

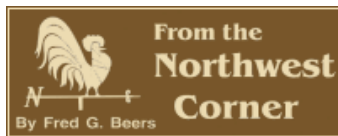
March 1, 2006

John Klein is the son of the former Perry mayor, George Klein. John now heads up the highly regarded sports department of the Tulsa World, and he invited questions at the end of his informal remarks before the Perry Rotary club the other day. Some of them were very interesting, to say the least.

Asked if he thought Oklahoma City would be able to keep the New Orleans NBA basketball team after this season, he promptly replied in the affirmative, adding that Tulsa was planning on getting an NHL team. Both would be very attractive packages for potential ticket buyers.

John made some other off the cuff remarks, including speculation about the future of OSU's basketball coach, Eddie Sutton, and all will bear repeating. Ask a Rotarian what John had to say about the football future (next season) of OU and OSU. Former PHS classmate Dwight Hamann introduced John with some entertaining comments.

For one thing, he believes the absence of the rivalry has a lot to do with the low ratings of the Winter Olympic games last week. I take that to mean the missing ingredient was international interest in the games. The Olympics may be heading for the world's junk yard, again. Too bad. They have such noble aims and achievable goals. What do you think?



March 4, 2006



Another view of the east side of the Perry square shows some of buildings that have been demolished. A gaping hole remains where the Palace Cafe and the Annex once stood. (Photo courtesy of the Brace Smith estate)

When this series on the four sides of our downtown square began a few days ago, I had no intention of letting it get out of hand, and it hasn't. Until now, at least. Many friends have mentioned businesses they knew that once flourished on the square, but are now gone. Most of them were on the east side of the square. I tried to explain that this was a list of stores that existed in 1940, but I do not think everyone heard me. So be it. We'll continue with what we have, and hope that all of you understand. For now, on with the list. We left off with some remarks about the Roxy Theater, next door to Foster's Corner Drug, one of the few still where it used to be.

Next door south of the Roxy was Kraemer's Shoe Store. The business was operated by Mr. and Mrs. E.O. Edson, and it was quite a draw for adults and children. Mrs. Edson was the former Marguerite Kraemer, daughter of A. Kraemer, who founded the business at the opening of the Cherokee Strip in 1893. The Kraemer store gave away baby rabbits to children at Easter time.

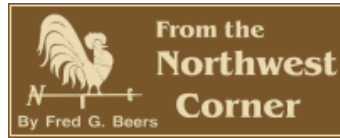
Just south of the Kraemer store was the Henry Loeffelholz barber shop, and south of that was the memorable Palace Cafe. That also was the home of Perry's Union Bus Station. You could buy a bus ticket to any place in the U.S. at the Palace. Coffee or Coca-Cola, a sandwich and a dinner at the Palace were considered quite elegant, and many business deals were made there.

Next door south of the Palace was a nickel and dime variety store opened by the affable Jack Smith, then came the H. L. Johnson grocery, operated by the Johnson family. Many "Mom and Pop" grocery stores were in the downtown area, and many were on or near the square. Somewhere in the vicinity were the Annex Theater, the Pacific Cafe, a pool hall, a bowling alley and various other firms. One of them was a four-lane bowling alley. The Annex Theater and several other buildings were razed in the 1960's to clear the way for a proposed renovation.

Other businesses came and moved away on the east side of the square, but perhaps this will give you a sample to savor. On the south end of that side was the Foucart building, and it is still there. Our Chamber of Commerce has offices there,

and the PIN TV offices are next door north. The east side also has historic buildings on the east side some of them erected after 1940. The Malzahn building cluster, now called the Heritage Center, is a good example.

Keep several things in mind when remembering the east side. Not all of the businesses in this column were there in 1940. The Moorehead Directory was a good source of information, but if anything has been overlooked it is my own fault, not Moorehead's. We will have more later on the south and west sides.



March 8, 2006

There are days, I must admit, when doing this column seems more of a chore than a joy, which is what it was supposed to be. Then someone is kind enough to say something or write something that is priceless to me, and then I know that the original intent is still there. One of the most respected copy readers in Oklahoma recently took time to address those very feelings, and that is all it took. This individual is part of a tandem writing team, and just knowing they approved of these humble efforts is enough to make it all seem worthwhile. The individual, who must remain anonymous, also expressed interest in the capricious Jane of the Journal, who used to work on this effort when I started out in 1941, and because of that request you can expect to see more about Jane, who now lives in San Francisco. But first, here's a contribution from another longtime friend. Hope you like it as much as I did.

I miss those made-up marketing words that were meant to sound modern and now sound so retro. Words like "DynaFlow" and "Electrolux" Introducing the 1963 Admiral TV, now with "SpectraVision!"

Food for thought—Was there a telethon that wiped out lumbago? Nobody complains of that anymore. Maybe that's what castor oil cured, because I never hear mothers threatening their kids with castor oil anymore.

Some words aren't gone, but are definitely on the endangered list. The one that grieves me most is "supper." Now everybody says "dinner." Save a great word. Invite someone to supper. Discuss fender skirts.

Someone forwarded this to me. I thought some of us of a "certain age" would remember most of these.

Fidel Castro dies and goes to heaven. When he gets there, St. Peter tells him that he is not on the list and that no way, no how, does he belong in heaven. Fidel must go to hell.

So Fidel goes to hell where Satan gives him a hearty welcome and tells him to make himself at home.

Then Fidel notices that he left his luggage in heaven and goes and tells Satan, who says, "No hay problema. I'll go send a couple of little devils to get your stuff."

When the 'little devils' get to heaven, they find the gates are locked because St. Peter is having lunch. They start debating what to do. Finally, one comes up with the idea they should go over the wall and get the luggage themselves.

As they are climbing the wall, two little angels see them, and one angel says to the other, "My goodness! Fidel has been in hell no more than ten minutes, and already we're getting refugees!"



March 11, 2006

Hope all you folks are ready for the annual events coming up in Our Town. The local Ministerial Alliance has already started the series of weekly Lenten services at noon each Wednesday. The Perry Progress Club will sponsor the annual Library Coffee in just a few days (watch this paper for details) and Bill Rotter's wonderful creation, the Great Big Band, played a free concert on Thursday evening. Come and enjoy all of these, and be ready to dig into your billfold to help support them.

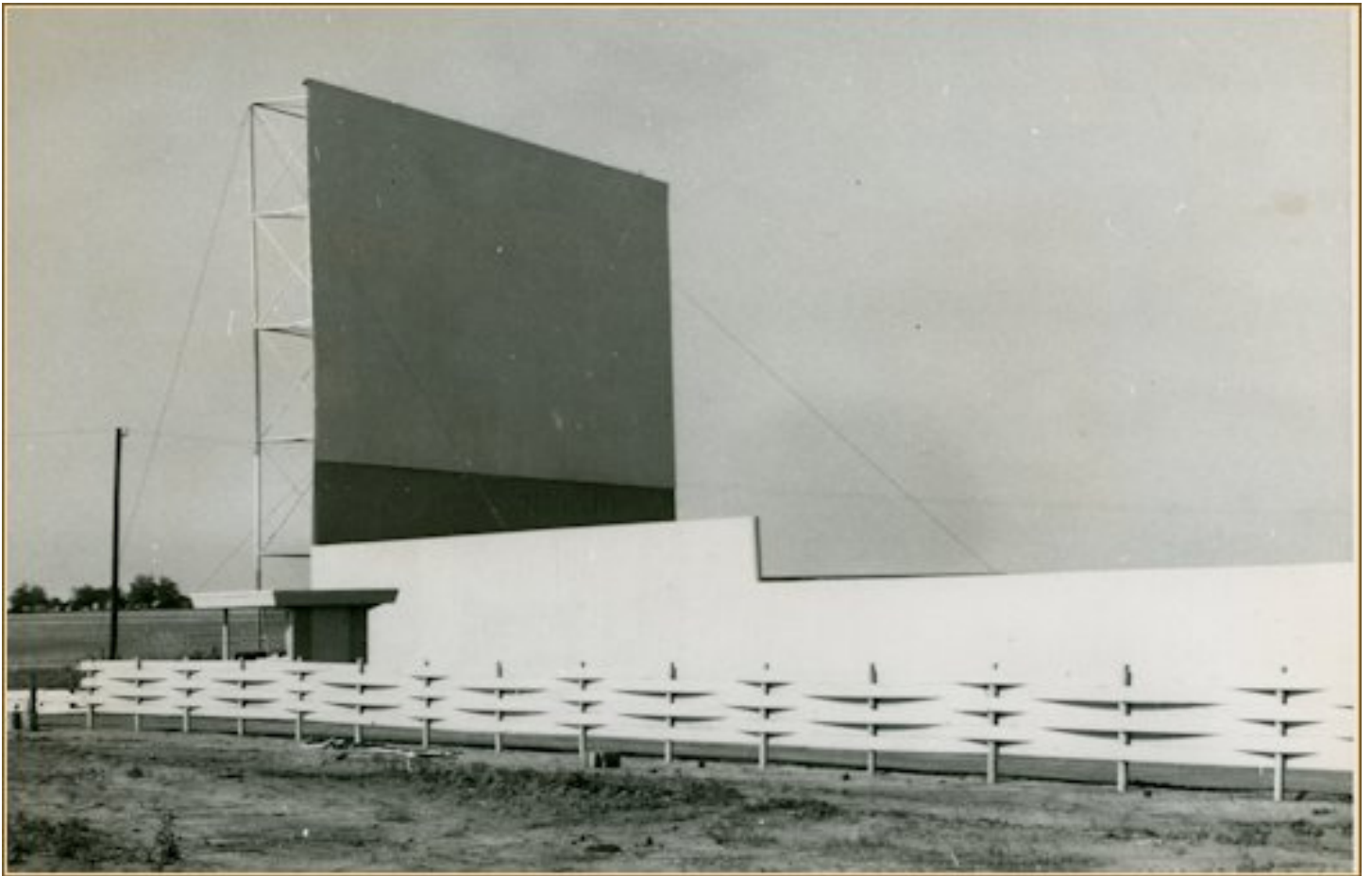
By the way, if you are wondering about the next installment of my new series on businesses that used to exist around the Perry square, do not be alarmed. The series will be continued, but not today. Too many stores have come and gone away to make that subject usable each publication day.

Carolyn Briegge made the comment recently that a town that stands still is doomed, but a town that is actively seeking new attractions is moving forward (or words to that effect) and that pretty well describes Perry. We are doomed to fail if we do not support the attractions already here, and we cannot move ahead without the money to support that effort. So, you can expect a revival of the Expo Center proposition very soon.

I, for one, can hardly wait. How about you?



March 15, 2006



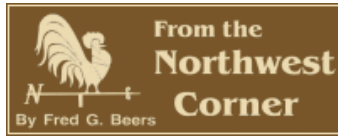
The Chief Drive in theatre was located on farmland now occupied by the Verl Brorsen. This photo probably was made in the 1940's, when construction on the theatre was completed. The Chief was dismantled when customers stopped coming.

When your perspective is clouded by distance, it's easy to say: "Chin up, all is well." The hard part comes when reality sets in and you realize the pain is not a dream, but harsh and true. Look for consolation where misery has visited sometime in the past. Your Heavenly Father knows all about this, too and He can bring relief. Above all, remember that this moment will go away. This is easy to say now, but those who have been previously afflicted can affirm the truth. Be brave, and pray for a better tomorrow.

The photo that comes with today's column shows that magnificent structure, the Chief Drive-In Theatre, as it appeared north of town, just a few feet off U.S. 77, the main highway for north-south travel before the Interstate system was built.

The Chief, like all of its counterparts everywhere, symbolized a new way of living, a new philosophy for America. Bobby soxers were in, rock 'n' roll was becoming the music of America's young folks, and indoor movies were dimmed. The Terry family saw it coming, and the McKennas, new owners of the Roxy and Annex Theatres also had a notion of what was going to happen. The Roxy was closed, the Perry Theatre was put in use, and eventually both the Roxy and Annex were closed. Perry has not been quite the same since then.

Nowadays, drive-in movies are pretty much passe. The old drive-ins just do not exist, and big movie palaces are found in shopping malls, rarely as freestanding edifices as we used to know them. That is a shame, but it is also a fact of life. We will have more on the movies and the businesses that once pulsed on the south side of the Perry courthouse square as time goes by.



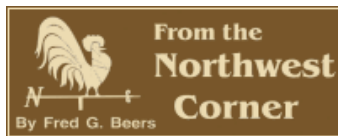
March 18, 2006

When Bill Rotter waved the baton over his "Great Big Band" musicians the other night at the high school auditorium, you didn't need a program to know who arranged that piece of music. It was obvious that the musicians knew who they were emulating, and they did it very well. Bill did help out by identifying the source of particular pieces of music, but you could tell his musicians knew where it came from.

Which is to say, the men and women who made up the band knew what they were doing, and it showed. It was an excellent program played in the manner of musicians who are for the most part no longer with us. They came from an age when ballroom dancing was popular, and when the gentle grace of good breeding were not only acceptable, but expected. That is just part of the reason many of us still prefer Big Band music to the raucous, noisy kind of music that now has found favor despite its debilitating results. Mr. Rotter, please give us more and more of that kind of good music.

No offering plates were on hand that night, but we were told by the directors that the same kind of music would follow a brief intermission, and it did, including a little Dixieland combo. Wonderful program. Great musicians and conductor. These performances should be taped or recorded on CD discs for playoff at our convenience.

The school auditorium was packed to give further evidence to the popularity of that kind of music, and we can hardly await the next concert. Just tell us where and when, and we will be there at the appointed time and place.



March 22, 2006

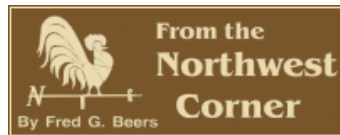
When I was a punk kid of the 1930's, growing up on the north side of the Perry square, I thought all the "good" businesses were on the south side, except our family's City Drug Store on the north side, where I labored as a soda jerk from 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 p.m. daily. Those I liked on the south side were our friendly competitor, Everett Nelson, at the South Side Pharmacy; Morris, Madge, Rudolph, Elsie and George Gottlieb at the Famous Department Store; Wesley Marcy at the Gem Café; Charlie Monroe Jr. at Monroe-Lang Hardware & Furniture; and Horace Galaway Sr. at his grocery store. There were others, of course, but most of them were come-and-go businesses.

Some of the others were the Farmers Exchange Store, the Humpty-Dumpty grocery, followed by Safeway, followed by Lester Barge when he moved from the north side; and several others. At the extreme east end was a vacant lot, which finally became an enclosed fruit stand and Union Bus Station with Leo and Hortense Johnson at the controls. It was a great kid hangout for several years. Now it is an unoccupied Mexican restaurant. The south side, like the other three sides, has lots of unoccupied buildings.

The Wood family had a restaurant in an old bank building, Ted Workman had an adult recreation parlor and cafe toward the west end, John Thompson eventually had a furniture store near the west end, and a car dealership once occupied a store front as I recall. I'm sure there were others, but those came quickly to mind. And of course the old ice plant, where

the Odd Fellows used to meet, was quite a building. It brought Perry's first rental space for frozen animal parts, I believe. The ice plant was not on the south side of the square, but was actually one block off the square. It's where the NAPA store is now located.

Mr. Galaway eventually closed his grocery store and Leonard Rugh opened a Food Market in that location. Both declined my proposal that they buy popped corn from me for moviegoers at the Roxy and Annex Theatres, where I had already been turned down by Charlie Wolleson and Henry Tate. All of us did not share the same vision. More about the south side of the square will follow shortly.



March 25, 2006

Like a lot of Americans, our adult Presbyterian Sunday school class spent some time recently discussing the meaning of certain phrases. One of these was "bar ditch." Do you know what it means, "borrow ditch," and when to use it? That is where we got hung up. Turns out, "bar" in this case is a corruption of the word "borrow," so when you hear the phrase "bar ditch," think "borrow ditch," and you will be at the right place. The term, bar ditch, came into existence when someone misunderstood a phrase that meant "borrow ditch," and the mystery ends there. In another age, a pile of dirt was placed on the center of an adjacent thoroughfare to provide material for continued improvement of the road in the future. The borrowed dirt came from an adjacent ditch. Hence, "borrow ditch."

Another tricky one (because of our use of it) was "tin whistle." Few of us knew the meaning or origin of that phrase. It is a term commonly applied to a device that allows excessive rain water to run beneath a driveway, for instance, following a heavy rain. We knew about rain in this part of the country, but the whistle term was not uniformly familiar. Now you know. A good dictionary will guide you along the way and prevent a stumble.

A conservative host of a popular talk radio show was amused the other day to see the word "bungled" in a statement issued by a Southern government official. The host was amused because no one on his staff knew what the heck "bungled" meant. Someone pointed out to him that it was another way of saying "messed up," and it was perfectly understandable to many people. You know, of course, that something bungled is normally considered a mess, so why doesn't the rest of the world know that? It's a way of understanding why our version of the American language is hard for outsiders to learn its correct usage.



March 29, 2006

Talking to Mr. Bill Rotter, director of the "Great Big Perry Band," the other night, I learned that he is planning another concert of "big band" music on May 18. As you might expect, there will be no pre-concert ticket sales, but voluntary contributions will supplement funds already allocated to assist the Perry band program. Mr. Rotter, who formerly served as the PHS band director and administrator of those funds, knows all too well how badly such supplements are needed, and

he is willing to accept that in lieu of salaries for the musicians who now make up the band for the rest of us to enjoy. Thanks, Bill, and to the musicians who provide us with these occasional concerts. A lot of other towns would love to have this feature in their community. When the next performance is officially announced, be sure to mark it on your calendar – and be there with your guests.

In rummaging through some old cardboard boxes of family lore while working on stories about businesses that once drew crowds of folks to our courthouse square, I found some that were interesting for special reasons. For instance, the south side of the square and the north side are more than a block long. They were laid out that way. The south side, which is part of Cedar, has harbored retailers and city administrative offices. At some point, the old South Side Pharmacy became the anchor of the west half of the south side, and the single block was divided by Gene Taylor Street. That short stretch was named for a one-time Perry Daily Journal reporter who faithfully covered city council meetings for decades, until he retired. Originally, that street was named John Brogan Street in honor of Perry's first mayor.

Will any of this ever change? Stay tuned. This is still Perry, you know.