

A JOURNAL OF WESTERN OKLAHOMA  
WESTVIEW



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# WESTVIEW

## A JOURNAL OF WESTERN OKLAHOMA

VOLUME 1

NUMBER 1

**BLACK GOLD: THE OKLAHOMA GOLD RUSH**  
**CHEYENNE'S HERMIT OF THE HILLS**  
**COMPUTER COWBOY      WESTVIEW ON TV**



ILLUSTRATION BY JOHN TRACY II

### PREMIERE EDITION

Fall 1981



# FOREWORD

Not often in the history of printing has a periodical publication had a longer gestation period than this Premiere Edition of WESTVIEW. From conception to birth, a year has passed.

Many obstacles — not to be mentioned here — have caused us to veer from our course and to change our plan of action. Oftentimes we have silenced a compulsion to scream, regarding our lack of knowledge of what we were doing, with Prissy, "Honest, Miz Scahlet, I doan know nuthin' 'bout buthin' no babies!"

But with the help of many interested people, we have produced a Premiere Edition which gives us a feeling of accomplishment. We recognize the contributions of those who sat on our hands until we planned a course to follow: the members of the Executive Committee of the Regional Studies Center, who suggested that we make a statement of philosophy; Pat Lazelle, our Art Director, who kept asking us about our format; and others who aren't listed here but who nevertheless know who they are.

I want to think that the works seen in this issue are among the best that have been received and that they are related to all aspects of the culture of Western Oklahoma and its pivotal position in the greater Southwest and Rocky Mountain regions.

If this first issue is considered successful, it is because of the assistance of all those who have submitted manuscripts, assessed them, worked on layout, and helped in the numerous other aspects of magazine publication. We welcome both the adverse and constructive comments of our reading audience. ■

— Leroy Thomas  
Managing Editor

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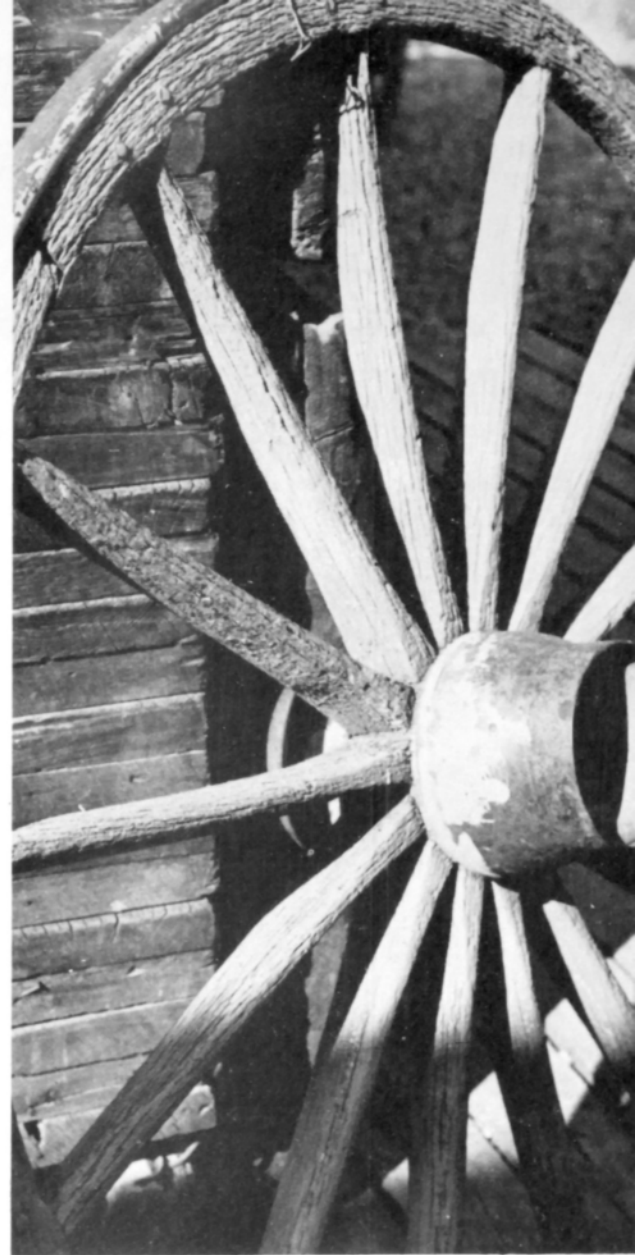
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ON THE COVER: "Pumping Gold" by artist John Tracy II, Mountain View, Oklahoma was selected from numerous entries as the winner of Westview's first cover contest. The second place winner, Alice Holland Barham, Oklahoma City, is featured in the Oil Section of this issue.

PHOTO BY KATHERINE DICKEY



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During these days of our infancy as a journal, we will pay small honoraria for works which we choose for publication.

WESTVIEW is the official quarterly of Southwestern Oklahoma State University's 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 Oklahoma State University Regional Studies Center of Weatherford, Oklahoma.



AGRICULTURE

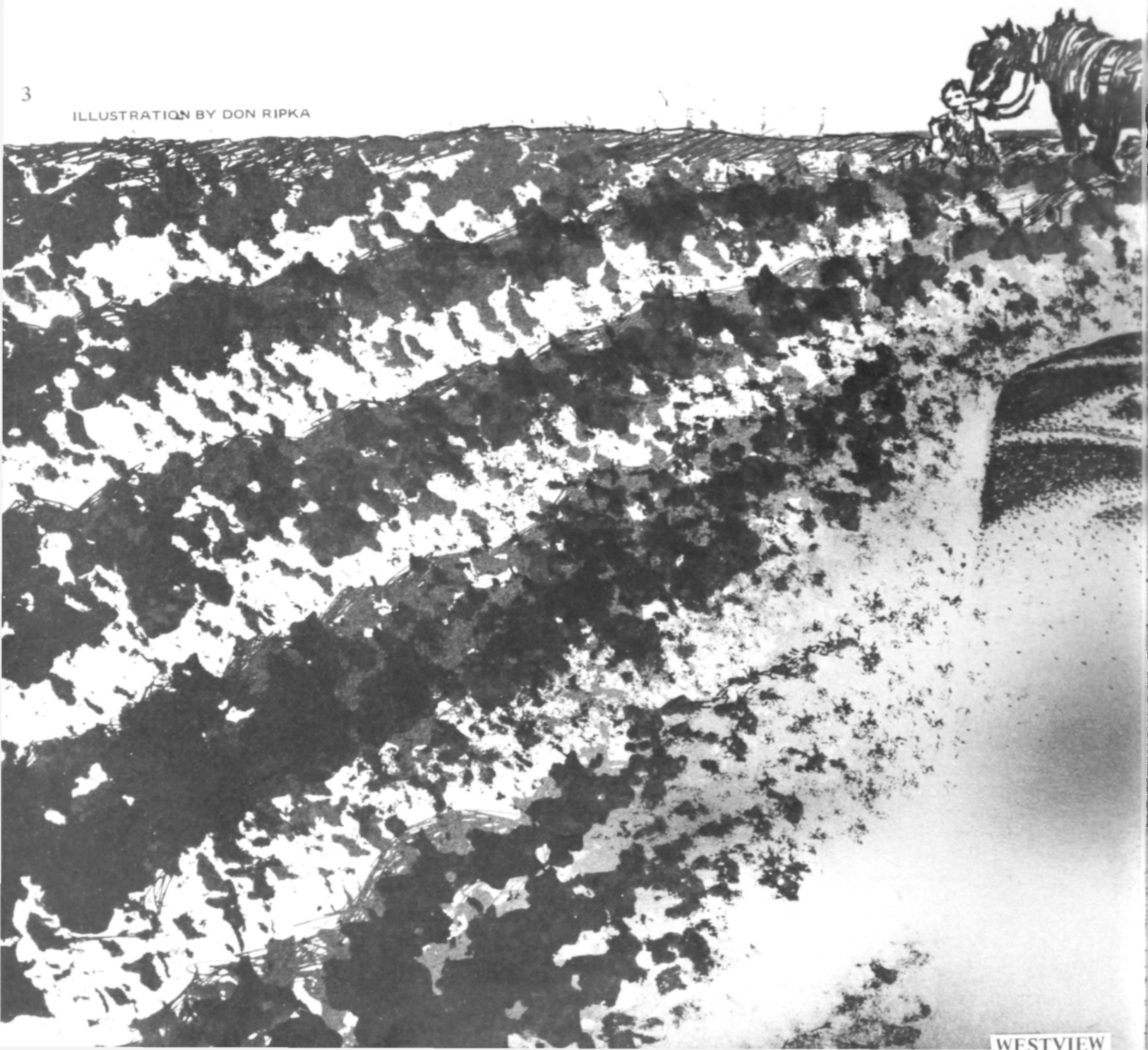
# AGRICULTURE:

## AMERICA'S GREATEST SUCCESS STORY

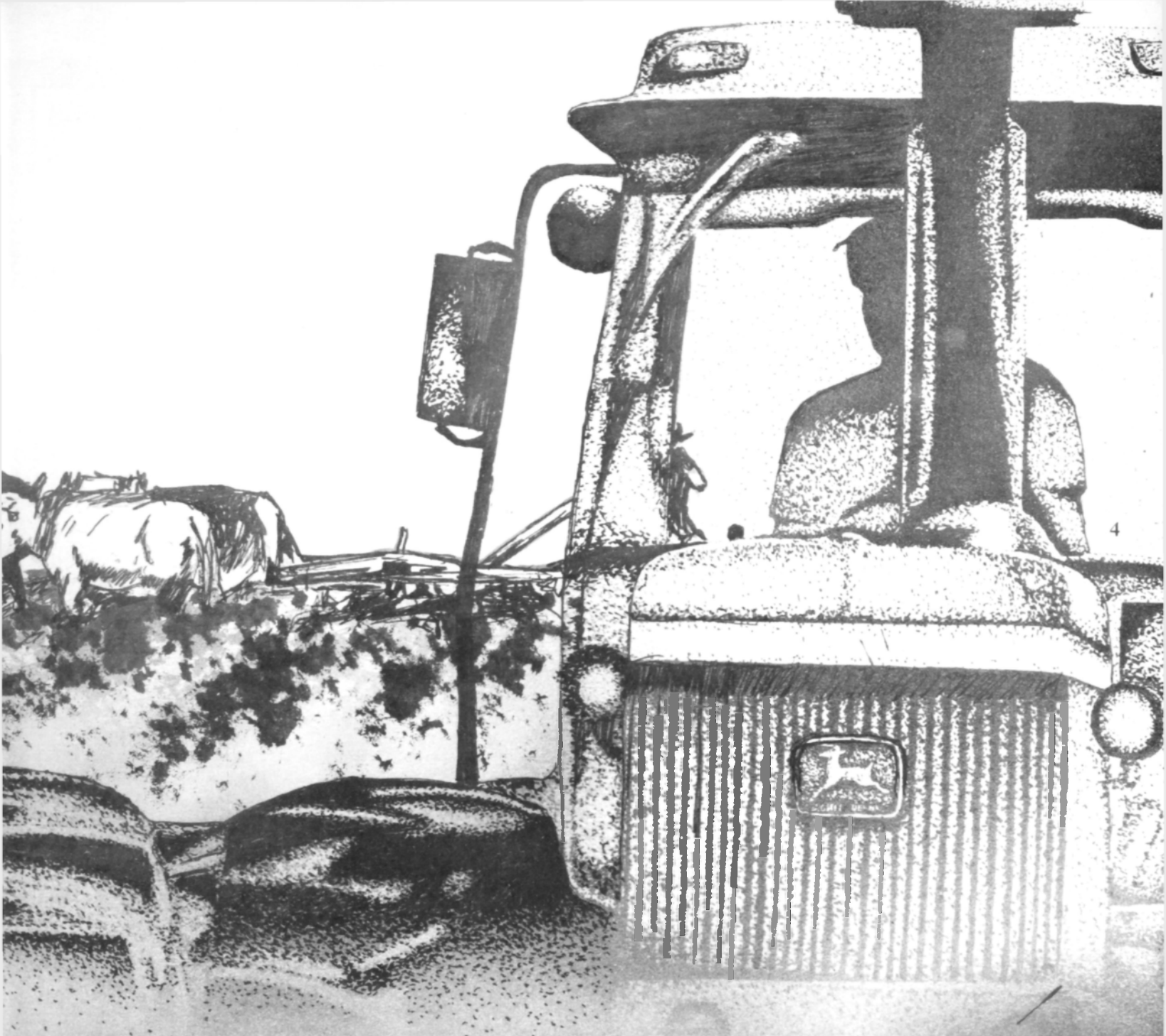
by County Agent Ladd Hudgins

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ILLUSTRATION BY DON RIPKA



WESTVIEW



When describing some of the changes which have taken place in American Agriculture in the last one hundred years, no title seems more appropriate than "America's Greatest Success Story."

What was America's Agriculture like in the early 1900's? First, there were many people involved — over 40% of the total U.S. population. Then it was primarily horse and mule powered. A very large farm consisted of three quarter-sections or 480 acres. Nearly

every quarter section had its own set of farm improvements and a farm family to occupy them. Farmers often had large families, all of whom had ample opportunity to share in farm work. Most farms were diversified. Many operated a small dairy enterprise and also had some chickens and hogs. Farms of this era represented hard work but also spawned close family and neighborhood ties.

There is quite a contrast with this labor-intensive type of agriculture of the early 1900's with the highly mech-



anized, scientific agriculture of today. Today less than 3% of the total U.S. population is involved in agriculture. Now a large 200-horsepower, 4-wheel-drive tractor does the work of tilling a quarter section of land in one day. A century ago several members of one family labored long hours for several weeks to work that same land. Now all that's left of many of those early homesteads is an abandoned water cistern or old concrete storm cellar somewhere in a farmer's pasture.

Probably this migration of people from the farm to the city is the most significant change in U.S. Agriculture. The rapid adoption of new technology in agriculture has allowed more people to leave the farm and provide other goods and services to further improve our standard of living.

How is this great change explained? An important part is due to the decision on behalf of the federal government to invest public funds in agricultural research and extension. This investment has paid enormous dividends. There is no equal for the increase in productivity as seen in U.S. Agriculture over the past one hundred years. For example, in the early 1900's a good wheat yield in the wheat-producing areas of Oklahoma was 20 bushels per acre. Expected yields on that same land today would be 50 bushels or better. Wheat yields in just the past 15 years have increased 25 percent. New crop varieties with vastly improved yield potential, improved fertility practices, and effective pesticides have all played a major role in bringing about greater yields.

Agriculture has a tremendous appetite for new technology. No segment of our business economy is more competitive. Capital continues to be substituted for labor. Today's full-time commercial farmer often farms well over a thousand acres. These new "super family farms" often include a father and one or more sons or sons-in-law. The farm business is often organized as a farm corporation or farm partnership. Most farmers today operate tractors equipped with the

comforts of air-conditioned cabs and radios. What a change from riding or walking behind a team of mules or horses as did the farmer's father or grandfather.

It is difficult to describe all the changes which have occurred in American Agriculture over the past hundred years; it's almost unbelievable!

Yet some things have not changed. The farmer of today still loves the land and still cherishes the rare opportunity that is his to help God create the essential products of food and fibre. Today's American Farmer remains intensely proud of his occupation. He willingly accepts the challenges presented by the always unpredictable weather, crop insects and diseases, wide variations in commodity prices, and changing government policy. Today's farmer still has the ambition and drive for self-improvement that brought his ancestors to this land. He farms a rich land as a vital part of a free economy. He knows that he is an important part of America's basic industry-agriculture.

Today, as it was a hundred years ago, agriculture is our greatest national strength. Perhaps today it is even more important. Annually the U.S. assumes an increasing role in feeding and clothing the world. During the past decade, agricultural exports grew by over 10% per year. We are now truly a global food merchant. The U.S. now accounts for half the world's wheat exports and over 70% of its corn and soybean exports.

In summary, we may have lost some ground in producing TVs, cameras, and small cars; but we are still undisputed champions in agricultural productivity. U.S. Agriculture is now the envy of the world.

American Agriculture has seen phenomenal changes in the past hundred years. It was one giant step to get to the moon but no less an accomplishment for our American Agriculture to achieve its current level of productivity. What better endorsement for democracy than American Agriculture — "America's Greatest Success Story." ■

PHOTO BY KATHERINE DICKEY



heat wave

weeds shrink down

turn  
from green  
to brown

as they melt  
back into  
the red dirt

— Sheryl L. Nelms

### INTO THE WHEATFIELDS

Come walk with me in the winter  
wheat.

Feel the new, green blades brashly  
Poking up from the frozen soil!

When you see the fields of emerald  
velveteen

Speak of your dreams.

Marvel at its awesome color at sunrise.

Come walk with me in the springtime  
wheat.

Laugh as the soft beards tickle your  
elbows

And ribs.

Lie down and hide in the sea of green  
As children love to do.

Delight in its radiant scent at full sun!

Come walk with me in the summer  
wheat.

Be silent in the tides of shimmering  
gold.

In the dry rustlings you may hear —  
The secret music of your heart.

Be at peace in its absolute beauty  
At sunset.

— Sheila Cohbmia

### PRAIRIE WIND: NOW AND THEN

— Joanna Thurston Roper

The wind is blowing

A pattern of sound

Around my house.

The dust cloud is howling

A curtain of gloom

Over my roof.

The light is dwindling

A wall of dimness

Inside my room.

Fifty years ago

The wind and the dirt

Pelted my mother's house

With shrieking darkness.

She willed an enlightening spirit

And survived with happiness intact.

Now this pall will lift

And I, too, will taste

Effervescence again.



# COMPU

Tom Mix, famous cowboy star, once worked as a real cowboy in an Oklahoma Wild West Show.

■ by Joanna Thurston Roper

Now that you're finally at the check-out counter and have a minute to add up the damage, look at the roast you just bought — yes the one in your market basket — did it ever occur to you that it might be a statistic? It's possible that your roast was a cipher on a green and white striped computer sheet. Even stranger, the steer that your roast was once a part of might have had an insurance policy — not that the owner could collect now that the steer is obviously deceased and been divided up. But he could have collected had the steer died an untimely death.

"But insurance on a steer! Isn't that another reason meat is so expensive?" Actually, the opposite is true. A rancher or a feedlot manager can recoup his losses more effectively when he has insurance. Then a dead steer doesn't become a dead loss — you'll pardon the pun!

"But won't computer costs drive up the price of meat?" Information that a feedlot operator uses for better management helps keep prices down. Admittedly, nothing has kept meat prices low; but the new kinds of

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE MUSEUM OF THE GREAT PLAINS, LAWTON

# TER COWBOY

technological assistance ranchers have access to now are making management decisions less hazardous. That, in turn, helps to reduce some of the hazards to the business of producing meat. And you as a consumer, when you pick out a roast at the supermarket, share in the advantages.

Where do ranchers and feedlot managers find such information, you ask? Right here in Oklahoma. It's called Professional Cattle Consultants, and it is the brain child of Steve L. Stroud, Weatherford, Oklahoma.

Just a little town, perhaps. But big things start small — and Professional Cattle Consultants (PCC) is Big Business nationwide. So the question is how can a business in a little place like Weatherford have an impact on the cattle industry nationwide? Good question. Let's take a look at how PCC operates.

Pretend for a moment that you either own or manage a feedlot. That would mean that you are responsible for about 20,000 head of cattle. We're talking about roughly \$13,000,000 in the current market. The life, the feeding, and the eventual sale of those

cattle depend on you. What you feed them, how much you feed them, when you feed them — all these affect when you can sell them and for how much you can sell them. To make even a minor misstep with your investment in 20,000 steers or heifers would be a major calamity. You're ready for help — who wouldn't be!

The thing you would probably desire the most is a source that gives

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Professional Cattle Consultants, the "brainchild" of Steve Stroud of Weatherford benefits feedlot owners.

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PHOTO BY ANDREA LEACH





unbiased, pertinent operating data for the industry. Your smartest move, then, would be to join the network of about ninety feedlot managers in the United States and six in Canada that are served by Professional Cattle Consultants. That move alone would put your 20,000 head of cattle in the company of nearly two million other cattle, whose performance provide the information and reap the benefits of Stroud's computerized consulting service. Stroud proudly points out, "PCC's information is developed by cattle people for cattle people, and our efforts are directed at providing feedlot managers with facts, not opinions."

As a feedlot manager, your part of the bargain would be to report monthly the number of cattle on feed in your lot; the total number of cattle brought in and their cost and weight; the total number sold and what they brought. PCC then audits this information plus some other data such as feed prices; number of steers and heifers, broken down by weight and sex; your number of employees and payroll; then the computer completes the process.

The resulting report would then be returned to you in the form of a Newsletter, furnishing you with comparable data such as the cost of gain for steers and heifers and feed conversion rate for steers and heifers; then you would have a report that compares your feedlot's performance with the "par" in all vital areas. You would also have an analysis of your own operating data as well as the industry averages within your area and a cross comparison with other feeding areas of the country. For example, you could compare your operation in Oklahoma with one of similar size in other areas of the United States or Canada. Thus, you would have a guide for making marketing decisions, and that information would give you tremendous advantage in making day-to-day managerial plans because you would have the edge in predicting market conditions "down the road." You could then capitalize on your feedlot's strengths and correct its weakpoints.

It's easy to see why the PCC Newsletter has become the "Bible" of the cattle industry since its introduction into the profession. Never before had such information been available — before 1973, as a manager, you would have depended on the local sale barn or the national TV stock markets.

PHOTO BY ANDREA LEACH



MPUTER COWBOY COMPUTER CO

But now, as a manager, with a professional Newsletter in hand, you could study in depth the current conditions in eight geographical areas. That Newsletter would indeed put you in good hands. Stroud points out, "Over 22% of the cattle on feed in the seven major feeding states are in PCC participating feedlots."

A simplified breakdown of useable information that you would receive based on a survey of almost 100,000 steers might go like this. We'll say that a steer bought in February cost you \$504.00.\*\* You will sell him in five months when he has gained the proper amount of weight. You would learn from the Newsletter that his gain in weight will cost you nearly \$248.00; other expenses (interest, commission, insurance, etc.) will be about \$45.00. So in five months' time that steer will cost you \$797.00 That is money out of your pocket.

According to the average projected in the Newsletter, you would have to sell the steer for 72.50c per pound to break even.

It obviously would help you as a feedlot manager to know what the projections are both area wide and nationwide. That same advantage is passed on to the consumer. You probably see now the fallacy in thinking that ranchers and feedlot owners are making exorbitant profits on the sale of their cattle. Too often there is the mistaken idea that pure unadulterated gold is pouring into their coffers — after all, one steer brought \$797.00! You know now about the expenses!

So, you see, the roast you just bought probably came to you from a feedlot manager who had taken advantage of some of the most accurate indicators (98% accuracy rate, in fact) of market conditions.



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE MUSEUM OF THE GREAT PLAINS, LAWTON

Stroud comments, "With consumer action groups and uncertain markets all added to the original chance of an agricultural industry, it should be comforting to know that firm facts and comparisons are available for decision making."

So while it's true that Oklahoma is a relatively small state and Weatherford is a small town, there are Big Business innovations that have their origin there. Weatherford Country has always had its share of the Old Time cowboy with faded britches and run-over boots; more recently it has seen an increasing accumulation of Urban Cowboys dancing the Cotton-Eyed Joe in pheasant-feather-decorated hats. But in the Stroud Building in downtown Weatherford is the Computer Cowboy — and he is the one who makes the difference to the feedlot manager and the family budget.

\*\*The figures used here are not current ones. ■

# NOSTALGIA

## THE COWBOY AND THE DUTCHMEN

by Margaret Friedrich

11

It was wheat-sowing time on the Oklahoma prairie in October of 1895. Two early settlers were giving their newly turned fields of virgin soil the final preparation before broadcasting the precious Turkey Red seed wheat. Philipp Frick and George Koch were close friends and neighbors whose farms lay across the section line from each other. Although the section line was reserved for a road, no roads were built at that time. There was no real barrier between their two farms.

Frick and Koch were part of the small group of twelve families who had left the Volga region in Russia in 1892 to travel together to The United States of America. Responding to advertising in their local German-language newspaper, the group had come to the country where religion was free and land was plentiful. In February of 1893 each head of family had filed on a quarter section of land — 160 acres — in the Cheyenne-Arapaho Opening in Western Oklahoma Territory. These farms were a part of the 300,000 acres which were unclaimed during the third "Run" for Oklahoma lands on April 16, 1892; they were located in northern Washita County near the present town of Bessie.

The first crop of winter wheat, sown in the fall of 1893 to be harvested in the summer of 1894, had been a failure due to a severe drouth. The settlers had almost lost the valuable Turkey Red seed brought so painstakingly from Kansas in their covered wagons. They had harvested only

enough grain to provide seed for another crop and to furnish bread to sustain themselves through the winter. The summer of 1895 was different. Each farmer had had a few surplus bushels to sell. They knew the land was productive.

Since their farms lay side by side, Koch and Frick had formed the habit of working together, first on one side of the section line and then on the other. That October day both young farmers were in excellent spirits. The soil was rich and deep, and they had prepared it well. With the farmers' perpetual optimism they looked forward to an abundant crop in 1896. The morning was cool and sunshiny with a pleasant light breeze, no strong wind. The sky was superbly blue with high cumulus clouds floating overhead — one of those exhilarating days seen on the western Oklahoma prairies.

Because the weather was no longer hot, both men and horses could work more efficiently. George and Philipp joked with each other when they came within shouting distance as they harrowed the field in an ever-decreasing square pattern. All their friends were also working in the fields that day.

Sharing the optimism and enthusiasm of his parishioners, their pastor came riding by on his roan saddle horse and stopped for a brief chat. He was the Reverend John Bunge who had been in the community only since July 5, 1895. He was the first resident pastor of Peace Lutheran Church.



The church had been the earliest project of the twelve families, once shelter had been provided for their families in their half-dugout homes. Since only one church per village was permitted in the German settlements in Russia, these settlers from Neu Straub near Sarotov were all Lutherans. Pastor Bunge shared his delight in their good prospects and was about to ride on when George asked, "Did you bring lumber when you came back from El Reno?" The conversation was carried on in the German language because the new citizens were not quite at ease with the language of their already well-loved country.

"Yes, I got enough for a good-sized table and some bookshelves. In fact, I'm going home now to draw the plans," and his roan cantered away to the sod parsonage a mile east.

Later that afternoon the skies grew darker. The pioneer farmers looked toward the Northwest where they saw a huge dust storm moving in. It approached slowly but steadily. When the storm was nearer, they saw that it was not a prairie wind which propelled the clouds of dust but a large herd of cattle driven by cowboys.

Koch and Frick were well aware of the animosity of the cowmen for the farmers. This attitude was particularly venomous toward the so-called German settlers. More than once they had heard themselves referred to as "them damned Dutchmen," and so had their neighbors.

When the herd had finally passed, and the dust had cleared somewhat, the neighbors noticed that Koch's and Frick's horses had bolted and were standing in the opposite corner of the farm, not in the cultivated field but on the prairie. They could not see the men. Were they trampled by the cattle? Had they been hurt by

the runaway horses dragging the harrows behind them? Could they be hiding among the trees along the small creek on the Koch land? They went to investigate.

When the neighbors arrived, they found Philipp Frick and George Koch lying near each other in the middle of the field. They had been shot dead on that eighteenth day of October, 1895.

Pastor Bunge was summoned to break the news to the families. The men picked up the bodies and put them on two plow horses and took them home. While some of the friends washed and prepared the bodies for burial, others built two coffins with the pastor's new lumber. Still others dug two graves in the newly-dedicated church cemetery. The next day after a Christian funeral they buried side by side the two young victims of the first tragedy in the lonely pioneer community. The graves were marked with crude hand-made markers. There was no money for tombstones.

Years later when there was a little money to spend, the Frick and Koch families erected a single tombstone with twin arches at the head of their graves. It stands today in Peace Lutheran Cemetery across the road from the large brick church and a half mile east of the small town of Bessie in Washita County, Oklahoma.

On the left arch is engraved:

George Wilhelm

KOCH

Born 22 July, 1868

Died 18 Oct., 1895

On the right arch is the inscription:

Johann Philipp

FRICK

Born 8 Oct., (year blank)

Died 18 Oct., 1895

The murderer was never brought to trial. ■



## GRANDMA'S LIBERATOR

— by Bob Spraker

“For sheer misery, no torture devised  
by man could compare  
with ‘wash day’ on that farm.”

“Grandchildren are life’s reward for growing old.”

I learned this much too late in life for it to be of any value to me, and I’m pretty sure my grandmother never found out about it at all.

Grandma was far too busy to reflect on such gentle thoughts. She had problems. She had the responsibility of helping my grandfather run a farm in Caddo county, a farm that was worked with horses and mules and sometimes with grandsons. She

further faced the necessity for being prepared to “Cross over Jordan” at the drop of a hat.

Grandmother was well qualified for what she did. She was built short and close to the ground, and I never once saw her waver in the western Oklahoma wind. She was a devout Christian, and the Good Lord provided her with what she needed. She knew perfectly well that this was because she had been saved and because she was willing at all times to do whatever was needed

to save anyone else she came in contact with. This was particularly applicable to grandsons.

When her grandsons were around, Grandmother had real need for a public address system and the Lord provided her with one. He built it into her throat and lungs.

Grandmother had a voice that could bring a grandson in from a quarter of a mile away. Many was the time that I arrived at her back door panting, tongue lolling and with my eyes bulging out of my head, to be told quietly, "It's time to feed the chickens."

It always seemed to me that her week started on Tuesday and built with intensity until the following Monday, which was wash day.

For sheer misery, no torture devised by man could compare with wash day on that farm. I visited there in summer and could only imagine how much worse it might be in the winter.

In the summer Wash Day began at the crack of dawn out in the back yard. Grandsons were hurled from their beds sound asleep with words like "Wood" and "Water" ringing in their ears.

The black iron pot was set up at some distance from the house. "So smoke won't fill the house," she said. This happened to be some distance also from the well and the wood pile which were sensibly located close to the house.

Many buckets of water and many armloads of wood later the sound of Grandmother's voice shouting — "BREAKFAST!" would echo across the yard one time, no more. Grandsons were expected to hear and to arrive at that table with clean faces, a clean soul and a hearty appetite.

Wash day lasted all day accompanied by great scurrying of grandsons in answer to the cry of "More wood!", "More water!"

I often stood and watched her cut the great chunks of lye soap into the black pot and wondered if anyone ever got "saved" enough to be spared wash day.

In my fourteenth summer visit to that farm, I decided that something had to be done. I had seen in a store in Carnegie, a wonderful device. It was a Maytag washing machine with a square gray tub just like the one my mother used in town except for one difference. This machine had a small gasoline engine that could be started by stepping on a foot pedal. Wonder of wonders! This thing would work on a farm where there was no electricity.

I laid my plans carefully. When the time came for the grandsons to visit I conducted myself in the most circumspect manner. I responded quickly to Grandmother's calls. I did everything I was asked and did it promptly. I even sat with Grandmother in the evenings while she read her large Bible at the dining table by the light of a kerosene lamp. When I thought the time was right I popped the question.

"Grandmother have you ever seen a washing machine?"

She looked at me and smiled.

"I think so," she said.

I put my arm around her shoulders.

"Grandmother, you need one,"

I said in a concerned and gentle voice.

Grandmother looked at me over her glasses and said, "Go to bed, boy."

The next morning was Saturday and I went to the barn with Grandfather and helped him hitch the team to the wagon. I rode to the house with him and jumped off the wagon at the back door. I knew Grandfather always went into Carnegie alone and there was no need to ask to go. Grandmother came out of the house and stood by the wagon wheel.

"Don't forget the washing machine, Melvin," she said, and I would have sworn she winked at me.

Grandfather nodded, clucked to the horses and drove away.

I was on pins and needles all day. Liberation was at hand! No more would I be slaving around all over the back yard for a full day just to get a washing done. In my mind I pictured



the neat gray machine sitting alone on the back porch quietly waiting for wash day when it's small engine would be started. This new mechanical slave would do the wash while I sat in the shade eating cold biscuits covered with chunks of butter and liberal quantities of brown sugar.

The equipment that my grandfather returned with was a little different than my dream machine.

To begin with it filled the entire bed of the wagon and left very little room for the other things my grandmother had ordered from town.

It was nearly dark when Grandfather drove into the yard. He parked the wagon near the house and unhitched the team. Grandmother called from the kitchen.

"Did you get everything, Melvin?"

"Yes."

"Did you get the washing machine?"

"I sure did!"

Grandmother came out of the house and looked at the load in the wagon then toward my grandfather's back as he took the team to the barn.

She made no comment but simply went back into the kitchen. At dinner she spoke once about the washing machine.

"I had a Maytag in mind, Melvin." she said.

My grandfather was enthusiastic in defense of his purchase. I could tell that he was repeating almost verbatim everything that the salesman had said to him.

Two wood tubs were definitely better than one metal one. Everyone knew how durable wood was, especially oak. There was plenty of room on the back porch for this rig. The whole machine consisted of a stationary engine about the size of a Shetland pony and a fifteen-foot long wide flat belt which drove a large iron wheel mounted beside the two large wooden tubs.

There would be fewer mechanical problems, he said, because the wringer instead of being infested with gears and machinery was a hand operated and would never wear out. then grand-

father threw in the clincher, all he had to do, he said, was to change the belt and run it in the opposite direction and he could saw wood with the engine!

My grandmother's only comment was, "Melvin, there is no wood here to saw. We buy it already cut."

Grandfather didn't go to church Sunday. He stayed at home. I was amazed at the answer my grandmother gave to inquiries as to his whereabouts.

"Has an ox in the ditch." she said to each who inquired. Everyone seemed to understand but me. I couldn't believe she would say such a thing. I knew full well that my grandfather didn't even own an ox. I knew further that he was at home at that very moment bolting that monstrosity firmly to the floor of the back porch.

When we arrived home from church, Grandfather had the whole thing all bolted down and hooked together. He read for a long time that night in a book entitled "How to start the engine."

Everyone was roused out an hour earlier the following morning because there was more to do now. Now we had to heat enough water in the black pot to fill the two wooden tubs. Then it had to be carried to the back porch along with enough more water to fill two large wash tubs for rinse water.

Each time I dumped a bucket of water into one of those tubs I studied that wringer. The more I studied it the more it became evident from the size of the handle and its height above the floor that it had been tailor made to be powered by a fourteen year old grandson. My grandmother studied the wringer too and a little later in the day she came to exactly the same conclusion.

Grandfather had no time to carry wood or water because he had to "PREPARE THE ENGINE!" After an hour and a half of tinkering and reading he announced that he was going to "START THE ENGINE!"

This required several people one of whom was a grandson to hold the

"COMPRESSION RELEASE." This was a spring-loaded valve located on the "CYLINDER HEAD." A fourteen-year-old boy by bracing his feet against something strong could push on this valve very hard with his thumb and thereby relieve the compression enough that a strong man could turn the engine over. The strong man, in this case my grandfather, would grasp the folding handle located on the large heavy "FLYWHEEL" and begin to crank. He would continue this until his body had reached terminal velocity then he would cry "Let her go!" At this point the grandson would let go of the relief valve and jam his sore thumb in his mouth while everyone hoped for the best. Sometimes the thing would start.

Grandmother used that washing machine for years. I carried water to it for years. Grandfather never sawed a stick of wood with it. Wash days were longer and more painful. Grandmother never commented on the machine except to say that since there were two tubs it was obvious that each batch was meant to go through two tubs of soapsuds before rinsing.

This meant of course that each had to be run through the hand wringer four times. Two washings, two rinsings, each hand wrung each time.

As I grew older I returned to the farm less frequently, but each time that I did the monster was there waiting for Monday morning.

When Grandfather died, I was not able to go to the funeral. So early in the spring I went to see Grandmother. She was well, she said, and everything was fine. No, she didn't need anything.

In a nostalgic mood I wandered to the back porch to look at the old machine. It was still there. And beside it was a neat gray machine with a metal tub and a wringer with balloon-sized rollers and down below a small engine you could start with a foot pedal.

Inside Grandmother was reading her Bible in the glow of a new electric lamp.

"Grandmother," I said. "You have electricity now. You could have an electric washing machine."

"I know," she said, "but I always wanted one just like that. Didn't you?" ■



"Grandfather had no time to carry wood or water because he had to PREPARE THE ENGINE."



ILLUSTRATION BY CINDY KAISER

## Home Stead

On the eleventh of October 1898 our immediate family consisting of James and Clara Chapman, a son Avery, sister Nellie, youngest son Paul and myself - Richard R. and accompanied by friends Mr and Mrs Carl Eads a young married couple of one day left northern Kansas on our way to Oklahoma Territory intending to settle on homesteads in Custer County

HAND LETTERING BY TONI TAYLOR





which my father, and Carl Eads had filed on the previous summer.

We arrived at the elder Eads homestead (Carl Eads father) just south of the partially built town of Weatherford on or about the second of November 1898 just as the work train and crew were entering the eastern side of the new town of Weatherford. Our wagon train had consisted of three wagons, seven head of horses, eight people and one yellow dog.

The Father Mother and two older brothers of Carl Eads

## Home' Stead

..... had come down and filed on land a year or two before just south of the Weatherford town-site. The northern half of the Eads place was bought by the city of Weatherford because of having several relatives in and about the town, so that was the end of their long overland trip.

The town was named, of course, in honor of an old settler and U. S. marshall by the name of Bill Weatherford.

Passenger service was not regular into Weatherford until the spring of 1899. After resting our teams and visiting for a day or two, we went on west another 20 miles farther to our claim, which was 9 miles southwest of Arapaho, the county seat, and oldest town in Custer County.

Father had made arrangements with an old ex-Union soldier to make his place our headquarters until we could construct living quarters on our homestead. His domicile consisted of a large dugout with a sheetiron roof, dug near a canyon which had an everflowing spring of gypsy water in it.

A dugout was cool in summer and easily warmed in cold weather. Brother Avery went to work on the excavation for our dugout while one of the wagons was unloaded and Dad went back to the railroad after lumber, windows, shingles, and one door as we were to have what was termed a half-dugout — four feet underground with the upper part made of pine lumber, a shingle roof, and four half windows.

Winter was upon us before the dugout was finished, but we moved in and made use of it while it was being finished. A shelter was needed for the horses and the cow. It was constructed in the canyon bank of willow poles with blue stem hay for a roof.

And a well was also a must as all the water we used had to be hauled. The water used for cooking was hauled on a sled in two barrels from a small soft-water spring on the north slope of a large red hill high above the

prairie. That unusual spring went dry a few years later and has never flowed a drop of water since that time about 75 years ago.

The overjet and cover from one wagon were set on blocks near the house; brother Avery and I slept in it during the first winter in the territory. If there was any special inconvenience in that arrangement, it has been forgotten or forgiven many years ago.

Our only neighbor within a mile was a large family named Hill; they lived in two adjoining all-dirt dugouts. There was a door in each one but not a pane of glass in either one; the only light was what came through an open door. We children went to a one-room school two miles from our homestead. Some children came five miles, but they had to ride. The number of students was between 35 and 40 ranging in age from 5 to 18.

The teacher received \$35.00 a month and was his own janitor except for carrying drinking water, which was brought from a well in a pasture a quarter-mile away.

Our most numerous neighbors were the night-singing coyote and an occasional bobcat. Both were probably on the prowl after the very numerous quail and prairie chickens roosting in the sumac, dogwood thickets, and horse-high blue-stem grass on the hillsides.

There were no more dangerous animals than the longhorned cattle that roamed the remaining areas of grassland, sometimes playing havoc with the settlers' cornfields in the redlands of the Cheyennes and Arapahoes. As to the Indians, they were very good neighbors so far as any trouble was concerned as they tended strictly to their own business and molested no one. They lived almost exclusively in tepee camps along the Washita River and usually moved to higher ground during the mid-summer to escape the heat, mosquitoes, and other insects.

They were never beggars, to my knowledge, and the timber on their

## Home Stead

allotments supplied many a family with firewood and posts for which they paid the Indians little or nothing.

Prairie fires were always to be dreaded and could be very dangerous, but high water and flashfloods on creeks and rivers were much more destructive and caused more property damage to property and loss of life to both livestock and human beings — as well as being very unpredictable.

Trouble between the cattlemen and settlers was not uncommon before the turn of the century and often caused serious injury or death to someone involved in the disagreement before being brought to an end. This trouble was mostly caused when wire fences were erected to protect crops and thereby restricted the open range for the ranchers' cattle and horses.

People from many different states were eventually to come to the area. Most were real farmers of experience, while some were only "would-be" farmers from some town or city; and they knew little or nothing about farming, especially in a raw new land. Some were mere speculators who intended to stay only long enough to prove up on their claim, sell out, and go back home — wherever that might be. Others stayed only a year or so and left broke and badly disillusioned.

Some families were hard to become friends with as they still had the Civil War on their minds and had never surrendered. They felt very bitter over the war most of their lives; but as the younger generations became acquainted, this animosity eventually disappeared. ■

■ R. R. Chapman

### THE UNSULLIED WORLD

A desolate war-weary world  
lies barren beneath a blazing  
sun that scorches life from the land.  
Many wheels of battle have packed  
the ground into a cement-hard  
wasteland that cannot soak up the  
pounding rain from the savage clouds  
raging so fiercely over all.  
Pillaged top-soil flows into streams  
advancing on their winding way  
toward the sea's filthy cesspool.

But it was not always this way.

Long ago God entrusted His  
Creation to the human race.  
The soil was rich and plant growth  
lush.  
The air was pure and water clear  
and songs of birds enhanced the peace  
that seemed to settle everywhere.  
The humans and animals lived  
in a perfect environment  
but through the years man's onerous  
deeds destroyed most of the beauty  
of a world that was unsullied.





# THE SAGA OF Dr. H. C. Laird

— Donita Lucas Shields

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Stacy Riggs, grandson of Chief Black Kettle of the Cheyenne Indians, once made the statement at a pioneer celebration that "Cheyenne some time the greatest city in Oklahoma because she has so great history." Riggs was primarily referring to the Battle of the Washita, which alone provides a historical gold mine of material for the history buff. Even though Cheyenne is noted for Indians, soldiers, and cowboys, it abounds also with the silk and satin of romantic history.

Typical of the cultural beauty of Cheyenne is the life story of Dr. H. C. Laird and his family. In 1900 Dr. Laird and his beautiful wife Elbertine homesteaded on a quarter section of land one mile west of the little pioneer town. Dr. Laird, however, was more than an ordinary farmer seeking a good life for his family. In fact, he was not a farmer at all; he was a showman and a doctor. Yet he wished for a place to call his own, a permanent home, and somehow he actually did live a part of the years on his farm and did prove his claim.

However, Dr. Laird's deepest love was for the theatrical world, and with this love was mixed an even more powerful wanderlust which led him all over the country. He could never resist the glamour of the stage, the applauding crowds,

and the thrill of a successful performance. His talents lay in two areas: the entertainment world and the medical profession. Dr. Laird combined both to develop a remarkable reputation of being a great entertainer and an even greater doctor. Some even believed that he had magical qualities.

All agreed that Dr. Laird was truly a doctor, having passed his examination to practice medicine in 1908. Many claimed that he studied at Johns Hopkins University and that he was a very well-educated and learned man. Most of all he was remembered as being the Painless Dentist and the Lightning Tooth Puller. George Laidlow, a long-time friend of Dr. Laird who worked with him for more than twenty years, explained that Laird pulled teeth with his fingers.

Laidlow revealed, "Dr. Laird wouldn't give anaesthetic or use instruments. He'd just feel around, and the first thing you knew, the tooth was out."

Pulling teeth was a strange thing for which to remember a person, but thousands remembered Dr. Laird because of his painless dentistry even if it was merely a side line with him. He never accepted money for his miraculous dental feats. He made his living by treating his patients by day, and he enjoyed himself by providing free entertainment for people at night.



ILLUSTRATION BY BENJAMIN TEST

Dr. and Mrs. Laird began their medical-theatrical career by wagon and horseback. As they galloped into a country town, Mrs. Laird threw clay disks into the air, and he flourishingly blasted them to bits while riding at full speed. After such attention-getting ballyhoo gathered a crowd, the two presented their medicine show complete with singing and dancing. Mrs. Laird played the guitar, and he picked a banjo. Dr. Laird with his wife's assistance then brought forth his tonics and draughts while telling the entranced audience of great miracle cures.

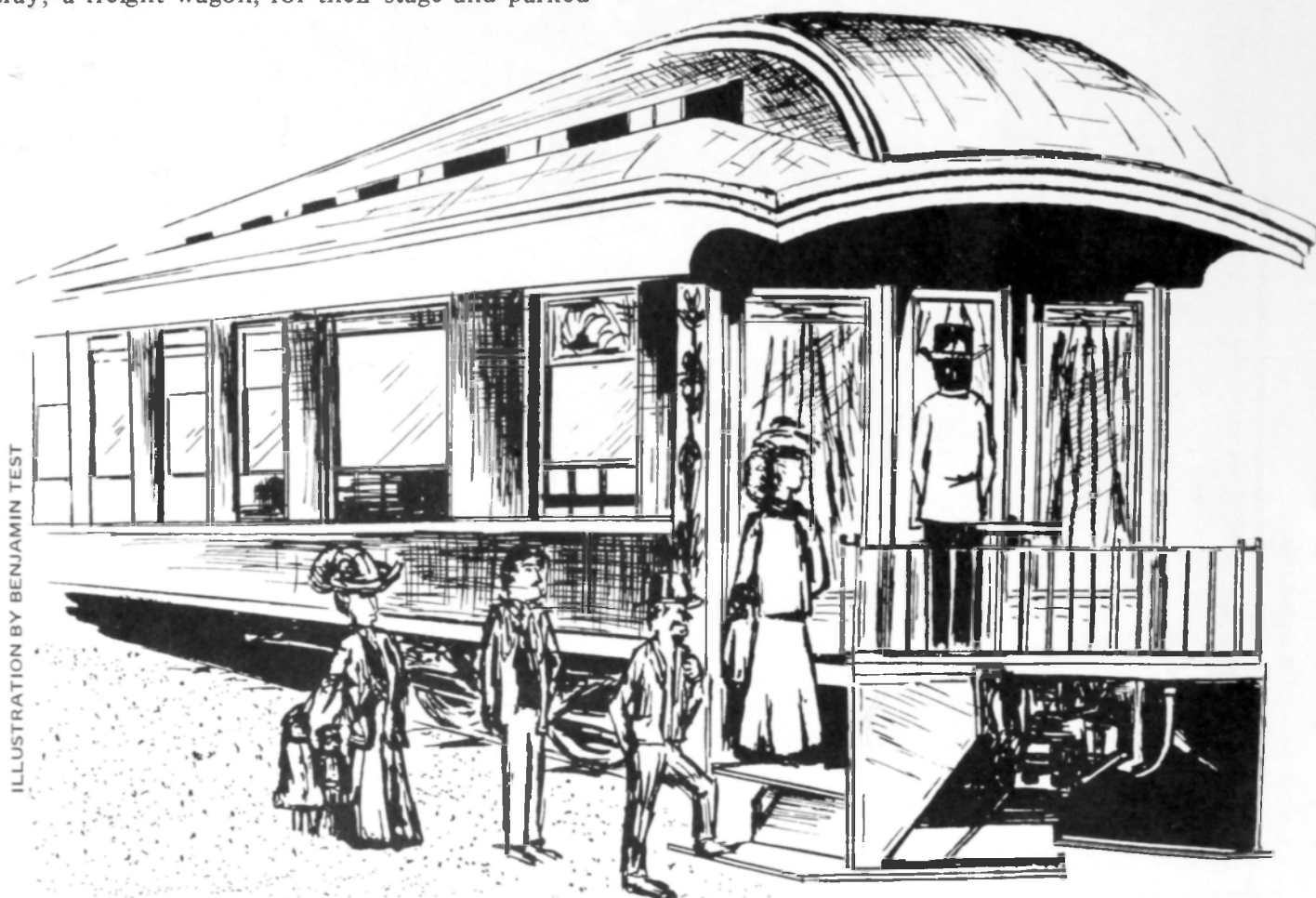
In later years after the advent of railroads, Dr. and Mrs. Laird became prosperous enough to purchase their own private Pullman car named "Mignon," which they always located on the siding near a town's depot. Sometimes they spent two weeks at a particular place. During the day Dr. Laird administered to the ailing at his office in the luxurious Pullman; then at night he and his wife presented singing, dancing, and novelty numbers.

A local fellow always volunteered his large dray, a freight wagon, for their stage and parked

it near their Pullman. Dr. and Mrs. Laird transformed the old wagon into the finest of stages, draped with velvets and adorned with Dr. Laird's bottles of tonics and linaments. At night they brilliantly lighted the stage with ornate gas lamps. Workers constructed makeshift benches of rough planks placed upon tiers of bricks stacked to the desired height, the typical pioneer out-door theater.

Dr. and Mrs. Laird graciously entertained the rough country folk with culture and beauty. Mrs. Laird, a gorgeous dark-haired beauty, glided onto the stage wearing the latest fashions of silks, satins, and ostrich plumes. She was a delightful singer and dancer. All early pioneer remembered and loved her most famous song, "The Bird in the Guilded Cage." Handsome Dr. Laird always wore a long black frock coat, a white ruffled shirt, a white hat, and cowboy boots. His curly dark hair grew below his should-

The Laird's Pullman Car, 'Mignon'.



ers, and he adorned himself with diamonds on his fingers and a huge diamond stickpin in his cravat. Early-day pioneers were astounded with their expensive splendor and responded by generously purchasing tonics, linaments, and ointments.

When the Lairds' little daughter Dottie and son Clifford became old enough, they joined their parents in the medicine shows. Dottie, a beautiful child with long black curls, was extraordinarily talented. Her dancing and singing instantly captured her audiences. Little Clifford, younger than his sister, became her singing and dancing partner until he retired at a young age to live with his grandparents.

As the years passed, the Lairds became an institution as they traveled throughout the country. Each night audiences expected and received something new and exciting from the gifted entertainers. As long as they remained in a town, the makeshift benches held a full house for the evening festivities, and Dr. Laird's Pullman office-home held a long line of patients waiting for his kind words and healing hands. Wherever the Lairds traveled, they cultivated lifelong friends and fond memories.

World War I then created vast changes in their life style. The U. S. government no longer allowed the Lairds to travel on the railroads from town to town since the war effort needed all available space in the trains. The Lairds parked their Pullman upon a spur line in Pauls Valley and attempted to become permanent citizens. However, sedentary life was not for Dr. Laird for he was a true traveling showman and doctor. Also, he and his wife realized that little Dottie was an usually gifted child. Therefore, the Laird saga does not end on that siding in Pauls Valley.

Because of their nomadic way of life, Dr. and Mrs. Laird had always been Dottie's only teachers. Being well-educated and highly-cultured themselves, their precocious daughter undoubtedly received the best of both the educational and the musical world. Dr. Laird was well-known for voicing his personal philosophy far ahead of its time concerning the child progressing and learning at his own rate. Dottie knew her letters and numbers at the age of two and read newspapers at four.

She was born in the Lairds' private Pullman and spent her toddling days with her parents on the dray-wagon stages of numerous towns, both large and small. She never knew the confine-

ment of hot, stuffy classrooms with ink-splattered desks. The entire country was her schoolroom, and the velvet-trimmed stage was her desk. Her father said on many occasions that schools merely "polished pebbles and dimmed diamonds." His little Dottie, of course, was a diamond.

With her parents' training, Dottie's career as a professional dancer actually began in the old Lyric Theater in Oklahoma City. Here critics first recognized that Dottie had potential for stardom. In 1922 Dr. and Mrs. Laird felt their daughter might be prepared for the opportunities of New York City. They traveled East with her, and at this time she became known to the theatrical world as Mignon Laird.

In New York City Mignon danced her way from vaudeville stages to the most exclusive clubs. She climbed onward to Broadway to become a dancer in Ziegfield Follies. Her name



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blazed forth in brilliant theatrical lights as she became famous as one of the greatest singers and dancers both on stage and in the movies. Mignon Laird, the country doctor's little girl who was born in a Pullman car and reared on dray wagons in the prairies of Oklahoma, continued her musical career even further by becoming a great harpist and a member of American Harp Society.

Both Dr. and Mrs. Laird lived with Mignon part of the time, and New York City gave her the first permanent home. However, Dr. Laird was still unable to settle down in one place. Mrs. Laird remained with Mignon, and he returned to Oklahoma in an ornately-decorated travel trailer. Dr. Laird would forever be the traveling entertainer and doctor who had to be on the move. There was no other way of life for him. Again he made his headquarters in Pauls Valley and continued to practice his profession. At one time there were as many as twenty-four entertainers in his troupe.



## NOSTALGIA

Then early in June, 1939, Dr. Laird drove to Oklahoma City and parked his trailer home behind Hamburger Stand at 217 South Broadway. It was there he died on September 6th after a three-day illness at the age of eighty-three. Doctors said he died a natural death. He was surrounded by all his old show friends: the pitch men, the med men, the opsy men, and all the old troupers from the days of his golden glory.

His old friends paid tribute to him as they paused beside his remains. They recalled he was both a great musician and a fine medical man, an enviable combination in itself without his magic of painless dentistry. All remembered his fabulous stories about his many feats. Dr. Laird was a great talker and teller of anecdotes.

Yet few of these old friends knew much of his personal life. Some said he owned property all over Oklahoma, but no one was sure. All knew, however, that his travel home was filled with pictures, clippings, and mementos of his early days with his beloved family, his travel troupes, and his remarkable Mignon. All watched tearfully as the deputy sheriff securely locked the doors of his home until his wife and daughter from New York City and his son from St. Louis arrived to give their final tribute.

"Don't ever call Dr. Laird a med opsy man," warned one old friend. "He was a trouper all right, but to call his show a medicine show is like calling an electric light a candle."

Even after Dr. H. C. Laird's death, his saga continued. His story opened again on April 19,

1967, when his pioneer homestead quarter section became Mignon Laird Airport of Cheyenne. At the Fly-In Breakfast Ceremony Governor Henry Bellmon gave the dedication speech. Mignon returned from New York City for the occasion. She responded to her introduction at the ceremony as being recipient in reverse for her father's honors.

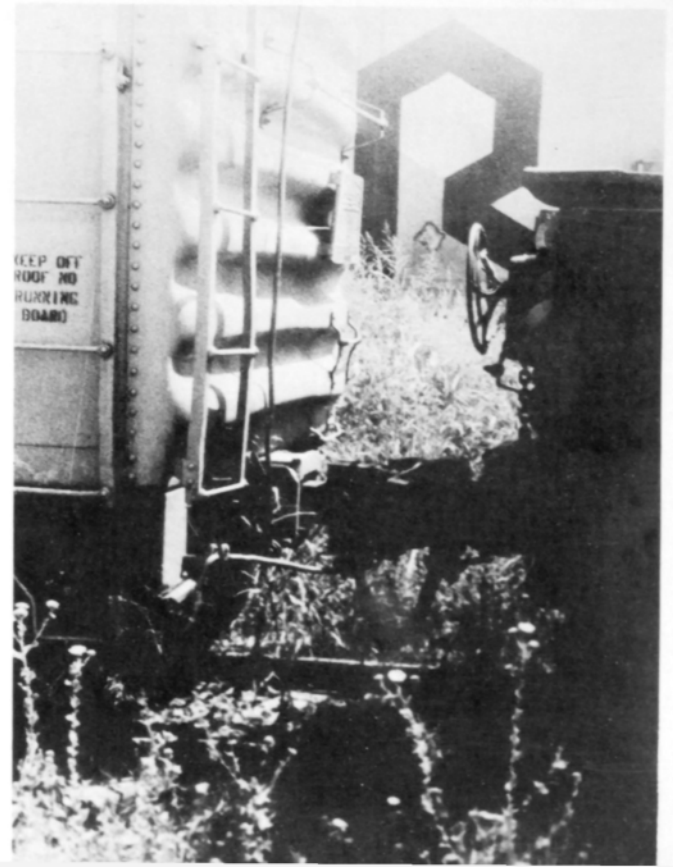
Mignon described the Cheyenne area as a tender symbol of her parents' young love and their dream of some day establishing a home upon the land of their choice. She continued by saying, ". . . Papa and Mama's dream of a permanent home was never realized, but instead it became a monument to transportation. . . the Laird destiny to be linked permanently with travel."

Cheyenne could never have given a more fitting monument for Dr. Laird, the showman and doctor who could never settle in one place. Nor could anything have been more fitting for his daughter Mignon who, according to Harp Journal, was the only harpist who already had her wings. For she, following in her father's footsteps, spent her life upon the wheels and wings of show business.

Neither Mignon nor Dr. Laird would have wished it any other way. In return Cheyenne's colorful history is made even more exciting by having been a part of the lives of those famous personalities. The memories of Dr. H. C. Laird and his family are almost as immortal to Cheyenne as are Chief Black Kettle and Battle of the Washita. ■

A glimpse of a possible relic of the future: A Rock Island boxcar. The outcome of this history-making railroad is currently in question.

PHOTO BY ANDREA LEACH



# INSPIRATION

## NOT JUST SOMEBODY'S GRAND-MOTHER

— Leroy Thomas

At age 74, Margaret Friedrich (pn. Fredrick), revered charter member of the Weatherford Wordhandlers, considers writing a dream-fulfillment: "The invitation to join Weatherford Wordhandlers and the OWFI freed my spirit." Her publication credits now include WESTVIEW, PRAIRIE LORE, and HOME LIFE.

This retired English teacher could sit back and relax, but her option is much more exciting. She says, "Life is a miracle — every day of it. The prayers and love that enabled Henry and me to rear our two children, the patience needed to teach other people's children for 29 years, the health that keeps me eager and active — all are profound everyday miracles."

Margaret's professional background has aided her in breaking into a writing career. She excels in OWFI and Federated Women's Clubs contests, having won firsts, seconds, thirds, and Honorable Mentions.

She has also remained active as president of the Custer-Dewey Retired Teachers' Association, as chairman and now secretary of the Trinity Lutheran Church in Clinton, and as secretary of Weatherford Wordhandlers.

Margaret nevertheless asserts, "I'd rather be a mother and grandmother than anything else on earth. The greatest contribution anyone can make is to influence others to make a better life for all of us." She therefore spends much time with her children and their families. Son Bruce has a Ph.D. in

Chemistry, and daughter Margee has an M.S. in Counseling. Margaret is justifiably proud of her two children and four grandchildren.

For Margaret, "widowhood is only a continuation of the faith we shared. Except for the great loneliness and the added responsibilities, life is no different than before. It's all there, waiting to be tried," she says.

Members of Weatherford Wordhandlers wait for the beautiful, white-haired Margaret to give her opinion of manuscripts that are read. Although Margaret in her unassuming way considers many of her colleagues better qualified than she is to judge, it's the Friedrich opinion that really matters. It shouldn't be any other way for a woman who vows that the "most fulfilling aspect of my life today is the love and wholehearted support of my family and friends in all the projects my curiosity prompts me to try."

Margaret Friedrich, active writer and retired English teacher believes life is a miracle.



## LAUGHTER IS THE BEST MEDICINE

— by *Walter Crouch*

Notorious more than forty years for fun and foolishness, Weatherford's "Snake Pit" is alive and well today under the guidance and goading of their founder and patron saint, Barney Elmo Christy.

The young-at-heart octogenarian is a man of many talents, not the least of them the spreading the gospel of "Laughter is the Best Medicine." He has become a prime candidate to be remembered as the city's legend in his own time.

He was born December 19, 1898, on the bank of Wild Horse Creek near Velma, Indian Territory, the son of Jim Christy, a former Texas Ranger, and Annie Cross, whose ancestors were Eastern Cherokees of North Carolina.

Barney is best known around town as a master of tall tales and of fun and games, but there is much more to this versatile, talented man. He is one of the most widely read history buffs in this university city, his mind a storehouse of Southwestern Oklahoma facts and legends. His travels have taken him to most historic landmarks in the South and East and in Europe.

During his early life he was an accomplished violinist. The most famous group of which he was a member was a Navy orchestra directed by Paul Whiteman during World War I. In recent years he has emerged as a "bluegrass fiddler," one of the faithful attending Weatherford's Cross Timbers sessions.

Masonry has been an important part of Barney's life for more than fifty years. His influence has been felt in Weatherford's Western Star Lodge 138, which today has a record membership and a list of good deeds to match. As in all his other areas of interest, he is well versed in Masonic history.

This World War I veteran is a patriot

of the old order. Sixty-three years a member of the American Legion, he has no tolerance for those who downgrade the United States or show disrespect for the Stars and Stripes, a trend so strong during the Viet Nam War.

Influenced perhaps by his Cherokee ancestry, Barney is this area's accepted authority on Indian lore and artifacts. From some fifty-odd ancient tribal mounds he has assembled an imposing collection of relics displayed in his "Wigwam Neosho," a converted workshop.



**Barney Christy, owner of an early restaurant in Weatherford, The Snake Pit.**

Tina, a diminutive rat terrier, beloved member of the Christy household until her death at age 16, was the heroine of one of Barney's most impossible, but often believed, yarns. More than one gullible newcomer to the community were convinced that Tina could point Indian arrowheads, moving her tail up and down if the specimen was a good one and wagging from side to side if it was flawed. In his farewell address, one pastor of the First United Methodist Church told his congregation that he had fallen

victim to Barney's arrowhead hoax.

Barney and his wife, Jewel, moved to Weatherford from Granite in January, 1939, so that their children could attend Southwestern. All three graduated: Dick in pharmacy; Bill, business administration, and Jean, art.

The Christys opened a small restaurant on North Broadway just off Main Street. Three years later, on December 7, 1941, they were in the process of opening at a new location in a small frame building that still stands at 114 East Main when word came of the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor. There was an immediate massive exodus of young men from the Southwestern campus and the Weatherford community rushing to volunteer. Before long both Christy sons had followed in their father's footsteps and enlisted in the Navy. Before the end of the conflict, the college enrollment had ebbed to a low point of 94 students, only five of them males.

The original Snake Pit was born during these troubled times. Barney's place became a refuge for those seeking a cheerful interlude from the harsh realities of a world at war. There was rarely a serious moment within the confines of the tiny diner. A daily diet of the cross, the double-cross, the frame-up, the charge and the counter-charge entertained the Disciples and bewildered occasional strangers.

The Snake Pit flourished after the war ended. Barney and Jewel retired from the restaurant business in 1963, but tales of the Snake Pit have become legendary and are retold after forty years. During the 18 years since he served his last bowl of chili (according to Barney, the recipe was stolen by an ancestor from a Mexican general during a revolution south of the border), the "retiree" has worked as a house painter until recently. On his 80th birthday he was plying his trade.

Barney has outlived most of his earliest Disciples, but still has a following among Weatherford residents

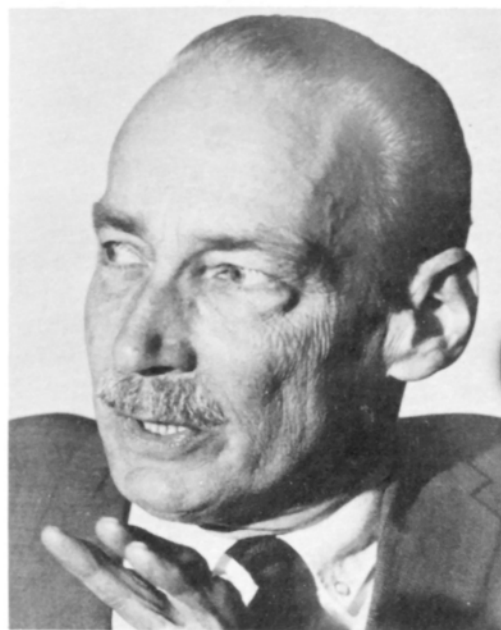
of all ages with whom he shares his vast knowledge of frontier life, of Masonry, of Indian lore, of bluegrass music, and occasionally a brand new fantasy, an impossible tale to which he gives the aura of reality.

Barney Christy, advocate of cheerful living, will never grow old.

## GEARY'S "WINDOW ON THE PAST"

— Pat Sturm, in collaboration  
with Joe Brooks and  
David Shanklin

Kent Ruth's name is in the history books. It might not be in the glossaries, but if you look on the title pages, you'll find that this writer from Geary has published seven books on travel and historical subjects. Among these are OKLAHOMA: A GUIDE TO THE SOONER STATE, GREAT DAY IN THE WEST, and TOURING THE OLD WEST. He is also the author of the Oklahoma section of COLLIER'S ENCYCLOPEDIA.



Behind-the-scenes writer, Kent Ruth from Geary, shares his expertise with high school students.



A 1934 graduate of Geary High School, 65-year-old Ruth travels about two months out of the year to get his stories. He writes newspaper columns and magazine articles on "out-of-the-way" vacation spots for tourists. Primarily, he stays in the United States, but he has ventured into Canada for some stories he thinks might be interesting.

Readers have the opportunity to enjoy Ruth's work every week; he pens two columns, "Trip Teasers" and "Window on the Past," for THE SUNDAY OKLAHOMAN. In 1973, both Ruth and Oklahoma Publishing Company received a special award from the Oklahoma Heritage Association for "Window on the Past."

One who does not know Kent Ruth might never suspect that this writer who contributes travel articles to THE NEW YORK TIMES, THE WASHINGTON POST, THE CHICAGO TRIBUNE, and THE DENVER POST, as well as to THE SUNDAY OKLAHOMAN has a disability; he suffered a severe case of polio in his youth which shrewdly distorted his form. That Ruth is an accomplished writer is one thing; that he has become a noted travel writer in the face of such difficulty is quite another. Kent Ruth has not only made a living, he's made a life.

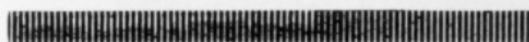
In addition to writing his books and weekly articles, Kent Ruth takes time to instruct and encourage young writers of the area. Frequently he notes the efforts of students in his Sunday columns. Instructing a writing class of Geary High School students, Ruth sagely stated, "Lots of people want to be writers, but most people don't want to write. They're like doctors," he quipped, "who enter the profession so they can play golf on Wednesday afternoon. But you should worry about becoming a doctor first, and then worry about your golf game."

Not all of Ruth's advice is comic. He is very careful to remind students

to study guidelines, write for the markets, send query letters, and be very precise about the technical aspects of their writing. He shares his experience and always credits his mentor, the late W. S. Campbell, who began the professional writing program at the University of Oklahoma where Ruth earned his bachelor's and Master's degrees.

Geary residents are proud of Ruth. He is "their" local celebrity, and they all have good words to say when his name is mentioned. Of course, Ruth has earned their respect. He was chosen Oklahoma Handicapped Citizen of the Year in 1972 and was inducted into the Oklahoma Hall of Fame in 1976. He is a member of the Oklahoma Historical Society and the Geary Chamber of Commerce.

Kent Ruth is a lucky fellow — he likes what he does. He enjoys travel, and he keeps his eyes open. His talent as a freelance writer has enabled him to turn his love for travel and history into bread and butter. He communicates his satisfaction, for a visit with this man leaves one feeling glad that they met. ■



# BLACK GOLD

Illustration by Alice Holland Barham, second place winner in WESTVIEW'S Cover Contest



***THE OKLAHOMA  
GOLD RUSH ■***

# "BLACK GOLD: THE OKLAHOMA GOLD RUSH"

■ A Westview Interview by Pat Lazelle

"Untold riches, bands o' pure gold as high as the eye can see, nuggets so big you cain't lift 'em," many a prospector's claim rang out. Panning for the sparkle that would "light up" a man's eye, the sanest man could be driven crazy in his search for the substance of which dreams were made: GOLD!

Romanticizing the Old West, numerous stories have been written mesmerizing readers with tales of overnight gold and silver strikes, especially in the Rockies during the 1850's, much like the present rush for "Black Gold: the Oklahoma Gold Rush of the 1980's."

Recently, while on vacation, winding my way through the Colorado Rockies, I was beckoned by the lure of the historic gold mining "boom" towns of Cripple Creek, Victor and Central City. Central City, the most famous, is a national "shrine" to what they called the "richest, square mile on earth." There are remnants in Central City of prosperous days past, now reduced to nothing more than a mere tourist attraction. With its freshly painted Victorian store fronts selling trinkets of every sort, to the wooden signs forever warning those adventuresome souls to STAY AWAY FROM THE OLD MINE SHAFTS!, come the uneasy feelings that exploitation knows. The mazes of underground mine shafts riddle the earth useless, their openings like silent gravemarkers dot the Colorado landscape.

To a "tinhorn" whose eyes had never viewed the Rockies, I wondered if, one hundred years hence, the present-day oil and gas "boom" towns of Elk City, Clinton and Weatherford would be scarred and reduced to ghost town proportions also. Many oil field exerts, as well as landowners, businessmen and townspeople have speculated on how long the furious rush for production will last in this region. Many parallels can be drawn to these two similarly "money-crazed" periods in history, from the substances that brought showers of overnight riches, the influx of new migrants from every state seeking jobs offering "big" money, to the dangers each respective occupation entails. The similarities in lifestyles between a miner and an "oilie" seem more than coincidental, as are the corruption and abuse that followed mining, and still follow the oil industry today. Their specialized terminology or "slang", as well as the pressures and physical demands of these jobs, set the men who work in these industries apart as special kinds of beings. Not everyone can stand the rigors of these lifestyles, nor would some want to.

It became obvious to the staff of Westview that history, taking place right under our very feet, is changing the course of many western Oklahomans' future, or at least their pocketbooks. In an effort to link more effectively the educational awareness of native Western Oklahomans to those who actively work in the oil industry, we have sought out some of the "pioneers" in this region. An active partnership in the Anadarko Basin is the GHK Company (Glover, Hefner and Kennedy), who contract drilling rigs from the Parker Drilling Company, the largest drilling company in the world, owned by Robert L. Parker. According to a brochure published by GHK in May 1981, the company is "jointly owned by Robert A. Hefner III and David O'D Kennedy. During its 20-year history, GHK has built an organization of specialists in all phases of deep natural gas exploration, development and production.

GHK's operations have focused on the deep sediments in the Anadarko Basin of Western Oklahoma and the Texas Panhandle. Shallow discoveries within the Greater Anadarko Basin have already established this area as one of the two most productive natural gas provinces in North America. However, Hefner, President of GHK, has seen that even within this productive province lies a "new frontier," virtually unexplored below 15,000 feet.

In 1969, GHK's second deep wildcat established the gas-producing capabilities of the Deep Anadarko Basin. This discovery, the No. 1-1 Green, reached 24,453 feet, then the second deepest hole ever drilled. Today more than 4 trillion cubic feet of gas has been discovered in the basins at depths below 15,000 feet. Yet less than 4% of the deep sediments have been explored.

Presently drilling the 1-1 Robinson well, the Parker 201 rig, the largest land drilling rig ever

BORDER ILLUSTRATION  
BY LEE STEWART

WESTVIEW

built, is designed to reach 50,000+ feet with a target depth of 33,000+ feet. It will set a record as the world's deepest well drilled for hydrocarbons.

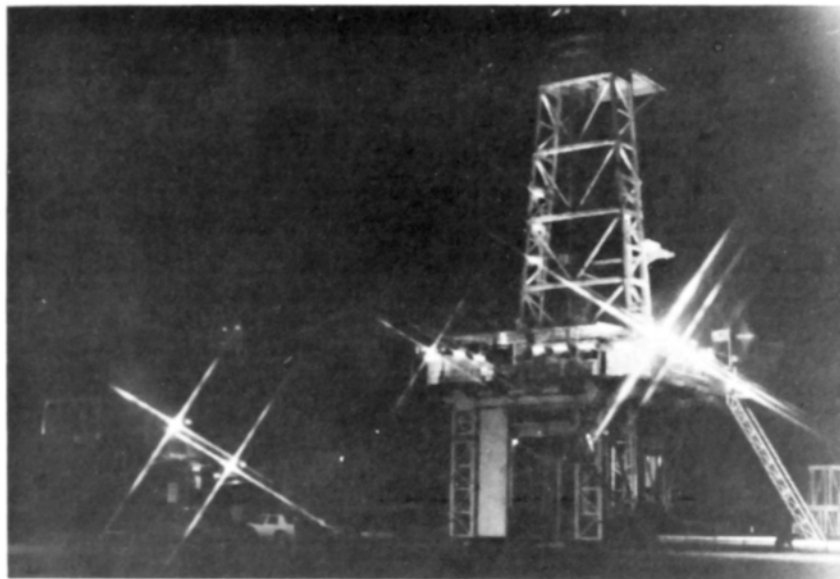
The industry's expenditures for exploration in the Deep Anadarko Basin approached 2 billion in 1980. With more than 442 deep well locations currently active in the basin, GHK estimates the industry's investment will top the \$2 billion dollar mark in 1981.

GHK is currently operating twenty-two deep wells (as of May 1981) in the Anadarko Basin. GHK's dominant acreage position and 20 years of deep drilling experience will allow it to continue its dominant role in the development of the Deep Anadarko Basin."

To a "layman", the preceding facts and statistics about the oil and gas "boom" and the prosperity that it brings seem quite impressive and optimistic. But since the pendulum always swings both ways, we cautiously pose the question of what price we will pay for this "instant" wealth, and whether or not history will be repeated.

The Westview staff felt a closer examination of the "life and times" of an oil field worker might lend some insight into the problems they face. For it is the workers, after all, who are responsible for this economic upturn in our lives.

Without hesitation, I volunteered to venture to Elk City, find this mammoth rig all the news media have been busy immortalizing, and interview some of its "hands."



AUGUST 7, 1981 – 7 pm.

As I drive across the bumps of the cattleguard, an ominous, shiny new oil rig towers overhead like a giant Christmas tree, its mercury lamps blinding me in the darkness. It is my first look at the Parker No. 201 – the largest land drilling rig in the world, located about 6 miles southeast of Elk City, Oklahoma. An awesome sight for one who has never been so close to one of the symbols of wealth that has become so common on the Western Oklahoma landscape. My first impression is amazement at the orderliness around the rig, furthering my feeling that this rig is a source of pride to its crews, company, and Western Oklahoma as well. I pull in front of one of the trailers, grab my notebook and tape recorder, and with a deep breath knocked on the door. I am greeted by a man named Herb Ropp, a welder-roughneck as he put it. As I begin explaining why I'm there, he becomes excited that someone wants to hear about his life and at the possibility that an article might help inform people about the industry. He agrees to an interview, but expresses the wish that I include the views of the "head toolpusher," Ronnie Givens. Since Ronnie was currently on his "days off," a date for the interview was set for the following week.

AUGUST 12, 1981 – 3 pm.

An enormous American flag greets me from atop its high perch on the gleaming rig, waving lazily against a sky that looks like rain. My second look at this blue and white "history-maker," leaves me no less impressed than the first. Ronnie Givens is a lanky, slow-talking, good 'ol boy-type, while Herb Ropp pulls no "punches" in his straightforward opinions, delivered with a gleam of mischief in his eye and a lip curled around his favorite dip. Both of these men are very cordial, proud of their profession and eager to tell their "stories." This is part of a three-hour conversation that ensues.

PHOTO BY PAT LAZELLE BY HERB ROPP





PHOTO BY PAT LAZELLE

**HERB ROPP** talks candidly with **WESTVIEW**. **RONNIE GIVENS** was on his "days off" during photo session.

**WESTVIEW:** *Ronnie, tell me about your experience and how long you've been working in the oil field?*

**RONNIE GIVENS:** Well, my brother-in-law's the one that started me in it. I started workin' weekends for the guys that wanted off. I was makin' better money than I was mechanic-ing, so I guess all told, I've been in the oil field about seven years now.

**WV:** *Where are you from originally?*

**RG:** Wichita, Kansas. My daddy was in the Air Force and he got transferred out here and ended up linin' here.

**WV:** *So in seven years you've gone from being like a roughneck to a toolpusher? Is that the common thing now? Seems like I've talked to people that have become a toolpusher in two years or less?*

**RG:** The reason for somethin' like that happenin' is they're gettin' too many rigs and not enough help. They vance a lot quicker than what they did before.

**WV:** *Do you feel that's bad? It's pretty dangerous up there isn't it?*

**RG:** Yeah, really it is because they need more experience. As far as the danger goes, it's not all that bad, 'cause they're pretty strict on safety.

**WV:** *The reason I was asking, was because if there are "hands" that aren't that experienced, isn't that endangering the safety of the other members of the crew?*

**RG:** It could, but it's mainly up to the driller, I mean, he got the lever to pull, if he knows what he's doing, it's pretty safe.

**WV:** *Is this particular rig all power everything? I mean is it electric?*

**RG:** What it is, is what they call diesel electric. You got four motors out there, 1500 horses apiece. It's got generators on the back of 'em. 1500 Kilowatt generators and the motor turns the generator and makes electricity. We'll put this one on a high-line. It's so much cheaper to run it off these high-lines than it is off motors 'cause they use so much diesel. Diesel's gettin' so high now, it's cheaper to pay for the electricity we use.

**WV:** *Are some of your rigs still run on gas?*

**RG:** Oh yeah. You go what you call diesel electric rig and a power rig. Most of 'em anymore are pretty well diesel now.

(Pause)

**WV:** *Well, I guess it's kind of hard to say what the average life of an oil field worker is like because I'm sure every-day's different, isn't it?*

**RG:** You mean like — what's our life like or somethin'?

**WV:** *Well, my original idea for this story was to compare the life of a gold mine worker to that of an oil field worker. They're a lot the same through the average day I would think, with dangers to face and so on. They make more money than the average worker and the industries both reflect on the communities surrounding them. We felt it would be interesting because a lot of people just don't know what it's like to work out here. When I was a kid growin' up in Western Oklahoma, oil field was kinda' . . . well . . . everybody looked down on those people because they were transient and never stayed very long.*

**HERB ROPP:** In other words, "oil field trash", that's what they call us.

**WV:** *Well not exactly. . . I don't think. . .*

**HR:** Oh yeah. Back in the 60's it was real bad. The wells we were drilling back then only took one to two months to drill sometimes, 'cause they were real shallow, so it didn't take so long. That's why we were always movin' around, to follow the work.

**WV:** *Well, I've altered my viewpoint anyway. . . it's a good industry for where we live, and it has affected a lot of people favorably and I think they're aware of that.*

**RG:** The only reason they went into the oil field is because of the money, ya know. They're many of us that would love to have a "city" job. You see a lot of college graduates in the oil field. That's somethin' I could never figure out. Ol' boy who's had several years of college, you know, just majors in something, turns right around and comes to the "oil patch". Well, why spend all this money on college, when you could have come out here to work. . . that's where they'll end up anyway.

**HR:** Where the term "oil field trash" comes from is ya take most people who are 8 to 5 workers — "white collar" — they go and do their work, and they're honest to their work. The money they make in comparison to the money in the oil field. . . now they're a big difference. So in the society part of it, is this. . . they can't understand why a person out here working, doin' the work they do in the oil field, makes twice and three times the

(continued on page 34)

# ■ AN ABBREVIATED DICTIONARY OF OIL FIELD TERMS

## A

**API:** the American Petroleum Institute. Founded in 1920, this national oil trade organization is the leading standardizing organization on oil-field drilling and producing equipment.

**AUTOMATIC DRILLING-CONTROL UNIT:** a mechanism used to regulate the amount of weight on the bit and not requiring attendance by personnel

**AUTOMATIC SHUTDOWN:** a system in which certain instruments are used to control or maintain the operating conditions of a process. If conditions become abnormal, this system automatically stops the process and notifies the operator of the problem.

## B

**BIT:** the cutting or boring element used in drilling oil and gas wells. Most bits used in rotary drilling are roller-cone bits. The bit consists of the cutting element and the circulating element. The circulating element permits the passage of drilling fluid and utilizes the hydraulic force of the fluid stream to improve drilling rates. In rotary drilling, several drill collars are joined to the bottom end of the drill collar.

**BIT BREAKER:** a device used in rotary drilling to unscrew, or break out, the bit from the drill stem.

**BLOWOUT:** an uncontrolled flow of gas, oil, or other well fluids into the atmosphere.

**BLOWOUT PREVENTER (BOP):** equipment installed at the wellhead at surface level on land rigs and on the seafloor of floating off-shore rigs to prevent the escape of pressure either in the annular space between the casing and drill pipe or in an open hole during drilling and completion operations.

**BREAK CIRCULATION:** to start the mud pump to restore circulation of the mud column.

**BREAK OUT:** to unscrew one section from another section of pipe, especially drill pipe while it is being withdrawn from the wellbore. During this operation, the breakout tongs are used to start the unscrewing operation.

**BRINE:** water that has a large quantity of salt, especially sodium chloride, dissolved in it; salt water.

**BRING IN A WELL:** to complete a well and put it in producing status.

## C

**CAP A WELL:** to control a blowout by placing a very strong valve on the wellhead.

**CASED HOLE:** a wellbore in which casing has been run.

**CASING:** steel pipe placed in an oil or gas well as drilling progresses to prevent the wall of the hole from caving during drilling and to provide a means of extracting petroleum if the well is productive.

**CATCH SAMPLE:** to obtain cuttings made by the bit as formations are penetrated for study by geologists.

**CATHEAD:** a spool-shaped attachment on a winch around which rope for hoisting and pulling is wound. The breakout cathead, a rotating spool located on the driller's side of the drawworks, is used as a power source for unscrewing drill pipe. The makeup cathead is a power source for screwing together joints of pipe.

**CEMENT CASING:** to fill the annulus between the casing and hole with cement to support the casing and to prevent migration of fluids between permeable zones.

**CHRISTMAS TREE:** the control valves, pressure gauges, and chokes assembled at the top of a well to control the flow of oil and gas after the well has been drilled and completed.

**CIRCULATE:** to pass from one point throughout a system and back to the starting point. Drilling fluid circulates from the suction pit through the drill pipe to the bottom of the well and returns through the annulus.

**COME OUT OF THE HOLE:** to pull the drill stem out of the wellbore. This withdrawal is necessary to change the bit, change from a core barrel to the bit, run electric logs, prepare for a drillstem test, run casing, and so on.

## D

**DAILY DRILLING REPORT:** a record made each day of the operations on a working drilling rig.

**DAY TOUR:** (pronounced "day tower") a period of 8 to 12 daylight hours worked by a drilling or workover crew when equipment is being run around the clock.

**DEADMAN:** a buried anchor to which guy wires are tied to steady the derrick, mast, stacks, and so on.

**DEAD WELL:** a well that has ceased to produce oil or gas, either temporarily or permanently; one that has kicked and been killed.

**DEEP DRILLING:** any drilling project that is deeper than average for a given area or period in time.

**DEFLOCCULATION:** the dispersion of solids that have stuck together in drilling fluid, usually by means of chemical thinners.

**DEPLETION ALLOWANCE:** a reduction in U.S. taxes for producers of minerals to compensate for the exhaustion of an irreplaceable capital asset.

**DERRICK:** a large load-bearing structure, usually of bolted construction. In drilling, the standard derrick has four legs standing at the corners of the substructure and reaching to the crown block. The substructure is an assembly of heavy beams used to elevate the derrick and provide space to install blowout preventers, casing-heads, etc. Because the standard derrick must be assembled piece by piece, it has largely been replaced by the mast, which can be lowered and raised without disassembly.

**DERRICKMAN:** the crew member who handles the upper end of the drill stem as it is being hoisted out of or lowered into the hole. He is also responsible for the conditioning of the drilling fluid and the circulating machinery.

**DIAMOND BIT:** a drilling bit that has a steel body surfaced with industrial diamonds. The rotation of the extremely hard diamonds cuts the surface of the rock.

**DIRECTIONAL DRILLING:** intentional deviation of a wellbore from the vertical. Although wellbores are normally drilled vertically, it is sometimes necessary or advantageous to drill at an angle from the vertical. Controlled directional drilling makes it possible to reach subsurface areas laterally remote from the point where the bit enters the earth.

**DISPOSAL WELL:** a well into which salt water is pumped, usually part of a saltwater-disposal system.

**DISTILLATE:** 1. a product of distillation; the liquid condensed from the vapor produced in a still. 2. heavy gasoline or light kerosines used as fuels.

**DISTRIBUTION:** the apportioning of daily production rates to wells on a lease. Because there are many wells on a lease, such production is apportioned on the basis of periodic tests rather than on the individual receiving and gauging of oil at each well.

**DRAWWORKS:** the hoisting mechanism on a drilling rig. It is essentially a large winch that spools off or takes in the drilling line and thus raises or lowers the drill stem and bit.

**DRILL:** to bore a hole in the earth, usually to find and remove subsurface formation fluids such as oil and gas.

**DRILL COLLAR:** a heavy, thick-walled tube, usually steel, used between the drill pipe and the bit in the drill stem to weight the bit in order to improve its performance.

**DRILLER:** the employee directly in charge of a drilling or workover rig and crew. His main duty is operation of the drilling and hoisting equipment, but he is also responsible for the downhole condition of the well, operation of downhole tools, and pipe measurements.

**DRILLER'S LOG:** a record that describes each formation encountered and lists the drilling time relative to depth, usually in 5- to 10-ft. intervals.

**DRILL PIPE:** the heavy seamless tubing used to rotate the bit and circulate the drilling fluid. Joints of pipe 30 ft. long are coupled together by means of tool joints.

**DRILL STEM:** the entire length of tubular pipes, composed of the kelly, the drill pipe, and drill collars, that make-up the drilling assembly from the surface to the bottom of the hole.

**DRY HOLE:** any well that does not produce oil or gas in commercial quantities. A dry hole may flow water, gas, or even oil, but not enough to justify production.

**EASEMENT:** a right that one individual or company has on another's land. In the petroleum industry, it usually refers to the permission given by a landowner for a pipeline or access road to be laid across his property.

**ELECTRIC RIG:** a drilling rig on which the energy from the power source is distributed to the various rig components through electrical conductors as opposed to distribution by mechanical transmission. Such a rig has an electric drive.

**FAULT:** a break in subsurface strata. Often strata on one side of the fault line have been displaced (upward, downward, or laterally) relative to their original positions.

**FISH:** 1. an object left in the wellbore during drilling or workover operations that must be recovered before work can proceed. It can be anything from a piece of scrap metal to a part

of the drill stem. 2. to recover from a well any equipment left there during drilling operations, such as a lost bit or drill collar or part of the drill string. 3. to remove from an older well certain pieces of equipment such as packers, liners, or screen pipe to allow reconditioning of the well.

**FISHING TOOL:** a tool designed to recover equipment lost in the well.

**FORMATION TESTING:** the gathering of data on a formation to determine its potential productivity before installing casing in a well. The conventional method is the drill-stem test. Incorporated in the drill-stem-testing tool are a packer, valves or ports that may be opened and closed from the surface, and a pressure-recording device.

**GANG PUSHER:** the supervisor of a roustabout crew or a foreman in charge of a pipeline crew.

**GRAVEYARD TOUR:** (pronounced "tower") the shift of duty on a drilling rig that starts at or about midnight.

**GUMBO:** any relatively sticky formation (as clay) encountered in drilling.

**GUSHER:** an oil well that has come in with such great pressure that the oil jets out of the well like a geyser. In reality, a gusher is a blowout and is extremely wasteful of reservoir fluids and drive energy. In the early days of the oil industry, gushers were common, and many times were the only indications that a large reservoir of oil and gas had been struck.

**HAND:** a worker in the oil industry, especially one in the field.

**HOLIDAY:** a gap or void in coating on a pipeline or in paint on a metal surface.

**ICC:** the Interstate Commerce Commission, a federal board that has jurisdiction over interstate pipelines.

**IDIOT STICK:** (slang) a shovel

**INJECTION WELL:** a well in which fluids have been injected into an underground stratum to increase reservoir pressure.

**JAR:** a percussion tool operated mechanically or hydraulically to deliver a heavy hammer blow to objects in the borehole.

**JET OUT:** to use a jet to clean out the cellar, slush pit, and so forth.

**JOINT:** a single length (30 ft.) of drill pipe or of drill collar, casing, tubing, or rod that has threaded connections at both ends. Several joints screwed together constitute a strand of pipe.

**JUG HUSTLER:** (slang) the member of a seismograph crew who places the geophones.

**JUNK:** metal debris lost in a hole. Junk may be a lost bit, pieces of a bit, milled pieces of pipe, wrenches, or any relatively small object that impedes drilling and must be fished out of the hole.

**KELLY:** the heavy steel member, four- or six-sided, suspended from the swivel through the rotary table and connected to the top-most joint of drill pipe to turn the drill stem as the rotary table turns.

**KNOWLEDGE BOX:** (slang) the cupboard or desk in which the driller keeps the various records pertaining to a drilling operation.

**KNUCKLE JOINT:** a deflection tool placed above the drill bit in the drill stem, with a ball and socket arrangement that allows the tool to be deflected at an angle; used in directional drilling.

**LANDMAN:** a person in the petroleum industry who negotiates with landowners for land options, oil-drilling leases, and royalties and with producers for the polling of production in the field; also called leaseman.

**LAY DOWN PIPE:** to pull drill pipe or tubing from the hole and place it in a horizontal position on a pipe rack.

**LEAD LINE:** the pipe through which oil or gas flows from the well to additional equipment on the lease.

**LEAD-TONG MAN:** the crew member operates lead tongs during hoisting of the drill pipe.

**LEAD TONGS:** (pronounced "leed") the pipe tongs suspended in the derrick and operated by a wireline connected to the breakout cathead. They are also called breakout tongs.

**LEASE:** 1. a legal document executed between a landowner, or lessor, and a company or individual, as lessee, that grants the right to exploit the premises for minerals or other products. 2. the area where production wells, stock tanks, separators, LACT units and other production equipment are located.

**LEASE HOUND:** (slang) a landman who procures leases on tracts of land for exploration and development of petroleum products.

**LESSEE:** the recipient of a lease (as an oil and gas lease).

**LESSOR:** the conveyer of a lease (as an oil and gas lease).

**LOST - CIRCULATION MATERIAL:** a substance added to cement slurries or drilling muds to prevent the loss of cement or mud to the formation.



# M

**MAKE A CONNECTION:** to attach a joint of drill pipe onto the drill stem suspended in the wellbore to permit deepening of the wellbore.

**MAKE A HAND:** (slang) to become a good worker.

**MAKE A TRIP:** to hoist the drill stem out of the wellbore to perform one of a number of operations such as changing bits, taking a core, and so forth, and then to return the drill stem to the wellbore.

**MAKE UP:** 1. to assemble and join parts to form a complete unit (as to make up a string of casing). 2. to screw together two threaded pieces. 3. to mix or prepare (as to make up a tank of mud). 4. to compensate for (as to make up for lost time).

**MAKE UP A JOINT:** to screw a length of pipe into another length of pipe.

**MAKEUP CATHEAD:** the cathead used as a power source for screwing together joints of pipe.

**MAST:** a portable derrick capable of being erected as a unit, as distinguished from a standard derrick, which cannot be raised to a working position as a unit. For transporting by land, the mast can be divided into two or more sections to avoid excessive length extending from truckbeds on the highway.

**MINERAL RIGHTS:** the rights of ownership, conveyed by deed, of gas, oil, and other minerals beneath the surface of the earth.

**MONKEYBOARD:** the derrickman's working platform. As pipe or tubing is run into or out of the hole, the derrickman must handle the top end of the pipe, which may be as high as 90 ft. in the derrick or mast. The monkeyboard provides a small platform to raise him to the proper height to be able to handle the top of the pipe.

**MORNING TOUR:** (pronounced "tower") an 8-hr. shift worked by a drilling crew or other oil-field workers.

**MOTORMAN:** the crew member on a rotary drilling rig responsible for the care and operation of drilling engines.

**MOUSEHOLE:** an opening through the rig floor, usually lined with pipe, into which a length of drill pipe is placed temporarily for later connection to the drill string.

**MUD:** the liquid circulated through the wellbore during rotary drilling and work-over operations. In addition to its function of bringing cuttings to the surface, drilling mud cools and lubricates the bit and drill stem, protects against blowouts by holding back subsurface pressures, and deposits a mud cake on the wall of the borehole to prevent loss of fluids to the formation.

# O

**OIL PATCH:** (slang) the oil field.

**OIL SHALE:** a formation containing hydrocarbons that cannot be recovered by an ordinary oil well but can be mined. After processing, the hydrocarbons are extracted from the shale. The cost of mining and treatment of the oil shale has until recently been too great to compete with the price of oil from wells.

**OIL SLICK:** a film of oil floating on water, considered a pollutant.

**OSHA:** the Occupational Health and Safety Administration.

# P

**PIPELINE:** a system of connected lengths of pipe, usually buried in the earth or laid on the seafloor, that is used for transporting petroleum and natural gas.

**POSTHOLE WELL:** (slang) a relatively shallow well.

**PRODUCTION:** 1. the phase of the petroleum industry that deals with bringing the well fluids to the surface and separating them and with storing, gauging, and otherwise preparing the product for the pipeline. 2. the amount of oil or gas produced in a given period.

**PRODUCTION CASING:** the last string of casing or liner that is set in a well, inside of which is usually suspended the tubing string.

**PRODUCTION LOG:** a well-logging method that measures and records the flow of fluid past an indicating device placed at varying depths in a producing or injection well; a spinner survey.

# R

**RATHOLE:** 1. a hole in the rig floor 30 to 35 ft. deep, lined with casing that projects above the floor, into which the kelly and swivel are placed when hoisting operations are in progress. 2. a hole of a diameter smaller than the main hole that is drilled in the bottom of the main hole.

**RATHOLE CONNECTION:** the addition of a length of drill pipe or tubing to the active string. The length to be added is placed in the rathole, made up to the kelly, pulled out of the rathole, and made up into the string.

**RAW CRUDE:** a crude oil before it is refined.

**REFINE:** to manufacture petroleum products from crude oil.

**REFINERY:** the physical plant and attendant equipment used in the process of refining.

**RELEASE:** a statement filed by the lessee of an oil and gas lease indicating that the lease has been relinquished.

**RELIEF WELL:** a well drilled near and deflected into a well that is out of control, making it possible to bring the wild well under control.

**RESERVE PIT:** 1. (obsolete) a mud pit in which a supply of drilling fluid was stored. 2. a waste pit, usually an excavated, earthen-walled pit. It may be lined with plastic to prevent contamination of the soil.

**RESERVOIR:** a subsurface, porous, permeable rock body in which oil or gas or both are stored. Most reservoir rocks are limestones, dolomites, sandstone, or a combination of these. The three basic types of hydrocarbon reservoirs are oil, gas, and condensate. An oil reservoir generally contains three fluids — gas, oil, and water — with oil the dominant product.

**RIG:** the derrick, drawworks, and attendant surface equipment of a drilling or workover unit.

**RIG DOWN:** to dismantle the drilling rig and auxiliary equipment following the completion of drilling operations; to tear down.

**RIG UP:** to prepare the drilling rig for making hole; to install tools and machinery before drilling is started.

**RIGHT-OF-WAY:** a strip of land usually 50 to 80 ft. wide on which permission has been granted by the landowner to construct a pipeline.

**ROTARY DRILLING:** a drilling method in which a hole is drilled by a rotating bit to which a downward force is applied. The bit is fastened to and rotated by the drill stem, which also provides a passageway through which the drilling fluid is circulated. Additional joints of drill pipe are added as drilling progresses.

**ROUGHNECK:** a worker on a drilling or workover rig, subordinate to the driller; sometimes called a rotary helper, floorman, or rig crewman.

**ROUSTABOUT:** a worker who assists the foreman in the general work around producing oil wells, usually on the property of the oil company. A roustabout may also be a helper on a well-servicing unit or one who does utility work on an offshore drilling rig.

**ROYALTY:** the part of oil, gas, and minerals or their cash value paid by the lessee to the lessor or to one who has acquired possession of the royalty rights, based on a certain percentage of the gross production from the property.

# S

**SEDIMENTARY ROCK:** a rock composed of materials that were transported to their present position by wind or water. Sandstone, shale, and limestone are sedimentary rocks.



**SHALE:** a fine-grained sedimentary rock composed of consolidated silt and clay or mud. Shale is the most frequently occurring sedimentary rock.

**SLUSH PIT:** the mud pit in which rotary drilling cuttings are separated from the mud stream or in which mud is treated with additives or temporarily stored before being pumped back into the well. Modern rotary drilling rigs are generally provided with three or more pits, usually fabricated steel tanks fitted with built-in piping, valves and mud agitators.

**SPINNING CHAIN:** a Y-shaped chain used to spin up (tighten) one joint of drill pipe into another. In use, one end of the chain is attached to the tongs, another end to the spinning cathead, and the third end is free. The free end is wrapped around the tool joint and the cathead pulls the chain off the joint, causing the joint to spin (turn) rapidly and tighten up. After the chain is pulled off the joint, the tongs are secured in the same spot, and continued pull on the chain (and thus on the tongs) by the cathead makes the joint up to final tightness.

**STAKE A WELL:** to precisely locate on the surface the point at which a well is to be drilled.

**STANDARD DERRICK:** a derrick that is built piece by piece at the drilling location opposed to a jackknife mast, which is preassembled. Standard derricks have been replaced almost totally by jackknife masts.

**STANDPIPE:** a vertical pipe rising along the side of the derrick or mast, which joins the mud pump to the rotary hose and through which mud is pumped.

**STANDS:** the connected joints of pipe racked in the derrick or mast when making a trip. On a rig, the usual stand is 90 ft. long (three lengths of pipe screwed together) or a thribble. Compare double and fourble.

**STRATIFICATION:** natural layering or lamination characteristic of sediments and sedimentary rocks.

**STRAT TEST:** a well that is drilled primarily to obtain geological information and that is usually not completed even if commercial quantities of petroleum are found.

**SURFACE PIPE:** the first string of casing set in a well after the conductor pipe, varying in length from a few hundred feet to several thousand.

**TERMINAL:** a point to which oil is transported through pipelines. It usually includes a tank farm and may include tanker-loading facilities.

**THROW THE CHAIN:** to flip the spinning chain up from a tool-joint box so that the chain wraps around the tool-joint pin after it is stabbed into the box. The stand or joint of drill pipe to be made up is turned or spun by a pull on the spinning chain from the cathead on the drawworks.

**TONGMAN:** the member of the drilling crew who handles the tongs.

**TONGS:** the large wrenches used for turning when making up or breaking out drill pipe, casing, tubing, or other pipe; variously called casing tongs, rotary tongs, and so forth according to the specific use. Power tongs are pneumatically or hydraulically operated tools that serve to spin the pipe up tight, and, in some instance, to apply the final makeup torque.

**TOOL PUSHER:** a drilling foreman or rig superintendent.

**TOUR:** (pronounced "tower") an 8-hr. shift worked by a drilling crew or other oil-field workers.

**TRIP:** (see make a trip.)

**TRIP IN:** to lower the drill stem into the wellbore.

**TRIP OUT:** (see come out of the hole.)

**TWIST OFF:** of drill pipe or drill collars, to part or split primarily because of metal fatigue in the pipe or because of mishandling.

**ULTIMATE RECOVERY:** total anticipated recovery of oil or gas from a well, lease, or pool.

**UNDERGAUGE BIT:** a drilling bit whose outside diameter has been worn down until it is smaller than the bit specifications allow. A 6 7/8 in. bit worn down to 6 5/8 in. is undergauge.

**UNDERGROUND BLOWOUT:** an uncontrolled flow of gas, salt water, or other fluids out of the wellbore and into another formation that the wellbore has penetrated in the subsurface.

**UNIT OPERATOR:** the oil company in charge of development and producing in an oil field in which several companies have joined together to produce the field.

**UNPROVEN AREA:** a wildcat area.

**VALVE:** a device used to control the rate of flow in a line, to open or shut off a line completely, or to serve as an automatic or semiautomatic safety device. Those with extensive usage include the gate valve, plug valve, globe valve, needle valve, check valve, and relief valve.

**WELLBORE:** a borehole; the hole drilled by the bit. A wellbore may have casing in it or may be open (i.e., uncased); or a portion of it may be cased and a portion of it may be open.

**WELL COMPLETION:** the activities and methods necessary to prepare a well for the production of oil and gas; the method by which a flow line for hydrocarbons is established between the reservoir and the surface. The method of well completion used by the operator depends on the individual characteristics of the producing formation or formations.

**WELLHEAD:** the equipment used to maintain surface control of a well, including the casinghead, tubing head, and Christmas tree.

**WELL LOGGING:** the recording of information about subsurface geologic formations. Logging methods include records kept by the driller, mud and cutting analysis, core analysis, drill-stem tests, and electric and radio-activity procedures.

**WELL PERMIT:** authorization, usually by a governmental conservation agency, to drill a well. A permit is sometimes required for deepening or remedial work also.

**WELL SERVICING:** the maintenance work performed on an oil or gas well to improve or maintain the production from a formation already producing. Usually it involves repairs to the pump, rods, gas-lift valves, tubing, packers, and so forth.

**WELL SPACING:** the regulation of the number and location of wells over a reservoir as a conservation measure.

**WELL STIMULATION:** any of several operations used to increase the production of a well.

**WILDCAT:** a well drilled in an area where no oil or gas production exists. With present day exploration methods and equipment about one wildcat out of every six proves to be productive although not necessarily profitable.

**WILD WELL:** a well that has blown out of control and from which oil, water, or gas is escaping with great force to the surface; also called a gusher.

**WINCH:** a machine that pulls or hoists by winding a cable around a spool.

**WORM:** (slang) a new and inexperienced oil-field worker.

**YIELD POINT:** the maximum stress that a solid can withstand without undergoing permanent deformation either by plastic flow or by rupture.

**ZONE:** a rock stratum that is different from or distinguished from another stratum (as pay zone).

amount of money that the "white collar" is. But the "white collar" doesn't realize that the man who works at the oil field is seven days a week, sometimes twelve to fourteen hours a day. . . away from his wife. . . most of the time they have to drive. . . now I don't know how it is on this one. . . these guys here are driving from pretty close areas. Not all of 'em are from this area. We got guys from Canada, Oklahoma, Texas and Arkansas workin' on this rig. They're moved into this area and the expenses grown out of it are tremendous. But to return to the term "oil field trash," this happens when these guys move into this area or any area where a "boom" is and the people in town can't understand their kind. (Pause) This kind of life. . . well. . . it's a hard life, a fast life. They work hard. . . they also play hard. They, the folks in town, don't understand this. That's where the term comes from. . . just like in the 60's.

**WV:** *Have you noticed any change in people's attitudes toward you recently either good or bad?*

**HR:** After a while, you do. Especially if you're livin' here, and have a wife and some kids, they seem to treat ya a little better. A good sign will be when the prices start comin' down.

**RG:** You know, ya price a . . . take an oil field town like here in Elk City – go there and price a pair of roughneck boots – then go to the city and price 'em.

**WV:** Well, I'm not familiar with these, how much did they cost?

RG: I bought a new pair here the other day. . . \$77, no \$78's what I had to pay for 'em. They're just a steel-toe boot. Used to you could buy boots — of course everthin's gone up 'cause of inflation — used to \$29 could buy a pair o' boots.

**WV:** *What would those same boots cost you today in Oklahoma City?*

**RG:** In the city I paid \$52.

**HR:** And where I'm from, I could buy the same boot for \$33.

**WV:** *Where's that?*

**HR:** Siloam Springs, Arkansas.

**WV:** *Hmm... sounds like some businesses are takin' advantage of a captive market with "price gouging."*

**RG:** Gas is cheaper in the city as well as the food prices. Here it's higher 'cause they know the oil fields here and they're gonna' pay it. What's it gonna cost ya to go to Oklahoma City and back just to buy a pair o' boots? Maybe \$20. You're gonna pay it here. And them people know it at the stores and stuff and they're gonna get it too.

**WV:** *I was having a conversation about this the other day with a former teacher of mine. He's really interested in the oil field activity but he doesn't think it will last at the pace it's going for more than three to four years. What's your opinion from an insider's view? Will the locations around Clinton, Elk City and Weatherford be "hot" now and later die down?*

**HR:** It will eventually die down later on, but it will be here for a while.

**WV:** *About how long do you think?*

**HR:** I'd say about ten years.

**WV:** *I'm sure a lot of people are speculating – investing in a lot of real estate properties, and so on. I'm wondering if all these areas are someday going to be just like ghost towns. Is there much maintenance in the production end of oil?*

**RG:** Yes, there will be maintenance.

**WV:** *So, there will be a certain amount of people that will stay here to maintain the well and pipeline.*

RG: Oh yeah! For several years to come. There's a difference say between the Enid oil field and here. In Enid, 9,300 feet was a deep hole — here, somewhere around 27 - 30,000 plus. Here's the difference in it. . .you're talking about two years drilling time as to, at the most, two months. There's a lot of difference in where geographically, you're drilling at. You take, what he was talkin' about. You drill a deep hole, it ain't fast drilling 'cause you have to start off with such a big hole. Nobody's been this deep before you know. Nobody know what's down there or been that deep.

**WV:** So you don't know for sure if you're gonna hit anything?

HR: Right.

**WV:** Gosh, what a tax write-off if you don't. But aren't the companies pretty sure they're going to hit something?

HR: Yeah, they're pretty sure they're gonna hit something. They just don't pull up anywhere and say hey! this looks like a good place to drill. That's the reason your seismograph crew goes 'round and gets readings of your formation.

**WV:** *Are those tests pretty reliable?*

RG: Yeah. They're pretty good, I mean they can pretty well tell there is something there. But how much there is and how strong it is... that's a different story.

**WV:** *How long do you think a well like this is going to produce?*

**RG:** You never can tell. It's according to how much gas is down there.

**WV:** Most of these are gas wells in this area?

**RG:** Do you understand exactly what a gas well is?

**WV:** *No, tell me.*

**HR:** It's seepage from sand pockets, sand formations. Your oil is the same way. It's seepage from sand. You have a sand formation down there and usually your best wells are on cap ridges, 'cause your pressure sends the oil and everything up here.

**WV:** *Do those pockets have predictable directions that they go in. Seems in some areas of the landscape the wells are all drilled in an almost straight line for miles.*

HR: That is rather rare, 'cause it can kick out, it might come back in, and you might drill right here and not hit nothing. But you might go right across and hit right in the middle of that vein.

**WV:** *When someone buys a lease, do they buy the rights to go straight down? Can they directional drill?*

**HR:** They can directional drill as long as they've got the mineral rights to where they're tapping to. Say I owned 80 acres. I can go over here in the southwest corner and drill down into the southeast corner if it's geographically impossible to drill straight down. There are experts in the field that can drill around underground boulders and other obstructions these days. You never know what you'll run into.

**WV:** *Let's talk about the physical abuse a "roughneck" has to undergo during the course of an average day. It's really rough on their body physically isn't it?*

**RG:** No, not really. . . they get used to that. It's harder work than what you're doin' in town.

**HR:** If you really want to know the technically hard part for a rough-neck, it boils down to family life. The hours away from family. If you really love the oil field it plays havoc on married life. (Ronnie is one of the few exceptions who has stayed married.) In the oil field most marriages of three to four years is a long marriage.

**WV:** *Why do you think that is . . . because of the separation?*

**HR:** Yes! You just don't have enough time together.

**RG:** You work seven days a week and eight hours a day. But the way your schedule is set up, you have three shifts: a daylight or "day tour", an evening and a morning.

**WV:** *You rotate every three weeks?*

**HR:** No, we don't rotate. It's a permanent position. Seven days a week you ain't gonna take your family no where. Daylights work from 6am - 2pm that's the best shift right there. But you can't work everybody on that shift. By the time you get home, you got from two in the afternoon, by the time they drive home now you figure it's gonna be three when they get home. You usually have to be in bed by 9:00 'cause they gotta get up so early. Evening tower works from 2 to 10:30pm. Usually when you get in late at night your gonna watch TV or something. By the time you get up in the morning, you go an' wash your "greasers", get 'em dry and everything and get ready to go to work that next morning. . . well, you gotta make a livin' don't ya?

**WV:** *Well, you've mentioned the money is why so many people are lured to the oil field. Just what does a beginning roughneck get paid per hour? I've been hearing \$10 - \$12 dollars an hour.*

**RG:** Naw, that's a little high, especially after taxes, it's more like \$9.50 an hour. Taxes every two weeks are about \$345. Where here they probably take home \$8 something here after deducts. Not many guys want to work at a "city" job and just "make it" when they could come out here to work and have that new car, you see what I'm saying.

**WV:** *Well then, you're saying that money is very important.*

**RG:** It's not really that important. What do you want? I mean do you want a good living or do you want to live. . . I guess it's all relevant. I couldn't stand being cooped up all day behind a desk. I like my freedom.

**WV:** *So in essence, you're saying that even though your salaries are higher, so is your cost of living compared to the average person, is that right?*

**HR:** Well, yeah. . . you try to find a place to live around here, especially when they find out that ya work in the oil field. There's more comin' in than places to live. . . some of 'em are living in their cars or campin' by the lake in a tent! If yer lucky enough, to find a place the landlords automatically jack up the deposit and rent per month, 'cause they know we gotta have it and can pay it. I know one guy with a family that's put \$200 deposit down on a concrete slab, the foundation on an apartment that's not even built yet! Another'n I knew had to buy a trailer house and the payments were \$600 a month, then he had to turn around and pay \$100 more just to park it in the parking spot. So that's \$700 a month, then you try to figure your bills on top of that, OK? He can't get out of the oil field now, and he can't go to town to go to work, so he has to stay here till he gets that greater pay. If a man was smart when he applies for that loan, he would tell them that he was working at a service station or something to get them payments down where he can stand it, but most of 'em are proud that they are making good money and they cut their own throats. They'll let the "average Joe" pay for a loan over 20 years, but a roughneck has to pay it off in 7 years. To stay in the oil field is the only way to start turning it around, in the beginning though you more or less live from payday to payday.

**WV:** *Sounds like you really have to pay your dues. Does it finally start paying off when a guy gets to be a driller or crew boss?*

**RG:** Well, that all depends on the person, the way they manage their money, ya know. Ya still hafta stand in the rain and snow, while the city guy's just watching it through the window, and you got to keep your "hands" a-workin', and make split-second decisions.

**WV:** *The next step up from driller is toolpusher, right? What are the pitfalls of your job as no. 1 toolpusher on this rig?*

**RG:** This job here, it's a good job, but it's more brainwrackin' than anything. Yeah, you got the responsibility if something happens on the rig or your "hands" aren't showing up, then you got to "chew-out" the driller. Somethin' could break-down or you gotta have an electrician, mechanic, or welder to fix some repair. . . that's all part of your job.

**HR:** Mainly, he's like a coordinator.

**WV:** *Sounds like you have a lot of headaches.*

**RG:** Yeah, sometimes. . . you know mainly everythin' goes up at once. . . like that one day out here, remember that Herb? Two o' my motors quit on me, then my mudline washed out. Ya go all kinds of steel down in that ground, and the ground's not easy to ya, it's rough. You don't move it, you don't work the pipe, or ya get stuck. Ya got thousands of dollars tied up in that hole. You see, a lot of this is a split-second decision. Most of the time it's not a perfectly straight hole. You'll have yer pockets and boulders. Sometimes you'll get one boulder that'll fall from one side and then maybe another from the other side on top of the drill bit. Then yer stuck! That's what I'm talkin' about. . . split-second decisions. The drill bits alone cost anywhere from \$9,000 to \$17,000 for a diamond bit. Sometimes you decide wrong, but if that happens too many times, you're lookin' for a new job.

**WV:** *How does someone go about finding work on a rig? I've seen a lot of hitchhikers coming into all these towns, probably from out of state. Do many of them find jobs?*

## Oil Poetry by Sheryl Nelms

sure thing he said

the land lay real good

gentle rolling  
hills pricked  
with oil  
rigs  
on every side

the geologist  
predicted  
production  
in the Mississippi Lime  
with an out  
side  
chance  
in the Lower Carmichael

then they sank the six thousand foot  
Wilcox Test

today they run  
the cement  
plug

oilies lament

it's at night  
always at night

if you're gonna  
have  
trouble

that's when it's  
gonna happen

usually about three in the morning

especially if  
you are  
runnin  
pipe

runnin pipe

now in runnin pipe  
you got three  
holes

you got the oil well itself

then you got your  
rat hole  
and your  
mouse hole

the rat is  
where you  
keep your spare  
pipe

the mouse is  
where you  
hook 'em  
up

an the well is where you put 'em



PHOTO BY HERB ROPP

■ "Tripping", or joining the pipe on the Parker No. 201.



# FIFTY YEARS OF OIL EXPLORATION

Many an early settler in Western Oklahoma dug his water well, which he desperately needed for his livestock and household, only to have it ruined by a black seepage of greasy oil. Several pioneers endangered their own lives when they breathed escaping poisonous gases while digging those water wells. Ranchers found oil oozing along Sandstone Creek in numerous places, making water unfit for cattle. Gas permeated one low-lying area with such force that, when set afire, the blaze reached a height of three feet.

Oil exploration in Beckham County began almost as soon as white man entered Oklahoma Territory in the 1890's. In those early days geologists knew little concerning the underlying strata of the Redbeds Plains of Western Oklahoma, but their unanimous decision seemed to be that all of Oklahoma was an oil field. Early pioneers sensed the abundance of oil and gas beneath the rolling redlands and immediately began searching. Yet their burning ambitions were not enough for oil discovery. They also needed financial and mechanical means of lifting the buried treasure to the surface.

Looking back into the early information provided by Lee Royse, we find that the first test well for Elk City was dug in 1899. While riding his horse along a canyon on the George Walker homestead southwest of town, Royse heard a peculiar chugging sound he had never heard before. Going down into the ravine to investigate, he found an elderly man digging away with a hand drill. Royse discovered that Walker had hired the old fellow to wildcat for oil. This first exploration was abandoned at sixty feet, some 10,000 feet shy of the later production zones of Elk City field, which were between 9,260 and 10,500 feet.

The next wildcat attempt in the early 1900's occurred when a private company formed by early settlers drilled a test well south of Elk City. The organization, known as Citizens Oil,

Gas, Mineral, and Coal Company, ran out of money when the well reached a depth of 900 feet. It was classified as a duster, and this abandoned wildcat later provided the water supply for Elk City. Portions of that old wooden derrick, the slush pit, and its pump house were still evident in the 1950's.

Between 1910 and 1920 two other wildcats were drilled northeast of Canute in Washita County, but still no petroleum deposits of any magnitude were discovered at either of these sites. Both locations reached a depth of 860 feet. Later, another attempt of a wildcat test was made southeast of Canute. Drillers abandoned it at 5,065 feet, the deepest test to that date. At this time all wildcatting activity ended in Western Oklahoma when big strikes were made at Cleveland, Red Fork, and Glenn Pool. As soon as Central Okla-

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PHOTO COURTESY OF THE MUSEUM OF THE GREAT PLAINS, LAWTON



# ATION IN BECKHAM COUNTY

homa began its oil boom, drilling companies flocked to this new productive area.

During the 1920's oil and gas activity opened near Sayre and Erick when Parker Drilling Company discovered a sufficient amount of gas. According to old records, the first productive well encountered oil and gas shows at a depth of 2,026 feet. This first well produced 889,000 cubic feet of gas daily and could be heard blowing for several miles through its two-inch pipe. At that time oil men considered natural gas a nuisance and detrimental in procuring the much-valued flow of oil.

Another drilling site in the vicinity of Erick completed a gas well in 1922. Its depth was 2,770 feet with a production of 19 million cubic feet of gas. A short time later this well began spraying oil and soon had a production re-

cord of twenty barrels daily.

Other wells near Sayre and Erick followed, and then Sayre and Erick became boom towns. One well belonging to Carter Oil Company produced 1,500 barrels of oil in its first ten hours of production. Another flowed 500 barrels daily. Oil leases brought \$1,100 an acre with royalty selling even higher. Sand hills became covered with drilling rigs instead of cotton fields.

In the 1930's Erick Gas Field opened an entirely new territory. Wells produced from 12 million to 119 million cubic feet daily, the largest proven potential gas area in Oklahoma. At this same time Continental Oil Company drilled another wildcat southeast of Elk City in Washita County. This well set the record as the deepest wildcat in the world at 14,000 feet. However, it was abandoned as a dry hole even though it was later revived to become No. 1-A Proctor.

It was not until 1947 that Elk City Field came into being with production at No. 1 J. G. Walters, No. 1 G. G. Music, No. 1 J. I. Long, and No. 1 W. G. McKenzie. Other wells followed in rapid succession until more than 130 active producers developed within a few years' time. Oil companies considered the field the mightiest gas condensate reservoir ever discovered.

Ironically, one of the last productive wells drilled in Elk City Field in the 1950's on the Ed Kelly holdings adjoined the section where that first wildcatting attempt took place on the George Walker homestead in 1899. That pioneer wildcatter, whom Lee Royse heard pounding away in the canyon with his hand drill, undoubtedly knew his business. Yet today no one remembers who he was or where he came from. ■

— Donita Lucas Shields

A Burkburnett, Texas, rig building company shows how styles have changed.



LANDMARKS

# LANDMARKS

**.WANDERLUST....**



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE MUSEUM OF THE GREAT PLAINS, LAWTON

I have had enough of going to far  
places

Hunting for the happiness

I hoped would be mine there.

Now I have come home again

To the blood-red hills of Oklahoma  
Where I was born.

Here, my weary body is at ease.

Here, my heart finds its final resting  
place.

Here, with old-time friends I live again  
The days long gone but not forgotten.

If ever I should begin to feel

Like going down some unknown road  
again —



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE MUSEUM OF THE GREAT PLAINS, LAWTON

If ever I should yearn to see  
Some far-off, storied place  
I have not seen before —  
I will stop. I will think. And then  
In some gray-green dawning of the day  
I will rise and go to meet the morning  
wind.

And I will discover, then, I think,  
This very different place,

This Oklahoma heartland,  
Where I live.

— Ideva Clark

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PHOTO COURTESY OF THE MUSEUM OF THE GREAT PLAINS, LAWTON



THE GREAT PLAINS, LAWTON





**FOLLOW THE TRAIL**

— Pat Sturm

Turn east at the first sign, the one at the Chisholm Restaurant in Geary, Oklahoma. From there the game is “watch, turn, and drive” for nine miles. The road deteriorates from paved, to chug-hole-ridden, to graveled, to a rutted dirt path. Should the gameplayer not miss any of the five signs, he will arrive at a seemingly deserted area that boasts the remains of a lopsided shack and a seven-foot marker declaring this to be the gravesite of Jesse Chisholm. The actual grave is some fifty-seven feet down the hill from the marker. The tombstone, surrounded by a white rail, reads:

**JESSE CHISHOLM  
BURIED MARCH 4, 1868  
NO ONE LEFT HIS HOUSE  
COLD OR HUNGRY**

Following the Civil War, Chisholm, a frontier “businessman,” took his wares to the settlers from the Red River in Texas, through Indian Territory, and up into Kansas. Chisholm’s freight wagons left ruts that became the main route of the cattle herds going from Texas to Abilene.

When the war wrecked the economy of Texas, the ranchers found themselves with no market for their longhorns nor any practical form of transportation to any other sales area. While Abilene, Kansas, offered a potential market for the cattle, the only means of getting them there was on hoof, which meant crossing the flat, grassy Indian Territory. Between 1868 and 1885, ten million cattle were estimated to have trampled the grasslands of Oklahoma. The path that the herds followed came to be known as the Chisholm Trail.

Today that trail can be roughly retraced by driving north on Highway 81 from Ringold, Texas, through the Oklahoma towns of Waurika, Duncan, Chickasha, El Reno, Kingfisher, and Enid, to the Kansas border where the Chisholm Trail continues to Caldwell, Wichita, Newton, and Abilene — the final “railhead” used by most of the cattle drives in the 1860’s. History seekers who follow these directions might get the impression they are criss-crossing through Central Oklahoma like the wild longhorns that roamed the ranges of West and Central Texas before the Trail was put into use.

Along the way, travelers can visit several museums. The Chisholm Trail Museum in Waurika is considered the best one on the cattle trail, and the Chisholm Trail Museum in Kingfisher displays a bust of the frontiersman. In the Muse-

um of the Cherokee Strip in Enid, Indian artifacts are featured as well as memorabilia of the cattle industry.

Another museum that should be considered is the Pioneer Museum in El Reno, which offers a comprehensive view of the historic trail along with other popular features in the glossaries of Oklahoma history books. While in El Reno, travelers can photograph wagon ruts left behind when Jesse Chisholm’s freight wagons crossed the banks of the North Canadian River.

It might be imagined that Chisholm’s gravesite would be surrounded by opportunists hawking postcards, T-shirts, and picture books about the trader and his trail — not so. Herein lies part of the charm of the find: total absence of commercialism. On the marker is a sketchy history of Chisholm, including the information that he died after eating bear meat cooked in a copper kettle, and that his Arapaho friend, Chief Left Hand, asked to be buried next to him, but nothing else mars the serenity of the scene. Tall green trees shade the grassy hillsides; a small stream flows not far below the grave; the only sounds that interrupt are those of the wind and perhaps a few cattle grazing nearby. Civilization does not appear to have spoiled this spot. It is perfect for the final resting place of a trailblazer like Jesse Chisholm.

(The materials for this article were gathered by Advanced Composition students of Geary High School — David Shanklin, Levi Magness, and Lynn Arnold — and then compiled and edited by Pat Sturm.)■



“Chisholm, a frontier “businessman”, took his wares to the settlers from the Red River in Texas, all the way to Kansas.”

# LAND OF THE FAIR GOD: INDIANAPOLIS

— Opal Hartsell Brown

Geese honked, ducks quacked, and chickens cackled a requiem in Indianapolis. Indianapolis, Oklahoma, that is. It was vesper-time, but the fowls were the only supplicants. They belonged at two trailer houses, the only occupied buildings where once stood a thriving, hopeful, and noisy community.

Located about 90 miles west of Oklahoma City on the Rock Island Railroad, the site and surrounding country were tagged "Land of the Fair God" on July 13, 1893, by B. F. Conover, an Indiana Professor.

Writing in the Rushville (Indiana) REPUBLICAN, the former superintendent of Rush County Schools described in glowing terms the Cheyenne-Arapaho country, where he planned to move his family. He had homesteaded there on Beaver Creek near Arapaho in 1892.

At that time, Arapaho, the nearest town to the future Indiana namesake, was five miles northwest. It had a post office, established in a covered wagon, and a newspaper, THE ARAPAHO BEE. Conover's article was reprinted in "The . . . Bee."

*"This is the loveliest country one ever traveled over. The valleys of the North and South Canadian and Washita Rivers are unequaled in the United States for beauty and fertility."*

*"Especially is this true of the Washita Valley, which is from one to four miles wide, opening into beautiful undulating prairies with here and there ground rising into hills, 50 to 200 feet high, with clear running streams. . . ."*

*"In G County, where one year ago no white man lived and only red men and coyotes held sway, now there are five organized churches, eight Sunday schools, and 15 district schools."*

Others made similar reports of Cheyenne-Arapaho country, which became part of Oklahoma Territory in May, 1890. After 3,320 Indians were allotted 160 acres each (1890-1892), the rest was settled by run.

G County, in which lay the site of future Indianapolis, was renamed Custer County for Maj. Gen. George Custer soon after it was organized. Children in that vicinity attended Lone

Star School, three miles north of the site.

Records for Lone Star go back to 1896, when Allie Wolverton of Arapaho was teacher. Board members were R. W. Wadsworth, J. A. Carlsburg, and J. W. Dixon.

In 1901, the Choctaw, Oklahoma and Gulf built a railroad from Weatherford to Elk City, crossing the site of future Indianapolis, then leased to CRI&P (Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific). About 12 miles west of Weatherford was Bear Siding.



PHOTO BY PAT LAZELLE

Rusted Ranger: Remnant of a bygone day.



Five teetering mailboxes await delivery.

The name might have come from an Indian or from the animal. There were bears in Oklahoma in early days. Anyway, enough people gathered around Bear Siding to organize a town. By February, 1902 or earlier, it was called Indianapolis and a post office was established. The Newcomb Addition was annexed.

Owned by Benjamin and Edith Newcomb, the land was surveyed by J. A. Cailbug, county surveyor, and offered for sale. W. C. Russell was registrar of deeds.

In February, 1904, a Democratic paper, INDIANAPOLIS BEE, opened for business. The first publisher's name was unavailable, but three months later, H. A. Solderberg from Iowa became the "third king of the hive." James Potter from Custer City was printer and assistant editor.

The one-sheet publication came out on Fridays and cost \$1.00 a year, "paid in advance, if possible."

The first subscriber under new management was Miss Katie Newcomb of Washington, Iowa. The next were W. M. Ross of Indianapolis and his son, H. W., of Izard County, Arkansas.

The paper extolled the advantages and beauty of the area as graphically as Professor Conover had a year earlier. Within a radius of six miles were 5000 acres of cotton, many acres of corn, wheat, kaffir, broomcorn, fruit, and vegetables. Pleas were made for a gin, bank, elevator, and hardware store.

Within the next few issues of the "Bee," there were ads by A. Joslen, photographer, who bought his supplies in Weatherford; Landlord and Mrs. E. Spiva's boarding house with meals for 15c; Hardin and Potter Store, where shirts cost 30 to 50c.

Coffee was seven pounds for \$1.00, eggs 8½c a dozen, and butter 12c a pound. Other items for sale were buggy whips and peanut seed.

J. A. Newcomb advertised a shoe and harness shop. Soon he added a silver plating apparatus to "make tin spoons look genuine."

From Weatherford were ads by Wilbourn wagonyard, with J. D. Samples, proprietor, and George T. Webster, attorney-at-law. A story from the same town stated "further evidence automobiles were dangerous." One of the "heavy machines" ran over a dog, breaking its neck.

There was a story about the new city of Clinton on a hill, six miles west. (Indianapolis was then three years old.) Clinton had adopted a whole page of ordinances.

Joseph Wolverton near Bellview sent for a consignment of mail boxes for a route to be established July 5, north and east of Indianapolis. The temporary carrier was to receive \$65 a month for serving 120 families. Postmistress was Henrietta Jones.

Oklahoma City was mentioned as having 33,000 population.

By June 3, 1904, Indianapolis had 150 people. boasted "a shoeshop, two churches, a notary public, boarding house, A-1 blacksmith, law-abiding citizens, two grocery stores, good drinking water, printing office, public scales, photography gallery, fine park and grove, excellent facilities, progressive businessmen, rock for building, a building good enough for a grade school, and drawbacks like any other place."



## LANDMARKS

Also, there was "a lodge of the M.W.A. pending, the handsomest girls and finest boys, the finest farming country in Custer County to draw trade from, fine jobbing center (Oklahoma City), a telephone exchange for short and long distance messages, large deposit of gyp within two miles, A-1 building material."

"A townsite on a slight incline with a good view of surrounding country; good business and residential lots, plenty of wood within hauling

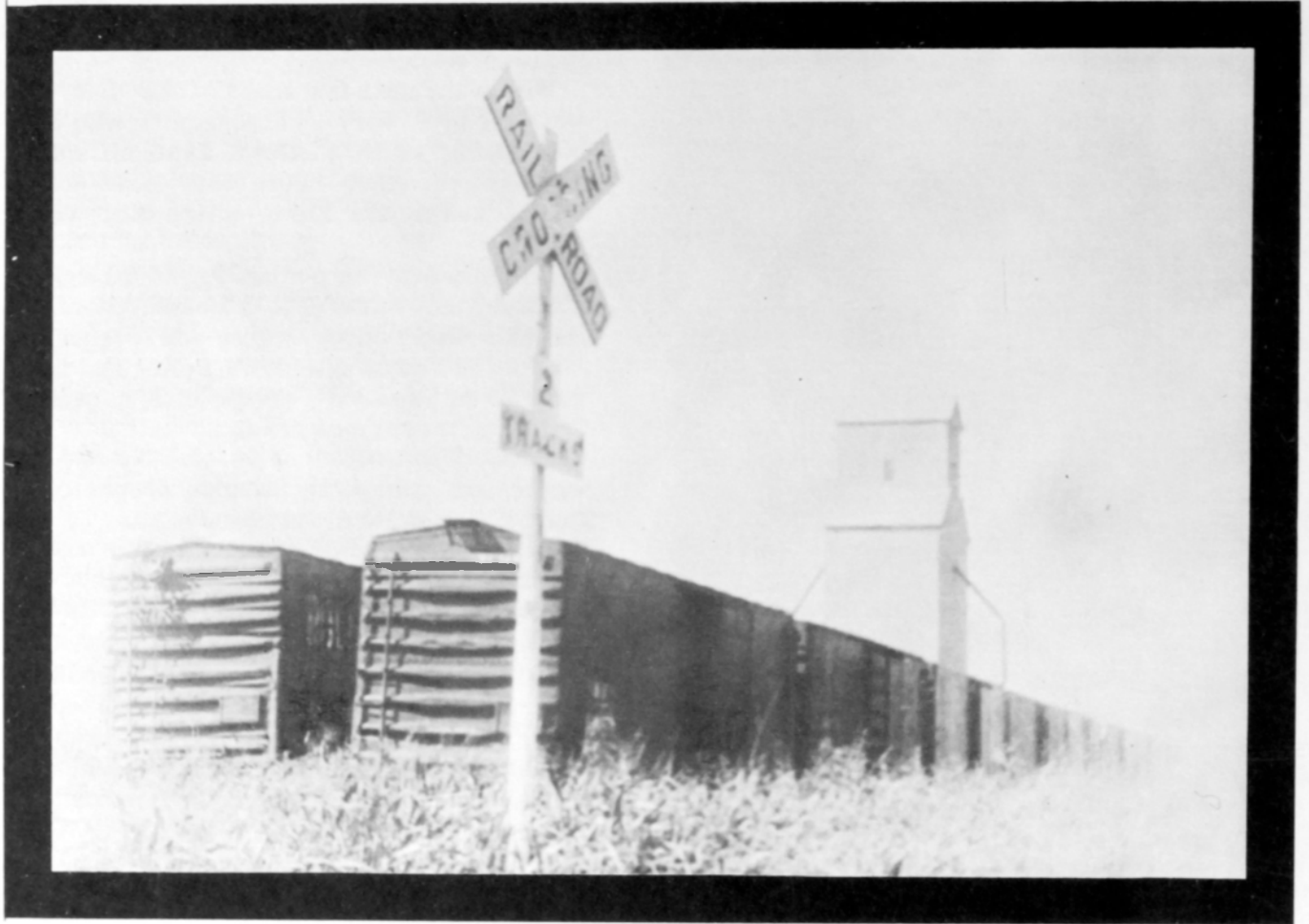
honest lawyer, dry goods store, first-class doctor, farm implement house, real estate man, no man who wants \$10 before he turns out \$1.00."

"Men who are not expecting to pick up \$20 gold pieces, but willing to work and hustle for them. No dead beats; none of this species ever helped build a town. . . all people who do not fill the qualifications for good citizenship keep on going until they reach Arapaho."

The town needed 500 paid up subscribers

45

PHOTO BY PAT LAZELLE



Elevator towers above once busy railroad passing Indianapolis.

distance. Coal costs about \$8.00 a ton unless you steal it from the railroad."

"Good fishing within a few miles and you can hunt almost anywhere. Rabbits are quite plentiful. Some farmers raise them for wool."

The "Bee" listed Indianapolis' needs: "a bank, cotton gin, drug store, lumberyard, harness shop, clothing store, grain elevator, hardware store,

for "the Bee, the smallest but most readable newspaper in Custer County — proof that good things come in small packages."

An issue of the "Bee" later that month begged for a gin. It listed cotton growers of 2,170 acres, but said about 3,000 acres were still unreported. Acreages ran from ten to 170 acres. Growers included: A. B. Stanberry, S. A. Sharum,

B. B. Newcomb, Tillison Cope, H. W. Newcomb, Hiram Newcomb, W. T. Mizelle, James Victory, E. Spira, and A. Joslen.

Also John Hardin, L. D. Hix, John Thurman, Grif Hardin, James Hays, Si Henry, Roy Jones, Henry Koch, Thomas Dozier, John Ballard, H. W. White, C. C. Kennedy, Charles Ivy, C. C. Clayton, H. N. Yearly, McCrea Bros., M. Jordan, Will Blakely, J. W. and W. W. Dickson, Doc Dewees, Monroe Sessions, Frank Burt, Jacob Bowles, L. J. Meeker.

And I. N. Sprawls, Fitzgerald Bellview, J.W. Hill, W. T. Jean, Lon and William Daves, Christ and Henry Gauger, Alten Smith, Henry Blair, E. W. Fitzgerald, Holman farm, F. Wadleigh, W. J. Carter, Charles Putnam, Kitchmiller, R. C. Charlton, and G. C. Janney.

The Modern Woodman of America was soon organized with H. A. Solderberg as V.C.; Will Victor, clerk; 14 beneficiary and three social members.

A lumber yard was established by A. L. West of Foss, and W. J. Newcomb used four teams to move his shoe and harness shop to Main Street. He added a carpet weaving machine.

A new Republican newspaper, THE HERALD, was established, with J. D. McGill as editor. The BEE's column, "Extract of Honey," dropped a few "stingers," criticizing THE HERALD's editor and all he advocated.

The column told, otherwise, of political rallies, a box supper, and good crops. Also that Indianapolis School had 26 pupils. Lula C. Bryan was teacher.

By July, 1904, there were four trains daily. One east and one west bound stopped on the flag. The others stopped only to let people off. A depot was scheduled for October 1, but the bank had been delayed. The proposed cashier was hired by another bank at a better salary.

J. M. Cherry of Mena, Arkansas, planned to construct a gin adjoining the railroad track. H. A. Solderberg, the BEE editor, was in the real estate business.

A cyclone and cloudburst, terrors of the plains, struck July 8 (1904) on Turtle Creek, two and a half miles west. The worst tragedy was to the Fleming Family. Their house was blown off the foundation and washed down-creek, drowning

Mrs. Fleming and five others. Mr. Fleming lodged in a treetop and was rescued. Railroad tracks and bridges were washed out.

The Indianapolis Development Company with headquarters in Ft. Smith, Arkansas, was working to make the town 1,000 population. Incorporated under the laws of Oklahoma Territory with capital stock of \$50,000, it was headed by B. B. Newcomb of Indianapolis, president; J. E. Dunn of Oklahoma City, vice-president; C. S. Avery of Vinita, I.T., secretary-treasurer. The office was in the Culbertson Building, Oklahoma City.

L. D. Hix planned to build a store 22x60 feet with a \$100 glass front.

No copies of the newspapers past 1904 were available. Additional information came from interviews with Mrs. John Gossman, near Indianapolis; Mrs. Ray Ford, a former resident of Indianapolis then living in Clinton, and Cloyse Boyd, a game ranger from Arapaho.

Mrs. Gossman, formerly Cora Helen Howenstein, was once postmistress at Arapaho, Custer County Court Clerk, a teacher, Public Welfare worker, and supervisor of Public Health in the Indian Service. Her husband, John, and parents came to Indianapolis in 1904 when he was 12 years old.

They came by train from Illinois, finding the country dry. But Indianapolis was a nice little town, one of the biggest in Custer County. It was platted along the Rock Island Railroad.

Harden's Store sold coffee from barrels. People



PHOTO BY PAT LAZELLE

Ominous warning to passersby.

bought it in large quantities, because it was cheap, and had it ground. Frank Harden had a cotton gin, and there was a school. Later, Henry Hays operated an elevator.

Ruth Clark married Ray Ford in 1932 and lived in Indianapolis. Her in-laws, the Mack Fords, moved there in 1911 from a farm east of town. Mack had a store and sold harness, horseshoes, groceries, gasoline, and about all essentials of life.

The post office was in the store; Mack was postmaster.

Of the four boys and one girl in the Mack Ford Family, Ray was the only survivor. He recalled being pitcher on the town's baseball team, singing with his family, and attending the local school.

Later, Indianapolis had 325 people. There were a depot, from which up to 25 sacks of mail were shipped; a telegraph operator, section house, three story school, mill, two lumber yards, two blacksmith shops, three stores, and two churches.

The Mennonites bought one of the churches and moved it five and a half miles southeast of Thomas. It still stands.

During picnics in the park, horses and buggies were tied to racks 100 yards in each direction. Sometimes small circuses came to town.

Ray Ford operated a barbershop and the post office. Some of the mail carriers were Mr. Langdon, Dick Wadsworth, and Scott Smith.

Up to 1940, the "COW" train (Clinton, Oklahoma, Western) stopped or could be flagged. Mail was hung on a crane to be snatched as the train whizzed past.

A severe snowstorm struck April 9, about 1936. An airplane dropped mail and bread. People drove tractors to the store.

Before REA, most residents had kerosene lamps. Ford's Store had carbide. During WPA days, the 1930s, everybody got a good outdoor toilet.

When Ray and Ruth married, the school was already gone. Their children attended Red Rock, a two room building southwest of town. They were Gary Ford, doctor of optometry, Elk City; Douglas Ford, manager of Hoffman Furniture, Clinton, and Mrs. Joy Smith.

Other residents of Indianapolis included: the H. C. Greens, later managers of College Oaks Apartments in Weatherford; Mr. and Mrs. Woods, the Nichols Family north of town, Simon Ford,



PHOTO BY PAT LAZELLE

August sun and entwining gourds reclaim idle masonry.

Roy Lewellen, section foreman who was killed by a train; the Browns, Jack Gayle, the Sawatzkys south of town, and Tom Whitworth.

Nobody contacted had information about Professor Conover from Indiana.

Highway 66, automobiles, and migration to the cities took its toll of Indianapolis. The post office was discontinued August 15, 1949. Stores closed; the community dwindled and died.

Still standing, the grain elevator reached into a gray sky, a monument to a dream, a birth, and a death. Nearby oil pumps reached into the earth for "black gold."

The geese, ducks, and chickens became silent, their requiem ended. Twilight turned to dusk and dusk to deep darkness. Rain clouds swept in to garnish tomorrow's whatever in "The Land of the Fair God." ■

## MOTHER'S MONEY

At last she had the money saved  
To buy those curtains that she craved;  
But daughter saw a pretty hat,  
So all the money went for that.

"Oh, that's all right," thought Mother then,  
"I'll save my money up again."  
And when she had the sum she sought,  
'Twas Junior's sweater that it bought!

But, being a mother is so much fun!  
And — after all is said and done,  
The way the money went was right,  
Besides —  
Curtains keep out too much light!!!

— Ima Hill Howard  
(January 25, 1937)

PHOTO BY ANDREA LEACH



## REVIEWS...REVIEWS...REVIEWS...

## GOLDEN ARROW

— Reviewed by Joan Shaddox Isom

**GOLDEN ARROW** by Bessie Holland Heck is a novel for young people that has something for everyone in a story of beautiful horses; motorcycles; and a picturesque farm in the Ozark Mountains tended by a delightful set of grandparents who dispense hot biscuits, ham, and corn-on-the-cob seasoned with a little positive advice on human relations.

Randy Colson, a "city boy" from Tulsa, Oklahoma, is the protagonist in this story. His dream of owning his own motorcycle is delayed somewhat when his father refuses to buy him a cycle as his friends' fathers have done, but insists on Randy making his own money for the purchase. Randy goes to his grandparents' farm in Arkansas to work for the summer and make the money for the beautiful machine he dreams of owning.

Once there, Randy falls in love with Goldy, the palomino mare, who is carrying a foal sired by a valuable stud, Straight Arrow. Randy's struggle begins as he is torn between his love for cycles and his attraction to the horse and farm life.

The apparent "heavy" in this story, a fifteen year-old boy named Terry Marlow, owns his own cycle and boasts of his free and easy lifestyle. Being from the city, he is awkward around animals and frightens Goldy almost to the point of losing her colt. Randy thinks this is done out of malice; and he begins to resent Terry, who has come between him and his friend, Junior Wisenheimer, the son of Grandpa's hired hand.

All summer long, Randy chops cotton, hoes corn, and works in the hay.

Unaccustomed to hard physical labor, he is tempted to abandon his plan until his body becomes hardened to the labor from sun-up to sun-down. The real "heavies," two horse thieves with their eyes on Goldy, appear near the end of the story and try to steal the mare just on the one night Randy is left alone on the farm. Of course, Randy and Bullet, the plucky dog, come through to save Goldy by putting up such a scrap they frighten the thieves away.

By the end of the book, Randy has resolved his conflict, deciding his love for horses is stronger than his attraction to cycles. He is afraid to tell his parents, who have hinted that he changes his mind too much and flits from one thing to another; but with Grandpa urging on dreams of partnership in a palomino ranch right there on the property, Randy confesses that his real dream is to raise beautiful horses, starting with Goldy's new colt, Golden Arrow, born the night of the attempted theft.

His parents are relieved, for they have wanted Randy to make this decision all along. Junior approaches to explain that Terry isn't as tough as he sounds, but is actually a lonely boy who needs some friends. Randy is willing to forget Terry's past behavior and start anew.

The story moves along smoothly with just enough action to keep the reader turning the pages. Mrs. Heck, Tulsa author, has handled the conflicts of different generations, varied lifestyles and pressures of growing up, with skill, and in a straightforward but non-preachy manner.

**GOLDEN ARROW** is illustrated with five black and white drawings by Charles Robinson of Morristown, New Jersey. ■

## REVIEWS...REVIEWS...REVIEWS...

## HANG ONTO THE WILLOWS

— Reviewed by Doyle Miles

HANG ONTO THE WILLOWS by Ernestine Gravley is, first of all, a well-written biography of Dr. O. C. Newman, a dedicated man who, in a harsh and unfamiliar environment of his own choosing, accomplished what he set out to do. Without preachment or hokum, Ernestine Gravley's text brings this frontier Schweitzer alive to us. With him we experience fulfillment of the American Dream in its purest expression, not because Dr. Newman achieves success and acquires riches, although he does both, but because we are involved with him in human values, are drawn on into his journey to know him for what he is rather than for what he has.

Even with a wealth of corroborating evidence in archives and in the personal testimony of living witnesses, except for one detail this chronicle might easily have picked up the taint of legend. But — Glory be! — by avoiding sentimentality, the breeding-bed of legend, the author's presentation runs true to the lean and purposeful course of Dr. Newman's life.

By the bonus of Augusta I. C. Metcalfe's classic pen drawings we are, as Dr. Arrell M. Gibson phrased it, "...blessed to have a book illustrated in this unique and original manner." In bare montage, the drawings characterize inclemencies existent in that time and place, particularly those to be encountered on a frontier of medicine. Three drawings — jacket, front cover, and page 48 — depict the basic spirit of the book: a solitary horseman moving with steady purpose into the weather.

Beyond the enjoyment of reading a good story well told, through passages

descriptive of the sparse population in almost daily stare-down of disaster, this reviewer is left with something more: loneliness for a place he has never been, bereavement by the death of a man he never saw, and persistent memories of an era that ended before he was born.

In years to come, this book will be a collector's item. Every Oklahoman, of whatever vintage, native or transplant, will want to read it — and slip it into that cache of goodies which time and time again he turns to when all the latest seems glop.

\* \* \*

Many readers of WESTVIEW have met the author, Ernestine Gravley, through earlier printings of HANG ONTO THE WILLOWS, or through her other full-length works: A HISTORY OF POTTAWATOMIE COUNTY (1952) and JUDGES OF THE PLACE OF FIRE (1980) — or perhaps through shorter pieces appearing regularly over the years in more than sixty national and regional publications.

She nominally resides at 1225 Sherry Lane in Shawnee, Oklahoma; but, being a teacher and compulsive foster-mother to all who yearn for authorship, it might be just as true to say she lives in Oklahoma and Arkansas, on the road to or from places where aspiring writers gather.

The book is available for \$9.95 at the above address. ■

# REVIEWS...REVIEWS...REVIEWS.

## THE MEXICANS IN OKLAHOMA

— Reviewed by Lee Daniel

Smith, Michael M. *THE MEXICANS IN OKLAHOMA*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980. Paper. 78 pp. \$3.95.

This slim volume by Michael M. Smith is composed of six chapters and a bibliographical essay, is part of a series entitled *NEWCOMERS TO A NEW LAND*, which analyzes the various ethnic groups that have contributed to the history of Oklahoma. It is an introductory survey that begins in 1541 with the arrival of the Spaniards — the first Europeans to enter Oklahoma — and continues through the 1970s. Despite its brevity, the book is the first serious study of the role of Mexicans in Oklahoma; and the author's announced intention is to encourage others "to examine more carefully Mexican contributions to the state's economic development and cultural heritage."

Chapter 1, entitled "Oklahoma and Mexico: A Distant Relationship," provides an account of the presence of Mexicans in Oklahoma until 1900. Smith points out that Mexico and Oklahoma "shared an intermittent, albeit subtle, relationship" from Coronado's 1541 entrance into Oklahoma until the present century. Despite the many romantic legends, scant evidence is available to verify the existence of Mexicans in Oklahoma during the more than 300 years following Coronado's arrival.

In Chapter 2, "Historical Antecedents to Mexican Migration," is found an account of the conditions in Mexico that created the impetus for the large immigrations of Mexicans at the beginning of the 20th century into the U.S. and eventually Oklahoma — poor economic conditions and the 1910 revolution.

Chapter 3, "Migration and Settlement in Oklahoma," details the developments in the U.S. and Mexico that coalesced in the early years of the 1900's to cause the massive

immigrations of Mexicans. Although most of the chapter is devoted to the conditions and activities in what Smith labels the "vast geo-cultural region historically designated the Spanish Borderlands," it is assumed that, in a minimal way, the same occurred in Oklahoma. Certainly, as the state grew and the economy increased, the need for more workers, occasioned by the U.S. immigration restrictions of cheap labor from Europe and the Orient, Mexicans were the answer. Also, the 1910 revolution displaced many Mexicans and discouraged their immediate return to Mexico. This development proved ideal because the outbreak of World War I caused a greater and extended demand for workers who normally returned after brief periods of employment.

In Chapter 4, "Mexican Labor in Oklahoma: 1900-1945," the author considers the Mexican role in the economic development of Oklahoma through their two major areas of employment — the railroad maintenance crews and the coal mines. The majority of the railroad crews were Spanish-speaking, which prompted the Santa Fe to issue Spanish-English dictionaries to their foremen. A significant segment of the coal miners were also Mexicans who were recruited from the railroad crews. Mexicans also worked in numerous unskilled jobs in industries, packinghouses, municipal services, and domestic employment until the Great Depression, when most were forced to leave the state.

In "Social and Cultural Adjustments: 1900-1945," Chapter 5, is found a glimpse of the average Mexican living in Oklahoma. The large majority had been campesinos, didn't seek citizenship, maintained strong bonds of loyalty to Mexico, returned frequently to renew their cultural roots, and infrequently learned to speak or read English — a major obstacle to adjustment to American culture. The implications of the celebrations, songs, organizations, and the Catholic Church that served the Mexican immigrants are also discussed.

## REVIEWS...REVIEWS...REVIEWS...

It is obvious in Chapter 6, "The Mexican Experience Since World War II," that the second World War was as significant an event in the lives of Mexicans in Oklahoma as the Mexican revolution, World War I, and the depression had been. During the postwar period, due to large Mexican-American military participation, the use of the G.I. Bill accounted for the unprecedented numbers receiving an education that ultimately led to white-collar professions. By the third generation many families had undergone almost total assimilation. However, Smith points out that the great influx of Mexicans coming from other states beginning in the 1970s and 80s is changing the situation dramatically. "The cultural pride of the state's older Mexican families, the constant influx of Mexican-American immigrants, and the enhanced consciousness of the Chicano movement have all served to maintain a strong ethnic tradition with Oklahoma's Mexican community."

The study concludes with the "Bibliographical Essay," which is provided to aid those who wish to learn more about the history, culture, and impact of the Mexicans. The book also contains ten photographs and seven maps.

There seems to be little documented evidence of the Mexicans in Oklahoma, and Smith has resorted to personal interviews of those who lived the Mexican experience to compensate for the lack of written accounts. He acknowledges that the present study is an introductory survey and concludes that "In sum, nearly everything needs to be done." His purpose in the book is to indicate the need for further research and encourage others to seek new materials that will provide a better understanding of the Mexican's role in Oklahoma. Nevertheless, the book is recommended reading for all Oklahomans who, every increasingly so, need to understand and be more aware of the estimated 100,000 - 200,000 Hispanics now

living in the state. Though largely ignored by scholars, the Mexicans have left a marked impact on the state's history, and by virtue of their numbers alone, the former "invisible minority" will be an important factor in Oklahoma's future. Unlike the other ethnic minorities, the Mexicans continue to enter the state and their history is still being written. The 78-page book may be ordered in paperback for \$3.95 from the O.U. Press.

#### WILL ROGERS MAGAZINE ARTICLES II

— Reviewed by Dr. Jerry Nye

Rogers, Will. Will Rogers' Weekly Articles: The Coolidge Years: 1925 - 1927 (II), ed. James M. Smallwood. Stillwater, Oklahoma, 1980.

Will Rogers is undoubtedly the most famous native son that Oklahoma has produced. Nearly fifty years after his death, Will Rogers is still internationally famous. Remembered best as a humorist and lecturer, Rogers was also a popular star of vaudeville, motion pictures, and radio as well as an author of books, magazine articles, and newspaper columns. His weekly syndicated newspaper column was carried by approximately 600 newspapers.

Will Rogers' Weekly Articles: The Coolidge Years is a collection of the columns which he wrote from 1925 to 1927. Rogers himself explained the runaway success of the column: "When I first started out to write and misspelled a few words, people said I was plain ignorant. But when I got all the words wrong, they declared I was a humorist."

The columns collected in this volume illustrate the qualities which so endeared Rogers to his readers. Beginning many of his columns with "All I know is what I read in the papers," Rogers used his homespun humor and down-to-earth philosophy to poke good-na-



tured fun at the President, politics, business, and government. As a humorist and social critic, Rogers used an easygoing, kidding style to comment on anything that caught his attention.

Presidents and politicians provided Rogers with much of his material. Rogers' comments about what President Coolidge did not do made good copy and helped to make a colorless President memorable. When members of Congress voted to raise their own pay, Rogers recommended that the voters support them and perhaps the flattery would make them do a better job. But he did find it strange that they could vote themselves a raise without asking the voters who paid the bill. Rogers found political slogans particularly amusing and frequently made up his own. Some of his better ones were "Be a politician — no training necessary"; "Come to Washington and vote to raise your own pay," and "Join the Senate and investigate something."

Tax issues were frequently targets for Rogers' wit in his columns. His Weekly Article 161 is as modern as today's newspapers. Pointing out that America owed more money than any other nation but was still lowering taxes, Rogers wrote, "Where would common business sense get? No Sir, you let a politician return home from Washington and announce, 'Boys we lowered your taxes. We had to borrow the money to do it, but we did it.' Say, they would elect him for life."

International affairs provided the subject matter for some of Rogers' best columns. In a column entitled "Meddling in Mexico. A Summer Sport," he poked fun at "protecting our interests" all over the world and suggested that we "protect 'em here at home." He

wrote, "Why don't you let every nation do and act as they please? What business is it of ours how Mexico acts or lives?"

In commenting on the war in China, Rogers explained it by saying, "An Irish History in some round-about way must have fallen into the hands of the Chinese, and as they read it they started loading their guns; and as they finished it, they started shooting." The Irish motto, according to Rogers, is "When in doubt, shoot."

But it is when he wrote about home, family, and friends that we see the warm, generous, compassionate Will Rogers who captured the hearts of his readers. Weekly Article 128 was written while he was in Chelsea, Oklahoma, for the funeral of his sister. This column reflects Rogers' values. He wrote, "After all, there is nothing in the world like home. You can roam all over the world, but after all, it's what the people at home think of you that really counts. I have just today witnessed a Funeral that for real sorrow and real affection I don't think will ever be surpassed anywhere." A later passage sums up his feelings about his sister's life, "Some uninformed newspapers printed: 'Mrs. C. L. Lane sister of the famous Comedian, Will Rogers.' They were greatly misinformed. It's the other way around. I am the brother of Mrs. C. L. Lane, 'The friend of Humanity,' and all the honors that I could ever in my wildest dreams hope to reach, would never equal the honor paid on a little western Prairie hilltop, among her people, to Maud Lane. If they will love me like that at the finish, my life will not be in vain."

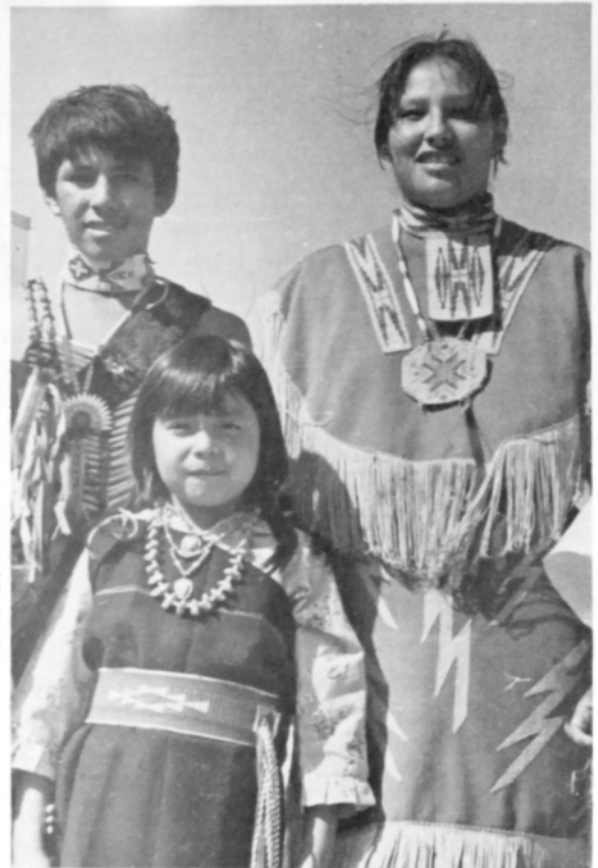
Another example of the warmth and human affection which characterized Will Rogers is found in Article 206, a

tribute to three of his famous friends who died at about the same time. The three were Harry Houdini, whom Rogers called "the greatest showman of our time;" Charles M. Russell, who was, in Rogers view, "the greatest artist the West has ever produced"; and Annie Oakley, "the best known woman in the world at one time", according to Rogers. The last paragraph in the article says as much about Will Rogers as it does about his three friends.

"One was a faker on the stage. One was a Cowpuncher. One was the greatest single attraction the outdoor show World has ever produced, yet they all lived so that their personal lives as well as their professional ones will remain an everlasting credit to their various professions. So it's what you are and not what you are in that makes you."

Surely it was what Will Rogers was that has kept his fame alive today. The articles in this volume capture the simple charm of a person who has become legendary and preserve the personality of a man who could honestly say, "I never met a man I didn't like." Few readers will read this volume without liking Will Rogers the better for their effort. ■

PHOTO BY KATHERINE DICKEY



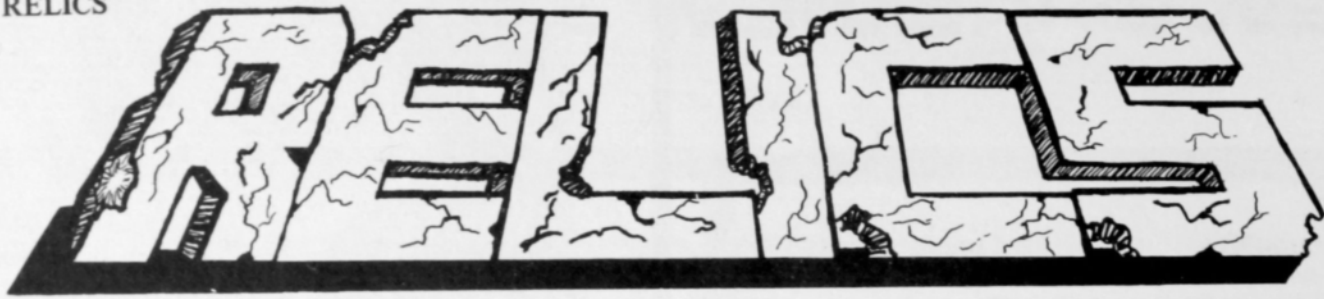
## WESTVIEW

Westview's next edition will feature the cultures, folklore, history, costumes, songs, and recipes of the tribes of Western Oklahoma Indians. Our Managing Editor, or Leroy Thomas, is now receiving manuscripts for review and possible publication for "featured" articles in our January edition. Any submissions should be typed, double spaced manuscripts. Be sure to enclose a self-addressed stamped envelope. Our staff reserves the right to edit these manuscripts if necessary, or return to author for changes. Mail manuscripts to the address on the bottom of the Contents page no later than November 20, 1981. Interesting photos and artwork will also be reviewed for inclusion by Pat Lazelle, Art Director, c/o Art Department, Southwestern Oklahoma State University, Weatherford, Oklahoma 73096 no later than November 20, 1981. Please enclose proper mailing and return postage if return of photo or artwork is desired. ■

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PHOTO BY KATHERINE DICKEY





LETTERING BY GREG CRUZAN

## .CHEYENNE'S HERMIT OF THE HILLS

— Donita Lucas Shields

"Go see Joe Muhlbacker's old place," advised a friendly Cheyenne native. "It's kinda unusual and peculiar, and Joe was a strange one."

Those descriptions were the understatement of the day, but then Cheyenne folk never brag about their history and their many accomplishments. They have too many of both to single out any one thing and describe it in superlatives. Muhlbacker's old place, however, can be described only in superlatives as the strangest and most unusual, at least in Cheyenne's immediate vicinity.

55 Following the rough, hilly oil field road according to vague directions, I became squeamish as I turned into little more than a cow path leading through a dry, rocky pasture. Turning off the main road, I noted the rusty, faded "No Trespassing" sign even though it was turned the wrong way. My town friend had failed to mention this sign. Bouncing along the crooked trail to the top of a red bluff, I sighted the Muhlbacker ruins atop the next hill, a tantalizing view. It was impossible to turn back after that first glimpse. Anyway, there was no place for a turnaround between the red boulders. Hopefully my faithful vintage Ford could make it back up the steep red cliff.

While drawing closer to the ruins, my emotions stirred with stunned disbelief. Nestled within the top of the red sandy hill is a square concrete half-dugout topped with a ten-foot-tall lookout tower protruding from the flat roof. In front of the little house stands a grotesque sculptural gibberish at least eight feet tall. At the side of this unbelievable artifact is a five-foot primitive but beautifully structured water fountain or bird-bath. Down the hill from this outlandish panorama are the ruins of what must have been the barn and another concrete room.

A distant viewing of Joseph Muhlbacker's ruins can never be enough. If a person is caught

trespassing, he might as well get his money's worth. A careful crawl through rusty barbed wire fence and a short walk wading tall grass and weeds and junk must lead only to even more excitement and stark disbelief. A four-tiered waterfall rock sculpture and a concrete retaining wall with three ornately trimmed compartments border the pathway leading to what may have been Joe's front porch. The porch and the roof over one room of his intriguing home have collapsed, but the remains reveal that the porch posts must have been molded to resemble human legs, knees, and feet. There is nothing now, however, but a few broken and crumbled chunks.

Stumbling down through the rubble toward the doorless entrance into the concrete room, the explorer marvels at the walls which are 3½ feet thick. When stepping inside the room, a person can only gasp at what must have been a place of beauty and splendor. All four walls and the ceiling are completely covered with carefully designed bas-relief and scrollwork surrounding smooth rectangular areas which were once said to have contained pictures covered with glass. Now only a few bits of broken, burned slivers remain.

Along the walls are deep, recessed concrete shelves. These storage areas must have been covered with wooden doors though there is nothing now except a few rusty hinges. At least one-half the height of the thick walls are underground with one-half above the surface. The upper parts of the walls contain two small windows, though no panes or shutters are now evident. One wall holds the caved-in ruins of Joe's fireplace with its concealed steel chimney pipe extending through the roof.

The most outstanding engineering and artistry of Muhlbacker's underground room is the center brace which holds the 2½ feet thick concrete roof intact and reaches on above the roof to

# 1920

## Joseph Muhlbacher



ILLUSTRATION BY PAT LAZELLE

continue as the lookout tower. A person can merely presume that Joe constructed this center sculpture from a large iron pipe and massive steel wheels. Where he obtained them, how he transported them to his hilltop home, and how he hoisted them into place and secured them will likely forever remain a mystery.

Joe coated these iron frameworks with a gorgeous type of knobby sculptured scrollwork to give a spiraling or revolving effect. This center brace shows his talent and skill more than any of his other sculpturings or moldings. Or perhaps it remains beautiful because it does not show the deterioration and vandalism as do his other endeavors. It is amazing how this work has withstood destruction and fire which apparently destroyed so much of the interior.

After climbing back outside Muhlbacker's underground home, it is impossible for anyone to avoid studying the macabre sculpture which seems to be guarding Joe's unusual living quarters. Some people have called the object a "Tree of Life" because one side is a male figure and the other a female. Their arms are entwined as living branches, and the legs supporting the figure represent the roots of a tree.

The most interesting tale concerning this baroque-type sculpture is told in a 1941 issue of the *CHEYENNE STAR*. The article explained that Joe called it his Teddy Roosevelt statue because he once heard President Theodore Roosevelt deliver a speech comparing American democracy to a tree with many different roots. According to Muhlbacker, Roosevelt stated that one root could not possibly destroy democracy unless it was severed. To make the statue authentic, Joe chopped off one of the supporting roots of his statue.



Likely the newspaper article is accurate because old timers claim that the male side of the statue once had the letters ROSENVELT embossed across the forehead, and indeed the sculpture could be said to show a slight resemblance to the old Rough Rider with his steel-rimmed glasses. The female figure still carries the name ZUFRAIGIS, but no one seems to remember what this name might have symbolized. Whatever this strange sculpture may represent, the sculpturing of the human body and the facial features was not one of Joe's finest talents. Viewing the tree of life figure is unsettling to all. Many local people have suggested that it be destroyed, but evidently no one wants the distasteful task of doing away with the oddity.

Standing beside the monstrosity of the "Tree of Life" is the five-tiered water fountain or bird-bath which has remained surprisingly intact throughout the years. The receptacle at the top of the large fountain appears at least three feet in diameter and is approximately eighteen inches deep. The four areas beneath graduate into even larger dimensions with each capable of retaining water, though none are as deep as the upper level. Muhlbacker designed the fountain of concrete with a rough cobblestone effect and trimmed it with small flint rocks. The outer rims of each tier are scalloped and ornamented with scrollwork. Situated at the side of the grotesque sculpture, the fountain appears a beautiful, graceful edifice.

Following the dim trail leading to the barn area, the sightseer finds another concrete half-dugout constructed at one end of the pole-type sheds. The entire barn area is embedded into the side of the sandy hill. Massive timbers hold up the brush-type roof of the shelters. Some of the timbers are two feet in diameter and are at least twelve feet long. The viewer cannot help but wonder if Joe hauled these enormous timbers from the Washita River four miles away. Such trees could not possibly have grown on his hilly quarter section.

Nothing except the walls and the two doorways now remain of the concrete room at the barn, but the smaller structure appears identical with the house with the exception of the ornate center brace and the bas-relief on the walls. The undecorated square concrete pillar now stands surrounded by caved-in debris from the roof. Joe did not reinforce this pillar with iron wheels as he did in the construction of the house

PHOTO BY DONITA LUCAS SHIELDS



View from the back of Joe's place.

roof. Evidently the solitary concrete brace could not withstand the heavy weight and stress of the thick roof. The outer edges are all that now remain of the roof. These crumbling edges are beautifully decorated with round flint stones embedded into the concrete.

The above seems a lengthy description of old Joe Muhlbacker's place, but the aged site is now practically destroyed. In a few short years it may be completely disintegrated for Joe did his sculpturing with materials which will not endure the elements forever. With the exception of igneous flint stones which he used for decorative trim, all other materials are of soft, sedimentary type, highly susceptible to erosion. He mixed his concrete with soft sands hauled from his own personal sand pit on his farm, and he constructed much of his structural forms with soft, red sandstone rock, so prevalent in the area.

Over the years these soft materials have eroded away until in many instances nothing now remains but rusty iron reinforcements and crumpled wire used for his base frameowrks. These rusting frameworks too will deteriorate in time. The cornerstone of his home bears the date of 1920, and it is readily seen how destructive forces of man and nature have wreaked havoc with his accomplishments during the past years.

Life at Cheyenne, Oklahoma, began for Joseph Muhlbacker on June 23, 1905, when he homesteaded on his claim two miles southwest of

PHOTO BY DONITA LUCAS SHIELDS



Dry-wall

town. He was born in Dheutschfiesteritz, Austria, on March 13, 1876, and came to the United States from Bremen, Germany, on June 9, 1901. Joe spent his first four years in the United States working the mines in the eastern states then one year in the state of Washington before settling at Cheyenne. On March 10, 1911, he received his naturalization papers in Roger Mills County and became a United States citizen. He was the only foreigner to ever locate in Cheyenne vicinity.

During World War I Joe developed the obsession that Germans would drop bombs from airplanes in his chosen country. It was for this reason, it is said, that he set to work constructing his bomb-proof house with its lookout tower and the concrete room attached to the barn. Rumors are that he also constructed a tunnel between the house and barn room, but no evidence can be seen today where the tunnel may have exited and entered from the two areas. It was also claimed that Joe spent hours upon his lookout tower watching for German planes. However, this seems somewhat far-fetched when observing how he must have toiled building his home and tilling his farm.

Joe lived alone and never married. People began calling him the Hermit because he lived such a secluded life. He seldom went to Cheyenne except to sell a few eggs in order to buy necessary goods to supplement the foodstuffs he grew

PHOTO BY DONITA LUCAS SHIELDS



The "Tree of Life" sculpture: a silent sentinel keeping watch.

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on his farm. The longest trip he ever made from his home was to attend a community fair in 1911 at the little town of Berlin fourteen miles to the southeast. Yet he liked people, and they enjoyed him. Old timers as young boys can remember visiting Joe and eating with him. He always served them a delicious-tasting soup almost black in color. The concoction was probably borscht, a mixture of meat stock, cabbage and onions which he raised on his farm.

Old timers also remember swimming in Muhlbacker's farm ponds for in even the driest years Joe always had an adequate water supply. In fact he was the first to practice soil and water conservation in Roger Mills County, many years ahead of its time. With his mules and his crude Fresno he constructed the first terraces, water ways, and detention ponds on his hillside farm. His crops and garden always flourished though droughs frequently destroyed his neighbors' endeavors.

Joe's peach orchard was the finest in that area. People drove from miles around to buy his peaches since they were the largest and juiciest to be found. He never allowed anyone



masonry technique was used in this side of the barn wall.

to gather the fruit for fear someone might damage his trees. Joe picked them himself while his customers waited and visited. Remains of this peach orchard are still evident at the foot of the hill below his house and barn.

Joe always enjoyed entertaining his friends by playing his quaint black accordion. His repertoire of musical numbers ranged from Strauss waltzes and selections from Haydn and Schubert to the simple dance jigs so popular in those days. He loved for people to dance when he played his jigs. Sometimes he took his accordion with him in his mule cart on his infrequent trips to Cheyenne and played for the town folk while they all sat under a shade tree.

When he entertained at his home, he climbed up on a concrete-embossed ladder and presented his concert from the top of his flat roof, a fine outdoor stage for his audience seated below. Bits and pieces of that steel and concrete ladder still remain where it once attached to the roof of the house. Old timers also remember Joe playing far into the night when he was alone. Many recall his music as a mournful but beautiful serenade, floating down on the still night breeze into the little town of Cheyenne.

Muhlbacker may have been called a hermit by many, but a true hermit would never have accepted the publicity which Joe so thoroughly enjoyed. Joe became famous in 1941 when he was contacted by Mr. J. M. Dubois of Denver, a representative for Pathe and News of the Day for Universal Films. Mr. Dubois interviewed Joe for two days and made pictures of his unusual accomplishments. Universal Films called the newsreel "Stranger Than Fiction." Joseph Muhlbacker and Cheyenne became national celebrities.

Joe's fame, however, did not end with the newsreel. He became so well-known and created so much excitement throughout the nation that

Columbia Broadcasting System of New York City instantly invited him to appear on their popular interview show "We the People." Because of difficulty in understanding Joe's foreign accent, CBS also invited John C. Casady, Joe's friend and editor of Cheyenne Star, to accompany Joe to New York City.

CBS selected Mr. J. Walter Turner, the former president of Southwestern State College of Weatherford and then a teacher in New York City, to host and entertain Muhlbacker and Casady during their stay. Joe, of course, was an instant sensation during his great night of "We the People" broadcast, Tuesday, February 18, 1941.

Joe, having never left Cheyenne during the intervening years between 1905 and 1941 except for the fair at Berlin, must have felt like Rip Van Winkle awakening into an entirely alien world. Before leaving for New York City, he had never talked over a telephone, ridden in a Pullman car, eaten in a restaurant, or had never seen a movie. He could only have marveled at the tall buildings, speeding cars, and roaring trains. According to Casady, Joe enjoyed the luxurious bathtub of hot water in his hotel room more than any of the other modern conveniences.

However, Joe's greatest enjoyment occurred after returning to Cheyenne when he watched his own movie "Stranger Than Fiction" at the Rook Theater on November 14 and 15, 1941. On both evenings John Casady presented remarks concerning their New York City trip and the "We the People" broadcast. Joe also provided his first indoor concert from the stage of the Rook for packed houses both nights.

Joe then returned to the obscurity of his simple life on his hilltop farm. His ways never changed; he still never wore a hat or shaved; he was content with his simple ways and his plain foods. People continued seeing him infrequently when he rode into town in his mule cart or when they purchased peaches. He continued playing his accordion as before. Joe never interfered with others, nor they with him.

Joseph Muhlbacker became ill in 1954 and spent his final year in Cheyenne Hospital where he died July 14, 1955, at seventy-nine years of age. His remains, marked with a simple gray stone, are interred at Cheyenne Cemetery. Yet his stories and his greatest monuments are found at that hilltop homestead where he proved his claim and built his own rare shrine with his two bare hands, the crudest of implements, and the simple materials provided by the land he loved.

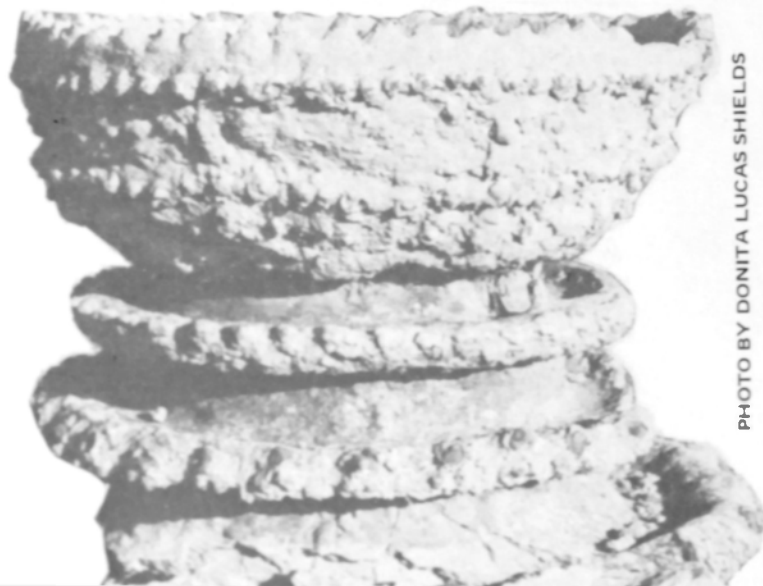


PHOTO BY DONITA LUCAS SHIELDS

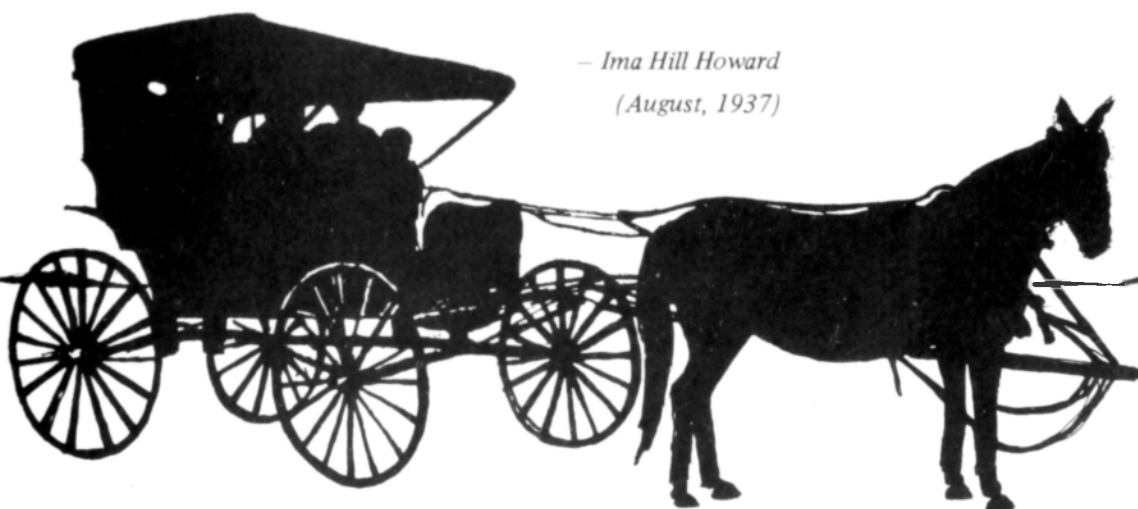
"THE ONE HORSE TOWN"

I'm glad I live in a one-horse town,  
In a little old one-horse town,  
For the folk down there are the finest folks  
You can find for miles around!  
When you walk down the street it's a "howdy-do,"  
With a smile or a pat on the back,  
And it's fun we have just sittin' around  
Listening to some "wise-guy's crack!"

The folks down there aren't famous folks,  
Not rich, too smart, nor grand,  
But they stand by a fellow when he needs it most,  
And they lend a helping hand  
Your troubles are never your own, down there,  
In that little old one-horse town,  
There's always someone willing to share  
And to give you a lift when you're down.

If I should die in some far-away place  
Many miles from the home I know,  
Please send me back o'er the long, long road,  
To my one-horse town let me go,  
For my old friends there will mourn over me  
And sort of miss my being around.  
Let me rest by the side of my loved ones there  
In that little old one-horse town.

— Ima Hill Howard  
(August, 1937)





## WESTVIEW'S TV EXCURSION

Oklahoma State University Educational Television spent an entire action-packed day, on August 18, 1981, filming a 30-minute historical documentary concerning Western Oklahoma. The primary goal of the film aimed at projecting the importance of area history and culture in relation to the booming progress so prevalent today. Westview, A Journal of Western Oklahoma was heralded as a launching pad for correlating the area's past and present.

OSU's blue and white TV equipment van led an impressive cortege of at least ten cars, station wagons, and pickup trucks filled with technicians, speakers, and guests as they traveled to various points of interest. Every excited participant quickly maneuvered to each of the four locations selected for filming Southwestern Oklahoma State University's premier production concerning regional culture.

First, the OSU television van joined the gleaming blue and silver machinery of Parker Drilling Company at No. 1 Duncan just outside Elk City's city limits. Here they make introductory shots showing ultra-modern drilling for gas in the famous Deep Anadarko Basin. Next, the truck, the technicians, and the rest of the entourage lumbered northwestward through the dazzling early morning sunshine to Cheyenne's Battle of the Washita National Memorial site. At this scene Dr. Robin Montgomery and Prof. Wayne Ellinger from SWOSU Departments of Political Science and History presented background information relating to the famous battle.

Leaving the memorial site, the convoy moved off the beaten path to the Muhlbacker ruins nestled in a red sandstone hill where rock boulders jutted from lush summer grasses. Donita Shields, an area farmer-rancher-writer,

gave a brief overview of the early-day farming and conservation practices. Joseph Muhlbacker a/ka State Representative Rollin Reimer joined her with additional historical facts concerning Muhlbacker and his early endeavors. At the conclusion of this shooting, technicians, guests, and spectators again stowed away equipment in preparation on moving to the next location.

All participants speeded northward over miles of smooth highway until they were directed onto a dusty country trail which led them to Metcalfe Ranch in the Washita River lowlands. As if by magic, the lovely ladies of Cheyenne who traveled with the group produced a picnic lunch of fried chicken with all the trimmings and iced lemonade punch. The famished, thirsty crowd relished the cool luxury beneath huge trees in Howard and Helen Metcalfe's back yard. Jiggs Krober, Lois Harmon, Neva Little, Bess Bullard, and Mary Green, all clad in colorful pioneer attire, received lavish thank-you's for their delightful meal.

Since the show must always go on, the TV crew returned to its task at hand. Howard Metcalfe hooked up his trophy-winning ox team to their antique wagon, and the TV cameras rolled again. After minor difficulties with mechanical breakdowns and with two fat longhorn steers having a prime motive of returning to their favorite shade



tree, the scene eventually reached its finale. All humans returned to the cool of the Metcalfe Museum where Augusta's paintings were filmed for posterity. Pat Lazelle, art director for Westview and instructor at SWOSU, discussed many unusual aspects of the paintings. Howard gave additional information concerning his mother's art work.

Once again, the TV crew packed equipment back in to their faithful but dusty van. The show was over except for those returning to SWOSU campus for curtain call. However, just before parting at Metcalfe Ranch, delicious cold watermelons materialized from somewhere for the cortege's final Western Oklahoma repeat beneath the mighty Metcalfe trees.



Through the efficiency of Otis Sanders, Director of Public Relations at SWOSU, Marshall Allen, TV director from OSU, Carter Bradley, filming producer of Oklahoma City, and John Crump, master of ceremonies from OCW at Chickasha, the filming of a colorful portion of western Oklahoma's culture and history was a tremendous success and a gala occasion. All concerned anticipated the end results in October when the film was to be aired on Channel 4, Channel 13, and other regional TV stations. ■



## ANNOUNCING WESTVIEW'S "SONG WRITING" CONTEST AND NEXT ISSUE

Featured sections in the next issue — in addition to some of those in the Premiere Edition — will be CUISINE, CHRISTMAS MEMORIES, and INDIANS.

In correlation with the January issue, since its theme is WESTERN OKLAHOMA-AMERICANA, there will also be a song-writing contest. We are inviting entries of original songs about Western Oklahoma. The best song, as judged by a panel of musicians, will be featured in the January issue, copied and be published as well as recorded by the Media Center of SWOSU's Center for Regional Studies.

The Editorial Board will also seek to have the song played over various radio stations in the area.

The Grand Winner of the contest will receive a \$100.00 prize. The contest entry fee is \$10.00. Songs of all varieties from country to classic will be considered. Questions regarding the contest and entries are to be sent to Dr. Ed Williams, SWOSU School of Music, Weatherford, OK 73096. ■

**CONTEST DEADLINE  
FOR ENTRIES:  
NOVEMBER 20, 1981**

# BLACKGOLD: The Oklahoma Rush OIL

(continued from page 35)

**HR:** Usually you can't hitchhike and find a job in the oil field. Your rigs are not all in one spot here like in some towns, they're scattered all over. If you don't know somebody with a car... you're outta luck. A lot of it depends on luck... being in the right place at the right time. You can leave your name and a phone number in convenience stores and restaurants around town where the drillers go. If they need a hand, you may get lucky and he'll give you a call. The only other way is to go to each rig and ask. I'm sure a lot of guys come in here hitchhikin' can't find any work... get disillusioned or their money runs out and they move on. It's tough...

... Suddenly, we're interrupted by the August rainstorm that had been threatening since my arrival. On the roof of the toolpusher's new mobile home the raindrops explode to a deafening roar. Both Herb and Ronnie go look out the door at the sheets of rain. Fifty yards away is the drone of the engines now familiar. I think of the men who are out there working in that grease and oil, and how this new element must add to their discomfort. Then as suddenly as it began, the rain stops... the conversation continues.

**WV:** Can you tell if a guy's going to "make a hand" as you call it, just by looking at him? What characteristics do you look for?

**RG:** Sometimes ya can, sometimes ya can't. He gotta be a "non-doper" to start with... that's the biggest problem today. We got people hired now with dogs and sniff that stuff out. We just can't have that or a drunk either. Anytime ya work around steel or work above ground... a mistake, even a small one... can kill you or somebody else.

**HR:** Yeah... that's the difference... person's gotta be alert, along with bein' able to do the physical labor. They hafta put up with mud'n their hair and eyes, busted fingers and arms and working 40-90 feet off the ground... stuff like that. Lotta people begrudge us makin' so much.

**RG:** Not only do we do the drillin' part... you also gotta paint this rig. What's painters get an hour? He gotta paint this rig, he gotta scrub this rig from top to bottom. Really, when ya hire a roughneck, you're hirin' a painter, an operator, ya gotta know how to run a forklift and motors... he gotta know about motors. He gotta be able to do about fifteen jobs.

**HR:** (Looking out the window) Have you ever been on a rig when it was "makin' a trip?"

**WV:** No... I haven't.

**HR:** Would ya like to go up and see it?

**WV:** (A big grin came on my face) Sure would!

... Herb hands a gold hard-hat to me, much to my amazement, and says, "Put this on, the guys'll think we've hired a new driller!" We walk the gravelly expanse between the trailer and the bottom of the rig which looms overhead. Herb proudly points out the diagonal elevator which effortlessly lifts us 40 feet to the "doghouse", a side room on the rig floor which acts as shelter both for the men, as well as the recording equipment. The room is spotless. I look at the floorhands busily working around the pipe that is "coming out of the hole," studying their faces, searching to find the quality they had spoken of earlier. They all looked like "ordinary" men, but I knew through their hard work, they were one of the three best crews around. The noise of the "kelly" hoisting the pipe stems reminds me of the sounds that would echo through an old sailing vessel. We take a tour around the floor and I notice the safety slides that shoot downward for crew members quick departure in case of a "blow-out." The rhythmic thrusts and pulls of the driller at the controls and the floorhands synchronized movements remind me of some kind of strange ballet performance... the immenseness of it all, drives home its reality...

**WV:** How tall is this rig?

**HR:** 154 feet tall, 38 feet from there to the ground.

**WV:** Can you tell me about what each man is doing? Do you have beginners that stand and watch? How does a man learn what to do?

**HR:** (Laughingly) Usually they start as a "worm." Don't ask me why they call it that... but say you came out to work here... we'd start you out as a "worm." Don't know nothing about what's goin' on. Say for instance, they need another tool pusher, and they want to promote this here daylight driller to the job... now I got an opening. If I like the derrick hand and think he's capable, I'll give him a drilling job. Then if that motorman wants that derrick job, I'll give him that job. So you just move them. Then the chain hand moves to motorman, and the "lead tongs" moves to "throwin' chain." Then the worm has a job! The guy that moves to the drillin' job, gets the worst shift first, morning tower. They call that the "dog tower." Then he moves up

through vacancies to the "daylight" job.

**WV:** So he has to pay his dues too?

**HR:** That's right.

**WV:** Could you describe in a bit more detail what each man does?

**RG:** Well, you take a floorhand... you got two of 'em. One runs the "make-up tongs," the other the "break-out tongs." They're the ones that put the pipe together or take it apart. Alright, then you got a motorman. What the motorman does... he holds you on that pipe so when he latches on to it up there... when it swings across the floor, it just won't swing in the air... he holds it and leads it over there, stabs it in there, then the floorhands screw it up. Then yer derrick hand up above you, see what he does. He pulls the pipe out, steadies it at the top, drops it in and latches it. That's what's called "makin' a trip." When you're drillin', your derrick hand... he's out there in that mud house with a mud chart like this'n. We got a mud engineer that tells ya how thick he wants that mud and what he wants in it. So he keeps it that thickness... how much it weighs and he got a scale out there that tells you how thick it is, that's what you call yer viscosity. If it needs water you add water, if it don't, you don't. Besides that he checks on his pumps and makes sure they're runnin' right. If they ain't, he fixes them. The mud pumps that check your mud... we got 3 of 'em on this rig... most just have 2 of 'em, but this rig's got 3! You take yer motorman... he keeps check of these water tanks all the time and makes sure he's got plenty o' water. He keeps oil in his motors in his radiator... everythin' checks on his motors and keeps that motor shaft cleaned up. You got yer floorhands... they pretty well keep yer floor cleaned up on the rig and stuff. Usually your motorman helps him. You check yer motors and go out there and paint awhile, then check yer motors. It's a steady job. If you really want to know the truth, they all should be performing 10 hours of work in an 8 hour shift. It's not like the "white collar" worker.

**WV:** So there's never any slack time?

**HR:** No, well, once in a while they'll take 10 or 15 minutes. Now some of these companies there's slack time. On the morning tower and later evening tower's when they get things caught up, they don't do an awful lot. With Parker, no, it's not that way. They want the rig clean and looking good all the time.

**WV:** Which job do you think is the most dangerous . . . would it be that of the derrick hand since he's 90 feet above ground?

**HR:** Well, they're all dangerous, but yea, the height has somethin' to do with it. You hafta keep alert all the time. On one rig I was workin', the derrick hand apparently got hot and wanted to take off his jacket, so he unhooked his safety belt, took his jacket off, a pipe came up and he grabbed it without thinking and fell all the way to the floor to his death! A man can never take safety for granted. His safety belt was all he had. . . poor sucker.

**WV:** How much does that pipe weigh, does the derrick hand have to lift all that weight?

**RG:** Well, that's called a "joint" of drill pipe 31 feet long, 19 lbs, per foot makes each joint weigh 589 lbs. When they "trip," 3 joints of pipe connected make a stand, 93 feet long, 1767 lbs. total. But he doesn't have to lift that, he just steadies it so it can be hooked up and guided in so the floorhands can tighten it up or "make the connection." Three joints tall or a "stand" of pipe is what they connect at one time when they're "trippin'."

**WV:** Tell me what a good well's production will come in at, I mean how many barrels of oil, and how many million cubic feet of gas per day?

**RG:** Depends on what they want, I've seen wells back in my days that they plugged, now they're drilling and producing those same wells. They plugged 'em back then because they didn't think they'd make enough production. They didn't think there was enough oil there to mess with, course at that time they weren't goin' as deep either. I tell you, you get into politics, and that's the kind of stuff I don't want to talk about 'cause it could get us in trouble. We just drill the hole and what they get, that's their business.

**WV:** So it's not like in the old days with "gushers" like the "Wild Mary Sudik"? Would that be a good well in terms of today's production rates?

**HR:** It would be considered a very good well by today's standards, but it was the first well drilled in that field and the pressure was tremendous underground. That's why it came in at 20,000 barrels a day!

**WV:** Then you don't have "gusher" wells anymore?

**HR:** Well, there are so many wells being drilled in this area that the

pressure isn't going to be that great. We have newer equipment that controls the regulation better and allocations that have to be met. We still have exceptional wells today, but they just don't come in that spectacularly. Today, anythin' over 600 barrels o' oil comin' in a day is a good well! All these wells are wildcats, 'cause ya don't know what's down there.

**WV:** What depth is this well going to drill to? I've heard several different depths mentioned?

**RG:** Around 33,000 feet, over 5 miles deep.

**WV:** What if you hit something before you get that far, will you stop there?

**RG:** Nope. We're going for the world's deepest hole. That's part of it.

**WV:** Do you ever have women apply for a job out here? Are there many who have worked out as a "hand?"

**HR:** (An emphatic) NO!

**WV:** Why is that, because they can't stand the. . .

**HR:** There's no place for 'em.

**RG:** Did you see how dirty they was? Would you want that all over you?

**WV:** I'm not saying I want a job in the oil field, but what if there was a woman. . .

**RG:** Would you want yer hands to look like this. . . with grease in yer pores?

**WV:** No.

**HR:** Well, that's why ya don't see women out here.

**RG:** If you can't lift that sack all day long and a man can, then what do I want you for?

**WV:** Well, I thought I'd ask. I understand you're not being chauvinistic, just realistic. I'd heard about a rare few women that were roughnecking, and was mainly curious. Personally, I agree with you. I don't think many women want or have the strength to work in the oil fields.

(Pause)

Herb, I never did ask how you came to work in the oil field?

**HR:** I started out drivin' 360 miles one way to work, leavin' at 4 in th' mornin' and gettin' home at 10 at night, for eight months straight. . . seven days a week. That gets old after awhile, but I've been doin' somethin' related to this field ever since. (Proudly) I helped build this rig. I didn't plan on workin' out here, but Ronnie asked me to come out.

**WV:** And you've been here ever since.

**HR:** Yeah. . . I've enjoyed it though. Ronnie's a good man to work for.

**WV:** Well, after all you've said and showed me today, I've learned a lot. It's rough, hard work and I respect

your profession and the honest thoughts you've shared with me. You're a part of history, the pioneer for the future. How does that sound?

**HR:** Pretty good. . . I guess.

**RG:** It's a livin'. . . (grinning).

**WV:** Thanks for everything. . . especially the photos, Herb. I'll come back to see you one of these days to get another ride up the elevator.

**BOTH:** OK. . . come back anytime. . . can't wait to see yer magazine.

As I turn to leave a deep respect for these men wells up inside of me. The fortyfive minute expanse back to Weatherford gives me time to reflect on all I've seen and heard during the day. The parallels between the two periods of history grow apparent to me again and I feel fortunate that I've taken the time to try and view life "through their eyes." Then, for no reason, a slogan from TV penetrates my brain as I pass another rig, it's lights blazing in the twilight: "If you don't have an oil well . . . GET ONE!!! I laughed for a moment as I thought. . . "Don't we all wish we could!"

A special thanks to the GHK Company for permission to reprint portions of their May 1981 brochure, Herb Ropp and Ronnie Givens for their permission to be interviewed, and the crews of the Parker No. 201. ■



The 'Wild Mary Sudik', Oklahoma's most famous 'gusher' well came in like a storm the morning of March 26, 1930 in the south part of an Oklahoma City oil-field. She came in flowing an estimated 200 million cu. feet of gas and 20,000 barrels of oil a day, legendary, even by today's standards. ■

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE MUSEUM OF THE GREAT PLAINS



# THANKS AND HUBBELL DEDICATION



The idea of WESTVIEW emerged from a matrix woven by five men at Southwestern Oklahoma State University: Vice President Earl Reynolds, Dean of Arts & Sciences Donald Hamm, Graduate Dean Bob Brown, Social Sciences Chairman Clarence Petrowsky and Language Arts Chairman Jerry Nye. Upon sensing the dynamism springing from the culture of Western Oklahoma, these men recognized the duty of SWOSU to explore the roots of that culture. Defining and describing the essence of meanings inherent in the term "Western Oklahoma" would be the purpose of SWOSU's Center and Program for Regional Studies. A prime avenue for communicating those meanings would be - and now indeed is - WESTVIEW.

Thank you gentlemen, and a special thanks also to the indispensable Pat Lazelle, along with Leroy Thomas, Carol and Sam Lackey, Lee Daniel, Diana Herrera-Ortiz, Conchita Barrios, Mariana de Lehman, Arthur Huseboe, Jack Shelton and all our donors listed on the inside front cover.

In a class by himself is the late Joe Hubbell whose untimely death created a permanent void in our program while leaving us a model of virtue, dedication and scholarship against which to measure our efforts. It is to the memory of Dr. Joe Hubbell, professor, scholar and best of all - a true friend to mankind - that we dedicate this Premiere Edition of WESTVIEW.

*Robin T. Montgomery*  
Editor-in-Chief



ART CONVERSION TAKEN FROM  
PHOTO BY KATHERINE DICKEY

## Special Thanks to All....

Well, it's finally time to paste-up, this, the last page of a journal that began as a "dream" of our Editor-in-Chief, Dr. Robin Montgomery two long years ago. He "felt a need" to preserve the heritage and relics of Western Oklahoma in some manner, thus the birth of Westview. We, the staff of this journal, hope you enjoy the Premiere Edition, for it was an enlightening and educational experience for us all.

Many thanks are in order for the articles and poetry that were submitted, and presently Dr. Leroy Thomas, Managing Editor and Assistant Editor, Dr. Chris Gould and Prof. Ted Dyle are assessing manuscripts for review for the January issue. Many photographers are to be thanked for their creative efforts: Andrea Leach - Photo Editor, for her last-minute darkroom work helped meet the deadline, Carol Phillips, Sonita Lucas Shields, Katherine Dickey, whose photo conversions added a "graphic look" & Herb Ropp for his excellent back cover photo of Parker #201! All the historical photos were from the files of the museum of the Great Plains in Lubbock. Thanks for your cooperation and encouragement, especially Howarda Spivey and Debbie.

A special thanks to Herb Ropp and Lonnie Givens of Parker Oil Company for their interviews enlightening the staff to their views of the oil field industry & life.

To the many contributors of donations to publish this journal, our "heart-felt" thanks for they are the ones that made Westview financially possible.

To Margaret and Jack Shelton, Belores and Bob Reid at the Weatherford Press for their patience (which was a lot!) typesetting, expertise in printing of this issue.

The beautiful cover design "in color" deserves a special salute to Jerald Tracy II for "Pumping Gold" and to Cherokee Color Process, Inc. - Tulsa for their color separations for both front & back covers.

Last, but surely not least, to my commercial art students who worked steadily for 5 weeks proofing type, pasting-up, laying-out pages, illustrating poetry and stories, taking & developing photos, & running errands daily to the print shop. Your assistance and "on-the-job" training was the catalyst that "put it all together."

It is because all these people cared enough to be involved or give their support, that I look forward to our next edition.

Thank you all sincerely -

*Pat Lazelle*  
Art Director

ON THE BACK: "Parker Drilling Rig No. 201" taken by welder-roughneck-photographer Herb Ropp, Sayre. Color separations by Cherokee Color Process in Tulsa. WESTVIEW printed by the Weatherford Press, published quarterly by Southwestern Oklahoma State University.

### AUTHORS IN THE PREMIERE EDITION

OPAL HARTSELL BROWN (Garrity), former president of the Oklahoma Writers' Federation, Inc. (OWFI), is a retired teacher who now lives in Oklahoma City and works fulltime as a freelance writer.

CLINTORA BYRNE-HARRIS, mother of 9 children, is a native of the Hinton area. After rearing a large family, she is pursuing a lifelong ambition — writing.

R. R. CHAPMAN resides in Arapaho, Oklahoma.

IDENA CLARK, president of the Norman Galaxy, a writers' organization, has had a lifelong interest in writing.

SHEILA COHLMIA is a housewife from Tyrone, Oklahoma. "Into the Wheatfields" is her first published poem.

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MARGARET FRIEDRICH, a retired English teacher from Clinton, Oklahoma, has many interests in addition to writing — including serving as president of the Custer-Dewey Retired Teachers' Association.

IMA HILL HOWARD, now deceased since 1980, lived and taught over 45 years in Terral, Oklahoma.

LADD HUDGINS is the Custer County Extension Director (County Agent).

JOAN SHADDOX ISOM of Tahlequah was winner of the OWFI Creme de la Creme Award in 1981 for her free-verse poem "Generations."

PAT LAZELLE is currently the Art Director of WESTVIEW and Commercial Art instructor at Southwestern Oklahoma State University.

DOYLE MILES is a freelance writer from Shawnee.

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PAT STURM is a high-school English teacher in Geary, Oklahoma.



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