



January 3, 1995

Recently it was my turn to spend an hour at the Perry middle school as a sort of teacher's aide in a program introduced last year at the suggestion of Nevilyn Throckmorton, one of the teachers at that school. The idea is to recruit a number of volunteer adults who can relieve teachers of some time-consuming but very necessary chores and thus free them up to do what they do best: teach our young people.

The program so far has been a godsend to middle school faculty members, as they will readily tell you. Some of the jobs being handled by the volunteers are such things as filing, highlighting portions of textbooks, helping individual students with their own particular problems in reading or other subjects, and things of that sort. There is virtually no end of such miscellaneous but essential tasks to be performed. Usually, all of these functions have to be handled by the teachers in addition to the classroom time required of them.

This is the second year for the program here, and it has worked quite well so far. But, as you might suspect, volunteers are in rather short supply, and that's the point of this column. They need a lot more helpers. Mrs. Throckmorton recruits organizations to furnish volunteers, and for the second consecutive year Jack Dolezal is assisting by coordinating the members of those groups who provide workers. He is assisted by Trish Bazzell and Mary Hager in that phase of the program. Mrs. Throckmorton has called on the Rotary and Lions clubs, both banks, and probably some other organizations, plus numerous individuals. One outstanding example of the latter is Elizabeth Willems, classified as a volunteer at large, who spends an hour or so several days a week helping with youngsters who have reading problems.

But more hands would certainly help out, and this is a program that you and I can handle with ease. I also can tell you after my brief stint that there is nothing at all difficult about the things asked of these volunteer aides. You won't be embarrassed by being asked to do something you can't do or don't want to do. It is, in fact, kind of fun. My task was performed in the teachers' lounge, right alongside the coffee pot and cold drink machine, and I was allowed to eavesdrop on teacher shop talk just as if I belonged there.

But Jack needs more of us to lend a hand. Maybe some clubs and other organizations have not yet been contacted, but I don't think you need to wait for a personal invitation. Take the initiative and call Jack, Mrs. Throckmorton or Beverly Coldiron in the middle school office and make it known that you'd like to be part of this program.

Satisfaction is practically guaranteed for anyone who serves in this capacity. Doesn't that sound like a good way to spend an hour? One thing for sure, you won't be tested or graded at the end of your stint. Why not give it a try?



January 5, 1995

I must admit that major league baseball has never been one of my passions. I appreciate the way some folks feel about it and I certainly have nothing against it, but it's just not something that ever stirred me greatly. I'm sorry. Call me a heretic.

Now, when the old semi-pro Perry Merchants were in their prime in the 1930s and 1940s, and we had blood-letting series with the Stillwater Boomers and Enid Eason Oilers all summer long, that was something totally different. You could really get to know most of those players, and believe me some of them took on truly heroic proportions. It was fun to attend those games on a balmy, TV less evening at Perry Stadium when the place was kind of new and very comfortable for spectators.

Those were teams you could develop a relationship with. Most of the players were local boys, although we usually had a few OSU lettermen along with some from Central State Teachers College (now University of Central Oklahoma) and others from assorted colleges throughout the state. But you also saw those guys regularly at their daytime jobs, delivering groceries or going to work in the oil field, or elsewhere, and you felt like you truly KNEW them.

Lefty Cleeton worked at the Famous Department Store, Bob Craft was at Lindeman Grocery, Hump Daniels coached at Perry high school, Otis Delaporte and Ed Stucien had various jobs here each summer, Pat Townsend drove a cab when he wasn't busy with something else, Tommy Warren had an oil field job before signing with the Brooklyn Dodgers, Tiny 'Lang was at the hardware store, Prentice (Bounce) Neal and Gene Boyett worked at different places, and the Henry boys always were gainfully employed. Those were real people. There were many others on the Perry Merchants teams in the late 1930s and early 1940s, but those were some of them.

There was a star-like aura above the ones with the fattest batting average or the pitchers with the lowest earned run average, and those statistics were printed regularly on *The Perry Daily Journal's* sport page. Jess Lee, the barber, kept meticulous records and Johnny Cable at Bush and Joe's Smoke House could quote all of them, plus the score of every big league game ever played I'm not kidding. Players of the greater eminence were gracious, but reserved. Most of them would speak to you. They were heroes of the first magnitude. I suppose some even had their own fan clubs among the hundreds of men, women and children here who followed them.

Also, the local high school baseball teams inspired loyalty, as did the American Legion teams and other age-levels when they came along with the development of kids baseball here. Even before that, we had a summer Twilight League which filled about the same needs, though on a much less-organized basis.

But back to the original point: The major league baseball strike has not been traumatic for me, personally. In the past I only became interested in the pennant races about World Series time, which of course did not occur in 1994. That did seem weird, so in that sense I missed it. The drama and excitement of the sport was always magnified at that time of year, and I have to admit that without it 1994 seemed kind of strange, almost Twilight Zone-strange.

But when I think about the million-dollar salaries earned by today's major leaguers, I am reminded of a story Dizzy Dean used to tell when he retired from baseball as a player more than 50 years ago. In a radio interview, he advised his fans that he had taken out a \$10,000 annuity, and that would assure him of a comfortable living the rest of his life. So much for Dizzy's cloudy crystal ball. Nearly broke, the great old St. Louis pitcher later became a colorful TV network personality on the "Game of the Week," and his annuity had long since been used up. Even allowing for inflation and cost of living adjustments, Dizzy Dean and his

contemporaries received only a pittance compared to today's pampered professional baseball players, and all of us are the losers.

It's just hard to feel sorry for the millionaires -- the team owners as well as the players -- now running the game. Bring back the semi-pro Perry Merchants!



January 7, 1995

Most of us know very little about the Meals on Wheels program that serves a number of families in this community. It's something you likely don't hear much about unless you are personally involved through the participation of family members or friends. The short story about it is this: It serves a major need for those who are unable to prepare a hot meal for themselves at least once a day.

In the normal course of events, the Wheatheart Nutrition Center handles all aspects of this program five days a week, all through the year. Most of us are vaguely aware of at least that much. However, it was news to me that the center receives much-needed relief and backup support during the November-December holiday season from the Perry Ministerial Alliance, and maybe you did not know that, either. It is truly a labor of love for those who take part.

This holiday assistance was started in 1993 by women of the First Christian church as a means of assuring a nutritious meal for all of the program's clients even when the Nutrition Center kitchen is closed because of the Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's holidays. After learning of this worthwhile endeavor, the Perry Ministerial Alliance asked to be included in the holiday season arrangement in 1994.

The Christian church ladies again this year prepared the food and cooked the meals, while men from several churches in the Alliance took on the responsibility of delivering them to the homes where the service was requested. Names of those to be served were provided by the Nutrition Center. The number of homes varies from day to day because not all clients are home each time. Part of the program requires that the families be contacted individually ahead of time to be sure they want a meal on a particular day.

On Thanksgiving day, 23 meals were prepared, and that same number was included on Friday, the day after Thanksgiving. For Christmas day (Sunday) and the following Monday, 19 meals were prepared and delivered. Likewise, 19 meals also were needed for New Year's Day (Sunday). A double quantity was delivered that day so no additional meals were needed for the following day, Monday.

The Thanksgiving menus consisted of turkey, dressing, mashed potatoes and gravy, green beans, fruit salad and cake. On Christmas it was turkey, dressing, mashed potatoes and gravy, corn, noodles, fruit salad and cake. The New Year's fare was turkey and ham sandwiches, macaroni and cheese, fruit salad, cake, cookies and candy. Making you hungry yet?

Women of the Christian church who worked in the kitchen were Shirley Morton, Dona Lee Powers, Bunnie Klinglesmith, Linda Scott, Maxine Schwartz and Verna Skouby. Cakes were provided by Mrs. Jim Holt and

Mrs. Gene Bay. Deliveries were made by men of the Zion Lutheran, First Baptist, Nazarene and Presbyterian churches.

Our community is blessed with an abundance of people, who go quietly about their way, doing good things for which they neither ask nor expect recognition. Their actions are motivated by a love and respect for their fellow man. It is a pleasure to make known some of these deeds in this fashion. What they do, and the reasons they do it, surely contributes to the wonderful quality of life all of us enjoy. Our heartfelt thanks to all such fine folks.



January 10, 1995

Congratulations to our newly elected district attorney, John Maddox, for his decision to keep Mark Gibson as assistant DA for Noble county. Mark is a very competent prosecutor and has done a good job during the time he has served in this capacity. He is a good citizen as well, and Perry is proud to have him as a member of this community. In addition to Mark, his assistant, Donna Yost, and long-time secretary, Darlene Meyer, also are being retained.

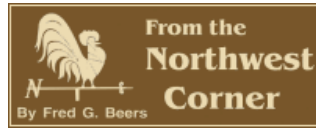
Several members of the Noble county bar, unofficially at least, also have expressed their support of Mark. He and Maddox come from different political parties, which indicates the choice was made primarily on the basis of ability. Mark ran an underfunded campaign for state attorney general last year but lost in the primary to an Oklahoma City area candidate who had much better resources to call on. We're glad our ADA is still on the job right here in Noble county, even though we also know he would have made a good attorney general.

In the recent whimsical piece about the Perry Merchants teams of the 1930s and 1940s, several individual players were mentioned. I had a call from Mrs. Edith Cunningham regarding one who was not named, Harvey Howell. He was a pitcher and first baseman on several of the Merchants teams of that era, and she hopes he will be fondly remembered by some of the old time fans. Her interest is understandable, since she was Harvey's wife back in that period, but from what I hear, he truly was an authentic star player for the local semi-pro nine for several years. Thanks, Mrs. Cunningham, for the information you provided.

Regarding the column on the old City Drug Store, I also have heard from Florence Lavington Foster. She was the wife of Woody Foster, who ran Foster's Corner Drug after the death of his father, Ralph Foster Sr. My column dealt primarily with some of the town's leading soda jerks at all four depression-era drug stores here, but Florence remembers another employee of the City Drug who made an impression on her. Her name was Nell Clift, and she was a cosmetics saleslady at that store. "I was just a little girl," Florence recalls, "but she was so pretty that I loved to go in the store just to look at her." Nell Clift had a sister, Eula, who married Frank Augustine. Thanks to Mrs. Foster for this information.

Many of us are happy to learn that there soon will be a place to deposit old engine oil legally in Perry. This has been a problem for some time. Maybe now we can start thinking of a recycling center here to collect glass and plastic bottles, tin and aluminum cans, and old newspapers. Anyone concerned about the environment now must take such things to the Stillwater recycling center. You can put them in the garbage

here and they will be picked up by our local trash haulers, but in that case they will still wind up in a landfill somewhere, and most of them are not biodegradable.



January 12, 1995

In a recent column, I wrote briefly about the traffic lights on each corner of the square. When one of those signals develops a mechanical problem, the standard procedure has been to turn it off and place a barrel with four stop signs in the middle of the intersection until replacement parts could be installed. Sometimes the lighted signals are not restored to working order for a week or longer. During that interval, motorists from all four directions are expected to come to a complete stop before proceeding. Pedestrians, on the other hand, have to guess when it is safe for them to dash from one side of the street to the other, trusting that any oncoming traffic will stop or at least yield the right of way.

Risky business? It sure is. Especially when you consider that not all drivers are willing to play by the rules; many of them barely make a rolling stop, much less a complete stop, when faced with a sign that means what it says. So pedestrians are playing a kind of Russian roulette, hoping that drivers will permit them to reach safety on the other side of the street.

The barrels also give a very distinctive look to our downtown business district, which really needs all the help it can get. Visitors can only wonder about a town that uses stop signs mounted on barrels that have seen better days. The term -"horse and buggy" comes to mind.

The city council took steps to resolve the matter last week by voting, 6-2, against installation of four-way stop signs, so the traffic lights will be retained.

But there is a difference of opinion about this. Some folks do not like waiting for what seems like an eternity for signal lights to change as they drive around the square. A different view is held by those who walk there; they much prefer the lights as a safety measure. Maybe someday someone can come up with a mutually acceptable compromise.

I did not realize so many folks are polarized on this subject, pro-lights or anti-lights. Still another sizable segment doesn't really care one way or the other. Makes you kind of glad that we don't have something serious to worry about, doesn't it?

Some folks wondered at how deftly, but erroneously, I was able to assign District Attorney John Maddox and his Noble county assistant, Mark Gibson, to opposing political parties the other day. Let me just say this: it was easy for me to do, but it may indicate the need for therapy. For the record, both are members of the Grand Old Party, a fact which was known to me but which became temporarily misfiled. Sorry.



January 13, 1995

Picture yourself at an advanced stage of life, existing on social security or welfare, living in a drafty house in the most modest circumstances, in poor health, unable to drive a car, with no family or close friends to check on you. Sounds pretty bleak, right? Friends, there are people right here in our own community to whom that is a dismal reality.

Jeanie Votaw, outreach worker at the local Wheatheart Nutrition Center, has made me aware of a problem which most of us probably did not know existed. Let me share some of her concerns with you.

In neighborhoods scattered throughout this little city are senior citizens who spend days and nights in dark rooms because they are unable to change a light bulb. Some of them go for weeks without hearing the sound of a human voice because no one comes to see them, even to say "hello."

Others cannot meet appointments with their doctors because they cannot drive a car, even if they could afford to own one. They have to rely on others for any kind of transportation; our city has no taxies or other public conveyances

Mrs. Votaw is acutely aware of these situations through her work with the Wheatheart Center. That is where hot meals are prepared for distribution around town to folks who request them. I had a column the other day telling about local churches pitching in during the recent holidays to help out in this regard, and that has led to the discovery of these other matters which really should concern all of us.

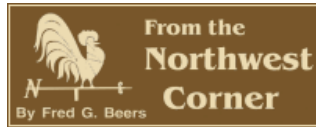
One of the most pressing needs right now is volunteers to deliver the hot meals on weekdays. The Wheatheart Center has no drivers but does have a fine new van for use in the distribution. Volunteers do the work now but there are only three of them and on some days it is hard for them to be available. Two of them drive during their own lunch hour from their place of employment.

But beyond that, Jeanie says there is a crying need for volunteers just to make friendly house calls from time to time. Changing light bulbs, furnishing a ride to the doctor's office, and numerous other things.

She would like to see a group of concerned Perryans step forward to work in such a program. Someone would be needed to serve as a coordinator, matching up the volunteers with those needing their assistance. This is beyond the scope of the program in which Jeanie functions, but the Wheatheart van could be used. "They have told us to make it available for things other than delivery of meals," she says.

The name of the food service program has been changed locally from "Meals on Wheels" to "Wheatheart Home Delivery," and because of that the rules are less strict than they were. Formerly a flat \$2.50 fee was charged for each meal. Now a contribution of \$1.25 is asked and arrangements can be made if that is a hardship. Who knows how many of our senior citizens have been spared illnesses due to malnutrition because of this program?

But apart from the basic human need for sustenance through nourishing meals there is also a tragic shortage of old-fashioned neighborliness extending to those who don't necessarily live next door to us. There is an opportunity here for some organization or group of individuals to become a significant force for good. If you are so inclined, contact Jeanie Votaw at the Wheatheart Center, telephone 336-3467, before 1 p.m.; or at her home, 336-3050, after hours. Give the idea some serious thought, and all of us will be richer for the experience.



January 17, 1995

Mrs. Robert Sanders, a relative newcomer to our fair city, is one of the most enthusiastic members of the Perry Development Coalition's Tourism Committee. Mr. and Mrs. Sanders moved here about 18 months ago after retiring from their farm near Joplin, Mo. Three of their children live in Edmond and another lives in Catoosa, in the Tulsa area. The Sanders' wanted to live nearer their offspring, so they began a systematic search for just the right place. Why did they choose our town? "We were just so impressed with everyone's friendliness here, and we especially noticed how courteous the teen-agers are," she says. The proximity to Edmond and Tulsa was just right so they settled here, and they couldn't be happier. Although Perry is still new to them, Mrs. Sanders says she feels like she's come back home. She was reared in the Wichita area, about 100 miles from here.

At a meeting of the Tourism Committee the other night, Mrs. Sanders listened with interest to plans for relocating the old Episcopal church building. Since being moved from the original site near Seventh and Grove, the historic building has been resting temporarily on blocks at Sixth and Fir while awaiting a permanent location. In an offhand remark, Mrs. Sanders described the historic old building as "the church-on-a-perch," and other committee members liked the term so well that it stuck. At least until the old church is placed on a permanent location someday.

Another project being kicked around by the Tourism Committee is a plan to lure sizable numbers of motorists off I-35 highway long enough to swing through Perry. Strategically placed billboards near both the north and south Perry access roads would invite tourists and others to "Make the Perry Loop." Northbound motorists would exit on U.S. 64, proceed east past the Department of Transportation division headquarters, into the downtown area for a trip around the square, then to depart on Fir past the Ditch Witch factory to get back onto I-35. The route would be reversed for southbound traffic./p>

Brochures will be needed for those who choose to "make the loop," with a schematic map of the city showing places of interest to check out while here. These would include historic business buildings and residences, the Perry Carnegie library, YMCA, our first-class hospital, schools, restaurants, motels, the beautiful courthouse square with its "Hopes and Dreams" Centennial statue, antique and crafts centers, and the many other unique things to see.

Committee members concluded that the loop itself is already here, but we have to devise a means of calling it to the attention of the thousands of motorists who travel along I-35. The plan is still in the embryonic stage, but it could be the fast building block in the foundation of a badly needed strategy to capture tourist interest in our town.

Still another matter under consideration is the creation of a "mini-park" in the downtown area where visitors could pause for a few moments to contemplate their next move, or just to rest and take a brief break. An important part of this would be some kind of public rest rooms, perhaps self-cleaning units, to add to the refreshing aspects of the stop. Most American cities are woefully short of good, clean public rest rooms, and it would be nice if Perry could come up with some thing of this sort.

David Dolezal, the newly elected county assessor, is chairman of the Tourism Committee, working closely with the co-directors of the Perry Development Coalition, Betty Warner and Karen Wilcox. The committee welcomes ideas and assistance from anyone interested in this type of community planning, so give them your comments. The Coalition office is in the Foucart building on the east side of the square, sharing space with the Chamber of Commerce.



January 19, 1995

There was a note in the paper the other day about the start of the annual membership drive by Stagecoach Community Theatre. This is something very dear to my heart, and I can only hope that many of you enjoy it, too. Stagecoach needs our support.

Laura and I were fortunate enough to have been present one winter night in 1975 when a group of some 30 Perry area people got together in the Presbyterian fellowship hall to meet with a lady from Oklahoma State University, Jeanne Adams Wray. Mrs. Wray was one of the founders of the Oklahoma Community Theatre Association and she also was a leader in the national organization, the American Community Theatre Association.

As a result of that one evening here, she can also claim at least partial credit for organizing Stagecoach Community Theatre. Because of her urging us on, we decided that very night not only to organize a local theatre group but we scheduled our first play, a modest little undertaking known as "Oklahoma!", the megahit by Rodgers and Hammerstein. Once we decided to form an association, Ms. Wray said she just happened to have part of the score for that wonderful musical in her purse. We assembled around the piano, sang some of those memorable songs - "Surrey With the Fringe on Top," "People Will Say We're in Love," "Oh What a Beautiful Mornin'" and of course the title tune. How could we possibly NOT want to do the play after that?

Our high school drama coach, Steve Smallwood, agreed to direct, and things just started falling in place. Steve helped in overseeing additional organizational details, including the formal incorporating process. John and Carolyn McLemore, Don and Judy Hamden and Bill and Melinda Corporon, the people who set up that first meeting, pitched in along with all the other charter members and soon there were many more wanting to be involved. You already know that our "Oklahoma!" opened on a stormy night when tornadoes were aloft, and the first night audience was sent home early because of a power failure in most of the city. Two more performances were scheduled and were extremely well received.

At that time Perry also had an Arts & Humanities Association, which sponsored several cultural attractions, including concerts by the Oklahoma City Symphony; and the Cherokee Strip Arts Company, formed by local artists and their patrons to produce exhibits and craft shows. Each of those groups had a loyal core of members, as did Stagecoach. In due time the three of them came together under an umbrella organization called the Perry Arts Council. One of the purposes was to consolidate the three membership drives and to coordinate activities to prevent overlapping their events.

This worked well for a few years, but first the Arts & Humanities Association and then the Cherokee Strip Arts Company decided to disband, leaving Stagecoach as the lone survivor. Today the theatre group has a decent building, the old highway department headquarters on south Seventh street, where most of its productions can be staged, and they have drawn up formal plans for renovation of the building when finances permit.

The Perry theatre group has earned recognition in the state, and Bob Herod, now of Tulsa, a former president of Stagecoach, is currently president of the Oklahoma Community Theatre Association. Steve Smallwood, now teaching at Broken Bow, is a past president of OCTA. Our local organization has uncovered some great talent through the years in its musical and dramatic undertakings./p>

Most of the financing for Stagecoach is derived from its annual membership drive, which is now underway. Several corporate sponsors contribute various amounts and ticket sales for each offering also contribute to keep the thing afloat. But now is the time for all of us to enroll as members of our local community theatre and let them know we appreciate the wholesome entertainment they provide for us.

This is the 20th anniversary year of the founding of Stagecoach and there will never be a better time to show how much we enjoy their efforts. Use one of the membership forms appearing in *The Journal* for that purpose, or if you receive one in the mail fill it out and return it promptly to R O. Box 82, Perry, OK 73077, and congratulate yourself for your role in assuring another season of quality theatrical productions from Stagecoach Community Theatre.



January 21, 1995

This is an update on last week's column about our senior citizens' need for help. So far, the Wheatheart Nutrition Center has received many additional requests for meals, but only one new volunteer to deliver them. I am a little surprised, but maybe it's just going to take time for more folks to react to this problem

You'll recall that Jeanie Votaw, outreach worker at the center, made it known in this space that a serious need exists for people to deliver the hot meals that are prepared each weekday at Wheatheart for qualified residents of our community. Since then she has had many calls from families and individuals asking to be added to the program, and that just intensifies the need for more people to deliver the food.

Three overworked volunteers now distribute the meals but more like them are being sought to share in this humanitarian effort. It does not take a lot of time, scheduling of days can be worked out to suit anyone's availability, and the center's van can be used as the delivery vehicle. Meals are prepared by the center and detailed instructions for delivery are provided by Mrs. Votaw. It is so simple really. All that's needed is a few willing workers.

Since the center has taken over the former Meals on Wheels program, a 50 percent price reduction has become possible. But each applicant for this service must meet certain criteria. Not everyone can qualify for

the program; close scrutiny is required to make sure there is no misapplication of funds, no waste and no fraud. It is, as you might imagine, a delicate but necessary job.

Now, there are still other cases involving some of the older or more incapacitated residents of this community, and help is also needed for them. Most of that aspect involves such simple things as calling on them once in a while to make sure they're all right, but they also need help with chores that seem routine to us but are impossible for them to carry out because of physical disabilities.

This is a legitimate problem in our town, but things like this have been worked out before and this one can, too. All it takes is a few willing members of church and fraternal organizations, service clubs and just plain unaffiliated folks who are willing to invest a few hours to help some of those in our community who have no one else to turn to.

The organization you belong to may be willing to consider stepping into lend a hand, but it may be up to you to bring the matter to their attention. Or you can act on your own. Just pick up the phone and call Jeanie Votaw at the center, 336-3467, or at her home, 336-3050, after 1 p.m. weekdays. A lot of voiceless people in this community will appreciate it.



January 24, 1995

Random thoughts while rummaging through a growing pile of notes atop my desk....

Congratulations to our city street department for taking advantage of the recent unseasonable warm weather and attacking some of those fearsome potholes around town. Among the worst of them were two huge ones on Eleventh street, just north of North Brookwood. They were nearly big enough to hold a Volkswagen, some say. But now they are neatly leveled travel surfaces with asphalt covering and you can drive over them without fear of breaking an axle or losing a muffler.

Also, thanks to the Perry Business Women's club and the park department for continuing work on Brookwood Park in north-central Perry. This neat little area has been adopted by the business women as a continuing project. Thus far they have purchased a teeter-totter, swing set and basketball backboard, plus two sturdy concrete and wood benches, and these things have made the park a more enjoyable place for children as well as adults.

The new playground equipment was made locally by Art Wise in the shop at his home on West Fir, and the benches were purchased from Perry Stone & Statuary on East Fir. Jim Branscum is the owner and artisan there, and he installed the new benches. Another area has been cleared by city park department workers on the same park to make way for a new sand box, in a shaded area near one of the benches. This small park is not far from our house and I know our grandchildren who visit here from Kansas City will be thrilled to see the work that's been going on there. Not to mention the Perry youngsters who enjoy that location on a regular basis.

Back to potholes for just a moment. A chronic problem seems to exist on the west side of the elementary school property in the vicinity of the city's water storage tank. Apparently a culvert was crushed there some time ago and drainage has been impeded. As a result, a large mudhole stands near the area where parents pick up their children after school. Is there some way that could be fixed?

Another drug store that could have been included in my recent column about the depression era was one operated by the Laird brothers, Paul and Carl, on the east side of the square. It was in the middle of the block, south of the Roxy Theatre, near Henry Loeffelholz' barber shop and Billy Reckert's Palace Club. I didn't mention it in my original reflections on this subject the other day because it came and went in a relatively short span, whereas the others were here for a much longer period of time.

Nevertheless, the Laird Drug Store did open here in the mid-1930s, during the depression, and I remember it well. Carl Laird once was a pharmacist at my dad's store, the City Drug. After Carl and Paul closed their own store, Carl was employed at Brownie Drug and Paul took a position with the state highway department.

The Laird family played an important part in the early development of Perry but none of them live here now. Beside Paul and Carl, there were three Laird sisters, Mrs. LeOhea Donley, Mrs. Kathryn McQuiston and Mrs. Marjorie Bowles. Al, the brothers and sisters are now deceased. Their parents, Mr. and Mrs. S. E. Laird, were prominent Noble county citizens and were highly regarded in the early days.

Gov. Keating is getting a lot of pats on the back for his selection of Wes Watkins to head up the state's new international trade program. The former sixth district congressman ran for governor himself as an independent candidate last fall, and even though he finished third in a three-way race he was impressive. In his new role as head of the state's international trade effort he just might seek some advice from his son, Wade, a Perry resident who is in the Ditch Witch international marketing department. He calls regularly on dealers and equipment users in the Far East.

Wade and his new bride, the former Diana Morris, daughter of Roy and Ann Morris, are getting settled in their home here after their marriage last month. Many Perry people got acquainted with the Watkins family during the campaign last year, and I will have to say that all of those that I have met are mighty fine people. So here's another pat on the back, Gov. Keating. You made a good choice.p>

My friend, Brian Anderson, is leaving Perry to return to his hometown, Guymon, as an officer in a bank trust department there. Just as I was getting his name straight, too. Well, Guymon is one of the state's hottest economic spots right now and we wish Brian well in his new career.

Attorney Royce Hobbs has moved his law office from the old Masonic building to the west side of the square, 319 Seventh street, where Brian's Edward D. Jones offices were located until he moved to the Executive Suites building on the north side of the square. No word yet on who will take over the Jones accounts here.



January 26, 1995

No doubt many of you are enjoying good books received from thoughtful friends or family members as Christmas gifts. Books are among the things we have in mind when discussing gifts that keep on giving. Once they've been read, good books become lasting friends, something to enjoy long after the initial reading. Just looking at them or handling them rekindles the pleasure experienced in that first encounter, which in itself may have been spread over a prolonged segment of time. There is nothing quite like good book.

If you are looking for some interesting reading matter to curl up with on these winter evenings, spend a little time browsing through the one-dollar book offerings at our own Perry Carnegie Library. Karen Bigbee, librarian, tells me that the books consigned to that area are not just worn-out copies, not poorly written, not white elephants the library wants to get rid of. Most of them are in good to excellent condition and the quality of their content is usually high.

They wind up on the one-dollar stack largely because requests for them by patrons have dwindled to a certain critical level, so they are removed to make room for new titles. The one-dollar table is a great place to acquire some terrific bargains in good reading. New additions join the collection regularly, so you need to check out the possibilities each time you visit the library. Or, of course, it would be worth your time just to make a special trip there for that purpose. You might also come across something intriguing on the regular shelves. We really have an exceptionally fine library, you know.

Perhaps I should mention two books that you might find of special interest. The more recent of the two is "Jaybird: Celebrating the Life of Jay C. Jones." The subject of this is a young man who achieved four years of 4.0-grades at Oklahoma State University, was named outstanding industrial engineering student in North America and OSU's outstanding male graduate. At 27, he was married, the father of a young son, and appeared destined for a great career in construction and insurance. Then he learned he had leukemia, and his life was cut tragically short.

His story, as told by author Doris Dellinger of Stillwater, is an inspiration to all who read it. While Jay was a student at OSU, beginning in 1974, he was a friend and an associate of several Noble county young people, whose names are included in the book. Among them are Kendall Roth and Kathy Beers of Perry and Dru Ann McCluskey of Billings. Reference also is made to Ed Malzahn and the Perry Ditch Witch factory. The book was published by Oklahoma Bylines, Inc., of Stillwater, and was printed by the OSU Press.

The other that I want to mention is "Abandoned: A Nostalgic Look at Rural America," consisting primarily of photographs by William D. Adams, whose mother is Margie Adams Anderson of Stillwater, formerly of Perry. Adams took his first photograph of an abandoned farm house in 1967, when such sites were fairly common. Since then he has photographed more abandoned farm houses, barns, schools, churches and other rural areas than he can remember.

Besides Adams' close Perry connection, the thing that makes this book particularly interesting to all of us is the fact that many of his photographs focus on Noble county structures. His text contains references to a number of our friends and neighbors. You can figure out who most of them are, even though only first names are used for the most part. The photos are reproduced with great care on fine quality paper and a sepia tone enhances the old-timey look. This would make a fine coffee table book for a conversation starter. The book was published by TG Press, P.O. Box 9005, Waco, Texas 76714. It was printed in Japan by Dai Nippon Printing Co., Ltd. At the time of original publication in 1989, Adams and his wife, Debbi, lived in suburban Houston.

It may take a little hunting to find either book, but be assured that they are both worth the trouble. Here's wishing you good luck and good reading.



January 28, 1995

It is interesting to note that Oklahoma City and Perry have very similar goals regarding their downtown business districts, although they are approaching them in vastly different ways. Both are trying to resuscitate their downtown shopping areas. Of course, the much bigger capital city operates on a grander scale than we do in our humble little town. Their budget is funded by a \$238 million kitty derived from a five-year, one-cent sales tax voted by Oklahoma City residents in 1993. Perry has a motel tax, paid primarily by tourists passing through, which helps the Perry Development Coalition, but most of the work is done by unpaid volunteers with little or no money to spend. Remember that difference, because you and I contribute to Oklahoma City's fund each time we purchase something there.

But this is not intended to be bitter or critical of Oklahoma City. It is quite true that local shoppers often are forced to go there by default simply because local merchants do not provide all goods and service required here. As merchants here and in other small towns have disappeared, shoppers have had to seek merchandise in the bigger cities. The trend toward regional shopping centers has been growing for several decades. Some small towns have been devastated far worse than we have.

Oklahoma City, meanwhile, lost its primary downtown shopping area years ago when it was demolished in what seemed to be badly handled, incomplete urban renewal program. The city's finest shops, department stores and movie theaters were wiped out by wrecking crews. Modern new structures were supposed to replace all that, but it never happened.

Many of us can remember the crowds on Oklahoma City's Main street, Broadway, Park avenue, Sheridan and numerous side streets as we trudged from Rothschild's, Halliburton's, Kerr's and John A. Brown Co. department stores, all now gone from the landscape; or perhaps from a first-run movie at the elegant Criterion theater, on the way to Katz or Veazey's drug store for a Coke. Perhaps later a dinner at Beverly's or Anna-Maude's, or dancing at the Black Hotel or the Persian Room at the Skirvin Tower, or maybe even a weekend luxuriating at the Biltmore Hotel. Pedestrians had to dodge trolley cars or, later, metropolitan buses. And if you couldn't find a parking meter at the curb near the store you wanted to visit, parking garages had plenty of levels for your use, even if that meant walking a few more yards to reach your destination. Most stores validated parking tickets. All of that is but a misty dream now.

Two years ago Oklahoma City devised an ambitious restructuring plan to recapture some of that magic. The plan, called Metropolitan Area Projects, or MAPS for short, is totally funded by the sales tax. It will include nine entertainment and cultural sites to make Oklahoma City a major tourist destination. Major features will be a new baseball stadium in the downtown area, expanded convention and cultural facilities, and a riverwalk. All of this is expected to jump-start private investments.

The program has inspired renewed intensity in the restoration of Bricktown, just east of what used to be Oklahoma City's primary shopping area. Malls have created new retail hubs in scattered locations throughout the city, and that much probably will not change. But in Bricktown, things are humming.

Historic street lamps dot the sidewalks in Bricktown, and they are similar to the ones ready for installation in downtown Perry at some future date. Lack of parking is a problem in Bricktown and may be here one day, but it is not now a major concern. Antique shops, art galleries and souvenir stores are doing a booming business now in Bricktown, and Perry also can provide some of those services to satisfy tourists' appetite for such things.

The Perry Development Coalition basically is composed of local people who are willing to roll up their sleeves to make Perry a more beautiful city, improve its numerous existing features, urge new businesses to locate here, assist those already here, and in general make our little city an even finer place to live.

There may come a time when we'll need to provide a few dollars for some of these things, just as Oklahoma City had to do. Our budgets will be far more modest, but you and I will have to foot the bill, whatever it is. If a need for that can be realistically demonstrated at some point in the future, Perry citizens will be behind it the way we always rally to the support of worthy causes.

Just remember what your sales tax dollars are doing to help Oklahoma City next time you're down there on a shopping spree, and make a silent pledge to be as generous in case the Perry Development Coalition comes calling one day in the future.



January 31, 1995

Charles Kemnitz is now into his second year on the faculty of Pennsylvania College of Technology in Williamsport, PA. He used to be a technical writer here in Perry for the Charles Machine Works, Inc., and the two of us were colleagues there for several years. I also knew Charles' father, George Kemnitz Jr., when George and I were students at the Perry elementary school years ago. George recently died after a prolonged illness.

Charles was home for his father's funeral and during the brief time we had to visit, he mentioned that he has finally completed a collection of essays which he began while still living in Perry. I had read one or two of the earlier essays, so he sent me a copy of the manuscript for the entire collection. The title is "Hand Me Down the Land," and when it is published in book form you really must try to buy a copy.

In general, the essays tell the story of the Kemnitz family and they joined the early settlers in the Perry area. They were pioneers in the purest sense, cowboys, farmers, adventurers and home builders. In many ways they typify the rugged individuals who came here around the time of the Cherokee Strip opening. Charles' storytelling technique mixes fiction and non-fiction as a means of spinning an interesting yarn. Many people are identified by their real names, others are given fictitious names but you will quickly recognize some of them.

just the same. It is a literary device known as "creative non-fiction" which is becoming more popular in this age.

The title, "Hand Me Down the Land," relates to the passage of land from generation to generation through inheritance, and the love that so many people have for the soil, especially ancestral soil. Charles weaves the pieces together in an engrossing style. It is far more than a history of the Kemnitz family, interesting as that subject is all by itself.

Some of the essays already have been published as separate articles. One of them, "Strong as an Ox," will be appearing in the *Small Farmer's Journal*; "Plain Ignorance" and "Some Dam Ecology" have been purchased by Oklahoma Today magazine. "Plain Geometry" was published in the fall 1994 issue of Cimarron Review, and Phoenix has taken the title essay, "Hand Me Down the Land."

I learned to appreciate Charles' writing gift when we were co-laborers at the Ditch Witch plant here, but previewing this collection has given me a new awareness of his artistry. He also is a published poet and his prose flows with the same grace and fluidity of poetry. I will keep you posted on the progress of this work as it goes through the various steps leading to publication. You'll find it well worth your while when it is finally available.