

June 3, 2003

Some of you will remember this, others will not. It takes us back in time, more than 60 years ago, when Perry's downtown business district was booming. Remember?

It was before America joined the Western Allies in World War II. The west side of the square had its share of shoppers. The Safeway Store at 317 Seventh street was a major attraction; it was packed with shoppers (mostly city wives and farm wives) all day on Saturdays, Ernie Edwards, the manager, greeted each of them with a smile. During that period, I was employed by Safeway as a sacker and carry-out specialist. Many of the farm wives shopped for a month's needs, and their grocery carts were usually full. Just up the street, Brownie's Drug Store at 321 Seventh and Forney's Dairy Store at 325 Seventh Street attracted teen-agers and adults for light refreshments and booths for hanging out. Charlie Watson, the owner of Brownie's, kept a vigilant eye on kids at the magazine rack. Don Kirchner, manager of Forney's, waited on the trade and mixed fountain drinks as they were ordered. Every storefront around the square was occupied by a variety of enterprising merchants.

Into this mix one day came a gentleman name of James Vaughan, who moved to Perry and opened a new meat market on the west side of the square at 311 Seventh Street. Mr. Vaughan's market was just a few steps south of the Safeway Store, but Ernie Edwards was happy to have the competition. There was no great hoopla at the time, but that began changing fairly soon.

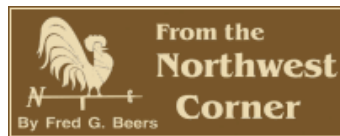
Vaughan's Market was an instant hit with Perry grocery shoppers and soon a young new clerk by the name of Herman Eisenhauer was added to the staff. Although Herman was a life-long resident of Perry and a graduate of PHS, few people knew his real first name. Most folks knew him merely as "Katz," and he was well-liked. Vaughan's Market prospered, partly because of him. A little later, Mr. Vaughan added a partner, the late Leonard Williams, and the name of the store was changed from Vaughan's Market to the V&W Food Store.

In a short while, the V&W Food Store outgrew the 25-foot front building it occupied on the west side of the square. About the same time Safeway closed its store on the south side of the square, which originally had been a Humpty Dumpty Grocery, and consolidated its merchandise into the west side store. Safeway realized it was growing too big for that location, so the corporate planners announced the firm would build a new, larger store just off the northwest corner of the square. That building is now occupied by the Dollar General Store. It has had other tenants through the years, such as Triton Motors (Chrysler-Plymouth dealership) and the Oklahoma Tire & Supply Co. (OTASCO) store, in addition to the present business.

Meanwhile, Mr. Vaughan retired and a new partner, Ralph Marriott, was welcomed into the business. The store was renamed "M&W" in recognition of that change, and Katz Eisenhauer left to accept a new opportunity in another state. The M&W Food Store kept on drawing customers; and soon the business moved to the north side of the square. M&W occupied the lower pail of the two-story building where Georgia Curtis now has a furniture and antique shop. Previously, my Dad's store, the City Drug, was in that location for some 40 years. Safeway's new store, with its large concrete parking lot on the south side, was still just a few feet from M&W s, but they both seemed to thrive on the competition. M&W built a new rear entrance for the convenience of its customers who parked on the Safeway lot. Safeway soon put up a chain link fence to halt that flow of traffic. The two firms were truly rivals. Safeway and M&W were two of the biggest advertisers each week in *The Perry Daily Journal*, back in the days before pre-printed color inserts were commonplace.

In time, Mr. Marriott's son, Roy, became an integral part of the business. They later opened a store in Ponca City. Safeway eventually bought a large chunk of real estate at the corner of Seventh street and Fir avenue, and built a fine new store there. When Safeway sold its interest in Oklahoma, the building was acquired by Homeland, the present occupants. M&W stayed close again, building a large store across the street from the present Homeland near the corner of Eighth and Fir. In time the Marriotts and Williamses retired, and their last store building here is now the home of Kennedy's True Value Hardware. A lot of us remember the Safeway-M&W stores fondly, perhaps for different reasons. That was truly another chapter in the story of Perry. Remember?

The chronological sequence of some of the events described herein may not be exactly right but that's the way I recall them.



June 6, 2003

Here's some additional information to go with the M & W-Safeway chronicles that appeared in this column the other day. Gloria Brown, now the managing editor of this newspaper, provided this as a kind of sequel to the original material, which dealt primarily with the early days of fussin' and feudin' between the big chain and the smaller independent store. Between them, the two grocery stores dominated the local market for several years. During that time, the so-called mom and pop (small) grocery stores in this community began to vanish. My account ended with the sale of Safeway to Homeland and the retirement of the Marriott family from the Perry business scene a little earlier. Here's the rest of the story, as supplied by my friend Gloria:

"Jerry and Phyllis Parks and Gene and Dana Hines purchased the M & W store (1978-1988) from Roy Marriott," Gloria writes, "Phyllis and Dana were sisters. (The name of the Perry store was then changed from M & W to H & P.) The two families later purchased another store in Ponca City and the Hines family moved there to operate that store."

"The Hines' continue to live in Ponca City, where Gene is employed as an investment agent for the Edward Jones Company. The Parks' live in Bristow where Jerry is still employed in the grocery business and Phyllis continues to work for Wal-Mart, where she also worked in Perry." (Also of interest, Roy Marriott's grave site is near Gloria's mother's grave site in a Norman cemetery. Gloria was standing at her mother's stone recently and saw Roy's from there. He had moved to Norman from Perry after selling his interest in the M & W Food Store.) Thanks to Gloria for this information. That pretty well brings us up to date on the Safeway-M & W saga during an interesting period of retailer's rivalry in our little city. We probably would also mention that Ed Feken, a hometown boy who is now retired and not in the best of health, was transferred back to Perry by Safeway when the new store on Seventh street was built. Ed like it so well that he's been here ever since.

If you're still interested, Perry has had many grocery stores around the square and in residential areas through the years. In 1940, there were at least 20, according to the Moorhead City Directory for that year. How many of these do you remember?

J.L. Barge, 628 Cedar
Corner Fruit Market, 600 Cedar
Cottage Grocery, 1016 Grove

Farmer's Exchange Store, 632 Cedar
H.C. Galaway, 644 Cedar
Hendren & Son, 407 Seventh
Charlie Huffman IGA Store, 417 Seventh
Johnson's Grocery, 314 Sixth
Fred Kretsch, 319 Seventh
C.J. Lindeman, 634 Cedar
Mooter's Grocery & Market, 295 Seventh
Public Food Market, 115 Seventh
Safeway Stores, Inc., 317 Seventh
L.C. Stanislav, 308 Sixth
C.T. Talliaferro, 404 Sixth
James Vaughan, 311 Seventh
H.R. Walker, 421 Cedar
Walkling Market, 409 Sixth
Jim Wilson Grocery, 516 Cedar
H.L. Winger, 322 Sixth

Not one of those businesses is in operation today. Along with several more once-prominent firms, they have slipped into obscurity. If you still remember them, as do I, you've been around this community for quite a long time.



June 10, 2003

Our city councillors now have a handsome new boomerang-shaped desk for their regular meetings, and the meeting room itself in City Hall on the south side of the square has been reconfigured to provide the best sight lines and acoustics for the public and the officials who attend. It looks like a giant step forward. The council's new desk was crafted by Sondra Garvey who is building quite a reputation in this region as a skilled craftswoman. Her husband, Jim Garvey, also is making an impact with his clever wooden art. Jim and Sondra are both very deserving of all the accolades.

I understand one reason for these improvements is the live television coverage now being provided on channel 19 by the Perry Information Network (PIN), for those who are served locally by the Cox Cable system. The TV camera now will be looking head-on at the council members. Until this became possible they were mostly faceless voices for TV viewers watching the council meeting "live." We are indebted to the Exchange Bank for the council's new desk and to PIN for their coverage of council meetings.

All this talk about the council chambers and the facilities they have had for their regular and special meetings through the years brought back a lot of memories. There's no easy way to reconstruct mental images of those locations, but a few of them stand out in my head, the result of covering so many of them as a reporter for this newspaper several years ago. The first meeting place I remember was in the early 1940's. At the time I think *The Journal* just reprinted the official minutes of council meetings, rather than staffing the meetings with a live reporter. Very soon I was given that assignment, and I think the meetings then were on the first and third Wednesday night of each month. At the time, Sunday and Wednesday nights were pretty much reserved for church activities, so in due time the councilmen were persuaded to try another night.

That's when the Monday night meetings began. The council met in the compact little water and light office at the west end of the first floor of the Masonic Temple. That space is now used by the Victory Baptist church. The congregation also is using the adjacent room, which once was the home of the Arcade Beauty Shop operated by Mrs. Elsie Boggs at 706 Delaware. Remember all those dangling lines hanging menacingly from the "permanent machine," like some devilish device from "the Matrix?"

As a further sidebar, sometimes those meetings ran rather late, often adjourning after, midnight. Some of the aldermen were hungry by then and they invited me to go along with them for a piece of lemon pie or bowl of chili and a cup of coffee at one of the local restau-rants. A lot of good-natured banter and just plain gossip took place at those sessions, and it was a good time to learn what was really going on in Perry. Most of those conversations were unprintable. The late hour also meant that I had to retire to the The Journal office to write my story for the next day's paper, usually finishing about 2 a.m. or so. It was disruptive to family life but essential for job security.

The council had eight members, all of them of the male gender, plus the mayor, city attorney and the city clerk. Various men filled those posts depending upon the voters' whims. Women almost never sought those offices. I remember Fred Kretsch as mayor, Robert Wilson as city clerk, and Kenneth Reed as city attorney. They sat on hard, unyielding tall-back wooden chairs without cushions, leaning elbows occasionally on the council table. At that time the table was nothing more than a long conference table, and it was crowded when all those gentlemen were in attendance. They made room for the newspaper reporter at one end of the table, but still some of the dialogue on various topics was hard to follow. The reporter's seat also was unpadded. Woe to the visitor or council member who was not paying attention. The city officials did not like to repeat their statements.

Years later, City Hall was moved to the present location on the south side of the square in the old Southside Pharmacy building. Still later the city purchased the next-door building where Dotts Hardware and Lester Barge's grocery business had been located at different times. By then the councilmen were allotted more space for their meetings but they still faced each other around a long table.

Now with the new desk, padded seats and more elbow room, our new mayor, Etsell Emde, and his city council will look fashionable on TV and spectators at the meetings will be able to hear and see the councillors as they perform their duties. You really ought to set aside a Monday night to attend one of these meetings. You will be welcomed, and it will give you a better understanding of how our municipal government functions. You might also want to take along a pillow to sit on.



Perry City Council members in late 1930s met in the water and light office at the west end of the Masonic Temple. We're not sure that all of these men are correctly identified, but this is how we have them, clockwise from lower left around the table: Councilmen E.H. Adams, Guy Folger, next two unidentified, City Clerk Charlie Guthrie, Mayor Fred Kretsch, City Attorney Kenneth Reed, Councilmen Floyd Laird, John Ames, H.A. DeLashmutt and Chester Swart. Do any of our readers have information about this group?



June 13, 2003

Welcome to the factory of midnight musings, or how do you handle insomnia?

Friend Don Stoddard seconds the motion on enforcing the rule against drivers making U-turns or left-hand turns in the middle of the block around the square. He also noted the need for left-turn signals at some busy traffic intersections, the ones where turning is difficult when the light turns green. At the same time, he applauds the new, wider parking spaces provided for Wal-Mart and other Perry Plaza shoppers on the west side of the city.

Another problem noted is those long, wide pickup trucks and vans that park near the corners on both Sixth and Seventh Streets. Folks complain that the tail ends of those vehicles stick out so far that drivers have to use part of the left turn lanes to get around them safely. "It's bad enough when you are parked next to one of those big guys and are trying to back out without getting hit," Don writes. "They are so big nowadays that you cannot see over, under or around them." Don makes some other comments that we can pass along at another time.

When the rains stop, you'll see combines working in wheat fields all over the county. Although the moisture content seems to be running a little high, most farmers believe that the quality of this year's crop is the best in ages. A lot of that must be due to the rainfall we have enjoyed (or griped about) this spring.

We have a lot of health walkers moving along some of our busy streets while the weather remains so pleasant. Just a reminder to adults and young people who enjoy these early morning or late evenings strolls: Always walk facing traffic. Don't assume that the next car coming up behind you will yield. Someday we may have a serious accident if all the rules are not observed. And drivers—remember, school is out and there are more youngsters on the street. Be careful out there.

I don't know who deserves the credit, but Perry's Ripley Field was in first-class condition last week for the fifth annual Trent Vorndran Baseball Tournament. Perry's American Legion team won the event, which makes it all the sweeter. Anyway, the base paths were in good condition and the grass on the infield and outfield could not have been greener or more lush. Visitors noticed this, too, and they had to be impressed. The only negative note I can find is the lack of local customers. The Ripley Field stands were almost empty so there were just a few (mostly parents or grandparents) on hand to cheer the Perry boys. The coaches, players and, of course, the umpires all deserve commendations. If you are not taking in some of the baseball games now being played in the area, you are missing a real treat.



June 17, 2003

A while back, we offered readers a handful of tried and true sayings, each containing nuggets of wisdom plus a bit of humor. They seem to have been well received, so now here are a few more supplied again by our friend and correspondent, Roy Kendrick. Try these on for size.

Next time you're washing your hands and complain because the water temperature isn't just how you like it, think about how things used to be Here are some facts about the 1500s....

Most people got married in June because they took their yearly bath in May and by June they still smelled pretty good. However, they were starting to smell so brides carried a bouquet to hide the body odor.

Baths consisted of a big tub filled with hot water. The man of the house had the privilege of using the nice clean water first, then all of the other sons and men, then the women and finally the children – last of all, the babies. By then the water was so so dirty you could actually lose someone in the tub. Hence the saying, "Don't throw the baby out with the bath water."

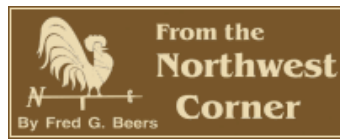
Houses had thatched roofs – thick straw – piled high with no wood underneath. It was the only place for animals to get warm, so all the dogs, cats and other small animals (mice, bugs) lived in the roof. When it rained, it became slippery and sometimes the animals would slip and fall off the roof. Hence, the saying, "It's raining cats and dogs."

There was nothing to stop things from falling into the house. This posed a real problem in the bedroom where droppings of bugs and other varmints could really mess up your nice clean bed. Hence, a bed with big post and a sheet hung over the top afforded some protection. That's how canopy beds came into existence.

The floor was dirt. Only the wealthy had something other than dirt. Hence, the saying, "dirt poor."

The wealthy had slate floors that would get slippery when wet in the winter, so they spread thresh (straw) on the floor to help keep their footing. As the winter wore on, they kept adding more thresh until when you opened the door it would all start slipping outside. A piece of wood was placed in the entrances. Hence, a "thresh hold."

If you enjoyed these well try to come up with some more.



June 20, 2003

A few years ago, the Perry high school football Maroons were known and feared by most of the much larger athletic teams in this area. Wrestling already was an established sport in schools from Tulsa and Oklahoma City but Perry Coach John Divine's teams also were beginning to earn a reputation for strength and endurance, even though our school system was one of the smallest offering that sport.

Maroon wrestlers were well on the way to the pinnacle of success. Football, then as now, was the sport with the greatest following and the PHS teams coached by Harold "Hump" Daniels won the respect of fans in Ponca City, Enid and Stillwater – among others – by outplaying and outscraping any of their football teams.

There was a kind of invisible mystique hovering over Hump Daniels. He could take a rawboned farm boy from the black jack hills of Noble county and in a single season turn him into a rough, tough gridiron dreadnought. There was no secret to his success. He ran the team's practice sessions like a Marine drill sergeant. Youngsters experiencing his methods for the first time learned quickly that they were not to question any order handed down by Coach Daniels. He usually reinforced his instructions by ordering bewildered youngsters to give him a few laps around the football field, which by the way, now bears his name.

Hump also was athletic director at PHS for several years and he regularly scheduled games with much larger schools. Most of the time the Maroons won, using a seldom-seen box formation on offense with waves of blockers running interference for the ball carriers. Local fans loved it and Hump was regarded as something special, which he was. He had a disarming smile (seldom seen by his players on the practice field) and he was articulate. I believe every kid who played for Hump considered him a surrogate father. He had no children of his own but he regarded each of the youngsters in the local school system with the kind of affection usually demonstrated by parents.

Hump retired a few years ago and eased into that period by teaching drivers training classes and some social studies. He died of a coronary attack in 1974 and the town was saddened. The football stadium at the north edge of town was named "Daniels Field" in his honor, but one of the finest tributes came from our neighbor in Stillwater, the late Otis Wile, who wrote a column for the *Stillwater NewsPress* in addition to serving as sports information director at OSU.

Otis wrote, in part: "Another former Aggie worked alongside Hump for many years at Perry, John Divine, as many of you know. There are a lot of worse careers than helping boys improve their lives through athletics. They'll remember Humpy (he never really was that stooped) for a long, long time in Perry town -- and in his first hometown of Stillwater, too."

Darned right, Otis. Hump is still part of this community, and I guess he always will be.



June 24, 2003

Thanks to a friend who knows how much I enjoy reading copies of the *Perry Daily Journal* from years ago, here's another little trip down memory lane. This goes back to a warm summer Saturday, July 7, 1934, and here are some of the topics included in the newspaper's coverage that day. It was only a four-page edition with barely enough advertising to pay the bills. But, in 1934, all of us were feeling overextended, financially, and managing editor Sam Schwieger still managed to find plenty of local stories to fill the news hole that day.

One of the principal stories on page one dealt with a rather bizarre error in a recent local election. Adding to the oddity is the fact that nowhere in the rather long story is the name of the office involved in the election. Reading between the lines, you get the feeling that the race was the primary election to choose candidates for county-level offices in the fall. But that is not stated in any part of the story. Seems that the name of a Republican candidate (for district one, county commissioner?) had been mistakenly listed on the Democratic party ballot. The GOP candidate was Claude E. Johnston. In the election, he received eleven Democratic votes. Hugh Osborne and William J. Hill went into the Democratic runoff since neither received a majority of votes cast. Mr. Johnston, a registered Republican, did not receive enough votes to change the outcome of the race by candidates of either party, so the state attorney general rendered his opinion that Mr. Johnston was not entitled to a new election. The only other Republican who filed for the unnamed office was George Sanders. He was officially declared the winner. Are you confused? Imagine how Mr. Johnston must have felt.

On another topic, that day's front page contained a story about a local man, Arthur Campbell, preparing for a long journey to Singapore to spend at least one year as the representative of the Good-All Electric Manufacturing Company of Ogallala, Nebraska. Mr. Campbell, who was a city employee during the time we owned and operated our own power-generating plant, was to assist with the installation and servicing of a wide district surrounding Singapore, specializing in "movie talking equipment." His territory was to include parts of India, Malay, Bermuda, Shanghai and Hong Kong, China, Somoa, the Philippine Islands and other countries. (Not sure why the West Indies islands of Bermuda are included in that list.) Some of us who remember Mr. Campbell can certainly believe that he was well qualified and chosen for this job. In later years, Art became a professional photographer and he was very good in that area, also.

The entire back page was devoted to collection of advertisers, including Walt Bittman's Art Cleaners, Laird's Drug Store on the east side of the square, Oscar Johnson's Betty Ann Bakery where an electronics store is now located, the Wade & Render Service Station operated by Sid Wade and Bailey Render at Seventh and Birch streets where the YMCA-CMW parking lot is now located, the Lacy Motor Company operated by C.D. (Slim) Lacy, Gay Marcy's Furniture Exchange on the south side of the square, the Tucker Auto Supply at 411 Sixth street, operated by Charlie Tucker, the Motor Inn Garage one half block north of the post office, and the Donaldson & Yahn Lumber Company at 511-517 Delaware, featuring the new Gibson refrigerators. There were more stories and more ads to help bring back the 1930s, but we'll save those for another time.



June 27, 2003

See where Walter Cronkite, the retired 80-something CBS evening news anchor, is about to begin a new career. He's signed a contract to produce a newspaper column of commentary starting in August. Walter says he resisted offers to write a similar column while he was still doing the weekday evening news. When he retired in 1981, the controversial Dan Rather replaced him and the Texas-born Dan already is doing a newspaper column. Mr. Rather makes no secret of the fact that he has a liberal leaning. Walter's column has had a big preliminary sale among newspapers so far, but we'll see how long he is able to sustain a high readership. Long-time readers of this newspaper may remember the World War II years when Walter Cronkite was one of the United Press reporters sending us accounts of the war from Europe. His byline appeared often on UP stories carried by the *Journal*.

Perry is about to lose a couple of very valuable citizens. Toni Miller and her husband, Larry, are offering Perry Printing Co. for sale and are planning to move to Colorado. Larry is the son of the late Leland Miller, Covington banker who died a short time back. For the past two years Toni has been chairman of the Perry Carnegie Library board of trustees and she is completing a second consecutive term as president of Stagecoach Community Theatre. She also has had other civic responsibilities, including serving as a rural schoolmarm at Rose Hill School on the Cherokee Strip Museum grounds, and Larry has produced quality print jobs from their shop on the west side of the square. That shop, incidentally, had its beginning more than 60 years ago when Harry Jones, shop foreman at the *Journal*, and Wendell Gottschall, assistant advertising manager of this paper, moved across the alley to operate the printing company. The business has been an asset to this community for all those years. We're sorry to lose Toni and Larry, but we certainly wish them well.

The death last week of Kathryn Peden in her home near Houston sent some of us old-timers to thinking about that family name. If you've forgotten, her late husband, Freddy, who died a few years ago, was an outstanding football player at PHS in the mid-30s. His father, Fred Peden, was the night police chief here in the 1940s, serving under Police Chief Oscar Dozier. Freddy's younger sister was Zelma Peden Gatz, who died in 1984 in Tonkawa where she had made her home with her family for several years. The Pedens lived at 815 Delaware. Zelma and my late sister, Gloria, were best friends. The elder Mr. Peden, by the way, was a brother of Herb Peden, a contract mail carrier who shuttled loads on his flat-bed Model T Ford truck between the Perry post office and our two railroad stations.

A reader passes along one of the amusing "Signs of the Times" tales that seem to tickle all of us. Thought you'd enjoy it as much as I did. Here 'tis:

"This sign," the reader writes, "was hanging on the wall of the house we first looked at when preparing to buy. The sign read: 'If we see smoke, we will assume you are on fire and take appropriate action.' No one has smoked here since then."

That's all until next time.