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## Westview: Vol. 3, Iss. 1 (Fall 1983)

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# WESTVIEW

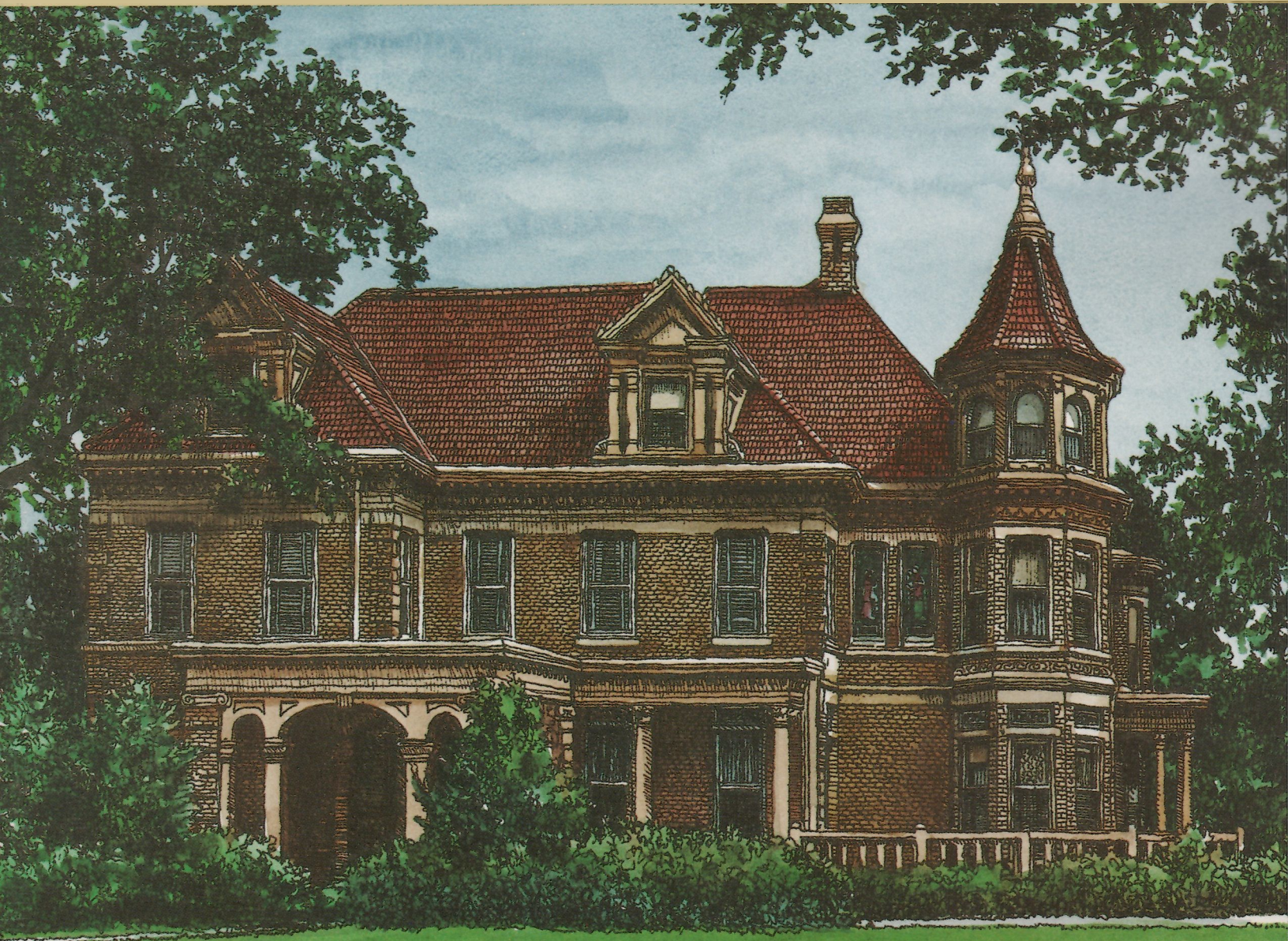
A Journal of Western Oklahoma

1983

FALL

\$2.50

## *Oklahoma Pride Issue*





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## FOREWORD

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W

ith this issue on Western Oklahoma Pride, we begin our third year of publication. We're grateful for the loyal support of our subscribers, advertisers, patrons, illustrators, and contributors.

We're also grateful to our new Art Director, Mr. David Oldham. Mr. Oldham is beginning his second year as an instructor in SOSU's Art Department. He has a rich background in layout and design; therefore, his expertise should give us that added ingredient we have needed since losing the services of our first Art Director, Mrs. Patricia Lazelle Stewart.

We welcome, in addition, a new member of our Editorial Board — Dr. Roger Bromert, who has been appointed to fill the position of Assistant Editor left by the late Teddy R. Pyle. Dr. Bromert is SOSU's Oklahoma History specialist.

As in the past, we welcome the contributions of our readers who have special talents in the areas of writing, photography, and drawing. As before, we ask that our contributors study our future-issues feature, prepare a coversheet, and indicate the theme for which the entry is being submitted. We desire anonymity for our contributors during the time assessments are being made.

— Leroy Thomas  
Editor

# WESTVIEW

## Fall

Volume 3

Oklahoma Pride Issue

Number 1

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#### COVER

"Overholser Mansion" by Greg Burns

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.





A frequent speaker at Teachers' Meetings in the 1920's, A. H. Burris never missed an opportunity to laud Southwestern (State Teachers' College, then). On one such occasion, the chairman was quite oratorical in his introduction:

"This man has been an inspiration to teachers in Oklahoma. At 20, he was a country-school teacher without even a formal highschool education. Many of us have watched him come up through the ranks, holding every position in public school work. Now, we see him at 43, a college president with two degrees from Phillips University." He paused, then grinned broadly. "But if you don't want to be convinced that Southwestern is the best Teachers' College in the state, I'd suggest that you leave — at once."

Amid a ripple of laughter, A.H. rose, ready, as always with a joke. No one left.

Those close to him knew why he was so exhilarated with his new work. As a teacher, he had zig-zagged over the state from Lincoln County, supporting a family and pursuing an education. Happy but difficult years. At last, that coveted college degree. It had opened doors. Superintendencies at Temple, Watonga, and Holdenville; membership on the State Board of Education; and a Master's degree in 1918 were climaxed by his moving to the presidency of Southwestern in July, 1921. Here, it was his privilege to foster a college for oncoming teachers.

He had excellent help. "We have one of the most highly qualified faculties in the state," he would boast in his speeches, and indeed a number of them held the Doctor's degree, a rarity in the early '20's.

## A. H. Burris, Early-Day President of SOSU

— by Gladys Toler Burris

Teachers would nod in recognition as he mentioned names such as Dr. Dora Ann Stewart, history; Dr. Clarence McCormick, mathematics; and Dr. J. A. McLaughlin, foreign language. To this distinguished list he soon added Dr. Grace Jencke as head of the English Department.

True, it was a small college with an enrollment of only 500. True, its only buildings were the Science Hall and the Administration Building at the top of the hill north of the President's Home. Never fear — this college would grow. It was a challenge he took with zest.

Accordingly, his first project was a Booster Trip with the Weatherford Chamber of Commerce. Touring the southwest part of the state, with a band and caravan of cars, he made enthusiastic speeches about the college's offerings. Later, he toured on his own, speaking at Teachers' Meetings.

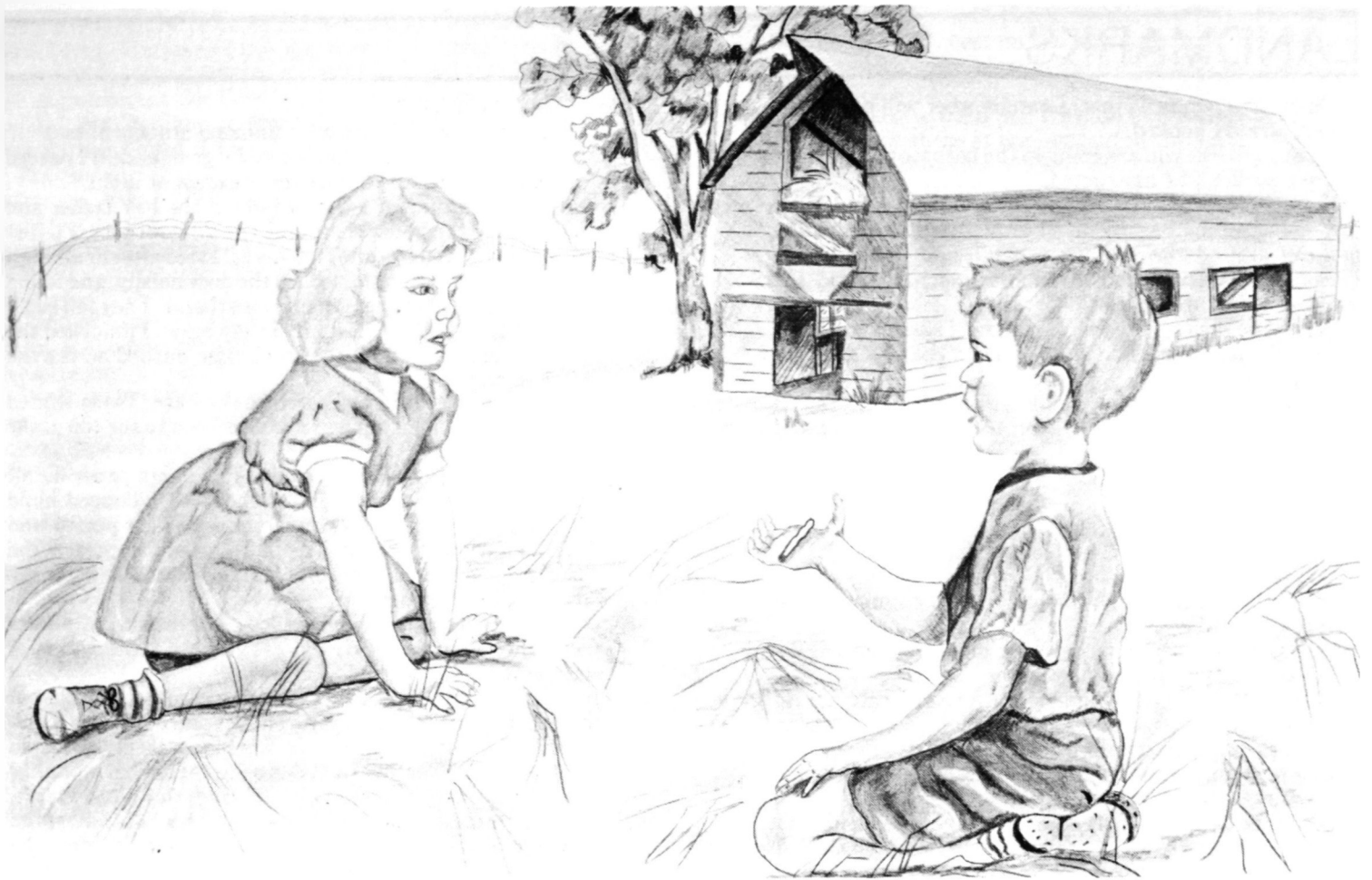
Summer school enrollment the following year more than tripled, rising from 500 (winter term) to 1700.

Yet his greatest reward was not in the number of students, but in the warm, personal relationship he had with them. For example, those in the 1922 summer session pooled their \$2.00 Library Refund to present him with a new Buick. This may have been an expression of gratitude; for, remembering his own struggle, he befriended anyone who wanted a college education. Still, he was an outgoing man with an uncanny memory for names, and he loved people, it seemed reciprocal.

"Weatherford and Southwestern have the friendliest people you'll find anywhere," he often declared, and when he left — moving to Stillwater and OSU (then, Oklahoma A & M) — they proved that this was no empty tribute. Townspeople joined with those on campus in saying goodbye with dinners, speeches, and gifts the family long treasured: a complete set of silver and a beautiful rug.

At OSU, as head of the History Department, he established himself as a state leader in progressive education, and his career flourished. Here he remained until shortly before a fatal illness in 1934.

Perhaps only his family knew that the most cherished years of that career were those at Southwestern, where he had found his fruition.



*(fiction from a definite Western Oklahoma source)*

## August Smoke

*by Yvonne Carpenter*

Black flies mingled with the watermelon seeds on the chipped porcelain table. Glade kicked me without looking my way. I pulled my feet up under me in the red wagon where Kay and I were seated. Glade was sitting on one of the metal stools carried out from the kitchen. He kicked me again. As I opened my mouth to howl my protest, he interrupted, "I have something to tell you after while, a secret." He looked meaningfully toward his sister beside me.

Weaver's helmet dipped with each bite of the messy treat. I watched as he put a large piece of melon in his mouth, chewed, and then spit the seeds on the new-mowed lawn. Glade imitated our grandfather's efficient style, but his seeds were aimed closer to the wagon. A maze of intricate tunnels laced Kay's melon. Looking at it, I could visualize the comic book world discovered by Mary Jane and Sniffles in the ragged book which Kay had read to me.

We sat in the shade beside a white, two-story house which Weaver had built for his mother in 1910, over 35 years ago. Wisteria vines covered the entire east side of the house. The grass cuttings heaped in piles smelled fresh and clean. We enjoyed one of the few days after the

plowing was done and the hay stored in the barn and before the cotton was ready to pick. Grandmother Stella, never one to let things ride, had organized the entire family to mow and rake her yard. She and the other adults had retreated to the cool of the house. Weaver stayed to savor the last of the watermelon. His presence quieted the constant battle that raged as I sided with first one of my cousins and then the other.

Leaving Kay to delicately finishing her fruit, Glade and I raced to the orange and green hammock suspended from a metal frame. Glade won. I tried to dump him out before settling in beside him to rock beneath the hot Oklahoma sun.

"You know where Weaver keeps his Red Top papers?" asked Glade.

"Sure. Right in the bathroom, on the shelf," I answered.

"If you get some, I'll show you how to roll a cigarette," he offered.

"To smoke? You're gonna smoke?"

"Yeah," he bragged. "I got some tobacco out of the Prince Albert can in the shop. If you get the papers, you can smoke one too."



# LANDMARKS

"How am I gonna do that? Grandmother will be mad." I asked, already hooked.

"Just go in like you are going to the bathroom. Put them in your pocket," he instructed.

Doubtful but willing, I pranced into the house. "I am just going to the bathroom," I announced to the adults visiting around the kitchen table. They looked at me curiously. I walked with dramatic nonchalance to the bathroom and closed the door. Inside, I took five thin papers from the red wrapper. I realized I had no pocket on my sundress. I stuck the papers inside the elastic of my underpants.

After flushing the stool, I walked out and announced, "I have been to the bathroom" and fled before they could comment.

"You got 'em?" Glade asked.

"Yeah."

"Let's see."

"Can't. They're hid." I patted my waist.

"Okay. Let's go to the barn."

"Weaver said we wasn't to play there anymore, now that it's full of hay."

"He said we wasn't to chase the pigeons no more. We won't bother the pigeons," he reasoned.

We ran down the short lane to the forbidden structure. The metal barn was stacked to the cottonwood rafters on both sides of the empty center aisle. The bales in varying shades of green and yellow signified the different cuttings made during the summer.

Glade and I climbed up the stack from the open end. The tiers of bales made a rough stairway with hip-high steps. I climbed by swinging my knees up on the hay and hoisting my weight. The hay scratched my bare legs. My nose itched and began to run. The air lay heavy with heat and silence when we reached the narrow space under the roof. The pigeons stopped their garbling noises and fluttered away when they saw their familiar antagonists. I pulled my sundress under me and sat on the rough bales. Glade took a white cotton sack of tobacco from his pocket.

"Let me see. I know how to do it." I reached for the purloined goods and wiped my nose on the skirt pulled across my knees.

"No, you're too little. You might spill it. I'll show you how," he offered.

I regretfully handed over the papers. He bent his blond head over his work. Glade was seven years old that summer. He was perfect in everything, or so it looked to my adoring five-year-old view. He shook the tobacco into a clump in the center of the thin rectangle of tissue. Weaver always shaped a line of brown in the curve of the bent paper. Wade shook the loose leaves. They fell off of the paper. I began to doubt his claimed expertise.

"Here, you hold the paper," he directed.

Working together, we managed to move the tobacco into position. The paper was brown and wet by the time he declared the cigarette ready to smoke.

"Do you have any matches?" I asked.

"They're right there in the bathroom. She uses them to light the heater," Glade pointed out. "You should've got some."

"Well, I didn't. And I can't go back. They'll think I'm sick."

"If you don't go, you won't get to smoke," he threatened.

"Let's get Kay to go," I suggested.

"No, she'll tell."

"Then you go," I said with unusual stubbornness.

"I can't," he said. "They know I'd go outside if I needed to go. I don't use the indoor toilet except at night."

His logic won me. I climbed down the hay ladder and returned to the house. I entered the kitchen door. "I'll just go to the bathroom while I am here," I said after drinking a glass of water. I went in, locked the door noisily, and found the matches. I put them in my waistband. They fell out. I decided to hold them casually in my hand. I unlocked the door, returned to flush the stool, then dashed across the kitchen and out the door.

"I got 'em," I said as I ran into the barn. Wade waited with his hand held out as I climbed back to the top of the barn.

"I'll light it," he said grandly. The damp paper didn't burn well. Weaver could light one with a cupped hand without a pause in his conversation. Wade puffed and drew, blew and sweated. The pile of used matches on the bale of hay lacked only one match when the cigarette finally glowed faintly.

"Let me smoke," I demanded. The stalks of alfalfa scratched the backs of my legs as I grasped at the symbol of our defiance.

"Be careful. Don't let it go out!" said the voice of experience. I held the limp roll of tobacco in my hand. Flakes fell out the unlit end. I inhaled deeply. I tasted burned paper. That wasn't such a big deal. What was all of the fuss about? I guessed you had to develop a taste for it, like buttermilk. I handed the cigarette back. It fell on the dry hay between us. We scrambled to pick it up before the hay caught fire.

"One of the boys at school was telling me he burnt a bale of hay. Set it right afire and rolled it outa the barn. It burnt up completely. His folks never knowed anything about it. Said it blazed like a big match."

"You burn one of Weaver's hay bales and he'll set you on fire."

"He won't know. The bale will burn up and not even leave any ashes. We can bury them."

"Better not."

"Oh, come on, Scarity Cat!"

Not wanting to be the last in line for courage, I reluctantly nodded.

"Here, let's burn one on the edge," he indicated the bales bordering the open space. "We'll light it and roll it out the back to watch it burn." He took our last match, struck it smartly on his overalls leg, and held it to the yellow fodder. It smoked faintly.

"Hurry! Push!" I urged.

We sat down on the hay and pushed the smoldering bale with our feet. Little flames were visible. The bale was wedged fast. It took several tries before it fell 20 feet to the barn floor. The loose straw scattered on the floor began to blaze. That forgotten factor, plus the time required to climb down the haystack, caused the trouble. By the time we reached ground level, the fire circle spanned the center aisle.

Glade danced on the flames, trying to put them out. "Come on! Help me!" he shouted.

I started to cry with fear and jumped on a small flame only to see it reborn as soon as I moved my sandal.

"Go get the water hose," he shouted above the noise of the fire.

A water hose lay coiled by the hydrant at the side of the barn. I dragged it toward the open door, but it didn't reach. Remembering another hose on the lawn, I ran to the house and disconnected the hose without assistance, a task I couldn't accomplish the day before. I raced back to the barn with the hose.

The fire had spread to the stacked bales. "I think we better get help," I said as Glade grabbed the hose. He looked at me with eyes wide and startled. He feared our grandfather more than the fire.

"He'll skin me alive. Tell him you lit the fire. He won't whip you."

I met Weaver on my way back to the house. He was running toward the barn. "Tell Stella to call the fire department!" he yelled before I could explain.

"Call the fire department! Glade didn't do it, but the barn's on fire," I threw open the kitchen door. The men sprang toward me. I stepped aside to avoid their heavy workboots.

"You stay right here," Grandmother commanded as she cranked the phone on the wall. "Hello, give me the Fire Department. Fire Department? This is Mrs. Weaver Myers. Our barn is on fire. That's right. One mile north and a quarter west of the Washita River bridge. Please hurry."

"Grandmother, I can help! I want to help!"

"You have helped enough for one day. Stay right here where I can see you. Yes, that's right. Weaver Myers. North and west. Thank you." She hung up the receiver. "Now let me think. They will need more hose at the barn."

"I already took it," I said. She looked at me.

"We'll get the gunny sacks from the shop then." I didn't understand but decided now was not the time to ask for explanations.

Kay went with us to the shop by the back door. She looked at me with pity as we saw the flames coming out

the wide door of the haybarn. Smaller tongues of fire were licking from the vent on the top of the roof. My dad and uncle had hooked a plow to the tractor and were plowing close to the barn.

"Is it going to burn up? We didn't mean to burn it up."

"Here, wet these at the hydrant in the yard."

I could see the fire truck with its lights flashing as it drove across the bridge. It raced down the road to the corner with a cloud of dust raising behind it. I thought of the Lone Ranger. It pulled into the yard before I had saturated the last burlap bag with water. A neighbor followed in his truck.

Two more pickups entered the yard. Grandmother ran to the first one and threw the wet sacks in the back. Then she led me by the hand to the porch. Some of the men loaded hay onto the trucks from the north end of the barn while others beat the flames with the dampened sacks. The south end blazed steadily. I could see Wade beating furiously with a heavy sack. I envied his part in the action.

As we watched, the south end of the barn crumbled. The pickups pulled away from the opposite end at the same time. The men stood back as the fire truck pumped an inadequate stream on the blaze.

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I didn't see Glade until school started that fall. He didn't want to talk about the whipping. Kay said it was worse than the one he got for spraying oil all over the shop last year with the new oil can. Grandmother never did bring up the subject of the barn with me, and I didn't feel inclined to do so myself.

They didn't take the trip to see my aunt in California that Christmas. Weaver had little time to let me sit behind him and comb his hair. In fact, I don't believe I ever did that again. By the time he had time to relax that winter, I was too big and too embarrassed.

— CHARIVARI or SHIVAREE — a significant slice of Western Oklahoma history —

## Things That Go Bump In The Night

— by Kerri Beaman and Senea Morris



A shivaree — we explain to confirmed city dwellers — is a commotion, a series of rude noises, a small riot staged outside the bedroom window of newlyweds. The COMPREHENSIVE ETYMOLOGICAL DICTIONARY OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE traces the word *shivaree* to the French and Latin translation which means heaviness in the head. Indeed, all this commotion outside the newlyweds' bedroom window would produce a heavy head or a headache. Bells, firecrackers, pots, and pans were all used to wake the newly married couple on their wedding night. In a personal interview Cedric Crink, travel consultant at Southwestern Oklahoma State University, stated, "Married couples of the early 1900's usually expected to be shivareed and they always would make sure to have refreshments the first and second night of their marriage." Refreshments would be anything from candy to cigars. This practice was usually found in rural areas where the



# LANDMARKS

couple would be staying at home on their wedding night. "Back then people didn't have the money to go on a honeymoon, and they also didn't have the transportation." Mr. Crink also added that motels were far and few between and that only the bigger cities had them. This may be the reason that the practice of having a shivaree for newlyweds has died out. Now couples whisk away to exotic honeymoons far from their homes. Decorating the cars and chasing the couple out of town may be all that remains of the old custom of a shivaree.

The performance of a shivaree cannot be pinpointed to any one particular area of the world because it was exercised in both the Western and Eastern Hemispheres. Since the word can be traced back to the Latin language, perhaps the idea of a shivaree could be traced even further back to the very first wedding ceremony. Even though the custom cannot be secluded to one specific area, we can say that this custom occurred mainly in the rural areas of the world because in the larger cities the practice would have disturbed the peace.

There are several different ways in which the shivareeing of the newlywed couple could take place. Mostly the pranks played upon the couple depended on the imagination and the mischievousness of the pranksters' minds.

For example, Ramon and Anna Samotts, immigrants from Ukraine, had several different "gags" pulled on them after their marriage ceremony which took place in the 1900's. The gagsters kidnapped the bride from the wedding reception and hustled her off to a "hidden" location so the groom had to "hunt" for his new bride. When Ramon found his bride, the instigators of the "kidnapping" then proceeded to parade them through the surrounding neighborhood on a haywagon which was drawn by plowhorses. Thus, the episode announced the news of their marriage to all the unknowing residents in a manner that had the same effects as that of the town crier spreading his news.

Howard and Eva Heath were married in 1945 in Michigan and were shivareed in a way similar to that of Ramon and Anna Samotts, Eva's parents. This time people kidnapped Eva from the reception that followed the wedding ceremony as was done at the Samotts' shivaree ritual. However, Eva was returned to the church after an hour because the groom had anticipated the prank and was following the pranksters through the town and outlying areas in his own car. Since this

stunt didn't go off as was expected, the townspeople waited and let a week go by before they tried a new approach. This time they caught the couple by surprise late at night. The Heaths were paraded around the countryside, seated on folding chairs in the back of a manure spreader, which was pulled by a tractor. Amidst the jeers and uproar of the neighbors, the Heaths noticed that their particular means of transportation that night had been painted with the nickname of the "Honeywagon." The whooping, shouts, and gun blasts of the crowd advertised their joining to the countryside in a very obvious way.

Another example of an old-fashioned Western shivaree was shown in the musical play OKLAHOMA. Here wagons and surreys filled with the town's men surrounded the newlywedded couple's

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*The entire idea of a shivaree was to create as much commotion as humanly possible.*

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house and shot their guns and clanged pots and pans until the couple came outside. Then the couple was driven amidst the loud cheers, whoops and gun blasts throughout the countryside to advertise their joining.

In Iowa the practice of a shivaree was slightly altered. Many times the crowds would even go to the extent of tarring and feathering the married couple and then parading them throughout the town's streets. The procession was usually led by someone playing a loud instrument, and torches lighted the pathway of the instigators. The couple may have been in a wagon pulled by horses, in a manure wagon, or even pushed throughout the streets in wheelbarrows. The main goal was to cause as much commotion as possible and to broadcast the couple's marriage to as many people in as loud and uproarious way as possible. Usually the ladies would think of plots to perform on the groom and the men would handle the commotion involved with "initiating" the new bride. As the years passed, more and more schemes were thought up so that the pranksters could come up with the most elaborate shivaree of them all.

The newlyweds in the rural areas soon learned to try to avoid the shivaree, so they would either sneak out of town unnoticed or anticipate every move that some plotters might make. A very good example of this occurred in 1935 near

Bridgewater, Iowa. Wayne and Minnie Beaman outsmarted their shivaree hosts by letting the townspeople think they were leaving in their car. Instead they went to Minnie's parent's home and while the townspeople were waiting for them to sneak around to Wayne's car, which they were watching closely, Wayne and Minnie sped away in a wagon which took them a few miles to another car that they had hidden.

Nowadays the idea of a shivaree is basically the decorating of the "getaway" car, tampering with the suitcases and chasing the couple out of town. The instigators of these have fun, but the couple also shares in the fun by trying to outsmart any maneuvers that might come up.

Various schemes can be performed on the car, depending on the extremes the people are willing to go to. For example, someone may be satisfied with merely shaving-creaming the outside, placing streamers, cans and balloons all over the car and chasing the couple around. Others may go to the extent of smearing vaseline on the windshield wipers, the steering wheel, and the other knobs in the interior plus stuffing the inside with newspaper or confetti, either putting rocks in the hubcaps or taking the tires off the car and putting it on blocks, putting cheese in the exhaust pipe, placing twigs and grass all under the hood and disconnecting the battery leads and spark plugs and any other devilish prank that can be devised to hamper the speedy getaway of the couple. Another thing that is known to happen occasionally is to hide the couple's car or to hide the car keys.

People also love to tamper with the suitcases of the newlyweds. The entire wardrobe can be removed or maybe only the underclothes will be left. Both things will leave the couple with a very limited wardrobe to choose from. Also pranksters may sew the sleeves of the shirts together or socks and pants may be filled with rice and confetti.

The entire idea of a shivaree was to create as much commotion as humanly possible to publicize the newlywedded couple's marriage status. However, the idea of sneaking away unnoticed to privately spend time together soon became the goal of the new couple. The pranks pulled on newlyweds are still practiced today mostly for fun, so although the gun shooting, fireworks, and "kidnapping" that were common in earlier times are done away with, the commotion and distracting gimmicks surrounding the custom of a shivaree are still alive. These pranks will probably maintain their usage as long as people are still getting married.

## BERRY TIME

— by Joanna Thurston Roper

Latent and unseen.  
desire begins like a nubbin,  
green and unready, still  
behind a facade, denied.

Then one day in fall,  
its maturation complete,  
love is there — a berry —  
ripe and ready to be shared.

## HAIKU

— by Diane Holcomb

Cosmetic sunsets  
Face autumn Oklahoma,  
Wash summer goodnight.

## CUISINE

*Even a youngster can increase his Western Oklahoma pride by preparing this almost- no-fail meal.*

### Thelma's Baked Chicken\*

— by Thelma Clampitt

Buy 10 - 12 chicken parts (breasts, thighs, legs). Dip in mixture of two beaten eggs and ½ teaspoon of salt. Then roll the pieces in cracker meal. Place the chicken parts in a greased baking dish or pan and bake at 350° for fifty minutes.

While the chicken is baking, prepare one or two cans of Campbell's Cream of Chicken soup. Pour the soup over the baked chicken, being careful to distribute the soup evenly. Then bake for fifteen minutes more before serving.

*\*Serves a small family or a harvest crew — depending on the number of chicken parts prepared.*





*John W. Duncan storekeeper at 103 years of age.*

## Kenton Centenarian Still Working

— by Opal Hartsell Brown

For a man taken west for his health in the early part of this century, John W. Duncan of Kenton, Oklahoma, is doing quite well, thank you. At age 103, he is still operating the only store in town, often walking a few blocks to get there. And he lives alone, keeping his house, but not his lawn.

The store, which Duncan bought twenty-five years ago, has a good supply of staple



*Museum Corner, Duncan's Store.*

groceries, some household items, and gasoline. Customers generally wait on themselves, but he controls the switch for gasoline.

Duncan works five hours a day. His daughters, Betty Book and Mildred Davis, and his sons-in-law, who live nearby, work the rest of the day.

Although Duncan's hearing and vision are slightly impaired and he takes shots

for diabetes, he does not wear glasses or a hearing aid, and he still has some of his natural teeth. He considers himself in exceptionally good health for his age.

"I eat anything I want," he said, "and always have. I've been in the hospital only once and that was long ago."

According to his daughter, Mrs. Book, Duncan came from a family of longevity. A disaster, however, almost shortened his life, becoming his most memorable experience.

When a young man, he was on a 125-mile train trip between Springfield and Newburg, Missouri, when "the train exploded, killing 22 people. A drunk engineer caused the explosion."

Born November 25, 1880, on a farm near Lebanon, Missouri, Duncan worked in a co-op store in that state. He married at the turn of the century and had two girls before his health began to fail. Doctors diagnosed his illness as tuberculosis.

"Where should I go?" Duncan asked. "West until you can breath better," the doctor said.

Mrs. Duncan loaded him and two small daughters into a buckboard and headed

west, settling in Colorado. Duncan soon became able to work. While accumulating land, he and his wife added another girl and a boy to the family.

In time, they established a large cattle and sheep ranch near Lamar, operating it fifty years. The discovery of oil helped.

After the children grew into adulthood with families of their own, the Duncans took in a grandchild when she was two years old. They bought the store to be nearer school.

At that time, Kenton had a high school, a bank, and even a dance hall. Little remains except Duncan's store, two churches, a post office, some empty buildings, and eight or ten occupied houses. The half dozen children are transported to Boise City Schools.

Yes, Duncan recognizes times have changed; he doesn't like it. "Things are in a mess," he philosophized.

Mrs. Book added that her father had always worked hard, practiced honesty, and taught his children to do likewise. He doesn't drink or smoke. He attributes his longevity to "having a wife to care for you."

Mrs. Duncan died three years ago.

The centenarian doesn't care for television. His diversion is keeping the artifacts in the corner of his store: arrowheads, animal horns, fossils, and talking with customers, researchers, and drop-ins. He enjoys telling people about Black Mesa, the dinosaur track nearby, and the way things used to be.



*Dinosaur tracks near Kenton, OK.*

*(John W. Duncan, subject of this article, died on April 3, 1983 — several months after "Kenton Centenarian Still Working" was accepted for publication.)*

## **OKIE PRIDE** — *by Pat Kourt*

Okie pride is a collage of faces, places, and dreams.

Pride shows in the dust-worn smiles of the  
migrants returning home —

in the retired farmer receiving his first  
oil-lease bonus —

in the nervous nine-year-old 4-H'er modeling  
her hand-stitched apron —

in the family burying its Great Grandma Kate,  
who made the Run.

Pride reveals itself in the manicured rows of  
frosty, gray-brown cotton stalks —

in the school rooms flying the prairie-sky blue  
state flag —

in the country pulpits echoing a booming  
Midwestern drawl —

in the dusty, rugged arena of man vs. beast  
known as rodeo.

Pride envisions progress in understanding  
the venerable Cheyenne-Arapaho culture —

in providing an answer for the troubled,  
searching unemployed —

in maintaining a "Bible-Belt" morality for  
tomorrow's grandchildren —

in keeping the red-earth environment as natural  
as God first created it.

Okie pride — assorted faces, places, and dreams —

a work of Western art.

## **WING SHOT** — *by Dr. R. Samuel Lackey*

Beneath the polished shell of Flamingo Motherhood,  
The neck of the egg is broken out of time  
By an arrow and a brightly painted stick  
That will slide like bubbles in the blood until

In flight the dark horizon flashes full of beaks and early fishes.  
The sea spins tightly around his pain.  
His eyes seek out the earth again.  
The waters churn —  
No stars within, but only He who will not break the Fall.

The atom turning clockwise snaps the feathers of the throat  
And stills the fluted breath.  
There is no marker here,  
No broken reed to cross the wind.

The water, always rising,  
Floating choruses,  
Brings dark counterpoint  
To crunch of sand and moccasins,  
One season in the sun. . .  
Before the last plumes crack.

## **a sense of pride**

— *by Sheryl L. Nelms*

it's there  
it permeates  
western Oklahoma  
flows through the veins  
of the people  
born Choctaw and Cherokee

generations removed  
from the Trail of Tears

they remember

make me wish  
I'd been  
born just a  
little bit Indian



## PERSPECTIVES

(an article that many of our readers, especially those interested in Country-Western music will enjoy)

### Ramona Reed: A New Sound

— by Stoney Hardcastle

The Ranchouse in Dallas was jammed that November, Saturday night, 1950, when Bob Wills, King of Western Swing gave one of his famous front and center stage calls "Ramona." To the microphone stepped a pretty little cowgirl, Ramona Reed, from Oklahoma's Kiamichi Country. Music history was made. Wills had added a fulltime female vocalist to his group and yodeling became an instrument in the famous Texas Playboy sound.

Until Ramona joined Wills, yodeling in the United States was used by singers only as a bridge and break in lonesome blues songs, Jimmy Rogers style. No one dreamed that the Swiss warble would be blended into a Country-Western swing beat. Yet, through Wills' creativity and patience and a lot of hard work by Ramona, her golden voice became both a lead and harmony instrument in the distinctive Texas Playboy sound.

"Joining the Texas Playboys was my pot of gold at the end of the rainbow," says Ramona. "From as far back as I can remember, my life's goal was to sing with a big-name Country-Western band."

Raised on a ranch near Talihina, Oklahoma, before she even started to school Ramona began singing, yodeling, and pretending she was on the radio show.

Recognizing her young daughter's talent, Ramona's mother started driving her to a Saturday morning, amateur radio show, KTMC, McAlester, Oklahoma. Dud Stallins, station manager at the time, remembers Ramona as "the cutest, singinest, yodelingest thing I ever saw. Oh she was great."

Ramona says, "Oh those old radio shows were the greatest. Just to get to stand and sing into a mike was a dream."

After graduating from high school, Ramona enrolled in the fashionable Colorado Women's College in Denver. Even though it was completely out of character with the school's curriculum, she continued Country-Western singing and yodeling and once received two demerits for yodeling in the bathtub.

"Four demerits would have gotten me kicked out of school," Ramona laughs. "Then to my surprise I was asked to sing at the next assembly. That is when I discovered that regardless of social level almost everyone loves Country-Western music."



While in college Ramona may have the distinction of being the only singer to yodel in the Denver Metro Opera House. This was by invitation.

After one year of college, the singing little cowgirl went to Nashville, asked for and was given an audition by Jack Stapp, program director for WSM. She was hired on the spot and put on the "Noon Neighbors" show with Roy Acuff and his Smokey Mountain Boys. She was also given a spot on the Grand Ole Opry.

"Jack Stapp is one of the finest people I ever met," Ramona says. "He urged me to wait until I finished my education before I turned fulltime professional. And am I glad I took his advice and went back to school."

After college it was back to Nashville

for Ramona. On Stapp's recommendation she was hired as the first "Martha White Flour Girl" by the Martha White Flour Company.

As the Martha White Flour Girl she appeared weekly on the Grand Ole Opry and did three daily radio shows. With all the exposure and her picture on every bag of flour, the Martha White Flour Girl soon became the toast of the South.

Ramona still has stacks of fan mail she received, and included were several marriage proposals. "There was only one thing wrong with all the popularity," she remembers. "No one knew my real name. I was just Martha White. Dang, it was frustrating."

After almost a year in Nashville, Ramona says she came face to face with the

other side of the entertainment world. It seemed one of the female members of the popular and powerful Carter family needed a job and Ramona was pushed out.

"I don't care to discuss the incident in detail," Ramona says. "I just was shocked and felt helpless, bitter and frustrated. I just couldn't believe people operated in that manner."

A tough little trooper, Ramona didn't stay down long from her Nashville disappointment. In a few weeks she was auditioning in Dallas for Bob Wills.

"Believe me, I never sang as long and hard in my life as I did in the audition," she says. "The audition was in the afternoon at Bob's new Ranchouse Nightclub. He took a chair in the middle of the huge dance floor in front of the bandstand."

"With his band backing me, I sang. He smoked a cigar and listened. Didn't say a word. And that band, they were the best. Never asked what key. Just picked it up. For two hours I sang. I began to think it was an endurance contest. I had on a new pair of high heels. My feet and legs started aching. Finally I thought to heck with it and kicked off my shoes. I only sang two more songs after I kicked off my shoes and at last Bob stopped the audition. I figured that was the end. Bob came backstage and all he said was, 'I always wanted a female singer that would kick her shoes off'."

"That had to be the biggest thrill of my life," Ramona says. "Getting pushed out of Nashville turned into my biggest break. I was Ramona Reed, myself, singing with one of the country's most famous bands, not just a picture on a flour sack."

She laughs. "But I almost got fired as soon as I got hired. I didn't know Bob hated the Grand Ole Opry and almost everything else in Nashville. When I told him I had been down there working he really came unwound."

Just as soon as she was hired, Ramona found out why the Texas Playboys were the greatest. "That tough audition was a vacation compared to those practice sessions," she remembers. "Bob Wills was a perfectionist. He was the teacher. I was the student. Hold it. Back up. Try it again. There was no rest until I learned to blend my voice into the Playboy sound."

The little cowgirl was a good student. Soon she learned to sing with the sophisticated, progressive, chord scheme arrangements of the great Eldon Shamblin. Shamblin did most of Wills' arranging. Her yodel breaks were a completely new dimension in Country-Western music and her lead and harmony blends into the distinctive rhythm progressions soon became a new music rage. Growth of the new sound was rapid and opened the door for many female vocalists.

Before Ramona and Bob Wills intro-

duced her new sound, female vocalists were few in the Country-Western field. And even fewer in western swing.

"I just couldn't believe the hard work," Ramona remembers. "My idea of being an up-front singer with a big time band didn't include seven nights a week. On the road day and night. And when not performing, we were practicing. Bob Wills was a master, no nonsense, and a strict disciplinarian. You lived by his rules or got out. I loved the guys in the band. I was afraid they would resent me, but they didn't. They appreciated my addition to their music. Those guys had pride. They were the best and knew it. Really they over-protected me. When riding the bus they watched their language. I told them many times to relax, that I was one of the troop."

The young star had many adjustments to make. There was little time off. The band was always on the road. Then there was quite a discussion as to what she would wear on the shows. Formal dress was out. And Bob wanted nothing that even resembled Nashville. It was finally decided she would wear glamourized cowgirl outfits with a lot of trimmings and color-rhinestones, hat, boots, and a lot of flash. Her dress started another fad for Country-Western female vocalists. "Oh, but did those outfits cost a bunch," Ramona remembers.

More and more the little Oklahoma cowgirl's popularity grew. At each show the crowd wanted more of Ramona. "Oh those crowds were great, especially those on the West Coast," she recalls.

"That traveling was something else," Ramona says. "One time we were splitting across west Texas on the bus. I don't remember the name of the little town. But on the outskirts a man flagged us down. He said he owned a cafe and invited us to stop and eat. We all thought the invitation was for a free meal. So everyone really ordered up — steaks, chicken, and the best. After we ate he demanded we pay for the meal. We did. I was a light eater; I only ate a sandwich. But the boys had really shoveled it in. Did they yell when they had to pay."

There was nothing to do but pay. But after we got back on the bus everyone laughed. We had really been conned."

In 1951, Ramona recorded "I'm tired Of Living This Life" with Bob Wills and his Playboys, and in 1952 she did "Little Girl, Little Girl." Both were hits. "I'm tired Of Living This Life" was on a 78 RPM and "Little Girl, Little Girl" was one of the first big hits on a 45 RPM. Today both are collector's treasures and demand a big price.

In 1952 after almost three years of touring with Bob Wills the love bug bit Ram-

ona. She married a native of her part of the country, Jim Blair, a civil engineer.

Husband Jim tells a humorous story after he and Ramona were married. "We took a tour to Tennessee. Ramona's picture was on all the Martha White flour sacks. Times were hard. And as we drove through the countryside I noticed every clothesline was full of women's unmentionables made from flour sacks. After a close inspection I discovered Ramona's picture was on the seat of every pair, and on the Big Mama size her picture was on there twice."

After marriage Ramona went into semi-retirement. For a few years she and her husband lived in Texas and then settled on a ranch near Clayton, Oklahoma. Between being a housewife and having four children, Ramona continued to do a few shows. When Bob Wills and his Playboys were in the vicinity, she always worked with them. Then she did countless charity shows.

In 1967, when Bob Wills was in the twilight of his great career, he called on Ramona again. They went to the RCA studios in Nashville and she recorded "I Betcha My Heart I Love You" and "Don't Send Him Back To Me." They were both hits and collectable items.

"It seemed all so unreal in those sessions," she recalls. "Bob was using studio musicians and I felt a little sad. They were good, but nothing like the old band. It just wasn't the same."

Three years ago Ramona was selected as a member of the Pioneers of Country Music, by the Country Music Association and Grand Ole Opry, which holds its reunion in June of each year. In 1979 she was honored as one of the featured singers at the annual Pioneers, Fan Fair, Nashville.

Still a petite cutie, Ramona brings the house down when she does an occasional show. She practices everyday and keeps up with all the latest songs, and learns the ones she likes. Last December she was selected Queen of the Little Dixie Opry, McAlester, Oklahoma. She has been a regular on the show since its beginning two years ago.

What does she think of some of the new sounds? "I love all music. But it is no different today than it has ever been, some good and some not so good," she says. "But that new sound title kinda bugs me. Much of what is being promoted as new sounds are the same progressions we were using with Bob Wills years ago. I'm not saying this to raise my ego. I am very happy Bob Wills is getting the recognition he deserves as a master musician. He was."

To show her versatility, at a recent show Ramona brought the house down

when she did a yodel in a cowboy disco beat. She said. "There was really nothing to it. A disco beat is just a takeoff from that old 'Osage Stomp' Bob Wills used to do."

When not being a housewife, mother and singer, Ramona is writing a book, her memoirs. She is writing her own manuscript, no ghost writer. To prepare for her project she enrolled and completed three semesters of creative writing at Eastern Oklahoma State College.

What about more recordings? "Yes, I

get an offer now and then," she replies. "But the only recording I would consider would be an album after I finish my book. And the contract would have to read that I would make no more than fifty appearances a year. All those one-night stands to sell records is a real killing life. I've been there."

Ramona Reed, even though she has received little publicity, is one of the true pioneers of Country-Western music, and her contributions are many. Few of today's female singing stars know that a

pretty little cowgirl from Oklahoma helped pave the road for their success — and that they are using a sound and style that she originated before they were born.

Then there are those Slim Whitman yodeling television commercials. Yes, he is using a yodeling style created by Ramona Reed when she was doing those Martha White Flour commercials on radio station WSM, Nashville, in 1949.



(All Oklahomans can be proud of Judge Phillips of Southeastern Oklahoma — including the author, a Western Oklahoman.)

## On A Leash And A Prayer

— by Vera Holding

gitis, which destroyed the optic nerves. The 69-year-old Phillips had always led an active life and to be almost totally helpless caused him to suffer a terrific trauma. But a keen sense of humor and a great Christian faith helped him to weather this storm. With great determination, he looked around for a school for the sightless where he could earn a guide dog.

In a telephone conversation with a cousin, Beulah Phillips, in Oakland, California, she reminded him that his late uncle Grover Phillips had gone to the Guide Dog for the Blind Inc., in San Raphael, California, in 1942. She volunteered to call the school and request an application blank. They sent the application and after reviewing it sent a representative from the school to interview Judge Phillips. He was eventually accepted as a student at the school.

After the flight to San Raphael where he enrolled in the school, he was in training for two weeks when to his utter dismay he was told he could not continue the training. They contended he was not steady enough on his feet with the dog. He was not only sightless but was weakened by the *Cryptococcus Menengitis*, which caused his leg muscles to cramp while walking.

He had such high hopes of earning a guide dog that he had called a friend in Durant who had a dog run built adjacent to the Judge's home for the expected dog. When he was told he had failed in the school. . . . that he could not have a dog, he said he felt utterly crushed. He had never known such disappointment.

One day, however, he had a visitor who had read about him in an Oklahoma newspaper. He was Austin Hicks, who with his wife Alma, was visiting her brother in Hugo, Oklahoma. Austin Hicks

is a member of the Hemet, California Lions Club, which is near the Guide Dogs of the Desert School.

Austin had driven the 54 miles from Hugo to Durant to tell Judge Phillips about the wonderful school there. "I was a little leery at first, because I had been burned once, but I agreed to contact the school because this stranger had driven all that way just to help me," he said.

The Hickes got in contact with Bud Maynard, Executive Director of the school, which led to the formalities of Judge Phillips' enrollment.

On arriving at the school, Judge Phillips found the training was the same as he had undergone at the San Raphael school and most of the trainers had done their schooling there. However, there was a vast difference in the schools. The San Raphael school was a posh layout with private rooms for the trainee and dog, while the school near Palm Springs had only the bare necessities. In fact it was a "poor boy operation." No school veterinarian, cook, or private baths. It is housed in a 1400 square foot building with two students and two dogs to each small bedroom. There is one bath, living-dining room all in one area. It is located nine miles north of Palm Springs.

"Although they didn't have anything much, they had a lot of know-how, dedication, and heart. They seemed to have an understanding of handicapped people and animals," Judge Phillips said. The trainers help clean the kennels as well as walk the dogs.

Eileen Johnstone was assigned to Judge Phillips as his trainer. She was still a month away from her Guide Dog trainer's license. But she was heaven sent, the Judge said. Within a week after she had taken over his training, she told him he

It was a gala day in Durant, Oklahoma — a celebration for a returning hero when Associate District Judge John Allen Phillips II came home from a session at the Guide Dogs of the Desert School in Palm Springs, California.

Proudly waving her long feathery tail was Brandy, a beautiful part German Shepherd and part Golden Retriever dog. She walked beside Judge Phillips with great dignity and pride. Her brown eyes filled with love as she watched the judge being greeted so warmly by his friends, the townspeople. Evidently she felt that way too.

Phillips says he graduated from the school "Magna Cum Brandy." Though her name may sound a little strange in a Baptist Church where they both attend regularly, the congregation has accepted Brandy wholeheartedly.

Judge Phillips drolly remarked, "Her Retriever mother might have taken up with a beautiful white German Shepherd one day on a trip down the primrose path."

Judge Phillips lost his sight in 1977 from a rare case of *Cryptococcus Menin-*



would have no trouble in earning a fine Guide Dog.

However, he was afraid to build up much hope because of his earlier experience, but when Maynard introduced him to the Hemet Lions Club members, he said Judge Phillips would earn a Guide Dog without a doubt and the Judge believed him.

Judge Phillips, who has been an after-dinner speaker in Oklahoma and Texas, likes to relate one of the anecdotes related by sightless people. "One day a sightless fellow dropped the correct change in the money box at the front of a bus he was boarding. His keen ears picked up the loud whispers from two ladies across the aisle, 'I don't believe he is really blind. Look how he put the exact change in the money box,' one lady said. The man turned his head toward the sound of their voices and smiling broadly said, 'No.. Ladies, I'm not really blind. I'm deaf!'"

He feels that some of the talks in the Hemet, California, area helped the program. One club doubled its support from a contribution of \$5,000.00 a year to \$10,000.00. "The Bob Hope Desert Golf Classic also contributes a share if its charity funds to this program," Judge Phillips said.

All this helps a sore heart. He remembers in 1978 when there was an attempt by the Bryan County Bar Association to remove him from the bench because of his blindness.

However, in a hearing conducted by Judge Lavern Fishel, he said in his ruling



Arleen Johnstone, Judge Phillips and Brandy.



that "Blindness alone, is not a valid cause for suspension. Judicial decisions are based on evidence, not on whether or not the Judge can see the smiles or frowns of the litigants or witnesses."

When Judge Phillips later filed for office in the July 10, 1978 election and no one filed against him, he felt that was a vote of confidence by the same lawyers who had protested his serving because he was blind.

The Judge refuses to accept the fact that his blindness is permanent. "God has a purpose while I am blind," he said. I refuse to accept it as being permanent. Our God is one of reason and He always gives an answer. Sometimes the answer is 'Yes', sometimes 'No,' and sometimes 'Wait' but He always answers. I think the answer in my case is 'later.' I don't know the reason for the delay, but I know I will get my answer." This faith has carried him far.

His Guide Dog Brandy is not only a sweet-tempered, loving companion; she is almost humanly clever. When she comes in the house after being outside in the rain, she lies down on her back and holds her four feet up to be wiped off so as not to track up the house. Before she retires in the evening on a rug at the foot of the Judge's bed when her harness is removed, she stretches, wiggles and shakes herself in relief like any working lady who removes her girdle.

She has attended weddings with a pink carnation corsage on her green harness, at which time Brandy is photographed with the bride and groom.

Judge Phillips smiled as he recalled, "I not only received a dear friend in getting Brandy when I was in the school, but I also received a hug from Lucille Ball."

The Judge said it came about when a

distant cousin, Chuck Collins, who lives in Palm Springs, took him to his home one evening where he was introduced to "Lucy." When he found out it was Lucille Ball he told her, "Well! I'll really have something to tell the boys down at the pool hall when I get home!" Lucy jumped from her chair and went over and gave him a big hug. Then she said, "And you can tell them something else. I love you too!"

"And who doesn't love Lucy?" Judge Phillips added.

Not long ago, his trainer from the school, Eileen Johnstone, came to visit the Judge and Brandy and was delighted with their continued progress.

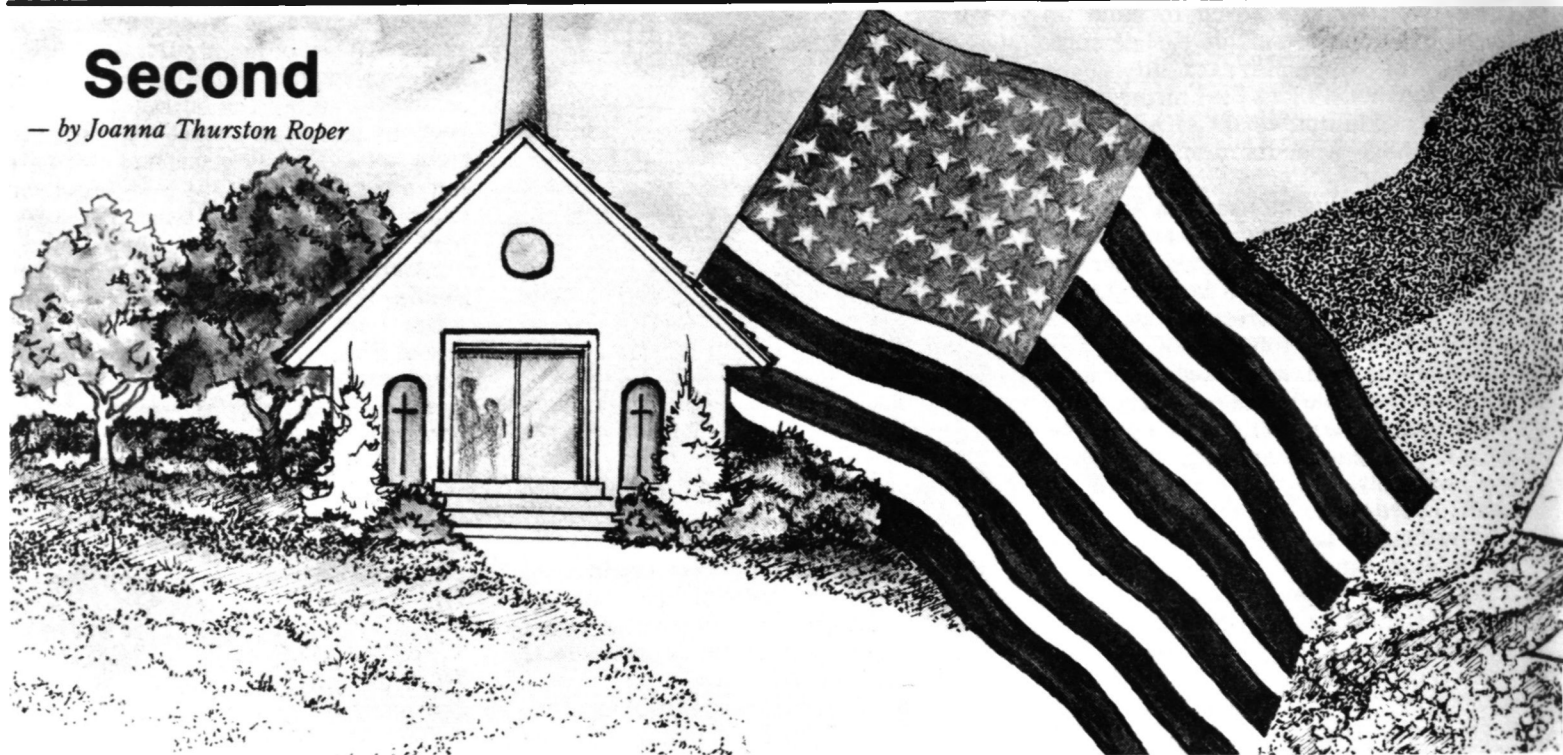
With Brandy as a comfort and guide, Judge Phillips continues to serve on the bench without sight not only as a fair-minded jurist but a very capable one as well.



# PERSPECTIVES

## Second

— by Joanna Thurston Roper



Trina had just said "I do" to the man she loved. She felt the love of her family and friends filling the tiny chapel — and she knew they were happy about her marriage. Just moments before, her big handsome son had kissed her on the forehead and whispered, "Go for it, Mom!" before he escorted her down the aisle. As they walked toward the minister waiting with Jacob, Trina saw happy tears glinting her daughter's eyes. "Marry him, Mom, or I will!" Helen had told her. Helen, of course, was teasing me — she always has. A perfect little imp! She has Charles and her beautiful family — my grandchildren! My baby girl is forty-seven. My little boy is forty-five. It's ridiculous for an old lady like me to be getting married. This is when people retire — not start over. . . .

Trina's attention came back to the minister as he spoke to them of love. Jacob turned and smiled down at her — Trina's heart skipped a beat. Ah, Trina thought, you're a fine little preacher, but you haven't lived long enough to know about love. Especially not the kind of love that lies in the heart unspoken for years — not even looked at after awhile.

"I pronounce you husband and wife." Trina turned to Jacob — he looked at her with smiling face and took her in his arms. "God has been good to us," he whispered. The minister turned them around. "May I present Mr. and Mrs. Jacob Gottfried." Then everyone there

swarmed around them — happy, happy. Finally they could walk into the parlor where champagne and little cakes were waiting. Trina fingered the silken pleats of her dove gray dress — so unlike the other one, the heavy satin. No pretending at this wedding, either. . . .

. . . No father to take her aside and confess the brutal lie he had lived ever since Jacob had left. "For your own good, Trina. Your own good. You must not leave your mother country." Trina's heart had gone cold and hard at that wedding forty-eight years ago. On her marriage bed she had made Bruno promise to leave Germany, to go to the United States. But not for love — for hate of the lie. It would be enough to know that Jacob was somewhere within the American boundaries — boundaries her father would never cross. . . .

Trina's mind flinched away from the past — she smiled and talked and danced — first with her new husband, then her son, then her son-in-law. Trina felt pretty. She knew she was pretty — she always had been. Perhaps remembering that he had called her "my little gazelle" made her stay slim when others had thickened with age. Trina stood watching Helen and Jacob dance. My life has been full, she thought. Bruno was a fine and caring man, and the children were everything — sometimes I even forgot.

If it hadn't been for the invitation to the festival in Rudesheim — no, she remem-

bered, I ignored it. It was Helen who had found it on the buffet one morning. "Go! she had said. "You haven't been anywhere since Papa died. Go celebrate the three hundred years of history with your hometown people." Trina sipped the champagne. Jacob's son had sent it from the Napa Valley.

. . . So I went back to Germany, she remembered, and there in the court square, looking as American and out of place as I did, was Jacob. I saw him first from the back. I knew that dignified man was my young sweetheart who had left Rudesheim to make a fortune in America and then come back for me.

She and Jacob were awkward at first — very reserved. "Ah — you married," he had said above the wail of the calliope. "Your father wrote that you were betrothed. He didn't say who."

"I'm a widow now," was all she could say then.

A grave light lit his eyes. "So am I," he had said. "I came back to Rudesheim to look at my beginnings again." It was nearly the end of her trip that she had told him. He had finally asked why she never answered his letters.

"I wrote a letter every Saturday night like I promised," he had said.

"Jacob, Jacob. I waited and waited for a letter. I never got one —"

"Never?!"

"First Papa said maybe the boat sank — finally he said, 'There are good boys

(an often-seen Western Oklahoma entertainment area)

## All That Glitters. . .

— by Donita Lucas Shields

Validity of the old adage, "All that glitters is not gold," might well be questioned by those living and working in Deep Anadarko Basin. Gas, not gold, creates this region of booming economy, but the end product of the great Gas Rush is gold, a golden payroll of wealth never before known in Western Oklahoma.

As for glitter, the most glittering place in Deep Basin is Schreck's Western Ballroom at I-40's Foss Junction. Beneath

gleaming lights surrounding Schreck's are acres of asphalt surface covered with shining Continentals, Cadillacs, and other top lines of chrome on wheels. Seldom do more than a few economy-minded vehicles mar the brilliance of the hillside parking area.

Upon entering Schreck's, the kings and queens of this Prairie Kingdom transform the Ballroom into an indigo sea of Levi's, bedecked with Western regalia of satins,

here, Trina. Marry one.' So I did after two years."

Trina remembered Jacob's stricken eyes as she watched him waltzing now with her daughter-in-law. It would be nice if his son could have been here to dance with me — the son in California whose voice sounds now like Jacob's did — even so, he gave his blessing. Yes, this wedding, she thought, is much better. . .

"I married Bruno," she had told him. "After the wedding Papa took me to the library — I thought he would give me money. He gave me your letters. He said he'd done it for my own good — so I'd stay in Germany."

"Oh, Trina, Trina, my little gazelle," Jacob had said. He remembered! . . .

Trina looked around the parlor bright with flowers and music and love. She remembered her father's library — heavy, dark, musty with his leather-bound books. Always more the professor than the father. He had taken the letters from a copy of ANNA KARENINA. What if I'd ever decided to read it? What if? But if I had, there wouldn't be Helen and Arnold. . . .

Jacob stopped beside her. "I was wondering, Mrs. Gottfried, if I might have this dance?"

Trina danced away with him, supremely happy.



leathers, cowboy boots, and handtooled belts sculptured with gold and silver dericks. Rising above all, crowns of feathered Stetsons ebb and flow through rushing tides of humanity.

Consistent with regal tastes in automobiles and clothing, the Prairie's royalty demands nothing but the finest, the top of the line in Country and Western music. On a typical evening, 2,000 Urban Cowboys with their girls, both spectators and dancers, surge through the Ballroom doors, if they are fortunate in acquiring the necessary passes before they are all sold.

No tickets are available at the door on the evening of big-name performers. Visitors arrive early to await the arrival of the royal court jesters, which include renowned entertainers such as Hank Williams, Jr., his troupe of five musicians, and 25 body guards.

Prior to Williams' arrival, his advance guard began in early morning preparing the stage with powerful sound equipment, carefully shipped by truck to Schreck's backstage door. Because sound is the name of Hank's game, the Ballroom's electrical system receives a complete renovation of the usually adequate facilities.

Hank's musicians require 20,000 amperage in order to carry the band's penetrating sound without blowing fuses. The normal amperage is 5,000 units, but Williams provides renditions which permeate every cell of the human body. His audience expects to breathe the tones ejecting from the multitude of mammoth amplifiers circling the Ballroom stage.

Waiting fans anticipate volumes of

tonal qualities while both listening and dancing. Hank Jr. admirers do not arrive to visit or talk among themselves. Country and western audiences demand escape from the maddening gas boom world to relax a few short hours in the land of sparkle and fantasy.

The Western star makes his grand entry into the Prairie Kingdom late in the evening via arrival of his private helicopter which gently places him upon the consecrated landing pad behind the Ballroom. At least it is said the chopper is his mode of transportation. No one could possibly hear the whirring beaters or powerful engine above the blasting beat of the orchestra.

Hank Jr. materializes onstage from somewhere for his two-hour appearance and pours his golden voice through the booming sound system. He re-creates the romantic Old West through his ballads of the gallant cowboy and his revered lady.

Fans sweep around the dance floor and stand upon tables and chairs for one brief glimpse of his famous bewhiskered face through tidal waves of gaudy hats, plumes, dancers, and Hank's mighty protectors. He provides the audience with top-of-the-line favorites and then bids goodnight and disappears through his private exit as quickly as he had entered. His musicians continue their throbbing beats until the evening draws to a close.

The ruling king of Schreck's Ballroom is none other than Lynn Schreck, a farm boy with a dream. His dream became a reality with first-class Western entertainment in a place that is clean, well-regulated, and law-abiding. His famed palace is anything but elaborate. It is func-

tional and comfortable, if it is possible to provide comfort for squeezed and trampled humanity.

Typical of gas boom architecture, the building is no more than steel beams, roofing, siding, and insulation constructed upon an enormous concrete slab. It is a metallic and plastic version of early-day barn dances, minus hay loft balconies, where pioneer fun seekers blazed the trail for today's electronic festivities.

Hundreds of rows of steel tables and chairs surround the half-acre dance floor centered in front of the uncurtained stage. Concession and souvenir areas located at the spacious entry way contribute to the Ballroom's booming business. Money flows as freely as do dancers and spectators.

In contrast, the padded dais containing the Mechanical Bull appears abandoned during the evening of Hank Williams, Jr. Possibly its neglect is because of Hank and His Band's amazing popularity, or perhaps it is because of the Bull's loss of the same.

Lynn Schreck held his opening night on New Year's Eve with Mickey Gilley as premier guest. Lynn's reign began almost simultaneously with Deep Anadarko Basin excitement, and the Ballroom flourishes with Western Oklahoma economy.

Prairie music lovers return again and again to enjoy famed Western talent while hundreds of newcomers join them to participate in the best of Country Music culture. Schreck's Ballroom will likely continue as the favorite, No. 1 nightspot, where "All that glitters IS gold," as long as the great Gas Rush booms.



## Grandma Higgins (1885-1977)

— by *Elsie Lang*

Mary Higgins' personality and the events that occurred during her childhood united to produce a unique individual: proud, stubborn, independent, and quarrelsome. She was a devoted Church of Christ member, completely intolerant of any other faith, and she never missed a chance to voice her opinions on this — or any other — subject. In fact, starting an

argument was her favorite pastime. At family gatherings, her voice could be heard above all others as she out-argued or out-shouted her seven children, their spouses, and her numerous grandchildren.

Born in Denton County, Texas, on August 24, 1885, Mary Frances Caskey was the first of three children to survive

journey to Oklahoma; and Mary, who was devoted to her father, said that she looked back as long as she could see. But she did not visit her father's grave again until 1969, seventy-three years later, when two of her children drove her to Gainesville so that she could place a marker on her father's grave. She said that the cemetery looked familiar to her, just as she had remembered it all of those years.

Mary's quick mind recorded every detail of the long journey to Oklahoma. Years later, she would tell her grandchildren what the countryside looked like when she first traveled over it in a covered wagon.

Melinda moved into a half dugout with Pleas and another brother, and they assumed the role of surrogate fathers for her daughters. Mary, who preferred the outdoors, worked in the fields and learned to ride horses and break colts as well as her uncles could. Even after she was married and had children, she liked outside work better than housework.

When Mary was nineteen, she married William Robert Higgins, who was only five months older than she. Starting out with nothing except their love for each other, the couple borrowed money to buy a farm close to her uncles' land. A four-room house with a trumpet vine-covered porch became their home, and here they struggled to keep themselves fed and clothed. Here their eight children were born: Clara, who died at age one; Eliza; Beulah Lee; Cleo; Lillie Mae; George; Delmer; and Elmo. The older children tell about one winter when they were unable to go to school until a more prosperous neighbor gave them some of her children's outgrown clothes to wear. Here Mary's beloved Will died of pneumonia in 1934.

When Will died, Mary was left to raise three teenage sons. Together they planted a garden for food, cut down trees for firewood, raised chickens for eggs, milked cows for milk and butter, and managed to survive the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl.

After her sons married and left home, Mary continued to live on her farm alone without modern conveniences until she was seventy. Then she decided to sell the farm and buy a house in Butler. Every day she walked to the post office to pick up her mail and sometimes to the grocery store to buy food. Twice on Sunday she walked to church. She planted a garden in her backyard and flowers in her front yard.

When Mary was eighty, she decided that she needed a "wash house" because she was tired of storing her washing



*Mary Higgins' home near Butler, OK.*

infancy. Four more sisters were born after Mary: Pearl, Lula May, and twin girls Lillie and Willie, but Willie was accidentally scalded to death at age two by Mary. It was Mary's turn to wash the supper dishes and she was angry because she, always the tomboy, preferred to walk to a neighbor's house for a bucket of milk. As she lifted the kettle of boiling water off the stove, she stumbled, spilling the water on her little sister who was crawling underfoot. She never forgot this incident, of course, but to her dying day she blamed her parents for making her wash the dishes when she was too young to be handling hot water.

When Mary was ten years old, her parents, Melinda and William Henry Caskey, decided to move to Oklahoma Territory where Melinda's brothers had homesteaded a quarter section of land in the Osceola community north of Butler. So in October 1895, Mary's parents, their

four daughters, and an uncle, Pleas Wilson, loaded their belongings into a covered wagon and left their home in Denton County. They had traveled only as far as Gainesville, a distance of some twenty miles, when Mary's father died of consumption.

The situation must have seemed hopeless for Melinda and her four small daughters, but the dead must be buried, so Melinda and her brother asked for the Church of Christ minister who recognized the name Caskey. He discovered that Melinda's husband was a nephew of the previous minister. With the minister's help, the Church of Christ congregation and the townfolk donated the money to pay all of the funeral expenses. Mary's father was laid out in the wagon yard and was buried that same evening, October 18, 1895, in Gainesville, Texas.

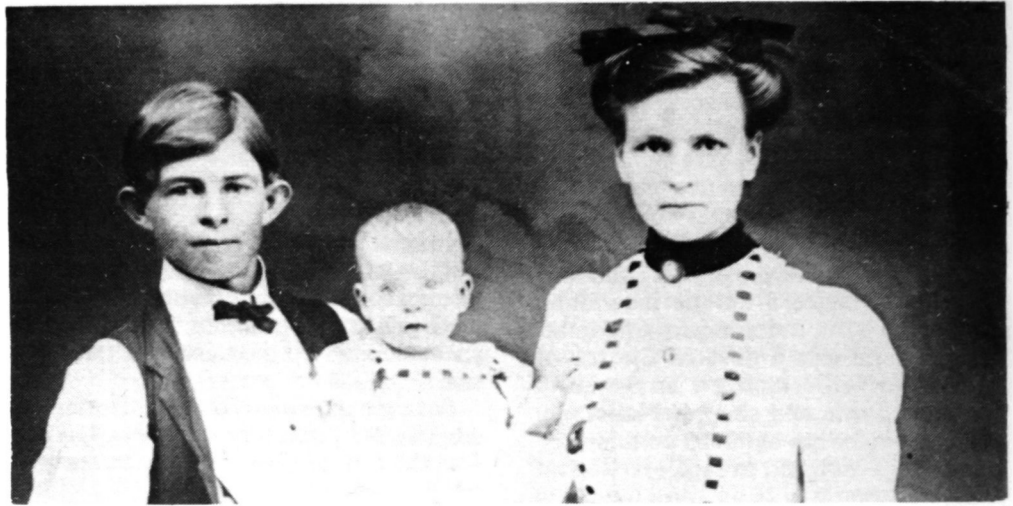
The next morning Melinda, her brother, and her daughters resumed their

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machine on the back porch. She kept mentioning the house to her sons and sons-in-law, but none of them took her seriously. So one day she walked to the lumberyard and ordered boards to be cut to a specific length. When the lumberyard delivered her order, she set to work nailing the boards together. Then she asked two of her grandsons to hold up the sides while she nailed them to a frame. After they had nailed shingles on the roof, she had a "wash house" to show her embarrassed children the next time they visited.

Her cantankerous actions sometimes backfired, though. Once when a son-in-

*continued on page 28*



*Mary and Will Higgins and baby Clara.*



*(another Western Oklahoma story by our favorite story-teller in Arapaho)*

## Stranger-Friend

— by R. R. Chapman

One early fall day in 1903 a young man of about 25 rode up to our dugout door in

Custer County, Oklahoma, recently a part of the Cheyenne-Arapaho Reservation.

The youth asked, "What is the chance to stay and get grub for the next week or so?" His blue suit showed considerable wear, but he was clean, except for the usual dust. He wore regular cowboy boots and spurs and a wide-brimmed Stetson hat. His voice was rather low and easy-spoken. His face had known a razor and was free of real dirt.

While he no doubt knew the hills and prairies, he didn't appear to be a working cowboy. He rode a good-looking grey pony and led another grey carrying a heavy pack. His saddle and bridle were good quality, finished off by a quirt and little maguey rope, with a yellow Fish-brand slicker tied on behind.

The stranger said he wanted only board, as he had his own bed and didn't care to sleep in the house. He declared, "I'm not too particular and have the money to pay my own way."

His request was granted; Dad seldom turned anyone away. Dad had traveled and knew what it meant to be without bed and board in a newly settled country of strangers.

The days turned into weeks. Still Joe (as we knew him) lingered in the area. He spent most of his time in Parkersburg, a new town on the new Rock Island Railroad near the Washita River. Parkersburg consisted mostly of twelve saloons, six or seven stores, and a cotton gin. It had quite a reputation for being tough for the few years it held sway at the end of the line before the railroad moved west up the river and Turkey Creek and on toward Amarillo.

Some evenings and stormy days Joe spent at our warm dugout, just visiting, playing dominoes with us or checkers with some happenby cowhand.

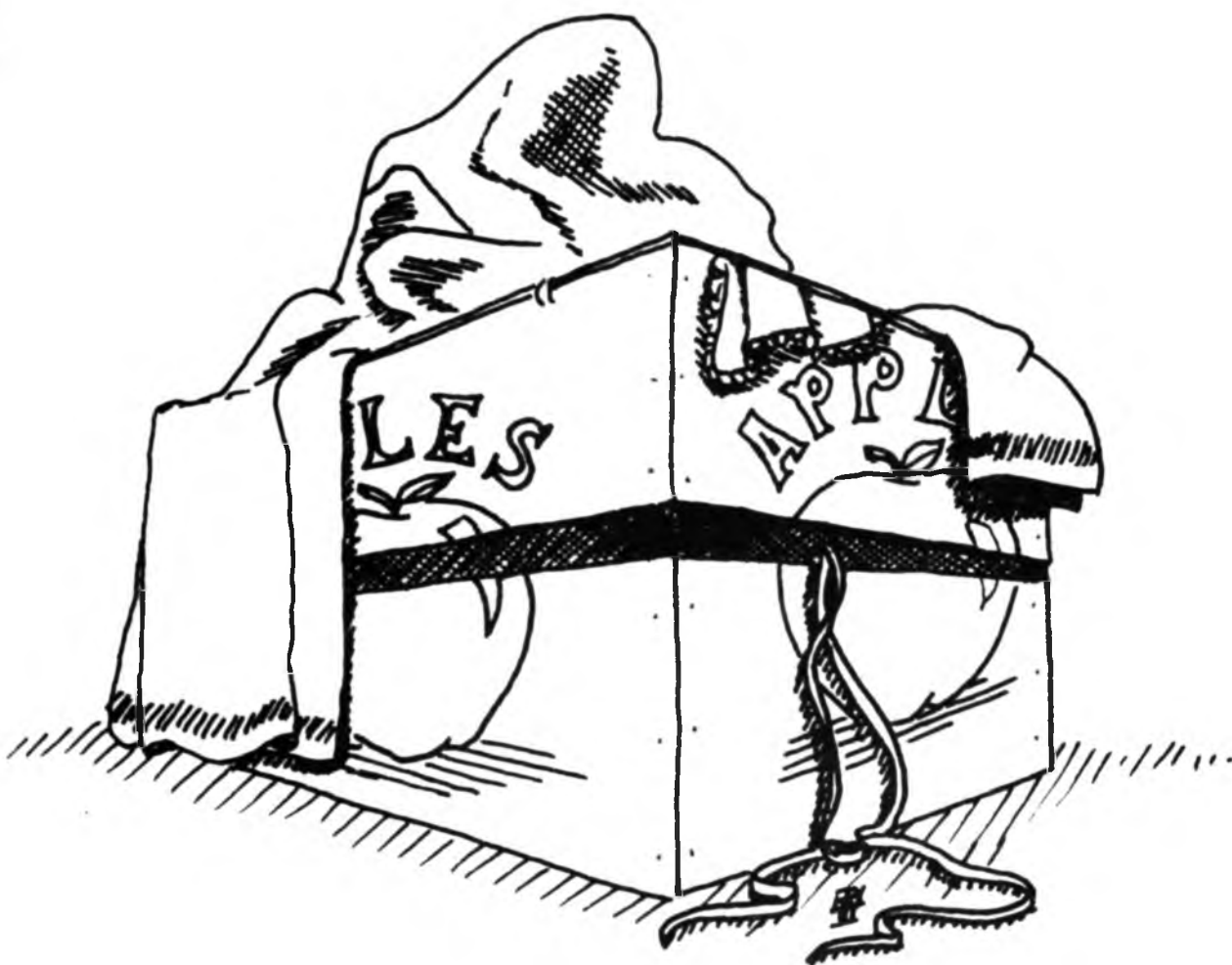
The only time I saw Joe make a quick move was when he and a range-riding youngster were playing a close game of checkers. Joe made a foolish move he couldn't change. The other player, through a wide grin, called Joe a disrespectful name Joe apparently had not heard. Before he realized it was only a silly joke, his hand darted quick as a snake's tongue toward a gun under the right side of his coat. He quickly saw he had almost made a serious mistake and joined in the laughter caused by his blunder, which cleared the board.

No matter the weather, Joe slept outside. We noticed he almost always moved his bed to a new location, regardless of where his ponies were staked not far away.

Joe was seldom gone long after dark. Soon after the sun disappeared beyond the red shaley hill, he would come riding in alone to where he had left his bedroll.

One day after he had been with us several weeks, at the place he sometimes called home, he came in earlier than usual. He rode by at a distance from the house, directly to where his packhorse was staked, without giving his usual signal. After tying his bedroll on the pack saddle with a diamond hitch, he stepped into his saddle and rode up to the door. Without explanation, speaking hesitantly, no smile, Joe said, "I am ready to go. If you will tell me what the bill is, I will pay what I owe. I may see you-all again some day; at least I hope so." With a flit of his hand, he turned and was gone. Thus, a friendly stranger passed into the land of somewhere.

Where did he come from? Where did he go? Was his name Joe? Mother said there were tears in his eyes as he turned away to ride over the ridge, away from the setting sun.



*(poignant fiction with a Western Oklahoma flair)*

## The Apple Box

— by Margaret Friedrich

Joe stirred drowsily. Only half awake he turned over and reached for Morlee. She wasn't there! Wide awake now, he remembered. But a habit of forty years persisted. The clock radio showed 4:00 a.m. The cold began to seep out of his middle somewhere and slowly spread up his backbone, out his arms, and down to his toes. He lay shivering. The cold came from within and had nothing to do with the frosty November morning. Again the horrible scene seemed to be projected on the huge screen of his memory.

Hastily in the dark he thrust his arms into the sleeves of the robe Morlee had given him last Christmas. He started for the den but turned and came back for his slippers. Still shivering, he poked at the faintly glowing logs in the fireplace. No amount of heat, he felt, could ever make him warm again. He began pacing. Only the dim light from the hall prevented his stumbling into the furniture. The logs blazed suddenly. He threw another small stick on the fire. When it too was burning, he lowered himself to the sofa.

He sat, fixedly gazing into the flames, not seeing them. It

had been four months since the accident. Yet the scene had so burned itself into his brain that it erupted night after night into his inner vision.

That day of disappointment had begun happily enough. The two drove out to the ranch to inspect the cattle on the grazing section. Morlee had been going with him quite often since all their six children were married and on their own. They swung around past Old Shandy Number One. It was their first oil well, brought in three years ago. Nothing spectacular there. It was pumping away as usual.

"Now, are we going to see my well?" They often joked about his and her wells.

"Sure." He turned the Continental in the opposite direction and covered the short two miles to Morlee's quarter section where their newest well was going down. Just two days before it was reported at 15,000 feet.

"It must be quite a bit deeper now," Joe surmised. Everything was noisily progressing. The drill was turning. The crew was busy, each man doing his specific job.

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They drove up fairly close and parked. As they sat there, fascinated as usual by the diverse activity, he heard a dim roar. He recognized it from his days as a young roustabout — the sound of a gusher about to blow in.

"Run!" he shouted, opening the driver's door. He grabbed Morlee and jerked her small frame across the seat, under the steering wheel, and out of the car. He landed running. With her arm clutched tightly in his hand, he half dragged, half supported her until she struck her stride.

"Let go my arm," she screamed. "I can run better." He heard her step closely following his. As they raced, he heard the explosion. When he had run as far as his panting lungs would let him, he turned to look back, expecting Morlee to be directly behind him.

No! Oh, No! The rig had toppled. It lay on top of the car which was crushed as if it had been through a compacting machine. Flames were shooting high into the air. The smell of gas was strong. Black smoke began to pour over everything as the fire spread to the slush pit. The whole area was an inferno. The heat scorched his face. A primeval urge forced Joe to run again to escape the withering heat. Finally, he could run no more and fell to the ground. He remembered nothing else until he awakened and saw disheveled medics putting him into the ambulance. He heard himself calling, "Morlee? Did you get her out? Where is she?" No one answered.

Again he blacked out. He opened his eyes to see a form in white standing near his bed. He reached up to snatch whatever was thrust into his nose. A cool hand held his own hand immobile. "No, Senator, don't touch the oxygen tubes."

Was that Dena standing beside the nurse? He closed his eyes. Yes, he heard her voice. "You were lucky, Dad. No burns — only shock and exhaustion."

But there was something else — oh, yes — "Where is Mama?"

"You are to rest now, Dad."

"Where's your mother?" he shouted and tried to sit up. "Dena, Dena, where is she? Tell me."

"She is not here, Dad."

"Did the fire get her?"

"Yes, Dad." Her voice quavered as she looked out the window.

He heard himself moaning. Then he felt a sharp prick in his arm.

When he roused again, he heard Jim's voice speaking in low tones with his sister. He couldn't distinguish what they were saying. He opened his eyes to see Jim and Dena standing near the window across the room.

"Jim! How did you get here?"

"I flew in just now."

"Have you seen your mother?"

"No, I haven't, Dad."

"She's gone, isn't she?"

"Yes, Dad, she's gone."

Time after time after time the scene had gone through Joe's mind, especially at night when he couldn't sleep. Although the accident had happened four months earlier, the searing memory of it was as sharp as when he first understood what had happened. He had so often castigated himself for not saving Morlee, but everyone told him that he had done everything possible.

His mind now went back more than forty years to the

day of their marriage. That too had been a freezing November day in New York State. Shortly before daylight he had heard wheels on the gravel driveway and then had heard them go away. He heard nothing else — no knock on the door, no voices. He drifted off into a short nap and then woke, feeling that something was amiss. He went to the window of his second-floor room. Oh, Lord! What was she doing? Little Morlee O'Neill! There she sat on an apple box with her coat clutched tightly around her, a large, black, crocheted wool fascinator tied over her head. She was crying, making no sound in the frosty air.

He knew in an instant why she was there. His first impulse was to run — go out the window on the opposite side of the house and get away, maybe ride a freight train out West. They had played around once too often in the past few months. He looked again, and this time his heart went out to the frightened, desolate, helpless sixteen-year-old girl.

By this time Pa was dressed in his sheepskin coat and had gone out to investigate. "Morlee, what's the trouble? How did you get here? You're freezing. Child! Come in, come in. Let's get you warm."

Then Joe heard the sound of shaking down the iron cookstove as Pa hurried to get the fire going before he called Ma. But his mother had already heard the commotion. He could hear her voice, gentle and comforting. He dressed quickly, his body shaking from more than the cold air.

"Joe, Joe, come down here this instant," his father called from the foot of the stairs. A few minutes later Pa's voice, "Joe! Now!"

"Coming, Pa." Joe came slowly down the steps in his farm-chore clothes. He ambled into the huge, old kitchen and stood gazing from one face to another. Morlee didn't look up. Ma stood with one arm around the shivering girl and her other arm akimbo with hand on hip. She said nothing. Pa was busily stuffing the cookstove with small, split firewood. When he had finished, he turned toward his son. Joe would never forget Pa's deliberate motions. His words were slow and careful.

"Can you tell me why this child says she came to see you? Her folks have packed all her clothes in an apple box, brought her here, and told her they don't want to see her again until you two are married."

Nineteen-year-old Joe looked at his summer playmate. She raised her eyes, and each looked steadily into the other's face. He saw the pain and misery there and, yes, the fear. He turned to his father. "Whatever she told you is probably true, Pa."

Nobody said a word. Each one was staring at the floor. Joe knew his father's hot temper. Finally, with no trace of anger, only regret in his voice, Pa said, "What's done can't be undone. But you can sure do your best to make it right the rest of your life."

Still staring at the floor, Joe heard himself reply, "Yes, Pa, I'll do it."

"Now get out there and get the milking done while the girls get breakfast." Joe willingly escaped to the cowbarn. In a few minutes his two brothers, Chuck and Sam, joined him.

"What's your gal ding here with all her clothes packed in an apple box?" taunted Sam.

"You shut up."

"Aha! Do I know a secret!" chanted Chuck.



As the boys finished the milking, Chuck and Sam were laughing and telling off-color jokes while Joe glowered darkly at them. Back in the big, warm kitchen the three washed up. By that time the family had gathered around the long plank table with benches at either side. Ma sat in her chair nursing Little Baby Joyce. Two-year-old Michael sat in his high chair at the left of his mother. Morlee was seated on the bench at Ma's right. Maggie carried the huge stack of buckwheat cakes to the table while Eileen carried an equally large stack of flannel cakes, those rich, light pancakes which warmed the insides of their bodies as their flannel underwear warmed the outside of each sturdy figure. Janie and Libby, flushed from their cooking, followed with the huge platter of sausages and the warm maple syrup.

After a blessing hurriedly recited by the children in unison, everyone began eating wordlessly. A strange uneasiness inhibited conversation but not appetites. Only Pa spoke. "Janie, me Love, where's me tay?"

"Oh, Pa, I forgot."

"I'll bring it," Libby exclaimed as she hurried to the stove where the teakettle was singing softly. She reached for the small copper-lustre teapot in the warming oven. A teaspoon of Pa's favorite green tea went in first. Then she filled the pot with the boiling water from the kettle. She carried it to him where he sat at the head of the table in his big captain's chair.

"Thank you, Darlin'. You do take good care of your old pa."

Joe furtively watched Morlee. She didn't eat although she had taken a flannel cake and cut it into small bits which she was pushing around on her plate. He himself was not hungry. He couldn't swallow the buckwheats and sausage in front of him.

Chuck and Sam had gone upstairs to dress for the academy which they attended in the village. Janie and Libby had gone upstairs to make beds and tidy up the second floor. Maggie and Eileen were playing with Baby Joyce.

"Put Baby in her cradle and go dress for school," Pa ordered them.

Little Michael was quietly playing with his blocks behind the stove. Ma was eating her delayed breakfast now that Joyce was quiet and happy. Joe rose.

"Sit down," commanded Pa. "I guess this ends your academy days — in the middle of your last year."

"Yes, sir," Joe stared out the window.

Pa continued, "I'll hitch up the team and we three will go to the County Seat to get your license and see the Reverend Moore about the ceremony. We'll have to pick up Pat O'Neill. He has to give his consent to the marriage since Morlee is under age. So are you, young man."

Joe was aware that his bride-to-be flinched when her father's name was mentioned. He wondered if Old Pat had ever beat her. At that moment a flicker of responsibility and protectiveness was born in him. When they were ready to go, Ma appeared.

"I just went and put on my best bib and tucker," she explained. "I'm not going to miss my oldest son's wedding. The girls can take care of the babies until I get back."

All his life Joe would remember the dour face of the minister and his gaunt, tall form as he stood in the sparsely furnished parlor of the manse. As the black-clad figure intoned the words of the ceremony, Joe heard himself repeating, "I, Joseph Alexander Shandy, take thee, Morlee. . ."

Yes, those first years were hard. They had moved way

out west to Oklahoma. Joe had worked as a cowboy until he saved enough money to make the first payment on a section of cheap grazing land. He had stocked the whole 640 acres with five cows and a bull. Morlee stayed on the ranch, caring for the children and keeping an eye on the cattle while he went to Eastern Oklahoma to work as a roustabout in the oilfields where the pay was good. He came home as often as he could, riding the caboose of a freight train. Soon he had earned enough to stock the ranch with a small herd of mixed breeds of beef cattle.

Morlee had been a good wife. He had tried to be kind to her. Gradually they developed a deep caring for one another. The six children had come along to keep them busy. The cattle business had proved to be profitable in the new state. He had bought two other farms. Their first oil well had come in three years before Morlee's death. And he had managed to read law in old Judge Johnson's office.

Yes, it had been a good life even though it was not exactly what he had planned. Always interested in community affairs, he found himself branching out into wider fields. Then two years ago his friends had helped him conduct a successful campaign, and he was elected to the state senate. Not exactly what he had planned, but good nevertheless.

As his thoughts traced events so long past, he slowly became drowsy. He lay back on the pillows and pulled the afghan from the back of the sofa over himself. The next thing he knew, the click of a key in the front door awakened him. Heavens! It was daylight. It must be 8:30. Sarah was always prompt. "Mornin', Senator." Sarah's cheerful black face peered in the doorway. Her unfailing pleasantness always gave him a lift. She had been coming in for fifteen years, yet he had paid little attention to household mechanics while Morlee was there.

"Good Morning, Sarah. I must have fallen asleep here."

"You want I should fix you some breakfas' while you git ready for work?"

"Yes, Sarah. Two soft-boiled eggs with toast and coffee will do I'll be ready in half an hour."

"Doe you want some juice, Senator?"

"Oh, yes."

As he showered, shaved, and dressed, he was thinking of the trip he must make to the capital in order to be there for the afternoon session. He came into the breakfast room clad in a conservative business suit but shod in cowboy boots.

"Thank you, Sarah. What would I do without you?"

"I 'spect you'd jis git somebody else to do for ya." And she left for other parts of the house to begin her cleaning chores.

Joe stayed in the capital all week, absorbed in the business on the senate floor. He was busy reading numerous newspapers and the mountain of letters his secretary handed him each morning. He was also doing some research on the state's water problems.

From habit he headed home on Friday evening. He didn't know why. No one was expecting him. As he unlocked the front door, he heard the telephone ringing — twice, three times, four, five. He answered on the fifth ring just in time to hear the click on the other end. A bit puzzled, he shrugged and went to his desk to check the mail. A few bills, some junk mail, and at the bottom of the stack lay a letter from Little Sister Joyce. Bless my sisters! he thought. They had all written him regularly since the accident. Brothers Chuck, Sam, and Mike phoned him occasionally. He sat down at the desk to read Joyce's letter. It was a rambling message full of family news — a brief

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trip, the kids' schools, plans for Thanksgiving.

Thanksgiving! What am I going to do that day? Maybe I'll spend the day on horseback, riding fences and counting cattle.

Then the telephone rang again. He answered promptly. "Shandy speaking."

"Oh, Dad, I'm glad you're home." It was Linda's voice pouring out her words so fast they tripped over one another. "Dad, will you come to our house for Thanksgiving? Bob says to tell you we'll really be disappointed if you don't come. I just talked with Dena. She and Harvey and the kids can come from Dallas. Jim and Sandra and the boys will try to make it, and maybe some of the others. Will you, Dad? Besides, Bob and I have some special news for you. And we're not going to tell you until you are here!"

"Your enthusiasm impresses me, Baby Daughter. Of course I'll come. What can I bring you?"

"Nothing this time. Just come. After you hear our news, you'll think of something."

As Joe turned away from the telephone, he was smiling.

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In two weeks he would see some of the family. The grandchildren would have changed. He could guess Linda's news — maybe. Now in a happier mood, he wanted to see some of his old-time friends. He went to the Stockman's Cafe for dinner. He could usually count on seeing someone he knew there.

But this evening everything seemed unusually quiet. Only Old Jake from the all-night filling station came in for pie and coffee. "Hello, Senator. Who're you bettin' on to win the game?"

Ah, yes, almost everyone was out of town to see the big football game of the season. How Morlee and he had enjoyed attending all the games when their children were playing! The excitement, the pride in their youngsters, the celebrations afterward — these and all the other family and hometown events had made life brilliant and satisfying though they were not fully appreciative of it at the time. Now he was left with only a hollow feeling. Not conscious that Old Jake's quizzical face was still turned toward his own nor aware that he spoke aloud, Joe exclaimed in a low voice, "Things will never be the same again?"

And they never were.

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— an article about an unlikely seeming Western Oklahoma philanthropist —

# The Town Miser

— by Sheila Cohlma



*Medford Johnson: left at two years of age and right as a young man.*

Occasionally one reads of a wealthy philanthropist donating huge sums of money to benefit mankind. Medford Johnson was an eccentric miser in a small Oklahoma panhandle town but he was no less charitable. He left his entire estate to benefit my hometown.

Medford was "quite an old gentleman"

as my dad would say. But most people in Tyrone said he was crazy, and to a certain extent they may have been right.

Medford worked for my dad in the 1970's as a farmhand. He had worked for several farmers in his later years and was known to be a good hand although sometimes infuriatingly slow and methodical.

He always wore a khaki shirt, worn overalls, and a denim cap over his thick, white hair. His warm brown eyes glowed with a dry, quiet humor.

My family still laughs about his odd habits and ways. We especially remember his mealtimes with us. Once Mom had fixed a large roast with all the trimmings.

After the rest of us had taken a serving from the beef, Medford forked the remaining three pounds of roast onto his plate, poured the remaining gravy over it, scooped mashed potatoes on top, and grinned sheepishly at Mom. He ate every morsel.

Medford was born in Illinois in 1905 and came to Tyrone with his parents one year later. His father had been a championship boxer in Illinois and ran a hardware store in Tyrone. An only child, Medford was known as a bookish, lonely boy who was teased for being a Mama's boy. He remained a loner all his life. He kept to himself, seldom leaving the house except to work and get groceries once or twice a month.

After graduating from Tyrone High School in 1924, he attended Panhandle A & M College at Goodwell. He taught school in the area four years, was a clerk in the First National Bank of Tyrone, and peddled coal during his younger years.

Medford, or M. H. as he liked to be called, lived in an old weatherworn house on the edge of town. The windows were all boarded up, and the yard was overgrown with weeds. The place looked as if it had been abandoned years earlier. There was no running water. He caught rain water in barrels for his laundry and gathered drinking water in five-gallon cans at our house. He felt being hooked up to the city water was an extravagance.

Those people lucky enough to be invited over could sort through and buy his antiques. Dad had bought several things and was asked to bring my brother Don and me over. While Dad drove us over in the pickup, he explained that we needed to learn the basics of bargaining to get the best buys. I was determined to show Dad I knew how to bargain with the old man.

Dad honked as we drove into the weedy

driveway. As we pounded at the weatherworn door, Medford peered out behind the old dusty crocheted curtains. My brother and I waited with apprehension as he clicked open the seven locks. Seven locks on a door was very odd at this time as many people in town still never locked their doors. We were both "pretty spooked" about going into the local "haunted house." But being 15, I felt I should appear brave in front of the 12-year-old. After all, he was just a kid.

As we stood in the dimly lighted kitchen, Medford clicked shut the seven locks and replaced the knife he kept wedged in between the door and facing. It was hard to see by the feeble light produced by one small bulb, but M. H. didn't believe in wasting anything. Especially electricity. When leaving for work he turned off all the electricity to the house at the breaker box.

In the dusty parlor were his antiques and bookcases full of dozens of old books, many of which are dated back to the 1890's. I was fascinated by these and gingerly leafed through several. There were volumes on philosophy, religion, history, vitamins, and self-improvement. I asked if the books were also for sale.

"No. That would be like selling my friends. I still read them over and over again," he replied. He was a very intelligent person.

In one corner of the room was a magnificent grand piano with its ivory keys and immaculate condition.

The antiques were arranged neatly on an assortment of old tables. Almost everything on the tables was in the original boxes. A colorful sugar bowl and creamer caught my eye, and I asked casually (so I wouldn't appear too interested), "How much for these?" "How much you want to offer?" Medford's eyes began to glisten.

He dearly loved to haggle over prices.

"Oh, I don't know. I couldn't go over three dollars." I was certain he would want much more. Boy, was I going to get a bargain!

"Sold! Three dollars!" Medford grinned broadly and laughed. "Dick, you're going to have to teach the girl how to buy antiques. Three dollars! Sold!"

I was embarrassed. Dad and Don were beginning to snicker. I could only hope the faded, worn carpet would swallow me up. As I paid for the sugar bowl and creamer, Medford teased me about my red face and laughed again about the "bargain." Later Dad confessed the old man had set the price on the set earlier at \$1.50.

Years later Dad told me Medford often asked if I still had the "high dollar tea set." The old man seemed to get a chuckle every time the subject came up.

Medford died in October of 1977. Dad dropped by to check on him and found him dead sitting in his favorite chair. His handwritten will, which named Dad as executor and mentioned the existence of some government bonds, was nearby. My parents searched the house later after the funeral and found a locked metal box in the back of a closet. Inside this box was a smaller locked box. Upon opening the last box, they were astounded to find stacks of old government savings bonds amounting to \$83,000.

As the will stipulated, the bonds were left on deposit with the U.S. Treasury Department and the interest is sent to the city of Tyrone. Medford's house, personal belongings, and lots were sold for over \$12,000, which was put in the city treasury. Medford left all he had ever owned to the city of Tyrone — basically to a town of strangers he had never met. Indeed, Medford H. Johnson was quite an old gentleman.

## THAT COLD SPELL OF '33

— by Idena McFadin Clark

Once, in a springtime long ago,  
These Chinese Elm trees along the walk  
Were almost too young to cast a shade.  
But I remember how brightly green  
Their young leaves were  
In the spring of '33.  
That was the year a cruel wind  
Blew down upon us from the frozen north.  
(That springtime storm was fiercer  
Than many a winter gale.)

Next morning, all the new young leaves  
Hung limp and dark upon the trees.  
Their brittle forms looked like something  
Hammered out in ancient times

From a strange and star-born bronze.

But finally, the sun found a way to shine again.  
The fragrant, warming air  
Was soft and sweet. Tulips grew  
And bloomed. The iris, too.  
And all the trees were green again.  
(The small dead leaves  
Lay forgotten in the dust,  
But the trees, themselves, had lived.)

Fifty years have passed since then.  
And all the elm trees are green once more.  
But I pray to God there will never be  
Another cold and frightening storm  
Like the one in '33 — when we were young.

### Another Cuelho — *by Leroy Thomas*

Another of Artie Cuelho's books has been published: Blackjack No. 12 from Southern Appalachia Mountains — STEP AROUND THE MOUNTAIN. Cuelho's dedication reads: "To these Southern Appalachia Mountain contributors who made me feel at home in their region and who gave me a part of their personal heritage and pride."

There's no substitute for reading the book, but the Table of Contents reveals a great deal: I. Hill-And-Holler Portraits II. Mountain Humor III. From Darkness They Come IV. And He Walked with Me

V. Home Place.

In STEP AROUND THE MOUNTAIN, we find universal experiences that are thus applicable to a theme like Western Oklahoma Pride. We see here a range of character in both people and landscape. We observe how family ties bind people together in a variety of ways. We find familiar sights, sounds, attitudes, and the beauty of nature.

The book is available for \$4.35 from Seven Buffaloes Press — P.O. Box 249; Big Timber, Montana 59011.

### Historical Keys

— *by Opal Hartsell Brown*

SOUTHWEST OKLAHOMA KEYS by Willie (Hardin) Bivins, Polly (Lewis) Murphy, and Jewell (Rone) Tankersley for Southwest Oklahoma Geneological Society. Printer, Metro Press, Oklahoma City. A Diamond Jubilee Project of 551 pages with hard cover.

From royalty to slaves, they came in waves to Southwest Oklahoma. It was 1889 and the 1890's and land was at the end of the journeys. These frontiersmen, their ancestors, and descendants compose the 7,400 individuals listed alphabetically in the Pedigree Section of this book.

The birthplace of these people includes about every state, with Oklahoma and Texas leading the list. Of the numerous foreign countries, England leads the list.

Other countries of birth include France, Germany, Japan, Guam, Denmark, Russia, Norway, Canada, Lebanon, Austria, Mexico, Sweden, Barbados, Ireland, Romania, Scotland, "Holy Land," Czechoslovakia, Puerto Rico, Italy, even Afghanistan, and probably others.

Places of burial include one "shipwrecked near Wales."

The Album Section of 127 pages introduces many of these people, some of their homes, and their professions: farmers,

soldiers, merchants. . . Street scenes tell of early days, and goats point to fun times. Some pictures go back as far as photography. The birth of one individual was 1814.

The Biographical Section, some of which includes pictures, dips stories from the hold of a ship, the court of a king, the battlefield of the world. It tells of adventure, hardships, pleasures.

There is a brief history of Southwest Oklahoma's twenty-three counties, some of which have their background in Indian Territory. There are also places to find records and other pertinent information on geneology and family histories.

In addition to all that, there are an alphabetized index and three pages for records.

The editors have done a superb job on a colossal undertaking. Besides recording important information, they and the contributors have made the reader say: "Who would want fiction, when detailed history is so exciting?"

These books may be purchased from Jewell R. Tankersley, 1212 Smith Avenue, Lawton, Ok. 73501 for \$37.50, which includes postage.

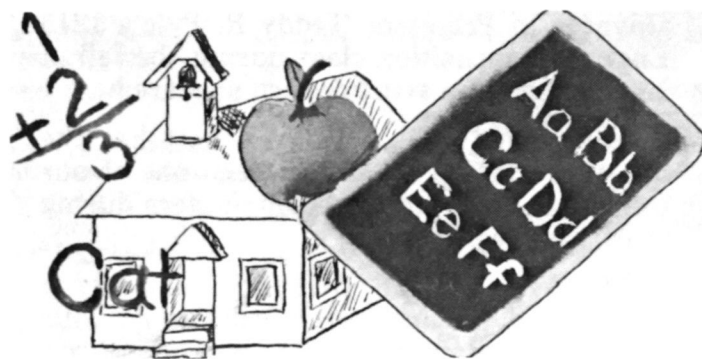


## SPECIAL ITEMS

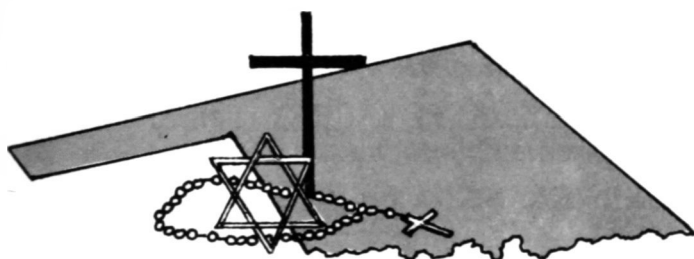
## FUTURE ISSUES



**WINTER, 1983.** This issue will have the theme "Oklahoma Athletics." Submissions may deal with athletes and athletic events. Deadline: November 1, 1983.



**SPRING, 1984.** This issue — "Oklahoma Teachers" — will give our readers a chance to give deserved honor to outstanding Western Oklahoma educators.



**SUMMER, 1984.** "Western Oklahoma Religion" is a theme that should draw many interesting submissions from our readers. The deadline for submissions is May 1, 1984.



**FALL, 1984.** The theme for this issue is "Western Oklahoma's Colorful Past." Surely there are some interesting tales that have never been told before in writing. Submissions deadline is August 1, 1984.



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

Issue themes that have been projected past Winter, 1984 are: Western Oklahoma's Promise (Spring, 1985), Frontier Western Oklahoma (Summer, 1985), Western Oklahoma Artists and Writers (Fall, 1985), Famous Western Oklahomans (Winter, 1985), and Western Oklahoma Firsts (Spring, 1986).

New submission deadlines (effective August 1, 1983) are: October 1 (Winter Issue), January 1, (Spring Issue), April 1 (Summer Issue), and July 1 (Fall Issue).

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## SPECIAL ITEMS

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### AUTHORS WHOSE WORKS APPEAR IN THIS ISSUE

KERRI BEAMAN and SENEAL MORRIS are SOSU students who did research on the shivaree in Professor Teddy R. Pyle's 1213 English Composition class during the fall of 1982 and did the article which appears here.

OPAL HARTSELL BROWN now has the last name Garrity; she has been one of our foremost supporters and contributors during these past two years.

GLADYS TOLER BURRIS, formerly a teacher at OSU and in the Stillwater Public Schools, is a daughter-in-law of A. H. Burris — the subject of her article. Mrs. Burris, an active member of the OWFI, is an honored writer in state writing circles.

YVONNE CARPENTER has lived in Western Oklahoma all her life. She has been a teacher, a newspaper writer, a community theater participant — and is presently a freelance writer, mother, and wife.

R. R. CHAPMAN of Arapaho boasts of ninety-plus years in this area and is a valued WESTVIEW contributor.

THELMA CLAMPITT, prior to her retirement in 1972, taught in the SOSU Language Arts Department. She presently lives in Ada.

IDENA MCFADIN CLARK is a resident of Norman and a member of the OWFI. She has been published once before in our journal.

SHEILA COHLMIA, an employee at 3-M in Weatherford, is formerly from Tyrone.

MARGARET FRIEDRICH is a retired teacher from Clinton. She's an active member of the Trinity Lutheran Church, the Custer County Retired Teachers' Association, and the Weatherford Wordhandlers.

STONEY HARDCASTLE is an envied opponent in writing contests. He teaches Creative Writing at Eastern Oklahoma State College in Wilburton and is in demand as a writers' workshop leader.

DIANE HOLCOMB lives in Sperry, Oklahoma; she's a freelance writer and a real-estate agent.

VERA HOLDING is a longtime staff member of the OU Professional Writers' Short Course. Formerly of Tipton, she now lives in Norman.

PAT KOURT, a SOSU alumna, lives and teaches in Thomas, where her husband operates a pharmacy.

DR. R. SAMUEL LACKEY is an Assistant Professor of Philosophy and English at SOSU.

ELSIE LANG teaches Composition, Elementary Education English Methods, and Women's Literature at SOSU.

SHERYL L. NELMS is much in demand as a leader of poetry workshops since she is the OWFI's most prolific and most published poet.

JOANNA THURSTON ROPER has taught English in Oklahoma schools for the last three decades — most recently for twelve years in the SOSU Language Arts Department.

law called to say that he would turn in her homestead exemption when he submitted his, she informed him that she would take care of it herself. She evidently forgot and later had to ask him to pay her property taxes because they were much higher than the previous year. But she never liked to "eat crow"; so she made him sorry for saying, "I told you so." Each time the subject was mentioned, Mary would cut him down with her sharp tongue, refusing to take any of the blame.

By her mid-eighties, Mary's eyesight was failing and she had diabetes, which required a special diet and daily medication. When she forgot to take her insulin, she sometimes went into a coma. But she stubbornly refused to tell her children about her health problems, afraid that they would move her into a rest home. Finally, she passed out one day while she was ironing, burning herself on the iron

in her fall. Then one of her daughters took her home with her, but Mary was so disagreeable during her visit that the daughter had to promise to return her to her home as soon as the burn healed.

As Mary's health and eyesight continued to worsen, her children decided that she could no longer live alone. Yet none of them could live with her. So Mary was moved into Hodges' Nursing Home in Elk City where she lived the last five years of her life.

At first, Mary hated her new home, arguing vehemently with her children that she'd rather live in a tent by the side of the road. Gradually, however, she adjusted and enjoyed watching the ducks swimming in a pond located on the grounds. But she refused to watch television (probably she couldn't see the picture anyway) or to associate with the other residents who were, according to

her, having clandestine affairs. Nor would she participate in the group activities of the Home. For example, once when all the other people were busy shelling peas, Mary escaped to the duck pond, using the excuse, "They're afraid I won't see the worms."

Although her eyes and ears were failing her, Mary's mind was alert to the end, and she loved to entertain visitors with stories from her past. Once when one of her grandchildren saw a picture of Mary and Will in an album and asked a question about it, Mary suddenly bristled and said, "Once Fronie [Will's sister] accused me of putting flour on my face. I told her that I never wore face powder and I caught a better man than any of them did!"

Mary died at age ninety-one, but her spirit lives on in her numerous descendants who inherited her dominant traits, both good and bad.

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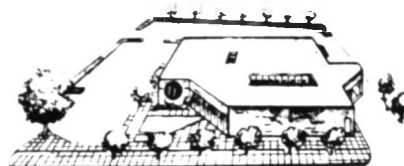
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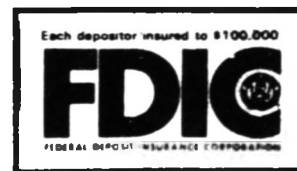
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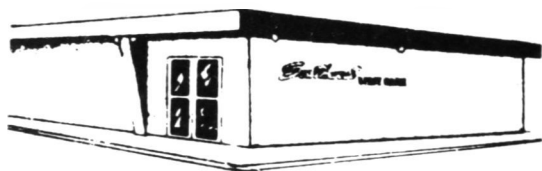
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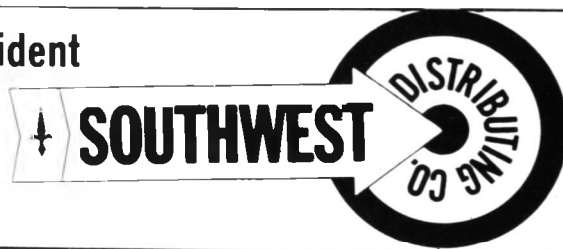
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