

February 1, 2002

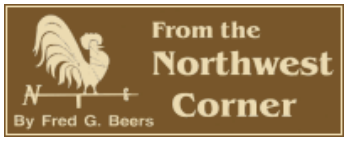
During recent weeks we have experienced the loss of several popular artists in the field of vocal music, and it makes me sad because most of them were gifted stylists. Many of them came from the Big Band Era, one of my personal favorite time periods. Some small compensation is the fact that modern recording techniques assure us that their unique qualities can still be heard and appreciated for years to come. But, nothing can take the place of a clever set of lyrics sung by Perry Como; a soulful ballad by Frank Sinatra or Mel (The Velvet Fog) Torme; or a sultry number by Miss Peggy Lee, who just died the other day. The list of those we have lost goes on. You undoubtedly have your own favorites just as I do. Some of our younger readers probably would not recognize many of the names. They have been deprived of something that a lot of us enjoyed greatly. How I miss the Big Band Era.

Jerry McKeown, up at Billings, advises that the internet's E-Bay has been offering a bicycle frame made by "Tobin Brothers of Perry." Jerry wonders who the Tobins were and what else they may have manufactured. My 1910-11 City Directory lists three male Tobins - Charles E., a carpenter; James F., a traveling salesman; and John, no occupation listed. That's all the information I can find that might be helpful. Does anyone else know about the bicycle frames?

Along with that copy of the 1934 newspaper, *The Perry Tribune*, described in this column the other day, Sam Ebersole also brought me an advertisement for Smith's Bile Beans (Small), and I thought you might like to hear about it. The piece is printed on a card measuring 4" x 8". One side has pictures of three couples, representing seven-year-olds, 17-year-olds and 70-year-olds. The male is shown planting a gentle kiss on the female's cheek in each case, accompanied by this poetic copy: "At seven a kiss is so sweet / To steal one now and then's a treat; At seventeen they're nicer still / And there's a way where there's a will; At seventy it's just the same / They still keep up the old old game." On the back side the card advises that the pills are "sugar coated, easy to take; one-fourth the size of old style." The pills were said to "act on the liver and bile." They were described as "a perfect cure for sick headache, billious attacks, colds, constipation and liver complaint." A bottle of 30 pills was priced at 25 cents, and they were available from druggists or the manufacturer, whose address was on Greenwich Street in New York City.

That information the other day about the Perry Mill & Elevator brought back a lot of pleasant memories for Betty Andrews and Dorothy Bowers. In its prime, the business was Perry's largest. Its chief product, Pride of Perry Flour, was widely known and highly regarded. Betty's dad, Charles Schaefer, was with the old mill until it was closed in the 1930s by the new owners, General Mills. Subsequenntly he became manager of the Diamond Ice Co. at 210 Seventh street. Dorothy's dad, Henry Grundeman, also was a long-time employee of the Perry Mill. He transferred to the General Mills plant in Oklahoma City when the Perry Mill & Elevator were closed.

Roy Kendrick offers this succinct advice, which will be today's column closer: "Don't squat with your spurs on."



February 5, 2002

After several weeks of anxious waiting, my new 3'x 5' tangle-free U.S. flag arrived in the mail the other day and now, with the completion of "minor assembly" and installation of the flag pole, it is ready to be unfurled. I can hardly wait for that momentous occasion.

I was pleased to notice on the information sheet accompanying the set that it was "proudly made in the U.S.A." If it had been made anywhere else it would have been promptly returned to the sender and the search for an American-made banner would have been resumed.

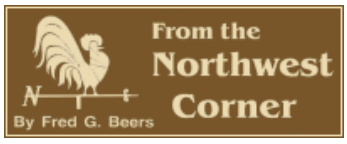
U.S. flags this size are scarce right now because more people want to fly them as part of the wave of patriotism that followed the September 11 terrorist attacks last year. In my case, the new flag is a nylon replacement for an aging cotton flag that pretty well ripped itself apart on a roof gutter over a period of several years. The new one swivels in the wind and is supposed to be nearly impervious to that kind of self-destruction. We'll see about that.

You might be interested in the "flag etiquette" brochure that came with my new flag. It begins by stating that ANY day is appropriate for flying the flag, but any legal or public holiday is OK. (Technically, the U.S. has no national holidays, since each state makes its own decision on that matter.) The next legal holiday in Oklahoma falls on February 12, Abraham Lincoln's birthday. Then comes February 18, which is designated as "Presidents' Day," combining George Washington's birthday and Lincoln's birthday into a single celebration.

Here's a summary of when and where to display the flag. On buildings and stationary flagpoles outdoors, the flag should be displayed only from sunrise to sunset. It should not be displayed at all during stormy or rainy weather, unless for some very special reason. (Some years ago, I was told that the U.S. flag could be flown at night if it were properly lighted. Has that changed?) In no case should the flag ever touch the ground. It should be raised with hearty briskness and when lowered it should be done solemnly and slowly.

The blue field with the stars in the flag should be at the peak of a staff extending from the building front, balcony or window, and next to a pole when extended from a house to a pole at the edge of sidewalk or suspended by a rope. (These tips presumably were written by an American, but I'm not sure the preceding makes sense.)

We'll continue this summary of flag etiquette at another date, if you are still interested. Meantime, let's see more U.S. flags proudly waving from homes and businesses every day, not just on special occasions.



February 8, 2002

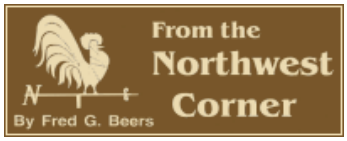
You may be looking for something to relieve the stress and strain of these past few days. Electricity, the lack of it, has been a problem and it continues to be just that for so many in this part of the U.S. All the woes are not yet over, so spend a moment or two with me as we delve into an unrelated subject that has no connection to the vicious "ice tornado," as our daughter, Susan, calls it.

Many of you will remember Margaret Plumer, a daughter of the late Mr. and Mrs. L.E. Plumer. She grew up here and was vice president of my graduating class at Perry high school in 1941. She was one of the most popular girls in school at that time, admired and respected by boys and girls alike. Margaret married a handsome Oregon man, Bill Black, and they have made their home in Salem, Oregon, for many years. Several months ago Margaret was diagnosed with cancer, and on January 31

she lost a valiant fight to that insidious foe. Many prayers were offered by friends on her behalf but now she is beyond all of that earthly suffering. I have not seen her since our class celebrated our 50th anniversary in 1991, but we have kept in touch via e-mail.

There's a slightly strange story concerning Margaret that I have told many times. It has to do with coincidences. When I was in the Army in 1943, I was sent to a wonderful little Catholic school, St. Bonaventure University, in Olean, New York, for training with the Army Specialized Training Program. The first night there, I was having a sandwich in the school cafeteria when another GI sat down across from me. He was a total stranger, but after a few minutes he asked if I was from Perry, Oklahoma. The question surprised me, but of course I proudly said yes, and he then explained the inquiry. His name was Tenal Cooley, from Bartlesville, OK, and he had been a student at Oklahoma A.& M. College before the war. While there he met a comely young co-ed named Margaret Plumer, from Perry, and they became friends. He remembered what her PHS class ring looked like, and he had observed that I had one like it, and that led to his opening question.

Tenal and I became good friends while we were at St. Bonaventure. He was later with an Army unit in Europe and lost a leg in combat. When the war was over, we both came back to Oklahoma. Tenal joined the personnel department of *The Daily Oklahoman* and began climbing the corporate ladder. I rejoined the news staff of this newspaper. Tenal also became a good friend of Francis Thetford, my former boss here at *The Journal*, who by that time had become a columnist with *The Oklahoman*. Several years later I learned that Dave and Thelma Muir, who moved to Perry after retiring from business in Oklahoma City, were neighbors of Tenal and the next time I saw him was at a gathering in the Muir home. There's no point to this story except that it serves as another illustration of what a small world we live in, indeed. But it also helps me remember three people, Margaret Plumer, Francis Thetford and Tenal Cooley, who were very special to me in different ways but who are now gone to their reward. I'll miss them, but I'll never forget them.



February 12, 2002

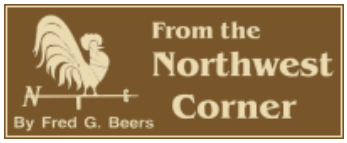
The 100th anniversary of anything is a big event and the PHS Alumni Association is trying to make sure the centennial year of our local high school is properly recognized. A handful of former students is ramrodding the project but they need help. A lot of help. If you've ever been involved with the organization of a family reunion or a class reunion, you know what kind of headaches can be encountered. And this centennial celebrates all of the 100 senior classes that have graduated from Perry high, so you know the usual problems are multiplied many times over on this special occasion. If you are willing to lend a hand, contact Delores Mitchell or someone else at the PHS Alumni Association office on the south side of the square any Wednesday afternoon. You won't have to do any heavy lifting, but you will need to dedicate some time to assist in rounding up a few of the loose ends.

The late Ethel Knox, the daughter of a true Noble county pioneer, taught social science subjects in the Perry school system for many years. History was one of her favorite topics and the history of this area was at the head of the list. In 1937 she wrote a thesis on "The Beginning of Perry, Oklahoma," as part of the requirements for a master of arts degree at Oklahoma A.&M. College. It is still a very lucid, well-organized treatise on the early years of this community. She was a teacher, so the history of local schools was a subject very dear to her heart. The thesis has only 61 pages, including the bibliography, but it is chockfull of factual information about the earliest days in Perry.

Thinking about the school's centennial year, I turned to Miss Knox's thesis, as I have many times previously, and found it to be still a veritable fountain of well-researched facts. Miss Knox introduced the subject with this statement:

"As things were in a more or less chaotic condition (after the opening), it is impossible to get a complete history of the growth of the schools in the early days. However, the settlers made various provisions for schooling. Short terms were maintained in all sorts of places - dugouts, sod houses, shanties and tents. Those early schools were greatly handicapped for want of space and in many instances they were far from inviting as to conveniences and equipment."

If you have visited the restored Rose Hill country school on the grounds of our wonderful Cherokee Strip Museum you can perhaps glimpse what it was like in those pioneer schools. In the portion quoted above, Miss Knox is talking about conditions as they existed even before the old one-room school houses emerged on the scene. Our ancestors were truly concerned about educating the children who came to this part of the Cherokee Strip. They recognized the importance of schools and they took steps to insure the cultural growth, understanding and development of the young people who assumed the mantle of leadership in due time. We'll have more about early school days in Noble county in a future column.



February 15, 2002

A reader has provided some good column fodder. She says: "We pass along jokes, we pass along just about everything. This information could really help someone." Here's her story: "A corporate attorney sent this to his employees. We've all heard horror stories about fraud that's committed using your name, address, social security number, credit account numbers, and so forth. Unfortunately, the author of this piece had firsthand knowledge. His wallet was stolen last month. Within a week the thieve(s) ordered an expensive monthly cell phone package, applied for a credit card, had a credit line approved to buy a computer, received a Personal Identification Number (PIN) from the Department of Motor Vehicles to change his driving record information online, and more. Here are his suggestions:

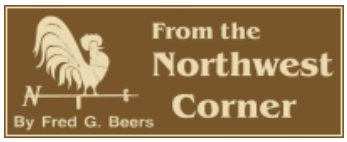
"Place the contents of your wallet on a photocopy machine; do both sides of each license, credit card, and the like. If your wallet is stolen, you will know what you had in it plus all of the account numbers and phone numbers to call and cancel. Keep the photocopy in a safe place. If you have a scanner on your computer, you can scan them and store them on a floppy, not just on your hard drive.

"But here's some more critical information to limit the damage in case this happens to you or someone you know. As everyone always advises, cancel your credit cards immediately, but the key is having the toll-free numbers and your card numbers handy so you know whom to call. Keep those where you can find them easily. File a police report immediately in the jurisdiction where it was stolen. This proves to credit providers you were diligent and it's a first step toward an investigation (if there is one).

"Here's what is perhaps most important: Call the three national credit reporting organizations immediately to place a fraud alert on your name and social security number. I had never thought of doing this until advised by a bank that called to tell me an application for credit was made over the internet in my name. The alert means any company that checks your credit knows your information was stolen and the company has to contact you by phone to authorize new credit. By the time I was advised to do this, almost two weeks after the theft, all the damage had been done.

"There are records of all the credit checks initiated by the thieves' purchases, none of which I knew about before placing the alert. Since then, no additional damage has been done and the thieves threw my wallet away this weekend. Someone turned it in. It seems to have stopped them in their tracks. The numbers are: Equifax - 1-800-525-6285; Experian (formerly TRW) - 1-888-397-3742; and Social Security Administration (fraud line) - 1-800-269-0271."

This information may be valuable to you if your wallet is stolen. It's better to be prepared than to wish you had done something before the fact. Be careful out there!



February 19, 2002

A roomful of folks met the other morning to talk about what's good and what needs fixing here in Perry. About 25 men and women, some of the leaders of this community, came up with a list of ideas, short term and long term goals, as requested by the Perry Chamber of Commerce. All the points are laudable, and the best part is they are doable.

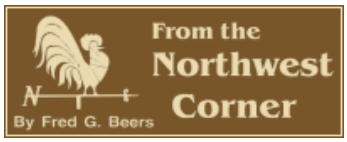
The purpose of the assembly was to outline a program for the Chamber this year and beyond under the direction of the newly elected C-C president, Rick Tearney. Sharing in the responsibility for getting things done is the chamber staff, composed of Carolyn Briegge, executive director, and administrative assistant Kaylee Martens, along with the group's board of directors. Many of the objectives named at the session are not new; some of them have been cussed and discussed for years without a solution. Solving the problems they identified will not happen overnight, either. But at least they came up with a laundry list of changes that need to be made quickly along with a collection of dreams that may take generations to achieve. The important thing is, all of the ideas were laid out in an atmosphere of congenial objectivity. Comments from the group were frank and, for the most part, to the point. But everyone's comments were discussed by the entire group.

I've been to meetings like this before and perhaps you have, too. The fact that they are even held shows the concern of people of this community about the stability and the future of Perry and all of Noble county. The time spent in weighing our condition is not wasted as long as some positive action results. If our flaws and beauty marks were weighed but nothing happened, it would be easy to dismiss the value of such seminars. That does not mean the Chamber of Commerce has the sole responsibility for developing a plan of action and putting it into effect. The Chamber is limited in what it can do by the constraints of time and manpower. The proof of the value of this assembly will be determined by the outcome of everyone's efforts, and that includes you and me.

Do you want to see a more beautiful Perry? Then organize neighborhood committees and police up the trash - plastic cups, soft drink cans and bottles, paper napkins and so forth - that now litters just about every street in town. Or do the picking up by yourself. Do merchants want to develop a better image? Instruct clerks to greet potential shoppers who come through the front door, showing them a cheerful face and a sincere offer to help. Prove to them that it's smart to shop Perry first. Don't encourage buyers to pay sales taxes in other communities when they could help build Perry by buying at home. You get the idea. Be a booster, not a knocker.

That's enough from the soapbox today. It's hard not to get worked up when you notice that we are in a changing economy and that help is needed. Don't blame the condition on Ditch Witch. Yes, there's a lull in the market right now but that

company is rock-solid and it will continue to serve as this area's premier employer for many years to come. Just have faith and take the time to do what you can to keep Perry and Noble county moving forward. The Chamber of Commerce rightfully asks each of us to do his or her part. That organization cannot possibly do it alone.



February 22, 2002

Among the biggest casualties in that recent ice storm were many of the beautiful old trees that graced Perry residential lawns and public places, including the courthouse park. Weighted down by the heavy sheath of ice deposited on them by a vicious winter blast, entire trees and large limbs were broken off, leaving ugly, rough stumps where graceful, leafy branches once grew. Professional tree trimmers did what they could, but, sadly, a lot of their patients were lost. Most were converted to firewood or mulch for spring planting.

The older trees were survivors of other storms, including straight and tornadic winds, along with an array of chewing insects and damaging disease blights, but they were no match for Mother Nature's wintry knockout punch. Those graceful old trees were our friends through the years. Some of them may have dated back to the Cherokee Strip run era, in 1893, but it is more likely that they were planted somewhat later by early-day settlers who disliked the naked prairie of this otherwise lovely land.

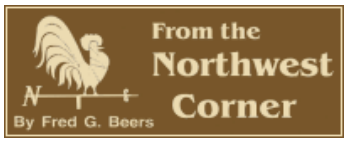
Will T. Little is the name most commonly associated with the planting of trees throughout Noble county in the first decade after the Cherokee Strip land run of September 16, 1893. He homesteaded a quarter-section at the time of the run, but in 1896 he planted 8,000 seedling white elm sprouts in the courthouse park. At the time, that five-acre tract was known as Central Park. It was usually covered by a haze of red dust, except for the times when alfalfa was planted there in a futile effort to reduce the swirling dirt cloud. Mr. Little was a newspaperman, a nature lover and an ecologist.

The courthouse park in 1896 was a desolate and barren piece of real estate, a buffalo wallow before the run, until Mr. Little received permission of county commissioners to plant the seedlings. As they matured, he was allowed to thin out the rows and move some of the saplings to parks and school grounds in Perry and elsewhere around the county. Thus, a large part of the treeless, virgin land of this area acquired windbreaks and graceful sentinels that enhanced the landscape for many years. Then came the ice storm of 2002. By then, many of Mr. Little's trees already were gone, but others have contributed to the growth and variety of trees in this area.

One whose name comes quickly to mind is the late Dr. F.C. Seids. He was a pioneer Perry dentist and a tree lover in his own right. A portion of his personal recollections can be found in Robert Cunningham's *Perry, Pride of the Prairie*, a history of this community. The book is now out of print but many local people have copies. Dr. Seids had a great interest in pecan trees and recommended grafting to improve the quality of pecans produced in this area. Dr. Seids was a man of many interests. For one thing, he was a flower lover. The backyard of his home on the southeast corner of Eighth and Ivanhoe was a wonderland of blooming irises and each year he invited the public to tour his garden any time at their convenience. His fascination with pecan trees and grafting eventually led him to file as a candidate for the Oklahoma house of representatives in the 1940s. He won the race, defeating Henry Bellmon of Billings, a Republican, who of course went on to serve two terms as governor of Oklahoma and two terms as a U.S. senator from this state. Dr. Seids, a Democrat, had some

issues he wanted to resolve and believed that he could best attack them by serving in the legislature. Mr. Bellmon was the first Republcan governor of this state. Both men were members of the Perry First Presbyterian church.

Many pecan trees were seriously damaged or destroyed in this winter's historic ice storm, and with their loss we say goodbye to visual links to an early era in Perry and Noble county. It's also a reminder of how much those early residents cared for the new land where they had taken up residence. Now, the rest of us have an opportunity to do something by replanting ornamental shade trees, or perhaps just picking up the trash and removing junk from our yards. Future generations will be grateful.



February 26, 2002

Elizabeth Sims sounds a warning for all of us - read the detailed breakdown in monthly charges on bills you receive in the mail. She was speaking from a recent personal experience with the telephone company (AT&T) but the same thing probably applies to anyone else (and any other phone company) whose services you use. In her case, some long distance calls were charged to her number at a time and to a place that she never calls. Evidently it was an honest mistake, but it took a while to get the account straightened out. Elizabeth suspects that others may be paying for calls they never made without bothering to check the detailed printout, and that's like pouring money down the drain. "Read your bill," she cautions.

Another reader, Kit Froebel, furnishes the following lines for our amusement. She notes that "personal ads" for "older folks" have become rather long. These ads are already in vogue in Florida and Arizona. Here is a sampling:

FOXY LADY: Sexy, fashion-conscious, blue-haired beauty, 80's, slim, 5'4" (used to be 5'6"), searching for sharp-looking, sharp-dressing companion. Matching white shoes and belt a plus.

LONG- TERM COMMITMENT: Recent widow who has just buried fourth husband looking for someone to round out a six-unit plot. Dizziness, fainting, shortness of breath, not a problem.

SERENITY NOW: I am into Solitude, long walks, sunrises, the ocean, yoga and meditation. If you are the silent type, let's get together, take our hearing aids out, and enjoy quiet times.

WINNING SMILE: Active grandmother with original teeth seeking a dedicated flosser to share rare steaks, corn on the cob and caramel corn.

SEATTLE OR STONES? I still like to rock, still like to cruise in my Camaro on Saturday nights and still like to play the air guitar. If you were a groovy chick, or are now a groovy hen, let's get together and listen to my boss collection of eight-track tapes.

MEMORIES: I can usually remember Monday through Thursday. If you can remember Friday, Saturday and Sunday, let's put our two heads together.

MINT CONDITION: Male, 1932, high mileage, good condition, some hair, many new parts including hip, knee, cornea, valves. Doesn't run but walks well.

If you're still on board, here are some more bits of Will Rogers' wisdom from Roy Kendrick:

"If you're riding ahead of the herd, take a look back every now an' then to make sure it's still there.

"Lettin' the cat out of the bag is a whole lot easier'n puttin' it back.

"After eating an entire bull, a mountain lion felt so good he started roaring. He kept it up until a hunter came along and shot him. The moral: When you're full of bull, keep your mouth shut."