

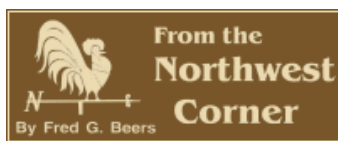
November 2, 2004

Rotter and friends to bring back Big Band sound

If you are like me, and your eyeballs and eardrums have been sufficiently assaulted by all the political haranguing the past few months, take heart! Relief is on the way; a remedy is at hand. Bill Rotter and his Perry Serenaders (my name for them) are about ready to bring us at least a brief but welcome respite.

On Thursday night (the date is November 4), Mr. Rotter's well-drilled version of the Big Bands will take the stage at the Perry Armory for a concert that is sure to delight anyone who remembers the real thing. Mr. Rotter, the retired principal and former band director at Perry High School, was too young to catch those legendary bands of Glenn Miller, Artie Shaw, Benny Goodman, Tommy Dorsey and countless others, but he knew about them through his mother, who loved them. He likes that sound and he has been working with a talented group of local musicians for the past few weeks to recreate and, yes, to improve on it. It has given our local young musicians goose bumps and it will do the same for you, if you dote on that great kind of music. Yes, none of these band members were around when the real Big Bands were providing listeners with those wonderful sounds from dance venues around the country. But with Mr. Rotter's guidance they have brought back the era in a faithful, accurate way. If you know anything about Mr. Rotter's preparations style for public performances, you know he has this band ready to perform. Even if you don't personally remember them, the sounds and the arrangements are sure to start your toe a-tapping.

Best part of the deal? It's free! Just come to the Armory about 7 o'clock on Thursday evening and enjoy the evening. You will go away happy, guaranteed. Two more similar concerts are planned, so there should be plenty of that great music to enjoy. I'm looking forward to Thursday night's program and hope you are, too.



November 6, 2004

Recognizing some random thoughts and reader remarks

And now, a few random thoughts aided and abetted by several readers who came up with worthy ideas.

My reader down the street shares the thought that more of us should make an effort to attend the appropriate PHS reunions and also sign the register on Cherokee Strip celebration day at the Alumni Association Office building on the south side of the square. Added defensively, however, this is bit of information, provided by my friend:

"My sister and I went to the Alumni office the day before the September 16th celebration, hoping to register before the crowds would assemble the following day. However, the door to our fine Alumni building was locked and no one was there to let us register, so our names do not appear on the list. Could we have the office open a day before the celebration each

year to accommodate people like us? We really have a fine Alumni office and I would be happy to work there part time if they had something meaningful for me to do. When I last volunteered, I got the feeling that they did not need me."

The lady also asked what has become of the "pioneers' registration" that used to take place each year at the Senior Citizens' Center. Granted, all the pioneers who actually made the 1893 run are no longer with us, but many others who came here in the early days still remain but we don't know who they are because there no longer is a registration book. Would someone please look into this?

In another vein, H.B. Evans, the retired Billings banker who used to teach vo-ag at PHS, tells me he recently found a greenish-colored bottle embossed with a phrase that indicated it was made at "the Perry Glass Factory." He saved the bottle for a while, hoping to find more information about a glass factory that was located here, but unfortunately the greenish bottle was broken and shattered into small pieces. Another friend tells me that the only Oklahoma glass factory he knows of was located for many years at Sapulpa. Anyone else know about this?

And now, finally, our Stagecoach Community Theatre is still alive and kicking. The last production, an encore performance of "Love, Sex and the IRS," was superbly done as a dinner theatre play at the wonderful Heritage Center performing center. It was arguably one of the finest ensemble casts here since the first production a couple decades ago. But, where are the audiences? The two dinner theater performances that we saw were skillfully done and appreciatively received, but the size of the audience each night left a lot to be desired. Let's encourage those folks by attending their plays and let them know how much we appreciate their hard work. It's great entertainment, presented by a live, local cast, and they deserve our praise.



November 10, 2004

Computers, Big Bands get better with age

There was a time when I thought I would never need a computer, so I passed up several opportunities to learn how to use them. That's a familiar story, but it happens to be mine. Very soon, it became apparent that a computer was going to be an essential tool for me, so I acquired one. Even found some helpful training locally through the Meridian Technical Center.

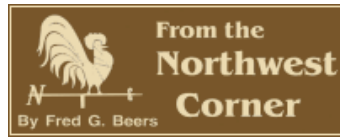
The new stuff was obsolete before it was installed, although it was the latest thing available when purchased. Since then I've been through some serious upgrades and replacements, and still my equipment is not the best that's available. Cost is just one factor to consider. It's a fact of life that we all have to consider.

With eyesight that seems to be dimming, I had to replace my monitor (the computer screen) with something bigger and brighter, and more expensive. That has been done and it definitely is a major improvement. The point of all this is just to let you know that I'm striving to continue in this business, and to explain the most recent acquisition of mechanical assistance, so I can continue with these twice-weekly rambblings.

You have been kind enough to ask, and that's the most recent information available. The new publication schedule, by the way, is on Wednesday and Saturday, instead of Tuesday and Friday. I appreciate your good wishes.

And now briefly on to an unrelated subject. Mr. Rotter's Great Big Band concert filled the Perry Armory last week, and it gave local citizens a good taste of what dance music used to sound like. Yes, I thought it was great, and so did the crowd

that turned out for this wondrous night. Dancers appeared like magic as the beat went on, and the people who played the music did a marvelous job. I cannot wait for the next concert by the Great Big Band. Thanks, Mr. Rotter, and all the musicians (and the girl vocalist) who made that a night to remember. Thanks also to the Chamber of Commerce for getting this thing organized.



November 13, 2004

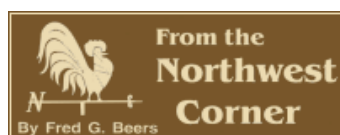
Seeking info about a message on a bottle.

Mrs. Henry Rieman, who lives north of Sumner, read with interest the item about the bottle that was recently found by H.B. Evans, the retired Billings banker. That bottle was embossed with information indicating it was made by "the Perry Glass Factory," but, alas, it was accidentally broken and thus lost forever. H.B. wondered if anyone remembers hearing about a glass factory here, because it was news to him. So far, no one has stepped forward with additional information, except for Mrs. Rieman.

"I worked in the Blackwell glass factory until it was blown away in a wind storm in 1945," Mrs. Rieman tells us. She has never heard of another glass factory in Perry or anywhere else in this area, so we are still wondering if there ever was such a place. If you can shed some light on the subject, tell us what you know about it.

It was just a coincidence, but interesting nevertheless. The weekend after Bill Rotter's Great Big Band (composed almost entirely of local folks) played that excellent concert in the Perry Armory, Doc Severinsen conducted the Oklahoma City Philharmonic orchestra in a warmly received concert of Big Band, Viennese waltzes and other classical pieces in the recently refurbished old Oklahoma City Municipal Auditorium. Doc Severinsen gained most of his fame as the band leader on Johnny Carson's TV Tonight Show, but he is widely recognized as a premier cornetist. His costumes were outlandish, of course, but the music was great. He also confided that one of his daughters, and her husband, train horses on their ranch near Purcell. That was a new bit of information to me. His OC concert was well worth the price of admission. The Philharmonic is indeed one of our state's most prized possessions and we thank them for the "Pop" series that brings in musicians and entertainers like Doc Severinsen. Can it be possible that his beautiful type of music is on the brink of a comeback?

Our Oklahoma State Cowboys may be stumbling just a bit on the gridiron lately, but that has not diminished their ability to choose a winner. At their recent Homecoming, the OSU players, students and fans chose a fair Perry lady as their "Miss OSU" for this year. She is none other than Katie Lamerton, a coed at the Stillwater school and the daughter of Dave and Kay Lamerton of Perry. Congratulations to all. That makes Katie eligible to compete in the "Miss Oklahoma" contest later this year, and the winner there will go on to the "Miss America" pageant on the boardwalk in New Jersey.



November 17, 2004

Presbyterian memories

The local Presbyterian Church, where our family worships, has been without a fulltime pastor since the departure last year of the Rev. Tim Boggess, in response to a call from a church in Georgia. Things could be worse, however. The local church was fortunate in one respect: The Rev. Ron Weathers retired from the United Methodist ministry at about the same time as Tim's exit, and Ron has provided meaningful sermons for many Sundays, moving over from the Methodist Church just across the street from the Presbyterian sanctuary. I don't know if we can convert him, but he is doing an outstanding job of filling the pulpit nearly every Sunday. Meantime, the search goes on for the pastor we know is out there, somewhere.

Reflecting on all this, however, has brought back a lot of bittersweet memories about my connection with the Perry Presbyterian Church. We've been friends for a long time. Our church has had 22 pastors since 1893, ranging from the Rev. Simon Peter Myers to the Rev. Tim Boggess. The next one will be Number 23. Rev. David Thomas had the longest tenure, from 1919 to 1946, when he retired. A few of us still remember the Rev. Thomas. He was a memorable man, as was his entire family. They are all deceased now, but they live on in the memory of many people. I was fortunate enough to know all of them quite well because they were not only Presbyterians, but also our across-the-street neighbors. Our house was diagonally across Eighth and Elm from the Church. We lived at 501 Eighth Street, where the High School Parking Lot is now located.

As faithful Presbyterians, we were present each Sunday for Church School, morning worship, evening service and youth fellowship. All of us proudly wore perfect attendance pins, and I still have mine in a box somewhere. As pre-schoolers, my two sisters and I attended Mrs. Crawford's Kindergarten Church each Sunday morning in the church basement. We learned many things there, besides cutting out Bible figures from the material Mrs. Crawford brought in an old suitcase that her husband dutifully hauled down the basement steps to our meeting room each Sunday.

More of these childhood Presbyterian memories when next we meet in this same place.



November 20, 2004

More Presbyterian Memories.

Continuing now with the reflections on a life of Presbyterianism in Perry, Oklahoma....

The Presbyterian Church manse, where the Pastor and his family lived, was the home of the Rev. and Mrs. David Thomas from 1919, when they came here, until 1946, when he retired. It was located approximately where the present Church Fellowship Hall now stands. There was a two-car garage at the east end of the two-story house and it was used to store a lot of things from the church, including a ten-pin alley with automatic pin-setters. I am not sure that it ever worked, but it was well cared for by the Thomas family. The Pastor's study occupied a room on the second floor of the Manse. Mrs. Eula Thomas, the pastor's wife and a former missionary to India, also prepared devotionals and other study material there amidst the clutter of books, papers, a typewriter and a large roll-top desk. Some of the furnishings were daintily hand-crafted and were made in India

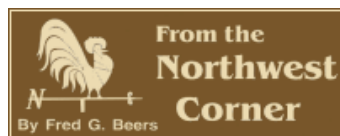
Mr. and Mrs. Thomas had two sons. The older was David Sleeth Thomas, and the younger was Harcourt William (Corky) Thomas. David and I were born just a few days apart and we pretty well grew up in each other's yard. We were best friends all the way through high school until we graduated in 1941. David then went to Park College in Missouri and I went to work at *The Journal* as a fledging reporter.

Because the Manse was just next door to the old pink stucco Presbyterian Church, our members expected the Rev. Thomas to stoke the church furnace in the winter and to have the entire church toasty warm by the time church school classes began. In the summer, he opened the beautiful stained glass windows on the east and west walls of the old sanctuary to capture any stray breezes that might be abroad. There was no air conditioning while I was growing up, but the Newton Funeral Home and Davis Funeral Home kept the church supplied with paper fans to provide a modicum of relief. We thought we were comfortable until the August heat arrived. Then the Church took a holiday and members were urged to visit the Church of their choice. The Thomas family took their vacation that month.

If Mr. Thomas objected to stoking the furnace or any other myriad jobs asked of him by the congregation, he never said so. Being the gentleman that he was, he would never have dreamed about complaining. He evidently believed such things were simply part of his ministry.

Tragedy was not unknown to the family. While he counseled others when Death or misfortune called, Mr. Thomas lost Eula, his helpmate, in 1948, soon after his retirement. David, my good friend and the older Thomas son, was killed in action in Germany during World War II. Mr. Thomas survived them all, but he too passed away in 1955. Harcourt survived until a year or so ago, but now he, too, is gone.

Sad thoughts, but pleasant, too. Knowing the Thomas family and being in the Church that they loved is comforting to me on several levels. I believe that in many ways their ministry lives on today, and I am thankful for having had the blessed opportunity of knowing all of them.



November 24, 2004

A tribute to America

A reader is kind enough to ask for a reprint of a special column that originally appeared in this space on August 4, 2000. The request was justified because our nation has just come through a very nasty election campaign, and for other reasons we have had to deal with matters related to foreign affairs. The original column was written by a non-U.S. citizen, and I agree that his sentiments are well worth contemplating right now. Here it is:

America: The Good Neighbor

Widespread but only partial news coverage was given recently to a remarkable editorial broadcast from Toronto by Gordon Sinclair, a Canadian television commentator. What follows is the full text of his trenchant remarks as printed in the Congressional Record.

"This Canadian thinks it is time to speak up for the Americans as the most generous and possibly the least appreciated people on all earth. Germany, Japan and, to a lesser extent, Britain and Italy, were lifted out of the debris of war by the Americans who poured in billions of dollars and forgave other billions in debts. None of these countries is today paying even the interest on its remaining debts to the United States.

"When France was in danger of collapsing in 1956, it was the Americans who propped it up, and their reward was to be insulted and swindled on the streets of Paris. I was there. I saw it. When earthquakes hit distant cities, it is the United States that hurries in to help. This spring, 59 American communities were flattened by tornadoes. Nobody helped.

"The Marshall Plan and the Truman Policy pumped billions of dollars into discouraged countries. Now newspapers in those countries are writing about the decadent, warmongering Americans. I'd like to see just one of those countries that is gloating over the erosion of the United States dollar build its own airplane. Does any other country in the world have a plane to equal the Boeing Jumbo Jet, the Lockheed Tri-Star, or the Douglas DC 10? If so, why don't they fly them? Why do all the international lines except Russia fly American planes?

"Why does no other land on earth even consider putting a man or woman on the moon – not once, but several times—and safely home again. You talk about scandals, and the Americans put theirs right in the store window for everybody to look at. Even their draft-dodgers are not pursued and hounded. They are here on our streets, and most of them, unless they are breaking Canadian laws, are getting American dollars from ma and pa at home to spend here.

"When the railways of France, Germany and India were breaking down through age, it was the Americans who rebuilt them. When the Pennsylvania Railroad and the New York Central went broke, nobody loaned them an old caboose. Both are still broke. I can name you 5,000 times when the Americans raced to the help of other people in trouble. Can you name me even one time when someone else raced to the Americans in trouble? I don't think there was outside help even during the San Francisco earthquake.

"Our neighbors have faced it alone, and I'm one Canadian who is damned tired of hearing them get kicked around. They will come out of this thing with their flag high. And when they do, they are entitled to thumb their nose at the lands that are gloating over their present troubles. I hope Canada is not one of those. Stand proud, America!"

This piece was sent to me by Kit Froebel of New Braunfels, Texas. Most of us know her better as the former Margaret Norman, as she was called while growing up here and graduating from Perry High School. Her mother, Gertrude Norman Lockett, who taught school in Perry and elsewhere, now lives in Richmond, Texas. The article is a fine tribute to our country.



November 27, 2004

Tales about the Glass Works

The story of "the glass bottles from a Perry manufacturing plant" seems to have captured the imagination and interest of many local folks. Enough so that they have pretty well taken over this column, with the result that some other things of general interest are now awaiting their turn. This started with a note from H.B. Evans of Billings after he found a "greenish bottle" embossed with information indicating it had been made in "the Perry glass factory." Unfortunately, H.B.'s bottle was

broken before the origin could be determined. There followed an unexpected wave of interest, and we have reported some of them to you in this column. Now, more readers have added their own bits of information, and I feel obliged to pass them on. That's what today's column is about.

Here's something to indicate how I'm led to that conclusion.

Don Stoddard drops a note to remind me that his brother, Alan, now of Shawnee, has been a collector of old bottles for many years. Don is contacting him to see if Alan has anything like the greenish bottles described by H.B. We are still awaiting further word on this.

Some others: Howard Kendle relates that he once had two bottles like H.B.'s, but only one was embossed with a line that indicated it was made in "the Perry glass factory," wherever that was located. Olivia McNeil has two bottles. One of them has this line embossed on it - "Perry Steam Bottling Works,"

There are other stories, but my notes are not clear, and I hesitate to pass them on to you. We expect more of these soon, and we will let you know what we find out. One of these has to do with the final cleanup on the property where the Century Park is now located on Fir Avenue. Stay tuned.