



December 3, 1999

A thoughtful reader passes along the following essay:

Let's face it – English is a crazy language. There is neither egg in eggplant nor ham in hamburger; neither apple nor pine in pineapple. English muffins weren't invented in England or French fries in France. Sweetmeats are candies while sweetbreads, which are not sweet, are meat.

We take English for granted. But if we explore its paradoxes, we find that quicksand can work slowly, boxing rings are square and a guinea pig is neither from Guinea nor is it a pig.

And why is it that writers write but fingers don't fing, grocers don't groce and hammers don't ham? If the plural of tooth is teeth, why isn't the plural of booth beeth? One goose, two geese. So, one moose, two meese? One index, two indices?

Doesn't it seem crazy that you can make amends but not one amend, that you comb through the annals of history but not a single annal? If you have a bunch of odds and ends and get rid of all but one of them, what do you call it?

If teachers taught, why didn't preachers praught? If a vegetarian eats vegetables, what does a humanitarian eat? If you wrote a letter, perhaps you bote your tongue?

Sometimes I think that all the English speakers should be committed to an asylum for the verbally insane. In what language do people recite at a play and play at a recital? Ship by truck and send cargo by ship? Have noses that run and feet that smell? Park on driveways and drive on parkways?

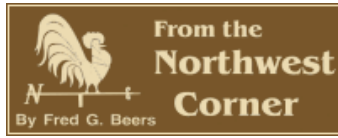
How can a slim chance and a fat chance be the same while a wise man and a wise guy are opposites? How can overlook and oversee be opposites while quite a lot and quite a few are alike? How can weather be hot as hell one day and cold as hell another?

Have you noticed that we can talk about certain things only when they are absent? Have you ever seen a horseful carriage or a strapful gown? Met a sung hero or experienced requited love? Have you ever run into someone who was combobulated, gruntled, ruly or peccable? And where are all those people who are spring chickens of who would ACTUALLY hurt a fly?

You have to marvel at the unique lunacy of a language in which your house can burn up as it burns down, in which you fill in a form by filling it out and in which an alarm clock goes off by going on.

English was invented by people, not computers, and it reflects the creativity of the human race (which, of course, is not a race at all. If it is a race, who is going to win?) That is why, when stars are out, they are visible, but when the lights are out, they are invisible. Why is it, when I wind up my watch, I start it, but when I wind up this essay, I end it?

The author of the foregoing is unknown, but thanks to him/her for providing a few chuckles at our human foibles.



December 7, 1999

This is the day that President Franklin Delano Roosevelt predicted would live in infamy. On Sunday, December 7th, 1941, elements of the imperial Japanese military forces surprised the U.S. and most of the Western world with a devastating attack on the U.S. Navy fleet anchored in the sunny, tranquil waters of Pearl Harbor, Territory of Hawaii. On the following day, President Roosevelt asked Congress to declare that a state of war existed between this country and Japan, plus the European German-Italian Axis. In the President's address to a solemn convocation of the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives, he uttered the "day of infamy" phrase, and that figure of speech itself continues to ring through the ages that followed.

This country thus was plunged into the cataclysm known as World War II and millions of citizens found their lives changed forever. Some of the most profound social and political facets of nations in every corner of the world were brought into being as a result of that single event. The impact is still being felt although the root cause becomes increasingly obscured with the onward march of time. We tend to forget that which we do not choose to remember.

The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor was a well-conceived operation. It caught Americans stationed in Hawaii sleeping late on the morning of a day traditionally set aside for rest and worship. Commanders and troops were unaware that a task force of Japanese Navy aircraft carriers was bearing down on them, intent upon vanquishing the American fleet, killing our fighting men and wreaking as much havoc as possible. It was an intentional provocation designed to bring this country to its knees and thus become an easy prey to uniformed marauders representing the very embodiment of evil.

We will never know just how close the enemy came to reaching that goal. The U.S. Navy, our primary line of defense in the vast Pacific Ocean area, was all but wiped out. Our military response to the attack was virtually non-existent. The Japanese pilots returned to their carriers with no American planes or seacraft in pursuit. It may have been the darkest day in U.S. military annals. Strangely, there was no attempt to land an invasion force on the West Coast of the U.S., although Pacific rim allies, such as the Philippine Islands, soon were overrun by the Japanese emperor's well-trained military. Americans quickly learned the need n and the meaning n of preparation for surprise attacks. All of us hope that lesson will never be forgotten when days of military cutbacks tempt our leaders to scale down below a reasonable margin of security.

Survivors of the epic known as World War II are rapidly dying out. That includes not only those who were called to serve in the military during that period, but also the civilians who provided support and succor. They are part of my generation, and I am saddened anew on this day by the melancholy thought of so many friends who gave up their lives on the battlefields, but also of the young men and women of that period who gladly surrendered their hopes and dreams for the future to bring all of us to a new era of well being. I salute them all.



December 10, 1999

A Rotary club speaker from Edmond paid Perry a fine compliment the other day. He said his job requires him to travel through every county of this state and he has decided that Perry is the coolest town he's seen. He said: "It is so

picturesque, just the way you like to think a small town should look. It reminds me of a Norman Rockwell painting," referring to works by the late artist who did many of the *Saturday Evening Post's* finest covers. I think that this is praise indeed because Mr. Rockwell pretty well succeeded in creating a definitive, idyllic visual image of America. Perry could well have been the inspiration for some of his most famous works of art. All this reminds me of a young Oklahoma City lady's remark around 45 years ago after her first trip to our community. She said then that Perry looked like the incarnation of a scene from a Booth Tarkington novel because of its classic Victorian architecture, plus some modern elements of the twentieth century. She liked it so much that she stayed here. Lucky for me she did. In time she became my bride.

Recently I've been listening to an expression of thoughts on a few things that would make Perry an even better place. One of the foremost needs cited was more city parks. No new municipal parks for general use have been built in this community for many years. An exception is the excellent Century Park at the east approach to the city, but it was built, equipped and donated to the municipality by the Exchange Bank & Trust Co. as part of our centennial observance in 1993. Baseball and softball fields have been constructed by the city, but they are not for use of the public in general.

The person I was listening to pointed out that we have a limited number of walking and hiking paths, no bicycle trails, no place for inline skaters or skateboards in the city limits, and we are lacking other recreational facilities for adults and young people.

In addition to that, parts of CCC Park are deteriorating. This park, southeast of Perry, was built in the Great Depression era of the 1930s and was donated to the city by the Civilian Conservation Corps. It has been our pride and joy for years, providing a decent place for swimmers, fishermen (and women), boaters and for group picnics in a restful, green oasis. Today anglers still wet their hooks there and a few walkers bravely traverse the park's roads, but rarely do you see picnickers spreading food on the shabby tables in the one good shelter at lakeside. Vandals have desecrated another shelter on a hill nearby with profane and obscene graffiti spray painted on the rock walls. The facility is being used by some as a bathroom and, others tell me, for criminal activities. What once was our city's finest park is now being badly abused. The city currently has an improvement project underway on the main road looping through the west side of the park, and that is laudable but it needs more than that. The "church on a perch," moved out there a couple of years ago by well-meaning local preservationists with hopes of restoring the historic structure, is falling apart, piece by piece, and there is no evidence of maintenance or renovation. Who should be looking into this problem?

Perhaps money would solve some of our park needs, but the municipal budget already is tight and there's little hope in that area. A good new water source probably 's our No. 1 priority, but I have a feeling that one day we're going to wake up and find some of our favorite recreational facilities are outdated or simply have fallen down. Steps should be taken soon to avoid such a calamity. Would a modest bond issue pass if proposed? Do our city fathers see the need for an early solution? What do you think should be done?



December 14, 1999

Our friend Lucy Foster has been an integral part of the Presbyterian choir as long as any of us can remember. Aside from a perfect pitch alto voice, she also has a wonderful memory that enables her to recall the tunes and lyrics of many of the beloved old hymns, and on occasion she has updated some of them with her own original words to make them more

meaningful. Her sweet, unassuming manner is the real thing, not an affectation. That's been the real Lucy for a long time. Here's a story told to me by her daughter and son-in-law, Penny and Luis Clay, who live in Illinois:

Sometime after graduating from Perry High School in the 1930s, Lucille Edgar (before she became Mrs. Dick Foster) went to work at the telephone office as an operator. She was living at home with her parents, Clarence and Tillie Edgar, and often her Dad took her to work in the Forney Dairy milk truck on his way to make deliveries. As was typical of that kind of vehicle, there were no doors, so the milkman could exit from either side to make deliveries.

One morning they approached the downtown square with Lucille sitting on a box on the passenger side as she always did. But, when they turned the corner, with nothing to prevent it, she fell out of the truck and went sliding over the roughly paved surface on her side. On one leg, the skin was peeled off from the ankle to thigh. Despite the pain and discomfort, she stood up and with great pain and difficulty managed to climb the stairs to the second floor of the old Davis & Son Furniture Store building, where the telephone office and switchboards were located. Her supervisor saw her condition and insisted that Lucy go immediately to Dr. D.F. Coldiron's office, on the second floor of the Masonic building, just across the street, to have her wounds cleaned and dressed. So, off went Lucy. Dr. Coldiron cleaned her leg, bandaged it and lent her crutches so that she could return to work.

With considerable effort, she again climbed the stairs to the telephone office. She could only use the crutches part of the way because one of the company rules was that employees had to be able to walk in under their own power to work. It's funny to think of now, but it never occurred to anyone to insist that she go home and recover before returning to work. Things were different in those days.

Penny and Luis, who will be here during the Christmas season, agree: What a convenient call-in-sick-if-you're-tired society we have become over the years. How attitudes have changed from those days when people were grateful to have a job rather than looking for ways to avoid working.

As a footnote or sidebar, this little anecdote takes me back to the days when our telephone company had real live operators, like Lucy, to make connections on our calls and even give us the time of day upon request. But, that's a separate issue.



December 17, 1999

The author of the following bit of whimsy is unknown. The piece came to me from a good friend via e-mail. That's all I know about it, but perhaps we can relate to some of the ideas expressed here. At least you may find a line or two that provokes a chuckle. Here 'tis:

You know you are in a small town when...

Every sport is played on dirt.

Third street is on the edge of town.

The runway of the airport is terraced.

You are run off Main Street by a combine.

The biggest business in town sells farm machinery.

The polka is more popular than disco on Saturday night.

You miss a Sunday at church and receive get-well cards.
You dial a wrong number and talk for 15 minutes anyway.
You write a check on the wrong bank and it covers for you.
The pickups on Main Street outnumber the cars three to one.
You don't use your signals because everyone knows where you are going.
You can't walk for exercise because every car that passes offers you a ride.
You drive in a ditch five miles out of town and word gets back to town before you do.
You are born on June 15 and your family receives gifts from the local merchants because you are the first baby of the year.
Someone asks how you feel, then listens to what you say.
Thank God for small towns ... and the people who live in them.

Switching subjects, and gears, here is something a bit more serious that merits our attention:

Geothermal heat pumps, used with underground installations pioneered by the Charles Machine Works, Inc., are an integral part of an energy-saving program selected by the U.S. Energy Department for federal installations. Five companies have been selected by the department to finance and manage contracts valued at as much as \$500 million to install the devices at military bases and other federal locations. A detailed story about the selection recently appeared in the *Wall Street Journal* and was passed along to me by Phil Albertson, a retired CMW executive who remains active in the underground water source heat pump program.

Savings of up to 40% are projected at each site. The program hopes to cut some of the federal government's \$8 billion annual energy bill and to reduce pollutants. "For every \$1 these contractors receive, the government will receive \$2 over the term of the contracts," according to Bill Richardson, secretary of the Department of Energy. The heat pumps can heat or cool, based on the difference between underground and surface temperatures. They would often replace outmoded steam boilers used at many federal installations. We have just been reading about the concerns over outdated seals on some of this state's boilers, and that problem exists wherever such systems are used. All this is good news for those who have been promoting the geothermal systems for years.



December 21, 1999

As promised earlier, here's the first installment of my "Fabulous and Famous Perry People of the 20th Century." Originally this was intended to be only a Top Ten list, but very quickly it became obvious that we have far more than just ten, so the number is indeterminate. The list is totally my own creation, and I fully expect you folks will have some additions. I don't expect unanimous agreement, so feel free to compose your own list. The names are presented in no particular order. The only criterion is a measure of success in some field of endeavor, and field. Ready? Here we go.

Mary Jane Barnes. This lady was a Hollywood actress. She never achieved stardom, but she came close. In 1939, *The Perry Daily Journal* reported: "(Mary Jane) hit the big time Sunday when she appeared on a Hollywood radio program with Joan Crawford. So bright a performance did Miss Barnes, now of Oklahoma City, give that a rosy future in filmland is almost certain for her, experts in that cinema capital said. Miss Barnes won an elimination contest sponsored by the RKO Studios in Oklahoma City." Her parent were A.E. and Frances Barnes, who lived in Perry from 1933 until after her father died

in 1952. After winning the radio talent contest, Mary Jane did appear in some minor Hollywood productions. She died in 1951.

Paul W. Cress. A federal district attorney, Kay-Noble district judge, Perry city attorney, World War II Air Force officer, bon vivant, raconteur, and a respected and eminent citizen of this city from his birth here in 1904 until his death nearly 90 years later. He practiced law here from 1929, when he joined his father's firm, until he retired in 1979. Paul had an endless supply of informative and often humorous tales about the early days in Perry.

Jack VanBebber. Gold medal winner in wrestling in the 1932 Olympics at Los Angeles. Jack hitch-hiked part of the way from Perry to Los Angeles for the games. He reportedly never lost a wrestling match in his career. Member of the Helms Hall of Fame, the National Wrestling Hall of Fame, and the Jim Thorpe Hall of Fame; he was an outstanding collegiate wrestler at Oklahoma A&M (now OSU). After 30 years with Phillips Petroleum, he retired, moved back to Perry, and died here a few years ago.

Danny Hodge. This one could be a candidate for "Mr. Wrestling," or "world's strongest man." After graduating from Perry High School, where he excelled in wrestling and football, Danny enrolled at Oklahoma University. He never lost a match there and was an NCAA champion. He wrestled in Olympics at Helsinki in 1952 and was a silver medal winner at Melbourne in 1956. After graduating from OU, he won the Golden Gloves heavyweight boxing championship and then turned to pro wrestling, where he also ruled. He was inducted into the National Wrestling Hall of Fame in Stillwater during the first honors banquet there in September 1976. He was the cover boy for Sports Illustrated magazine. Dan still makes his home here.

Bill Pricer. We're still talking athletes. Bill, who died just a few weeks ago, was an all-state football player and a state champion wrestler at Perry High School in the 1950s. OU recruited him, and for a time he competed in both sports there. However, Bud Wilkinson convinced him to concentrate on football. He played fullback and place kicker for the Sooners, then was signed to a professional football contract. His most exemplary work was with the Baltimore Colts when Johnny Unitas was quarterback. Injuries forced him out of the game prematurely.

Bill Krisher. He attended high school in Midwest City and went to Oklahoma University on a football scholarship, but Perry can claim him because his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Irwin Krisher, were long-time Perry residents before they moved to Midwest City. Bill went on to play with the Pittsburgh Steelers of the National Football League. In recent years he has been a staff member with the Fellowship of Christian Athletes.

Many more names to come, including some more of our "in-laws" and shirttail relatives. Keep watching this space.



December 23, 1999

Music, to me, is one of the best parts of the Christmas season. Many pleasures are laid before us each year at this glorious time. Family reunions, bountiful meals, gaily decorated homes, shops and indeed entire cities ... all these help to focus attention on the true centerpiece of the season, the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Special services at the church, pageants featuring youngsters who are just beginning to understand what the fuss is all about ... gifts to exchange with dear friends and family, time to visit those we love but too rarely see ... all of these are part of the fabric of this glorious season.

We select the most appropriate (or affordable) gift for each one on the list and carefully wrap it in festive paper trimmed with bright ribbons and bows. Then it goes beneath the tree until whenever your tradition dictates, or perhaps it provides a reason to make the delivery in person and thus fulfill your vow to visit that one at some point this year. On a calendar, we pencil in the time and location for each of the many holiday events offered by friends, relatives, organizations and others who become swept up in the holiday festivities.

And in spite of the busy-ness, time is allotted for remembering Christmases past, those yesteryears that remain fresh in our hearts and in our minds despite the intervening years. Times we spent with loved ones who no longer walk the earth are vividly recalled and add to the glow, even though the associations are from days long ago. Sweet memories of those who remain close for unique and particular reasons may bring a tear to the eye while adding joy to the heart.

We search the Scriptures for new shades of meaning to this story, but the essence never changes. A baby was miraculously born to a poor couple huddled in a Bethlehem stable on a night long ago that will be forever remembered. The child was worshiped and adored at birth, later hailed as a young itinerant preacher, teacher and healer, then betrayed, persecuted and wrongfully accused by vindictive detractors and finally hung from a rough cross in a manner of execution reserved for the most despicable criminals. There he suffered and died to atone for the sins of all who believe in him, although he himself committed no sin because he truly was the Son of God. His body was laid in a tomb from which he arose triumphantly, alive, three days later, then ascended to Heaven where he dwells still today with his Heavenly Father and the Holy Spirit.

This wonderful old story has been told, dramatized and offered to men, women and children throughout all the ages, and it is the reason we celebrate Christmas. We reflect on its meaning and wonder how we can be considered worthy of redemption, but try to live each day as we think our Lord would have us.

Skeptics may scoff at the truth of this story and doubters may turn away, but to my mind its authenticity and veracity are confirmed in many ways, none more forcefully than through the inspirational music of the season. Listen, how can anyone question a Spiritual presence when the panorama of the Christmas story becomes so moving and real through all the elements around us? The carols and anthems bring a sense of the glory, the magnificence of this time of year that nothing else can do. The inspired choruses, the arias and ensembles, the powerful organ artistry, the mighty symphonic chords, even the strolling youngsters lifting their voices as they make calls in the neighborhood – all of this tells me beyond the shadow of a doubt that a Divine, supernatural influence, not mere mortals, brought these works to us and they were moved by the same Spirit that encompasses all of us today. Praise God and bless His holy name forever!

Merry Christmas to all.



December 28, 1999

Consider the following modest but interesting morsels as you take a break from post-Christmas cleanup chores.

The current (January-February) issue of *Oklahoma Today*, the most worthy official magazine of the state of Oklahoma, contains the usual quota of excellent articles and photographs that illustrate life in this wonderful state. One of the pieces is of special interest locally because it deals with wrestling, a sport that is spoken here. "Legends of the Falls" is mostly about professional wrestling -- see, the title is a play on words -- and of course it would not be complete without

reference to Perry's own Dan Hodge. The main body of the story, written by Gordon Grice with photos by Tom Luker, concerns what is now called "sports entertainment" to distinguish it from real athletic competition.

As most of us know, Dan Hodge was a splendid amateur wrestler at Perry high school, then the U.S. Navy, then four years at Oklahoma University, then as a competitor in the Olympics at Helsinki and a medalist at Melbourne. He later won the U.S. Golden Gloves heavyweight boxing championship and had a brief fling at professional boxing before turning to professional wrestling. In that field he also became a champion, one of the good guys, before a succession of mishaps halted his career.

Dan is shown in a full-page picture accompanied by a half-page of text which gives a little profile of his prowess and his career. It also retells the familiar story of how he could snap a pair of pliers by squeezing them in his powerful grip. The writer calls Danny possibly the strongest wrestler in his class. He won't get an argument on that point from me. Buy the magazine and read all of it.

A recent note from Mary Lee Streller, daughter of Milo W. Watson, the late publisher of this newspaper, tells me that her sister, Carolyn Adkins, was spared the pain inflicted on some families by the recent shooting at the Ft. Gibson school. Carolyn and her husband, Richard, live in Ft. Gibson and two of their grandsons attend school there. "Eric, the older of the two, was outside the school when the shooting started," Mary Lee writes. "He ran home as hard as he could." Mary Lee and her husband, John, live at Earlsboro and commute to Tinker Field each day.

To wind this up, here's a story about four people named Everybody, Somebody, Anybody and Nobody. There was an important job to be done and Everybody was asked to do it. Everybody was sure Somebody would do it. Anybody could have done it, but Nobody did it. Somebody got angry about that, because it was Everybody's job. Everybody thought Anybody could do it but Nobody realized that Everybody wouldn't do it. It ended up that Everybody blamed Somebody when Nobody did what Anybody could have done. Sound familiar? (The original author of this bit is unknown.)



December 30, 1999

Here we come with some more Perry-connected people who could be on our list of "top ten" for this millennium, if there were such a list. I arbitrarily chose all of them on the basis of their achievement in some field, and you may not agree. That's OK. Now, here's the second installment.

Dr. R.R. Robinson. This former Perry school superintendent later became president of the Tonkawa University Preparatory College (now Northern Oklahoma College) and later president of what was then Central State Teachers College in Edmond, now the University of Central Oklahoma. Dr. Robinson guided Perry schools during the difficult, formative years after the Cherokee Strip land opening.

David Lilienthal. Strictly speaking, not a resident here, but we claim a close connection. A *Perry Journal* story in 1939 had this to say: "David Lilienthal, the stormy petrel of the TVA (Tennessee Valley Authority), the man whom President Franklin D. Roosevelt depends on to tame all the utilities, is married to a former Perry girl. Mrs. Lilienthal is the former Helen Lamb, daughter of W .S.. Lamb, pioneer Perry abstractor and former partner of J.E. Dolezal. Mrs. Lilienthal is a graduate of Perry schools and taught in the system here for several years. She left here in the early 1920s to attend DePauw University in

Indiana, where she met the famous liberal." After World War II, he was the first chairman of the newly formed Atomic Energy Commission. He visited here in the home of Mr. and Mrs. R.W. Treeman before his death in 1981. Lilienthal was a brash young lawyer of 32 when he was summoned by President Roosevelt to serve on the first TVA board of directors. He was on the board 13 years.

Dr. Joseph Brandt. I may need some help with this. Dr. Brandt was president of the University of Oklahoma prior to World War II, and his wife was the daughter of the late Mrs. Maud Long of Perry. Dr. Brandt was an intellectual and at one time was head of the OU Press, a highly regarded publishing house. His background included training in journalism. He was usually seen wearing tweeds and smoking a pipe. I had the opportunity to interview him once when he came here to visit Mrs. Long, who lived in our neighborhood at the time. We had a cordial visit.

William E. Jones. Bill Jones was a Noble county farm boy who earned an appointment to the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. He became a general in the Air Force and in 1939 survived a plane crash in Panama. My files lack additional information, but I remember a brother, Freeman Jones, who clerked at a Perry grocery store prior to WWII. Gen. Jones was a frequent visitor in Noble county when his responsibilities permitted.

Clara Bowles Pellow. She was the daughter of Judge and Mrs. William A. Bowles. Her father was a distinguished attorney and jurist, one of several prominent members of the Noble county bar. Mrs. Pellow was well known nationally as a radio and concert singer in the 1930s. Most of the Bowles family were accomplished musically, but Mrs. Pellow had a successful career in the field.

Patti Page. This highly successful singer is not from Perry but we will claim her on the grounds that her brother, Dan Fowler, spent much of his time here while employed in oil field work. Patti visited here with Mr. and Mrs. Fowler and their children. She wanted to come here for a concert during one of our Cherokee Strip celebrations but union wage requirements placed her beyond our budget. We still feel like she's one of us.

More of these are coming soon. Stay tuned.