

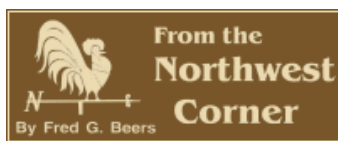
**February 1, 2006**

**David Thomas**

There was always something special about David Thomas. I mean, really unusual, beside the fact that he was a preacher's son, an A student, and one of the best bass horn players ever to march around the Perry square. He was good in all those things, and many others, too. I guess that is what made him "special."

David was born just a few days before I was, in the summer of 1924. That's probably one reason I always considered him "special," although he would have disputed that contention. His father was pastor of the local Presbyterian church for nearly 30 years and his mother, Eula, was a former missionary to India. He had a younger brother, Harcourt. The younger David thought of himself as normal. He was my best friend until the Army separated us at the start of the Army Specialized training Program (ASTP), during WWII, when he went to Rutgers University in New Jersey and I went to St. Bonaventure University in New York state. We were both 18 years old. David wound up in Europe during the Battle of the Bulge, in which he was killed by the Nazis. Fate took me to the Pacific Ocean area and a non-combative role on the Army Newspaper, *Stars & Stripes*. Mrs. Thomas gave me one of David's favorite books, "The Bounty Trilogy," shortly after his Army coffin arrived in Perry from France for reburial.

After graduating from Perry High School at the age of 16 in 1941, David enrolled in Park College, a Presbyterian-related school in Missouri, and became a bass vocal soloist with the college glee club. I thought that was amazing. He sang with the youth choir here but could never get the pitch just right. Even when he and I, at my suggestion, helped ourselves to some knives sold at my Dad's drug store, he was willing to do what others said. He was a good student, besides a good friend. I have many old snapshots of the two of us at the church manse, at Eighth and Elm, playing with our little red wagons or just messing around. I will always miss him.



**February 4, 2006**

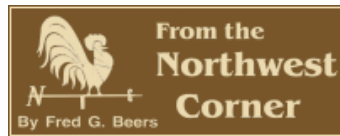
**There were many more PHS friends**

One thing about being a student at Perry High School – if you attended school there, everyone was your friend. At least, that was true if you were a senior at PHS in 1941. That's when and where I was, and I had a lot of good buddies. Our class may have been distinctive for that reason, but we like to think that the whole school was like that. We truly cared for each other then, and we do now. So, to identify some particular "good friends" may have been a good idea, but that is not to say that others were excluded. We all liked everyone else, and we still do. Not many of us are left, that's true, but the survivors know that we can call on any of the others when help, even just a helping hand, is needed, it will be forthcoming.

In recent columns I have called out the names of a handful of my best buddies from that period long ago, but you must understand that there are others. The first ones identified were three men, all now deceased, but I would not hesitate to request a word of cheer or a smile from the female gender. Like Phyllis Schurkens Wurtz, a classmate from that misty past.

Or Margie Jean Gafford of Oklahoma City, Philamene Lindeman Hardin of Houston, or Marvin Dauman. Some of these are no longer with us, but I consider all of them buddies. – Jack Bechtold, Lee Davis Auer, Margaret Plummer Black, Bonita Trumbla, Bill Wurtz, Peggy Dixon Harris, Cathleen Wright Foster, Neils Anderson, Clem Yockey, Charlie Bair, Bob Beck, Virginia Magee Clark, Dorothy and George Dolezal, or any of many more whose names escape me momentarily.

There are many more – all of those on our class roster, actually, and if you are a graduate of that illustrious palace of education, you know what I mean. Also, it is comforting to know that we all have family and friends who stand ready to lend a hand when requested. None of us deserves the measure of devotion that others have for us, and perhaps this season only makes us more aware of that.



## ***February 8, 2006***

### **Gene Wood**

Gene Wood has always been a man's man, but he had enough chutzpah to charm the socks off many a local maiden. I had the good fortune to work with him vocationally and professionally. Yet, somehow I know that I never did get to know him, and as far as I know that was how the game should be played.

Gene was the coach of a super-successful kid's baseball team here one summer and he welcomed all comers, long as they did not affect his team's eligibility. He was chief of the city police department after his tenure at the sheriffs office was over. He put many bad men in jail, and turned many of them away from a life of crime. He knew everyone.

When someone needed a bunch of kids or grownups for a particular chore, they turned to Gene. He knew how much leverage would be needed for each one, so they asked Gene for his service. He always remembered where the skeletons were stashed, and he knew what it would take to make them workers for that cause.

For years he has been part of the backbone of the local Presbyterian church, the Democrat party and the Lions Club, not necessarily in that order. But he has always known how to make things grow, and I'm not talking about garden plants. He'd appreciate a call or a brief rap on the door of his room at Perry Memorial. Go by and see him someday when you have a few minutes.



## ***February 11, 2006***

### **Billy Pricer**

One of the best football players turned out by the skill and wisdom of the late Coach Harold (Hump) Daniels at Perry High School was a young man named Billy Pricer. Unfortunately, for me, he came along at a time when I was not covering sports

for this newspaper, although I did see many wrestling matches, basketball and football games during that time.

We were winning in all of them, by the way, and that made it easier to get good stories about them from fans, parents and other devotees of the activity. Billy was good, a natural born athlete. He graduated from PHS and was recruited by the late Bud Wilkinson at OU, which was just beginning to acquire some of the indomitable spirit we now associate with the Sooner teams. Bud wanted Billy as a blocking back, place kicker and a ball carrier. Actually, Billy could have played any position, anywhere. He also was sought by the OU wrestling coach, Port Robertson, as a heavyweight wrestler, and he excelled in all those roles. Wrestling had to be dropped from his list of vocations, however, because of an injury, but he was a mighty good football player for the Sooners. He was later drafted by the world champion Baltimore Colts for the same skills running back, place kicker and blocking back—in the days of Johnny Unitas, Alan (The Horse) Ameche, and other worthies. An unfortunate injury terminated Billy's gridiron career much too soon.

But Billy, a quarterback at Perry High School, was as good as the best of that fabulous era. Wilkinson openly called him the best blocking back of his career, and that is saying something. One night, when we had Bud as a speaker at the Perry Junior High cafeteria, he told how many championships OU had won because of Billy's solid downfield blocking. It was an amazing sidelight.

Anyway, Billy Pricer could hold his head high as one of the makers of Mr. Wilkinson's glittering career. For those of us who still remember that time, such plaudits do not come easily. Billy Pricer was an elite among the elitists. Death took him from our midst much too soon.



**February 15, 2006**



Here's a look at the east side of the Perry square as it was in 1927, when the World Series of that year was about to begin.

Some of the buildings shown here have been demolished, but Foster's Corner Drug remains. (Photo courtesy estate of Ralph Foster Jr.)

### East Side of Square

We are talking about the east of the square, as it used to look, in about 1941, when the town's two movie theaters were located there along with other sturdy businesses. Previously we discussed Foster's Corner Drug and some of the upstairs sleeping rooms, or hotels, on the square. Among them were Hans Hoover clock repairman, and Barney Woolverton, justice of the peace and former Red Rock baseball player. Now for the rest of the story. We relied on Moorehead's Perry Directory and our own personal memory for a lot of this. Hope you agree.

Next door south of the Roxy Theater was Kraemer's Shoe Store. The shoe business was the store's primary interest, but it carried a complete line of apparel for men, women and children, and it was all "brand name" merchandise. Many people also remember that the store used to give away baby rabbits to celebrate Easter Sunday. The bunnies were displayed in a centrally located kiosk on the sidewalk at the front of the store. The business was owned and operated by Mr. and Mrs. E.O. Edson. Mrs. Edson, whose maiden name was Marguerite Kraemer, was the daughter of the founder, A. Kraemer, a pioneer in the Cherokee Strip run. Mr. Kraemer and the Edsons are now deceased. Next door south of their store was a barber shop operated by Henry Loeffelholz.

Attached to the barber building was the Palace Cafe, a large and rightfully highly regarded restaurant/ Union Bus Station operated by the late Mr. and Mrs. Billy Reckert. A Palace Cafe cup of coffee, or a sandwich, or a plate lunch was a Perry institution. Mr. Reckert, a selective service committee member, greeted the men as they left for military service or discharge on a bus.

Next door south of the Palace was a grocery store operated by the H.L. Johnson family. It was one of many "Mom and Pop" grocery stores in the downtown areas. After that store came another restaurant, variously known as the Pacific Cafe, and by other names, and a pool hall which changed owners/operators often. On the south corner of the east side was the First National Bank in the multi-storied building now occupied by the Chamber of Commerce, Perry Information Network and other businesses. It is better known as the Foucart building, honoring the original architect. Across the street, at the intersection of Sixth street and Cedar street, is the Kemnitz Station, which has been known by several brand names through the years. Originally, I believe it was a D-X Station. Am I remembering all these by the rightful owners and operators?



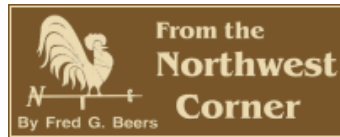
### February 18, 2006

**Marshall Davis** was one of the cadre of new faces hired by John Terry and G.M. (Doc) Deen when they took over operation of the Perry movie theater franchise in the early 1940's. I became the movie critic of the *PDJ* at that time and so naturally I was called upon to review the theatre listing at the Roxy and the Annex Theaters, both located on the east side of the Perry square. In time, the Roxy was closed and the new Perry Theater opened a block north of there, and the Annex followed suit by closing when the Chief Drive-In was opened north of town. It was a much different world in many ways. Now, all of them are gone.

In the earlier account, I wrote a little bit about the east side in general. There also were several grocery stores there, but not much was written about them. Mr. and Mrs. H.L. Winger had a store as did Louis Stanislay. A procession of others came and went as the landscape changed. You probably remember some that are not listed here. We are taking a short break this week to discuss some other aspects of that time.

Back to Marshall Davis: He was born in 1925, which makes him a year younger than I am. He served in the Navy during World War II, then returned to Perry to earn his PHS diploma and to marry Glenna McGill, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Carl McGill. She has just been returned home from an Albuquerque, NM hospital, where she was treated for a serious illness. Marshall says she is doing OK. He also called to identify one of the city councilmen in that 8x10 photo that ran in this newspaper a few weeks ago. The councilman was Chester Swart, and he was largely responsible for bringing the Davis family to Perry. Marshall's dad, Danny Davis, had looked for work here, without success, but Mr. Swart told him to pack the wife, kids and household belongings in a car at Hutchinson, KS, where they then resided, and Mr. Davis then could have a job at Mr. Swart's produce house here. So the Davis family came to Perry, and Marshall still considers it his hometown.

And that is how at least part of early day Perry was settled, friend.



## ***February 22, 2006***

**Here's some more stuff** for your amusement, supplied by an anonymous friend from another state. It's all in fun, so enjoy.

Pregnant executives have it hard. It's not easy being in management and labor at the same time.

Will Rogers–It is not what you pay a man but what he costs you that counts.

A neurotic is someone who is self-employed and doesn't get along with his boss.

Gary Sinise–Careers, like rockets, don't always take off on schedule. The key is to keep working on the engines.

Fax machine: a device that allows someone in another state to pile work on your desk.

It's called take home pay because there is nowhere else you can go with it.

H.G. Norman–The surest way to get a job done is to give it to the busiest man in the office. He'll give it to his secretary to do.

Personnel director–What previous experience have you had and what work have you done.

Pretty young job candidate: I was a secretary. All I had to do was look like a girl, think like a man, act like a lady, and work like a dog.

Milton Berle–How can I retire? I still have 300 glossy pictures and \$200 worth of makeup left.

Bernard Meltzer–Top cats often begin as underdogs.

It's really amazing how unimportant your job is when you ask for a raise...and how important it is when you want a day off.

It is hard to keep a mink wife on a muskrat salary.

Lily Tomlin—The trouble with the rat race is that even if you win you are still a rat.

Henry Youngman—My unemployed brother-in-law gave up his job because of illness. His boss got sick of him.

Mencken—Never let your inferiors do you a favor. It will be extremely costly.

There was the recent grad from Texas A & M who went to work as an accountant and absconded with all the accounts payable.

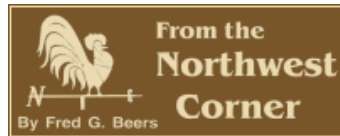
Why did the redneck get fired from the M & M factory? He threw out all the W's.

Henry Ford—Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is a progress. Working together is success.

Bureaucrats and insurance salesmen have all the answers...to their own questions. The physics of politics is based on the superiority of sound over light; The physics of bureaucracy is based on the superiority of procedures over substance.

Don't worry if your job is small and your rewards are few. Remember that the mighty oak was once a nut like you.

Prairie dogging – When someone yells or drops something loudly in a cube farm, and people's heads pop up over the walls to see what's going on.



**February 25, 2006**

### **Glenn Miller's Band**

I well remember the first time I heard the Glenn Miller Army Air Force band, even if it was recorded. I was in Hawaii, on the island of Oahu, where Honolulu is located. I was a recent transfer to Division Headquarters from a rifle company (Company 1, 179th Regiment) in the 98th Infantry division. A few weeks later I would be transferred again, to the daily military newspaper, *The Stars & Stripes*, but I did not yet know that. The 98th division was being readied for an invasion of Japan. Our mess hall was in the open at headquarters because we were fortunate enough to be in Hawaii, where the sun almost always shines. On weekends, it was about the only way to soak up a few rays.

Anyway, the public address system was playing some standard pieces, when along came the Miller military band playing "St. Louis Blues March," a new arrangement of an old tune, in march tempo, of all things! In a moment I realized I was having a dream, and the Miller band sound was the subject. I asked the Pfc. sitting across the outdoor table what was going on. Surprised, he told me Glenn Miller had recently joined the Army. (This was a dream remember.) Mr. Miller formed a band and began transforming the music into something GI's like I was could understand. Then I woke up, and found the GM Army Air Force band was on the air from New York City, directed by Larry O'Brien, and it was a one hour show on our own channel 13, from Oklahoma City. So it was partly true, partly fantasy. I enjoyed every moment, and I will gladly contribute to a fund to have them return. It was, in short, a wonderful hour.

I like the Glenn Miller band, even the recordings and dreams. You may have guessed that.