



December 2, 1995

Let me reassure those who fear the new 70 mph speed limit will increase the number of accidents on our highways. Motorists have been going that fast on I-35 between Perry and Oklahoma City for several years, so changing the legal limit won't require much of an adjustment for them. Some may have to slow down from 75 or 80, if the highway patrol makes good on its threat to crack down, but for the most part driving at 70 mph won't be anything new for most of them. The collision rate should not be affected.

I was privileged to sit in on a district meeting of the Christian Men's Fellowship the other night at our Perry Christian church. After a great spaghetti dinner, the men kicked things off with group singing led by Ray Nimmo with Ashley Alexander performing at the keyboard. Ashley's son, Richie, helped entertain the group before dinner. There's nothing so inspiring as a group of men singing hymns with gusto. I come from the Presbyterian discipline where it's kind of understood that you don't sing above sotto voce in church, so this was a wonderfully refreshing experience. More than 70 men from throughout the area took part.

After the meeting I had a chance to visit with a couple of former Perrys, Gene Burchardt of Crescent and Jay Hesser of Stillwater. Jay, our former Noble county farm agent, was sweating out the birth of another great-grandchild in Dallas. He stays in close contact with several folks in and around Perry. He and Gene both keep up with Perry by subscribing to *The Perry Daily Journal*. Gene's wife, Lorene, was head of the vocal music department in the Perry school system before she retired several years ago. She worked hard at that job and was able to develop a fine program while here.

Charles Baker, the former pastor of University Baptist church in Stillwater, was guest speaker. He now is a well traveled motivational speaker and business consultant working out of Tulsa. He mentioned that he is now a member of the First United Methodist church in Tulsa. "I found that dry cleaning was cheaper," he said. Charles was a popular pastor while at University Baptist church, and many Perry young people from a mixture of denominations worshiped at his church while they were students at OSU. Mr. Baker admonished the men to share their faith with their children and in particular to tell them their own story of finding Christ. He is an excellent speaker, or story teller, as he likes to call himself.

Some other folks have confirmed my recollection of Malloch's Book Store and its location on the west side of the square. Brace Smith says he remembers as a young boy in 1923 hitching his pony to a rail where the old Masonic Temple now stands, at the northwest corner of the square, and then going into Malloch's store next door, where Perry Floral & Gifts Plus is now located. Leroy Kelley also remembers the Malloch store on the west side. I'm still trying to pin down the Barton Book Store location. Thus far, everything indicates Barton's was Malloch's predecessor on the west side.

A note from Warrenne Kennedy Harris in Canoga Park, Calif., adds some more information about the history of Perry high school pep songs and fight songs. Warrenne wrote the words and music to the official PHS song, "Dear Old Perry High," in 1935, at the request of Glenn Yahn. "Without Glenn," she relates, "there probably wouldn't have been 'Dear Old Perry High.' I remember the night Glenn drove to Stillwater to see me and asked me to write a song for our school. I was surprised, but I said I'd do it. He wants a song -- I'll write one. So I went upstairs to my room and sat at my desk and I wrote it all before bedtime! It was introduced the next Friday night at a pep rally in the auditorium. We were fortunate to have Prof. Leopold Radgowsky, who made the arrangement for the band."

Warrenne adds this bit of lore: "You mentioned a song (the Notre Dame fight song) that Perry used to use. I go back farther. The song I first remember was 'Dear Perry-O,' to the tune of 'Sweet Adeline.' I heard it first when I was in school at Perry's

'Old Central.'" Warene hopes to visit home folks here next September at the Cherokee Strip celebration. We ought to serenade her with "Dear Old Perry High" when she's here. It's a great school song.



December 5, 1995

The fates conspired last week to leave me with very perceptible traces of egg on my face. One I take responsibility for, but not the other. Please indulge me as I explain.

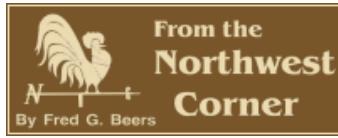
The book signing party arranged for me last Friday at the Chamber of Commerce office was a bit of an embarrassment because the shipment of my new booklet, "Perry Tales," did not arrive here by express delivery as promised. They were due here at 10:30 that morning from Denver, but it didn't happen. Many of you were at the Chamber of Commerce between 2 and 4 p.m., the designated hours, and I appreciate your patience and understanding. All orders received then will be promptly filled, along with the complimentary bonus provided by the publisher's representative who came here to apologize for the foulup. Thank you for coming, and thanks to the Chamber of Commerce for arranging the party. We had fun even without the book, didn't we? Now that the stress of the moment has passed, I can chalk it up to experience.

The other matter concerns the recent appeals in this column for information about the location of Barton's Book Store in the early days of this community. Georgia Curtis provides the answer to that, and guess where she found it? A photo on page 113 of my book, "The First Generation," clearly shows Barton's in 1912 on the north side of the square in the building next door west of Alan Odgers' new Antiques on the Square mini-mall. Barton's was just two doors east of a popular chili parlor operated by my grandparents, Alfred and Margaret Bucklin. The photo graphically shows damage left by the severe wind storm, probably a tornado, which ripped through Perry on the afternoon of April 20, 1912. Yup, I should have known that, but thanks to Georgia for calling it to my attention.

The Christmas parade and foodcourt in downtown Perry last Friday night were immensely popular. Unseasonably balmy weather helped draw hundreds of people of all ages to streets lining the square. We oohed and aahed as the beautiful light display was turned on at about 5:30 p.m. The parade, with the largest number of units ever, started winding around the square at 6:30 to the delight of children and adults, producing applause for each entry. Then at 6:45 the foodcourt officially opened and a steady stream of diners happily wandered through the courthouse corridors until the 8 p.m. closing.

Many of our local food service people offered a wide variety of menu items on the first floor. The second and third floors were given over to a chocoholic's dream come true -- dish after dish of heavenly dessert items, all of them chocolate-based. What a night! The foodcourt was a new idea introduced this year, but its success Friday night should guarantee that it will be even bigger and better in the future. Thanks to the Perry Main Street group for that innovation, and to the Chamber of Commerce for all the other fun events that evening.

I can't let this column end without a word of sympathy to Cheryle Leach, the Chamber's executive director. We all know her as an upbeat, smiling pillar of the community, but the tragedy that visited her family last week staggers all of us. Love and prayers go out to Cheryle and her family.



December 7, 1995

December 7th, 1941. Reading that date or saying it aloud still calls up images of treachery and the specter of a national nightmare. On that sunny morning, a major part of America's military might was destroyed when Japanese forces launched a surprise attack on the island of Oahu in the unsuspecting territory of Hawaii.

The news shattered a beautiful Sunday afternoon in Perry. Temperatures were approaching the 60s. Worship services had just concluded at most city churches when the radio network news reporters began relaying word of the attack with its devastating results. Pearl Harbor was mortally wounded. Voices on the airwaves were tinged with grave concern as they read successive bulletins to anxious listeners throughout the U.S.

Along with some friends from the Presbyterian church, I had stopped by Brownie's Drug Store on the west side of the square for a quick Coke before going home for the standard Sunday roast beef dinner. On the car radio, word of the assault crackled in the crisp, clear, autumn air of that unseasonably mild December afternoon. Those of us in the car were teenagers but I think we understood most of the implications of that bloody event.

Earlier that spring I had become a reporter for *The Perry Daily Journal*. Though young and very green, I realized that the attack meant my country was going to war, and that was by far the biggest news event of my brief career. In those days before television, people relied on their daily newspapers for details and commentary on every major happening, and I knew *The Journal* would have to put out an "extra" edition that Sunday afternoon to service readers in this area. Our regular publication schedule was Monday through Friday afternoon and mid-day on Saturday, just as it is now. Normally there was no Sunday edition of *The Journal*, but on that fateful Sunday afternoon there were two editions.

Checking in at home before going to *The Journal* to help with the anticipated extra, I discovered my mother was busy in the kitchen and had not yet heard the news. I told her what I had just been hearing and we switched on the radio. It was especially stressful for mother because my sister, Jeanice, was on the island of Oahu with her husband, 1st Lt. Sydney L. Wade, who was stationed with the Army at Schofield Barracks, one of the prime targets of the Japanese warplanes. Jeanice and Syd's four-year-old daughter, Sydney Jean, also was there. Of course at that early stage of the crisis we had no word on their safety or if they were in peril. Thousands of families throughout this country shared the same anxieties. The Wade family escaped harm in the attack, but we did not know that until the next day.

After settling things down at home I walked the block and a half distance from our house to *The Journal* office and reported for duty. W. K. Leatherock, editor and publisher, did not normally involve himself in the daily details of putting out a newspaper, but on this momentous day he was in command. Francis Thetford, managing editor, was my boss. He was preoccupied transcribing stories received from United Press via a voice link. A headset was clamped to his ears for that purpose but a steady stream of curious visitors surged in and out of the small newsroom Francis and I occupied, and he had to admonish them several times to be quiet while he flailed away at a manual typewriter keyboard as the steady, grim succession of war news reached his headset.

Jane Schneider, our newly arrived women's editor from the Oklahoma A.&M. College school of journalism, was on hand. Most of the crew arrived without having to be summoned. Printers in the mechanical department were killing out the front page from Saturday's paper in preparation for the first extra. Most of the inside pages from Saturday were undisturbed except where some portions had to be removed to make way for spillover from the front page. Charlie Armstrong was the

chief makeup man. Harry Jones was mechanical superintendent. Peb Gaskill headed the Linotype crew. Circulation manager Merl Edwards was notifying *Journal* carrier-salesmen to prepare for home deliveries.

Mr. Leatherrock and Francis assigned me to do a story about local men stationed in Hawaii, and I began trying to track down names. Several quickly came to mind and I checked with their family members by telephone. Besides the Wades, I came up with Lambert Johnson, 21, son of Mr. and Mrs. From Johnson, a third class Navy petty officer; Warren Ryan, 20, son of Mr. and Mrs. Paul V Ryan, a sailor aboard the USS Oregon; Elza Fitzhugh, 25, son of Mr. and Mrs. Earl Fitzhugh, a Field Artillery corporal; Jack Powers, 23, son of Mr. and Mrs. W. S. Powers, a Navy petty officer at Pearl Harbor; and Paul Hicks, 22, son of Mr. and Mrs. S. S. Hicks, a first class seaman aboard the USS Portland. All of them came through the bombing without injury.

George Butler, a clerk at the post office and a veteran of the first World War, was one of those hanging around the newsroom to keep track of developments. His son, George Jr., was in the Army Air corps and would later perish in the Pacific. George Sr. soon would offer himself for the Navy Seabees. James G. Heck, manager of Houston-McCune Lumber, Co. and also a World War I vet, came in to listen to the news. He and Mr. Leatherrock had served together in France and both had been wounded. Journal employees and visitors alike, wore solemn expressions and conversations were mostly in subdued tones.

The first Sunday afternoon extra had a banner headline in two-inch bold capital letters stretched across the front page: "JAPAN ATTACKS U.S. BASES." Beneath it was a smaller line: "Bombers Blast Manila, Pearl Harbor." UP stories describing the attack, its devastation and the reaction of President Roosevelt, congressional leaders and military authorities occupied most of the front page. My piece about local men in Hawaii had a three column head at the bottom of the page. The day's second extra, printed only a few hours after the first, contained an update on our heavy, tragic casualties.

Some of the local stories from Saturday's edition showed the degree of tranquility existing here and across the U.S. on the day before the attack. Among them was an item from Marsh Woodruff, Chamber of Commerce secretary, announcing that the C-C had raised a record amount of \$1,855.50 in its annual fund drive. Another reported that the Agricultural Administration Agency (AAA) office was moving from the post office basement to the Hall building just north of the Perry Theater on Sixth street. J. D. Nelson was county administrative officer.

The next day, Dec. 8, 1941, The Journal's heavy black banner again was in two-inch bold type and announced: "U.S. AT WAR." It also contained the full text of President Roosevelt's "day of infamy" address to Congress, when the declaration of war was formally adopted.

In a matter of months I was a member of the Army of the United States, along with hundreds of thousands of other young men. For all of us, and for this country as a whole, it was a loss of innocence. We would never again see the world as it had been before that sunny Sunday, Dec. 7, 1941.



December 9, 1995

During the last few days, many of you have been good enough to ask if my new booklet, "Perry Tales," has been delivered. You know the shipment was delayed, but I am happy to report the complete order has now been received. Copies are

available at Foster's Corner Drug, Chris' Pharmacy, First Bank, Exchange Bank, the Chamber of Commerce and *The Perry Daily Journal*. Thanks for asking. The early response has been fantastic.

Now is a good time to be thinking about books, all kinds of books (not just mine), either as a gift or perhaps for your own library. I've come across a couple of possibilities lately that merit consideration.

The "Oklahoma almanac," published by the Oklahoma Department of Libraries, is out with an updated version that is filled to the brim with interesting and valuable information about our state. This book is considered Oklahoma's official information source. It has been published in odd-numbered years since statehood, making the current edition the 45th. Cost of the 928-page volume is \$13, plus \$2 for shipping.

The Almanac, formerly called "Directory of Oklahoma," has been expanded in recent years to include current and historical information about state, federal, county and municipal governments, information about natural phenomena, a comprehensive listing of state agencies, boards and commissions, as well as museums, historical societies, institutions of higher learning, election returns and information about commerce, agriculture, tourism and other activity in the state.

Can you answer these questions? Who served as Oklahoma Territory's third governor? What is the average per capita income in Noble county? What is the population of Perry? Which county is Oklahoma's largest geographically? What is the recipe for a comet? What is Oklahoma's official furbearer? Answers to these and thousands of other questions are in the Almanac.

It may not be the book you'd curl up with on a winter night for a good read, but it will help you learn more about the makeup and character of this great state. For information, contact Ann Hamilton, editor, at the Oklahoma Department of Libraries, 200 NE 18, Oklahoma City, OK 73105; or call 1-800-522-8116.

The other book also has an Oklahoma focus and, like the Almanac, it is packed with information all of us should have. The title is simple "The Story of Oklahoma," and it is a history textbook used in many state schools. The authors are W. David Baird and Danney Goble, two writers with impeccable credentials as historians.

A copy of this book was added to the Perry Carnegie Library earlier this year by the Noble county chapter of the Cherokee Strip Historical Society in memory of the late James O. Morbley, a past president of the chapter. Again, this is not a novel and certainly it is not fiction, but it contains an organized, well-illustrated story of this state dating back to the dawn of history. Its 511 pages include a comprehensive index, suggestions for further reading, and notes about traditional pageants and celebrations where Oklahoma history is brought to life.

You might check the library's copy for a better idea of this book, then visit your favorite book store and purchase a copy. The Almanac and this book should be in every home in this state.



December 12, 1995

Several years ago, a community choir composed of voices from churches of the Ministerial Alliance used to delight local audiences with an annual Christmas concert, always climaxed by the Hallelujah chorus from Handel's magnificent "The Messiah." I hate to suggest this because our city already is loaded with so many holiday treats, but I wish we could revive

that one. As I recall, each of the participating churches would sing one or two numbers, but the benediction came with the massed choir singing the great chorus and the public was free to join in. Accompaniment was furnished by members of the Perry high school band, directed then by Bill Rotter. It was always a stirring moment and a fine way to celebrate the season. Wish we could do something like that again.

Also on my Christmas wish list are left turn only traffic signals for several intersections around town, most notably at Seventh and Fir. Traffic is perhaps heavier there than at any other street crossing in Perry, and the east-west flow dominates in the early morning hours, at noon and in the late afternoon. Sometimes it is very difficult for north-south vehicles to make a left turn because of the heavy through traffic. A lane is provided for left turns but motorists have to wait for a clear path to get through the intersection safely, and sometimes that just can't be done in the time provided. A short left turn only light would help the situation. Fifteenth and Fir also badly needs such a signal, in my estimation.

Kelley Kueck's new women's apparel store on the south side is now officially open and it is a nice addition to our downtown square. The decor is tasteful, attractive and features kelly green highlights, very appropriately.

On the north side of the square, Bob Kasper's suite of law offices and Harry Hughes' Three Sands Oil Co. offices are sporting attractive new canvas awnings as they continue to renovate the buildings they occupy. I'm sure you've already admired them.

New management and new call letters are in the offing for our local FM and AM radio stations. The studios are returning to downtown Perry, on the east side of the square in the building formerly occupied by Cherokee Hair Co. at 312 Sixth street. The new call letters will be KVCS; could that be acronym for "Voice of the Cherokee Strip?" More word on this business change will be forthcoming.

On Wednesday night, the A&E channel (cable channel 25) will carry an hour-long biography of Buster Keaton, starting at 7 p.m. Oklahoma time. It should be worth watching, but don't expect any mention of Buster's early years in Perry unless the film's researchers have done a more thorough job than those whose efforts preceded this piece. Tune it in, just to see what they left out.



December 14, 1995

Kevin and Shelly Wiley have one of Perry's most unusual yard decorations this Christmas season at their home on West Fir avenue. It's composed almost entirely of bales of hay, both the round and rectangular variety, in clever arrangements. The centerpiece is formed by three round bales stacked in graduated sizes, with the smallest at the top, to resemble a very large snowman, topped by a king-size Western hat. On either side are rectangular bales stacked pyramid fashion so that they look like twin Christmas trees, complete with multi-colored lights and other yuletide decorations. If you haven't caught sight of this, it's worth a trip to see.

The town has many, many bright and twinkling holiday decorations in the business area, the courthouse park, and throughout the residential areas. Every year we seem to have more and more of these, some quite elaborate and some charming in their simplicity. Additions to the downtown display have been made annually with proceeds from the annual Christmas homes tour, and we have now accumulated a really impressive collection.

Perry is a veritable Christmas wonderland by night. Thanks to each of you who have contributed to the joy of the season by decorating your home, your church and/or your business. The rest of us appreciate all that you've done, and perhaps you have even inspired some of us to join in.

Shoppers in this area should be flocking to Perry stores to take advantage of honest to goodness savings. Perhaps it escaped your attention, but Perry now has the lowest sales tax rate of any city in this immediate vicinity, according to figures supplied by the Oklahoma tax commission. Our rate in Perry went down to 5.75% on Oct. 1 after the municipal hospital improvement levy expired.

Local merchants should capitalize on this fact every chance they get. It's an advantage any town would like to claim. Our present city tax rate is a mere 1%, the lowest in this area. Ponca City's is 3%, Enid's is 3%, Guthrie's is 3%, Stillwater's is 3%, and Oklahoma City's is 3.875%. Of course, those are merely city sales tax rates. The state of Oklahoma collects an additional 4.5%; Garfield county imposes a 1% county sales tax, Payne county's is .50%; Logan county's is 1%; and Noble county's is .25%.

So, if you bought a \$300 appliance in Stillwater, you'd pay 8 percent sales tax -- 4.50% state, .50% county and 3% city. That would add \$24 to your purchase price, making a total of \$324. The same appliance in Perry would cost a total of \$317.25, including tax, a saving of \$6.75. Plus, you wouldn't have the added expense of driving your car to our neighbors over there, and you'd have the satisfaction of knowing that your tax dollars were going to benefit this community, not someone else's.

Summarizing, Stillwater's total sales tax bite is 8%; Enid's is 8.5%; Ponca City's is 7.5%; Guthrie's is 8.5%; and Perry's is a relatively modest 5.75%. We'd all do well to remember these figures.

How about a word of commendation for the three banks in Perry. They certainly do their part to set a standard of excellence in maintaining their property. All three have attractive buildings, well landscaped on the outside and very tastefully decorated interiors. The Exchange Bank & Trust is adding a neat white fence on the north side of its drive through lanes and the adjacent unoccupied property is newly leveled and cleaned off. This proves again that eyesores can be converted to something worthwhile. Let's tackle some more of these spots in the business and residential areas.



December 16, 1995

Zella Aigner provides us with another tale from the day Japan bombed Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941. Her brother, Chester Loveless, was serving in the U.S. Navy aboard a submarine which was in the vicinity of Hawaii on that fateful morning. He was 26. His sub was not in the harbor but from an offshore position he and his crewmates could clearly see the terrible destruction taking place.

"We were reared on a farm south of Red Rock," Zella relates, "and Chester grew up with a great fear of prairie fires, because we saw so many of them." They were fearful to behold as they swept across the plains faster than they could be contained. "Chester told us that the firestorm at Pearl Harbor looked just like one of those great prairie fires. It gave us a very vivid picture of how it must have seemed to him at the scene."

In October 1944, Chester lost his life in the Pacific when his submarine was on the attack against Japanese vessels off Formosa. Apparently, a torpedo fired by the sub reversed its course for some inexplicable reason, and the submarine itself was hit. One of the survivors told the Loveless family about the incident after the war. He grew up on a farm in an area between Perry and Enid, and for that reason he and Chester had been close friends aboard ship. He told how the sub survivors were brought aboard a Japanese vessel, forced to disrobe and survive on the deck. Most of them were badly blistered by the sun because as submariners their skin was very pale, but that was just the beginning of their ordeal as prisoners of war. It was not a pleasant experience.

Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols appeared this week before the new federal judge who has been assigned to preside over the government's trial in the Murrah Building bombing. Cameras will not be permitted in any of the courtroom proceedings and security keeps news photographers far away from the prisoners as they arrive or leave the building where hearings are held. So, I guess for some time to come we'll continue to see that video tape of Mr. McVeigh leaving the west door of the Noble county courthouse last April. It's been shown countless times on TV network news shows and people all across the U.S. are familiar with it by now. That seems to be the only good view cameramen have had since all this began, so we'd best get used to seeing it again and again. Maybe eventually we'll be able to identify all of the local officers shown in that clip. How many can you name so far?

Melva Pancoast from Sumner has been around for a few years and she's proud of it, but she recently made an interesting discovery. During a trip to the local C.R. Anthony store, she was pleased to find such a fine array of merchandise. At the cashier's desk she was politely asked if she had a Visa card, or Master card, or any of the others. She had never bothered with getting one, so they offered to send in an application for her. After a few days she received a nice reply thanking her for the request, but stating that they could not issue one because they could find no credit history for her.

That set her to thinking. "Paul and I celebrated our 60th anniversary before he passed away," Melva recalls. "During all that time we made it a practice to pay cash for everything we bought. If we didn't have the money, we didn't buy it. That's the way both of us grew up, and that's the way I am today. But it suggests a bit of advice for people who may just be starting their adult life. You need to charge some things and pay for them promptly if you hope to have a major credit card someday." So, there's a word to the wise if you need it.



December 19, 1995

Christmas is by far the busiest time of the year at the post office, right? So who do you think was summoned to jury duty from November to January, during the heart of the Christmas season? Perry postmaster Leonard Robinson is who. He was called for possible service in Payne county district court in Stillwater last month and was advised to report daily until mid-January for standby duty. Leonard is doing what all good citizens should do, and affairs at the Perry postal center are in the capable hands of Larry Buffington during his absence. But it's just not the best time for this to be happening. Leonard is a legal resident of Stillwater so his jury responsibilities are vested in Payne county. Maybe this will motivate him to become a fulltime Perry resident.

Here's a little early notice for all you Glenn Miller fans out there. The 20th annual Glenn Miller Festival is scheduled for June 6-9, 1996, in Clarinda, Iowa, the maestro's birthplace. This event has been endorsed by the Iowa Sesquicentennial

Commission and thus it will be an official part of the state's 150th anniversary program next summer.

Dr. and Mrs. Ed Fair attended the Miller festival last June and had hoped to go again in 1996, but his health may prevent that. They greatly enjoyed all the celebration events and recommend the trip for anyone interested in the great Miller style music. Some from Perry have expressed interest in attending next June. If you want further information, call the secretary of the Glenn Miller Birthplace Society in Clarinda at 712-542-3881.

Traffic problems are acute daily in the area of the middle school on Fifteenth street. Vehicles and young pedestrians alike are affected. For starters, it's a narrow two-lane street feeding traffic from north and south as parents deliver youngsters to school in the morning or pick them up at mid-afternoon. There are no sidewalks and virtually no shoulders along the street because of deep drainage ditches on either side, so students walking to school must be especially wary.

It would be well if teachers and parents spent some time telling boys and girls to walk **FACING** traffic. Children that age need to be taught the safe way to be pedestrians. Some of us adults need to be reminded of the same thing so we can set a good example. Let's don't have any more accidents involving our school-age youngsters.

Another fragile but legible school book from out of the past has been provided by Donna Crossfield. Her husband, J. I. Crossfield, found the book and other miscellaneous items in a 1948 Fleetside pickup which he bought at an auction in 1971. The other articles have long since been disposed of, but Mrs. Crossfield kept this book, a text on English literature, all this time. It goes back much further than 1948 -- all the way to 1905, when it was copyrighted. The flyleaf is artfully signed by "Wanda Johnston" in a style much like calligraphy, and notes in her handwriting fill the book. The flyleaf also shows that the book was purchased at my dad's store, the City Drug, when that was Perry's official school book depository.

I recognized "Wanda Johnston" as the maiden name of the late Mrs. Henry Schurkens, and a phone call to her daughter, Phyllis Wurtz, confirms that it is indeed her mom's. Mrs. Schurkens inscribed this information at the front of the book, "March 17, 1913; 2nd period a.m., 10:25-11:05." The textbook apparently was used in an English literature class at Perry high school where Wanda Johnston graduated in 1914 along with Dr. A. M. Crowder, Quine Brengle Sr., Marsh Woodruff and other notables.

Incidentally, the textbook was written by Alphonso Gerald Newcomer, professor of English in the Leland Stanford Junior University. It covers the old English period, from 670-1066, through the "modern" English period, 1509-1558. Makes me wonder. Do schools still teach this subject? Shakespeare, Bacon and Elizabethan drama, prose and poetry are included, and we could all benefit from such a study. Thanks to Mrs. Crossfield for passing this along. The book has been turned over to Phyllis Wurtz, "Wanda Johnston's" daughter.



December 21, 1995

Karen Keith was a checker at Perry's Homeland store when she was diagnosed with a serious illness some months ago. Shoppers knew her as a smiling, obliging clerk. Since then, she has been through a series of medical and surgical procedures to restore her health and things generally were looking pretty good. The smiles were perhaps harder to come by, but still there nonetheless.

The day after Thanksgiving, she was admitted to a Tulsa hospital for a bone stem transplant, similar to a bone marrow transplant, as the latest step in a long, slow path to recovery. For three weeks she was in the Tulsa hospital. Her husband, Don, is a leadman welder in the Pierce-Airrow department at the Charles Machine Works, Inc., where the best known product is the Ditch Witch trencher. Each year Don's group, takes up a Christmas collection to benefit some family in this community. This year, the group voted to give the entire collection to Don to help with travel expenses and other items during this time of treatment. Karen is home now but still receives care on a regular schedule at Stillwater as part of the recovery program.

But in addition to the financial gesture, the same group of Don's workers pooled many of the accumulated leave time hours coming to them and transferred them to Don so that he would not miss substantial amounts of pay while he helps in caring for Karen.

David Bluethman, manager of the Ditch Witch company's personnel department, said that about two years ago the company adopted a policy allowing employees to transfer their leave hours to others in cases like this, and the program has been very helpful on numerous occasions. I thought this story was most appropriate for the Christmas season.

Along with the heartwarming response to the Perry community's fund-raising efforts for young Shane Kindschi, it again seems to demonstrate the compassion we have come to expect as residents of this special little city. Yes, there is something unique about Perry.

The Oklahoma Historical Society has announced that pictures shot by the Tulsa Photography Collective in Perry earlier this fall will be on display April 1-26, 1996, at the Cherokee Strip Museum in Perry. A lecture also will be scheduled during that period, but the date for that has not been set. Title of the display is "On Assignment: A Day in the Life of Perry, Oklahoma. Many local residents, business buildings and other things that interested the photographers will be included in the display. Be sure to watch for reminders when the exhibit time draws near.

The Historical Society also has announced that the local, museum's centennial celebration of the Rose Hill School has been tentatively scheduled for the month of May. Further information on this event will be forthcoming.

Many of you no doubt have noticed that our local TV cable supplier, TCI Cablevision of Stillwater, is discontinuing the 800 phone number formerly used for customer service. Effective Jan. 1, customers may call a local customer service number, 336-5559, or stop by the Perry office on the north side of the square. According to a news report on a Stillwater radio station, TCI customers in this area have been complaining about rude treatment by the company's people at the Tulsa 800 number office and the change was made to alleviate some of that. So, if you are one of those still unhappy about TCI's refusal to include the AMC channel in Perry's basic service package, or even as a premium option, you can start calling the local number after the first of the year.



December 23, 1995

The Howard Schnellenberger "era" at Oklahoma University lasted only 13 months but it will be hashed over and rehashed for years to come. The big, gruff, basso-profundo coach called it quits this week after just one season at the helm in Norman. Big Eight conference losses to Oklahoma State, Nebraska, Colorado and both the Kansas teams, plus a tie with our old rivals at Texas University, were just too much to overcome. After the colonel abruptly announced his resignation, a

page one headline in the *Oklahoman* said that OU President David Boren wants to hire a "players' coach." The inference being that Schnellenberger is not a players' coach, even though several Sooner starters said in TV interviews that they liked him and wanted him to stay.

The feeling here is that Schnellenberger is not a "media coach," meaning that he did not sufficiently or frequently enough bow in obeisance and genuflect before the writers and sportscasters who covered his abbreviated regime. They have been on his case almost since day one. As far back as last Sept. 29, I noted in this column: "Does it seem to you that the Oklahoma City sports writers try awfully hard sometimes to create a controversy for the new OU football coach to deal with? ...They also appear to be conjuring up questions each week about hypothetical matters that require answers from Coach Schnellenberger. I have a feeling that one of these days he's going to inhale deeply and then unload his feelings..."

The sports writers were just as confused as everyone else after the colonel's shell landed. Dave Sittler's personal column on the sports page was headlined: "Don't Rule Out Return By Switzer," topping a lengthy article setting forth all the reasons why Barry Switzer might leave the Dallas Cowboys for a return stint at OU. Two pages later in the same day's sports section, writer Mike Baldwin, who covers the 'Boys for the *Oklahoman*, had a piece with a four-column headline stating unequivocally: "Switzer Will Stay in Dallas."

Oh well, the media at that level knows how to cover its backside. By saying "he will" and "he won't" in the same edition, they can't be wrong. They're doing the same thing in discussing the possibility of Dallas defensive line coach John Blake returning to his alma mater, OU, as head coach. One writer says Blake has all but signed his contract; another says he has not even been contacted by the university. Hang on. The saga continues

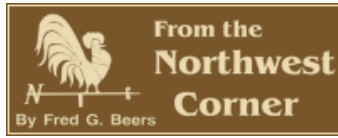
Let's get off that weird story and switch to a much more interesting subject. I had a brief but nice telephone visit the other evening with Lola Shelton, who lives on east Delaware. Her family has been around Perry since the very early days, and she was recalling one of the oft-repeated stories she remembered from her childhood.

Lola's mother was Laura Griggs, who married Jud Shelton. Laura had a brother, Lige Griggs, who operated a horsedrawn dray wagon service here back in the early part of this century before the Model T Fords and other gasoline buggies were commonplace. Lige's wagon was for hire and he kept busy hauling freight from the Santa Fe and Frisco depots to various customers in the burgeoning little city of Perry.

"One of Uncle Lige's proudest accomplishments," Lola says, "was the part he played in construction of the Noble county courthouse in 1915 and 1916. He didn't do any work on the building itself, but he had a hand in almost everything in it."

By way of explanation, Lige was hired to haul construction material from the freight depot to the building site in the central park location where our stately courthouse now stands. Throughout the months of work on the building, he hauled load after load of steel, building stones, windows, doors, hardware, flooring material, handrails for the staircases, and just about everything else. "Uncle Lige had a sense of history about what he was doing," Lola says. "He told us that he personally touched every piece that he hauled to the jobsite, because he knew it was significant." She adds that Uncle Lige or his sister, Laura, the mother of Lola, would tell this story any time the family got together, and she is proud of her family's part in that portion of our Noble county history.

To one and all on this eve of Christmas Eve, may this be a time of blessed peace for all of us and those throughout the world who are yearning for an end of turmoil at every level. Merry Christmas.



December 26, 1995

More interesting facts continue to surface concerning Buster Keaton and his family's connection with Perry some 95 years ago. So many, in fact, that it is going to require at least two of these columns to cover them adequately. Buster's centennial birth year is about to end, so perhaps most of his fascinating background has been covered by now.

Today I want to mention briefly a new Buster Keaton biography that has just been published. More on that will follow in a day or so. The book, "Buster Keaton: Cut to the Chase," is described by Time magazine as thorough and poignant. It arrived only last week at Perry Carnegie Library, but don't look for it there for a day or so. I was lucky enough to be first in line to check it out. Soon as the time on my library card expires, you can borrow it from the library. Suggestion: Get on the waiting list. I guarantee you'll find it interesting.

But for today's column I want to follow up on some questions that were asked here recently concerning the Keaton house in Perry. Our dedicated Noble county clerk, Ronita Coldiron, has come through again with the missing information.

The other day I wrote about Bill Urban's father, Carl Urban, who once owned the former home of Buster and his family at 610 Grove street. Bill knew his parents owned the home in 1917 because that's the year he was born there, but he did not know exactly when his parents bought it. The house now is owned by Marvin and Shirley Beier, and Mrs. Julius Beier, Marvin's mother, lives there.

"They say curiosity killed the cat," Mrs. Coldiron writes. "Well, I must have some feline blood as I could not resist researching the 'Keaton' property." She attached a detailed table of information extracted from Noble county property records. It shows how, and when, the Keatons originally got the property. Ronita adds: "I found it very interesting that the name of Joseph Z. Keaton (Buster's grandfather) on the deed when he originally acquired the property was spelled 'Keyton.' However, on the next document the last name is spelled 'Keaton.' Whether this was a clerical error or the Keatons changed the spelling is unknown."

My own guess is that it was a clerical error, but perhaps it was changed at some point. This is the first reference I've seen to the "Keyton" spelling. However, Meade's biography does state that the name was sometimes spelled "Keton." The middle initial in Joseph Z. Keaton's name stood for Zachariah.

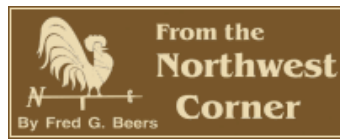
Ronita's search shows that Bill's father, Carl Urban, acquired the property in 1914 and sold it in 1936. The Beiers acquired it in 1974 and it has remained in their family since then. Joseph Zachariah Keyton (that's the spelling on the document) acquired it by general warranty deed on Jan. 29, 1900. After the death of Joseph Z. in 1912, the property was deeded to his widow, Lydia J. Keaton; two daughters, Rosa K. Jones and Birdie Bradford, and two sons, Joseph Keaton (father of Buster) and Jesse B. (Bert) Keaton. By tradition, all the firstborn sons in the Keaton family were named Joseph. Buster's real name was Joseph Francis Keaton.

On May 29, 1913, Joseph Z. Keaton's widow, Lydia, received quit claim deeds to the property from her two daughters and from son Joseph H. Keaton, Buster's father; and on Aug. 16 that year she passed title to her son, Jesse B. Keaton, better known to Buster as Uncle Bert. He transferred the deed to W. H. Stewart nine days later. On Oct. 25, 1913, Stewart conveyed ownership to L. R. Swartz, and Carl Urban bought it from Mr. Swartz on April 8, 1914. Successive owners were Homer B. Matthews on July 11, 1936; Nellie Matthews on Dec. 8, 1938; John P. Henry and others on Oct. 9, 1973; Julius and Alice Beier

on July 15, 1974; and Marvin Beier and others on Dec. 14, 1992. And that's the genealogy of the Buster Keaton family home at 610 Grove street.

As an interesting sidelight, Ronita notes that P. W. Cress was the attorney who settled the Keaton estate in 1912. Also, the final decree mentions some Keaton family ownership in Lot 43, Block 12, Original Perry. This lot is on the north side of the square and is now owned by Jack Dorl.

I greatly appreciate Ronita's research on this subject. It adds interesting documentation to the Keaton family lore in Perry. Several of you called about the Buster Keaton biography on the A&E television network the night of Dec. 13. I wasn't home when it was telecast, but I taped it for posterity.



December 28, 1995

As I mentioned the other day, our Perry Carnegie Library has just received a copy of "Buster Keaton: Cut to the Chase," a new biography by author Marion Meade, published by HarperCollins. I was the first to borrow the library's copy and I am reading it as fast as I can, but still it's a slow job because there is so much to savor in this excellent book. Don't give up. It is well worth waiting for.

For one thing, the author did a thorough and painstaking job of researching Keaton's life story. As a result, she devotes a portion of the early chapters to the Keaton family's years in Perry around the turn of the century when Buster was just learning to entertain audiences by tumbling onstage. That chapter is headed "Cherokee Strip," but Meade also refers to Perry later on in at least three more chapters.

One of these is chapter three, entitled "Keep Your Eye on the Kid." In that, the author reprints a one-paragraph letter from Buster's father to the Gerry Society in New York City. Dated December 27, 1900, it is signed by "Joseph Keaton, 624 G Street, Perry, Oklahoma." If you'll recall last Tuesday's Northwest Corner, I related information from county clerk Ronita Coldiron about the Keaton property at 610 Grove street. Before our city addresses were reviewed a few months ago in preparation for the 911 emergency phone system, the Beier house now listed at 610 Grove street had been erroneously given the 624 street address. That explains the address used by Joseph Keaton in his letter. Bill Gengler has a rare 1910-11 edition of Hoffhine's Perry City Directory which shows Lydia J. Keaton to be a resident of 624 G street at that time. Lydia was Buster's paternal grandmother.

The Gerry Society was a private child-welfare agency also known as the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. Its founder, Elbridge T. Gerry, was the grandson of the U.S. vice president who originated the practice of "gerrymandering." Keaton was writing the agency to assure them that Buster was not being subjected to cruelty in his New York stage performances. As things turned out, the society did manage to bar the Keatons from using Buster in their vaudeville act in New York for a full year because of the rough and tumble acts he starred in as a young child of five years.

Near the end of the book, Meade again refers to Perry in telling about the feature film, "The Buster Keaton Story," which was premiered here in 1957. Buster and his third wife, Eleanor, were here that day and many Perry residents had a chance to meet with them on an informal basis. The author notes that reviewers roasted the picture, which starred Donald

O'Connor in the title role, and adds that even Buster was embarrassed by it. Still, the film made money. The production cost \$800,000 but it has earned perhaps triple that amount and is still being shown on TV.

Earlier this year I wrote that Keaton birthday centennials were being held during 1995 in Piqua, Kan., where he was born, and in Muskegon, Mich., for no reason that I knew of then. Meade's book explains that. She tells about the Keaton family home in an actor's colony at Muskegon which Papa Joseph Keaton helped establish. Buster, his parents, brother and sister all spent many happy months there in the off seasons when they were being highly acclaimed as major vaudevillians between 1909 and 1920.

Bert Keaton, Joseph's brother and Buster's uncle, was perhaps better known in Perry than others in the family because the lived here longer than they did. He worked at a local department store. In the early 1920s, when Buster was becoming established as a megastar in the Hollywood film colony, the entire Keaton clan lived in Los Angeles and were supported by Buster, who was happy to do so. A genuine loving family feeling existed as a result of their close relationship in the vaudeville years, and in spite of some personal difficulties between Keaton's parents, Uncle Bert and Papa Joseph appeared in several Keaton films, as did his mother, Myra Keaton; his brother, Jingles; and his sister, Louise.

Buster's unhappy marriage to Natalie Talmadge is described at length. She was one of the three intriguing Talmadge sisters, the others being actresses Norma and Constance. Buster's accumulation of wealth through his movie successes and his profitable real estate investments also are described, as well as the 1929 Wall Street crash which wiped him out, financially. After divorcing Natalie Talmadge, Keaton married Mae Scriven, a nurse. That marriage did not last, and in 1940 Buster married Eleanor Norris, a dancer with beauty queen good looks, and that proved to be a perfect match.

I'm still reading this book. It covers a relatively modest 306 pages but it also includes a coda to update us on later events in the Keaton family; a chapter containing Buster's favorite recipes; a filmography with dates and credits on all of his movies; detailed notes on all sources consulted by the author, including the Noble County Genealogical Society's "History of Noble County"; a bibliography; the author's thanks to various individuals and organizations for assistance; and an index which mentions some, but not all, of the references to Perry. This book belongs in our library and probably in our museum, as well.

Meade's book was enthusiastically reviewed by *Time* magazine last October. Anyone with even a slight interest in knowing more about Buster Keaton, a one-time resident of Perry, Oklahoma, will find this book well worth the reading. I heartily recommend that it be added to your home library.



December 30, 1995

Verna Lee Swart has a commendable practice of writing letters to friends when they are ill to relieve the boredom of long periods in bed. Several years ago she began including little personal stories in each letter when the supply of interesting news ran low. "I thought I would just write a story about, the most interesting thing I could think of -- ME," Verna Lee says, "and so the 'ME'S' were born to entertain a trapped audience."

Some of my recent columns dealt with Ethel Ryerson's nursing home and the doctors who delivered babies there 45-50 years ago, and that brought to mind one of Verna Lee's "ME" stories, originally written in 1985. It is a charming little tale, so let me turn this over to Verna Lee for a retelling. This is the "ME" story which she entitled "My Hero." Here it is:

"Barbara, my sister, and I were always looking for ways to bring pleasure into our parents' lives and we knew they would like to have a little boy to go with us girls. Every, family should have a mixture, we thought. With all of this in mind, we developed a plan. The very next time we were taken to town we went hand in hand up the steep, scary stairs above the drug store to Dr. Coldiron's office. We marched into his office and climbed into his big patient's chair. I must have been about 6 and Barbara about 8, so this was a pretty big step for us and we were pretty nervous, but we had our plan.

"Being the family doctor for about everyone in Noble county, Dr. Coldiron had brought both of us into the world so we were no strangers to him. Still, he was puzzled to have us there by ourselves and not looking sick. He very kindly asked what he could do for us. We said we thought it would really be nice if he would please bring us a little baby brother with black hair and brown eyes like Daddy. He could bring him in his little, black bag. Never mind that a baby was bigger than his bag. Never mind that we knew where baby animals came from. Never mind we knew you could hope for male or female animals but you never knew for sure until they came. We just knew Dr. Coldiron would bring our little brother with black hair and brown eyes in his little black bag one day soon.

"One night in early November, Barbara woke me jumping up and down on the bed and yelling, 'We have a baby brother! We have a baby brother!' And we did, too. I heard him cry. We forgave Dr. Coldiron that his hair was dark brown instead of black and his eyes were blue like ours. We didn't want to hurt his feelings. After all, he had been so busy that day he had to come out in the middle of the night to bring our little brother to us.

"We did kind of wonder why Mama stayed in bed the next day, but she had been up pretty late the night before and we guessed she was just tired. All was forgotten in the thrill of rocking and holding our little brother. He was just wonderful -- exactly what we knew he would be. Barbara and I always loved Dr. Coldiron. We had living proof he could do anything."

The baby brother described above was Leonard Shelton, a former Perry high school wrestling coach. The parents of Barbara, Leonard and Verna Lee were J. Roy and Clara Shelton, and Mrs. Shelton provides this postscript to the above:

"Just ten years after Leonard, the baby brother Verna Lee and Barbara asked Dr. Coldiron for was born, Ralph arrived on Verna Lee's 17th birthday, Dec. 8, 1947. He was a pleasant surprise. No one asked for him! He also had brown eyes and black hair like his Daddy."

Mrs. Shelton continues: "I still have the cancelled check we gave Dr. Coldiron for \$25 for delivering Ralph in Mrs. Ryerson's hospital on the north side of the square. The rest of our babies were born at home. We loved Dr. Coldiron very much. No other doctor has taken his place in our hearts."

With this engaging little tale, I take my leave and wish you one and all a Blessed and Happy New Year!