



December 4, 2001

In this age of politically correct awareness, it comes as no surprise that more of our cherished, traditional phrases appear to be under assault this year. Some of the recent additions to the list of no-no's apparently have to do with the way we speak and write about Christmas, perhaps the most meaningful time of the year for many people. The universal greeting once was "Merry Christmas!" But have you noticed that we are now hearing "Happy Holiday" instead of the usual phrase? That's what they use on many so-called Christmas cards these days, and in advertisements on various media. Most surprising of all, however, is the substitution of "holiday tree" for "Christmas tree." We are seeing and hearing more of that "new," supposedly sanitized way on radio, TV and in print ads, for no apparent reason, but we'd have to conclude that the so-called 'old' way is offensive or objectionable to some segment of the population. Offensive? Objectionable? Give me a break.

I've learned to accept a lot of these wacky changes, but I'm not ready to substitute the generic "holiday" for the name of the season when we celebrate the birth of Christ. I do reluctantly use the abbreviated form, "Xmas," when space requires, but I am assured by preacher friends that the "X" is Greek for the letter "Chi" and that has been understood to mean Christ for something like 2,000 years. It may be OK, but it still seems wrong. Call me a fogey, but I'm not budging.

While on the subject of Christmas, let me throw in another plug for the annual Perry Tour of Homes on Sunday afternoon, December 9, between 1 and 5 p.m.. As usual, the tour will end with an informal tea at the Cherokee Strip Museum on West Fir Avenue. Five decorated homes are on the itinerary and those folks always go to a lot of extra work to make this a worthwhile event. Tickets bought in advance are \$6 at Foster's Corner Drug Store. Thorn Originals and the Rose Petal. The ticket price bought at the door on the day of the Tour is \$7. Proceeds will make possible the purchase of more Christmas decorations for our city. And if you haven't seen the brilliant display of lights in the courthouse park, drive downtown any evening and you will find a delightful array to help brighten your spirit in this blessed CHRISTMAS season.

Still more on this subject: The annual Madrigal Dinner-Concert at Oklahoma State University is now underway nightly. You know what a treat that event is if you have seen it previously. Some of the most gifted students at OSU provide an evening of Christmas carols and other seasonal selections – and this year that includes a humorous rendition of "Rudolphus Rubrinus" ("Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer") done in Madrigal style. Three OSU band members serve as Herald Trumpeters, and one of them is Perry's own Steve Luthye, son of Mr. and Mrs. Jim Luthye. The show goes on nightly starting at 7 p.m. and including an excellent Madrigal dinner. This is one of the least ballyhooed but finest Christmas offerings and you really should try to take it in.

Recommended for the Christmas season is an excellent book by the late Jim Bishop. Actually it is two best-selling books, "The Day Christ Was Born" and "The Day Christ Died," both available singly or all in one volume. The stories are told in documentary style with worlds of good information that I've not found anywhere else. Try the local Carnegie library or your favorite book store.



December 7, 2001



Early Noble county draftees had their picture taken with Selective Service board members at the Perry Santa Fe Railroad station as they awaited a train that would take them to an Army base. Left to right: Board members Joe McClellan Sr., Ile (Ace) Levy, John M. Steighten and Billy Reckert; plus inductees, from left: Walter Anglemeyer, next one unidentified, and Frank Henry Knight.

Stories about the "new" Perry post office keep popping up. When we speak of the "new" post office we are referring to the nice looking red brick building constructed by the Works Progress Administration in 1939 to replace an aging sandstone building that once occupied the extreme northwest corner of the courthouse park. That "new" 1939 building is still there but it has been enlarged and updated by the Postal Service to keep pace with Perry's growing needs. Here's a story for this Pearl Harbor Day.

When the so-called new post office building was constructed, it had a full basement with office space for several government entities. In 1939, that included the newly formed Noble County Selective Service board, which had the unpleasant duty of summoning young Noble county men and sending them away for military duty. To build a well-trained Army and Navy, men 18 years of age and older were drafted even in the trying days before the U.S. became a belligerent in World War II. After the sneak Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, our entry was formalized by President Roosevelt and an angry U.S. Congress. The conscription tempo became much more hectic after that.

The Selective Service Board, or draft board as most people called it, was an early tenant in the new post office basement. Mr. Ile (Ace) Levy, who operated a pawn shop on the north side of the square at 603 Delaware, was clerk of the board. He and his wife, Ethel, a telephone operator, and their young daughter, Janice, had an apartment above Joe Appelman's (sic) Smoke House. Today Mr. Levy would most likely have a different title, something like "administrative assistant," because he really was the full-time executive in a most sensitive position. I believe Irene Malzahn, who passed away last year, was his secretary for a time. Mrs. Jane (Fyffe) Davis also was a key figure in the draft board office. She saw military duty during the war in the women's Coast Guard branch, the SPARS.

One of the draft board's principal responsibilities was the frequent review of men who had registered with them. The board was charged with creating a pool of healthy young men who were eligible for the draft when their registration number was called. If you were ready for the draft, you were classified as 1-A. If you were physically unqualified for service, you were classified as 4-F. Each month a group of Noble county men would be called to have physical examinations at the Tulsa Selective Service office. If you were found to be physically fit for service, you were classified 1-A and told to await orders for induction.

Mr. Levy and the other draft board members had a tough job. Keeping the military supplied with strong young men was not an easy task. They also had to listen to appeals from men and families who wanted a different classification for specific reasons. It was not easy to be deferred after having been classified 1-A, but there were legal grounds for that to happen. Draft board members must have had many sleepless nights as they performed their duties in the basement of the post office building. As a young reporter for *The Perry Daily Journal* at that time, I became familiar with the draft board and the issues they dealt with, and of course in time my number came up and they sent me to Camp Fannin, Texas, for basic training in the Army, just like hundreds of others before me. The board was composed of dedicated men and I respected them for the way they discharged their duties, although at times that must have been stressful and distasteful.



December 11, 2001

Perry's Christmas lights again are providing us with a twinkling wonderland, something to delight all ages, and every bit of the magic is free of charge. Just drive around town one of these fine evenings and enjoy the wonderful displays that have been created by city residents to please the rest of us. Every neighborhood seems to have at least a few ingeniously decorated homes. I haven't seen the figures, but this may be a record year for the number of dressed up for the Christmas season.

And then there is the wonderful collection of lighted holiday scenes in our beautiful courthouse park in the downtown area. Don't fail to check out those decorations and pass along a word of thanks to the city employees and volunteers who create the park's unique collection. The annual Tour of Homes, held last Sunday, provides funds for this special part of our Christmas enjoyment. A lot of people help to make this possible. Here's hoping they understand how much their efforts are appreciated.

The remarks made in this space last week about my personal dislike for the removal of Christian references to this season have inspired some responses, just as might be expected. One lady said she also finds "Xmas" a distasteful, if abbreviated, way of writing "Christmas." To avoid doing that, she uses "C-mas" when a shortened version is needed. "I have used the

term C-mas for years," she writes. "It's short, concise and doesn't 'X' Christ out of Christmas." Sounds like a good idea to me.

Another lady says she does not believe terms like "Happy Holidays" are meant to sanitize the "Merry Christmas" greeting. She believes it is merely an acknowledgment that folks who are not Christians also celebrate the season. To her it seems to be an attempt to appeal to every one, but with the understanding that some are Islamics, Jewish, Buddhists or believers in some other faith. Christians are not the exclusive inhabitants of earth. That is certainly a reasonable point of view. My main complaint, however, is focused on those who use the term "holiday tree" for "Christmas tree." It is important to remember that "Christmas" celebrates the birth of the One who miraculously came to this speck in the universe to show the rest of us how to live.

A note from former Perryman Doris Brookhart, now of Siloam Springs, Arkansas, tells of a unique coincidence that involves the Northwest Corner. On October 19, I had a bit about a program presented by the National Troubadours in the old Grand Opera House on the east side of the square, probably in the year 1916. The printed program for that performance was among the things given to me by David Foster, another former Perryman who now lives in Albuquerque, New Mexico. The program gave the names of the performers for that show on the Perry stage, and it listed a Mr. Earnest Brookhart as a trumpet soloist. Doris writes: "(Mr. Brookhart) was my father-in-law and my mother's cousin. Mr. Brookhart's mother was Rebecca Harrison. a descendant of President Harrison. Mr. Brookhart taught music later at Phillips University in Enid. He was a remarkable man." He had no way of knowing in 1916 that his son would marry a Perry girl several years later.

Doris grew up here and graduated from Perry High School as Doris Gregory. She visits our little city from time to time. She is a cousin of Shirley Morton. My thanks to Doris for this interesting story.



December 14, 2001

In a few months, when the current major renovation project at Perry Memorial Hospital is completed, we are going to have a very impressive-looking building out there on Fourteenth Street. The new entryway on the north end is both handsome and clearly recognizable, and that has not always been true in the past. Families and other visitors had to study the front of the building for a while just to figure out where to go in. There were other problems, including a much-too-small emergency room and congestion in other busy parts of the hospital, but it appears that all of these problems will be solved in the work now being done at the hospital.

With the newly completed Medical Clinic adjacent to the hospital and other health-care facilities in the area, we are seeing the emergence of a modern, well-planned community designed to serve the needs of Noble county and the north-central Oklahoma area. The hospital, Perry physicians, nurses, technicians and others in that field have managed to stay abreast of the latest technology for diagnostics and both short- and long-term care. We all should be grateful and give thanks each day for the availability of that. The community has done much to support the hospital and that kind of help is vital.

Here's hoping the city can soon find a way to provide a new surface for the street that crosses the front of the hospital. Because of heavy traffic in the area, the street is now badly pitted and extremely rough. It should be rebuilt, or at the very least resurfaced with a fresh coat of asphalt. I understand the city does plan to improve the street very soon.

On another topic, a reader takes time to write about the Perry CCC Park southeast of town. He leads off with this question: "Have you noticed how muddy the water stays all the time? That little lake is in the same predicament that the Perry Lake is in.. Why does the city want to put good, clean water from Lake McMurtry on top of muddy water? How much do they plan to raise the level of our little lake? . I would sure like to know the answer to this puzzle."

Also gleaned from the mailbag are the following nuggets, offered by a long-time friend who now enjoys retirement in Florida, where the sun almost always shines. These evidently were borrowed from someone else's column:

"There are many ethnic restaurants in my rather ethnic neighborhood, but once you've eaten one portion of boiled yak, that's about it for the rest of your life."

"As a journalist I've talked to two presidents, and another who claimed he was Jesus, and another who said he knew who was buried in the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier but was sworn to secrecy."

"I've bought houses in less time than it takes a woman to shop for a skirt and blouse."

If you like these, we'll submit some more for your approval at a later date.



December 18, 2001

I had an unexpected phone call the other day from Neva Turner Artall, a former Sumner and Perry lady, who now lives in Houston, Texas. She was primarily interested in information about the family of Mr. and Mrs. Virgil Sherrod, with whom she lived while attending Perry high school in the early 1930s. The Sherrod children, Juhree, Sandra and Kim, were of special interest to her. I helped her with that request, but during the course of our conversation some of the names she mentioned brought back a flood of memories. (Just so you'll know – Virgil Sherrod was advertising manager and the No. 2 man at *The Perry Daily Journal* during that time, prior to the arrival of Milo Watson, and he was still with the local paper when I went to work there in 1941. Milo came aboard the following summer. Mr. and Mrs. Sherrod are now deceased, but Juhree and Sandra live in Newkirk. Kim lives in California. Juhree is a key person in the Newkirk Main Street program, and I see her at some of the state Main Street meetings that both of us attend.)

Neva is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Bill Turner, who operated a service station 12 miles east of Perry on U.S. 64. The location is named Bill's Corner for her Dad – Bill Turner. (See the Turner family history in Vol. 1, "History of Noble County, Oklahoma.")

Neva was a student at PHS in about the same era as my older sister, Jeanice, and some of the names Neva recalled were familiar to me for that reason. Names of others also came back to me during our phone chat. It makes me wonder: What became of those people, who will remain forever young in my memory because that is the only way I knew them. I was not yet ten years old when I became acquainted with some of these people, and they were probably in their mid-teens. Add seventy years elapsed time to those ages and that is about where they would be today. But in my mind's eye, they are still the effervescent, happy "young adults" that I remember. Jeanice and her friends were popular people, and many of them whiled away the time in our living room.

Some of these may be familiar to you – **Wyveeta Powell**. I'm not sure about the spelling of her first name, but that is how it was pronounced. She was a dark-haired, sophisticated young lady, who reminded me of the movie actress Norma Shearer. **Grace Dawson**. A high-spirited cheerleader with the Red Hots PHS pep club; she also was from the Sumner area. **Dickie Jensen**. She was one of the daughters of Mr. and Mrs. C.D. Jensen. She was tall and slender, with high cheekbones and a ready smile. Her real first name was Dorothea. She was the mother of Mrs. Lavaughn (Jandryd) Lawson. **Mildred (Mitzi) Green**. She was a petite and always pleasant high schooler. She married **Bud Francis**, son of Dr. and Mrs. J.W. Francis, and they later lived in Oklahoma City. **Betty Munger**. She was arguably the prettiest girl in town. Betty later went to work as a reporter at *The Perry Daily Journal* and her departure therefrom opened the door for me as her replacement. **Bob Powers**. He was the son of Mr. and Mrs. W.S. Powers. As a youngster, Bob was badly burned and his face was scarred when he tried to get rid of some red ants. Nevertheless, he was a fine football player for the Maroons and Coach Hump Daniels. **Nick Triplett**. Another PHS gridiron hero. I think he lived with the Powers family. He was very upset one night at our house when someone (who shall remain nameless) tried to dump a full ashtray on his curly locks. He eventually forgave the miscreant.

Those are some of the people and personalities who come to mind as I ponder the discussion I had with Neva Turner the other day. Do you remember any of them?



December 21, 2001

One of these Northwest Corner columns the other day told about the old sandstone Perry post office, and it was accompanied by a photo of the local U.S. Postal Service crew who worked there in October 1939 when the original version of our present post office was built. That brought back some pleasant memories for Jo W. Garten of Ponca City, who grew up here. Mrs. Garten, daughter of the late Mr. and Mrs. G.A. (Gus) Wollard, maintains several connections with Perry and she is well known to many of us here. I thought you would enjoy her recollections. Here they are, in her own words:

"The Exchange Bank (several years ago) was across the street north of the old post office. Next door west of the bank was my Dad's office that he shared with W.S. (Walt) Powers. A short distance west was your Dad's drug store (the City Drug) where my daddy give me a nickel to go get an ice cream cone. That section of town and the old post office were a big, exciting part of my early childhood.

"It was a delight to remember many of the fine men you mentioned who worked at the post office. However, the one I loved most was John Warner. You called him fireman-laborer. He was a black American gentleman. It was in the 1920s and 1930s that I knew him. I was born in 1914. I would perhaps have called him a custodian today. I think the term fireman meant he was responsible for their heating equipment operating in the old post office.

"I was a 'late in life child' so my parents were able to afford help with the cleaning. We lived at 1013 Elm street and the street was still dirt. Things got mighty dusty. John Warner came in the spring and again in the fall to wash the windows and beat the rugs. They were large rugs from the parlor, living and dining rooms. He hung them on the clothes lines in the back yard, then beat them with a large wire tennis-shape rod to beat the dirt out. I loved to follow him around and visit with him while he did that and washed the windows. He was a fine man and I feel very blessed to have known him. Racial colors and cultures have never been a problem for me because of knowing him.

"The other part of your article about memories from the 1930s told about the flatbed Model-T truck that hauled mail from the Santa Fe and Frisco Railroad stations. I remember calling it 'the Special Delivery Truck.' Air Mail was a new and exciting thing. My sister Mary Lee had graduated from college by that time and was teaching school in Perry. She and I were excited when 'the Air Mail Truck' stopped at our house, for it usually meant she was getting an air mail letter from her boy friend. Perry was a wonderful place to grow up. I have indeed been blessed."

Thanks to Jo Garten for sharing these memories. I well remember Mr. John Warner and he was indeed a fine gentleman. Also, she reminds us of that ritual of beating the rugs each fall and spring. Seems like it took several days of hard work by all the family to get the dust out. But mostly, those were good old days.



December 24, 2001

Americans, despite some trying times in recent months, can truly give thanks for many things in this wonderful Christmas season. We are at war and one of the consequences of that condition is the placing of lives in peril. Still, we pray for the safety of the men and women of this nation as they carry out their duties and seek to replace terrorism with hope for justice and peace. We are thankful for leaders who have the gritty determination to see this terrible global nightmare brought to a conclusion, although that may take months or years to achieve.

Economic conditions are still wobbly, partly as a collateral of the terrible ordeal manifested in New York and at the Pentagon on September 11, but we know things could be much worse. There is no shortage of sugar, tires, nylons, new cars and the other civilian goods that quickly became rationed or just disappeared after the U.S. was plunged into World War II sixty years ago. The stock market seems hardly to know how to react from hour to hour. Up one day, down the next. In Perry, we know of the business difficulties at the Ditch Witch plant, but we look with confidence to the future when that amazing company again will be leading all of us back to good times. Fortunately it is not directly subject to the whims of the New York Stock Exchange. Remember, though, some of its customers are and the Charles Machine Works, Inc., and its leaders must deal with reality. We can be very thankful that a morally responsible enterprise such as that is our neighbor and benefactor.

Patriotism in this country continues to be at an all-time high. One indication of that is the scarcity of 3'x 5' U.S. flags. The one that I have flown from a pole above the garage door for several years wore out quite some time ago and I just didn't get around to replacing it right away. Then came the current crisis and I still do not have one. The usual sources have been out of flags that size for months. About a month ago I finally ordered one from a catalog and was told to expect delivery "by mid-December." The latest update advises that the item is now on back order and may be shipped "within thirty days." I'm not holding my breath.

Georgia Curtis advises that she cannot find a photo of the St. Louis Hotel, the red brick hostelry that once stood at 708 Cedar street, where Dr. Brian Busby's dental care suite is now located. Georgia has received several requests for a picture of that grand old place, but she has been unable to locate one. Let her know if you can help.

Back to the wartime shortages of other times.. We're all delighted that the price of gasoline in Perry is among the lowest in the U.S. Thanks to the old supply-and-demand principle we can enjoy regular unleaded and premium fuel at the most

favorable price in many months. For a while recently that meant around 83 cents a gallon for regular, depending on where you choose to fill your tank. The price is higher now but that was a nice Christmas present for a while.

Here's a sincere Christmas wish for happiness to each of you. Now, to wrap this up, here's a bit of philosophy to live by, or not:

Work like you don't need the money.

Love like you've never been hurt.

Dance like nobody's watching.

Sing like nobody's listening.

Live like it's Heaven on Earth.



December 27, 2001

A few decades ago, when I was still covering Perry high school sports for this newspaper, there was a resurgence of excellence in several areas of our local athleticism. As usual, the Maroon wrestlers were winning state championships. The PHS basketball team was threatening to outscore every opponent they faced and that was a relatively new experience. As usual, the sport that garnered the most attention was football, and Perry fans were experiencing some major thrills because of the success of the young men who took part in that endeavor. Rex Edgar was coach of both football and wrestling at the time. Gary Kirtley assisted in football and also served as head coach of the basketball program. Coaches Edgar and Kirtley both were local boys, products of the Perry school system, and that made their achievements all the sweeter.

Perry fans of that period were fiercely loyal in their support of all those programs, just as they are today. Traditionally, that is always the case everywhere, but needless to say it is more fun to praise a team, the individual players and the coaches when things are going well. Just ask the young men who played football at the University of Oklahoma this season. But let's not get into that.

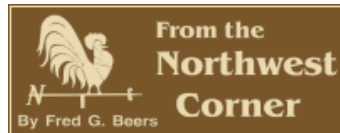
Another parallel between that era and today is the help provided by such groups as the Perry Quarterback Club, the Tip-In Club and the Takedown Club. Most of the members are parents of participants in the program they support, but many are just John Q. Fans. They love the kids, both boys and girls, who are members of the teams, and they render a lot of help to the coaches in collateral ways. Right now I'm remembering something the Quarterback Club of that period used to do every year on behalf of the football program at PHS.

At the start of each season, the QB Club president would announce that money was needed to help pay for some of the things the club wanted to do. Foremost in that area was a complete movie of each game played by the Maroons. The film was used as a program at Quarterback meetings but it also was a prime tool for the coaches in their team meetings when good plays and some not so good were called to the attention of the Perry gridiron squad. This was back in the days before video tape became commonplace.

To cover the considerable expense of filming and developing movies of each game, the QB Club tried several kinds of money-raisers. The one that proved most successful, however, was a kind of game where the ultimate prize was a cash gift, or season tickets, or things like that. With the proceeds the QB's filmed all games, both home and away, then sent the

raw film to a laboratory in Oklahoma City where processing was expedited in order to have the developed film ready to be shown to the team on Monday mornings and at noon when the QB Club had lunch in the Junior High cafeteria. In both instances, Coach Edgar provided a narration and pointed out significant things that were praiseworthy or needed correcting.

The film project had to be undertaken each year, of course, until technology made possible the wonder of video tape that could be viewed immediately. The QB Club earned a lot of money through their annual "game," and to some of us it seemed that a new camera had to be purchased every year. That probably was not literally the case, but it gave us something to laugh about each year while grumbling good-naturedly as we shelled out money for QB Club tickets.



December 31, 2001

Carol Steichen gave me an advance look at some of her new acquisitions the other day, and I'm like a kid in a candy store. So many interesting photographs, bits of memorabilia and other treasures. All of them bring us clear glimpses of Perry as it must have been seventy or eighty years ago. It appears to have been the kinder, gentler age that we can only dream about now.

I want to share some of these with you, but there is a problem. Reading descriptions of these fascinating shards of information cannot begin to explain the fascinating images the articles conjure in our minds, so you may want to see and touch them for yourself. For instance, a collection of some rarely seen picture postcards and other photographs of Perry scenes in the 1890s and early 1900s show us how local citizens dressed and wore their hair back then. Merely reading about them does not conjure the mental images that spring up when you hold the photos in your hands.

Most of the material I'm writing about here is from the estate of the late Fredonna Eisenhower Dowell. She saved many things, including newspaper clippings and some correspondence from Russia received by the Perry school instrumental music director, Professor Leopold Radgowsky, the Russian Bolshevik refugee who wound up in Perry after the 101 Ranch Show went bankrupt. Professor Radgowsky had no family in this country, so when he died in 1938 many of his things were bequeathed to Lizzie Eisenhower, his landlady and friend, who also was the mother of Fredonna's first husband, Jesse Eisenhower. The Professor, of course, is a story all by himself.

The handwritten letters are in the language of Russia, so whatever light they shine on that period must remain hidden until a translator is found. The other articles are in English and they help to illuminate our understanding of that age. For instance, there is a single-sheet, printed program for a Perry High School senior class play, with the year unfortunately missing. Members of the cast were Lucinda Wollard, Carl Thomason, Ella Merry, Margaret Monroe, Edward Trumbula, Jessamine Jensen, Sherman Branen, Edna Mugler, Maxine Woodruff and Robert Coyle. Some reader probably can tell us what year that would have been. Title of the play was "I'll Leave It to You," a three-act comedy. Entertainment between the first and second acts was provided by Marguerite Braden singing "In Old Madrid;" a Spanish dance by Alene Willett; and a vocal solo, "In Old Madrid," by Clara Bowles.

In the same area is another single-sheet program, this one for the PHS junior class play, "A June Rose," also without showing the year it was presented. Music was provided by Professor Radgowsky's orchestra. Cast members were Maude Jensen, Margaret Harbaugh, Josephine St.Clair, Norman Jones, Russell Dotts, James Johnston, Sue Powers, Ruby Walters, Christine Casparis, Helen Lobsitz, Viola Hogzette and Otis Sims. "Specialties between acts" were offered by a boys' quartet

composed of Harold Victory, Norman Jones, Earnest Brown and Ted Duty; plus a vocal solo by Georgianna Blake and a number by a girls' quartet composed of Miss Blake, Christine Casparis, Jonnie Lee Atkins and Josephine St.Clair. Advertisers who bought space in the program were J.C. Penney Co. ("A Nation-Wide Institution Where Savings Are Greatest"); the O.K. Filling Station ("Service" Our Motto); The Famous ("Noble County's Greatest Store"); Kraemer's Shoe Store ("The Home of Standard Merchandise"); McCuiston's ("The Men's Store"); and Lobsitz Hardware Co. ("35 Years in Perry and Always on the Square; Everything in Hardware"). The program was printed by Hovey's Print Shop ("Where Work Is High Class and Always on Time"). On the back page, Mr. Hovey claimed to have patrons "in Tokio, Japan," and to prove it he threw in a few Japanese language characters, which probably no one in Perry could read.

More on this collection coming soon.