

**May 2, 2003**

Here's a bit more concerning the Perry fire department in the era shortly after the opening of the Cherokee Strip on September 16, 1893.

A lot of the following information was compiled by Fredonna Eisenhauer Dowell when she was city treasurer some 23 years ago. One of her principal sources was an old Perry newspaper dated February 12, 1912. Her story begins here:

The first move toward a fire department in Perry was made on March 12, 1894, when the city council purchased a hook and ladder outfit for \$1,200. J. C. Patterson was appointed fire chief. Barrels of salt water were placed around the square in front of many business houses. Before the wagon arrived, two fires had virtually cleaned up the block southeast of the square.

After the spring elections, Henry Beard was appointed fire chief by Mayor Stone and he served about one month. W. W. Keas was appointed to fill the vacancy caused by Chief Beard's resignation. The department was located on the hill on the south side of C Street between 8th and 9th Streets. The fire house was moved next to 7th Street below C Street, in the Martin Laundry building. Gene Shoup was appointed chief by Mayor Holland.

A pair of gray horses was purchased from Captain Busch for a fire team and later J. A. Snyder was made chief with Dave Snow as assistant. From there the headquarters was moved to the old Pabst building on C Street between 5th and 8th Streets, which burned in 1908. The chiefs in succession following J. A. Snyder were W. Morehead, Charley Welter, George Durfee, Ed Staff, Art Shively, Chet Snyder, Emmit DeLaney and Tom Brandon, who was chief as of February 1912.

The old gray team passed out of commission five years ago (1907) and was replaced by a fine bay team. The department is located (in 1912) on 7th Street and has besides the chief an assistant, two paid and eight call men. Has 40 hydrants covering a radius of 160 blocks. From July 1 to December 31, 1911, the department made 47 blocks runs in response to 12 alarms, laid 3,750 feet of hose. Property loss amounted to \$245, the amount of property involved being \$103,220 with \$69,000 insurance.

We'll wrap up this series of columns with the next one, unless more new information is found in the meantime.



**May 6, 2003**

To conclude this series of columns telling about the early days of the Perry fire department, here are a few odds and ends, salvaged from various sources.

The new Perry fire station on "D" Street was dedicated on September 10, 1923, with an open house and a royal feast served with a keg of cold Budweiser. On December 3, 1905, the Perry fire house was destroyed by fire along with two or three other buildings.

On February 4, 1902, the city council fixed the following monthly salaries for Perry officials: City treasurer, \$20; marshal, \$50; and policemen and firemen, \$40. In April of that year, a city ordinance was adopted prohibiting policemen and firemen from playing cards, pool or billiards while on duty.

Fire destroyed two Perry landmarks in 1911 -- the Bryan building and the old Van Cleef building housing the McCoy Grocery and the Ed Mossman Grocery. The old Senate building, as the Bryant property was called, had an interesting history. It had been occupied as a saloon, restaurant, dry goods store and again a saloon several years before statehood. The upper rooms had been put to various and diverse uses (according to The Perry Republican). The 1890s, the newspaper reported, was the palmiest period for the building. The gentle clicking of ivory checks (?), the magic whirl of the roulette wheel or the eager "little Joe" or "come-a-seven" could be heard from the crowd around the crap table.

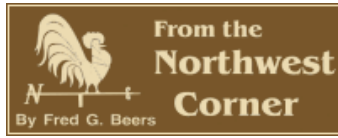
On April 3, 1908, (the paper reported) the City Drug Store on the west side of the square, owned and operated by my Dad, Fred W Beers, was destroyed by fire along with the entire contents, with the exception of an iron mortar, which we still have. In less than 10 days the City Drug was back in running order on the north side of the square, in the Palmer & Smelser building, which Dad had purchased.

The first move toward a fire department was made on March 12, 1894, by the first city council, which purchased a hook and ladder outfit for \$1,200. J. C. Patterson was appointed fire chief.

I hope these tidbits of information about the early days of the Perry fire department have been interesting, if fragmented, as you read them.



THIS PHOTO shows the Perry fire department as it existed in 1916. It includes regular firefighters along with the volunteers, lined up with their new fire truck, which may be the old Stutz Bearcat that served the department for many years. None of the firefighters are named Here. In the background is the old Perry post office, a sandstone building that graced the north-west corner of the courthouse park for many years.



**May 9, 2003**

Arlene Green, long-time friend and formerly a co-worker in this newspaper's editorial department, phoned the other day to ask if I saw the cable TV drama about the former mayor of New York, Rudy Giuliani. I had to admit that I saw only a few minutes of that show but I thought it was well done. Arlene agreed, but that was not her point. The actor who played the part of the mayor was James Woods, one of my favorites. Arlene was struck by Woods' resemblance to our own friend, the late Henry S. Johnston, former governor of Oklahoma, who also had a stormy political career not unlike that of the ex-mayor. Thinking back to Mr. Johnston's distinctive and distinguished appearance and demeanor, I had to agree with Arlene. Did anyone else notice that?

Maybe it was that brief conversation, but later I saw a TV movie starring Fred Dryer as detective Rick Hunter of the San Diego police department. In the course of watching, it struck me that Mr. Dryer looks just like the late Bud Wilkinson, who coached the Oklahoma University football Sooners when they began their ascent to gridiron glory a few decades back. I hope someone else agrees.

Here's a bit of froth for a spring day's reading, provided by Barbara Hamous Barker. (I've known her almost since the day of her birth, when her Daddy, the late Merrill Hamous, was a pharmacist at our family's City Drug Store. Merrill later worked for Charlie Watson at Brownie's Drug and still later Merrill and Jim Hopper opened the Hamous & Hopper pharmacy in the Masonic Temple building where Chris' Pharmacy is now located.) The following are under the general heading of "Fifty Year High School Reunion Songs. Here they are:

The Bee Gees—"How Can You Mend A Broken Hip?"

Roberta Flack—"The First Time Ever I Forgot Your Face."

Johnny Nash—"I Can't See Clearly Now."

The Temptations—"Papa Got a Kidney Stone."

ABBA—"Denture Queen."

Leo Sayer—"You Make Me Feel Like Napping."

Commodores—"Once, Twice, Three Trips to the Bathroom"

Porcol Harem—"A White Shade of Hair."

Steely Dan—"Rikki Don't Lose Your Car Keys."

Herman's Hermits—"Mrs. Brown You've Got a Lovely Walker."

Marvin Gaye—"I Heard It Through the Grape Nuts."

The Who—"Talkin' 'bout My Medication."

If you don't understand any of these, ask the nearest teen-ager.



**May 13, 2003**

So, gentle reader, Laura and I are now home again after a most enjoyable stay in London for a theater tour. The affair was put together by the good folks in the drama department of the University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma, down at Chickasha. It is still hard to talk and write about "USAO" instead of the school's former name, OCW, or Oklahoma College for Women, as it was known for many years. This time we saw wonderful theatrical performances on London's equivalent of Broadway. Of course the entire London area is a treat and a delight because of the enormous amount of history it contains. Despite many visits there, we have not yet succeeded in seeing it all, nor do we ever expect to reach that plateau. The city simply has too much to offer.

I have to admit that for a time, earlier this spring, I considered canceling our reservations and not making the trip. Primarily that was a reaction to the continuing terrorist threat so prevalent in many minds, but in the end I recognized the truth of the conclusion that if we don't go, they win. So, I reconsidered the withdrawal and we proceeded to join around 30 others on the junket. I assure you it was a very happy group, and they were not all students. Most of them, including us, were what we now call senior citizens, and the mixture of ages worked out very well. Roger Drummond, from the USAO drama staff, is an experienced leader of such trips and all the details were well arranged. This was our third trip with Roger. Our local guide in London was Karen, a comely young Swedish import who spoke perfect English and mother-henned all of us admirably.

Most of us on the trip saw three plays as part of the package. Two of them were wonderful revivals of "My Fair Lady" and "Phantom of the Opera." We had seen both of those previously but the London productions were superb. The third offering was a new hit comedy entitled "The Complete Works of William Shakespeare, Abridged." It was done by three talented comedians and they made it a very entertaining show. On our own we chose to see "Mama Mia," another funny show on the order of the current movie, "My Big Fat Greek Wedding." A most amusing presentation.

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The timing was bad in some respects, of course. For one thing I did not have a chance to write a few words about Lois Magee Severe, the lovely lady who has been so gracious to share her artistic talents with her church and this community. Her late husband, Clovis Severe, was an usher at our wedding and a lifelong friend. We were neighbors when growing up on Eighth Street. I remember years ago how Lois brought to life the ingenue roles in several PHS operettas. She certainly will be missed by this community. It's hard to say goodbye to someone like that.



**May 16, 2003**

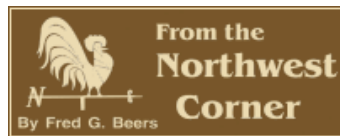
I have enjoyed the concerts presented by the Perry school system's instrumental musicians the past few days. The vocal group performed separately but I regret that other obligations made it impossible for me to attend them. I have heard nothing but good things about all of these, both vocal and instrumental. Sandy Hentges and Jim Parham are the band directors; Sandy Cranfill and Mary Weinkauff are vocal music teachers. There probably are other names that should be credited in some measure, but those are the ones I know.

We seem to have an abundance of richly talented young men and women in music this year and I don't want to diminish that factor, but these dedicated instructors have given us a year to remember. Because of budget restrictions, we are approaching a time of belt-tightening in our school system. But it will be nice in the years ahead to recall the versatility, artistic skills and, if you will, the genius of these young students in confluence with the magic of their instructors in this particular year. Thanks to all of them for the talent they have shared with the rest of us.

Many folks in this area remember Eunice Khoury, who lived here a few years back before returning to the Oklahoma City area. You can catch her now on a Saturday morning (11 a.m.) KOMA radio show. Occasionally the show features a Perry resident, which makes it even more interesting.

Don Stoddard read the recent Northwest Corner column about Atchison, Kansas, and it punched his reminiscence button. Atchison, you will recall, lent its name to the fabled Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad Line, and the town is now devising ways to lure tourists to its warehouse of memorabilia. Don writes: "Back during the depression days in the 1930s, I began my school days in Arkansas City, Kansas, better known as Ark City. It also was a railhead of the old Santa Fe line. I had an uncle who lived there. He also worked in one of the old roundhouses for the Santa Fe. I got to go watch him one time while he was working on one of those old steam engines. Also in Old Ark City there is still standing, as far as I know, a beautiful old high school that was built in 1890. A trip to that old high school is worth the time and effort. I plan to visit Ark City again this summer. It holds a lot of memories for me and I still have some old school pictures from there."

I appreciate Don's recollections and his contributions to this column from time to time.



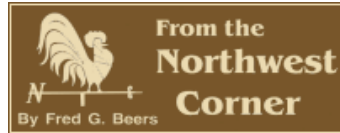
## **May 20, 2003**

Interesting interlude at one of the local restaurants after church services Sunday morning. A familiar gentleman and his charming wife presented themselves at the table we occupied and identified themselves as Mr. and Mrs. Jim Barge, who grew up here and are now living in retirement in St. Paul, Minnesota. It was a most pleasant surprise and I had the opportunity to escort them to some of the tables where Perrys with long memories got to see them. In the 1930s Jim's dad, the late Lester Barge, operated a grocery store on the north side of the square in the Palmer & Smelser building, on the east side of my Dad's business, the City Drug Store. That building is now occupied by Georgia Curtis' furniture and antique business. Lester later moved to the south side of the square in the building where our city councilmen now meet twice monthly.

Several year after Lester's death, his widow, Mary, married L.O. Winters Sr., the Perry fire chief. Jim, meanwhile, attended seminary and became a Presbyterian pastor. His mother was the Perry Carnegie librarian for several years before her retirement. She died five years ago. Jim's wife is the former Silvey Wood, daughter of the late Mr. and Mrs. Lew Wood. Jim and Silvey were here as part of their "jubilee celebration," which means they are retracing some steps in 2003 as a means of taking note of their Golden Wedding Anniversary year. As part of that, they attended services here Sunday morning at the First Christian Church where they were married in 1953 by Rev. Cryder Brayshaw. We enjoyed spending a few minutes visiting about some of the olden days with Jim and Silvey.

Apparently all went well at the Perry high school graduation ceremony Saturday morning on the football field of Perry Stadium. The weather is always questionable, at any time of year, but considering the storms we've experienced lately

there was good reason to be wary. A large crowd of parents, other proud relatives and interested spectators filled the stands. The school's fine auditorium was designed to hold a large crowd, but with more than 90 seniors receiving diplomas this year there was just no way the ceremony could have been held there. Too many family members and friends deserved seats, and the auditorium would not have held them. OSU's athletic director, Harry Birdwell, who has many friends here, was the commencement speaker. Even though young graduates are not too apt to remember the remarks of their commencement speaker, we hope the Perry grads, as they go on with their lives, will bear in mind some of the points Mr. Birdwell made. He's a very level-headed man doing a great job for the Cowboys' athletic program.



## **May 23, 2003**

Despite the inexplicably vicious vagaries of Mother Nature on her rampages this time of year in Oklahoma, most folks seem to agree that our portion of the universe has been well treated. One has only to look out the nearest window to see rolling meadows and lawns of emerald green, certain signs of new growth after some of winter's worst poundings. You may also observe serene herds of fat cattle as they contentedly masticate their cud while they stay close to their mamas to learn how to survive in the lovely rustic landscape surrounding them.

Perry yards are taking on a beautiful new look as trees, lawns, flower beds and other living decorations welcome the first few weeks of spring. Rain? Farm ponds generally are full to the brim, and the lush growth of Bermuda grass and other varieties seem to be reassuring us that this spring in our state is going to be a vision of beauty, partly despite the elimination of some old tree limbs and other unwanted items in many neighborhoods. Remember that month last year when the lights were off for several days in Perry as the result of an historic ice storm?

It's a gorgeous time of the year. Savor every moment and think how lucky we are to be living in this blessed land.

On to other subjects now, including a couple of personal pet peeves that are not becoming easier to endure. For some time now, I have avoided mentioning the folks who nonchalantly make U-turns in the middle of busy downtown streets. But, I have to bring this up again because it is still going on.

City police officers have posted signs to warn drivers that the practice of making left-hand turns in unmarked lanes is illegal around the square, but I must tell you I do not think the situation is any better. Last week, on a street approaching the north side of our downtown square, a car in front of me unexpectedly made a left another vehicle did the same thing. The driver of that car stepped out and trudged up the steps to the post office, no doubt thinking how many steps he had saved by making a left turn in the middle of the block but not worrying about the other people he had endangered by so doing.

The other thing that bugs me is pedestrians in the downtown area who walk or hustle across city intersections when the traffic light facing them is red. They may or may not agree that traffic lights are the safest and surest way of controlling traffic, but the law clearly states that pedestrians must observe the same warning signs as motorists. And that includes moving against the light, no matter how clear the path may appear to be.

Now, that stuff is off my chest for while, but I will continue to gnash my teeth when someone else decides to become a scofflaw.



**May 27, 2003**

Teachers are called upon to perform a lot of things that are not necessarily in the realm of education. This is especially true in the lower grades, where many of the students are not yet too wise about such things as getting their boots pulled on in winter weather. A former Noble county rural school teacher offers this tidbit by way of demonstrating the point. Anyone who has dealt with youngsters will enjoy this. She says it's a true story.

A teacher in a Texas school was helping one of her kindergarten students put on his cowboy boots. He asked for help and she could see why. Even with her pulling and his pushing, the little boots still didn't want to go on. Finally, when the second boot was on, she had worked up a sweat.

She almost cried when the little boy said, "Teacher, they're on the wrong feet." She looked and sure enough, they were. It wasn't any easier pulling the boots off than it was putting them on. She managed to keep her cool as together they worked to get the boots back on--this time on the right feet.

He then announced, "These aren't my boots." She bit her tongue rather than get right in his face and scream, "Why didn't you say so?", as she wanted to. And so, once again, she struggled to help him pull the ill-fitting boots off his little feet.

Soon as they had the boots off, he said, "They're my brother's boots. My Mom made me wear 'em." Now she didn't know if she should laugh or cry. But she mustered up the grace and courage she had left to wrestle the boots on his feet again. Helping him into his coat, she asked, "Now, where are your mittens?" He said, "I stuffed 'em in the toes of my boots."

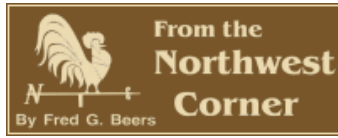
Her trial starts next month.

For today's finale, here's another contribution that may amuse anyone who has ever had problems with a computer. There are technical reasons for that, but here is a Dr. Seuss explanation. You need to read this to yourself, aloud. You should also be alone. Here we go.

If a packet hits a pocket on a socket or a port, and the bus is interrupted at a very last resort, and the access of the memory makes your floppy disk abort, then the socket packet pocket has an error to report. If your cursor finds a menu item followed by a dash, and the double-clicking icon put your window in the trash, and your data is corrupted 'cause the index doesn't hash, then your situation's hopeless and your system's gonna crash!

If the label on the cable on the table at your house says the network is connected to the button on your mouse, but your packets want to tunnel to another protocol, that's repeatedly rejected by the printer down the hall, and your screen is all distorted by the side effects of gauss, so your icons in the window are as wavy as a souse, then you may as well reboot and go out with a bang, 'cuz sure as I'm a poet, the sucker's gonna hang! When the copy of your floppy's getting sloppy in the disk, and the macro code instructions cause unnecessary risk, then you'll have to flash the memory and you'll want to RAM your ROM then quickly turn off the computer and be sure to tell your Mom!

Well! That certainly clears things up for me!



**May 30, 2003**

Lets lead off with a few humorous definitions borrowed from the Perry Rotary club's weekly newsletter. It is edited by Dr. Stacey Wilda, who will become president of the local club in July. Here we go:

Bottle feeding: An opportunity for Daddy to get up at 2 a.m. too.

Dumbwaiter: One who asks if the kids would care to order dessert.

Feedback: The inevitable result when the baby doesn't appreciate the strained carrots.

Full name: What you call your child when you're mad at him.

Grandparents: The people who think your children are wonderful even though they're sure you're not raising them right.

Hearsay: What toddlers do when anyone mutters a dirty word.

Impregnable: A woman whose memory of labor is still vivid.

Independent: What we want our children to be as long as they do everything we say.

Now here's a bit of information sent to this corner by Wes Leatherock of Oklahoma City. (Before his retirement a few years ago, Wes was a communications executive for Southwestern Bell. His late dad, W. K. Leatherock, took a chance and hired me to work in the news department of this newspaper back in 1941.) The following appeared in a recent edition of "This & That," a weekly electronic newsletter edited and published by Butch Bridges, a systems administrator for Carter county in Ardmore. The material is credited to Roy Kendrick, Perry antique dealer. There is no charge for the newsletter, I'm told. If you're interested, send an e-mail to: [bridges@brightok.net](mailto:bridges@brightok.net)

Here's the portion of interest to Perry folks, all of it provided by Roy Kendrick for Mr. Bridges' newsletter:

"Thought you might like to see some of the murals here in Perry, Oklahoma. About four or five of them are on the outside walls of business buildings (a couple pertain to the business inside, such as the one on Foster's Corner Drug depicting its original '40s soda fountain which is still in use inside the store.) The one seen in the attachment here shows a map of early Oklahoma and Indian Territories as they would have appeared at the time of the Cherokee Strip land run in 1893, and is on a historic building now used its the headquarters for the IOOF Grand Lodge of Oklahoma."

The second portion from Mr. Kendrick follows: "I know that you already have a photo of this bell at the First Baptist Church at 7th and Fir avenue here in Perry, but when I saw it on your website, I didn't see a closeup of the plaque nor the lettering molded into the bell. The date on the bell is significant, too. The Cherokee Strip land run was September 16th, 1893, so this must have been ordered right away (or purchased soon after the run.) (Also submitted was a) picture of the bell at St. Mark's Episcopal church here in Perry at 7th and Grove. I think that it was formerly on an engine of the AT&SF Railroad, but I'm not certain. (The next) bell is at the First United Methodist church at 7th and Elm Streets, also here in Perry."