadine F. Wells



"Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition" was a popular song during World War II. It could have been my mother's theme song when she played the organ in our small country church. If you had known my mother and watched her during Sunday morning services, you would agree she praised the Lord in a most war-like manner.

When the sparrows scattered from the steeple, we didn't know if they were scared or if the rattling of the rafters shook them from their roosting places.

As Mom rambled towards the organ, clutching her cloth handbag, we held our breaths until she straddled the small, round stool. There wasn't a stool made to fit Mom's posterior.

She arrived early, as it took a long time to get all the stops pulled out to create just the right sounds. Then she made sure her feet were placed on the pedals in the proper position and her knees spread far enough to give sufficient pressure to the knee levers.

Mom was ready to begin the minute the Reverend Jackson walked to the podium,

adjusted his spectacles, and gave her his quick nod. Her feet started pumping, her knees pushed in and out, and her stubby fingers raced across the keys.

The louder the congregation sang, the faster Mom pumped, pushed, and rocked on her little round stool. The perspiration rolled from her brow, and when she gave a certain wiggle, we knew it was also trickling down her spine.

Sunday morning was the highlight of our week. It was social as well as spiritual—all because of Mom's pumping and pushing on that little organ. On those rare occasions when she slowed to a softer melody, we could hear Mr. Jones' collie harmonizing from across the street. I was in my teens before I realized it was Rover and not Miss Lena Wilson straining for those high notes.

There were also other special days, such as weddings and funerals. The church was overflowing on either occasion. Weddings were festive, with relatives and friends coming from throughout the county. When Mom began pumping and pushing, "Here Comes the Bride"

was never delivered with more sentiment. She pushed, pumped, and wiggled on her little stool until the bride and groom were on their way to a long and happy married life. At times, Mom got so carried away, the bridal party stood several minutes in front of the altar until the Reverend Jackson caught Mom's attention and signaled it was time to stop pumping.

Then there were the funerals. If it were possible for anyone to enjoy funerals, it would have been my mother. She had a special black dress and a small black hat which she perched atop her gray hair. One of her favorite hymns was "Nearer My God to Thee." She pumped and pushed in such a doleful fashion it caused the bereaved family to mourn and weep all the more.

Now that Mom has departed from this life, I'm sure she managed to sneak in a small organ somewhere up there. Often at night when I hear the rumble of thunder, I know she's shoved the harps to one side and is pumping while the heavenly choirs sing "Alleluia."



# Humor and the Bible

by Dr. Tal D. Bonham

A young girl was saved in an exciting revival at her church and was baptized during the closing Sunday morning. That afternoon, she ran through the house singing and dancing.

Her sour grandfather rebuked her with these words, "You ought to be ashamed of yourself! Just joined the church and singing and dancing on the Lord's Day!"

Crushed by her grandfather's attitude, the little girl went out to the barn, climbed up on the corral fence, and observed an old mule standing there with a sad droopy face and bleary eyes with tears coarsing down his cheeks.

As she reached over and patted the mule sympathetically, she said, "Don't cry, ole' mule. I guess you have just got the same kind of religion that Grandpa has!"

The teachings of the Bible are often falsely construed as joy-killing and pleas-

ure-stifling precepts designed to make us sad and somber. But the Bible has much to say about happiness, joy, and a sense of humor.

Many doctors are preaching the truth of Proverbs 17:22: "A merry heart doeth good like a medicine, but a broken spirit drieth the bones."

The Psalmist said, "Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye righteous: and shout for joy, . . ." (Psalm 32:11). Both reverence and joy are mixed when the Psalmist admonishes us to "fear the Lord" but adds, "and rejoice" (Psalm 2:11).

The birth of Jesus was announced as "good tidings of *great joy*" (Luke 2:10). Jesus characterized his disciples in the Beatitudes as "blessed." This speaks of an inner joy, peace, and satisfaction--the root of a true sense of humor.

Jesus admonished his disciples to "be of good cheer" because "I have overcome the

world" (John 16:33). He also said to his followers, "If ye know these things, *happy* are ye if ye do them" (John 13:17). When his Gospel was preached in Samaria, "there was great joy in that city" (Acts 8:8).

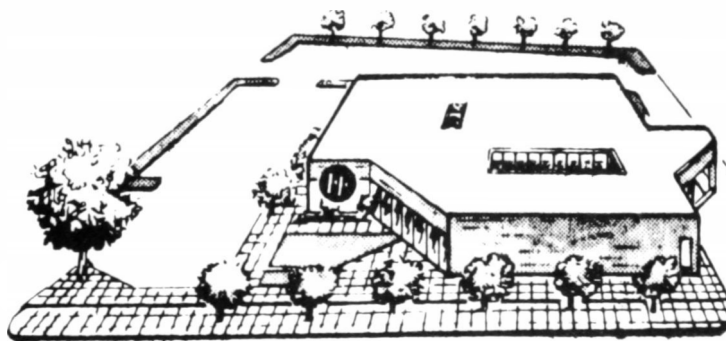
"If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, *happy* are ye" said Peter (I Peter 4:14). James echoed, "Behold, we count them *happy* which endure" (James 5:11).

Jerry Clower said, "God doesn't want his children to walk around unhappy. He wants them to be happy. I am convinced that there is just one place where there is just not any laughter and that is hell. And I've made arrangements to miss hell, so ha, ha, ha, I ain't goin' to have to ever be nowhere some folks ain't laughin'."

"Whoso trusts in the Lord, *happy* is he" (Proverbs 16:20).

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## HAVE LIFE *by R. R. Chapman*

---

The sun, the moon and the brilliant stars  
Attest to the fact of a being on high that  
Assures us a life where we'll never die —  
For those who love Him and obey His will of the  
Christ who died for you and me on Calvary's hill.

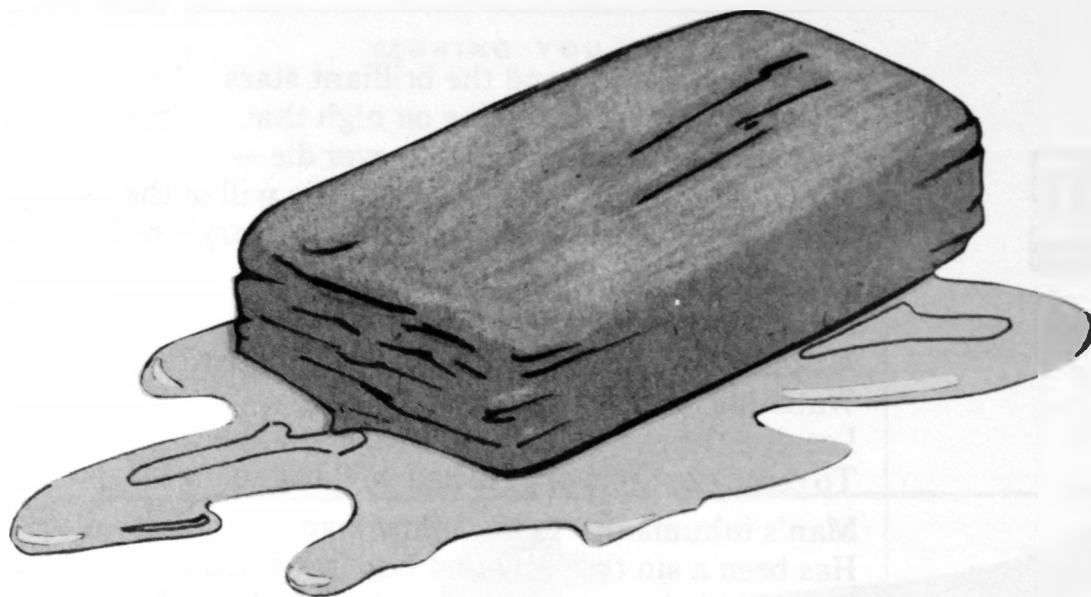
The earth that we walk on, the very sod,  
Attests to the fact that there is a God,  
A Superlative being with powers unknown  
Watching, waiting on a Holy throne  
Leaving the earth's fate to His chosen Son  
To complete the work He had well begun.

Man's inhumanity to his fellow man  
Has been a sin that all must bear while man exists and  
Flaunts his boastful ways for the world's acclaim through  
Many a day until the Lord in his wrath shall destroy by a blaze  
A world corrupt until the latter days.

The earth, the grass, the air that we breathe,  
The gorgeous sunset, the sky, and the trees —  
All attest to the fact that there is one  
On high that assures us with Love that we need not die.

# Lyeing For The Lord

by Jane Janzen



"If you have dandruff, just wash your head with good old lye soap. That will take care of your problem."

"This grease is ready. Where are the lyers?"

"There's nothing that gets clothes whiter than washing them with lye soap."

"Aunt Millie always made the prettiest, whitest lye soap. Mother's soap was more cream color, and we never did know why."

"Lye soap will sure cure a case of athlete's foot."

"This batch of soap is setting up fast! Are the cartons ready for pouring?"

And so went the conversation on Valentine's Day, 1984, when 24 members of the Herold Mennonite Church met to make soap to send to the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) for foreign distribution.

Herold Church, "the country church with the caring heart," is located ESE of Bessie, Oklahoma, and has its church office in Cordell. The 60-75 people who participate in the Sunday services drive from Bessie, Cordell, Corn, and Clinton to be with their church family. For the past 16 Februarys, various persons from this

congregation, under the direction of the Women's Mission Society, have gathered in the home of Louis and Ann Horn, Corn, for a soap-making project.

Most of these men and women helping remember when their parents made soap for household use. In the days of home butchering, the raw fat from the killed hogs was always rendered to produce cooking lard. (Beef fat cooked down in the same manner was called tallow.) This lard was first used for cooking and then for laundry. Louis remembers, "Mom saved all the lard after frying meat and when she had about a dishpan full, she made a small batch of soap. If Dad butchered again before the kitchen grease had been used, Mom made washing soap from the old lard and cooked with the new."

This year the Herold people produced 1980 pounds of soap, not enough to beat their 1980 record of 2500 pounds, but definitely more than a dishpan full.

When the workers began arriving at 8:30 a.m. on February 14, Louis had several 5-gallon buckets of grease heating over a wood fire in the basement. The buckets were sitting in steaming water

PHOTOS BY REV. JOHN SPRUNGER

inside a big black kettle which is built into a brick chimney. This is the same kettle that Louis' dad used to render fat in days past, and Louis' mother used to heat water for washing family clothes.

When the grease has been melted enough for pouring, Louis grabs the top of a bucket with two pairs of pliers and carries it to a holding barrel where the grease is kept at a constant 80 degrees ready for the next step. This warming barrel, which was a creation of Louis', sits in a horizontal position over a propane burner. There is a spigot at one end so workers can release 6 pounds of grease into a pre-marked pail.

By 9:00 in the morning the lyers are at work in another well-ventilated area of the basement. In addition to being able to withstand a number of jokes about church-going lyers, these men have to tolerate the toxic fumes that come from mixing the powdered lye with water. When the dry lye is poured into room temperature water, there is a chemical reaction that heats the mixture to over 160 degrees. The solution has to be stirred to bring the temperature down as well as to dissolve the lye. When this liquid is



*Stirring warm grease and lye water.*

cooled to 75 degrees, it is ready to be mixed with the warm grease.

It is interesting that 60 years ago area grocers stocked large quantities of Lewis Lye or Eagle brand lye, but today the stores will carry only a few cans at a time. When the church special-ordered 240 cans of Lewis Red Devil Lye at \$1.00 per can, the store manager was a little anxious. Since he could not imagine anyone using that amount of lye, he was worried he would be stuck with a 20-year supply.

Now that the lye and the grease are both at best temperatures, it is time for action at the stirring table. Long boards, years ago used on butchering day, have been laid across saw horses and are now

covered with large metal dishpans containing warm grease. The lye water is slowly poured into the grease while the stirrers use small wooden paddles to immediately begin combining the two ingredients.

In stirring, it is important to scrape the sides of the pan as well as to muddle the



*Soap molds.*

middle to get a thorough honey-like blend that will make good soap. Knowing how long to stir is much like knowing when it's time to pick the green beans; it takes experience. The process has to be judged by appearance and not by time because time will vary with the quality of grease, the temperature of ingredients, and the ratio between the stirring and the talking of the stirrer. It has been observed that some people stir as fast as they talk while other people can do only one or the other.

Stirring grease in a circle while standing in a circle of friends doesn't sound like the most difficult task, but these people must constantly be alert to the danger of lye burns. Although the workers wear rubber gloves and long-sleeved shirts to protect themselves, there are times when someone's skin is irritated. It may happen when a glove finger is unknowingly punctured or when a person unthinkingly scratches his itching face. Vinegar and clean cloths are kept handy at several spots in the basement and used to neutralize the acid burns. Often heard is, "Would someone with dry hands dab some vinegar on my nose?" In a day filled with slick lye and slippery grease, occasionally a pan slips through someone's hands, and there is potential for a severe burn to skin or eyes. However, in the 16 years this group has met, there has been only one member who required minimal medical attention beyond the vinegar treatment.

When the soap soup is "ready," it is poured through a trough funnel into half-gallon milk-carton molds to cool and to set up. Over the years the Herold people have washed, saved, and recycled the milk cartons that they bought in the grocery store. This year they had a donation of 300 never-been-used cartons from the

Borden Milk Company in Oklahoma City. The Herold recipe of 1 can of lye, 5 cups water, and 6 pounds of grease will fill 2 milk cartons and make 9 pounds of soap.

The morning goes on.

"Louis, which can of grease do you want to melt next?"

"Where is the measuring pail, John? I'm ready for more grease."

"Tell the lyers to speed up. We're waiting for lye."

"The weather is too warm today. The lye isn't cooling very quick."

"Be sure you stir along the edges or the lye won't get mixed into the grease."

"This is making beautiful white soap this year."

"Linda, my pan is ready to pour."

"How many cartons have we filled?"

"It's time for the first shift to go up and eat lunch."

"That's me. I've been waiting all morning for some of Ann's creamy lima beans!"

"You can have those. I've got my appetite set for Erna's egg custard pie."

Upstairs Ann has extended her dining room table to full length and covered it with her company china and the fine food that each family furnished for the occasion. The plentiful potluck meal invites second and third helpings, but no one lingers long. This is soap-making day, and the stirring must go on.

During the afternoon, friends drop in to see how the project is progressing. Conversation turns to past experiences.

"Remember one of our first years when we made 695 pounds of soap and thought we had a big day?"

"Remember the year Leonard spilled lye on his new \$40.00 shoes? He was the only lyer with holey shoes."

"Remember how frustrated we were last year when the grease was bad and we couldn't get the soap to make?"



*Pouring lye water and stirring.*

"I remember a different year when the soap wouldn't set. Then we discovered we were stirring straight grease. Someone had forgotten to add the lye."

"Remember the year the preacher dissolved lye and poured a pan of lye



water on his pants? He borrowed some slacks while his were in the washer and then kept borrowing them when his clothes came out in pieces. We told him that's what happens to lyers."

Sometime after 5:00 the clean-up begins. Even though there are a few cans of lye left, the grease has been used. All of the pails, pans, and paddles have to be washed in hot sudsy water.

"Hey, we need some soap to wash all this stuff."

"You need soap? You've got to be kidding, Aaron!"

"Where should we put all of this equipment?" Are we going to use it again next year?"

"Do you want us to clean the floor now, Ann?"

"When should we come back for soap cutting? Will it be set up by Friday?"

The big day is over once again. This day of love was spent with caring friends who were demonstrating their love for people they will never meet.

After the church people leave, Louis and Ann collapse over coffee and leftovers from lunch. The day's work was happily hectic, but it was more than this day that wearied them. Their involvement started shortly after last soap-making day when people of the community began calling them and offering grease and milk cartons for the next project. The Horns collected these materials and stored them along with all of the equipment that is

kept from year to year. (many of these stowed-away items, such as the warming barrel and an electric stirring device, as well as wooden paddles, pouring troughs and storing trays, were designed and built by the Horns during the last 16 years particularly for the work days.)

In January Louis and Ann began bringing everything out of basement and barn storage in preparation for February. They spent several days washing the grease, so that it would later make clean soap. This energy-consuming process required digging the given grease out of containers that ranged in size from 1 pound coffee cans to 20 gallon crocks, heating the grease over a wood fire, stirring in water, and sometimes bleach, to float away the impurities such as salt, and then pouring the pure product into 5-gallon buckets.

They asked for discarded packing crates at furniture stores so that they could cut the boxes open and have large flat pieces of cardboard to tape to the basement floor.

The floor covering was to speed the clean up afterwards; but now while Louis and Ann munch, they meditate about the mess and wonder, "Will we ever get all of the grease film washed away?" They decide not to even try until after soap-cutting evening has passed.

Within 4 to 7 days some of the Herold men and women will come back to the Horn home to tear away the paper cartons and to cut the large chunks of soap into 4"

by 4" bars--two per mold. These bars are then stored in the basement for about 6 weeks so they will harden.

When the curing process is complete, Louis and Ann will haul a trailer load of soap to the Mennonite General Conference Office in North Newton, Kansas. There the bars are weighed and then sent to Akron, Pennsylvania, where the MCC headquarters is located.

MCC will ship the lye soap to impoverished countries such as Cambodia and Bangladesh where it is used in hospitals, orphanages, clinics and schools. Last year the church received a copy of a letter that praised the people who send soap, because this product is truly needed for cleaning and for disinfecting. The letter was written by Sister Teresa.

Knowing the need makes the work worthwhile for the Mennonite members. Knowing the need has helped the Horns do the yearly preparation for the official work day. Although the church as always expressed their appreciation for the efforts of the Horns, this year they presented a permanent thank you. On March 11th, the church surprised Louis and Ann with a plaque for their "Labor of Love." The inscription concludes with a portion of the Bible verse found in Matthew 25:40, "whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me."

Surely it will be only one of the rewards they earned lying for the Lord.

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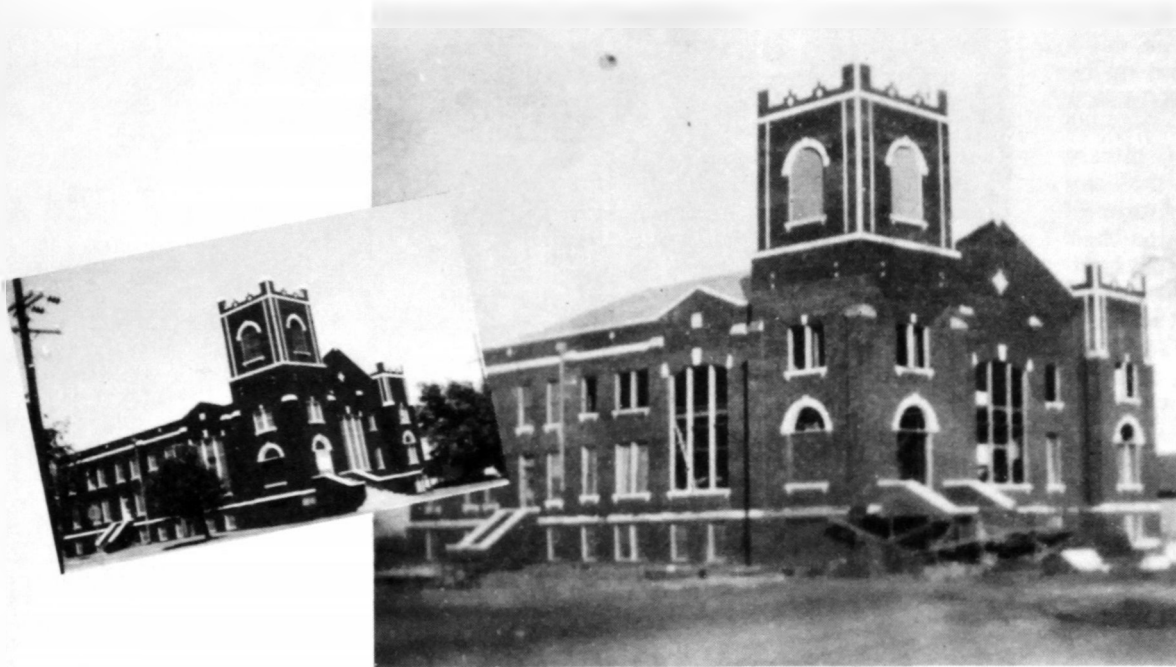
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*New Methodist Church  
is built where Willia and  
Edgar Watts once lived.*

## Reflections of the Ghost of Martha Methodist Church

*by Kate Jackson Lewis*

I am the ghost of Martha Methodist Church. I can remember when children sang and worshiped in my lovely old church building. Their parents did, too. Back then, children spent much time watching the sun shine through my stained-glass windows if they didn't understand the preacher's sermon. A portrait of the Good Shepherd is pictured in the center as if he were watching his sheep.

Three years ago, in June, the people closed my doors for the last time. I heard them say that church attendance had grown too low. It was a sad time for me after the children went away, but I still have a place to live. Now I've heard that my thirty-two colorful windows are up for sale. How drab this place will be without them. But, then the building may be made into an apartment house. My fine old church will lose its identity without its windows, nameplates, and furniture.

My builders, God-fearing pioneers, came here to this last great area with a dream to build a monument to their Almighty God. They sacrificed to build me even before they had the time or

means to build nice, comfortable homes for themselves. I was made of pine lumber, covered with brick and mortar and floored with fine hardwood. After the windows were installed, the rostrum carpeted, and my furniture covered with crushed velvet, the sanctuary was fit for a king.

My people completed me in 1926 at a cost of \$25,000, but my valuation went up to \$40,000 when the donated labor of these "salt of the earth people" was figured in.

I liked my first name, "Martha." Not only is it Biblical, but it is my town's name and it was named for Martha Medlin, who was responsible for the first organized school and for securing a charter for the new community. The worthy Christian miss was named post-mistress soon afterward. The mail came by stagecoach from Vernon, Texas.

Miss Medlin taught the first school, an enrollment of 12, in a half dugout. The subscription School was paid for by me here whose children attended it. One home to build afraid that children would lose their God. They the tall grass, plowed a they had

furrow from his home to the school.

Other pioneer teachers at Martha were Miss Bertie Newcomb, Mr. Nye, Mr. Watkins. A. S. J. Shaw, well-known State Auditor, taught at a much later date than did the others.

When one of my people relates history, I "am all ears." Free lancers keep asking if Martha is a ghost town. Nelson Doughty's answer is, "No, Martha is a small town struggling to stay alive." Being a resident here and president of The First State Bank of Altus seems to be a desirable lifestyle for Doughty. The bank is family-owned and was operated, first at Martha and later moved to Altus. Several of the Doughtys still work there. Among them are Lee, Nelson's son, and Harold, one of Nelson's siblings.

Then, one day in 1964, I overheard an elderly lady member of the church telling a local teacher how the earliest Methodists served God when they migrated here from other states, "My preacher husband, J. F. Hosmer set up the first church and Sunday School in our homestead, one and one-half miles north of Martha. We had an organ, so we just invited the people

*Continued on p. 43*

# RELICS

A sweet and easy trombone sound wailed over the vacant lot, down the railroad tracks, and up toward Main Street. Sometimes, it could be heard out on the Lake Road toward Kirtley, and even up on Cemetery Hill. Folks who had worked hard all day and were just too tired after supper to change into church clothes, sat on their porches quietly listening to the old familiar songs. Later, they would catch some of the preacher's sermon if he would just speak up and not talk too fast. The Baptists' summer revival in a small Western Oklahoma community was going strong.

It was the trombone playing that made this one different from all the other summer meetings. The crowds got bigger every night. People wanted to know what was going on.

The young, good-looking "singer" from the Baptist Seminary had come to help the preacher in a two-weeks' evangelistic meeting. He had hardly hit town until his amazing musical versatility began to get things moving. Nobody would ever forget his first performance. In his white linen suit, his black hair parted in the middle, slicked down and shining against his silver trombone, he swayed the congregation up and down the jubilations of sheer rapture. To rest his fine tenor voice, he played the third verse of every song on his horn.

A stillness caught the sound and sent it right up to heaven. A suspension of breath lifted the most skeptical right up there also; those most ardent were already in flight. The romance of it all never diminished, even when it was announced that this heraldic charmer had a wife and child down in Ft. Worth.

So the singing and the playing and the preaching would go on for two weeks. Preparations, however, had begun much earlier as women and girls planned their revival wardrobes, a supply of cool summer dresses of voile and dimity, with an organdy for special nights. Hill's and Chancellor's, the two dry goods stores in town, sold extra seersucker or cotton trousers for the men. White shirts were kept in starched readiness. Gardening and canning projects were now finished for the year, crops were laid by, nothing new was started, and lazy August days lasted through long summer evenings.

Social life accelerated as the revival got underway. With hair done up in curlers all morning, the ladies of the congregation prepared their finest Sunday meals for every day, and "company" suppers and parties every evening. The preacher and the singer never ate better. Homemade ice cream and the town's finest layer cakes



*by Helen Thames Raley*

were available for after-church gatherings on porches, or for singing around somebody's piano, or maybe for choir practice.

When the sun went down, the crowd began to gather. A few curious onlookers parked their high-topped Model T's on side streets or in the alley just to listen. Quieter cars parked a little closer, their occupants getting out to sit on running boards.

New one-by-twelve boards from the lumber yard, donated for two weeks, and now laid across nail kegs, provided seating arrangements that were cool and not too uncomfortable, at least for the first hour. A center aisle led up to the improvised altar, the wood platform built by a carpenter who donated his labor. The careful placing of the golden oak pulpit stand from the church building enhanced all these arrangements with authenticity. The piano, protected by a tarpaulin loaned for the duration by the Ice Company, had seen better days. In spite of gaps in the ivories and a few soundless keys, the music was still there. At times,

the pedal worked very well.

With the magic turn of a switch, the electric lights flashed across the scene in a fiery brilliance that ante-dated used car lots that would come within the next two or three decades.

Come one, Come all, everybody's welcome! At last, the long anticipated event broke the monotony of the summer. Brightly colored handbills announcing time, place, and participants, had been delivered all over town, tucked in screen doors, and prominently displayed on counters in all the stores. Like the trombone-playing, this advertising was something new; but the Baptists, the most thriving denomination in town, were known for their modern methods, and for their strong convictions about the worth of their summer revival.

Off to a good, peppy start! Chorus after chorus, first the ladies sang, then the men, then all together, softer, louder, everybody! For exciting effect, the pianist went into a higher octave, the melody then played in the left hand, the trombone sliding in on the third verse. A tremelo on



ILLUSTRATION BY J. VAN ORSDOL

the last verse was an exciting innovation.

"Be seated, please," was the directive. Due for a good rest by now, the perspiring choir members glistened in the blazing glare of the electric lights as they settled themselves in rows of wooden folding chairs borrowed from the Funeral Parlor, whose palm leaf fans accrued much advertising.

Squirming and giggling on the first two rows, the Booster Band children were about to explode with unaccountable energy at the end of a long, hot summer day. Most of the afternoon, they had practiced their choruses. Now in stiff, starched shirts and dresses, each properly badged with "Booster Band" labels, they could hardly wait to perform... two songs.

"Brighten the corner where you are...."  
and

"A sunbeam, a sunbeam, Jesus wants me for a sunbeam, A sunbeam, a sunbeam, I'll be a sunbeam for Him." On the last phrase, each child turned involuntarily for approval from beaming parents in the congregation.

In a different mood, the song service continued. Bouncing enthusiasm gave way to a Hawaiian harp effect as a favorite song was solicited. Surely, there was nothing to compare with such beauty, such soul-satisfaction, flung out across the lot, into the cars, on to the porches, far down to the river.... "He lives on high, He lives on high,....Someday, He's coming again....."

Then, everybody relaxed, at ease in Zion, and sat back to wait for the "special music." Every evening, it was a surprise. And now, there was a kind of ecstasy as the best alto in town blended her voice with the singer's sweet tenor, rendering the popular favorite, "Out of the Ivory Palaces." It just literally took one's breath away. A solemn hush swept over the crowd.

The effect was almost ruined, however, by the preacher himself, fiery and impatient to get on with his preaching. His words came in a rush. There was instant attention. Time was of the essence all right, with doom right there in town. He exhorted, he extolled. Virtue and inte-

grity were found wanting, just as in the Bible.

This is what he said. The mighty words, the powerful words caught up in the clichés and stilted phrases of that generation, were familiar. The Christian life called for repentance and righteousness, and everybody knew exactly what he was talking about, although he didn't come right out and call a spade a spade. With his sun-streaked, straw-colored hair thrashed about, his face red with heat and exertion, he cut the air with his incisive, assailing pronouncements. Occasionally, there was a slight break in the torrent of words. Then, mopping his face with a damp, wrinkled handkerchief, he would lapse into a pleasant informality that gave some relief from the hell-fire voice of the prophet.

No one moved. The children sat motionless. Solemnity gave way to a descent from glory hovering around the edges of the crowd, up the aisle and on to the platform.

Over and over the endless verses produced the sinner. Nowhere in town or in the country was there a place to hide, a "cleft in the rock"; certainly, there was no privacy along this sawdust trail up the aisle to shake the preacher's hand. In most cases it was the sharing of a strange and significant step with friends and neighbors. Except for a few dramatic incidents, the in-gathering of souls brought few changes. Life just went on as usual, accepted and secure, summer after summer, but time-honored virtues associated with religion were sure to be bolstered by those set-apart days when the Baptist revival relieved the monotony of summer. For a while, there was a fervor for goodness.

The service finally ended. Sleeping babies were roused from their pallets on the grass. Cars eased down the street, Model T's sputtered around the corner, and folks sitting on their porches slammed and hooked the screen doors as they went inside. Somebody tied down the tarpaulin around the piano. The lights were switched off.

Now it was bedtime. A faint breeze had come up. In anticipation of tomorrow night's service and hopes for a big crowd, a few of the faithful seemed reluctant to leave. Somebody said it might rain before morning because of the ring around the moon, visible now above the tall trees on Gresham Street.

"Well, Goodnight." Footsteps were easy, walking home. The only sound was the switch engine shunting freight cars to another track before the midnight train came in.

# The KLAN Goes to Church

by Kate Jackson Lewis

When I was a teenager, a revival meeting was held once a year, usually after the crops were laid by and before harvest time. The custom was to build a brush-arbor out of poles laid crosswise over corner posts placed securely in the ground. The entire structure was then covered with leafy branches to keep out the sun. Split logs served as seats with one placed at the front for a "Mourner's Bench."

A pump-style organ was placed to one side of the front to accompany the hymn singing. A center podium, made by anchoring a post in the ground with a slice of wood across the top, served for the evangelist's Bible.

People came from miles around in wagons, hacks, buggies, on horses—some on foot. Pallets were spread all around the outside edges and between the benches for sleeping children. Still farther back,

the wagons provided seating for some who didn't wish to sit under the arbor. Horses' reins were secured to fences or nearby saplings.

Sometimes a group of rowdies disrupted the services by whooping, whistling, or hooting like owls. At times they even mounted their horses and rode pell-mell around the arbor. Obviously, this behavior disturbed the speaker and caused great concern among those who had come to listen or participate in the services.

One night following the worst outbreak, a group of white-robed men filed in and formed a line in front of the congregation. One of the group, acting as a spokesman, made a warning speech to the rowdies. He minced no words. His threats included severe punishment to anyone who created a disturbance at any time during the remainder of the revival.

After services that night, stories of tarring, feathering, even hanging, were told all over the community. The people agreed that this group of robed men was definitely a return of the Klan.

I remember that I was frozen with fright though I kept thinking that I detected a familiar note in the spokesman's voice—a bit of Irish brogue. My brother-in-law was a full-blooded Irishman. Could it have been...? When I arrived home with my sister, I asked, "Where is Joe?" Her answer was that he stayed at home because he wasn't feeling well. As I walked outside toward the outdoor privy, I glanced toward a small washshed. I found the evidence. There on a bench was the worn sheet with eye-holes and all. I kept his secret and the revival continued undisturbed.

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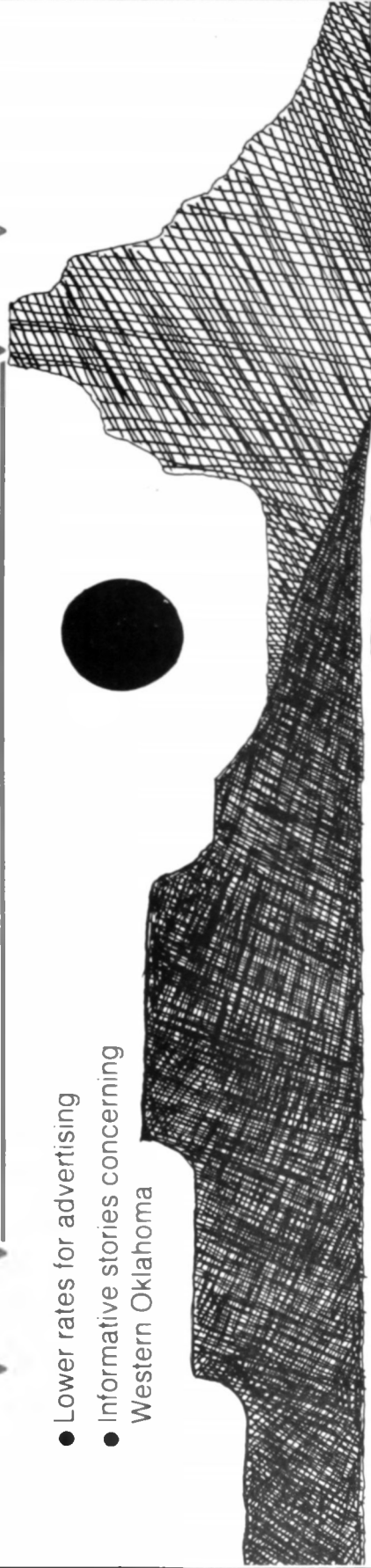


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# LITTLEST PAUL

by Opal Hartsell Brown Garrity

His name was Johnny, but they called him "Littlest Paul." He had preached since Sarah could remember. Today at the back of the log house, he lined up her; Old Smut, the big black dog; Old Puss, the mean gray cat, and Blossom, the blond China doll; and opened his Bible.

With only his bushy head and bare feet sticking out from opposite ends of Daddy's long black coat, Littlest Paul began his sermon.

"Repent and be baptized, everyone of you," he read from memory, "in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of your sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."

Littlest Paul was seven, three years older than Sarah. He had preached to the trees, cows, birds, insects, warning them

of hell-fire and damnation if they didn't obey the Lord.

Today was his first full service, and he expected some of his listeners to come to Christ. This was practice for next Sunday. He would preach for the children after dinner on the ground at church.

Old Puss rose to her feet and started to walk away. Sarah grabbed the fur on her neck and set her down. Old Smut curled around to nibble fleas on his back. Sarah spat him with her hand.

"Gentlemen don't do that in church," she scolded.

Clutching the dog's collar with one hand and the cat's neck with the other, she looked at the China doll, pretty and unmoved. Littlest Paul continued his sermon, raising one foot to scratch the

other with his cracked heel.

Soon the animals became too restless for Sarah to handle. Littlest Paul gave the invitation' "'Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden,'" he quoted, "'and I will give you rest.' Won't you come while we sing?"

Keeping time with his flapping coat sleeve, he led, "Walking in Sunlight." Sarah joined in the singing. At the end of the first verse, Littlest Paul stopped and pointed a finger at the pets.

"Now you two know," he said, "that you haven't been living right. Just this morning you got in a fight over a piece of bread. Smut, you took it away from Puss and she scratched you. You growled and she clawed. And the Lord said, 'Man shall not live by bread alone.' Now what are you going to do about it?"

Sarah remembered her own sins. Often she teased Littlest Paul until he struck her; then the fight was on. Because he was the older and larger, he got the blame. Today, her ears burned; she didn't want her brother pointing to her next.

Hoping he would keep talking to the animals, Sarah rose up and pulled them forward. Littlest Paul pushed up his long sleeves and bent to take the dog's paw.

"Smut," he asked, "do you believe with all your heart that Jesus Christ is the son of God?"

Sarah moved the dog's head up and down in a nod.

Littlest Paul took the cat's paw. "And Puss, do you believe with all your heart that Jesus Christ is the son of God?"

Sarah moved the cat's head up and down.

Littlest Paul took off his coat and laid it on a box. "We will now have the baptizing," he said and went to the well.

While he drew water and filled the big black pot, Sarah held the wiggling animals. Littlest Paul took Smut first. The dog pulled back from the water and tried to get away.

Using her free hand, Sarah picked up a stick and hit him across the tail. With one big leap, he cleared the wash pot, then dashed into the pasture.

"Ah," Littlest Paul said, reaching for the cat, "let the old sinner go."

When he put Old Puss in the water, she bounced up on hind legs, kicking and meowing, but Littlest Paul put her under. She came up dripping, her ears laid back and her green eyes angry. Littlest Paul held her at arms' length, while Sarah picked up Blossom. The four hurried to the house.

Sarah knocked on the door. Mother opened it.

"Sister Hart," Littlest Paul said, "meet Sister Puss."

Sister Hart tossed back her head and

laughed until the pile of brown hair on her head shook. Sister Puss tossed back her wet gray head and ripped Littlest Paul's chin. Two long streaks oozed blood.

"Y, you old devil!" Littlest Paul shouted, throwing the cat to the ground.

Mother slammed the door. Her footsteps raced into the front room where Daddy was. Now Littlest Paul was in trouble. He walked to the cellar door and sat down. Sarah followed. Big tears rolled down her brother's sunburned cheeks.

Sarah wished he would cry aloud and make an ugly face. She couldn't stand to see him crying without a wrinkle or sound. She had to do something. Quick!

Choking back tears, she raced to the front porch and up the steps, stopping at the door as if the knob had a stinger. It was so quiet inside. Maybe Mother and Daddy had gone out the back door after Littlest Paul.

"Jesus God," she begged, "please help me."

The sound of a giggle reached her ears. Why, Mother and Daddy were laughing and whispering. Sarah leaned against the door. Her parents giggled louder.

She hadn't heard them have so much fun since the time Daddy grabbed the runaway pig by the tail, and it popped off in his hand. He sat down in a puddle of mud.

Their talk became louder. "We'll have to do something," Daddy said, "maybe stop him from preaching a while."

Oh, my! That would be worse than the razor strop! Littlest Paul couldn't preach to the children Sunday after dinner on the ground, and Cousin Claud needed to be baptized. He was always teasing the girls and fighting the boys. "Teasing" jogged her memory, shooting her through the door.

"Mother! Daddy!" she shouted. "Brother is a good man. He lets me tease him a long time before he gets mad and fights; then he takes the blame. He didn't mean to call the cat a bad name. Whip us, then I won't tease him any more, and he won't cuss the cat any more."

Daddy in the armless rocker and Mother squatted beside him were as still as a painting. Then Littlest Paul appeared in the front door, his eyes and cheeks red.

"I told God I'm sorry," he said, "and I really am."

Daddy got up and put his arm around Littlest Paul, while Mother drew Sarah to her full warm bosom.

"Mother," Sarah asked, "will Littlest Paul have to quit preaching?"

"Ask your father," she said.

Father tilted his head sideways. "That depends on his future speech," he answered.

"Oh, good," Sarah said. "He'll get to preach to us Sunday after dinner on the ground at church."

Mother and Daddy looked surprised and then smiled.

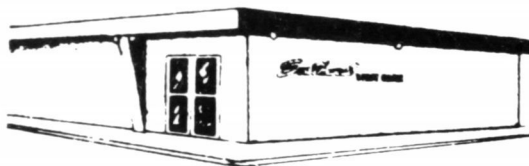
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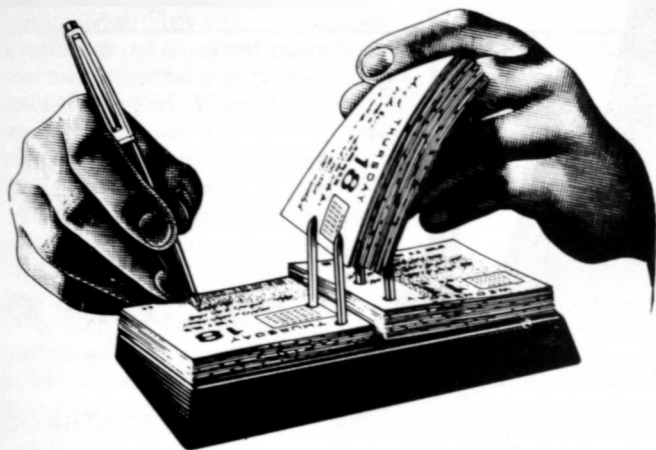


# Escape

*by Olive DeWitt*

A sign —  
it came at dusk:  
A pale snow owl  
flew across the fence-row.  
With wide wingspread it rose up  
in half-light.

Dear one:  
She lay at dusk,  
At soul's release;  
With freedom's wing she rose  
To eternity and flew  
In full-light.



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by Inez Schneider Whitney

ILLUSTRATION BY  
LESLIE HUNNICUTT

# Mt. Hope

## a Pioneer Church

One of my earliest recollections is sitting on Papa's knee in one of the long wooden pews at Mt. Hope. The sermons seemed endless, and Papa used to amuse me by dangling his gold pocket watch on its chain and letting me see the second hand go round.

Mt. Hope was only one of many small churches scattered over Western Oklahoma in the early nineteen hundreds. Most of them were Protestant with an occasional Catholic.

All the members of Mt. Hope lived on farms close to the church. Since it was before the day of the automobile and all of us went to services in buggies, surreys, and wagons, with a few on horseback, distance was important. Mama was from Indiana and had been reared in the Episcopal Church, and Papa was a Lutheran from Nebraska. They chose to be Methodists since Mt. Hope was only a mile away. Mt. Hope was a Southern Methodist Church. It was many years later when the Northern and Southern jurisdictions merged to form the present United Methodist Church.

Mt. Hope was a one-room frame building painted white. Although it had a steeple, the pioneer parishioners could not afford a bell. It was all they could do to pay the minister's meager salary. He often was not paid for months and then some Sunday at the end of services Mr. Will Little, one of the mainstays of the church, would say, "All right, folks. Let's stay a few minutes and see what we

can do to help our minister. Now, I will give \$50 to start. Who will match it?" Usually no one else. Then he would go to \$25.00, \$10.00, and so on down to \$1.00. Sometimes as much as two or three hundred dollars would be pledged. Mt. Hope shared its minister with the Methodist church in the small town of Custer, four miles away. He held services one Sunday at Mt. Hope and the next Sunday in Custer.

The church building stood on a small acreage on the northeast corner of a farm. Probably the land had been donated by the owner. On the south side was a cemetery. If we were early, Papa used to take my hand and say, "I want to walk over to Ma's grave." I never knew my grandmother since she died when I was three months old, but I made many trips to her grave. Now my grandfather lies beside her.

Sunday School was held every Sunday. The classes were scattered around in different parts of the sanctuary. Mrs. Wynn was my primary teacher. I really loved her. At the end of each lesson she gave us a card. I remember when she started giving them. The first one had a picture of the world and started with creation. I really didn't like being promoted when I was older because we were given a booklet for the whole quarter instead of the lovely colored cards.

Everyone stayed for church. If a baby cried or a small child became restless, the mother would take it to the back of the

sanctuary and pace back and forth to soothe it the best she could.

Mrs. Newton played the organ for the singing. Every few Sundays a quartet composed of her husband Mark, Hermie Sauers and her husband August, and Jim Dooley's single sister Mary sang a special. The Southern Methodist was the old-time conservative religion. Services were interrupted with long prayers, many on bended knee. There were loud shouts of "Hallelujah," "Praise the Lord," "Amen Brother," and others.

Every year a revival was held. This was an effort to bring sinners into the fold who had not been "saved." Usually a Methodist minister from another church not too far away came to conduct services. These revivals always lasted a week and sometimes two.

I remember how important I felt when I joined the church. I was twelve years old. I had always envied the people who took communion. Members were asked to come forward, a small group at a time, and kneel in a long row in front of the sanctuary. Then the minister passed a glass of grape juice down the row, exhorting everyone in turn to take a sip. Then the glass was passed on to the next person. How different from today with the tiny individual glasses.

The church provided much of the social life of the community. The observance of Christmas was a wonderful time for the

whole family. The women started making plans weeks ahead. They sewed small bags with drawstrings out of colored mosquito bar (a fine net used to spread over tables to keep mosquitoes off the food). When the time drew near, each bag was filled with an apple, an orange, nuts, and candy. There were enough bags and to spare for everyone, even adults. An elaborate program was planned, and many rehearsals were held. There were songs, drills, plays, and individual recitations. I really was happy one year when I was an angel with wings.

On Christmas Eve everyone donned his "Sunday clothes" for the occasion. Families took most of their gifts to be given out at church. There was always an immense tree that reached almost to the ceiling. It would be beautifully decorated with strings of popcorn and cranberries and other homemade ornaments. Real candles were in holders all over the tree and lighted when it was time for the gifts to be given out.

I especially remember one Christmas. I loved dolls and had written a letter to Santa to ask for a doll. When we entered the church, there were many dolls hanging on the tree but I saw one that I thought was the most beautiful of all. How I wished she could be mine. What a surprise when Santa took her off the tree and called my name. She is still one of my prized possessions.

Another highlight enjoyed by all was the Children's Day every spring. The program took the place of Sunday School. Only children participated. One Children's Day I was given a recitation to learn, and one was given to my little four-year-old brother. I helped him learn it and still remember every word:

A little bird up in a tree  
Sang his happy song out to me  
And this is what I heard him say,  
"Be glad, dear child; 'tis Children's Day."

After the program there was "Dinner on the Grounds." Some of the men had brought lumber the day before and built several long tables. The lumber had been loaned by Antrim Lumber Co. in Custer. Then what a bountiful feast was spread. Every housewife had spent hours the day before to prepare her best recipes. Mama was famous for her cherry pie. I still remember Mr. Agan, a neighbor, calling to her, "Mrs. Schneider, I hope you brought some of your cherry pies."

These are but a few of my precious memories of Mt. Hope. I visited where Mt. Hope once stood the last time I was in Oklahoma. The building was gone, but the cemetery remained and was beautifully kept. My thoughts took me back to the time when it was a place of worship for the Littles, Newtons, Dooleys, Agans, Bozarth's, Sauers, Driscolls, Schneiders, and other pioneer families.

Then I thought again of Papa's gold watch and chain and the second hand that was so fascinating.

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# Looking Back

*Comments and indices by Kathleen Gould.*

WESTVIEW

The title of this piece is a bit of obviousness. Most of WESTVIEW is, and has been, made up of looks back to our pioneer past. When I proposed the compilation of an index for the first three years of WESTVIEW, I had in mind a simple clerical task. Then I got a bit more ambitious and proposed a brief commentary on the magazine's evolution over three years. Looking back on WESTVIEW has been rather like paging through a family album. One first notes physical changes, then meditates on more abstract measures of growth.

To the typical reader, the physical changes have seemed gradual. Creating this new magazine required commitment as much as skill to see the vision through to reality. The early issues saw much experimentation. Pat Lazelle, the first art director, called upon her art students to assist in the layout and illustration. The index notes those artistic efforts with "author" listings for illustrations and photographs. Present art director David Oldham has assumed most of the artistic duties, and although there are no author listings giving him official credit, his contribution here is no mere masthead formality. Other changes in format and layout which have improved the journal's appearance include integration of advertising throughout the body of the magazine, a streamlined title logo, and more conventional pagination (from side margin to lower margin). The premiere issue had 66 pages (counting covers), and the Spring, 1984 issue had 48 pages. There are more photographs and fewer drawings. Titles are more often typeset now. There is no doubt that the appearance of WESTVIEW has matured, but the young, sometimes tentative, yet earnest contributions to the early issues hold special memories not unlike the plaster handprint of the kindergartener's first Mother's Day gift.

The staff has changed in other areas, too. Donita Lucas Shields was so prolific and talented an early contributor, that she became an official staff writer. The editorial staff was stunned by the death of Ted Pyle, but Dr. Roger Bromert, from SOSU's Social Sciences department, took over those assistant-editor duties. The most recent change is the departure of Dr. Robin Montgomery as Publisher. The editorial staff determines the content of the magazine, but is, finally, wholly dependent on contributors. In his editor's foreword in each issue, Dr. Thomas reiterates the basic facts of a journal of this nature: WESTVIEW's existence depends on writers who write well, readers who are faithful even through the lean times — and revenues to pay the printer.

The physical facts and changes in WESTVIEW are one matter. But what of the content of this "Journal of Western Oklahoma"? After the titles and authors are dealt with, a "mere" clerical matter, indexing a magazine becomes a creative act in its own right. What *are* fit subjects for indexing? Towns and people are obvious choices when articles are about them, but what about isolated "mentions" such as the name of the first resident pastor of Peace Lutheran Church or the name of a ghost town in an article about Canute? One must keep in mind the needs of a potential, hypothetical researcher. Just how deep is this guy going to dig, anyway? When is a piece of information *too* esoteric? How does the indexer guard against slighting a small, but important, fact and negating the purpose of the index by giving equal weight to everything? I don't know. I just decided. So sue me.

I remember my mother once (*more* than once) cleaning out the hall closet only to get side-tracked reading an old magazine. There is a similar danger in my task. It was easy to get so caught up in re-reading that I forgot to make notes. In spite of those snags, I couldn't help but notice certain tendencies.

In the course of making my "subjective" decisions, I was struck by how many entries were, indeed, place names — 27, counting places that aren't towns. Cheyenne leads with four articles cited in some way. Are all these places more notable than others, or is it just that, so far, no writers have thought to focus on the fascinating events and people in other places? Is there some confusion or hesitancy about just what *are* the boundaries of "Western Oklahoma"?

Even from issues not specifically themed as such, there are numerous entries for *education* and *religion*. Articles that could be listed broadly under *pioneer life* have been distributed among more specific headings such as *homesteading*, *depression*, *oil*, *farming*, and the like. Fiction and poetry are mostly *not* indexed by subject because I felt either that I could not limit them in that way (they are so variously evocative) or that considerations of space precluded multiple cross-listings. It should be easy to see that a single poem could be listed under *nature*, *spring*, *school days*, and more.

There was one other difficulty (besides the awesome responsibility of the whole enterprise) which lay in the sometimes clouded distinction between fact and fiction. I was not always sure if a piece was one or the other, a dilemma which brings to mind a comment by comedienne Lily Tomlin, in the voice of her character Edith Ann, "Lady, I do not make up things. That is lies. Lies is not the truth. But the truth can be made up if you know how."<sup>1</sup> Most of the subject listings are people's names, of course, and those names are not always the "famous" ones. In the various tales of pioneer life, specific details vary little from one person or town to another, evoking, perhaps a reader's "so what?" Naturally, a writer with a lively style can raise one more catalogue of facts to a higher plane. History is constructed with two kinds of raw materials: the ordinary, nothing-special-about-us people and the visionary world-beaters. "Little people" history has gained ascendancy in academe. Writers, editors, and readers are constantly having to temper pride, lest it become inflated chauvinism, and modesty, lest it fade memories irrevocably.

Even the briefest of analyses discovers that "historical" articles have carried the weight in WESTVIEW. Although past thematic issues have naturally suggested looking back, the title of the journal does not limit us to recounting the past. Donita Lucas Shields has opened the way with several pieces featuring contemporary views of Western Oklahoma. There is, perhaps, a tendency to think that any current event worth noting is being covered by local newspapers and that a WESTVIEW of it would be redundant. Perhaps a WESTVIEW of it would be instead like a photograph from a different angle. I would have writers and readers remember that the sub-title is "A Journal of Western Oklahoma." A journal is not only a place for recollection of the past, but also a place for recording the present. Recall my comparison of WESTVIEW to a family album. The family must decide *in the present* what needs to be recorded *in the present*, what really describes the family best. Sometimes it is a group picture, sisters, brothers, children, and all, lined up on the sofa the year we were all home for Thanksgiving at once. Sometimes it is a sneak snapshot of Uncle Larry and Grandpa playing marathon cribbage at the kitchen table, perhaps an ordinary "so what?" but just as worthy of preservation.

<sup>1</sup>Lily Tomlin, "And That's the Truth," Polydor Incorporated, 1972. Recording.

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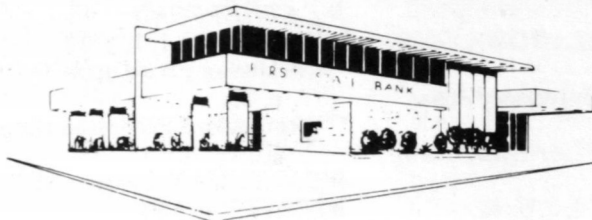
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to worship there." That was in 1888, according to Mrs. Hosmer. After her husband died, the lady married a Presbyterian minister, a Rev. McNamee, but continued teaching organ lessons for many years.

On the fiftieth anniversary of the church, 1939, three of its thirteen charter members were present--Mrs. McAnally, formerly Hosmer, Mrs. Lillie Cotney Cox, and F. M. Doughty. Mrs. McNamee was honored for serving thirty-nine years as teacher of the Adult Sunday School class.

Almost 500 people attended one or more of the three services held on that memorable day.

Generations have passed and friendships have ripened into romances that resulted in families. The church congregation increased, people prospered, and the town thrived. Then began a population decline brought about by a changing economy as people looked for jobs.

Now, it is a time for reminiscing for Martha Methodist Church members and friends. It began when the doors closed in 1981 and accelerated when Jack and

Velma Smiley bought the building. Nelson Doughty recalls that fifty members of his family were on the church's active roll at one time. "This church means a lot to me," he said. "All four of my children were baptized here." His daughter, Donna Cullen, Norman housewife, said that her earliest memory is of attending church camp at Red Rock Canyon at Hinton. "I'll miss the old church," she said. It's like losing an elderly friend."

As a friendly ghost, I feel a glowing pride for my people who selflessly dedicated themselves to serving their Lord.

*Continued from p. 7*

manifest when one of her families suffers the loss of a loved one. Not only do the members express sympathy and offer prayers in behalf of the mourners, but they make a special effort to help their friends go on living in faith and trust after the funeral is past.

These people are givers. From pioneer days when they had nothing to give but themselves and the work of their hands through days of plenty, the work of their church has flourished. Not always easy nor peaceful was the transition from the European system of church dues to the present method of free-will giving for the joy of it. In response to the question, "What is the annual budget of Peace Church?" an officer of the church, who prefers not to be named, explained, "We have none. If there is a need, we meet it when it comes."

Nowhere is the concern of the church more apparent than in its care and

encouragement of her youth. Approximately 80 confirmation classes have been conducted. The young people, after being instructed in Bible concepts and in the beliefs of their church as expressed in Luther's Catechism, are asked to make a commitment for themselves. Usually the children of the church are ready to take their vows of loyalty to God, to their Savior, and to the church in their early teen years. So they become confirmed members. Continued participation of the youth at Peace Church is reinforced by the leadership of their present pastor. The Rev. Don Brewer is head of Youth Activities for American Lutherans in Oklahoma.

Not always do individuals nor groups measure up to their own ideals. These people see themselves as sinners saved by grace. They feel in need of daily forgiveness. They believe in absolute reliance on Jesus Christ as their Savior. No human effort, they are convinced, can

bring about their salvation. Expressed in lay language, their attitudes seem to include reliance on a Power much higher than human, a need for daily forgiveness, careful training of their young, the expression of devotion through action, love for one another and for others around the world, and a sincere prayer life in the homes.

Could these attitudes, however imperfectly attained, be the reasons why this rural church has been active and strong through 90 years? Could these reasons explain why the "children of the church" tend to bring their spouses and their own children back to their rural church home even though they are no longer farmers?

Although they are not today a completely rural people, it just may be that the faith of their fathers reinforced by individual commitment keeps alive and active rural religion in one church in Western Oklahoma.

## WESTVIEW PATRONS

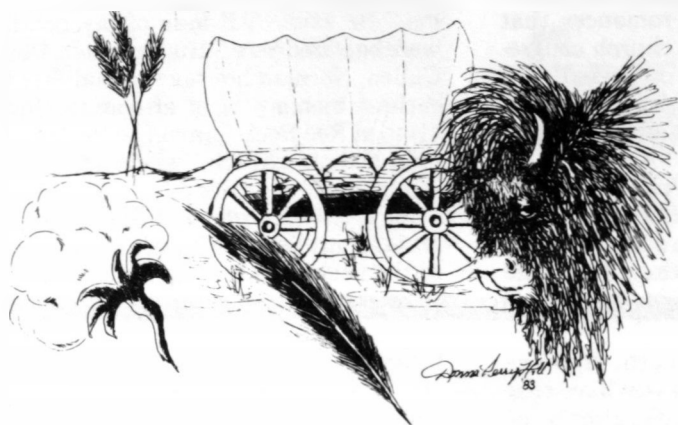
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## SPECIAL ITEMS

## FUTURE ISSUES



FALL, 1984. "Western Oklahoma's Colorful Past." Surely there are some interesting tales that have never been told in written form. Deadline: July 1, 1984.



WINTER, 1984. WESTERN OKLAHOMA POLITICS. This theme could breed some controversial issues, but good taste will be insisted upon. Articles on political theories as well as Western Oklahoma politicians may be submitted. Deadline: October 1, 1984.



SPRING, 1985. "Western Oklahoma's Promise." This issue is a promising possibility for contributors. Theme interpretation allows much creative flexibility. Deadline: January 1, 1985.



SUMMER, 1985. "Frontier Western Oklahoma." This issue offers opportunities for writers of family histories and biographies. We need Frontier Western Oklahoma material. Deadline: April 1, 1985.



FALL, 1985. "Western Oklahoma Artists, Musicians, and Writers." Feature articles, poems, stories, and graphics are needed on people or activities related to the theme. Deadline: April 1, 1985.



Other projected future themes are "Famous Western Oklahomans" (Winter, 1985), and "Western Oklahoma Firsts" (Spring, 1986).



# WESTVIEW

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