



**January 5, 2005**

**Reminiscing about old friends**

I glanced across the street the other day and noticed that my neighbor for the past 24 years, Otis Shelley, was not mowing the lawn or doing other things to make his picture-perfect yard look even better. It was like a jolt to realize that he was gone. No one has ever taken better care of his yard than Otis. It was a shock to realize that he had lost a valiant battle with cancer. He had plans for improvements this coming summer but we will never know what that would have included. Besides all that, he was the kind of good neighbor everyone wishes they had. We are going to miss him. Our condolences to Jeanette, the children, grandchildren and host of friends who admired him greatly.

Both of us have been retired several years, but I had known Otis since the time I edited *The Journal* years ago, when he worked at the telephone office. We received the daily United Press International (UPI) report from Oklahoma City on a dedicated phone line, or Teletype, and we frequently had to call on the phone people when trouble disrupted the flow of wire service news. J.M. Markey was the phone man in charge here, but he was usually aided and abetted by Otis or his late brother, Jim Shelley, who also worked for the phone company.

One day after a summer vacation, Mr. Markey answered a summons to our office to see what was causing some line hits, or a problem of that sort. He found a spaghetti-like terminal attached to the bottom of someone's desk, and asked who rigged that up. No matter. He said it would have to be taken apart by whoever put it together, and only then would he attempt to solve the problem. And he did, after the phone company's original wiring was restored.

Speaking of those times, let me reminisce a bit more, please. I was originally hired at the newspaper office by Mr. W.K. Leatherrock, editor and publisher of *The Journal*. After I came home from WWII, Mr. Leatherrock fell ill and died of cancer at the age of 52. Some years later his daughter, Marianne, died of cancer, at the age of 52. Last month, W.K.'s grandson, Cyrus Leatherrock, died of cancer in Oklahoma City, at the age of 52. Weird coincidences. All were taken much too soon. Cyrus grew up in Oklahoma City. He was the son of Wesley and Gloria Leatherrock. Wesley is a retired communicator with Southwestern Bell Telephone Company in Oklahoma City and he is well known there.

I'm pleased to see that Bill Rotter's Great Big Band is going to furnish the program for the annual Chamber of Commerce dinner on Jan. 15. Better get your tickets early from Carolyn Briegge or Kaylen Martens at the C-C office and join the throng at that affair. If you heard Bill's band at their debut in the armory a few weeks ago, you know its going to be a good show.



**January 8, 2005**

**Memories of ice storms past**

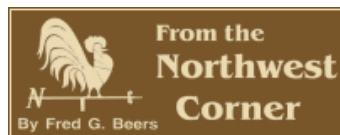
The other day, when we were just beginning to experience some winter weather and icy rainfall, I was reminded of weather problems from another age. Think back to a point about forty or so years ago, and you will remember what it was like. Sure

as clockwork, every year about Christmas time we would have a severe winter storm that shut down major highways and leave dozens of motorists stranded in the Perry area. Remember? Maybe it's a sign of global warming, as the environmentalists would have us to believe, but we haven't had a problem like that for many years. Our winters, for the most part, have been pleasant and mild.

But, if you remember those other days, you will undoubtedly recall the makeshift beds and hot meals we provided for weather-weary motorists who for the most part had never heard of Perry, Oklahoma, and did not know how hospitable we could be when strangers in our midst found themselves snowbound. There was, of course, no charge for any of those services, including the tow trucks that pulled unwary travelers and their cars out of snow-filled ditches alongside the highways. Usually, the ice, snow, freezing rain and other undesirable elements were melted away in just a day or so and the travelers were on their way again. Hopefully, they all had pleasant memories of this little prairie town. It gives me a glow just to recall how nice everyone here was to our unknown overnight guests.

I remember with pleasure how the Red Cross, the Salvation Army, the National Guard and other locally based entities worked together to provide aid and sustenance to those unfortunate families who were forced to stop here overnight. Virtually all of them were expecting fair weather here in the sun belt and few were prepared for the potential problems they were dealing with. As I recall those times, the people of this area were most helpful and hospitable in the face of bad weather problems encountered by our guests. *The Journal* usually received numerous "thank you" letters from those people after they safely reached their destinations. Without exception, they were grateful for the reception they received here.

All this gave Christmas-time a special meaning and it helped demonstrate that the spirit of the season really meant something to the good folks of north-central Oklahoma. Our guests would testify to that if called upon, I'm sure.



***January 12, 2005***

**Harry and Marsha Williams to be missed.**

Our little town is going to have trouble filling all the slots that have been undertaken by Harry and Marsha Williams since they came here from Kingfisher a few years back. They have willingly accepted a number of important duties here, but in just a few days they will be moving to Muskogee where Harry has been assigned to duty by Oklahoma Natural Gas, Co., his employer. We are really going to miss them.

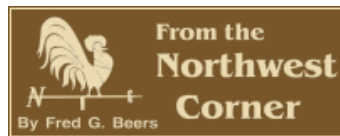
For one thing, Harry entered an off-campus program that led to a bachelor's degree from the University of Oklahoma. At the time he was ONG's local representative, for service, sales and numerous other things, such as lighting furnaces for some of our senior citizens. He did a good job in that respect. The OU program itself was not an easy chore, but he took it on knowing full well the time required to finish the job. In addition to all that, he was an active member of the Perry Rotary Club, and eventually he became president of the local club. Later he was appointed an assistant district governor, the first Perry Rotarian to my knowledge to hold that post. Again, he conscientiously handled the chores implicit in that position.

Meanwhile, Marsha was an active and interested member of the volunteer staff at the Perry Main Street office. She spent many hours there and for a time was chairman of the Design Committee, which had the responsibility of leading the way

in many projects. She was a good administrator and chairman. Main Street programs are successful because of the dedication of people like Marsha.

This recitation tells only part of their story. They are good citizens, good parents, and, in short, upstanding members of this community. A few years ago, ONG had an office manager and a full cadre of staff people to handle billing, public relations and the like. In the wake of changes in the economy, they have eliminated the office and its staff, but people like Harry and Marsha have filled the void, remarkably well.

We all wish them well as they relocate to another area, but replacing them as good citizens of the Perry area will not be an easy chore. Good luck to Harry, Marsha and their family as they begin their new endeavors.



***January 15, 2005***

#### **Cleaning up a few contributions from readers and other friends.**

John Skinner earned a reputation as Perry's premier and most effective fundraiser years ago when he headed up several crusades for money to assist in polio research. That was just one of the many projects he took on, and he believed in it because he himself had been a victim of the crippling disease. That's a story all by itself, but this one has to do with a recollection of a raffle that John worked on in his senior year at Perry High School. That would have been 1948. Some other beneficiaries of John's money-making methods have been various high school football and band queens, and the 45th Division's National Guard Army Units that have been stationed here through the years.

Right now John is not sure of the organization that benefited from the raffle, but as I recall it was the March of Dimes, which the late President Franklin D. Roosevelt used to promote. He, also, had been a polio victim.

Locally, a brand new Ford two-door sedan from the Randall Motor Co. was offered as a prize for the lucky ticket-holder. It was to be the first post-war car seen in Perry since the Japanese surrendered to the Allies in 1945 to end World War II. John had unsuccessfully tried many times to sell a ticket for the drawing to Otis Shelley, the telephone repairman who died recently. On the final day of sales, about 10 minutes before the drawing, John managed to sell a ticket (only one) to Otis. You can guess what happened. It was the right one, and Otis drove home that night in his brand-new Ford sedan. He and John were both happy.

The first time I saw Mickey Rooney was at Perry's Santa Fe train depot at the east end of Delaware, where Burlington Northern now occupies the premises. That was on November 1, 1938. I know the date because it appeared on a front page feature story in The Perry Daily Journal, written by the paper's reporter, Betty Munger Beasley. Mickey was on a personal appearance tour, headed for Oklahoma City, but he came to the Pullman car's steps and chatted with a few of us who stood in awe of Hollywood's newest mega star. He was a teenager. He had just made the first in a series of wildly popular Andy Hardy movies for MGM, and he was the biggest star in the universe. Now cut quickly to several years later. Laura and I saw him, when he was about 80, in a smash Broadway musical that received great reviews, even though he was advanced in years. He still wowed the critics and his audiences with comic timing and musical skills. I'm still a big fan, so I was happy to catch him the other day on TV with the latest wife (No. 8?) promoting a health insurance company in a new commercial. They both looked great, but Mickey had virtually nothing to do but smile at the camera.

Since then I've learned that he and Mrs. Rooney have done another commercial, which I have not seen, and it is kicking up some kind of storm because in it he drops a towel, or something, as he runs out the door of a room, exposing his 84 year-old hind end. It is just as controversial as it sounds, and I'm sorry to hear that our old friend has fallen to that depth. I still remember him as the tousle-haired Andy Hardy with problems that seemed to have been torn out of my own daily existence, such as it was. C'mon, Andy, we can do better than that.



***January 19, 2005***

#### **Trotter memories...**

A story about the Harlem Globetrotters basketball team in the Daily Oklahoman the other day brought back some memories to a couple of Perry ladies, Betty Andrews and Betty Ripley, and possibly to a few others. The story dealt with how an Oklahoma University graduate has helped the 'Trotters resume their role as clown princes of comics on the court. They are the kings, the ultimate funnymen and trick shot artists.

Betty Andrews remembers that the touring Globetrotters basketball entourage played a game here against a team of locals, whose roster included her late husband, Willard Andrews, and Betty Ripley's late husband, Joe Ripley. Exactly where the game was played and the final score really do not matter. Everyone expected the Globetrotters to win, and they obliged, mixing funny stuff with basketball trickery that delighted the crowd.

Willard and Joe were good athletes in several sports, but their team was no match for the barn-storming aggregation. It was primarily an exhibition of tricky stuff by the visiting team and they obliged the crowd with a fine demonstration of weird shots, peculiar dribbling, unorthodox passing and unusual basketball. This was in the 1940s when the NBA was not yet a cash cow. The AAU and the colleges were the basketball biggies and folks in hamlets the size of Perry relished the chance to see touring teams, like the Globetrotters, when their territory was invaded.

For example, Willard and Joe both were gainfully employed in legitimate daytime jobs but in the winter evenings, when basketball was the game of the season, they played for Harold Scovill's C&S Tire team and the local American Legion team. Both were active in a host of other community activities. No one remembers the score of the benefit game, but anyone who saw it would testify to the legitimacy of the visitors' victory.

The same issue of the Oklahoma City newspaper contains an interesting story about the saga of Jacob Hager, the outstanding PHS football player who went to OU on a football scholarship but switched to the wrestling team with the realization that the gridiron was not the place for him. He's doing all right, too, as the Sooners' rock-solid heavyweight. Keep an eye on him.



***January 22, 2005***

## Reflecting on wonderful memories provided by the Avila's

When the "Avila team" joined the Perry hospital and the community medical staff a few years back, they were welcomed with open arms. They were Dr. Patricio (Pat) Avila and his wife, Dr. Estrella (Dr. E) Avila. We needed the kind of medical practice and good humor that they provided, and they were indeed very welcome here.

The unique husband and wife team came to Perry from their former practice in Hannibal, Missouri, by the way, and I'm sure they've probably heard all the Mark-Twain – Torn Sawyer – Huckleberry Finn stories they want to hear. They are unique in many ways -- Filipinos by birth but dedicated to the American way of life. He is a surgeon and Dr. E focused a great deal of her time and skills on healing women.

Since coming here, Dr. Pat has been elected president of the Oklahoma Filipino Doctors Association and both of them are very earnest members of that organization. They are well regarded throughout this area as dedicated professionals with no-nonsense ideas about the medical arts. They are skilled practitioners, and we are going to miss them if they should ever decide to leave this little community. They are one of us, really.

Dr. Pat and Dr. E have been medical missionaries to the Philippines for several years and they plan to continue that work on an annual basis. Their homeland, their relatives and friends there, are very much on their minds and they are concerned with the lack of facilities available to their countrymen. When furious seasonal storms hit the Philippines a few weeks ago, some of the islands were ravaged and people suffered the loss of the most basic needs, clothing and medicine included. Dr. Pat and Dr. E took an appeal to the Perry Rotary Club and received immediate approval for assistance, both clothing and financial. Dr. Pat is a member and past president of the Perry club, and Dr. E could have been a member at any time she wished but her medical practice always came first.

They are good members, good citizens, and Dr. Pat particularly is a good singer, when the mood is right. Perry is proud to be their home. They have many friends here within and outside their medical practice, and we wish them well in all their future undertakings. Also, we thank them for filling a serious need when they first came here.



***January 26, 2005***

### **Dogs teaching good advice???**

Russell Chapin, a Red Rock boy who made good as an attorney in Washington, D.C., then retired with his wife, Helen, in Florida, has been a good friend since the days he shared an office with Henry Dolezal in a second story location on the north side of the square. Russell sends me bits and pieces of humor he has snipped from various periodicals and some that he found on the e-mail postings. I thought you would enjoy the following, a fanciful series of thoughts to ponder in your spare time. Russell now has the floor:

Good advice! If a dog was the teacher, this is some good advice!

If a dog was the teacher you would learn stuff like:

When loved ones come home, always run to greet them.

Never pass up the opportunity to go for a joyride. Allow the experience of fresh air and the wind in your face to be pure ecstasy.

Let others know when they've invaded your territory.

Take naps.

Stretch before rising.

Run, romp, and play daily.

Thrive on attention and let people touch you.

Avoid biting when a simple growl will do.

On warm days, stop to lie on your back in the grass.

On hot days, drink lots of water and lie under a shady tree.

When you're happy, dance around and wag your entire body.

No matter how often you're scolded, don't buy into the guilt thing and pout...! Run right back and make friends.

Delight in the simple joy of a long walk.

Eat with gusto and enthusiasm. Stop when you have had enough.

Be loyal. Never pretend to be something you're not.

If what you want lies buried, dig until you find it.

When someone is having a bad day, be silent, sit close by and nuzzle them gently.

Some good advice in those succinct thoughts. What kind of world would we know if dogs were the dominant species? It could be a lot better than the one we know today.

Others have contributed bits and pieces of thought-provoking, humorous and down to earth material along the same line, and I will share some of those with you as time goes by. Such things are always welcome if they have not been previously used in some medium and are not protected by a copyright or something of the sort. Watch for them in future columns.



***January 29, 2005***

**Factoids to make you blink, as they did me**

Here's another contribution from our good friend, Russell Chapin, a native of Red Rock who now lives in Florida after retiring from the U.S. Department of Justice in the nation's capital. This is especially interesting because of the statistical contrasts it highlights, but Russ tells me it is even more so because his mother, as a single woman working in a Winfield, Kan., bank, boarded a train there and went to the St. Louis World's Fair about a century ago. Remember the Judy Garland movie, "Meet Me in St. Louis." That's the one. Maybe these factoids will cause you to blink, as they did me.

1904 was an interesting year in many ways. The good news: First perfect baseball game, New York City subway system opened first section, first speed law passed in New York state (20 mph in open country), Teddy Roosevelt reelected President, first Olympics in U.S. opened at St. Louis Exposition. The bad news: 900 died when the steamship General Slocum burned in New York City harbor; fire destroyed an 800-block area in Baltimore with \$80 million in losses, a woman was arrested for smoking a cigarette while riding in an open automobile on Fifth Avenue in New York City.

Now, just imagine; that was only in the U.S. The year is 1904, just a little more than 100 years ago. What a difference a century makes! Here are some U.S. statistics for 1904, courtesy of Michael M. Dunn, Lt. General USAF and president of the National Defense University FYI. This was also circulated to students.

The average life expectancy in this country was 47 years. Only 14 percent of homes in the U.S. had a bathtub. Only eight percent of the homes had a telephone.

A three-minute call from Denver to New York cost \$11. There were only 8,000 cars in the U.S. and 144 miles of paved roads. The maximum speed limit in most U.S. cities was ten miles per hour.

Alabama, Mississippi, Iowa and Tennessee were each more heavily populated than California. With a mere 1.4 million residents, California was only the 21st most populated state in the Union.

The tallest structure in the world was the Eiffel Tower. The average wage in the U.S. was 22 cents per hour. The average worker in the U.S. made between \$200 and \$400 per year. A competent accountant could expect to earn \$2,000 per year, a dentist \$2,500, a veterinarian between \$1,500 and \$4,000 per year and a mechanical engineer about \$5,000 per year.

Interesting information, right? We might have some more of these later on if you find them worthwhile. What do you think?