

## **November 4, 2003**

*Oklahoma Main Street News*, the latest newsletter from the home office of our state's wide-awake Main Street program, has an interesting feature this month about the success and growth of Okmulgee's development and renovation. Specifically, the article focuses on Okmulgee's downtown "pocket park" program, and that is something of interest to Perry folks.

So far, the possibility for Perry has just dealt with the future tense, but maybe the time is right for some positive action-now. Creating one or more of those miniature, restful green areas around the Perry square could inspire even greater efforts to make our downtown more inviting to visitors and shoppers. And that is one of the goals of every Main Street program.

Enough from the soapbox. Let's hear about the reality—the successful program in Okmulgee. It's a city with more population than Perry, but with problems very much like ours. The downtown area of Okmulgee is centered on a "square," very much like ours. Here are some of the salient points as listed by Kendall Mooney, program director of Okmulgee Main Street, Inc.

The pocket park effort began with members asking themselves, "What do we want our downtown to feel like," and they decided they wanted it to feel like home. What is your home? They agreed, "home" is safe, inviting, beautiful, comfortable and thus, a place you truly want to be. So they began to create positive public spaces that would encourage and reinforce the feeling of "home." (Okmulgee had suffered through a rash of fires in the historic downtown area. As a result, several buildings were mere burned-out, ugly shells.) Mooney relates: "That simple, yet poignant analogy really impacted and inspired the viewpoint of the Okmulgee Main Street Design Committee and the Program Committee. A group effort began thinking and planning ways in which they could preserve and transform their beautiful 'home'—Downtown Okmulgee."

To make a long story short, the committees inspired a unified effort to clean up the burned-out property, plant grass, flowers and trees, and engaged a Main Street architect to design those compact, restful areas for the pleasure and enjoyment of the entire community.

Of course, there's much more to the story of Okmulgee's pocket park transformation, but you can read all about it in the most recent edition of the state Main Street organization's newsletter. It's a program that could reap many rewards for our own local downtown revival. Think about it, including what you could do to get this project off high center in Perry.



## **November 7, 2003**

If it's any consolation, ONG's Harry Williams offers this as a soothing balm for all the OSU Cowboy football fans in this area. Read Psalms 52:9. (Remember the score last Saturday was 52-9). It may not make all the hurt go away, but maybe it will help. Wait till next year!

I've been hearing mixed reports about the foliage tours this year in various parts of Oklahoma and elsewhere in the U.S. Some say Nature already has exhausted her artistry in the nation's forests and woods and they have been disappointed in travels through southeastern Oklahoma, where our best is usually found, as well as in New England. At least, we avoided those horrific wildfires just endured by Southern California. All we can do for those unfortunate people is offer our prayers and sympathy. It's too late to help now, but I should have advised you that Larry and Myrna Moore, my neighbors across the street, have been providing the rest of us with a brilliant splash of fall colors on their stately, beautiful trees. The peak season is long past, but you should have seen them when they were at their best. Fantastic!

Friend Don Stoddard advises that the first name of the Guthrie quarterback (mentioned in a column last week) is B-R-E-N-T. Sorry for the slipup. The District 5A-2 Bluejays host Carl Albert in a crucial test tonight. Against El Reno last week, Brent rushed for 85 yards and three touchdowns. The Guthrie defense held El Reno to 23 yards rushing. The 'Jays won easily, 47-0.

Don also is among those who remember the Ed Seeley band, as mentioned in a column last week. He recalls that Seeley and his band were from Enid, not Perry, as another reader recalled. Don also says that the Seeley band featured Country and Western music, and they used to play occasionally on Saturday nights in the 1940s at the Kennedy Skating Rink on 7th Street, just off the northwest corner of the square. Don remembers that he did not go to the Seeley dances because he loved to skate. When Ed Seeley played at the rink, Bob Kennedy would set up a portable rink for skaters on the empty lot on the east side of the Donaldson & Yahn Lumber Yard.

In case you were among those who occasionally tuned in to the Arkansas City AM radio station that played that wonderful music from the Big Band era, you already know that the station has dropped that format in favor of more contemporary stuff and some Western swing from time to time. That was the only station, to my knowledge, in our coverage area that played the kind of music that once was everywhere on the dial. Guess we aging fogies will have to satisfy our need for that good old music by buying new CDs and tapes, when they can be found.



## ***November 10, 2003***

Let's take another short stroll down Memory Lane, thanks to Virginia Gengler's collection of this newspaper from years ago. Today we'll focus on the issue of Monday, October 24, 1934. What was going on here 'way back then? Here are some of the topics.

One of the front page headlines announced: LOCAL CANDIDATES OPEN FINAL DRIVE FOR GENERAL VOTE. The reporter wrote: "County candidates outlined plans Monday for their final week of campaigning, with election only a week hence. While a number of county meetings are planned, the final week will be devoted chiefly to individual activity." Three county offices were among those at stake—county judge, county treasurer, and county attorney. W.D. Barnes was the incumbent treasurer but after two terms he was ineligible to run again. Paul Cress, county attorney, and James A. Ledbetter, county judge, were not seeking re-election.

Candidates seeking voter approval at the forthcoming general election were listed as follows: County attorney: Judson Pierce, Democrat, and Henry Dolezal, Republican. County Judge: Al T. Singletary, Democrat, and E.W. Jones, Republican.

County sheriff: Merl Harman, Democrat, and Earl Sanders, Republican. County treasurer: Mellie Mock, Democrat, and Frank Goe, Republican. County clerk: Frank Warner, Democrat, and Mrs. Gus Malzahn, Republican. County superintendent: Guy Lambert, Democrat, and Allen Fitchett, Republican. County clerk: Allien Adams, Democrat, and Henry Rucker, Republican. County assessor: H.R. McMullen, Democrat. and Frank Ritthaler, Republican. County commissioner, first district: Wm. J. Hill, Democrat, and George Sanders, Republican; second district, Walker Robberson, Democrat, and James Taylor, Republican; third district, Charles Johnson, Democrat, and Ed Bieberdorf, Republican. It wasn't included with the election story, but the newspaper also announced that a son had just been born in Perry General Hospital to Mr. and Mrs. Judson Pierce of 705 Locust street.

Other political stories in the news included these: Rep. E.W. Marland of Ponca City, Democratic candidate for governor, spoke in the Perry district courtroom to a crowd of several hundred as estimated by *The Journal*. It was his final campaign effort here. Mrs. Ray Casey, president of the Billings Women's Democratic Club, announced that Josh Lee, noted University of Oklahoma speaker and candidate for Congress in the fifth district, would be a special speaker at the club meeting next week. He would be accompanied by Mrs. Phil Ferguson, wife of the eighth district congressman. Coverage was given to a speech made in the Perry courthouse park the previous week by W. B. Pine, Republican nominee for governor. The paper reported that a "large" crowd was on hand. Mr. Pine also had spoken in Billings and Red Rock earlier that day.

On the editorial page, managing editor Sam Schwieger offered the following: "There are still quite a number of people who will vote their ticket straight regardless of whether the devil's name appears on it or not." He added this thought: "Some people won't vote at all because they say it's no use, the crooks and hoodlums will get by anyhow." (Thank goodness we don't have any of those in office now.)



## **November 14, 2003**

Veterans of all wars were saluted, literally and symbolically in ceremonies here and elsewhere during the past few days. The half-time show at Daniels Field the other night also included a tip of the hat to all who have served this country in times of trouble. At mid-morning on Veterans Day last Tuesday, Perry students and their adult guests in the high school auditorium and the elementary cafetorium were reminded of the sacrifices made on their behalf by young men and women through the years. These programs, and others like them, were thoughtfully planned and graciously received. Most of the veterans I know say pretty much the same thing, in their own words - "I wouldn't trade the world for the privilege of serving my country, but I wouldn't pay a nickel to do it again." World War II veterans are leaving us at an average rate of 1,000 per day. Soon all of them will be gone. If they deserve a tribute, now's the time to offer it.

Now here's something a little frothier, passed along to me by a faithful reader. All of them are borrowed from the Hillbilly School of Medicine.

**Secretion**-Hiding something

**Tablet**-A small table to change babies on.

**Seizure**-A Roman emperor.

**Terminal Illness** - Getting sick at the train station.

**Tumor**-More than one.

**Varicose**–Nearby.

**Fester**– Quicker than someone else.

**Hangnail**–What you hang your coat on.

**Labor pain**–Getting hurt at work.

**Morbid**–A higher offer than I bid.

**Nitrate**–Cheaper than day rates.

**Benign**–What you be after you be eight.

**Bacteria**–Back door to cafeteria.

**Barium**–What you do with dead folks.

**Cat scan**–Searching for the cat.

**Coma**–A punctuation mark.

Let's meet here again at the same time next week.



## ***November 18, 2003***

When fire destroyed most of the contents of the Operation Blessing storehouse in south Perry a few weeks ago, most of us crossed our fingers and prayed that another facility would quickly become available. Enough time now has passed that we know it's not going to be that easy to resume the program.

The old Blaine school was in an ideal location to serve many of this community's needy. Cars and other vehicles could be driven up close to the front door. Pedestrian traffic also could easily be accommodated. Even though the old sandstone building was unheated in the winter and not air conditioned for Oklahoma's searing summers, the school served a real need. Operation Blessing made it possible for numerous families to have adequate clothing for children and adults of every age plus other household necessities that made their lives a little more tolerable.

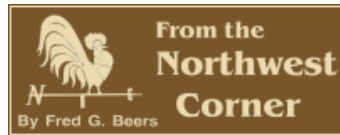
The Blaine building has not been used as a school for decades. It was very suitable for the helpful assistance provided by Operation Blessing. Arson is generally believed to have been the cause of the fire. Time goes on and winter is now settling in with no central location for the kind of assistance that Operation Blessing provided. A new home for the service is still being sought. Prospects for an early solution to this dilemma are not bright. Meanwhile, the ARC center on Sixth Street, just north of the square, also has closed.

One idea that has come to the surface is offered by Fred Kohman, a retired engineer from the Ditch Witch company, the Charles Machine Works, Inc. Fred and I share the same first name and birth date so we have had many informal conversations over a span of several years. The other day he called with a suggestion that seems worth considering.

Apparently, an existing building is not available in Perry as a future home for Operation Blessing. Here's the suggestion: Get a group of community-minded people together and check out the expense of erecting a portable steel building, something on the order of a Butler building or General Steel, or from some other manufacturer. The cost should be fairly low, and generous Perryans have demonstrated their willingness to help out in such cases. It might be only a shell at first, but the new home could provide shelter from Oklahoma's weather extremes, plus a place to store wearing apparel and other things. The aid program then could be resumed after restocking from the homes of generous Perry friends.

It just might be that some other local agency, perhaps the Perry Habitat for Humanity, would be interested in assisting in exchange for a space they could use to store their equipment and material. Habitat, for example, is providing another kind of real help in this community but it has no central location

These are positive ideas offered by Fred Kohman and they would require the acceptance and dedication of many others to bring them to reality, but does anyone else have a better idea? I think the need for Operation Blessing already has been demonstrated here. Who will step up to get this program moving here again?



## ***November 21, 2003***

That was an interesting piece about Willard Andrews and his Army service in this newspaper last week. It brings to mind a "small world" story that you may have read in this column some time ago. It's one of my favorite World War II yarns. During that period, in the 1940s, just after we had dropped the first and second atomic bombs on Japan, I was on the South Pacific island of New Caledonia on special assignment from the official military newspaper, *Stars & Stripes*. With staff artist Earl Wolf, I was writing feature stories about some of the South Pacific isles that had been bypassed as our U.S. military began the long road to Tokyo and ultimate victory. At the time I was there, Guadalcanal and other jungle beaches in the area had become service centers for the Army, Navy, Air Force and other elements of our military might. Most of them had been the scenes of ugly, brutal battles between forces of this country and the Empire of Japan, but that time was long past. They were tranquil places by the time we got there. Earl and I were preparing for an early departure back to our 'home office in Honolulu as the war wound down, and the kind of news we were seeking was subordinated by the GI readers because all they wanted to do was go home by then. That's also all they wanted to read about.

On New Caledonia, in case you have not visited there, the only town of any consequence is Noumea. The island itself is a very pleasant place, mild climate and very friendly people. Most of them were and are descendants of French folks who had been deported years ago from their native country for various law violations and shipped off to New Caledonia for stays of varying length. They were European in their manner, their customs and their thought processes. Noumea was a very civilized town. It had one restaurant, a library and a few other civilized, features. (The only "meal" on the restaurant menu was steak and egg., for breakfast, lunch or dinner.)

One pleasant day in the early autumn, I stood outside Noumea's only hotel, trying to decide my next move. Shortly I heard a voice speaking my name, and I turned to find Willard Andrews, a good old Perry boy, smiling at me from just a few feet away. Thanks to the Army, our paths had crossed at that unlikely juncture when neither of us knew the other was there. We exchanged pleasantries, and I wired a brief story about the incident to this newspaper. Since then Willard and I have reminisced many times about that day, which just may reinforce every "small world" incident you've ever heard.

The mailbag last week also contained a similar happening from a few years later while Perry's Don Stoddard was visiting his cousin, Wayne Stoddard, in Arkansas City, KS. They were about 18 years of age. Don recalls that once when he was spending a weekend there, Wayne said someone had set up a portable skating rink on the north side of Ark City and they decided to check it out. Imagine Don's surprise when it turned out that someone he knew, Bob Kennedy from Perry, operated the rink. Bob was surprised, too, but he let the cousins skate free, and in due time they found some girls to skate with.



**November 25, 2003**

I have spent virtually a lifetime in this part of the U.S. That is long enough to know the weather, no matter how nice it is today, may not be so nice tomorrow. So, I am not paying much attention to long-range forecasts for this part of the U.S. during the extended holiday season. Whatever Mother Nature serves up will be just fine. Most of our family and friends will not be doing much traveling during that period, anyway, and I hope and pray that others who do hit the road can make it to their home or other destination safely.

Plenty of things are planned for the entertainment of those who will spend the holiday in Perry. The 16th annual Christmas Tour of Homes sounds even more exciting than usual, with trips to some traditionally decorated houses along with others in a different vein. The tour will be on Sunday afternoon, December 14, from 1 to 6 p.m. Tickets can be obtained in advance at Foster's Corner Drug and Thorn Originals, beginning Dec. 1. For advanced tickets, the price is \$6. Or, you can purchase them at the door of any of the homes on Dec. 14 for \$7. Proceeds go to the fund for purchasing more Christmas decorations in the downtown area.

Part of the tradition includes an informal tea at the Cherokee Strip Museum on West Fir Avenue. Heading up the Tour of Homes are Doris Bridal, Karen Wilcox and Gloria Maine. Members of the board of directors of the Noble County chapter of the Cherokee Strip Historical Society will be host and hostesses for the tea. The tour and the tea have drawn public interest at this time of the year since this feature began, in 1987. It's fun and interesting, and you should plan to be among those who take part. And don't forget the tea; it's a great climax to a wonderful afternoon. We owe a great debt to the men and women who arrange this day for the rest of us

This newspaper is carrying a calendar of holiday events each day on the front page to help you remember all the fun and interesting things being planned for the special holiday season. We don't need individual invitations to take part. Let's put these things on our own personal calendars and take them in as they occur. It's another way we can "think Perry" and cut down on the need for holiday travels. Check out this calendar every day and circle the ones that interest you.

To wind this up in an entirely different vein, here's a little bit of humor submitted by a faithful reader.

"All I need to know I learned from a cow. Wake up in a happy m000-d. Don't cry over spilled milk. When chewing your cud, remember, there is no fat, no calories, no cholesterol and no taste!

"The grass is greener on the other side of the fence. Turn the udder cheek and moo-ve on. Seize every opportunity and milk it for all it's worth. Honor thy fodder and thy mother and all your udder relatives. Never take any bull from anybody. Always let them know who's boss. Stepping on cow pies brings good luck. Black and white are always appropriate fashion state-ments. Don't forget to cow-nt your blessings every day."



## **November 28, 2003**

Ready for a few more chuckles? Enjoy the following bits of humor as provided by a faithful reader.

### CHURCH FOOTBALL

Quarterback sneak-Church members quietly leaving during the invitation.

Draw Play-What many children do with the bulletin during worship.

Half-Time-The period between Sunday school and worship when many choose to leave.

Bench Warmer-Those who do not sing, pray, work, or apparently do anything but sit.

Backfield-in-Motion-Making a trip to the back (restroom or water fountain) during the service.

Staying in the pocket-What happens to a lot of money that should be given to the Lord's work.

Two-Minute Warning-The point at which you realize the sermon is almost over and begin to gather up your children and belongings.

Instant Replay-The preacher loses his notes and falls back on last week's illustrations.

Sudden Death-What happens to the attention span of the congregation if the preacher goes "overtime."

Trap-You're called on to pray and are asleep.

End Run-Getting out of church quickly without speaking to any guest or fellow member.

Flex Defense-The ability to allow absolutely nothing said during the sermon to affect your life.

Halfback Option--The decision of 50% of the congregation not to return for the evening service or Bible study.

Blitz-The rush for the restaurants following the benediction.

And now, finally, here's a thought to ponder that seems appropriate for this time of the year:

### THE FOUR STAGES OF LIFE

- 1) You believe in Santa Claus.
- 2) You don't believe in Santa Claus.
- 3) You are Santa Claus.
- 4) You look like Santa Claus.

If these tickle your funny bone, we'll try to rustle up some more for another visit.