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WESTVIEW

A JOURNAL OF WESTERN OKLAHOMA

VOLUME II

Published Quarterly by Southwestern Center for Regional Studies

NUMBER 1

FALL, 1982

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WEATHERFORD, OK.

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PHOTO BY DONNA PORTER

PAINTING BY MIKE JOHNSON

Agriculture — Great Natural Resource
Farmers Big and Small

Farm Sale
Farming — The Big Chance

Cotton Revolution
Granny's Tips

FOREWORD

Lately we have had a scarcity of submissions. We invite all of our readers--especially those who are also writers-- to look carefully at our "Future Issues" feature. We don't have a heavy backlog of submissions; therefore, we need additional works for the remainder of our projected issues. Such support will motivate us to do further projecting. Everyone should act quickly and not let someone else get a jump ahead. Those who send materials, however, should remember that we like neat submissions. We accept photocopies but not carbon copies. We insist on a coversheet so that a contributor's anonymity may be protected. Even if a work is done by someone in a place of elevated authority, I don't want the Board members to know his identity when they make their assessment. So everyone else has the same chance as Ronald Reagan, Donald Hamm, or Leroy Thomas. The coversheet is to include name, address, telephone number, journal theme, and journal category.

Now that our former Art Director, Pat Lazelle Stewart, has assumed other duties, we also welcome help with illustrations. We have, of course, been fortunate in securing the assistance of a few area artists. We are especially grateful to Linda Fickling, Kevin and Donna Hill, Cindy Kaiser Moore, JoAnn Medders, Mike Toahty, Dr. R. Samuel Lackey, and Ginger Rader. They have been most cooperative.

Paste-ups are another matter; therefore, this rookie requests your good thoughts, your tolerance, and your mediation — and would be remiss not to thank the Weatherford Press people for their helpful tolerance.

We're awestruck when we realize that this is our fifth issue; at times we wondered if we would last through the first one, but now we are into our second year. We extend our gratitude to everyone who has believed in us and has done or said something positive. We hope for your continued trust and support.

— Leroy Thomas

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JUST HANGING AROUND WAITING FOR HARVEST: Eight-month old Jodi Langley of Sidney, Nebraska, guards her custom harvester grandfather's combine while the crew waits for the wheat to ripen and dry in Buffalo, OK.

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PHOTO BY CAROLYN LEONARD



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ON THE COVER: Front — from a painting by Mike Johnson, formerly of Weatherford and now a fashion photographer with the Turtle Creek Studios of Dallas. Back — from a painting by Dr. Leroy Folks, a Weatherford native who is now chairman of the Department of Statistics at OSU. Photography by Donna Porter, SOSU English major. Both paintings are now owned by Noble and Rachel Amen of Weatherford; their cooperation is gratefully acknowledged.

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; Managing 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.

Harvesting cotton during the 1980's is a lark. No more three months of human bondage to the duck sacks and all their ramifications. Numerous \$70,000 machines are rolling through Oklahoma's 570,000 acres of "white gold" in thirty counties this autumn, sucking up two to four rows at a time.

Even though their speed is only two and a half to near three miles an hour, the machines gather a bale of 1,500 pounds in a relatively few minutes, depending on the abundance of yield.

Engineers bask in air conditioned or heated cabs, according to the weather, as they sit on cushioned bucket seats and watch through mirrors as "white gold" pours into baskets behind. Furthermore, they can listen to the radio or tapes of their favorite musicians.

With lights, engineers can operate into darkness until the air gets damp. After that, cotton becomes too tough to gather.

When bins are full, operators dump the loads into trailers, which transport several bales at a time to the gins. In some instances, the newer module builders replace the trailers to catch and compress up to twenty bales at once. The modules stand like rows of rectangular icebergs until trucks move in, hoist them aboard and take them to the gins.

With such robots these days, one person can farm thousands of acres and gather hundreds of bales each season, never touching the cotton. The sad news is the falling prices.

In 1980, cotton reached 77 cents a pound. October 1, 1981, it reached 53.95 cents, with the overall price ranging between 36 and 45 cents. Even with a 15 percent reduction in acreage, members of the industry are not projecting an increase in price. They are hoping it doesn't continue to drop.

Regardless of the market, the yields become the farmers' "mother lodes." Of some 30 counties producing cotton, Jackson ranks first, according to Oklahoma Department of Agriculture for 1980, with Tillman and Washita ranking second and third. Tillman, Washita, and Kiowa plant more acres than Jackson, but get less yield.

The picture was different in the "old days," prior to the 1940s. Almost every farmer in the southern part of Oklahoma and some farther north raised a few acres of cotton. Practically all members of the households went to the fields, where babies were placed on shaded pallets or pulled on the sacks.

Cont. on p. 11

linda fickling

illustration by

olution in cotton harvest

BY

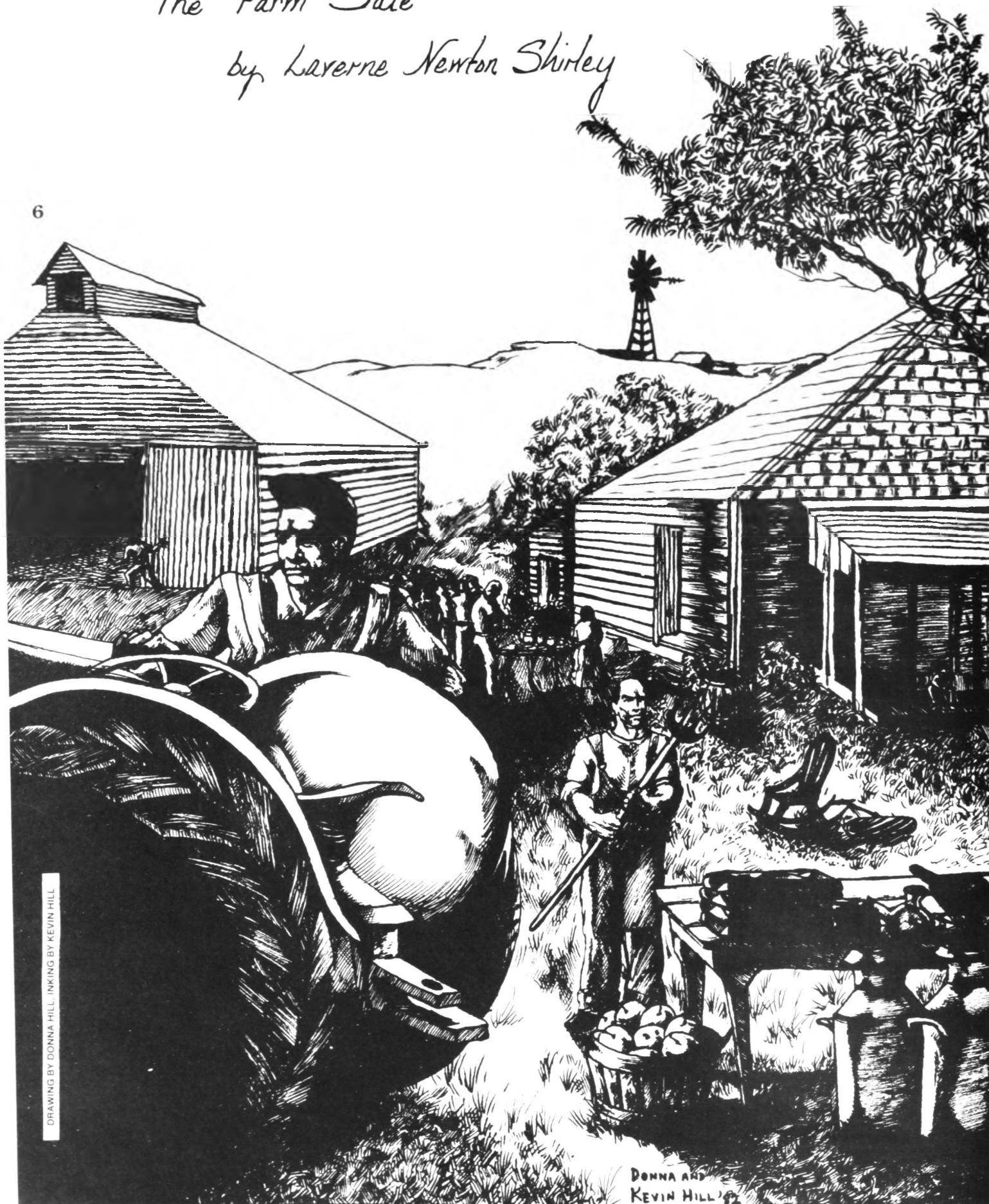
OPAL HARTSELL BROWN



The Farm Sale

by Laverne Newton Shirley

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DRAWING BY DONNA HILL. INKING BY KEVIN HILL

DONNA AND
KEVIN HILL

"Dad, you've got to slow down or you won't be around much longer." This was the advice from his doctor son, Paul.

"Slow down?" gray-haired Jake snorted, "How do you think I'd get any farming done? If I get any slower, I'll have to quit as I'm always behind as it is!"

"That's just it, Dad, You'll have to quit farming. Your heart won't hold up to the lifting and straining of farm work. That flat on the tractor yesterday just about did you in."

"I've taken a hundred tractor wheels off in my days. It was more the heat than getting that wheel off and loaded. Humidity was high."

"Yeah, it was a humid day. But, Dad, you're seventy and not forty. These jobs are going to be much too strenuous on you each year. A job that was a breeze ten years ago is too much, now."

"Now, son, how am I going to live if I quit farming? I can't sit in the living room and watch television and expect the cattle and alfalfa to grow themselves. We'd soon have to leave for the tax collector would move us out!"

"I'll tell you how you'd live," said Paul as his dark brown eyes became stern with determination. "Pretty well for the rest of your days. Let's see, good alfalfa and wheat land in the Washita bottoms sells for what? Eight or nine hundred dollars an acre, doesn't it? Machinery and cattle would bring something like forty thousand. You and mother would live well the rest of your lives on two hundred thousand dollars."

"Sell?" Jake had stormed; his tall, muscular frame became taut with anger. His brown eyes flamed and he drew his gray shaggy eyebrows down into a scowl. "I'm not going to sell a foot of this land. It's been my dream to build it up perfect so you and Patricia could have it. I'll die right here on this place!"

"That's exactly what will happen to you, Dad; ten or perhaps twenty years before you should. You and mother have worked hard all your lives. Nothing would make me happier than for you to live out your lives at ease."

"Don't you want the farm?" Jake asked in hurt amazement.

"No, Dad. I'm a doctor and not a farmer. Patricia and Bob have made themselves a life on the West Coast; and besides your son-in-law doesn't know an Angus from a Massey-Ferguson," laughed Paul.

Helen Moore had listened to her husband's and son's argument and had known her son was right. She knew Jake's objection to selling and retiring was not being stubborn for stubbornness sake, but the love of the farm he had labored on for nearly fifty years. Through lean and good years he had worked hard, paid for the land, built it into a productive farm, and developed one of the state's best Shorthorn herds.

It had taken the rest of the summer and into November for Helen to convince Jake that Paul was right. The neighbors and Jake's preacher said Paul was right, also. A couple near heart attacks convinced him they might be right.

"Doggone, if I don't hate to admit I'm getting old!" he had complained to Helen.

Helen smiled sympathetically at Jake. Her clear gray eyes rested kindly on Jake's silver hair, and she remembered how black it had been. Her own brown hair had grayed, too; but she had few wrinkles for a woman nearing seventy.

PERSPECTIVES

Helen set a platter of bacon and eggs on the table midway between the two plates on the table. The toaster on the cabinet clicked. She hurried to remove the golden toast and spread it with soft yellow butter. Her mind was not on the buttering of the toast, but on the day ahead of her. She wondered if it would be sunny or misty and cold as yesterday had been. The dampness and chill would keep some people home—especially the women.

After setting the toast on the table, she went to the east window to see if the sky was still overcast. To her surprise, the sun was coloring the sky a brilliant orange.

"You're what the doctored orderd," she said to the unseen sun. Her mind went fleetingly to Paul. She wondered if he would be able to leave his office in Chickasha to come to the sale.

Turning from the window, she frowned at the food on the table. It would be cold if Jake didn't come in from the barn chores soon. Maybe she should call him, she thought, for there were several things to do before sale time.

As she reached for the door knob, she saw Jake's silhouette against the sky. She dropped her hand from the knob and stepped closer to the glass. She saw his stooped shoulders and how the flesh hung around his jaws and neck in folds. She saw the sadness in his eyes as he looked out over fields and pastures.

Helen's heart ached for Jake. It was going to be harder for him than for her. For several years, she had realized they couldn't continue farming much longer.

Helen tried to be cheerful during breakfast. She talked about the sale, the new house they had bought in town, and which of their neighbors would likely be at the sale. Jake scarcely commented. She gave up conversation and finished the meal in silence.

8 As soon as Jake left the table, Helen washed the few dishes, swept the kitchen floor, and straightened the bed coverings. The two men, whom she had hired to move the extra pieces of furniture she wouldn't need in the new house out into the yard, arrived. She pointed to the furniture and watched to see that they handled it carefully. The porch was crowded with boxes, tables of extra dishes, crocks, stone jars, and innumerable odds and ends she had wanted to discard.

Before the men could finish moving, cars began to arrive. The first couple to come through the yard gate was Hazel and Felix Scott.

"Good morning, Hazel," Helen called, "A nice day isn't it?"

"It's pretty cold to be standing around at a sale. Folks won't come unless they really want to buy something. Don't count on a big crowd," replied Hazel. Her eyes roamed over the sale items.

Poor Hazel, thought Helen, always peevish and complaining about everything and everyone. Hazel worked long hours in the fields and helping Felix with the livestock. She seldom went anywhere except to church and to Farm Bureau meetings. She and Felix bought farm after farm until it seemed they owned half the county, and they never had children. Helen had known Hazel since all three of them attended the same rural school.

Hazel, with wisps of gray hair blowing across her broad florrid face, walked up to the porch where Helen stood. Felix ambled toward the barn to look at the machinery and cattle.

"Heard you were going to sell some of your pretty quilts. How much do you suppose they will sell for?" Hazel asked.

Helen smiled, remembering that cost was Hazel's usual approach. "Yes, I've put out ten to sell. Mae Burns thinks they'll sell for fifty to seventy-five dollars; and she ought to know for she goes around to sales and craft shops."

"That's too high!" Hazel declared.

Helen smiled at her, remembering Hazel always de-

valued what she wanted to buy but expected more than the worth from what she had to sell. She turned her attention to other arrivals.

The day was sunny but accompanied by a brisk wind. Both sides of the road as far as the orchard and down to the meadow were lined with cars and pickups. The men wore mackinaws, and the women wore their long coats and thick head scarves tied under their chins. Many farm men brought their wives; some men came alone or with other men. Some men wanted to buy certain items while others came to see what was being sold and for how much.

The closest friends, women with whom Helen belonged to extension club and church, clustered about her. The men gathered around Jake. They had all been neighbors for years. They had watched one another's children grow up and leave home. They had sorrowed with one another over family deaths. They had helped one another with sick animals and to get hay in ahead of a rain. They were close, for they shared common problems and joys.

Helen tried to be cheerful and told the women about the new house. She asked about their children and admired grandchildren's pictures. She told the news of her own families. She listened to the talk about the community events and the church. Not once did she voice regret at selling the farm.

She kept searching the clusters of men with her eyes to locate Jake. She hoped Paul could get out to the sale to be with his dad. She could take it all but it was going to be hard on Jake. She wished the auctioneer would hurry and get started before the nine o'clock schedule.

On the appointed hour, the auctioneer stepped upon the porch and began ringing a hand bell and chanted, "Yaw'll come! Yaw'll come!" followed by a long rigamarole of nonsensical words.

The women gathered around the porch while the men drifted up from the barn to stand behind. The household goods were to be sold first. The auctioneer held up a rocking chair with a needle point back and seat covering. "This is a real antique chair. Been in the family for generations. It has rocked a hundred babies to sleep and is still a good chair. What am I bid for this lovely antique chair. Someone say twenty.' Someone say twenty! Twenty I got! Someone make it twenty-five! Twenty-five! Twenty-five I got. Do I hear a thirty? Thirty? Thirty—" on and on he chanted.

The chair sold for \$85.50.

"My goodness!" Helen declared to herself. "Nearly eighty-six dollars! I ordered it out of Sears for twenty dollars the year Paul was born. Generations! I hope no one thinks I told the auctioneer that!"

The lovely pieced and appliqued quilts went fast and high. Her Double Wedding Ring quilt sold for a hundred dollars to a pretty blonde woman wearing a leather coat and green turban. She was a stranger.

When Helen's Rose of Sharon appliqued quilt was offered, Hazel began bidding at twenty dollars. A neighbor raised the bid to twenty-five. Every time the woman made a bid, Hazel would raise the bid fifty cents. Hazel's plain face beamed as she took the beautiful creation from the auctioneer and paid the clerk \$75.50.

In two hours, the household goods were sold.

As the auctioneer moved the crowd over to begin selling an assortment of steel posts, leftover rolls of barbed wire, grease guns, and hand tools, Helen saw Paul coming. She felt a flood of relief. She smiled as she watched him in his long dark blue overcoat thread his way among the people toward her. He nodded and smiled at those he knew. Some of them were his patients.

"He's so smart and handsome," Helen thought proudly. "I've done a good job with my children."

Paul came up to her, put his arm around her waist, and hugged her. He spoke to the women nearby and Helen noted that he was always mannerly. He smelled clean and

slightly antiseptic. It was good to have him near them today, she thought.

"How's Dad doing?" he asked.

"It's hard on him. He's so quiet. He's over there," she pointed.

"How are you?"

"Me? Oh, I'm doing fine!" she hastily replied and smiled as brightly as she could.

"Five years from now, you'll be glad you did this, Mom. You and Dad are going to have many more years together. This farm work would get him in a year or two."

"I know," Helen admitted. "It's the giving up things I've used and loved--like this farm. Many people have done it before me and I can, too. The preacher said I couldn't take it with me, anyway," she laughed. In spite of herself, her eyes sparkled with tears.

She and Paul wound their way over to Jake's side. She put her arm through his and felt his body tremble. It's not the cold, she thought.

A look of relief spread over Jake's face when he saw Paul. Having his son at his side today is worth more than medicine, Helen thought.

After the greetings and how-are-yous were said and questions were answered about the grandchildren, they gave their attention to the auctioneer and the bidding. Everything was going high.

Helen overheard several men, who were not interested in buying tools, discussing the cattle, "I'd say the cows will go from \$700-\$1,000. They're good cows," one farmer said.

"Yeh, they are. Jake's been improving this herd for years. Really the best bunch of Shorthorns in this section of the state."

"Wouldn't doubt it a bit. That bull is the best Shorthorn ever in this area."

"Next to that'n Rufe Medlock had back in the forties!" spoke up an oldster in a high defensive voice.

"I don't remember him," the man explained.

"He was the best'un!" the old man's voice rose to a higher note.

"I wouldn't know about that."

"He dang sure was! I know. I helped Rafe unload 'im when he brought 'im to his place!" the old man defended; his voice had gotten more shrill.

The other men chose to ignore him and took up another topic of conversation.

At twelve o'clock, the auctioneer stopped selling for lunch. All the people rushed to the tables set up by the church women on the south side of the house out of the wind. Paper plates of baked ham, baked beans, slaw, and thick slices of homemade bread were bought for \$1.25. Ham sandwiches sold for 75¢. Apple pie and scalding hot coffee were in great demand.

Helen could eat little of what was on her plate. Jake wasn't hungry, he said; but he drank three styrofoam cups of hot coffee. Paul was the only one with a healthy appetite.

At one o'clock sharp, the cattle began selling. Helen, Jake, and Paul stood in the great circle with the other folks and watched as the cows were led out and sold. Helen's mind wasn't on the money they sold for, but more as to the buyers. These were good cows; she and Jake had great pride in them.

When the bull was led out, Helen and Paul moved closer to Jake. Helen looked closely at Jake and saw a tear in the corner of his eye. The folds of his jaws sagged even more and his face looked gray. She felt his body tremble and saw his hands shake.

The bull saw Jake and pulled at the halter trying to go to him. Paul put his arm around his father's shoulders. While the bidding was going on, the bull kept looking at Jake. He sold for \$2,000. He kept trying to turn his head to look at Jake as he was led away.

"He was worth every cent of that!" declared a farmer behind them.

"If I was a Shorthorn man, I'd of bought him," a second man said.

"He's a good 'un all right; but not as good as that'n Rafe Medlock had!" It was the old man again.

Hazel and Felix were standing close to Helen and her folks. Hazel told Felix loudly, "They sure sold for more than they would have brought on the market! No cattle are worth more than market prices!"

Margaret Turner leaned closer to Helen and whispered, "Hazel thinks only of the money value of everything. I'd hate to be like her."

Helen thought she could have said many things in Hazel's defense but doubted she could have changed Margaret's opinion.

"It's three o'clock, ladies and gentlemen! Let's get this farm sold and go home!" the auctioneer shouted. He was standing on the porch again. With his arm, he swept the farm area, "Let's don't start this bidding out low! Let's save some time and get out of the cold."

"I'm not telling you a thing you don't know when I tell you this is the best two quarter sections in this community. Yes, siree! Excellent improved pastures. Good firm comfortable house. Barns in excellent condition. Ladies and gentlemen, this farm has been loved and cared for better than you have your own mother!"

A ripple of laughter went through the crowd.

The auctioneer began his chanting and a bid of \$400 an acre was quickly offered. Bids came fast, upping the price by \$25 and \$50 until a bid of \$700 was reached. The auctioneer pleaded and cajoled. The going-going-going was usually said before a reluctant \$25 would be upped.

The people almost held their breaths. Many glanced at Felix Scott wondering why he didn't bid. He usually bought every farm that was auctioned off in the county. He kept his eyes on the ground.

The final bid of \$975 was made by a stranger. He was a well-dressed man with a small, neat mustache. The blonde woman wearing the leather coat who had bought the Wedding Ring quilt stood beside him.

The price was good. Neighbors and friends crowded around Helen and Jake, shaking their hands and congratulating them on the good price their farm sold for.

Many people went over to get acquainted with the new owner and find out if they would be neighbors. They wouldn't. He was buying the land for a large company that owned many tracts across the state.

The numerous buyers quickly loaded their purchases and went home. Paul said he'd have to go in order to make his hospital rounds.

"I'll get supper on the table. I'm sure you're hungry since you ate no dinner," said Helen.

"I could eat," Jake replied. "Maybe we ought to go to town to eat as you're tired."

"The women gave me all the left over ham and baked beans they didn't sell. Even a whole apple pie. I'll fix something to go with it. Want some hot tea?"

"Rather have coffee," Jake answered.

Paul wanted his father to cut down on his coffee drinking. Why not, Helen thought, this one time won't hurt him that much.

They were sitting down to eat when they heard a light knock on the kitchen door. They looked at each other.

"I'll go," Helen offered.

There stood Hazel and Felix. Helen was so surprised she couldn't think to invite them in. She stammered. "Why, Hazel, we thought everyone had gone home by now!"

"Could we talk to you and Jake?" Hazel looked pleadingly at Helen.

"Of course you can! You and Felix come in. We are just getting ready to eat. There's plenty, for the church women left enough for days. Sit down here with Jake."

Hazel and Felix acted embarrassed and awkward. "We don't mean to intrude, but we want to talk to you," Hazel said shyly while Felix nodded his head in agreement.

PERSPECTIVES

"Farm Sale," cont.

Hazel took a sip of coffee and set the cup down and began talking, "Me and Felix are getting up in years, too, you remember. Felix's back is bad and the doctor says it can't hold out much longer. Arthritis is botherin' me so I hurt all time. We don't have any children to leave our land to, we been thinking of selling like you folks have done."

Felix spoke for the first time, "A man can't enjoy his land and stock when his back hurts so bad he can't stand it to take care of 'em." Hazel nodded in agreement that time.

"You're right, Felix; but we all get to that place sometime. When we get too old to be stewards of the land, God expects us to move over for younger people to take over," Jake said.

"So that's the way it is, now," thought Helen amusedly, "after all the struggle Paul and I had getting him to sell. He sees his stewardship has come to an end."

Hazel went on, "There's a new house just been built that Felix and me looked at. It's right behind the one you folks bought. I--we are just wondering if you'd care if we bought it and would be your neighbors?"

Helen was so taken aback she couldn't reply. She saw the pleading looks on their faces. She knew they would feel more secure if there were others close they knew.

She felt hot tears sting her eyes as she put out her hand and covered Hazel's. "Oh, Hazel, we have known each other since we were children. Of course, we would love for you and Felix to be our neighbors. We won't get so lonesome with you living close."

Tears rolled down Hazel's weathered cheeks. Felix blew his nose.

PHOTO — COURTESY OF JOHN DEERE COMPANY



The mechanical picker today, with one man at the wheel

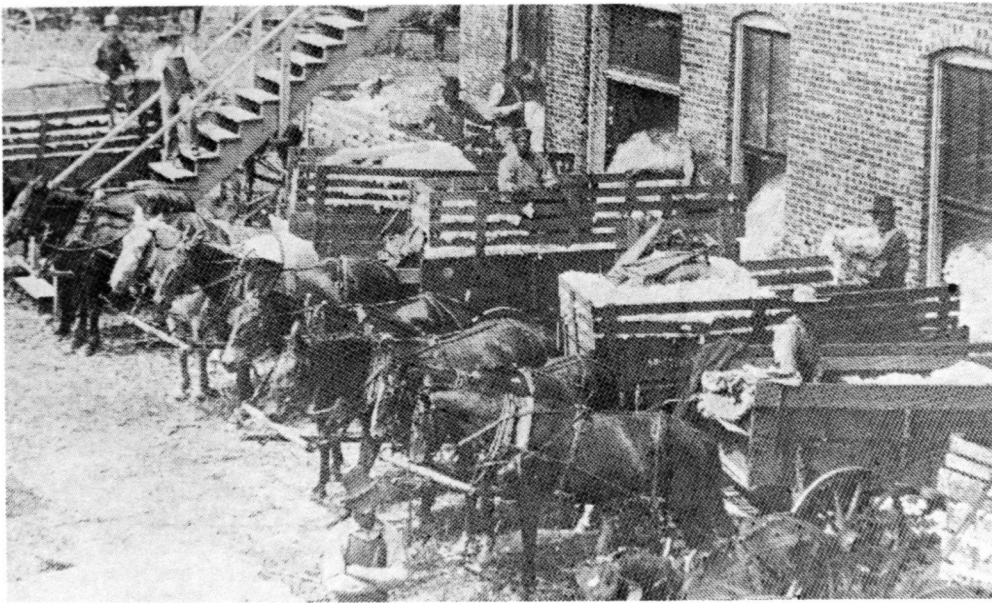
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PHOTO — COURTESY OF KIOWA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



Jesse and Nancy Brown's cotton crop near Snyder, OK in 1902 (with a baby on a cotton sack)

PHOTO — COURTESY OF KIOWA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



Farmers lined up with cotton in Lone Wolf, OK to dispose of their cotton during the early part of this century

"Cotton Revolution," cont.

Up and down the rows pickers bent or crawled, plucking one or two bolls at a time from sticky burs. Their backs ached and their knees smarted until they became calloused. Their fingers sore and sometimes bleeding, they occasionally succumbed to "dew poison."

When pickers' sacks were full, they hoisted them upon their shoulders and trudged half a mile to the scales for weighing. . . 40, 50, 60 pounds. The sacks were lifted up the wheels and over the sideboards of the wagons, emptied, and the cotton packed by trampling. Children delighted in that job.

An average family of four could pick a bale in about a week, and what fun it was to dress in "Sunday clothes," climb aboard a wagon, and settle down on a white heap to rock away to town. They had "killed a buffalo," and it was time to "feast" soul and body.

Prices were better then, in accordance with the rest of the economy, than they were in 1981. In 1905, a first bale of the season sold for 12 cents a pound. By 1907, it was 15 cents, and in 1923, it was 23 cents. Those prices were lower for most of the remaining seasons, but enjoyment was the same.

The cotton ginned and sold, the heads of households paid debts and rent on farms, bought necessities, and saved a little for winter clothes. They distributed a few nickles for luxuries: ice cream, coconut topped cookies, chewing gum. . . On rare occasions, they all saw a sideshow: a two-headed calf, a spider woman, a circus.

They rattled home in an empty wagon, their hearts singing because they had a store-bought loaf of bread and some fresh sausage for supper.

By 1923, a considerable number of farmers could go home in automobiles. One state paper listed Ford touring cars at \$298, F.O.B. Detroit, and Dodges at \$1,600.

The last bale of every season gathered and sold, the families sat before crackling fireplaces to browse through mail order catalogues, choosing winter clothes: shoes, hats or caps, and early in the century long underwear. If there had been good crops and not too many debts, the order included a strip of velvet for the womenfolk and a suit for each of the men.

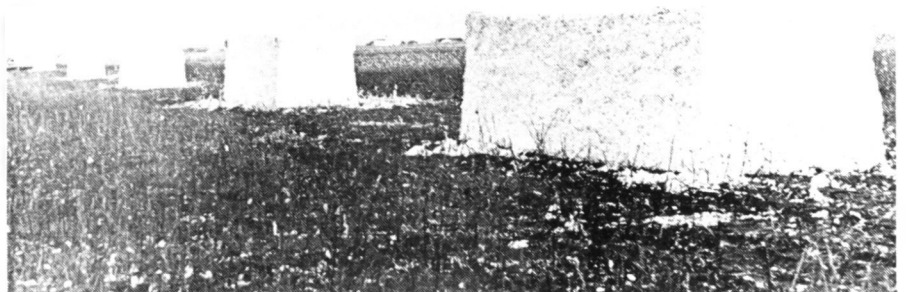
Receiving that order near Christmas helped enhance the community tree. Besides colored net sacks of fruit, candy, and nuts, there was sometimes a toy for each child. And all from the "buffalo" in one way or another.

Yes, the mechanical monsters get the job done in a hurry and without physical pain, but the fortunes made and spent in cotton production today seem impersonal and less satisfying than the meager rewards gained the hard way in by-gone years. Those who remember say cotton was fatness to their souls.

But they wouldn't go back.

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PHOTO: COURTESY OF ALTUS TIMES DEMOCRAT



Modules lined up in a field near Altus

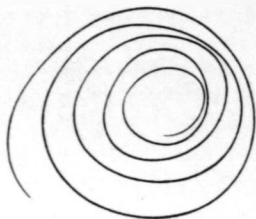
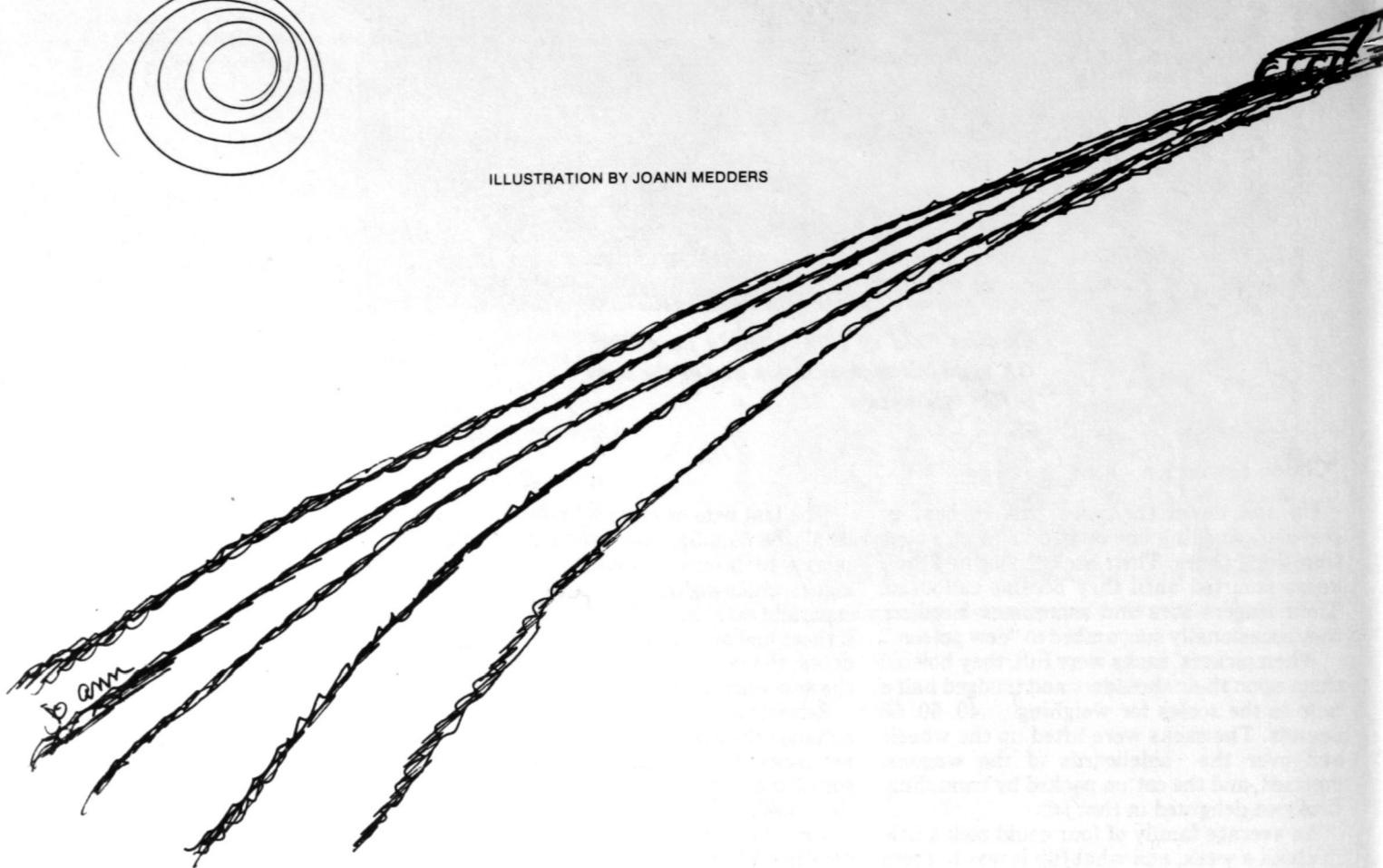


ILLUSTRATION BY JOANN MEDDERS

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NOT A LIVING

— by Janie Horn Janzen

When we were young lovers, I persuaded my farm-reared husband to promise me that we would never farm for a living. With his Industrial Arts degree just signed by the college president and his teaching certificate in the mail from the State Department of Education, he pledged that he would never consider it.

This spring, 15 years past that promise, my lover began a farming partnership with my father. Last Saturday midnight after we had spent four hours in the field getting a sunk-in-the-mud-to-its-hubs swather onto drier acres and after postponing our plans of going to town for pizza, I teasingly reminded my husband, "I thought you promised me we would never farm for a living."

His apt answer was, "I never said we would make a living doing this."



IN RUTS AND FURROWS

— by Janie Horn Janzen

In my growing up years it took two red and gray tractors and three sunny gold days to plow our wheat land. Soon after the custom combine crew had moved north, I knew Dad would draft me to drive the little Ford while he managed the bigger machine, and that there would be no rest for man, machines or me until the red dirt was turned over.

I was eager for the challenge. Daily routines were blown away as I put the tractor into road gear and let the morning wind explore my face. As we bounced to the wheat field, the thought traveled through my head that my family needed me. My day had a purpose.

When we reached the edge of stiff stubble, Dad stopped to give me final directions, "Drive in third gear and keep it at 1800 r.p.m. If anything goes wrong, wave to me so I can come help you. Ready?"

Dad led the way so I had a delightful view of the first dirt turning up in clods three layers deep. Then it was time for me to start the yearly event. My beginning was easier because I had a furrow to follow, but the thrill was there as I watched the cool earth roll over to tease the summer sun. The red soil smelled clean and rich, and I felt like singing.

By noon we had made a number of rounds, and I had sung most of the music I knew by memory. Mother came and unpacked the picnic lunch while Dad and I looked over the field to see how far we had progressed from the starting point and grinned with pride at what we had achieved. Then under the cottonwood tree, together we savored garden cucumbers coated with country cream, Mother's original recipe crisp chicken, new potatoes covered with crunchy chicken gravy, clear cold tea, and chocolate layer cake.

We returned home after dark, dusty but content.

At 5:00 a.m. of the second day I couldn't find my enthusiasm anywhere. The sheet that I had pulled over my head to keep from hearing Mother's call was also covering red eyes smarting from Oklahoma dirt, sunburned legs because I had insisted on wearing shorts to get a tan, and a bruised bottom where my padding did not match the tractor seat.

Just before my parents lost all their patience, I pulled myself out of bed and into my work clothes. Unable to face breakfast, I picked up a piece of yesterday's cake as I passed through the kitchen and carried it to the field to eat when the sun was up.

Dad and I and silence drove to the field in the pickup. There was no conversation as the gasoline gurgled into the tractor tanks. When Dad reminded, "If anything goes wrong, wave to me," I nodded and we started our rounds. There was no beginning today, and I knew there would be no end. I would follow Dad around and around and around the wheatless field, but we would not finish. 13

My muscles pleaded to get off the rigid metal tractor seat, but I followed the furrow behind Dad.

My skin begged for cooler air, but I followed the furrow behind Da.

My mind searched for songs to sing, but all my songs had been sung the day before.

I began daydreaming, and in every episode I was the sweet super girl who became the heroine of each situation. While I dreamed around the field I forgot my complaints until I forgot to lift the plow at the corner. I became aware of Dad watching my awkward attempts to complete the turn, but when he was convinced I would return to the narrow path instead of creating my own route, he continued on his round.

After that every circle around the field was the same until I saw a blue and white station wagon approaching our land and then waiting at the edge of the plowed ground. Mother was there with a 4:00 lunch. She pulled back the hand embroidered dish towel and revealed a long pan of sweet rolls still warm from the oven. She held out a figure eight filled with tart red cherries and drizzled with white powdered sugar icing and knew it was my favorite pastry. When I reached for my fifth cherry roll, I felt ready to plow on until dark even though the hot sun was still high, and we were still in the middle with no chance of meeting the end of our task.

As I started my tractor for the third day, I began humming a hopeful tune. The tiresome work ahead didn't seem a great problem when we had the prospect of reaching our goal.

Throughout the day furrow met furrow as odd-shaped corner patches were finished.

Late in the day the last strip of stubble disappeared, and we drove toward the road that would take us to the farmyard. At the field driveway I stopped and looked back with pride at what we had accomplished. When I glanced forward I was rewarded by the pleased smile on Dad's face, and then I followed him home singing all the way.

This afternoon I watched Big Blue — a four wheeled drive diesel tractor that was pulling a multi-shared plow. The driver sat on an adjustable cushioned seat in a radio equipped air conditioned cab and plowed the same land that I used to plow. I know it is the same land even though it is now terraced and makes twice as many bushels of harvest wheat per acre. As the one man and the one machine worked, memories of past plowing drifted into my mind. Suddenly those three days each summer seemed just like my life.

Tonight I prayed: Father, You said I could call on You when I'm in trouble. Well, there's nothing really wrong now, and You know I'm doing my best to follow You, but sometimes this rut seems so confining. Yes, it was exciting at the beginning when everything was new. I still remember learning how to ride bike, and starting college was a big thrill. And I thought nothing would compare to hearing my bridegroom pledge his love to me, but at that time I didn't know about giving birth. Now my two boys are having many exciting beginnings, but here I am in the middle. Every day is the same. It's hard to get up in the mornings to go to work. During the day I worry about having enough money to buy groceries, make car payments, and pay the dentist. Frequently I wonder if the hectic schedule we try to keep has a purpose. Then at night I dread the next day because I fear it will be another round. Father, I know I can't have cherries everyday, but would You help me find a song for my life? I want to make it. I want to get to the end and be glad that I plowed through the problems. I want to see a pleased smile on Your face when I reach my reward.

Father, do You mind if I sing?

FUTURE ISSUES

ILLUSTRATION BY LINDA FICKLING



WINTER, 1982. This edition will follow the theme "Oklahoma History in Review." Submissions are to deal with events that shaped our area. Deadline for submissions: November 1, 1982.

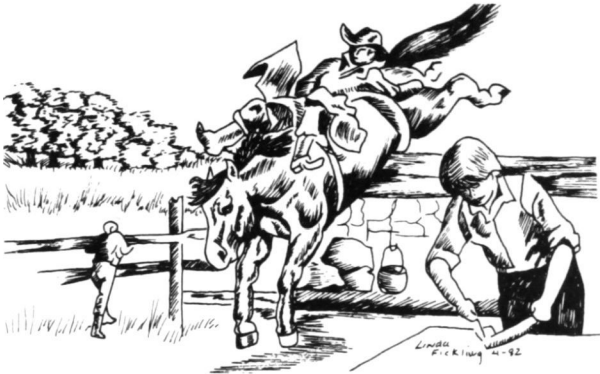
ILLUSTRATION BY LINDA FICKLING



SPRING, 1983. "Oklahoma Education" has long been a significant topic and should thus provide a good theme for this issue. Deadline for submissions is February 1, 1983.

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ILLUSTRATION BY LINDA FICKLING



SUMMER, 1983. "Ranching in Oklahoma" will be the general theme of this edition, and it will no doubt prompt many good submissions. The deadline for submissions is May 1, 1983.

ILLUSTRATION BY LINDA FICKLING



FALL, 1983. The theme to be developed in this issue is "Oklahoma Pride," and the deadline for submissions is August 1, 1983.

illustration by Linda Fickling



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

WESTVIEW

HOUSEHOLD TIPS

Granny's

HELPFUL
TIPS

Like the early-day remedies and medications used by my grandparents, my grandmother in the Sentinel, Oklahoma, area relied upon household cleaning methods made from simple, inexpensive, and available materials. When comparing these cleaning procedures with those of today, I can only presume that Grandma's elbow grease was the basic ingredient, an ingredient undoubtedly equally mixed with the determination of having the most spotless home upon the dusty prairie. These helpful hints, like the early-day medical remedies, were handed down and shared with relatives and friends.

Soft Soap: Boil 25 lbs. of fried grease and 2 pails of strong lye. Next day add another pail of hot lye. If there is grease on top of the soap the next day, add another pail. Add a pailful of hot water each day until soap barrel is filled.

Hard Soap: Add 2 lbs. of salt and 1 lb. of resin to 5 pails of soft soap. Cook slowly. When ingredients are thoroughly fused together, turn out in shallow pans so as to be easily cut.

To Clean Bath Tubs: Dirt on porcelain can be removed with kerosene. Apply with a saturated cloth, rinse off, and rub with hot water and soda. White blotches on zinc-lined tubs may be removed in the same way.

To Clean Bottles: Put powdered charcoal with either hot or cold water into the bottle and shake thoroughly. Allow the water to stay in the bottle for a little while.

To Clean Carpets: Sprinkle with moist tea leaves. Sweep thoroughly, using soft soap and warm water on greasy and dirty spots.

To Bleach Cloth: Add the strained juice of 1 lemon to 1 qt. of cold water. Spread cloth on the grass in the sun. Wet it several times each day. Repeat until cloth is whitened.

To Drive Away Cockroaches: Cut up green cucumbers and at night put pieces in infested areas. Bois de arc apples will also aid in getting rid of these insects.

To Wash Cottons: Add a teaspoon of black pepper to the first suds to prevent colors from running. A handful of salt also fixes colors but does not prevent fading. Alum water is a sure fixative, but it sets grime as well as color.

To Make Disinfectants: (1) Heat an iron shovel until very hot and then pour vinegar upon it. Be sure doors and windows are open at the time. (2) Roast coffee until it is dark brown, pulverize it, and burn it on a shovel or sprinkle about the room.

To Wash and Cure Feathers: Wash feathers in warm soap suds and rinse in slightly blued water. Dry them in the wind. To recur, use a bone or silver knife to draw fibers of feathers between the thumb and the dull edge, working 3 fibers at a time. Begin at the point of the feather and curl sides in opposite directions.

To Keep a Room Free of Flies: Pour a little alcohol into saucers. Add a teaspoon of oil of lavender. Place a piece of clean sponge in each saucer.

To Clean Gilt Frames: Dust frames; then with a camel's hair brush, rub gently with the white of an egg to remove all dirt. To add luster to frame, add 1 ounce of soda to egg white.

To Clean and Polish Furniture: Mix 3 parts linseed oil with 1 part turpentine and apply with a woolen rag. This will both clean and give the wood a fine luster.

To Restore Furs: Sprinkle fur with hot flour and sand. Brush thoroughly with a hard brush; then beat with a stick or cane. Comb the wool with a wet comb and press carefully with a warm iron. For ermine, substitute plaster of paris for flour and sand.

To Prevent Cracking of Glass: Put lamp chimneys or light globes in a pot filled with cold water. Add a little cooking salt. Let the water boil well and then cool slowly.

To Clean Looking Glasses: Dampen a sponge with water or spirits of wine. Rub to remove every speck and stain. Dust surface with the finest sifted whiting or powder blue. Polish with silk handkerchief.

To Clean Marble: Make a paste of soft soap and whiting. Wash marble with it. Leave a coat of the paste

upon marble for two or three days; then wash off with warm water.

To Clean Oil Paintings: Wash the canvas with soft soap and warm water. Dry with a soft cloth. Then before a fire, rub the painting with a warm silk handkerchief.

To Clean Pewter: Make a paste of fine wood ashes mixed with vinegar and salt. Rub on generously and then rub off quickly.

To Clean Silk: Take equal quantities of alcohol or whiskey and soft soap made of wood ashes and molasses. Mix together; then rub on with a soft cloth. Rinse once or twice in clear water. Dry silk or wrap in a towel until ready to iron.

To Give Luster to Silver: Make a strong brine of alum dissolved in water. Skim carefully and then add soap. Apply with a linen cloth. Rub gently before rinsing.

To Clean Straw Matting: Use a cloth wet in clean salt and water and rub matting. Wipe dry immediately.

To Clean Wall Paper: Remove all dust with a soft cloth. Then mix flour and water into a stiff lump. Rub wall gently downward as far as arm will sweep. After going around the room, return and begin rubbing above that just completed. Do not cross the paper or rub upward.

To Make Watertight Shoe Soles: Warm a little beeswax and mutton suet until in a liquid state. Apply over all stitchings.

THE POTPOURRI JAR

Gather rose petals early in the morning and leave them in a cool airy place until the dew has evaporated. Place leaves in a large glass jar. Sprinkle salt over each one-half inch thick layer of petals. Continue adding in this manner until the jar is filled. Let stand for ten days. Stir thoroughly each day. Then mix together one ounce each of cloves, allspice, and stick cinnamon finely shredded. Transfer rose petals to another jar by mixing spices and petals in layers. Cover jar tightly and let it stand in a dark place for three or four weeks. The pourri will now be ready for its permanent jar, which must have a double cover.

Mix together in a bowl one-fourth ounce of mace and one-half ounce each of allspice and cloves, one-half of a grated nutmeg, one-half ounce of cinnamon, one ounce of powdered orris root, and one-fourth pound of dried lavender flowers. Transfer rose leaf mixture to the permanent container and mix the above in layers with the rose petals. As the jar is filled, scatter a few drops of essential oils of rose, geranium, bitter almond, and orange flower on each layer. Then pour one ounce of toilet water or cologne over entire mixture.

These contents will fill a two-quart jar and will keep for years. From time to time add sweet flowers such as tuberose, violets, or heliotrope. Open the jar for one-half hour daily, and the atmosphere of the home will be permeated with a delightful, spicy fragrance that can be imagined to come from an enchanted Arabian garden.

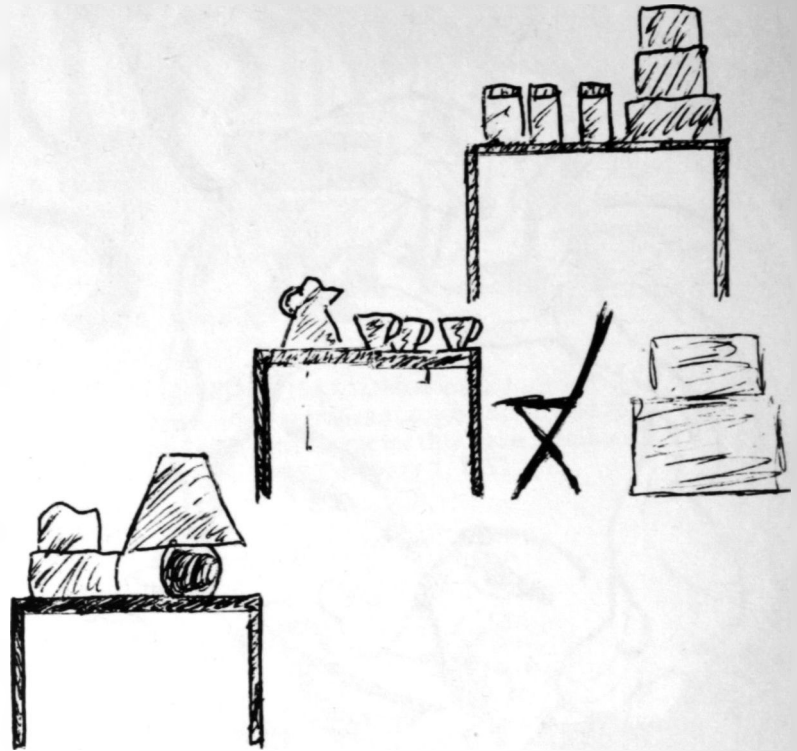
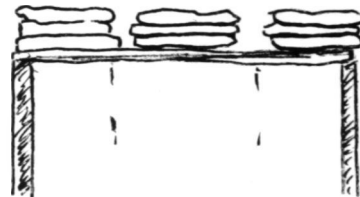


ILLUSTRATION BY MIKE TOAHY





THE FARMER TODAY

— Donita Lucas Shields

Grim words paint the picture of Western Oklahoma farmers who are facing economic havoc far worse than during the tragic Depression of the '30s.

Disastrously low prices for crops, meager farm incomes, soaring interest rates, and over-extended or unavailable operating credits do not allow farmers to keep up with machinery and land mortgage payments, fuel and repair bills, and day-to-day expenses.

Since he has invested heavily, the farmer cannot walk off the job. He cannot strike. He has no unemployment compensation. He can only wait for the axe to fall. While he waits, he repeats the sage words, "Things got to get better. They can't get worse. . ."

He is the only business man in the world who sells on wholesale markets and buys on retail. He may be forced to purchase his needs on highs then sell products at lows. Oftentimes he feels he is drowning in a maelstrom of problems that he cannot escape. Yet, even with odds against him, he continues to farm.

In spite of droughts, floods, and low prices, the Western Oklahoma farmer plants and harvests. Regardless of over-production and glutted markets, he attempts to avoid bankruptcy. He is the world's greatest gambler for the smallest of stakes.

The farmer's determination remains unshaken even though cotton, wheat, and cattle markets weaken. He cuts back production only when the government forces him. He believes his government has done too much against him and not enough for him, but still he strives for economic survival.

Bleak crop reports and weather forecasts fail to disrupt his faith. He visions a brighter future. Some call him a dreamer, but he is a fighter, a tough one who fights to the finish. In times of long droughts, he scans the skies for clouds and rain. His age-old saying "It will rain some time. It always has. . .," is proof of a faith that never weakens.

The Western Oklahoma farmer accepts destructive heat, cold, blowing winds, floods, and searing droughts without fear or malice. He harvests and sells his crops, realizing they will barely pay expenses.

One year of every ten may yield a bumper crop and good profits. He is a philosopher who reveres those prosperous years and takes many failures or near-failures in stride. He is an optimist who believes that next year will be more successful with adequate rainfall and better markets.

Nothing affects him more deeply than watching soil erode or blow away. Flooding rains ravage fields, float away topsoil, and gully freshly planted crops. Lack of rainfall and blowing dust cause plants to shrivel then die because of devastating heat and high winds. Hail and intense cold destroy his efforts within a few short minutes.

The farmer finds solace in the fact that he is not alone in his plight. His neighbors suffer too, and he is closely bonded with sorrows of his fellow man. Disasters create empathy and companionship, ties that remain unbroken throughout lifetimes. Neighbor helps neighbor in periods of strife as they work together to protect their soil and families until they put in and harvest another crop.

A Western Oklahoma farming career seems an endless cycle of adverse extremes as the farmer copes with the unexpected and unforeseen. He sprays when insects invade crops, knowing well that insecticide expenses eat away meager profits.

Yet he is guardian and protector of his crops. People depend upon him, and he cannot let them hunger. His farming domain is breadbasket of the world, and he has a heart far bigger than his bank account.

A farmer's job is to see crops through, nursing balky machinery to avoid too many repair bills and protecting plants from every adversity within his control. Crops are the heartbeat of his lifestyle.

Harvest is the time of quiet satisfaction for a job completed to the best of his abilities. Market places are beyond his scope and power. He can merely hope for good prices. He must sell to pay expenses and prepare for next year's crops.

A farmer jokes about his troubles in order to cover a multitude of heartbreaks. He may say he seldom worries because his banker does enough worrying for both, but his deepest dread is not being able to pay off last year's indebtedness. He constantly fears his benefactor will turn him down for money to put in another crop.

Yet he is no quitter. Being a quitter would destroy his pride as well as his way of life. He works at off-the-farm jobs, and his wife brings in a second paycheck. He admits they hold down outside jobs to support farming. When spring arrives, he goes back fulltime to his land and crops.

Only as a last resort will any farmer give up his lands. Nothing less than forced liquidation, foreclosure, loss of borrowing power, or extreme illness halts his farming gamble. He is certain that Fate will deal him a better hand next year.

If a farmer ceases tilling the soil, he considers himself a failure or a coward. He forever carries the burden that he defaulted his responsibility to humanity.

Some inner compulsion tells him he should have continued, regardless of its futility. Next year might have been the big breakthrough when he cleared away debts with enough left over for a new pickup truck, a new tractor, or maybe to have paid off the mortgage on his land.

If he is among the lucky minority in Western Oklahoma, the farmer's undying faith in his lands may now be paying off through oil and gas leases and production. Yet he cannot truly enjoy new wealth because of many years of frugality and hardships. Those unknown, unexplored miles beneath his fields baffle him. His new source of income could be a fleeting thing, a once-in-a-lifetime crop.

He hoards his bonanza in anticipation of lean years which he is certain will return. The true farmer has no faith in oil and gas empires. He buys nothing lavish or unnecessary. Yet he never hesitates in sharing newly acquired wealth with church, hospital, and community.

Whatever his destiny, he will forever remain a tiller of soil with unfaltering trust in what he can see, feel, and nurture. His faith will forever lie in his lands, his crops, and his God.

INDIAN FALL

— by Carol Rothhammer Lackey

Self-sufficient, going to town in buggies
Just once a month—tales that seem like memories.
Here my childhood springs to life in sharp relief:
Running free, barefoot, miles from nowhere,
Without care, among the miles and miles of oaks
And pines and creeks to wade, up to my knees—
Plucking huge round bouquets of wild
Small-fragile violet blossoms, faint aroma,
Climbing oaks with vast, sprawling limbs—
Sleeping there in the limbs some afternoons.
Now here in this fertile, not-yet-desecrated
Field, my past and peaceful present meet
Within a teeming brain of familiar sounds and smells.
Above, criss-cross patterns of jet-stream clouds
Emit vague jet motor sounds.
Beyond, harsh barbed-wire cages fence field after field
As far as my eyes can see each direction—
Partitions for God's fields of praise.
High above, on the tallest hill,
A television antenna towers high,
Raising its ugly head above the natural landscape,
To taunt the dreams of yesterday,
To mute the glimmerings of tomorrow's escape,
To bring to these quiet, still hills
Sixty minutes of today's outstanding atrocities.

Hilly plains accept this sunset,
Infinite color combinations,
Autumn's late greens, yellows, oranges,
Colors tossed against the pale blue heavens
In shining golds, dark blues, tinges of pink.
Here my world takes on a ceaseless reality.
Here I'm loose from fetters
Of close enclosing buildings,
The trees, rocks, open fields invite me
To a permanent feeling—
Here my dreams turn loose.
I see the duck's formations overhead
And hear their mournful, searching cries.
I dream of ascension.
Here I see the small brown hills beyond
And picture in clear colors
Indian dwellings two hundred years ago—
Brown horses, brown dogs, brown buffaloes,
Brown men fearing white men's pale eyes.
A curved white sliver of moon peeks
Through the sky's darkest dusk blue.
Here the repetitious whippoorwill song
and the evening language of cows
Going home create a rustic music—
Dredging up tales I've heard of rustic farmers,

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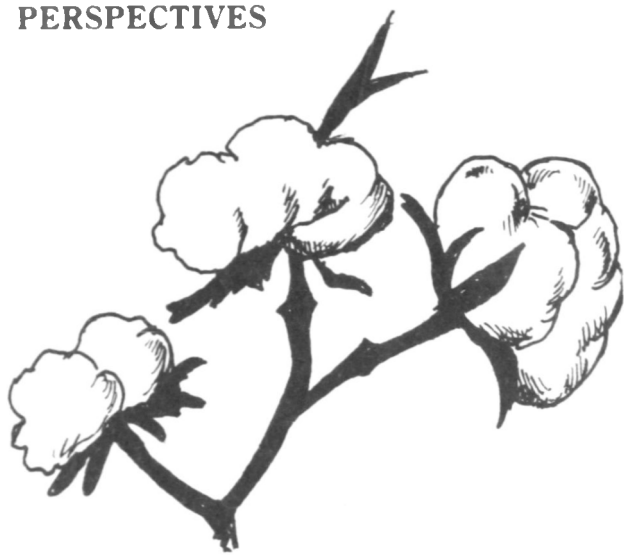
ILLUSTRATION BY DR. R. SAMUEL LACKEY

MATRIARCH VENERATED

— Pat Kourt

Standing majestically--whirling, wooden blades
cutting through the dewy sunrise,
The matriarch of the prairie guards her pasture and
sage with an aged eye of authority.
Depending upon God's bristling breezes to supply
her daily power and energy,
She offers soothing water to dusty, parched acres
of red, bawling cattle.
Her rhythmical humming is melodious routine despite
an occasional arthritic creaking of her vane.
Taller, more statuesque than any cottonwood or
graying, decaying barn,
This silver-crowned lady echoes a noble past fused
into a powerful, progressive present--
For she is truly the venerable matriarch of the
prairie--the ageless windmill.





the corn is planted
and waiting for rain
the beans are in
the ground
and the milo
is going down

then it's flax
and oats
to cut
before another
go round of alfalfa

and somewhere in between
it's put up prairie hay
combine wheat
cull the cows
sell the feeder pigs
and lambs
at the
right time
disk and harrow

easy livin'

then cultivate
always cultivate
except for what we can spray
when we top dress with anhydrous
or later if it's not too expensive

and in our spare time
there's show calves
and truck garden
to work
eggs to candle
and fences to mend

by then it will be time
to plow
again

and those folks in town
think farmers
have it made

free food for all

Poet

rained-out farmer

too much
of a good rain
sends him

caged panther pacing
across the kitchen linoleum

muttering muddled
meanness
to any
who

dare there

DRAWING BY GINGER RADER, INKING BY KEVIN HILL

Oklahoma whea

shopping at Safeway
is a chore
for him

he checks
every banana
and white onion
every loaf of Wonder
and box of Grapenuts
every can of pork 'n b
all of the varieties of
every bag of enriched
all of the frozen juices
and cartons of ice cre
every doughnut
and jar of wheat germ
every wheel of Chedd
and link of sausage
every pickled pig's fo
and slab of bacon
every sack of popcorn
and bottle of vegetab

his eyes scan
them all

add
subtract
divide by a bushel
of his winter wheat

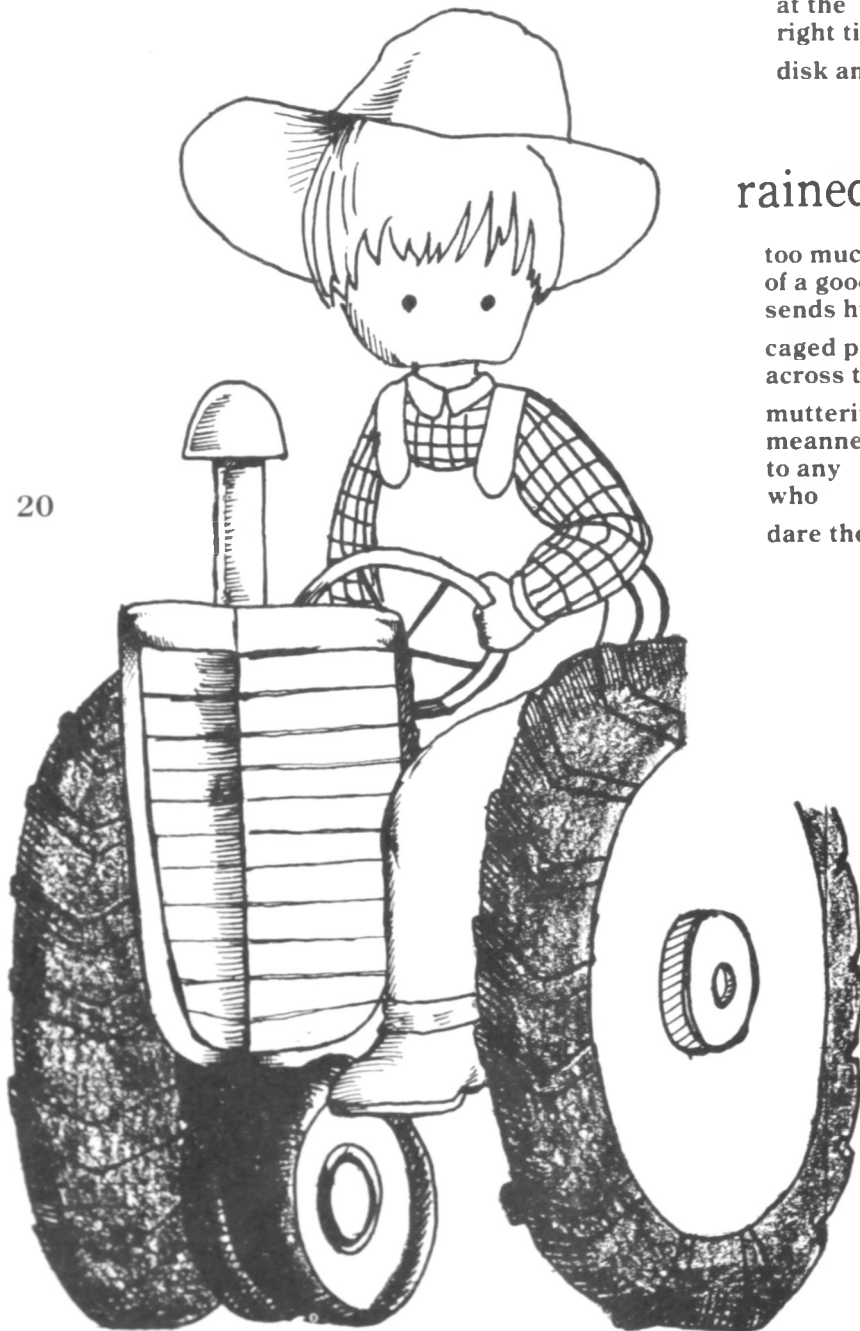
and this time
he comes out
in the hole

Oklahoma wheat harvest

plump
tan kernels
loil in the July sun
waiting

to be
picked up
by the churning clippers
rolling along
through
the riptide

spraying straw
in a golden wake



spi
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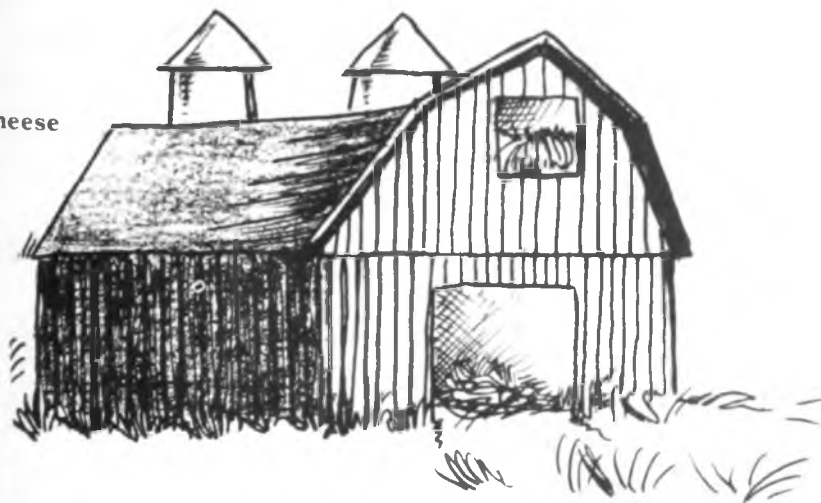
Sheryl L. Nelms

awheat farmer

galeway

Wonder bread
apenuts
pork 'n beans
eties of milk
enriched flour
en juices
of ice cream
nut
eat germ
of Cheddar cheese
ausage
d pig's foot
acon
f popcorn
vegetable oil

ushel
wheat



The Spirit

it's there in the
earthworm smell
of fresh plowed loam

it's there in the
Levi work shirt

it's there in the
worn linoleum
and the squeaking Dempster windmill

I see it in those sun weathered wrinkles

it's there in every
farmer
each time it
rains on fresh sown seed

21



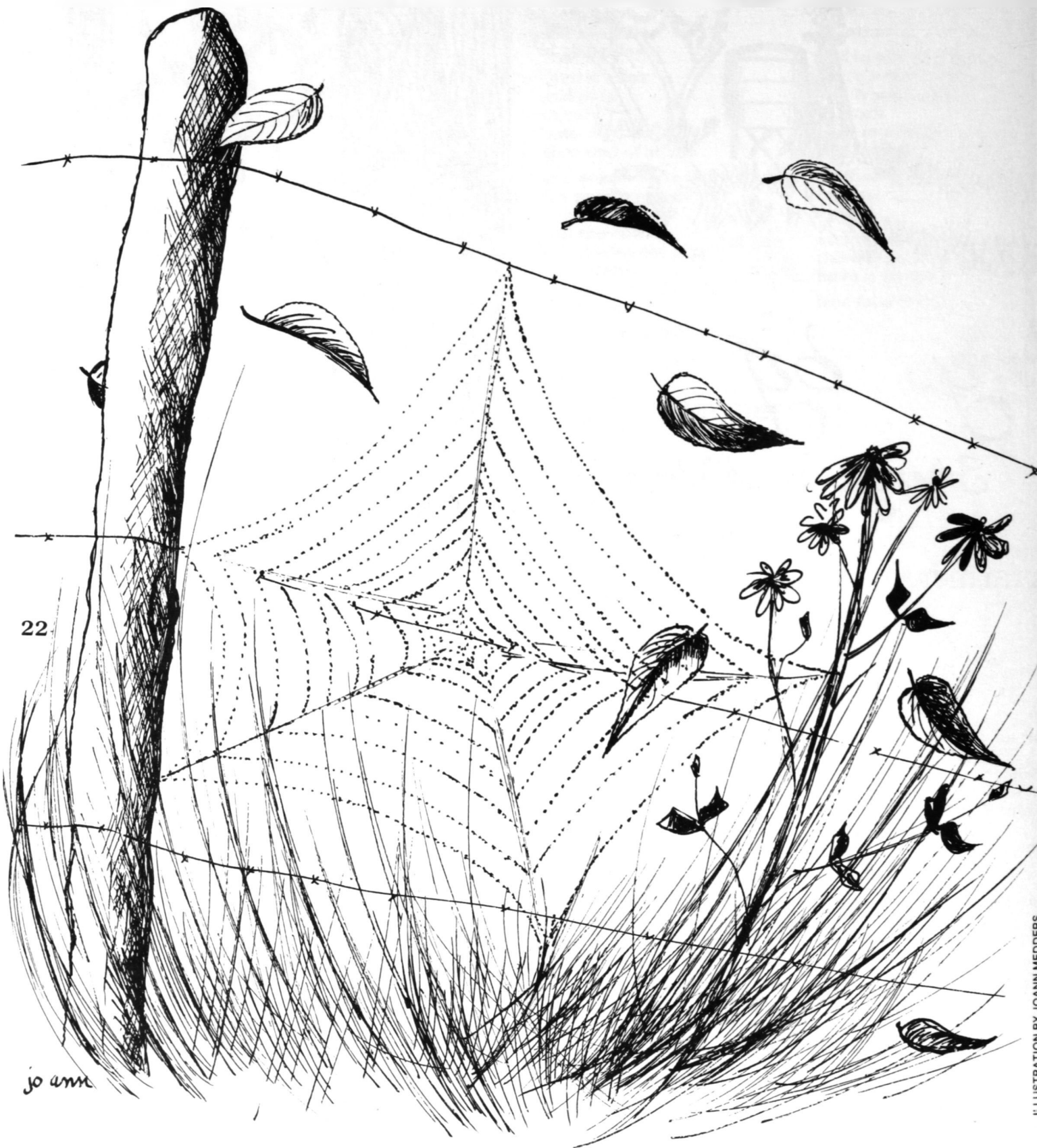


ILLUSTRATION BY JOANN MEDDERS

SYMPHONY OF THE WINDS

— *Una Lois McCoy*

I remember an autumn time, not long ago, when I went from Oklahoma down to the Texas farm where, it seems, the only cure for my annual homesickness took place.

When golden rod and wild asters bloom along the lane leading to the old homestead, when clear skies are October blue, when the neighboring sounds of crowing roosters carry through the thin morning air, and unseen spiders cannily spin tensile barricades from telephone wires to fence post to blades of grass, crows caw to one another over their banquet tables in the corn fields, and the most tenuous leaves begin falling from the trees. . . then I must go back home for a while.

This remembered day was as perfect as one can ever be. And it was further enhanced when its stillness began to be ruffled by a rising wind. Those familiar with the sound wind makes, as it sighs through tall cedar trees, know the intoxication of it.

I guess my giddiness became uncontrollable as the wind grew stronger and wilder, making the tree limbs bend and sway. . . filling my very soul and lifting me out of myself. Before I realized what I was doing, I took a stance, as if on a podium, and began flailing my arms in the air. With sweeping motions, I stood there, idiotically directing the orchestration of the symphony of the winds!

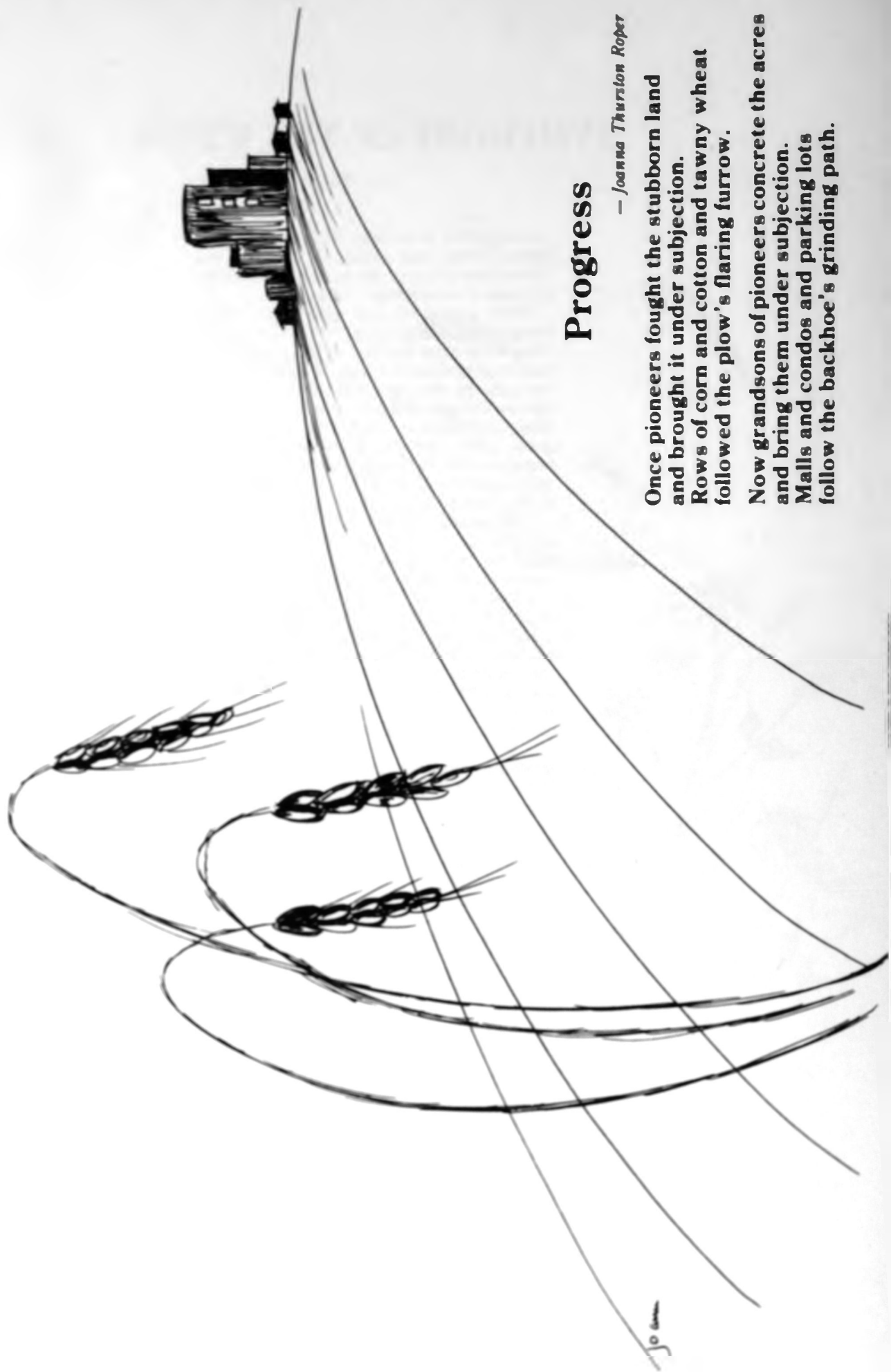
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Such magnificent heights of pure joy I felt! I knew there was nothing freer than this wind, and the falling leaves, from a nearby walnut tree, dancing in the air with wild abandon. . . until my eyes followed a particular leaf to a sudden halt.

From my imaginary podium, I could see no reason for its aborted flight; for its not dancing on its windward way. But there it stayed, barely fluttering, in suspension. Going closer to it, I saw it was imprisoned by an all but invisible jailer.

In spite of every autumn condition, seemingly, being in its favor. . . the time for it to fall from its summer confinement, the staging of nature seemed to be ideal for its freedom flight. But it wasn't free after all. The bonds of a cobweb held it so tightly it could only tremble in the wind. It took a close look to see its fetters, and the reason why it could no longer soar with the wind-symphony of the cedar trees.

The analogy of what I'd seen was not lost to me. Quickly, it had a sobering effect, making me mindful of a continuing paradox. . . the freedom I've felt, high in the air, if the words flow freely when I'm writing. But from somewhere, somehow, sometime, I too become fettered and held in trembling frustration. . . earthbound by the cobwebs in my mind!



Progress

— Joanna Thurston Roper

Once pioneers fought the stubborn land
and brought it under subjection.
Rows of corn and cotton and tawny wheat
followed the plow's flaring furrow.

Now grandsons of pioneers concrete the acres
and bring them under subjection.
Malls and condos and parking lots
follow the backhoe's grinding path.

THE MOTHER MARSUPIAL

— by Con Hood

Death's an old possum
 rattling through dry leaves
 sniffing beer cans
 and eating worms
 and baby birds and thrown-away roast.
 Her breath smells rank
 and her little teeth gleam.

Don't be fooled
 when she's curled in a limp gray ball.
 She's not really asleep.
 The last thing you see
 if she waddles away in the dusk
 is a long cold tail.
 With an innocent grin
 she'll come right up to your door
 and if you're not careful
 she'll eat *you* out of house and home.
 Even though she seems
 awfully ugly and fat
 deep down in her pouch
 little things feed.

25



ILLUSTRATION BY CINDY KAISER MOORE

— Pat Kourt

Amid yesterday's plows, wagons, and rusted wire fences stands an eighty-year old tower of strength. This lady oversees the farm of Ernie Richardson, life-long resident of Putnam, Oklahoma. Located just northeast of the tiny farm village, this beautiful structure is truly the grande dame of the countryside.

A collector of antiques and cherished memories, Mr. Richardson emphatically proclaims that his windmill is priceless. "Why, she's the only one left in this area. Yep, she's a Monitor—an extinct breed. She's worth a thousand or more for the whole thing, but I'm not a-sellin'. Got too many memories. She used to set up on this hill here while many a Saturday night dance, 4th of July celebration, and party would go on down there by Fletcher's Pond. Folks from all over came to have a good time."

Almost regally, the proud head of this special windmill moves noiselessly in the cool, evening breeze. Made completely of wood, each small blade works harmoniously with the others to provide energy. The cement tail weighs sixty pounds and appears to be as solid as it was in 1900.

Although she's now retired, the Monitor stands among the giants in Oklahoma's pioneer history. Yes, pioneers like Ernie Richardson enjoy recalling and comparing those "good ol' days" when life was simple—like the windmill.



GUYMON NAME SONG

— Sheila Cohlma

During harvest, my parents used a converted 1950 school bus to take meals to the fields. I have fond memories of bumping along the dusty roads and of the big family meals inside the old yellow bus. A tradition of my family was to recite and argue about the words to Old Uncle Ed's Name Song.

Ed Colburn was my grandpa's brother-in-law and was a fun loving, cut-up of an old man. He drove trucks during harvest "wide open." Actually, he was somewhat of a traffic menace racing other truck drivers back and forth to the elevator in Tyrone. He was particularly "riled up" when a lady driver would pass him.

He lived in Guymon during these years until the death of his wife. Since his daughter lived in Prague, he moved there and later moved on to Florida. I was a very small girl during the years he worked with us, so he is somewhat of a shadowy memory. But I'll never forget his Name Song.

Old Uncle Ed would come bouncing into the bus, wolf down a big meal, and praise the women folk's cooking to the skies. Often after supper he would sing an old song—sometimes a church song, sometimes not. But our favorite was his Name Song. My dad and two older boy cousins memorized the words after much practice. All of us kids would beg and pester him about it.

"Come on, Uncle Ed, sing us that song," we would chant. "Say it slow this time."

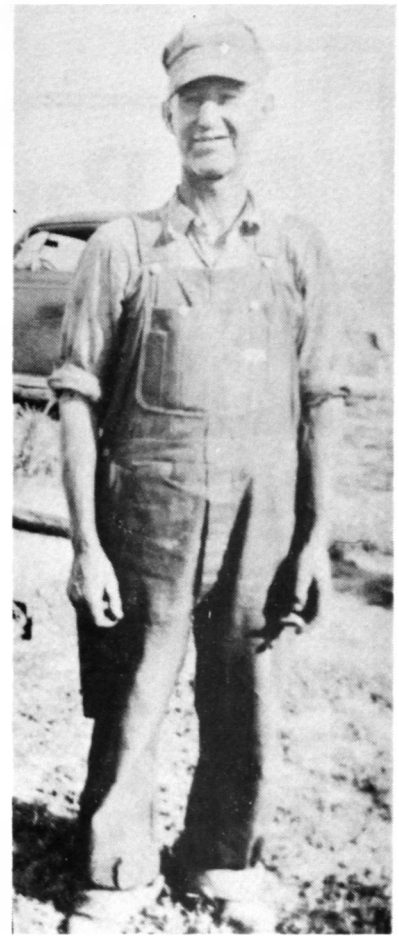
He would shove his dusty, beat-up felt hat back on his head, and his face would beam a mischievous grin. As he slowly recited the words, he would tap his boot in time. Then he would gradually sing the words and tap faster and faster until we all dissolved in laughter.

I don't know if Uncle Ed's song was a popular one in his youth or if he made it up. He died several years ago; but my cousins, Jerry and John Shilling, and my dad, Richard Stalcup, still talk about the song. We have long since forgotten the melody and the words are beginning to fade away. But we will never forget the happy times in scorching hot, dusty Panhandle harvest fields that the old man brought with his Name Song.

UNCLE ED'S NAME SONG

My mother and father were practical folks,
And both had a liking for practical jokes.
So when I was born, they both of one mind
Said I should have all the names they could find.

Jonathon Joseph Jeremiah
Timothy Titus Obediah
William Henry Walter Sims
Rueben Rufus Sullivan Jim
Nathaniel Daniel Abraham
Roderick Frederick Peter Sam
Simon Timon Nicholas Pat
Christopher Dick Jehosophat.



Ed Colburn in his workclothes, in the 1940's

PHOTO BY SHEILA COHLMIA

27



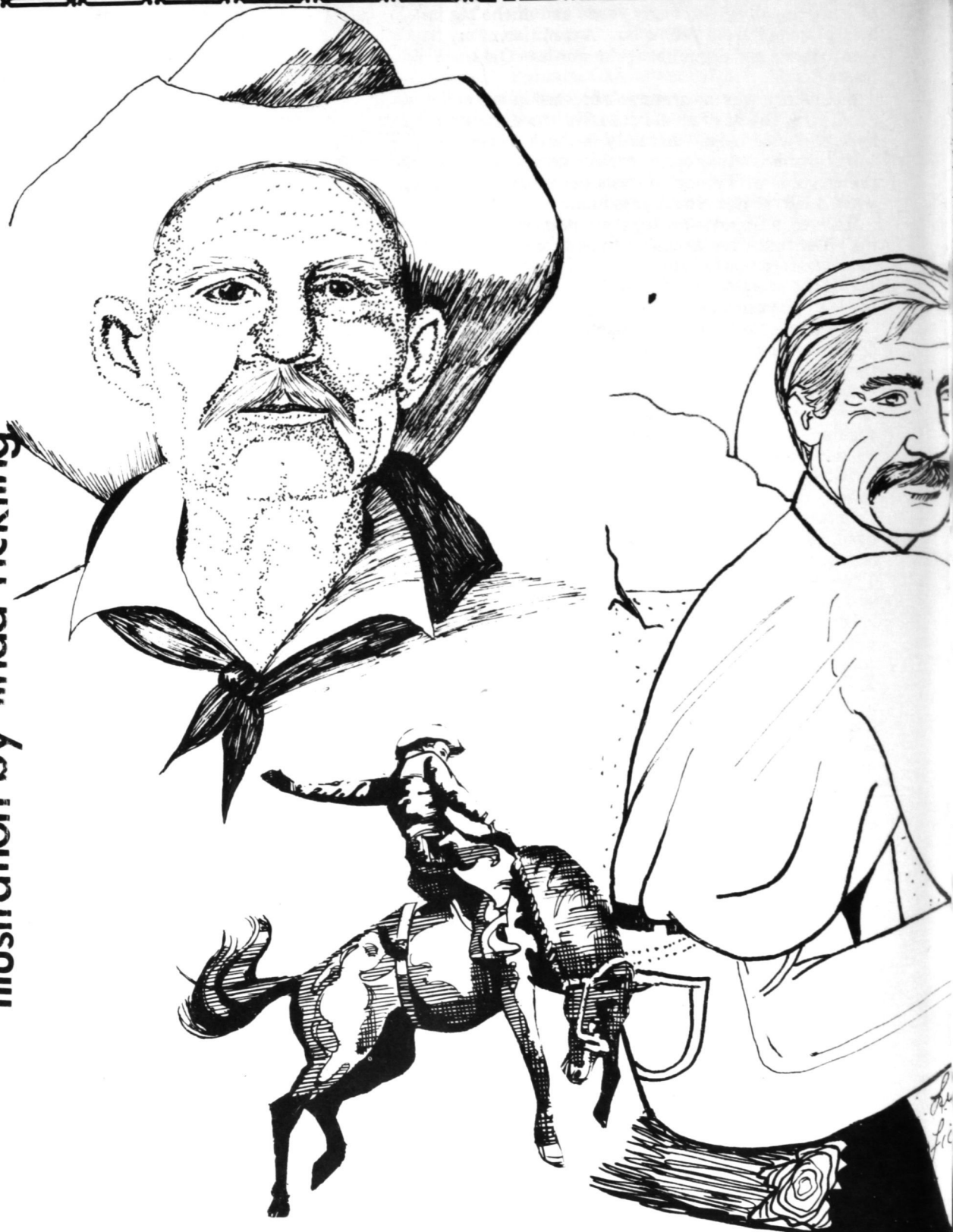
Ed Colburn all dressed up in the 1940's

PHOTO BY SHEILA COHLMIA

Paradox Undisputed by Leroy

illustration by linda fickling

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He was bent and wirey, standing about 5' 5" and weighing 140 pounds soaking wet. The day before he died of a heart attack, he had pulled 595 pounds of cotton to his wife's 400 and had personally emptied the sacks containing the combined total of almost a thousand pounds.

The next day, John Elmer Thomas got up at 6:00 a.m. to do the chores. The date was October 15, 1955. Even as he died, he was preparing the breakfast coffee prior to doing the milking and feeding. It was one of his practical ways of saying "I love you" to Emma, his wife of 30 years who was still asleep and who would soon get up to cook the first meal of the day.

With their four children now "out of the nest," Elmer and Emma could take life a little easier. That fall they had been pulling cotton to make money for some extras and on the Saturday of Elmer's death had planned a little trip into the county seat to shop for some new kitchen appliances. But life hadn't always been so easy. . .

Elmer was born on September 12, 1896, in Williamson County, Texas, son of James William and Sarah Jane Thomas. He was the fifth child (third and last son) of seven children. The parents were poor sharecroppers; and when Elmer was still a small baby, the family moved to Greer County, Oklahoma, to try to start over again. Like many other Oklahoma pioneers, however, failure dogged the family's steps in the new land.

An almost tragic accident occurred when Elmer was about five months old. His parents, while they were working in the fields, had left him in the care of two older brothers and two older sisters. He was in a wooden cradle, and his siblings were making sport of jumping over it. Several months passed before Sarah Jane discovered that her baby was crying continually because he had several broken ribs and a caved-in chest cavity.

The accident was the beginning of a series of problems that would bother Elmer all his life. When he was five years old, his father died; and from that time on, he and his siblings had a difficult upbringing.

In any way he could make money--whether it was by breaking horses, resulting in many broken bones, or doing farm chores--he helped to support his mother and three of his four sisters from the time he was a very young man.

Since Elmer had so many family responsibilities, he was never able to go past the second grade in school. As an adult, the only thing he could write was his own name; and the only writing he could read was his signature and that only because he knew by rote what it was.

There being little time for courting in his busy life, Elmer was 28 years old when he married Emma Mullins on February 9, 1924. The newlyweds settled down on a rented farm in Southeast Greer County. But Elmer's obligation to the first family didn't end with his marriage. He was still responsible to his mother, one sister, and a niece.

(Continued on Next Page)

NOSTALGIA

"Paradox Undisputed," cont.

Life was difficult for Elmer and Emma during those early years of marriage. Oftentimes Elmer would go into the county seat to buy supplies armed with grocery lists for his two families and return with nothing for him and Emma because his mother and sister's list was too extensive.

Their children came along quickly. Fortunately for the children, Elmer and Emma didn't wreak vengeance in the names they gave them. Emma had been named Margaret Emmaline by her mother, Martelie Albertine, who had named another of her daughters Lela Etheline and a son Joe Lonzo Claud. When Elmer and Emma's first daughter was born in 1925, they named her Juanita. The second child, a boy, Floyd (Pete), was born in 1927. Joyce was born in 1929, and the last child, another boy, Leroy, was born in 1934--thus, two girls and two boys.

Although Elmer didn't remember a father's love and had no father-model, he was a loving, sensitive father. His children remember him nostalgically as one who was kind in his ministrations during their childhood illnesses. One child remembers having very bad earaches and being doctored by a father who applied heat and cigarette smoke to the aching, throbbing ear. Evidently Elmer was sensitive to suffering since he had suffered so much.

Life on that windswept sandyland farm wasn't all darkness and despair--even though there wasn't an overabundance of material wealth. Elmer and Emma always enjoyed telling, for instance, about the Sunday afternoon that they dammed up a creek on their rented farm and pulled out an endless number of channel catfish for their supper.

30 And then an event that has become legend in the Thomas family occurred during the early years of their marriage. Not ever really having a normal childhood since he had worked all his life, Elmer felt that he had to find some enjoyment occasionally.

He liked the taste of alcoholic drinks, and his appetite was often appeased by some young single men in the community who liked to make homebrewed grape wine. They liked the activity partially because it was against Federal law and partially because it was against Emma's law; in short, they liked to make trouble for Little Elmer, as they called him, with his wife.

One day Little Elmer left for the neighbors' farm, and Emma knew where he was even though he had said that he was going "to town." Being an ingenious woman, she knew that he would come home drunk, and she had made plans for his arrival.

By nightfall, Little Elmer had fulfilled her expectations: not only did he come home drunk, but he was also ill. Each time he vomited, Emma, according to plan, laughed. He looked so pitifully helpless and wretched that she couldn't keep from laughing. Then Little Elmer conceived the plan of drinking a glassful of water after each regurgitation. The water only aggravated his condition, which triggered more laughter from his wife.

The next day he was sober but still extremely nauseated. His throat was parched because of thirst; but each time he drank water, he would begin vomiting again. And then of course, Emma's laughter would begin anew. The more she laughed, the angrier he became. But when time came later for reflection, after he had been cured of his malady by the pioneer wizardry of Dr. R. Z. Taylor of Blair, Oklahoma, Little Elmer promised that he would never take another drink of alcohol. He kept his promise and eventually could even laugh when Emma told about his foolishness.

During the long days of winter on the family farm, Emma taught Elmer some things that he had never had a chance to learn as a child: how to read printing and to write his name. Later she would jokingly say, as he kept his head buried in Western magazines throughout the long days of winter, "I wish I'd never taught you to read! I can't get a thing out of you!" He would only smile mysteriously and continue his reading.

His partial illiteracy wasn't pleasing to Little Elmer; and although he was ordinarily very open about things, he never made very much of an issue about his disadvantage. He could figure numbers well in his head, and he could also write down his cotton weights and tally them. Therefore, his deficiency was fairly well guarded.

Since he had never had an opportunity to be schooled, he firmly believed in education. He wanted his children to have the educational opportunities he never had. But still when a teacher unfairly punished his older son, Little Elmer went to the school--intent on whipping the superintendent, who had upheld the punishment, not even considering that the school official was twice his size. The problem was solved, however, because a temper that had boiled up suddenly and erupted was somewhat cooled by the time Father and Son drove into the schoolyard.

Considering the stock he placed in education, Little Elmer found it difficult to approve when one of his sons and later one of his daughters dropped out of school at age 16. Conversely he felt great pride when one daughter finished high school and his other son went on to college. He didn't live long enough to see that same son earn a doctorate.

Little Elmer didn't handle grief well. He was a very sensitive man given to weeping when something touched him deeply. He was manly, but he evidently didn't believe in the theory that "grown men don't cry." He would cry over hurt feelings or over the death or sickness of a loved one. For months after his older son died in an Army camp, he was constantly grieved. His own empathy for mourners made him a prime confidant, for instance, for a neighbor whose wife had died or for anyone else who needed an attentive ear or strong shoulder.

Little Elmer was in one sense a paradox too. He loved his children deeply, but was hard on them almost to the point of brutality at times. His temper would erupt violently and subside quickly. He wasn't disposed to pouting, and he couldn't tolerate it in others--especially his children. He could wield a walloping blow to the body of one of his children and then love him back to submission. He also told them that when they married, that was the end of their living at home: "If you make your bed hard, you'll lie in it." It was possibly because of his declaration that his children formed stable marriages.

Another aspect of the paradoxical in Little Elmer was his insistence on proper pronunciation, regardless of his own lack of education. One of his pet peeves was **wite** for **white**. He constantly reminded his children that the word was **white**.

And he was a paradox in his treatment of his work-horses. If they misbehaved or tried to slack up on work, he would beat them into obeisance; but he was always sure that they were well cared for. If one of his horses died, Little Elmer always provided a deep grave in a secluded area. Once a fiesty horse that hadn't been worked all winter attacked Little Elmer during a routine disciplinary session. The master ended up with a broken collar bone, but he continued to keep the horse on the farm.

Little Elmer was the last person in the community to

NOSTALGIA

give up his horses. While everyone else used modern machinery, he hitched up his team and plowed straight rows. When he finally bought a Ford tractor in 1950, he grumbled about it. During the next five years, however, he learned the inner workings of that tractor and thus adapted to an easier life without his horses, but he was never able to plow a straight row with a tractor.

Even up to his last days, Little Elmer was a gregarious entertainer. He had favorite sayings like "Oh, he'd gripe if he'uz gonna be hung with a new rope" and "It's as hard to get him to talk as it is to count a hen's teeth." Also the strains of music would make him break into a lively jig. He also could do an impersonation of a dog fleeing itself, which is impossible to illustrate in writing.

He never owned his own farm; he always lived from one crop to the next—always hoping to break even after paying off loans, always working extra for other farmers in the hope of having a few extras. He also kept up his life-insurance policy. When Little Elmer died in 1955, Emma had enough money from the policy to give her husband a decent burial and buy a modest frame home in Mangum. There she lives today at the age of 77—with her memories of fishing for channel cats on a Sunday afternoon, of breaking Little Elmer of the grape wine habit, and of thirty challenging years with that good man.

ILLUSTRATION BY MIKE TOAHTY



Shortgrass Viewpoints

— by Alma Eileen Dill

31

CLEAN COTTON GROWING

The cotton rows are long, and the reckless sun
Spills heat profusely on the sagging shoulder
That Jim swings backward — forward. Hoeing is done
By measured effort as the arm grows older.

It's done by looking out across the rows
Already cleaned — and not the ones that wait.
Clean cotton growing cheers a man who knows
How fat, white bales help meet a mortgage date.

THOUGHT AT DAWN

This moist, tender wind is beauty's breath.
A nameless scent, a texture at its core,
Is gentle witness that no gust of death
Can close the spirit's wide and brightening door.

THESE ACRES

*For better, for worse. . . a grudging dry-land farm,
Till death do us part . . . the scarcity, the alarm
That comes to those, at the mercy of chance and weather,
Who have no margin of capital. Together
They have met the seasons, always toiling
With singleness of aim and spirit, foiling
Loss of love and joy, for these acres
Know happy wells — the faith of homemakers.*

TWO WOMEN

She made my garden seem too much abloom;
She had such tailored, sleek, expensive grace.
The car she drove was long as our front room.
Her bored and petulant unhappy face
Smoothed out and looked plain housewifely when she
Examined my hooked rug and crocheted spread'
But when her shadowed eyes looked up at me,
The restlessness had all come back. She said,
"But what in God's name does a woman do
To exorcise her devil off out here?"
Although I knew that she might laugh, I drew
A breath and made my timid voice clear
As I defended my own simpler ways:
"I have no devilish moods — just busy days."

THE BASIC PATTERNS OF PLOT

— by Mike McCarville

Foster-Harris is to the fiction writer as water is to the desert. Thus, it is with genuine joy we learn of a sixth edition of *THE BASIC PATTERNS OF PLOT*, a Foster-Harris classroom-between-covers volume first issued by the University of Oklahoma Press in 1959.

In the 23 years since that first edition was published, the wisdom of the professor's grasp of "fictioneering" has become dominant among those who studied with him, heard of him, learned of the myriad successes of his students, and admired his gumption. Like his father, to whom the book is dedicated, Foster-Harris "never quit trying," and therein lies a valuable lesson for the writer and the non-writer alike, to wit: Determination often overcomes all else.

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FAMILY TRADITIONS

— Leroy Thomas

Blackjack Eleven is out! The title of it is *FAMILY TRADITIONS*, and Editor-Publisher Art Cuelho has done his usual excellent work. *FAMILY TRADITIONS* is billed as "Writing from Rural America," the prose and poetry coming from a wide variety of writers — including Diane Glancy, Sheryl L. Nelms, and Dorothy Rose, all writers with Oklahoma connections.

It's interesting just to browse through the sections of the book: The Ozarks, Grandfathers, Okies and Oklahoma, The Dakotas, and Family Traditions.

"Some of the joys, heartbreaks, and triumphs of the cycle of life are found in these family portraits," according to Cuelho. The poems and stories range from the smell of fresh bread baking in the oven to going to church by mulecart. They are unadorned portraits of everyday life.

And those who are interested may get the book by sending \$4.35 to Seven Buffaloes Press (P.O. Box 249 — Big Timber, MT 59011).

Evening Comes Slow To A Fieldhand

— Donita Lucas Shields

In his *EVENING COMES SLOW TO A FIELDHAND*, Artie Cuelho's introductory poem "You Can Go Home Again" exemplifies that anyone having a rural origin seldom breaks his rural ties throughout his life. Time proves that no urban concrete jungle ever destroys man's basic love of nature.

Artie Cuelho's heritage springs from his childhood in San Joaquin Valley. His past provides memories of difficult dryland tilling with horses as well as with modern, mechanized irrigated vineyards, truck farming, and grain production. The rural setting of his California Heartland could as easily be in western Oklahoma.

The poet wears no rose-colored glasses as he portrays recollections of blazing sun, caked sweat and mud, and dust devils. With honesty he recognizes hardships and heartbreaks of those who struggle with alkali soils and prolonged droughts. Cuelho recalls "hardpan. . . dry as an antelope's bones" where ". . . the will of dust rules every rut of a cookshack home."

To make the land of sagebrush and coyotes a productive agricultural region, Mr. Cuelho describes diesel Cats and farmers' calloused, cracked hands toiling from sun to sun. He shows pride that his father blazed the trail "to rule the ways of water" by cultivating "furrows essential to dark green shining. . . from Clovis to Crow's Landing."

Nor does Mr. Cuelho look askance at those hard-working, hard-drinking toilers who struggle to conquer fertile San Joaquin Valley. He portrays women, those like Rhyming Fast Lil and Wilma Elizabeth McDaniel with their private endeavors, as being fully as important to the Valley as field workers. Kind-hearted, understanding women are as vital and necessary to the region as canals, syphoning pipes, and Caterpillars.

Mr. Cuelho recalls his youthful years, filled with daring escapades that temporarily erased the stains and strains of barley fields and irrigation ditches. His adventures at Tiny's Bar and Saturday night parties are re-created with rollicking nostalgia. Mr. Cuelho's memories are saddened only by thoughts of friends who were killed during the war or as results of wild, drunken driving sprees.

Many of Artie Cuelho's reminiscences are not pretty recollections. They are rugged interpretations of rural life and its universal struggles. The poet communicates through simple, powerful, compelling language of the land. He embellishes nothing; he is a realist. To him and to all who have rural backgrounds, realism is beauty.

Mr. Cuelho projects his observations with a rustic passion. Without condemnation or criticism, he is attuned to his heritage with affection and pride, fully at peace with himself and his environment.

EVENING COMES SLOW TO A FIELDHAND is available through Seven Buffaloes Press (Box 249, Big Timber, MT 59011). It's a bargain for \$4.35.

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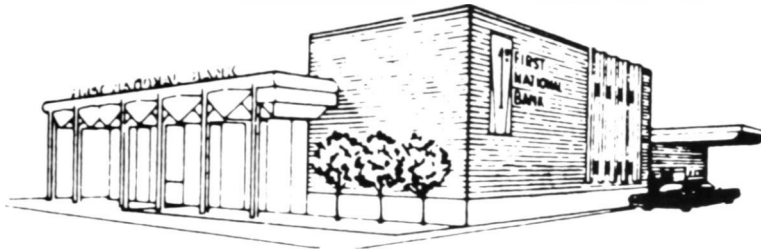


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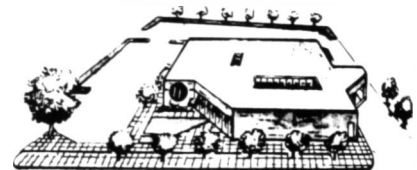


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