

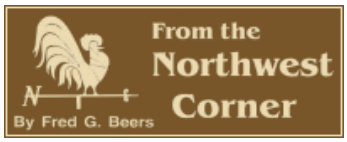
Novemeber 1, 2002

Family reunions, school reunions and assorted other get-togethers .... They are all pretty much alike in many respects, but the one that is becoming increasingly meaningful to me is the annual reunion of old Army friends from the World War II era. A few days ago I met with some of the guys who produced various editions of *The Stars and Stripes*, the fabled Army newspaper which has won acclaim and acceptance from all branches of military service since the U.S. Civil War. We met in Honolulu where the edition I worked on in 1945-46 was written and published. It was distributed throughout the Pacific Ocean area. To me, my time on the paper was like a post-graduate course in journalism taught by some of the ablest practitioners who ever toiled in the Fourth Estate. Sadly, many of those once-young men have either passed away or reached a stage in life where travel is no longer possible.

Let me set the stage for this a little more. As stated earlier, our offices were in Hawaii. Other editions, each an independent entity, were published in London, Paris, Italy, Germany and elsewhere. The paper continues to be published today but most of the editorial work is done in the U.S. and transmitted electronically to major headquarter bases throughout the world, wherever American military personnel are based. When we were in Hawaii during World War II, Honolulu was a bustling little city badly overrun with men and women from all branches of service. That much has not changed, but the city's skyline and its attitude toward servicemen are quite different. There used to be a decided animosity between the military and civilian populations, but we all got along. Some of the biggest problems resulted from the occasional forays of soldiers, sailors and marines into the limited number of available females, but that was a concern wherever large encampments of troops were located. The point is, now, in peacetime, that is still a serious cause of friction and it began long before WWII. That much has not changed, but in most other respects Honolulu bears little resemblance to the wartime city I knew.

Sad mementos still remain from those uneasy days after the 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor. The USS Arizona still lies on the bottom of that immense naval, base with a memorial topside to mark the spot. Contemplating the tragic overtones of that horrific day, one cannot avoid a feeling of immense grief at the fate of those young American men who gave the last measure of devotion in their sacrifice that day. Armistice Day (now called Veterans Day) is just around the corner. Each of us would do well to utter a prayer then for those who made it possible for you and me to enjoy the fruits of freedom in this wonderful country.

Our *Stars and Stripes* reunion was a brief one. No major business matters were brought up for discussion and most of the joy came from some of the conversations that took place in the coffee shops and (I understand) the bars along Waikiki Beach. Personally, a special thrill came from a visit with Bob Ebert, who has lived in Honolulu since the end of WWII. Bob, a Pulitzer prize winner for some of his post-war work on assignment from *Time-Life* magazines, was celebrating his 90th birthday while we were there last week. He was chief photographer on our edition. He and I were the only attendees from the Honolulu paper. Those of us who were there for the reunion decided to do it again next year in Nashville, partly as a convenience for former staffers who now live along the Eastern seaboard of the U.S. I guess we reelected officers, but most of the serious topics were settled at a meeting of the board of directors, and we can read about that in the next monthly issue of our association's newspaper. That's about all there is to say concerning this bittersweet reunion. These are sentimental occasions at best, but they do provide a few moments of reflection on many topics, and a time to remember old friends who have signed "30" to their last sheets of copy paper. Bless `em all.



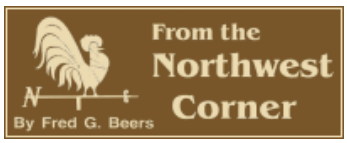
Novemeber 5, 2002

Many of you have been good enough to inquire lately about the availability of *The First Generation*, a chronicle of the first fifty years in this community following the opening of the Cherokee Strip in 1893. A limited number of copies are still available, but the quantity is dwindling. The Cherokee Strip Museum on West Fir Avenue is the chief source of copies. The book, which also tells the story of the birth and growth of the Charles Machine Works, Inc., and the internationally marketed line of Ditch Witch equipment made in Perry, is a sought-after item around the time of the annual September 16th celebration and for Christmas gift purposes. All proceeds from sale of the book go to the Noble County Chapter of the Cherokee Strip Historical Society. In addition to a story of the dramatic opening of the Strip, the book contains numerous thumbnail profiles of people and events that distinguish Perry from all the other cities in the land run area of Northern Oklahoma.

For those of you still interested in bringing back a movie theater to Perry, here's a story carried on the AP news wire the other day. The dateline was Kinsley, Kansas, a town of about 2,500 population in south-central Kansas. Here's the story:

Moviegoers are again filling a Kansas theater that showed silent pictures accompanied by organ music when it was built in 1917. The Palace Theater operated almost continuously until it closed at the end of 1998. In June 1999, residents formed the nonprofit Palace Association to buy the theater. A new roof and sound system were added, and the building became a venue for concerts and classic films. But more work needed to be done, so E-Team (Entertainment in Edwards County), a group of more than 70 volunteers, spent the summer painting, installing new flooring and refinishing 50 seats. E-Team was formed to fight what the group considered a lack of entertainment in the area. The work culminated with the showing of "Men in Black II" in early October. So you see, what it takes is a little resolve and elbow grease, with someone or something to provide a measure of leadership. The point is, it can be done. Check with the folks in Kinsley, Kansas, for details.

Before long we'll be thinking Thanksgiving thoughts. That means family reunions and other get-togethers, plus the traditional feasting on turkey, dressing, mince pie and all the rest of those wonderful goodies, and a time to give thanks for all the blessings we have received, especially in this country. It also makes me think back several years, not long after the end of World War II, when Perry's retail business district around the square was booming. I believe my friend, the ebullient Clarence Paden, was secretary-manager of the Chamber of Commerce at this particular time, and he was very good at figuring out offbeat promotions to bring shoppers downtown. One of his brainstorms was a "turkey drop," in which live turkeys were to be turned loose from the top of the courthouse. People could scramble for them and take home the birds they captured. As I recall it now, the first turkey crashed through a plate glass window on the front of the Monroe-Lang Store, where major appliances, hardware and furniture were sold, and the next turkey dropped was unable to fly. In the interest of shoppers' safety and for prevention of further cruelty to animals, the event was called off and the chamber planners went back to work on other ideas.



Novemeber 8, 2002

Sam Jerome of Orlando, a former colleague when we both worked for the Charles Machine Works, Inc., brought me some interesting material the other day. Included is a remarkably well-preserved copy of *The Perry Daily Times*, the first newspaper distributed here after the Cherokee Strip opening on September 16, 1893. The paper was printed in Guthrie and brought here for distribution. Bert Green was the enterprising publisher. The copy that Sam showed me was dated June 15, 1894, just nine months after the land run. The news content was minimal, if the copy Sam showed me is typical, but it is nonetheless interesting from an historical standpoint.

The pages are yellowing and very brittle, but the entire paper is protected by a clear plastic material that enables a reader to scan the front and back sides of the sheet without damaging it. Most of the "news" stories were canned material clipped from other sources, a common practice in that era, before the AP, UPI, CNN and others who deal in serving up news while it is news. Most of the ads, however, were from local businesses and they tell a story all by themselves.

On page one, two full columns on the right side of the front page are filled with ads about two columns wide and only a few inches deep. Here's a rundown on a few of those local merchants.

T.M. Richardson & Sons, bankers, stressed individual attention and responsibility to prospective customers. T.M. Richardson was listed as president, with D.C. Richardson and T.M. Richardson Jr. filling the posts of vice president and cashier, respectively.

Also in a prominent position on the front page was an ad for The Royal Palace, claiming to be an "elegant resort," operated by Jake and Fred Forch. "Wines, liquor and cigars of the best imported and domestic brands will be found (at the Royal Palace)," the ad stated. The ad also proclaimed that the Royal Palace had "convenient side rooms and courteous attendance." (The latter probably was a typo and should have read "attendants.") The Royal Palace was "on Sixth Street, west side of square," and that is confusing because Sixth street is on the east side of the square. Billy Reckert used to operate the Palace Cafe on the east side and that leads me to believe that the Royal Palace had something to do with the ancestry of the Palace Cafe.

Another ad was placed by the Smith Brick Manufacturing Company, located in north Perry, east of the railroad, where Perry-made bricks were "cheap as the cheapest." Several lawyers had small ads in a "professional directory" on the back page. None of the names are familiar to me, but maybe you've heard of some of them. Here's the list: C.S. Parrish and E.B. Mentz; Stewart & Sevier; Joe Rosenthal & Lee Wisby; C.A. Morris & J.W. Johnson; Barnes & Cook ("offices in the Decker building"). One physician also placed an ad. He was Dr. Pierce, physician and surgeon. His office was on "C Street between 6th and 7th," which means he was on the south side of the square. Office hours were 9 to 11 a.m. and 2 to 4 p.m. His residence was at E and 11th street, in case he was needed after office hours.

Thanks to Sam Jerome for sharing this interesting bit of history from the early days in Perry.

From the Northwest Corner
By Fred G. Beers

Novemeber 12, 2002

For many years, Noble county taxpayers supported rural schools because the early Cherokee Strip settlers were determined to provide an education for their sons and daughters in this new land. Rural school districts were administered by a county superintendent who was elected by the county at large and served from an office in the

courthouse. Those days are gone forever, but many whose memories go back a few years still remember the county fair, fine arts shows and other events featuring youngsters from Noble county's rural schools. The year's climax, of course, was the annual eighth grade graduation when the boys and girls from those classes were promoted to larger schools serving their district. I've been scanning a printed program from the eighth grade commencement exercises held on May 15, 1934, in the Perry high school auditorium, and I thought you would be interested. How many of these graduates are familiar to you?

Joint district 1 - Doris Wyckoff and Warren Case; District 1 - Waynard Buffington, Mary Fagg, Billy Hageman and Lawrence Musick; District 2 - Norma Jean Sibley; District 3 - Velda Foster, Leroy Murray and Beulah Matthiesen; District 5 -Olivia O'Grady; District 6 - Eldon Cox and Glenn Smoot; District 7 - Melvin Henke; District 9 - Eileen Wade and Elza Fairchild; District 11 - Fred Feken; District 12 - Maxine Cockrum, Marvin Freese, Kenneth Mossier and Mable Schultz; District 13 - Dorothy Gray and Laura Gray.

District 14 - Maxine Schwartz and John K. Hunter; District 15 - Marie Schieffer; District 16 - Mary Melton, LaVinta Fipps and Ernestine Edgar; District 17 - Josie Moelling; District 18 - J.D. Dawson and Jack Winiger; District 20 - Martha Robbins; District 21 - Edith Mae Brame, Geraldine Rouse, Carolyne Morris, Leta Belle Turner, Ruth Thelma Smith, Harry Dent, James Hock, Lewis Holcomb, Billie Mathews, Ida Bushorr, Eugene Snyder and Bessie Pribble; District 22 - Lawrence Clemens, Floyd Wilkins and Leon Gravel.

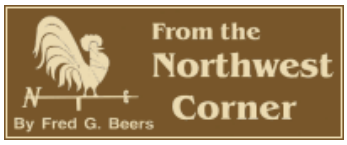
District 23 - Charles Kidd and Henry Bellmon; District 24Russell Merry and Maxine White; District 25 - Leafa Farrant and Dorthy Price; District 26 - Bernice Lively, Tena Franklin and John Roberson; District 27 - Paul Hicks; District 28 - ..Lorine Ferrell, Joe Osborne, Irvan Faulkner, Oakley Price, Jimmy Hibbets, Dorothy Garton and Blanche Landes; District 34 - James Speakman and Franklin Ruble; District 39, Alta Campbell; District 40 - Helene Lovekamp; District 44 - Rachel Adams, Anna Pyle, Grover Galloway and Wilbert Noteware.

District 45 - Lloyd Nichols, John Ekhoff, Dorothy King and Lyman McClure; District 46 - Dorothy Mae Akins; District 47 - Billy Enslow; District 48 - Martha Rose Pour and Edward Pour; District 50 - Marjorie Brooks, Robert Stengle, James Blanchard and Daniel McClurg; District 53 - Arthur Davis and Mildred Cox; District 57 Edwin Merriman, Glenn Patterson, Mary Masters, Dorothy Gardner and June Masters; District 59 - Mae Golliver, LaVerne Golliver, Verlyn Golliver and Gerald Marshall; District 60 - Ruby Belle McNeal and Logan Knott.

District 63 Kenneth Aynes; District 64 - Lucille Cooper, Letah Farris, Edith Hartert, John Patterson, Leo Hughes, Jack Antle and Calvin Arkeketa; District 67 -George Wortman and Harold Loveless; District 68 - Marjorie Menzies; District 71 -Helen Anderson, Mayo Anderson, Mattie Dixon and James Anderson; District 74 -Maxine Branham, Mildred Branham, Helen Stickel and Clyde Lynch; District 75 - David Sherrard and Patrick Elgin; District 76 - Howard Walker; District 78 - LaVina Brand, Herbert Brand and Dora Kirk.

District 80 - Ted Beauchamp, Georgia Berger, Margaret_. Berger and Treva Robinson; District 81 - Rosalie Bridges, Norman Bishop, Wayne Hughes and Hazel Spillman; Consolidated 1 (Sumner) - Walter Brokop, Dorthy Focht, Robert Lesh, Alice Mosena, LaVerne Hansen, Lafa Welch, Melvin Kinnick, Lambert Johnson, Carl Mikisch and Idena Milliron. Consolidated 2 (Marland) - Francis Thornton, Edith Monroe, Irene Shultz, Elmo Scholes, Pauline Newton, Noel Mock, Carl Freeman, Louise Hartpence, Florine McAllister, John Snyder, Wanda Shultz, Velda Morris, Helen Penny, Evabelle Russell and Maryetta Collier.

Rachel Adams was valedictorian and Joe Osborne was salutatorian. Allen Fitchett, county superintendent, presented diplomas to the graduates and special music was provided by Aleen Plumer, cellist; Frank Ley, trumpet solo; processional by the PHS orchestra, recessional by pianist James Parker, and the invocation was given by Rev. David Thomas. How many of those names do you remember?



Novemeber 15, 2002

Minor mental meanderings at week's end while looking forward, hopefully, to an early spring, even before the first real fall and winter weather blankets Oklahoma...

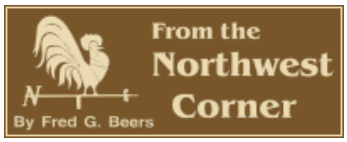
Veterans Day has come and gone, but it brings up a persistent question that I've never seen answered. So many of these traditional holidays have an "s" tacked onto the name of the event that is being honored. Does that mean it's a plural possessive, or a singular possessive? In either case, doesn't the apostrophe (') either precede or follow the "s"? When the "s" is preceded by an apostrophe ('s) that would indicate the singular possessive case. So, if you see "Veteran's Day" used, does that mean it's a day belonging to just one (singular) veteran? How about Mother's Day and Father's Day, to cite just two more examples. If they are written with an apostrophe (') followed by an "s," what is that telling us? My Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary lists only a "Mother's Day," not a "Mothers' Day," and calls the second Sunday in May a day for the honoring of mothers. That implies all mothers. Not "some" mothers, but ALL of them. That seems to me to make the "s apostrophe" a logical choice (Mothers'). Because that would make it a plural possessive, wouldn't it? My *New York Times Manual of Style and Usage*, as well as the Associated Press style book, both admonish us to write "Mother's Day" or Father's Day" and give no alternative possibilities. Both are regarded as authoritative. That should settle the matter, but I'll bet we continue to see "Fathers' Day, Mothers' Day and Veterans' Day" for some time to come, despite the best efforts of curious readers who worry about such things. I know I won't sleep well until a resolution is reached. Maybe we should circulate a petition.

Having disposed of that matter, more or less, let us move on to other weighty issues, or just some observations.

Isn't the newly surfaced portion of 14th street in front of Perry Memorial Hospital nice to behold, and to drive on? The job apparently isn't finished but what they've done so far is just great. The new surface begins at the intersection with Fir AVENUE and extends south to Cedar Street. Maybe when this job is complete we can look forward to seeing some new street signs that correctly call Fir an AVENUE and not merely a street.

Breakfast With Main Street the other morning in the Horizon Room of the Exchange Bank was an enlightening and exciting time. The Hospitality Guide, the new brochures produced by the Perry Main Street organization, was introduced and distributed to the group. These little booklets contain a wealth of information in an attractive format, all of it designed to help Perry businesses and their employees answer questions that might be asked by visitors. We still hear questions like "Where is the Heritage Center, and what is its purpose?", and not everyone in Perry can answer that. The brochures will help all of us provide intelligent answers to visitors' questions. Main Street has an office in the Foucart Building and the brochures are available there.

Makes me think - Main Street puts out one of the neatest newsletters in town. If you're a member, you should be receiving it.



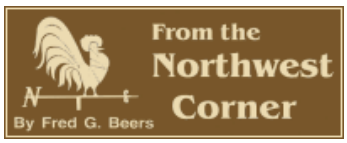
Novemeber 19, 2002

I gather that many of you like a little humor now and then, so here's another offering, supplied by a faithful reader: We'll begin with some church marquee signs. Maybe you've seen some of these.

The best vitamin for a Christian is B1.
Tithe if you love Jesus! Anyone can honk.
Don't wait for the hearse to take you to church.
Don't give up. Moses was once a basket case.
Life has many choices. Eternity has two. What's yours?
Worry is interest paid on trouble before it is due.
Wal-Mart isn't the only saving place.
Prevent truth decay. Brush up on your Bible.
It's hard to stumble when you're down on your knees.
What part of "Thou Shalt Not" don't you understand?
A clear conscience makes a soft pillow.
The wages of sin is death. Repent before payday.
Never give the devil a ride. He will always want to drive.
Can't sleep? Try counting your blessings.
Forbidden fruit creates many jams.
Christians, keep the faith.... But not from others.
Satan subtracts and divides. God multiplies and multiplies.
To belittle is to be little.
Don't let the littleness in others bring out the littleness in you.
God answers knee-mail.
Try Jesus. If you don't like Him, the devil will always take you back.
Now, to close this offering, here are a few more quotes from the comic George Carlin, as passed along by Roy Kendrick.

There are three religious truths:
1. Jews do not recognize Jesus as the Messiah.
2. Protestants do not recognize the Pope as the leader of the Christian faith.
3. Baptists do not recognize each other in the liquor store or at Hooters.
And finally - If you take an Oriental person and spin him around several times, does he become disoriented?

No offense intended with any of these.



Novemeber 22, 2002

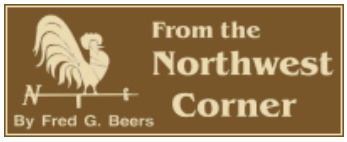
On Sunday, December 7, 1941, carrier-based Japanese airplanes launched a surprise, devastating attack on Pearl Harbor and other U.S. military installations in Hawaii, wreaking unprecedented damage and killing hundreds of American sailors, Marines and soldiers. The unexpected assault left this country with virtually no defense in the Pacific Ocean area. Some felt the imperial Japanese army could easily have stormed ashore on the U.S. West Coast and captured such strategic cities as San Francisco, Los Angeles and Seattle. For reasons that are unclear, that did not happen, but the attack on Pearl Harbor brought the U.S. into World War II as a very belligerent partner of the Allies in Europe. On the next day, President Franklin D. Roosevelt addressed Congress and angrily asked for a declaration of war against the Japanese, Germans and Italians, lumped together as "the Axis powers." This country and its teeming population were changed forever.

In his address, President Roosevelt spoke of America's losses in the treachery. He called it "a day that will live in infamy," and to some extent it is still remembered that way. But that was more than sixty years ago. Korea, Vietnam, Desert Storm and other engagements have occurred since then, and those whose lives were directly affected by the World War II era are dwindling rapidly. Statisticians tell us that at least 1,000 veterans of World War II are now dying each day, and that figure will only go higher as time goes by. Someday soon, the attack on Pearl Harbor may be recalled only by reading history or seeing dramatizations.

I remember December 7, 1941, very well, and I know how that day impacted my life and those of my contemporaries. It awakened all of us to this country's new role as a super power in world affairs, a realization that we are a world neighborhood and not a collection of unrelated ethnic and religious groups. Like it or not, we could no longer afford the luxury of isolationist policies. Things that happened to remote nations (Kuwait, Afghanistan, et al) were serious issues for this country to debate and to take appropriate action.

My own recollection of Pearl Harbor day is like a short subject at the movies. When the attack on the Hawaiian islands began (about 8 a.m., Honolulu time) it was shortly after 12 noon on a Sunday in Perry. With Hugh Lobsitz, Charlie Lamb and one or two other friends, we met after church and went to Brownie's Drug Store on the west side of the square for Cokes before heading to our homes for Sunday dinner. The noon news was just starting on the radio, and the announcement of the attack brought back memories of the Orson Welles Mercury Theater radio dramatization of "The War of the Worlds," a few years earlier, when many Americans were frightened into thinking alien creatures from Mars had landed in New Jersey. But we knew what we were hearing that Sunday was the real thing, and so we went to our homes to be with our families.

Nothing was the same for us after that. We knew it was just a matter of time before we were called to duty in some branch of military service, so plans that we had been making for the future were put on hold for the duration. I have invited a few friends to share with the rest of us what they remember about December 7, 1941, and the effects of that sad day on their lives. You will be seeing their accounts in this space during the next few days.



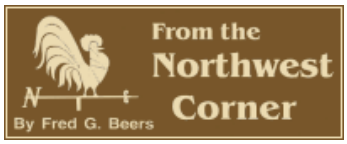
Novemeber 26, 2002

A big portion of the old Highway Department complex on the U.S. 64 curve at the south edge of town went up in flames last week. The old administrative building and warehouse made a huge bonfire, perhaps the biggest of that type since the Long-Bell Lumber Yard burned to the ground a few years ago. To some of us with long memories, the old highway building represented a special period of time in this community.

In 1937, the Perry business community was in dire straits. Most of the world was in a prolonged economic vise, the Great Depression, and despite the best efforts of politicians and some self-appointed but misguided "wizards," no relief was in sight. Perry families suffered along with the rest of the universe. Suddenly, after months of negotiation and backstage maneuvering, an announcement was made that Perry had been selected as the location of a State Highway Department division headquarters. Something like that will jump-start the economic heart of a community, and local leaders were ecstatic. Locating a division headquarters here meant Perry residents would have a sizable payroll to count on, jobs for the unemployed, and the apparent certainty of an entity that would not suddenly pick up stakes and disappear.

So the news was met with a glad reaction locally and the magnitude of the layout became clearer when the buildings were under construction. Initially the newly formed Highway Patrol planned to locate a district office here and share facilities with the Highway Department, but in the end the patrol office was moved to Pawnee. Perry civic leaders were content with their good fortune. A few years ago the Oklahoma Department of Transportation (new name of the State Highway Department) decided to relocate its Perry office and built a complete new division yard here. The former location was bought by the Charles Machine Works, Inc. The administrative building-warehouse became a new home for the City Police Court and eventually Stagecoach Community Theatre was invited to make use of the building. The city has some equipment secured on the grounds there and the Perry School District uses the area for its buses. Last week's fire destroyed some of CMW's records but the Police Court and Stagecoach had long since moved to newer and nicer locations. Thank goodness, there were no personal injuries and many of the structures are pretty much intact. So, a chapter ends in the story of this community but a new one begins. The big fire was a dramatic exclamation point, but it reminds us of how important that facility was to the desperate citizens of Perry in the midst of the Great Depression.

On a personal note, I was saddened last week to learn of the death of Irene Hamous at age 91 in Oklahoma City. Her late husband, Merrill, was a pharmacist in our family's City Drug Store in the early 1930s. Later, he and Jim Hopper opened a pharmacy in the old Masonic Temple. The Hamous family have always been good friends and I particularly remember their daughter, now Barbara Barker, as a vivacious and always friendly young lady. Condolences to the family.



Novemeber 29, 2002

Today we continue with the series on memories of December 7, 1941, the tragic, historic day that propelled this country into a new role. No longer were we merely observers from the sideline. On that day the U.S. became a belligerent on the side of the Allies in World War II. From a peaceful, isolationist posture, we have metamorphosed into a leader in international affairs that affect not only the citizens of the U.S., but quite literally the entire world.

How do Perry residents remember the bombing of Pearl Harbor? The number of those from that period who are still living is growing smaller day by day. We asked a few of them to share the thoughts that raced through their minds on that fateful day, nearly sixty-one years ago. Here is the first one, written by Dr. Charles E. Martin, with this subject: "On Remembering Pearl Harbor Day."

"I remember it was on a Sunday, December 7, 1941. I was 17 and a freshman in college at Oklahoma A&M (now Oklahoma State University) and still living at home in Stillwater with my younger brother and sister, together with our parents.

"I had graduated that spring (1941) from Stillwater High School, having gone through all twelve grades in that public school system. One of my fondest memories was that of being a regular carrier-newsboy for the local newspaper, *The Stillwater Daily Press*, for the last three or four years while in high school. I had seen the headlines and followed the stories from Europe. Poland invaded in 1939. The fall of France in 1940.... The Battle of Britain in 1941.

"America was trying to stay out of it, but was using Lend-Lease to help Great Britain-and then came the invasion of Russia on the East.... And now PEARL HARBOR! We were at WAR! !

"I do recall trying to return to my studies that Sunday evening. It was freshman chemistry, but of course, I had no luck at all. There was no TV back then, but my attention was glued to the radio."

Dr. Martin is now retired from his medical practice. We appreciate his thoughts as we approach another anniversary of "the day that will live in infamy." More of these personal recollections will follow in this space the next few days. Please stay tuned in.