



June 1, 2005

Returning from a wonderful vacation...

My spouse (LB) and I returned home the other day after nearly a week in Gotham, our annual theater tour in the Big City, and it was lots of fun. Hard work, too, because although the theater district is fairly compact, people our age have to move faster than usual and it's no picnic if some of us aren't physically ready. But, on the flip side, we saw some wonderful things on stage, including revivals, and all in all it was very satisfactory. Our hotel (the Edison) has been around Broadway for many years and it is close enough to some of the theaters that we can easily walk to almost any destination. Some of the revivals we saw were "On Golden Pond," with James Earl Jones and Leslie Uggams, an excellent production; and "Steel Magnolias," with Delta Burke, Marsha Mason and several other very competent female actors. They were all good, or they wouldn't be doing the Big Apple circuit. If you are considering a trip up there, you already know that ticket prices and everything else are very high, so, go prepared. Walk when you can, eat sandwiches, and have fun. We certainly did.

We returned just in time for the Memorial Day service at Grace Hill Cemetery, and I'm glad we did not miss that. Our people always seem to say and to do just the right things, and Memorial Day is thereby made very meaningful. Thanks to Frank Lawson, Ken Schuermann, Richard McVay, Jesse Phillips, Richard Dugger, Rhonda Dugger, Bill Rotter, the Boy Scouts, the Legion auxiliary, the Otoe War Mothers and everyone else who had a hand in that moment of remembrance. It was well done!

Here's a note from Don Stoddard: "... (During the polio scare a few years ago), some guy drove a Model A Ford, or was it a Model T, out on the ice one winter at West Park Lake and sank it to the bottom! Do you know who that guy was?" If you do, get in touch with Don. He's trying to remember. I do know that Robin Johnston and I each owned a half interest in a Model T about that same time period, and Robin was at the controls when it slipped under the ice. He escaped unhurt, and the remains of our car were found later when the lake was drained because of the polio thing. If you know the answer to Don's query, call him.



June 4, 2005

Hope you had a chance to study the list of events being brought here for the Chautauqua series in the courthouse park. Pick out the ones that most interest you and write them on your calendar. You will be very happy when it's all a thing of the past. We are truly fortunate to have this event in our midst. The Chautauqua series were major entertainment and educational events years ago, before the arrival of TV, radio, movies and other media that brought our forefathers instant gratification in the arts. I can remember my mother and others of her generation telling marvelous stories about the benefits of the old Chautauqua series that used to visit this little town every summer. Now, thanks to some hard work by a handful of people and at the suggestion of Charlotte Ann Ream Cooper, a resident of Oklahoma City, we have the equivalent of a semester of fulfilling information. It's hard to believe we have not had a Chautauqua series here in so many

years, but that's true. Let's take advantage of all this program has to offer and be there for the major events. You will be talking about it in glowing terms, I guarantee.

"Mistletoe Leaves," the official monthly newsletter of the Oklahoma Historical Society, has a regular feature dealing with events of special interest to folks who are interested in Oklahoma history. I have just received the most recent edition, and it includes a listing of the Rose Hill School program at Cherokee Strip Museum. I'll share that with you this month and in the future as long as they continue with that feature. Wouldn't hurt to drop by the school and tell the students and their adult sponsors that we are happy to have them as visitors. Here's the "Mistletoe Leaves" listing:

AUGUST

August 11 -- Route 66 photography contest. Route 66 Museum, Clinton

August 13 -- The Greatest Wolf Hunter That Ever Lived; The Story of "Catch 'Em Alive. Jack Abernathy," Book Review and Signing with Ronald J. Ward, Chisholm Trail Museum, Kingfisher.

August 23 -- Tatting Workshop With Ju di Banashek, Chisholm Trail Museum, Kingfisher.

August 31 -- Fairfax students attend 1910 Living history program, "A Day At Rose Hill School." Visitors welcome to observe. Cherokee Strip Museum, Perry.



June 8, 2005

What follows is a modern fairy tale, a contribution from a friend. Hope you enjoy it, too.

THE OLD PHONE- PART I

When I was quite young, my father had one of the first telephones in our neighborhood. I remember the polished, old case fastened to the wall and the shiny receiver hung on one side of the box. I was too young to reach the telephone, but used to listen with fascination when my mother talked to it. Then I discovered that somewhere in the wonderful device lived an amazing person. Her name was "Information Please" and there was nothing she did not know. "Information Please" could supply anyone's number and the correct time.

My personal experience with the genie-in-a-bottle came one day when my mother was visiting a neighbor. Amusing myself at the tool bench in the basement, I whacked my finger with a hammer. The pain was terrible, but there seemed no point in crying because no one was home to give me sympathy.

I walked around the house sucking my throbbing finger, finally arriving at the stairway. The telephone! Quickly I ran for the foot stool in the parlor and dragged it to the landing. Climbing up, I unhooked the receiver in the parlor and held it to my ear. "Information Please" I said into the mouthpiece just above my head.

A click or two and a small, clear voice spoke into my ear. "Information Please" and I told her the sad story. She listened and then said things grown-ups say to soothe a child. But I was not consoled. I asked her, "Why is it that birds should sing so beautifully and bring joy to all families, only to end up as a heap of feathers on the bottom of a cage?"

She must have sensed my concern, for she said, quietly, "Wayne, always remember that there are other worlds to sing in." Somehow I felt better.

Another day I was on the telephone, "Information Please." "Information," said the now familiar voice. "How do I spell "fix?" I asked. All this took place in a small town in the Pacific Northwest.

This story will continue in the next Northwest Corner column. Please watch for it.



June 11, 2005

Today we have the conclusion of this little tale, provided for our reading enjoyment by a reader in another state. Here's Part II of this epic tale:

THE OLD PHONE- PART II

When I was nine years old, we moved across the country to Boston. I missed my friend very much. "Information Please" belonged in that old wooden box back home and I somehow never thought of trying the shiny new phone that sat on the table in the hall. As I grew into my teens, the memory of those childhood conversations never really left me. Often, in moments of doubt and perplexity, I would recall the serene sense of security I had then. I appreciate now how patient, understanding and kind she was to have spent her time on a little boy.

A few years later, on a trip west to college, my plane put down in Seattle. I had about half hour between planes. I spent 15 minutes on the phone with my sister, who lived there. Then, without thinking what I was doing, I dialed my hometown operator and said, "Information Please." Miraculously, I heard the small, clear voice say "Information." I hadn't heard this but I heard myself saying, "Could you please tell me how to spell fix?"

There was a long pause. Then came the soft-spoken answer. "I guess your finger must have healed by now." I laughed. "So it's really you," I said. "I wonder if you have any idea how much you meant to me during that time?"

"I wonder," she said, "if you know how much your call meant to me. I never had any children and I used to look forward to your calls."

I told her how often I had thought of her over the years and I asked if I could call her again when I came back to visit my sister.

"Please do," she said. "Just ask for Sally."

Three months later I was back in Seattle. A different voice answered, "Information." I asked for Sally.

"Are you a friend," she said.

"Yes, very old friend," I answered.

"Sorry to have to tell you this," she said. "Sally had been working part-time the last few years because she was sick. She died five weeks ago."

Before I could hang up she said, "By the way, did you say your name was Wayne?" "Yes," I answered.

"Well, Sally left a message for you. She wrote it down in case you call. Let me read it to you."

The note said, "Tell him there are other worlds to sing in. He'll know what I mean."

I thanked her and hung up. I knew what Sally meant. Far as I know, this is a true story.



June 15, 2005

By any standard, the Chautauqua series held here last week was a resounding success. The community owes a large debt of thanks to the people who came here to present the historical series, and to the local folks who laid the groundwork for the rest of us. Although storm clouds threatened the whole thing right from the start, the Perry high school auditorium became available as a substitute when it was needed, and everything seemed to go off right on schedule in spite of the storm clouds. The auditorium was cool, comfortable and the seating was merely great. The scholars and the entertainers succeeded in making the crowd happy, and the other performances were well done, also. Next time you see Karen Wilcox, Marilee Macias, Anna Lou Randall, Lloyd Brown, Richard Dugger or Lois Smith, or any of the others who labored so hard to make this program successful, tell them how much you appreciate their efforts in this and other types of civic projects. I hope the Chautauqua people will return to Perry soon and often. Special thanks to Charlotte Ann Ream Cooper for getting the idea originally.

The Noble County jail situation seems to have a dark cloud floating overhead. Changing the date of the election probably was mandated by the Oklahoma statutes, but here's hoping nothing more comes along to plague this important issue. We need that jail. Now.

One of the things we learned at the Chautauqua series was that for many years many of us have been using the wrong pronunciation for Sacajawea, or whatever the correct spelling may be. We learned in high school that she became part of the Lewis & Clark expedition, and that the English translation of her name told us she was "the Bird Woman," but the scholar's explanation the other night did succeed in convincing us that we have used the wrong pronunciation for many years. Ain't education great?

A lady told me the other day that she had some photos made of businesses around the square when the present post office was being built. She describes them and they definitely do sound interesting, so one of these days you are likely to see some of those pictures in this column with current captions to clarify what they are. Please keep watching for them.



June 18, 2005

On a recent pleasant evening, we took a little drive to see how things look in the CCC Park. This neat little place, laid out on a hill on the south side of Perry, is one of our little known treasures, something we should be promoting and capitalizing

on. Instead, it is not used to the fullest extent by a long shot.

The administration of Mayor Estell Emde has seen to it that the park's road system has been repaired and brought up to the highest standards in years. The roads are great. The evening we were out there, several people were having a picnic where the main boat dock is located. That's where the Civilian Conservation Corps, which built the park in the Depression Era of the 1930s, intended such things would be located.

Across the lake, which is full and tranquil looking because it is now part of the city's water system, are what looks like stalls and a broad, paved area. The old wooden "Church on a Perch," formerly the Fellowship Hall of the Episcopal Church, has been painted and appears to be nearly ready for use, but there's no signage to indicate that is true. Our citizens need to know about such things. Weddings, showers and other events could be held there.

Something else occurred to us after a recent trip to Pawnee's municipal park. It appears to me that a pretty good golf course could be laid out in our CCC Park and that would relieve some of the scheduling at the Country Club, where only nine holes are available. That's the only place local golfers can now play, without going out of town. Wouldn't another course make money for the city? Anyway, there are possibilities for developing our CCC Park into something more than it has ever been, but it will take someone with drive and ambition to make that a reality. We have the start of something really good, if we can just turn the dreams into reality.

The CCC Park is an untapped treasure. We need to make something good out of it and bring more visitors to Perry. The basics are there, just waiting to be developed and tapped into. What do you think?



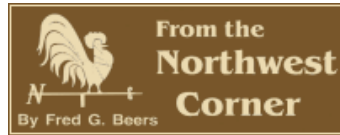
June 22, 2005

Not many things annoy me for long periods of time. Usually little irritants can be dismissed with a shrug of the shoulders or the realization that nothing really matters that much. So it just goes away. An exception to that good rule is the cavalier way our little city is treated when Oklahoma news is being discussed by the TV weathermen. I'm talking about Channels 4, 5, 9, 12 and any of the others who get into this aspect of what they call "TV News." You hear those prognosticators, including the new ones, pointing out temperature features, rainfall predictions or forecasts for various parts of the state, including Perry, but it seems they usually find a way to avoid verbalizing the name of our home city. The other day, for a bad example, the electronic weatherman kept referring to "Noble County" without ever mentioning the name of the county's capital city Perry. Why? No apparent explanation was forthcoming, so we just had to sit there and endure the ignominy of the consignment to oblivion that the weathermen have tossed our way. Maybe next time they spend big amounts of money for new equipment they will find something that explains Perry is at least the name of Noble County's equivalent of Ponca City (which is not the capital of Kay County but always manages to get mentioned.)

Don Stoddard's inquiry about the Model T, or Model A, Ford automobile that slipped beneath the ice on West Park Lake years ago brought up some local interest. Archie Moore and Irl Henry both remember when George Dufek Jr. drove the old relic when it began sinking under the surface. Irl was ice skating at the time but he says a winch truck salvaged the car and brought it up out of the ice. George was unhurt.

For my part, Robin Johnston and I each owned a half interest in an open top Model T pickup. He was driving it on the surface of the lake when the back end of the vehicle began disappearing under the surface of the water. Robin got out OK,

but as I remember it the car just disappeared. Years later, when the lake was drained as an anti-mosquito innovation, remains of the Model T were found in the lake. It was never driven after that. Along about the same time, my brother-in-law, Sid Wade, and Bailey Render operated a Texaco station on 7th street, where the YMCA parking lot is now located. It was about the time the Texaco Fire Chief advertising promotion and the old Ford was painted fire engine red. I don't think Sid or Bailey ever drove it on the ice of West Park Lake, but I don't know what became of their fire truck. They drove it in the September 16 parade and for other promotions, but it stayed on the surface for several years.



June 25, 2005

Here now are some things just to help round out your week with a smile or a chuckle, and for no other good reason that I can think of. Read and enjoy. These come from a friend who chooses anonymity.

Two newborns were lying in their respective cribs in the hospital's maternity ward when one of them turned to the other and said, "I'm a little boy."

Second baby: "I don't believe it."

First baby: "Oh is that so? Well, just wait until the nurse leaves the room and I'll show you."

As soon as the nurse left the room, he kicked off the blanket, lifted his leg in the air and said, "See, blue booties."

Women's wear often goes to extreme but seldom to extremities.

I wouldn't say your bathing suit is skimpy, but I've seen more cotton in the top of an aspirin bottle.

Dorothy Parker: "Brevity is the soul of lingerie."

Franklin P. Adams: "Wearing shorts usually reveals nothing about a man so much as his indifference to public opinion."

Women's styles may change, but their designs remain the same.

Phyllis Diller: "There is so much nudity in films that this year's Oscar for clothing design will probably go to a dermatologist."

Sophia Loren: "A woman's dress should be like a barbed-wire fence...serving its purpose without disturbing the view."

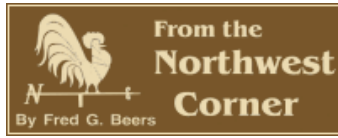
Marilyn Monroe: "It's not true that I had nothing on. I had the radio on."

Jim Klobusher: "Never in the history of fashion has so little material been raised so high to reveal so much that needs to be covered so badly."

Emelda's slacks are so tight you can tell if the coin pocket is heads or tails.

I knew a girl who had a dress made entirely of chicken feathers. The men watched her like a hawk.

That's all for now. See you in a few days.



June 29, 2005

Something strange popped into my memory bank the other day. It had virtually nothing to do with anything else. It was just the kind of stuff that bounces around in my head from time to time for no apparent reason, but nevertheless, there it was: A story about rats. Yes, those furry little denizens that upset many of us just because they exist. Nasty, unnecessary, disease-bearing rats.

Not a pleasant thing to dwell on, but they were once a fact of life at the City Drug Store, our family business in the depression-era of the 1930's, and we hated them. They were seen everywhere food was served. We had a soda fountain where lots of creamy malts and hot fudge sundaes were made, and thus we dispensed many gallons of thick, calorie-laden goodies each day. Some of those little rodents were usually just hanging around, hoping someone would spill something for them to clean up. They normally stayed out of sight, thank goodness, but this little piece is built around their occasional visibility. We knew they were there.

My older cousin, Fred W. Beers, ran the drug store for my widowed mother and he probably hated the rats more than the rest of us did. So my sisters and I were not surprised when he took me and marched into the Lobsitz Hardware Store on the south side of the square, looking for a weapon we could use to destroy the enemy – those rats. He was much better acquainted with arms than I was, and he asked to see a .22 short rifle. Mr. Lobsitz, a white-haired gentleman who had made the run here in the wild and wooly days of 1893, brought one out from beneath the counter and asked Fred how he liked it. Fred squinted down the barrel, aimed it a couple of times, and said he'd take it. We returned to the drug store. In the back room, Cousin Fred had set up a kind of target area, complete with paper targets, and for the first time in my young life I fired a rifle. The small shell went wide of the target, but at least it was in the right direction.

Years later, when I was an infantryman in the U.S. Army at wartime, I was taken to the targets with a .30 caliber rifle of my own and ranked high enough that they declared me to be a "sharp-shooter," and I knew I owed it all to that little .22 rifle. Cousin Fred had taken me to the town dump on many Sunday afternoons. We saw lots of live targets when the resident rat populace scurried away from us, and I must have actually hit a few of them. They never quite disappeared altogether at the drug store, but Cousin Fred and I, and our trusty weaponry, kept them at bay. Nobody was ever bitten, at least, as I recall.