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(an often-seen Western Oklahoma entertainment area)

All That Glitters. . .

— by Donita Lucas Shields

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Trina danced away with him, supremely happy.



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

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

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

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

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

Waiting fans anticipate volumes of

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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