

January 4, 2006



The photo that comes with this column should be of historic interest to all of us. It shows the City Council of Perry, the Mayor at that time, the Water & Light Department clerk, the city attorney and all of the eight council members who served at that time. The picture was made in the late 1930s by a photographer at *The Perry Daily Journal*, located just across the alley from this meeting room. Not all of the subjects are identified. In those days, it was not uncommon for the newspaper to send a photographer but not a reporter to the council meeting. Stories about the meeting were composed from the clerk's minutes.

Times were tough. There was a Great Depression with its dreary implications hanging over everything. New programs were cast aside for lack of funding, and just surviving the time was a terrible chore. But the Mayor and his Council persisted, and Perry was able to persevere.

Around this rectangular table, many important and constructive decisions were made in the late 1930s. The date is uncertain, and many of these men cannot now be identified. Mayor Fred Kretsch, who operated a grocery store with his wife on the west side of the square, is seated in the center. Many of the gentlemen pictured here took part in the building of Perry as a major trade center for this area, and this is where their deliberations were held. This council room was

located was on the west end of the ground floor level of the three-story Masonic Temple, which is now owned by Victor Green. The last known rental customer for this room was the Victory Baptist Church, which has moved to a new location. City Hall is now on the south side of the square. The four council members on the left are not identified. After Mr. Wilson and Mayor Kretsch, are Kenneth Reed, city attorney; Floyd Laird, city council member; next one unknown; Harry DeLashmutt, city council member; next one unknown. Can you provide some of the missing names?

This room doubled as the official office of the city clerk, who received collections of water & light bills. Mr. Wilson was still the clerk some ten years later.

If you can identify any of the men shown here, please let me know. All of us should know the names of those who governed this city during its historic growth period.



January 7, 2006

Some of you have been kind enough to admit you read the recent column under this heading which repeated portions of a column originally written by a former staff member, Jane Schneider, who now lives in retirement in San Francisco. Her husband, who also was a news writer and a San Francisco city councilman, is now deceased but fortunately I receive an occasional note or a phone call from her just to reassure me and folks in this area that she is still going strong. Jane was quite a gal and I miss her. She worked under the indirect supervision of Milo W. Watson, who was sort of assistant publisher when he wrote a column of his own, El Toro. On October 29, 1943, he wrote a column that I came across in researching another project recently at the Perry Carnegie Library. The reprinted portion follows.

The paper that day also included small ads from merchants like Cleo Stout's OK Filling Station, Frank Eby's Economy Cleaners, the J.C. Penny department store and Dr. C.H. Cooke's Perry General Hospital, Inc. Remember them? All are now deceased.

Here's the column by the late Milo Watson, or MWW, as he signed it. Get set, and Go: this was Milo's column:

There's no telling what benefits are liable to accrue from church attendance in addition to the spiritual uplift. A good friend of ours went to church a few evenings ago for the first time in quite a spell, and later was asked to fill a vacant position in the choir. This he did and sang loudly and lustily, but imagine his surprise when next morning his first business transaction give him a net profit of \$24. Pretty good, considering his collection plate investment was only 50 cents, but the profit probably wouldn't have been more than \$18 if he hadn't helped out in the choir emergency.

We learned some more about church attendance from listening in on a session of a local spit and whittle club,. One philosopher said he always felt guilty when church bells began ringing on Sunday, unless he found himself ready to go to services somewhere. However, his advice is to attend churches of various denominations without offering permanent vows to any one group. "That way," he explained, "none of them can claim you and they won't come hitting you up for big donations."

Mrs. H.L. Johnson has preserved a copy of a Perry newspaper dated May 3, 1923, which carries an ad from Crowder and Johnson offering loganberries at 68 cents a gallon. Even if loganberries were available at 68 cents now, the OPA wouldn't be long in getting them to \$1.68.

Another thing the OPA seems to have overlooked is bobby pins. While they're selling for 10 cents a dozen here, Oklahoma City department stores are offering two of the tiny wire necessities (?) on a card for 10 cents, with a limit of one card to a customer.

And that's about it for today. At the time this piece by Milo was written, Jane Schneider also wrote Perry Parings, W.K. Leatherock wrote In the Wake of the News, and I was in military-service, though still listed as city editor. The Northwest Corner came later.



January 11, 2006

A few days ago I ran a column featuring a photo of the City Council and other city officials who served in the 1930's, with a note that the original caption in the PDJ did not give the names of any of the men. I knew Fred Kretsch, who was mayor at the time; Harry DeLashmutt Sr., who was bookkeeper at the PDJ when I went to work there as a reporter in 1941, and a few others. For the most part, however, the city officials were strangers. I asked for help in identifying them.

What followed was a deluge of phone calls advising that the gentleman on the right end was Chester Swart, who operated a car repair building and service station approximately where the Noble County Family YMCA now stands. First to call with that information was Marilyn Seeliger, Chester's granddaughter, but several others soon followed. I appreciated every call. Those who shared their knowledge included Archie Moore, Hugo Friedemann and others – too many to list, actually. My thanks to all of them. But the names of others in the photo remain unknown, so if you know them, please let me know.

Mayor Kretsch, by the way, would make a good subject for a future column. He and his wife operated a Ma and Pa grocery store on the west side of the square, next door south of Doc Miller's auction business. Kids knew they could always find candy there, in the dimly lit interior of the little store, plus other goodies that did not seem to be available anywhere else. Mr. Kretsch was an authentic pioneer of the Cherokee Strip Run on September 16, 1893. Mr. Kretsch had served as mayor before the 1930's, and he was a good one, considering the difficulties he confronted.

Mr. and Mrs. Kretsch had a son, who worked as a pharmacist and clerk at Foster's Corner Drug, and a daughter, who taught school in Enid after graduating from OSU. She was honored by the Enid school system when she retired a few years ago. Bob Wilson was city clerk when the photo was shot by Virgil Sherrod of the PDJ advertising staff, as I recall. Anyway, thanks to all those who tried to help solve the mystery of the anonymous city officials shown in that historic photo.



January 14, 2006

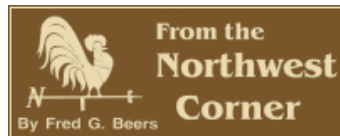
Did I miss something, or what? Just a few days after the voters of Perry chose not to pursue the I-35 Expo Center proposal. We were confronted with a slick and expensive insert in the daily press inviting local folks to Enid where the official show of the Enid "Agrifest 2006" was scheduled to be held over a two-day period in the Chisholm Trail Expo

Center in Enid. Did those people support our Expo Center proposal? Are you kidding? If we had voted to build an Expo Center, as Enid, Stillwater and others have voted to do, there probably would not be an "Agrifest 2006," whatever that is. We seem unable to learn how to lead, or even follow, when a good deal is offered.

Today's column is a collection of unrelated ideas. There is no particular theme to tie them together. Maybe they will promote a thought from you or someone else.

Stagecoach Community Theater needs our help. That is the group that has provided this community with funny and serious stage plays since 1975. Remember "Oklahoma!", "Carousel," and many others? Stagecoach now operates out of what is arguably the nicest hometown theater in Oklahoma, but the handful of performers and crafts people who make those plays possible are growing weary. They desperately need and deserve our help.

When the next play is announced, let the Stagecoach people know that you are ready and willing to step in if needed, and you will find it rewarding. We have lost too many artistic endeavors here. Let us not allow this one to slip through our fingers. Who knows, you may get hooked on them. Hopefully, we will not lose another artistic organizing event.



January 18, 2006

Back there in December, when Christmas was mostly a gift day for children, I was prevailed upon to compose my own Christmas list.

I had heard a lot about the Ipod, the marvelous little recording and playback device aimed mostly at young folks. My own preference for music peaked in the 1940's, during the Big Band era, but I listed that player as one of my choices for a gift. Then what do you know, I got one for Christmas, even though I had no idea how to use it, or even to right it up for recording and listening. My granddaughters came to the rescue. They recorded a bunch of CD's for me and showed me how to play them back. Everything I had heard was true. The sound was great, no other way to describe it, and I am enjoying the music as if it were brand new again. I can record up to 240 songs (with a lot of help), the quality is excellent. If you are deliberating a purchase, wait no longer. Order one and take advantage of the quality. You may be surprised.

Otherwise, last Christmas was a lot of fun. We saw some relatives who had not touched base recently, and it helped to catch us up on details of life in other lanes. Our family from Kansas City also were there, and that was a rare treat. They have moved to a new home and our one and only grandson is preparing for college after this school year. His sister, our granddaughter, is younger but she also has an Ipod. Our two granddaughters here in Perry are growing up too fast, but we enjoy it, even if they do not like Glenn Miller, Tommy Dorsey, and some of the other big names in music. Mr. Rotter and his Great Big Band may be encouraging them.

Speaking of that, do you remember when Frank Boggs retired as managing editor of the *Daily Oklahoman*? He also had been sports editor of the paper for a time, and I recall when Frank came to Perry to cover a boxing match featuring Danny Hodge versus another Golden Gloves boxer. It was not a pretty sight. Anyway, Frank put together a little book consisting of essays from his column, and he called it "The Pretty Good of Frank Boggs." Not the Best of.... "because he felt the best was yet to come." I think of that whenever someone mentions the Great Big Band. Those musicians are good, and their best may be yet to come.



January 21, 2006

The other day I offered readers an old photo of the Perry City Council, believed to have been made about 70 years ago, with a note that no one seemed to know any of the names. The Councilmen were seated around an old rectangular table in their old meeting place, at the rear of the Water & Light office on the ground floor of the aldermen's meeting place at the rear of the three-story Masonic building, just across the alley from the *PDJ* office.

No one seemed to know any of the names, except for a few who identified one of the city rulers as Chester Swart, a produce man who had a business building in downtown Perry. He was a brother of Ed and Ted Swart, who had a service station where the Noble County Family YMCA is now located. A.J. Bontrager, now of Oklahoma City, who had a pharmacy on the south side of the square and later in the Masonic building, helped with the identities but we were about to give up on names of the other councilmen. Then came Kenny Carmack. With help from his friends, he had most of the names. Here they are, in case you want to clip them out.

Seated around the table, from left to right: E.H. Adams, Guy Folger, H.R Walker, (all city councilmen), Bob Wilson (city clerk), Mayor Fred Kretsch, City Attorney Kenneth Reed, City Councilman, Floyd Laird, Councilman John Ames, and Councilman Harry DeLashmutt and Chester Swart.

There have been some false starts on this list of identifications, but I believe we have all of the names correct now and our thanks goes out to all who helped with this chore.



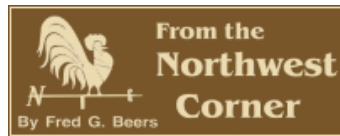
January 25, 2006

Bob Elliott was a musician but early in life he was torn between that field and athletics. He was a big man for his day, about 6' 4", and an uncertain weight. He was big enough that Perry High School's wrestling genius, John Divine, thought he could be a champion heavyweight, but Professor Bill Sharp saw him as a brass musician. Bob was drum major of the PHS band and later spent four years as drum major of the University of Oklahoma marching band, "The Pride of Oklahoma," and in the end he became an engineer. It was the right field for him. He solved a number of problems for communities and road builders throughout this state, and that includes Perry. Unfortunately, death ended a lot of his dreams.

Bob was a high school buddy. We both played in the band and went out for wrestling at the same time, but he had arm strength, which I did not have, and he also was smarter than the average guy. In science subjects, like chemistry and physics, he excelled, while I was simply perplexed by the topics. I could spell, but he understood formulas. Bob went to OU

after graduating high school and immediately pledged the Phi Kappa Psi fraternity, urging me to join in that. I quickly realized that the fraternity needed money pretty badly and that was a commodity I did not possess.

Bob was understanding and was always ready to counsel others, if requested. He qualified for admission to West Point but chose the Navy (as a cook, of all things) so that he could marry the lovely Mary Louise Byrd in WWII. He invited me to have lunch with his sailors at Pearl Harbor when his floating dry dock was tied up there and I was based in downtown Honolulu. In high school, he was willing to take a minor role in an improvised version of a Jack Benny comedy segment on a class program before the PHS student body. Bob was a fun guy who enjoyed life to the fullest. A good friend, on top of everything else.



January 28, 2006

A few years ago, when Perry High school was more than just a place of fond remembrance, I unknowingly began preparing for young adulthood. It was without malice because none of us in the circles I was familiar with had any thoughts of "growing up," whatever that implied. We were preoccupied with getting an education, whatever that entailed, and going on with the business of making a living and getting established in some honorable way. Our choice of friends was an important aspect, and there were many types available for selection. I shall always be thankful for the quality of those who were there for me at that critical time. I am talking about Charlie Lamb, Bob Elliott and David S. Thomas. If you have lived here long enough, you may have known them. They were good men, even if I did not know at the time what that meant. All three are gone from this earth, but their influence will last me at least a lifetime. All three were Presbyterians, but that is almost beside the point. They would have been good men, no matter which denomination they grew up in.

Charlie was the son of a gifted mother and a jeweler/optician, Mr. and Mrs. A. C. Lamb, and they had a family operated jewelry store in a small space adjacent to the west side of our drug store on the north side of the square. In time, they built a new location just down the street, next door to Eddie Parker's popular Kumback Cafe. People bought reading glasses, wedding rings, and flashy looking gift items there. Our store went out of business several years earlier but Charlie and I were still friends.

Mr. Lamb was an optometrist and he conducted most of his optical examinations in a small area at the rear of the store. I never heard him called "Dr." Lamb, but he was entitled to that and Charlie followed him in the business. In the late 1940's, Charlie moved to Seattle and had a thriving practice there for many years until death claimed him, a year or so after the death of his loving wife, Ruth. I bought my first pair of glasses from him the year Truman upset Dewey for the Presidency.

Charlie, Bob and I used to do little playlets, usually based on the wit of radio comedian Jack Benny, and we enjoyed each other in many ways. I hope there are still good men like that to influence the young men of today. I will never forget Charlie, Bob and David. They helped me more than they could have known.