

June 4, 2004

Just back from NYC

LB and I (perhaps better known to many of you as "Mr. and Mrs. FGB") have just returned from our annual trip to New York City for the Theater Tour arranged each spring by Roger Drummond, head of the Drama Department at USAO. That's a mouthful of initials, but maybe you are more familiar with the school's former longtime name Oklahoma College for Women, or OCW. The name was changed many years ago, but it still, sticks in the minds of many people. For one thing, I have numerous pleasant memories of days spent on the campus at Chickasha when Oklahoma Presbyterian young people attended what they called "Conferences," but time also was allowed for getting acquainted with young men and women from other churches between classes. As I recall, I had what they called a scholarship that required working each day in the cafeteria kitchen for several hours while my friends frolicked in the noonday sun of July and August.

But, as often happens, I am drifting off the subject. I wanted to tell you that one of the members of our little party included a distinguished looking man who is a former head of the accounting department in the schools of business at both Northern Oklahoma College and Oklahoma State University. He wanted to know if I knew Bill Wurtz, Paul Laird and Lila Lee Davis. Indeed I do remember them. All three were members of the illustrious class of 1941 at Perry High School. I also was a member of that class, and I remember those three very well. He said they were outstanding students, at NOC. He also taught accounting to Gwen Easter when she was under his tutelage at Oklahoma State University, and he remembers her as another outstanding student. Of course, she is now president of our own First Bank and Trust Company, and we go to the same church. So, there is more evidence that this is a very small world, indeed. The gentleman's name, by the way, is Wilton T. Anderson, and Gwen gives him credit for advising her in a way that led ultimately to her entering the banking field.

So, this began as a report to you on what we saw on the New York stages. We took in at least one play each day we were there, sometimes two. Many were musical revivals, and, truthfully, I must say they were the best because the playwrights just aren't doing that kind of thing right now. One of these days we will furnish more details. It was, needless to say, a good trip, but it's always great to be back in Perry.



June 8, 2004

Fluff to tickle your funny bone

It's been a while since the last column of pure fluff was sent your way, so relax for a few moments and enjoy the rest of this

A Russian scientist and a Czechoslovakian scientist had spent their whole lives studying the majestic grizzly bear. Each year they petitioned their respective governments to allow them to go to Yellowstone to study these wondrous beasts.

Finally, their request was granted and they immediately flew on to New York City, and then on west to Yellowstone. They reported to the local ranger station and were told that it was the grizzly mating season. And it was much too dangerous to go out and study the animals.

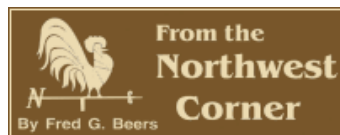
They pleaded that this was their only chance. Finally, the ranger relented. The Russian and the Czech were given cell phones and were told to report in each and every day.

For several days they called in, and then nothing was heard from the two scientists. The ranger mounted a search party and found the scientists' camp completely ravaged. No sign of the missing men.

They then followed the trail of a male and a female bear. They found the female and decided they must kill the animal to find out if she had eaten the scientists because they feared an international incident. They killed the animal and opened her stomach. Lo and behold, they found the remains of the Russian.

One ranger turned to the other and said, "You know what this means, don't you?"

"Of course," the other ranger nodded. "The Czech is in the mail." And that will wrap it up for today.



June 11, 2004

More on drug stores

The other day, we were thinking back in time to the late 1920s and early 1930s which is when the Great Drug Store War erupted in Perry. The commotion was triggered by the arrival of a chain store pharmacy on the west side of the square in downtown Perry. In that domain, three drug stores had reigned supreme for several years, and the owners were reluctant to meekly turn over any of their territory to an upstart newcomer, especially one of the feared chain operations. My Dad, Fred W. Beers, was the owner-proprietor of the City Drug Store on the north side of the square. The other offensive militants were Ralph Foster Sr. of Foster's Corner Drug on the east side, and Everett Nelson of the Southside Pharmacy on that side of the square.

In later years, Charlie Watson had the Brownie Drug on the west side, but he was not around for this particular engagement. The City Drug was closed in 1940; nine years after Dad died. The Southside Pharmacy changed hands about 15 years later, and Foster's Corner Drug is still in business although under different ownership.

Chain store businesses had nothing to do with the closure of any of the stores.

The Perry Pharmacy on Fir Avenue is a lineal descendant of the Brownie Drug and also the Monte Jones Drug, but it was not here when the Drug Store War occurred.

I've heard many stories about the "war" from other members of my family, but I was too young at the time to have any vivid personal memories of it now.

The incident was generously covered in a nationally distributed trade magazine, Drug Topics. The article carried a detailed but straightforward account of the skirmish, printed several weeks after the three Perry druggists were proclaimed the

winners. The chain store closed its outlet here and left town.

The magazine account summarized the Perry pharmacies' strategy as a simple one. The three men met periodically, pooled their purchases from wholesalers and passed the saving on to their customers. The buying power they employed was more than the chain operation cared to absorb, so the newcomers excused themselves and left town. It was a great victory for hometown ownership.