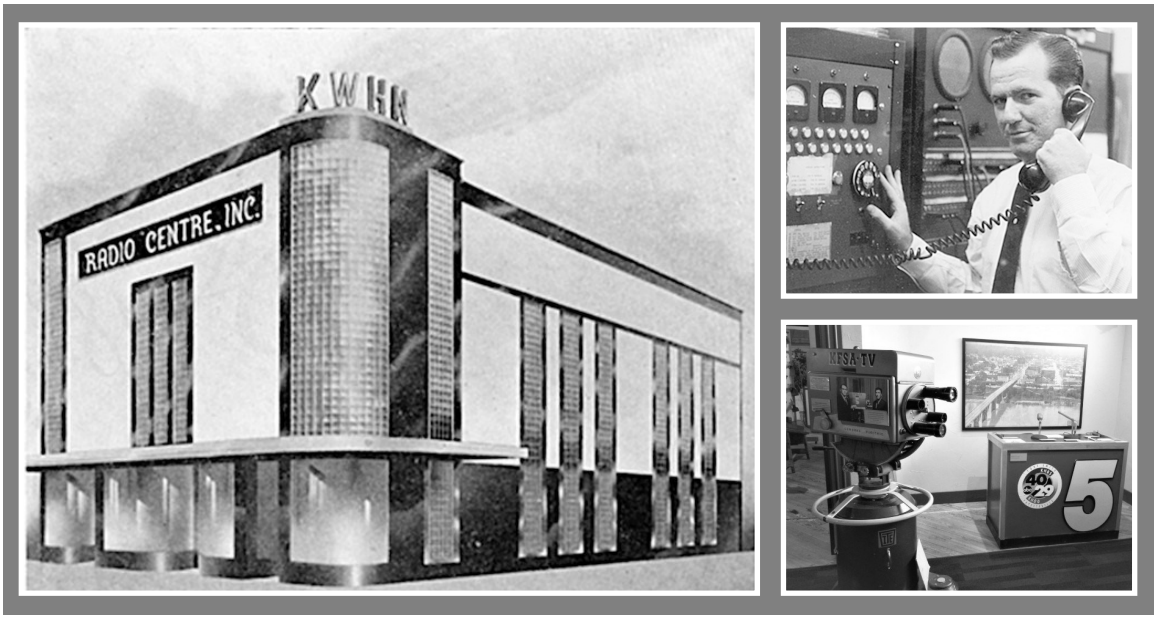
FORT SMITH HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC

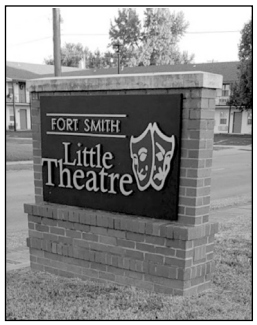
The JOURNAL



Carl Riggins: On the Air

Preserving Media History in Fort Smith

Fort Smith, Dardanelle, and the True Grit Trail



Fort Smith Little Theatre Endures: Part II

A Woman's Touch, Part II

Vol. 46, No. 2, September 2022

MISSION: The mission of the Fort Smith Historical Society Inc., founded in 1977, is to publish the *Journal* of the FSHS and through the *Journal* and other activities to locate, identify, and collect historical materials; to publish primary source material and historical articles that pertain to the city of Fort Smith and the vicinity. Preservation of Fort Smith history is our primary mission, and we always welcome the loan of historical material, including photographs, letters, diaries, and memoirs, and will return them promptly.

MEMBERSHIP & ORDERS: *Journal* issues are available. Cost for current and past issues is $7.50 plus a $2.50 mailing charge per copy. Send orders to:

Editors
P.O. Box 3676
Fort Smith, AR 72913-3676

or contact us online at webmaster@fortsmithhistory.org

Membership in the Fort Smith Historical Society includes a subscription to the *Journal* of the FSHS, which is published semi-annually. Send your membership dues and other business matters to:

Fort Smith Historical Society
Thomas J. Waller Jr., Treasurer
P.O. Box 3676
Fort Smith, AR 72913-3676

QUESTIONS pertaining to the Fort Smith Historical Society or the *Journal* may be addressed by email to:

Mary Jeanne Black, inquiry coordinator and researcher, mblack3086@aol.com.

Mary Jeanne edits the *Journal* department titled "Who Knew?" Contact her with your research and/or genealogical questions or topics.

VISIT OUR WEBSITE! www.fortsmithhistory.org
Our website is updated by webmaster:
Al Whitson webmaster@fortsmithhistory.org

Content tabs: Organizations, Membership, Back Issues, Tables of Contents, Contacts & Links, Archives and Gallery.

SUBMITTING MANUSCRIPTS FOR POSSIBLE PUBLICATION IN THE JOURNAL

A submitted article is peer-reviewed by members of the *Journal*'s editorial board and approved before publication. The due dates for manuscript submissions are February 15 for the April issue and July 15 for the September issue. The story should be relevant to the city of Fort Smith and/or this area and significant to the history of the border region. Manuscripts must be based on historical documentation with notes, bibliography, or a list of sources. We recommend authors search through the literature on their subject. We encourage photographs, charts, or maps to accompany the article. These visual aids must be released by the owner, who is to be properly accredited, and appropriately captioned.

Specifics

1. Manuscripts of 3,000-7,000 words may be submitted to the Editorial Board of the *Journal* electronically using the email address of billy.higgins@uafs.edu, editor, or stoliv44@gmail.com, Sherry Toliver, President of the Society, or mblack3086@aol.com, Mary Jeanne Black, Inquiry Coordinator.
2. Title page should include article title and author name.
3. Manuscripts should be double-spaced in Times Roman 12-point font with one-inch margins. Pages should be numbered, preferably with author name in the top right corner.
4. Notes and bibliography should be cited according to the *Chicago Manual of Style* (Turabian). Book, journal, and newspaper titles should be italicized.
5. Photographs and maps should be submitted with manuscript in digital format of at least 300 dpi resolution and must be captioned with 1-5 sentences. Photographs and maps must be credited as to source.
6. An author photograph and short bio should be submitted at the end of the manuscript along with mailing address, phone number, and email address.

Membership in the Fort Smith Historical Society includes a subscription to the *Journal* of the FSHS, which is published semi-annually. Membership year begins January 1 and ends December 31. For membership, send dues with your name and mailing address to:

The Fort Smith Historical Society, Inc.
P.O. Box 3676
Fort Smith, Arkansas 72913-3676

Annual	$30.00
Senior Citizens (62 and older)	25.00
Student	15.00
Annual Sustaining	50.00
Joint Membership with Fort Smith Museum of History	100.00
Annual Business Sponsor	200.00

The Fort Smith Historical Society, Inc. is a nonprofit organization under Sec. 501C(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954. Gifts and legacies are tax deductible.

FORT SMITH HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC

The JOURNAL

VOL. 46 NO. 2 OCTOBER 2022

CONTENTS

COVER PHOTOS:
Main) Photos of Carl Riggins and Fort Smith Media History
(Lower left) From Fort Smith, Dardanelle, and the True Grit Trail
(Middle) From Part 2 of the Fort Smith Little Theatre's 75th Anniversary
(Lower right) From Part 2 of A Woman's Touch

Printed at Midwest Type and Printing, Fort Smith, Arkansas

Change of address cards are free at your post office. If you move, please fill one out and send it to: P.O. Box 3676 • Fort Smith, Arkansas 72913-3676

News & Opportunities

Fort Smith Historical Society

2022 Monthly Meetings
are held on the
Second Monday of every month at 6 p.m.
University of Arkansas-Fort Smith,
location to be announced.

Check FSHS Facebook page and email alerts for monthly meeting sites.

Historical News

Higgins Honored: On May 3, the History department at the University of Arkansas-Fort Smith honored Billy Higgins by hosting a retirement party at the Bakery District. Billy also stepped down as editor of *The Journal* and was a valuable asset in the printing of Vol. 46, No. 1 as new co-editors learned the ropes. His dedication to both this organization and UAFS was profound. The organization hopes he enjoys his retirement, and the new co-editors find security in the fact that he is only an email or phone call away.

Bridge Celebrated: In May, the Fort Smith Museum of History, the Fort Smith Historic Society, and the National Park Service at the Fort Smith Historic Site marked the 100th anniversary of the Garrison Avenue Free Bridge with a program at the Frisco Station in downtown Fort Smith. As part of the event:

❖ Charles Girard provided information about the Frisco building.

❖ Al Whitson gave a presentation on the construction of the bridge.

❖ Mayor George McGill granted a proclamation of "Million Dollar Free Bridge Day."

❖ Cody Faber of the National Park Service presented a program on the history of roads and travel.

❖ A procession of classic cars owned by the Fort Smith Automotive Club transported costumed interpreters and dignitaries across the current bridge.

❖ Matt Hutchinson, portraying Mayor Fagan Bourland, and Susie Brooks, portraying Bridge Queen Louise Golden, read speeches from the original celebration.

❖ The Fort Smith Regional Art Museum displayed prints of the original bridge by local artist John Bell, Jr.

An Arkansas State Tourism representative was also present, sharing state roadway information with guests. Artifacts from the original celebration, as well as the original bridge blueprints, were on display courtesy of the Fort Smith Museum of History and Carder Ferguson.

Wilhauf Update: During the regular meeting of the society in July, Professor Tom Wing, UAFS, shared an update on the Historic Preservation of the Wilhauf House in Van Buren, as well as new information about preservation and artifacts at the Drennen-Scott House.

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Arkansas Historical Association

82nd Annual Conference 2023

Theme: "Amusing Arkansas: Sports and Leisure in the Natural State."

Arkadelphia, April 13-15, 2023

Register at the Arkansas Historical Association website: www.arkansashistoricalassociation.org

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Clayton House

514 North Sixth Street
(479) 783-3000
claytonhouse@claytonhouse.org

❖ **Murder and Mayhem — October 21-22, 28-29**: The Tour and Progressive Dinner features haunted and gruesome stories from years past while visiting the Fort Smith Museum of History, the Bonneville House, and the WHH Clayton House.

Dinner, drinks, and decadent dessert compliment the stories and haunted tour through the Historic District.

As guests will be outdoors; please wear comfy shoes and dress accordingly.

❖ **Gaslight Gala — December 2, 2022.** This exciting holiday event kicks off the season in style! Our Gaslight Gala is a way to step back in time, and feel the history of the home while supporting the preservation of the Clayton House!

Live music, carriage rides around the historic district, live auctions, and more await!

All events require reservations or per-ordered tickets: claytonhouse.org or Facebook page, or call!

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Friends of the Fort

More information at Facebook page or by emailing friendsofthefort@gmail.com

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Fort Smith Museum of History

320 Rogers Avenue
(479) 783-7841

❖ **Celebrating 150 Years: The Story of First National Bank**—On exhibit through January 14, 2023.

A partnership between First National Bank and the Fort Smith Museum of History allows us to present the Fort Smith Museum of History's newest exhibition.

The history of First National Bank is interwoven into the history and progress of Fort Smith. In February 1872, Fort Smith's First National Bank was organized as The National Bank of Western Arkansas. Men including Bernard Baer, a German immigrant, former Congressman Logan H. Roots and others familiar with the constraints and potential of the city secured a charter from the Comptroller of Currency to commence business on March 22, 1872.

Soon thereafter, bank Directors Samuel McLoud, George T. Sparks, and James Vaile established McCloud, Vaile, and Sparks—the first large furniture factory in the area. The thriving bank and burgeoning town were growing together.

By 1888, the bank had outgrown its facilities, and a new brick building was constructed at South Sixth Street and Garrison Avenue. It became the bank's new home, and soon, a new name would grace the institution—First National Bank of Fort Smith.

The existing eight-story, white brick building at Sixth and Garrison was completed after three decades of steady growth. The landmark building and storied institution have operated at that location since January 31, 1910.

A strong, involved, and constant supporter of the Fort Smith community, First National Bank remains one of the largest banks in both the city and the state of Arkansas.

❖ **Yarnell's Ice Cream**, made in Arkansas since 1932, is featured in the Museum's old-fashioned soda fountain. Come in and treat yourself.

***

Drennen-Scott House

Visitor Center—221 N. Third Street
Van Buren, Arkansas
(479) 262-2750
drennen-scott@uafs.edu

Drennen-Scott House is closed for restoration and maintenance work with reopening planned for 2022. Willhalf House restoration work is scheduled to be finished and a grand opening is being planned for late 2022.

Leonard Willhaf was a German immigrant, ran a bakery on Main Street in Van Buren, and was a veteran of the Mexican War of 1846-48. His home, built in 1851, was donated to UAFS and grants were acquired to restore and interpret the home as a museum.

For more information contact Tom Wing, Director of the Drennen-Scott Historical Site by email at drennen-scott@uafs.edu. Facebook: Drennen-Scott Historic Site

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John Talkington Chapter of the Sons of Union Veterans

Anyone with Union Army ancestors from the Civil War period or who have an interest in joining can contact Tom Wing at 479-262-2750 or VanBurenSUV@gmail.com.

The local Chapter is named for John Talkington, an ancestor of Angela Walton-Raji, was a slave of Isaac Talkington in Crawford County. John Talkington fled in 1863, headed to Fort Scott, Kansas, and joined the 2nd Kansas Colored Infantry, which engaged Confederate forces at the 1864 Battle of Jenkins Ferry in lower Arkansas (referenced and re-enacted scenes shown in the Academy Award-winning movie *Lincoln*). Talkington was wounded in the combat. He later died in Fort Smith and is buried in Fairview Cemetery, Van Buren.

***

Fort Smith Regional Art Museum

1601 Rogers Avenue—Fort Smith
(479) 784-2787
info@fsram.org

❖ Regional artists are the focus of the Fort Smith Regional Art Museum, and the watercolors in the exhibition *Doyle Young—Painted Stories: Reflections of Southern Days Gone By* seek to capture the artist's

passion for the places he has lived—the Delta region of Arkansas, Mississippi, and Louisiana. While living in Dardanelle, Arkansas, and traveling extensively throughout the Delta region, Young became captivated with the remnants of a cultural potpourri that is becoming more and more just a faded memory—a culture consisting of cotton fields, sharecropper shacks, field labor and river plantations, and colorful small-town life. Exhibit open until September 25.

❖ Shabana Kauser, a Fayetteville, Arkansas, artist, creates contemporary portrait paintings in oil and mixed media that are influenced by her experiences as the daughter of Pakistani immigrants. Kauser's painting inspiration of women wearing traditional fabrics of the dupatta (scarf worn in South Asia) comes from her mother's work creating traditional outfits for the Pakistani and Indian community in the UK, where Kauser lived until 2008.

"Exploring identity and immigration through the eyes of a living female artist of color, I use my Pakistani heritage and Western culture to tell a story of change, culture, social, and economic impact. Each work up close allows you to examine each thread, its imperfections and uniqueness." —Shabana Kauser. Exhibit open until September 22.

❖ Lectures, Workshops, Education Programs, and Events throughout the year. Contact RAM for full schedule of activities, exhibits, and children-centered art classes.

***

Fort Smith Little Theatre

(479) 783-2966
401 North Sixth Street
https://www.fslt.org/

Seventy-fifth season events are underway, including performances of *The Philadelphia Story* in September and *Coffee Shop* in November. For additional information, volunteer opportunities, or to read about community memories of the last seventy-four seasons, please visit the website.

***

Museum of Chaffee History

7313 Terry Street, Building 805
Fort Smith, Arkansas
(479) 434 - 6774

Open Monday through Saturday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., except on national holidays.

The Museum of Fort Chaffee and the Chaffee Barbershop Museum are holding farmers and artisan markets throughout the Summer and Fall. Next date is October 8—OktoberFest.

The annual Veterans Day Parade at the museum will take place on November 12, 2022.

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Fort Smith Historical Members

Do you know how much you are loved and appreciated? Your support and assistance make possible the preservation of Fort Smith history for future generations. Without your on-going support, the Fort Smith Historical Society and *The Journal* could not exist.

Reprinted from the tenth year of the *Journal* in 1987. We feel same about our dear members in this, our forty-fifth year.

We hope that you do as well. Our FSHS membership now runs from January 1, 2022, to January 1, 2023

Please renew. Your support and membership for the *Journal of the Fort Smith Historical Society* is deeply appreciated.

***

Gifts

At the July meeting of the Fort Smith Historic Society, a generous gift of $10,000 was presented to the society by Mayor George McGill from proceeds of a Juneteenth performance of the play *A Raisin in the Sun* by Lorainne Hansberry, performed at the ArcBest Performing Arts Center performed by Entertainistry Productions! at the Fort Smith Convention Center. Mayor McGill presented the gift, accepted by President Sherry Toliver, board members, and other members. The Fort Smith Historic Society was chosen to receive proceeds from the event because of its mission to preserve the history of the city.

From the press release for the play: "The Mayor's Office collaborated with Punkin Pictures to create a modern and inspiring version of Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* on June 18th at 7:00 PM at the ArcBest Performing Arts Center. The owner of Punkin

Pictures and Director of the play is a Fort Smith resident, Silvia D. Manning. Silvia, an accomplished actor and singer herself, has assembled a talented cast, including three local actors and Grammy Award winner Mrs. Shirley Murdock as Lena Younger, Mama.

Lorraine Hansberry drew inspiration from her own experiences in Chicago in the 1930s to pen the theatrical masterpiece that broke down racial barriers both on and off the stage. *A Raisin in the Sun* opened on Broadway in 1959 and, for the first time, hailed an all-Black principal cast, a Black playwright and a Black director. The play follows the three-generation Younger family as they grapple with different definitions of the American Dream, as well as, how to achieve it.

When the matriarch, Lena, buys a home in an all-white neighborhood, the Youngers are greeted by thinly veiled racism and financial pitfalls that threaten to pull the family apart and push their dreams out of reach. The play received four Tony Award nominations and Hansberry was the first Black woman produced on Broadway."

The Fort Smith Historic Society is elated to receive such a generous gift and will use it to further our mission of preserving and sharing the history of Fort Smith.

Give The Local History Fans You Know the Gift of Membership.

They will love the *Journal* — and you.

MEMBERSHIP FORM

CHECK ONE: ☐ New Member ☐ Renewal ☐ Gift

Name

Street address

City

State

Zip code

Please check the appropriate box:

☐ Annual $30
☐ Senior citizens (62 or older) $25
☐ Student $15
☐ Sustaining (annual) $50
☐ Joint membership with Fort Smith Museum of History..... $100
☐ Business sponsor $200

The Fort Smith Historical Society is a nonprofit organization under Sec. 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Gifts and legacies are tax deductible.

Make your check to:
Fort Smith Historical Society Inc.
P.O. Box 3676
Fort Smith, Arkansas 72913

For information, call:
479/420-1162
479/226-2026
479/788-7588

(LEFT) FORT SMITH HISTORICAL SOCIETY PRESIDENT SHERRY TOLLIVER and Fort Smith Mayor George McGill at the July 2022 meeting in the Community Room of the Fort Smith Public Library. (Right, top and bottom) FSHS members await Professor Tom Wing's presentation on the Drennen-Scott House.
(FSHS Photo)

Mayor McGill Presents $10K to Historical Society

Mayor Cites Group's Contributions to Fabric of Fort Smith

By Joyce Faulkner

With the advent of vaccines, the covid pandemic moderated in the summer of 2022. After the long shutdown, Fort Smith citizens were eager to participate in civic, cultural, and business activities again. In July, the Fort Smith Historical Society (FSHS) met in the Fort Smith Public Library Community Room to hear University of Arkansas at Fort Smith (UAFS) Professor Tom Wing discuss the Drennen-Scott Historic Site.

However, everyone was surprised to see not only Professors Billy Higgins and Tom Wing but also Fort Smith Mayor George McGill standing in front of the room along with FSHS President Sherry Toliver. Sherry introduced the mayor who was welcomed by the audience.

The mayor explained how pleased he was to see the turnout to hear Wing's presentation. However, he wanted to say a few words first. He thanked Fort Smith citizens in general for the support they had shown for several downtown Juneteenth celebration events. The gala was sold out. Also, a classic stage play, *A Raisin in the Sun*, at the ArcBest Theater was performed to an almost sold-out crowd. On Sunday, the U.S. Army Jazz Band put on show on the Riverfront. No city tax money went into any of these activities. They were funded by UAFS, Walmart, ArcBest, and other companies.

"And people came out," Mayor McGill said. "And the crowds that supported these activities were as diverse as I could've hoped for. And with all that said, we ended up with a few extra dollars. And we began to think about who that should go to."

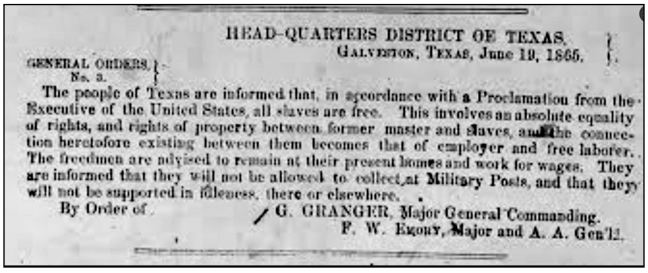
And then Mayor McGill remembered FSHS contributions—led by President Sherry Toliver—to the creation of the movie, *The Fabric of Fort Smith*. "It's where we told our story about integration," he said. "Where we told our story about who we are in this

MEMBERS OF THE FORT SMITH HISTORICAL SOCIETY, led by President Shery Toliver, accept a check for $10,000 from Fort Smith Mayor George McGill during the July 2022 meeting.
(FSHS Photo)

region. And because of all that, a one-man committee decided to give some of those proceeds to the Fort Smith Historical Society. We are proud to present a check for ten thousand dollars."

The attendees were thrilled and appreciative of both the thought and the resources.

The History of Juneteenth



HEAD-QUARTERS DISTRICT OF TEXAS,
GALVESTON, TEXAS, June 19, 1865.

GENERAL ORDERS, No. 3.

The people of Texas are informed that, in accordance with a Proclamation from the Executive of the United States, all slaves are free. This involves an absolute equality of rights, and rights of property between former master and slaves, and the connection heretofore existing between them becomes that of employer and free laborer. The freedmen are advised to remain at their present homes and work for wages. They are informed that they will not be allowed to collect at Military Posts, and that they will not be supported in idleness, there or elsewhere.

By Order of G. GRANGER, Major General Commanding.
F. W. EMERY, Major and A. A. Gen'l.

...all persons held as slaves within any state...shall then be, and henceforth, and forever free...

While the Thirteenth Amendment officially abolishing slavery was ratified on December 18, 1865, Lincoln had already issued the Emancipation Proclamation.

It states, in part, "…that on the first day of January in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty three, all persons held as slaves within any state or designated part of a state, the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against United States, shall then be, henceforth, and forever free; and the executive government of the United States including the military and naval authority thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of such persons, and will do no act or acts to repress such persons, or any of them, in any efforts they may take for their actual freedom." It is signed by President Abraham Lincoln and Secretary of State William H. Seward.

Until Union Soldiers arrived to enforce it, however, the slave states ignored the proclamation. Texas being the most western of the Confederate states, slaves there were the last to learn they were free. General Gordon Granger arrived in Galveston on June 19, 1865, and announced General Order No. 3.

The joyful reaction of the enslaved people of Texas became the model for annual celebrations in many African American communities since the late 1800s. Traditionally, June 19th has been called many things—Emancipation Day, Freedom Day, Jubilee Day, Black Independence Day and Juneteenth Independence Day. June 19th became a National Holiday on June 17, 2022, when President Joe Biden issued, "A Proclamation of Juneteenth Day of Observance, 2022."

A Woman's Touch

Fashion, Commerce, and Community In Fort Smith: 1900-Forward

By Sue Robison

"These little beginnings were managed entirely by men. I never heard that even one woman was on their boards. So when a library was talked about by the women of the Fortnightly Club, the men said, and smiled, "We will help you financially, but don't ask us to do anything else."

—Miss Emily Johnson, President of the Fortnightly Library Association, upon the opening of the Fort Smith Carnegie Library (*Southwest American*. Page 2. January 31, 1908)

It was twenty years in the making. It took the dedication of hundreds of women. It required a group of volunteers with little business experience to successfully have state regulations on taxes and libraries amended, and to win a major funding grant to open the doors of Fort Smith's Andrew Carnegie Library in 1908.

Fort Smith's Fortnightly Club will forever be held as an example of a successful women's organization. Beginning as little more than a reading club for wealthy 1880s women who were denied access to professional outlets, the ambitions of the ladies drove them to spread their love of the written word first to children, then to adults. Their eventual dream of opening a library was smiled at by the male gentry, but the Fortnightly Club passed the goal down through generations of members who adapted themselves, and their organization, to meet the challenges associated with such an enormous project. The Andrew Carnegie Library on North Thirteenth Street, built on the home site of the Fortnightly Club's first president, Mrs. Judge Isaac C. Parker, was not only the realization of a dream, it was a starting point for Fort Smith's new breed of female volunteers.

The twentieth century opened to a series of changes, challenges, and opportunities for women. Groups once social in nature took up the banner to support hospitals, schools, the needy, and even start a city museum. The Society pages in local newspapers were peppered with invitations for ladies to join forces to create positive change inside the city limits of Fort Smith.

For women whose financial situations did not allow them to spend their days discussing suffrage and the plight of foundlings, employers began slowly opening doors. The South Fort Smith industrial area was quickly growing into a hub of Arkansas industry and new factories, such as a planned knitting plant and cotton mill, promised jobs for women.

FROM THE FORT SMITH NEWS RECORD, page 3, of the Tuesday, January 27, 1903, edition.

In a January 10, 1904, edition of the *Fort Smith News Record* newspaper, the Dawson Employment

Agency declared itself a bridge between employer and employee. The agency invited "men and women of brains and skill" to drop by its Garrison Avenue office to investigate the sixteen jobs it had available, including positions for ladies.

Traditionally, women stepped out of the working world once they took wedding vows to free up employment for men. The availability of higher education and advent of exciting new employment fields, however, proved too powerful a lure for many women who would not have considered keeping a position after marriage just a few years earlier. Suddenly, married women were remaining on the job.

Not everyone was happy to make room for women in the employment market. The influx of new women into the working world was a national movement drawing attention from editorials around the country. A Sunday issue of the *Fort Smith News Record* newspaper in January 1900 reprinted a national article on "Female Aggression" in which the author complained of women moving men "out of baking houses, out of stores, away from the typewriter, out of the schools, and now she is invading farm fields and taking the plow handles away from men." The writer encouraged men to "rise up and howl with an earthquake roar."

Fort Smith was too enthralled with its own progress at the beginning of the twentieth century to begrudge a lady a job in the fields. City leaders understood the money coming into town, like the twenty-five-thousand-dollar Carnegie Grant brought in by the Fortnightly Library Association, was money to benefit everyone. The architect the ladies contracted to build their beautiful showcase of literature hired workers to assist him, and those workers purchased supplies. It was a profitable process with the economy of Fort Smith as its beneficiary.

There was growth, and there was celebration. Fort Smith residents poured onto Garrison Avenue for shopping at the best retailers. "Fashion Nights" became a tradition on Garrison Avenue as a way to introduce the latest styles to customers and display the elegance of local shops. An October Fashion Night in 1912 featured multi-colored electric lights both inside and outside the stores, and merchants promised "all lovers of refinement" would find the perfect outfits on display.

Fine dining in the city's restaurants drew couples downtown. Live theater presentations offered a variety of programs on numerous stages and there were sophisticated establishments where a lady might stop for a drink with her husband or suitor before heading home. The Miller Brewing Company even developed a beer especially for modern, busy women called the Buffet, which promised to help a lady relax after a day of shopping or work.

"(Women are moving men) out of baking houses, out of stores, away from the typewriter, out of the schools, and now she is invading farm fields and taking the plow handles away from men."

National article reprinted
in *Fort Smith News Record*, January 1900

It was a fine time for the ladies, and they showed their pleasure by wearing clothes reflecting self-confidence and optimism. Slim skirts with long jackets were popular by the middle of the decade, and laced boots continued to protect slender ankles during daylight hours. Delicate heels and shoes of calf skin and velvet were popular for evening wear, and a well-dressed lady continued to prefer a blouse with a high neckline and long sleeves. Mauve, red, and gray were the favored palette of designers, and women began adding a touch of color to their cheeks to present a blushing complexion.

Hats exemplified the opulence and high spirits of the new century. Genuine ostrich plumes atop a hat were on every woman's must-have list. Long ostrich plumes, as light air, both delicate and strong, these lacy beauties of nature were loaded onto women's hats to create charming, constantly moving crowns of color.

Perhaps it was those tall, flighty ostrich feathers gracing hats of ladies attending the 1908 May Festival at Electric Park that caused them to be warned about their head wear. In an article titled "This Is For Your Own Good" printed by the *Southwest American* newspaper, organizers outlined behavior necessary to enjoy the celebration, and informed ladies they would be required to remove their hats during the first number of each program throughout the festival.

Indeed, things were changing for women. There were jobs, service groups, and beer designed to meet their tastes and ambitions. There was even a lady playing baseball. Young Alta Weiss of Ohio was touring America and pitching in all-male baseball games to prove women could throw a ball.

There were laws regulating women's activities. Brothels existed on the shadowy edge of legality until

officially banished in 1924. Their origin is sometimes attributed to the presence of the military in Fort Smith during its early years, but it might simply be that the income made by local entrepreneurs outweighed the vices of prostitution and kept the brothel doors open.

Groups like the Anti-Saloon League of Fort Smith, comprised of influential men and women, looked upon the easy accessibility of alcohol as the leading contributor to all the town's social ills, including prostitution. The Anti-Saloon League, various women's groups, and religious leaders supported plans to close drinking establishments in 1917 and tightly regulate prostitutes working in Fort Smith.

City leaders relegated the brothels to an area near the riverbanks known as "the row," and required women working in the houses to purchase monthly health certificates. Eventually, in response to continued complaints from Fort Smith's concerned citizens, the houses were placed behind a wall to hide them from view.

There was a cat-and-mouse relationship between the inmates, as the prostitutes working in the bordellos were known, and the upright citizens of Fort Smith, all of whom shared a desire to spend time in the shops and theaters on Garrison Avenue. Inmates of the row who ventured downtown were expected to stay out of sight, take the highest seats in theater balconies, and never approach anyone in the public areas of Fort Smith. Violations of these standards or daring to approach a gentleman to seek his patronage outside the row, would earn the woman a hefty fine, if not jail time.

These rules were often broken, so the city enacted a regulation preventing women from traveling in Fort Smith unchaperoned after sunset. The intention was to prevent prostitutes from roaming Garrison Avenue. The regulation led to an amusing story of a Fort Smith woman who wanted to visit one of the bars at the west end of the avenue unattended by a male companion. The lady dressed herself as a man, made her way to the saloon, and was quickly arrested for her trouble.

It was obvious not all women in Fort Smith rode the wave of opportunity brought in by the new century. There were those who struggled in the workplace and formed unions to negotiate their long workdays down to the nine-hour shift now accepted as normal. Women continued to take a less-than-equal role in society and in the home, but women's organizations were turning a serious eye to these problems and their solutions.

A 1914 conference of Arkansas state charities held at the Goldman Hotel took a broad view of causes needing volunteer assistance. Child welfare, the effect of movies on sex hygiene, questions regarding the

There was a cat-and-mouse relationship between the inmates, as the prostitutes working in the bordellos were known, and the upright citizens of Fort Smith, all of whom shared a desire to spend time in the shops and theaters on Garrison Avenue.

institutionalization or sterilization of the feeble minded, and the mission of almshouses were listed among topics for discussion. Experts traveled from around the country to take on these challenging subjects, and even examine the role of women in organized charities.

All the organization and planning experience of local women's groups gave them a head-start on facing the problems swooping down on Fort Smith within a few years of the conference: a world war and Spanish influenza.

Women's organizations from Sebastian County gathered in Fort Smith to form the War Works Drive to raise funds and support for the war effort. The ladies canvased businesses and even went door to door through neighborhoods to bring their cause to the public. If they could not donate cash, the ladies suggested families become patriots with hoes by starting home gardens to reduce the demands on markets for fresh food. The Red Cross Society organized home economics classes to assist wives struggling to manage a household in the midst of rationing, disease, and war. Several support programs for families with male members in the military sprang up across the area headed by female volunteers.

The Spanish influenza was not as easy an enemy to fight as the Germans. The flu wore no uniform, made no battle plans, and cared not if its victims were men or children. The first mention of the local effects of influenza came in the society pages of city newspapers where event postponements and cancellations were published daily. On October 9, 1918, city leaders declared all cases of influenza should be recorded, and those cases began showing up in the local press. It was the society pages noting who was diagnosed with the disease, where they lived, and their condition.

The front pages of the papers were reserved for war news and notices about the epidemic sweeping across America. On the morning of October 10, 1918, there

FORT SMITH HIGH SCHOOL'S 1918 Hoover Club (left) and girls basketball team (right).

(Courtesy of the Fort Smith Historical Society)

came a notice on the front page of the *Southwest American* newspaper from the Fort Smith Health Department urging funerals be attended only by immediate family members and a few close friends to fight the spread of influenza.

Through all this, women dealt with the question of suffrage. Not all ladies believed the vote was something women needed, but those who did had been organized for years and were as deeply entrenched in the battle for the ballot as they were for victory in Europe. The Business Women For Equal Suffrage organization met at the YWCA on Garrison Avenue on a May evening in 1917 to elect Alice Price as its president. The group outlined a plan to spread their cause throughout western Arkansas.

Later that same month, the group opened a Suffrage Headquarters at 719 Garrison Avenue. From this office, they launched a house-to-house canvas encouraging women interested in voting to pay their poll tax and secure a receipt. The group's new president expressed her pleasure at the more than five hundred responses they received, and women were asked to fly the black and yellow banners of the suffrage movement to show their support.

In November 1917, an unassuming female resident of Fort Smith named Dymple Johnson proved being an early riser is a good way to make history. Miss Johnson was already the first woman to practice as a dental nurse in the state of Arkansas when she became the first woman inside the state to cast a vote in a public election.

Arkansas was the first southern state to allow women to vote, and it was scheduled for the historic event to take place in a state-wide election. However, Fort Smith held a special election in a mayoral primary ahead of the state election on November 13, 1917. Dymple Johnson made history by being the first woman in line to vote when the polls opened that morning, and she was followed quickly by Peabody school teacher, Mollie Williams, who was destined to be the second woman to vote in any Southern state.

Polls opened to women across the nation with the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment on August 18, 1920. The war ended and strict health guidelines brought an end to the deadly Spanish influenza. It was time to start anew in Fort Smith.

> Veneer will hide anything for a time, whether it be a staircase or a woman.
>
> —Agnes Dohoney writing in the first article submitted in the "Why Flappers Fail" series published on the front page of the *Southwest American* newspaper on Sunday, June 4, 1922

Young girls, having watched their mothers and grandmothers struggle against the horrors of a world war and the Spanish influenza, became determined to make a different life for themselves. Upon reaching maturity in the early 1920s, they stood up, faced the world with their new ideas, and became "Flappers."

Flappers were young, professional women who were modern in their sense of style and attitude toward gender roles. They were educated, progressive in thought, and quite certain women should break free of the chains holding them to the kitchen sink and take on full-force the challenges and amazements of the world. Not even the conservative little hamlet of Fort Smith was safe from the Flapper. They were a social movement with their own fashion, language style, and music. One could not embrace the Flapper lifestyle

without bobbed hair, short skirts, beaded necklaces, and a fondness for the latest jazz tunes.

Chopping the hair caught society's attention when Flappers first appeared in American culture. Traditionally, women wore their hair long, but these young ladies turned their backs to the old styles and the beauty shops where they flourished. Saying traditional shops peddled matronly styles while sales ladies pressured patrons to purchase expensive, wasteful powders and oils, young women avoided the salons. All the Flapper needed was a haircut, and those were to be had without fanfare in a barber shop.

Southwest Times newspaper reporter A.D. Manning was in a Garrison Avenue barbershop one August morning in 1922 when a Flapper entered. Unaware of the traditional manner of deciding whose hair was cut in which order, the short-skirted young lady casually took an available chair and expected service. The stunned barber gave her the cut she requested as fascinated male patrons watched. When it was over, the Flapper paid her bill and left the shop with short hair bobbing.

Instead of enjoying the prospect of new customers, barbers complained about the changes they would need to make to serve women. A regular sweeping of the floor would be the first order of business, as well as finding a way to calm the nerves of loyal male patrons who did not care for women invading their smoke-filled, joke-filled sanctuary at the barber shop.

Pharmacies made changes to suit the modern woman. Since Flappers disliked the high prices charged for old style cosmetics and fragrances at salons, they searched for more modern products in the shelves at pharmacies. Soon most Fort Smith pharmacies dedicated a portion of their floor space to hair care products and makeup designed for the busy lady.

It was not long before curious men were peeking at the new wares, sometimes purchasing a bit of rouge or perfume for their wives. So much attention to the new cosmetic counters coming from male customers prompted a 1922 article in the *Southwest American* newspaper suggesting there might be beauty parlors for men soon opening in downtown Fort Smith.

Not even the great outdoors was a safe escape for gentlemen hoping to be away from the modern woman. In their desire to experience joys of life previously denied females, local Flappers took up fishing. Once again, a news reporter was on hand when a group of young ladies, armed with the latest editions of outdoors magazines as resources, visited a bait and tackle shop. The reporter shared his observation of a young woman purchasing red lures because she thought them pretty and hoped the fish might enjoy them, as well. Loaded

MRS. ADDIE WHITE AND FRIEND pose for a photo in the 1930s in Fort Smith.

(Photo courtesy of Sue Robison)

with rods and pretty bait, the ladies were last seen by the reporter heading toward the banks of the Arkansas River.

Little was mentioned in the press about Flappers finding their way into board rooms, taking seats at the head of businesses, or positions in university classrooms. Flappers were locally seen mostly as harmless, senseless, and amusing. The *Southwest American* newspaper even developed a cartoon character known as Flapper Fanny who dressed in a short skirt, sported short hair, wore long pearls, and gave out snippets of Flapper wisdom. In a May 1929 edition of the newspaper, Flapper Fanny declared, "The woman who says she is willing to go through anything for her husband may have his bank account in mind."

There was, however, a serious backlash to the Flapper movement, both locally and nationally, portraying the ladies as a menace to society. The newspaper article about the young women fishing brought complaints from men who claimed the riverbanks as their domain and loud laments that romantic boat rides were over forever.

There was a nationwide movement to quell the Flapper. Locally, the *Southwest American* newspaper

featured a series of treaties titled “Why Flappers Fail” in 1922, inviting women to air their dislike for the lifestyle. The newspaper’s editor promised the articles would “discuss the shortcomings of the Flapper,” and be of interest to both sexes.

It took the tumultuous events of the 1930s to still the Flapper’s flamboyant spirit. Outbreaks of typhoid fever and a depressed economy overwhelmed the optimism inherent to the Flapper and quieted her voice. Between the years of 1930 and 1935, the number of manufacturers in Fort Smith dropped from 141 to eighty-four. Transients looking for work made their way to town, and the federal government took over the LeFlore Hotel on Garrison Avenue and the vacant tuberculous sanitarium at Wildcat Mountain to house job seekers. These shelters were for men. While local women called “matrons” were hired with city and county funds to meet men traveling to Fort Smith seeking employment and direct them to assistance locations, there appeared to be little support available for unemployed women.

Infectious diseases spread through the community. Brought on by an influx of transients and the inability of families to afford medical care, health officials saw a sharp rise in childhood disease. Doctors volunteered to treat tuberculous and other crippling conditions at the Health Department, and children were checked for contagious diseases in the public schools.

President Roosevelt’s New Deal programs in 1933 opened several recovery programs in the Fort Smith area. The Civilian Conservation Corps program employed men to implement a flood control program, and the Work Projects Administration of 1935 added new opportunities for unemployed men. Also in 1935, the National Youth Assistance program began offering part-time work positions for young men attending school.

Finding employment for women remained a problem. *Southwest American* newspaper reporter Charley Bare wrote about the “forgotten woman” in a 1935 article concerning the plight of 500 women under the care of the Emergency Relief Administration because work could not be found for them. The dissolution of the Relief Administration was imminent, but officials found it extremely difficult to create programs to offer continuous employment to women. A meeting in Fort Smith of city, county, and state officials ended with a promise to rescue the women from the “gap” created by the new relief programs.

The depression in America’s economy led to a sudden reverse in women’s fashion styles. Gone were the short skirts, swinging beads and snappy haircuts of the 1920s. Suddenly economy was stressed on Paris runways, and the “immodest” short skirts of the previous decade were replaced by hemlines reaching just a few inches above the floor. “Simplicity” was the new byword, and guidelines were published for accepted skirt length. For daytime wear, a skirt should hit four to six inches below the knee. In the afternoon, skirts should be at least six inches below the knee, and evening wear should touch the ankle.

The Arcade Store, Sol C. Cohen, and The Robin’s Shop were popular with ladies seeking the new, muted styles of the 1930s in downtown Fort Smith. Following in the call for conservative spending, the Boston Store stocked its fabric shelves, declaring in newspaper ads “Sewing is Fashionable Again!”

Eventually, government support programs began bolstering the faltering national economy. Things lightened enough for citizens of Fort Smith to allow their attention to be drawn to a book written by a former city resident titled *My Own, My Native Land*. Author of the book, Thyra Samter Winslow, was born to a Jewish Fort Smith family and was former editor of the Society Page in a local newspaper. Mrs. Winslow moved away from Fort Smith and became a well-known author and screenwriter, publishing her scathing little story of wealthy local families and their prejudices in 1935. The book created quite an uproar with its thinly veiled references to local society. Winslow’s ventures into screenwriting led to the production of the movie *She Married Her Boss*, which featured a young actress named Katharine Alexander, also a native of Fort Smith.

On November 15, 1933, the Fort Smith Light and Traction Company pulled its trolley cars from the streets of Fort Smith. The next morning, The Twin City Coach Company began running a bus service along the former streetcar lines. Fort Smith entered the modern age.

> "All of the women we're focusing on stepped outside the path—outside the norms of their day and did something not all women did, and actually were not expected to do."
>
> —Lesia Gramlich, Executive Director, Fort Smith Museum of History at the opening of "The Divergent Path—Women in Arkansas History" exhibit. (Fort Smith Museum Examines Role of Notable Arkansas Women, swtimes.com, July 2, 2013)

On April 12, 1940, the Women’s Board of Sparks Hospital hosted a visit to Fort Smith by the nation’s

First Lady, Eleanor Roosevelt. The event was a fund-raising affair for the hospital and its nursing school. Planned as a premium evening for ticket holders, Mrs. Roosevelt's visit turned into a city-wide celebration, complete with thousands of people lining Garrison Avenue to wave and cheer as she made her way from Union Train Station to the Goldman Hotel. Mrs. Roosevelt's friendly nature won many hearts that day, including those belonging to members of Doc Miller's Orchestra. Musicians in the band recalled years later how the First Lady spoke with each member, complimenting their talent and praising the quality of the evening's performance.

On September 20, 1941, Arkansas Governor Homer Adkins stood with visiting dignitaries at the dedication of a new Army base, Camp Chaffee, located a few miles east of Fort Smith. The following December 7, the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor and America was at war. On that same day, the first soldiers arrived at the new Camp Chaffee. Six hundred troops arrived by train destined for Camp Chaffee in March 1942. The Sixth Armored Division of the U.S. Army was in control of the installation, but all of Fort Smith was engaged in the war effort. Fort Smith was an Army town again.

Citizens organized scrap metal drives, purchased war bonds, and collected clothing for European victims of the war. Military draft registration was handled by senior high school teachers, and students forfeited yearbooks because of rationing, then donated their yearbook funds to help build tanks. Patriotic organizations staffed by volunteers were abundant, as were the jobs left vacant when men answered the call of military service. Tradition was cast aside as women and young ladies rushed to meet the needs of their community.

One of the most unique organizations formed was the Women's Auxiliary Motor Corps in 1942. Operating under the auspices of the Red Cross, volunteers drove a seven-passenger van, trucks, cars, and ambulances between Fort Smith and Camp Chaffee. Mrs. Thomas Pitts was in charge of the volunteers, who purchased their own uniforms in order to be part of the program.

Since the Motor Corps involved driving vehicles and few ladies had much knowledge of the combustion engine, Ross Motor Company gave members lessons on side-of-the-road auto repair. Armed with a patriotic spirit and a rudimentary knowledge of how their vehicles worked, female crews transported personnel and supplies between the Red Cross office and Camp Chaffee. Corps members volunteering for ambulance crews were sent to the Camp for specialized training in first aid.

MRS. RUTH WERY is shown in Fort Smith in the 1940s.

(Photo courtesy of Sue Robison)

DOWNTOWN FORT SMITH is shown in the 1940s in this photo from the Chamber of Commerce.

On Saturday nights, soldiers outnumbered local revelers on Garrison Avenue. The U.S.O. opened its doors on South Twelfth Street, and young ladies volunteered for many positions designed to support the troops stationed at Camp Chaffee. The Toastmistress Club and the Y.W.C.A. hosted Army nurses at activities designed to show appreciation for women in uniform.

Local retailers developed collection drives asking for clothing and shoes to send to suffering European refugees. Hunts Department Store employees wrote letters to service men stationed abroad and, should the soldiers respond, their letters were read each day at noon on KFPW radio. The Fort Smith Chamber of Commerce developed an "Emblem of Honor" pin for women with four or more family members in military

service. The Chamber also sponsored a group of ladies in their effort to sell war bonds and stamps with the assistance of the 146th Signal Company.

By the time the war ended, the organizations in charge of putting all those support efforts together were well trained and eager for new challenges. Women's groups turned their attention to education and revitalizing their community. Mary Jacobs Brown earned the title "Flower Lady" for her efforts to landscape Creekmore Park on Rogers Avenue. Brown authored a gardening column in the *Southwest Times Record* newspaper before taking on the project and was able to collect enough flower bulbs, including hundreds of daffodil bulbs from the Benedictine Sisters at Saint Scholastica Academy for Girls, to landscape the park. Her efforts led to a twenty-five-year project with Fort Smith's Parks Department as landscaper.

No doubt Ms. Brown found a place in her closet for the wide leg pants, overalls, and jeans making their way into women's wardrobes at the end of the war. Women regularly donned "man pants" during their duties as patriotic volunteers, but they enjoyed the fit and freedom the trousers offered and soon altered them into the wide-leg pants popular with 1940s women. The pants fit the trend of "modest apparel" developed for the practical lady. While skirts were a bit shorter than those of the previous decade, there was little exposed skin in the new fashion designs except for evening wear.

To counteract the seriousness of the war years, fashions were presented in bright colors. Even lipstick displayed the shiniest red shades available. While the goal was an hourglass silhouette, the styling was definitely masculine. Padded, wide shoulders, cinched waist and suits presented the practical, powerful image of post-war America. Victory suits in red, white, or blue featuring long, man-tailored jackets, and accessorized with hats, gloves, clutch bags, and boxy, open-toed shoes made the fashionable lady. The two-piece bathing suit known as the bikini made its first appearance on late 1940s fashion runways. For all its sexuality and sensationalism, the bikini did not become the icon for its generation. The silk stocking with its back seam became the image to define the horror, and the triumph, of the 1940s.

Perhaps members of the 1948 Association of University Women donned the turbans so popular as head wear at the time, or the wide leg pants lately acceptable in society, when they began teaching painting and drawing at Fort Smith Junior College. In classes meeting under the Grizzly Stadium at what is now Northside Senior High School, many students were exposed to the Associated Artists of Fort Smith for the first time.

The Associated Artists was a popular group, gathering members and sponsors as it grew through the years. The artists were soon holding shows in the Goldman Hotel, at the Fort Smith Junior College, and in the Masonic Hall. As the organization expanded, it garnered both local and national support, until eventually it sought a permanent home. In 1959, the group that began as a few ladies teaching an art class was raising funds to purchase the majestic Schaap House on North Sixth Street, where they opened the Fort Smith Art Center. The Art Center evolved into the Regional Art Museum operating today on Rogers Avenue.

On July 19, 1953, at 4:22 in the afternoon, the first television station in Fort Smith took to the airwaves. KFSA Television, broadcasting from a small, downtown studio, joined local radio stations to complete the arrival of electronic media in Fort Smith. Print advertisements quickly appeared highlighting the dependability of the all-male news and weather staff at KFSA. A schedule of entertainment programs was listed to one side of the ads, beginning in the early afternoon with a comedy called *Private Secretary* starring Ann Southern. A series of cartoons and westerns followed until the evening ended with the final program of the day, *Willy*. The broadcast was billed as a comedy, and its description read, "June Havoc stars as a feminine lawyer…and that's where the laughs begin." While the new magic television continued the tradition of finding a professional woman working outside the home as comedy fodder, local women were clearing their own pathways into history.

By the time Mame Stewart Josenburger was honored in 1951 for her work with the National Association for The Advancement of Colored People and other agencies, she was already a beacon for young women of all races in Fort Smith. A New York native, the young Mame came to Fort Smith in 1890 to teach at Howard High School, the only African American secondary school in town at the time. The death of her husband, William Josenberger, left her in charge of his multiple businesses and put her in a position to work on local and national causes to improve the lives of African American children and families.

Jim Crow laws were part of life in Fort Smith in the mid-twentieth century. Remnants of the physical manifestation of the laws are still evident in town, such as segregated water fountains in the old Kress five and dime store on Garrison Avenue. The Fort Smith National Historic Site studied the way races were

(ABOVE) Two young girls are shown wearing can-can dresses in the 1950s in this photo provided by Marcus Woodward.

(TOP RIGHT) Fort Smith's first meter readers—Mrs. Combs, Mrs. Williams and Mrs. Curry—are seen in 1962 in a photo provided by Charles Raney.

(LOWER RIGHT) Miss Fort Smith 1963 waves to the crowd in this photo from If You Ever Lived in Fort Smith.

separated at the Frisco Railway Station on their property. The old divisions were marked inside the building, and their history recorded for modern visitors to the train depot near the Arkansas River to study.

While the Fort Smith public school system followed state regulations regarding desegregation in schools, the Benedictine Sisters at Saint Scholastica Academy for Girls cut their own way through the darkness of segregation. Sister Louise Sharum, OSB, wrote in the Arkansas Catholic magazine about the integration of Saint Scholastica, a four-year high school for girls, in 1952. Saint John's Catholic school in Fort Smith educated African American children in lower grades since 1927, with none of their girls moving to Saint Scholastica at graduation. The faculties of both schools discussed the situation, and with Bishop Fletcher's agreement, the decision was made to welcome admission of the Saint John female students to Saint Scholastica. Two girls, Shirley Williams and Helen Weaver, registered in 1952 and a steady stream of graduates continued until the closing of both schools.

Mame Josenberger and the teachers from Saint John's School and Saint Scholastica Academy are to be applauded for tackling racism in a time when civic activism was not expected from women. The strength and self-assurance women built up for themselves in the war years was all but stripped away in the 1950s. While the generation itself is portrayed as a wholesome, happy time, it offered little for women.

Even the fashions of the 1950s felt shallow and seemed mere recreations of earlier, demure styles. The wide skirts and feminine shapes of the 1860s were suddenly reflected in the 1950 dress. Stiff slips called "can-cans" replaced hoop skirts, but the corseted, cinched waist of the new styles recalled a Southern Belle in her boned crinoline. Fashion designers in the middle of the century drew clear lines between the sexes, meaning women packed away their padded shoulder jackets and man pants. There was a playful, almost "little girl" presentation to 1950 fashions featuring novelty prints on an overly feminine silhouette.

The generation gave us the poodle skirt and a gown designed for the time between afternoon and evening known as "the cocktail hour." Women refused to let go of their pants completely, forcing designers to find a place for them in the new lines. Pedal pushers and slim fitting ankle pants with diminutive, cropped tops replaced the wide legged pants and work jeans of the war era woman.

The little-girl look of the 1950s carried over to the start of the1960 fashion era, but with a heavy dose of style and attitude attached. With the iconic styling of First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy as their model, American women put away the fluffy, soft styles of the '50s in favor of a sophisticated, sleek look. Suits and slim skirts made a return to area shops on Garrison Avenue and pill box hats adorned display windows.

Fort Smith Junior College underwent a public-to-private change in the 1950s. Leaving the city's public school system where it had been since 1928, the school became a private educational institution located at the end of Grand Avenue. Melanie Holt Speer and Ed Louise Ballman made major financial gifts to the young college and had buildings on campus named in their honor. Speer, Ballman, and Nancy Orr thus were major supporters of FSJC and served on its Board of Trustees. In 1966, the college became a public institution and was renamed Westark Junior College. Luella Krehbiel and Lucille Speakman, highly respected instructors, left a powerful legacy of thorough and personal attention to learning of students and UAFS names its major UAFS faculty awards after them.

In the 1960s, amid "America's Century," young ladies reported to class in shift dresses cut to the knee or higher, square-toed shoes or short boots, and purses on long shoulder straps. England again held the reigns of fashion, and its influence was evident on campuses. What is sometimes considered a continuation of the Flapper design and attitude, the 1960s fashions offered bright colors, short skirts, styled hair, heavy makeup, low heels on shoes and, more than anything else, the mod attitude. Little seemed out of reach to the mod girl. She was a powerful creature secure in her ability to create and achieve her goals. She lived in a world of change and possibilities.

By the end of the decade, world events quieted the mod girl spirit, and the reality of another war and lingering social problems drew her energy. The late 1960s saw the advent of the Hippie movement, and Fort Smith's retail stores stocked their shelves with bell-bottom blue jeans, hip-hugger pants, and all things leather. The styled hair of the mod girl became long, loose tresses on the 1970s woman. Makeup softened and synthetic materials made their way into fashion lines. By the middle of the 1970s, fashions molded into styles reminiscent of the elegance of the 1940s evening look, and all things old became fashionable again on the disco dance floor.

In 1970, Phoenix Village Mall opened in the southwest section of the city. The next year, Central Mall Shopping Center opened just a few miles east of downtown Fort Smith. Anchored by favorite department stores of local shoppers such as J. C. Penney and Hunts, the mall was frequented by younger patrons looking for variety. When the centerpiece of downtown Fort Smith, The Boston Store, moved to Central Mall, the spirit seemed to seep from Garrison Avenue. It was the beginning of the modern age of commerce. Online shopping, traveling to experience new ideas and fashions, and the advent of social media moved shoppers away from downtown areas across America.

The world was changing for women in professional arenas, as well. New doors opened for Fort Smith women near the end of the twentieth century. Carolyn Pollan was elected to the Arkansas House of Representatives by Fort Smith voters, where she spent twelve terms in office. Mrs. Pollan rose to the Vice-Chairmanship of the Arkansas Republican party, a traditional male position.

Anne Woods Patterson, a Fort Smith native, reached the highest levels of service to her nation. Ms. Patterson was born in 1949 and graduated from the prestigious Wellesley College before her graduate education. As a member of the United States Foreign Service, Patterson served as Ambassador to El Salvador, Columbia, Pakistan, and Egypt, appointed by three presidents. After her service to the nation and to the State Department, the Honorable Anne Woods Patterson taught as a Kissinger Senior Fellow at Yale's Jackson Institute for Foreign Affairs.

In 2009, Robert Davidson announced his retirement as President and Chief Executive Officer of the Arkansas Best Corporation. Judy McReynolds, serving as Vice President and Treasurer of the company at the time, was selected as his replacement. The advancement of Judy McReynolds to the top position of one of the nation's largest transportation companies was immediate news in the trucking industry and welcomed by women in business.

Women cut their own paths through this significant hamlet called Fort Smith on the riverbank and left their own legacy. Members of the Fortnightly Club might be surprised about what resulted from their dream of a library or assume we would know their story and their names in the twenty-first century. A visit to the current, modern Fort

Smith Library reminds every woman and young girl how important it is to write their own definitions, set their own limitations, and make their own history.

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Rodeos and Hollywood Heroes

TV stars once saddled up for annual Fort Smith event

By Phil Karber

Every year, in late May, in the ’50s and ’60s, at least one of our television Western heroes would appear on horseback at the Arkansas-Oklahoma Rodeo. On the afternoon of opening night, often spiffed up in Nudie of Hollywood glitz, they rode their prancing steeds in the rodeo parade down Garrison Avenue. The parade customarily featured a local cavalcade of buckaroos on Shetlands, ox-drawn buckboards, hayrides, stagecoaches, antique cars, the Lincoln High band, Rotarians, Masons, Kiwanians, trick rope artists, formations of Fort Chaffee soldiers, the Sheriff’s mounted patrol, make-believe Indians, and dozens of riding clubs sporting their sponsors’ flags. For young and old, it was nostalgia raised to the highest power. At night, the parade’s glory played on, as the ground shuddered with the concussion of a thousand hoofs in the Grand Entry at Harper Stadium. Rodeo royalty burst out of the main chute, quirting their mounts, rearing in caprioles, waving and hat tipping while caracoling right and left, amplifying the small stadium to a pitch of rolling thunder. Hundreds of women and men riders mostly from the riding clubs with their matching shirts followed circling the perimeter and then weaving through the infield. The arena was teeming and literally in motion with colorful horses and riders. As kids, we sat edgewise, gaping wide-eyed, and breathlessly drank it all in.

Daddy (John Karber), using his County Agent connections—more like good friends—always came up with opening night box seats at the stadium. On the fence, we were up close to the clowns, cowboys, cowgirls, Western stars and the pounding hoofs of the fast moving and often high-mettled steeds whooshing by, showering us cowboy wannabes with clods of churned up, barnyard-steeped debris. The complex aroma of the arena, the popcorn and burnt sugar smells of cotton candy mixed with the reek of manure and sweaty horses, grew on our cowlicked herd of five boys like hot cornbread in the oven, permeating everything.

Rodeo clowns, known as “barrel men,” produced more than just comic relief with their baggy pants, painted faces, bulbous red noses, bandanas, and lariats. “Matadors in clown costumes,” dad would say. “They have a sixth sense for what a Mexican fighting bull might do next.” Full of poised indifference, in the heat of the chase they beat a retreat to the fence next to us when their escape route to the large, padded barrel in the center of the arena wasn’t closer. The booming voice of legendary rodeo announcer, Pete Logan, often synchronized with drum rolls from Ruby Nance’s Rodeo Band, never failed to gin up crowd excitement and deliver play-by-play action. Once the bucking chute flung open in the bull riding competition, dad turned our attention to the clown’s steps and stunts. He knew at any moment these American matadors might be saving a fellow cowboy’s cajones. Unarmed, the clown’s dangling red bandanas served as muletas, or capes. Once they got the eye of the bull, the ducking, dipping, and diving in a kind of dodgeball ballet played out, breathtakingly so at times. Dad had seen and met them all: Stillwell Shorty, the Clarke Brothers, Bunky Boger, Chuck Henson, Emmett Kelly, Duane Stephens, and, of course, Ken Boen with his famed act, Old Grey Mare. I came to think of rodeo clowns as the Navy Seals of cowboys.

The Hollywood heroes who made the promotional schlepp to Arkansas, year after year, imprinted their marquee brand on us for at least the life of our childhoods (and often beyond): Cochise (Michael Ansara) from the show *Broken Arrow*, Zorro (Guy Williams) from the eponymous movies and serial, Wishbone (Paul Brinegar) from *Rawhide*, Cheyenne Bodie (Clint Walker) of the serial *Cheyenne*, Charlie Wooster (Frank McGrath) and Bill Hawks (Terry Wilson) from *Wagon Train*, Doc Adams (Milburn Stone) and Festus (Ken Curtis) of the popular *Gunsmoke*, Agent Jim Hardie (Dale Robertson) from *Tales of Wells Fargo*, and Daniel Boone (Fess Parker) of the namesake show, *Daniel Boone*. Many of these actors further endeared themselves to the community by giving talks at elementary schools and the Kiwanis Club, or by vaulting over the rump to mount a neighbor’s paint horse (Michael Ansara).

By 1959 there were thirty prime-time Westerns on television. On Thursday nights in the ’50s, when *The Lone Ranger* came on, we hummed or tapped out the

William Tell Overture. At school we sang *Home on the Range* in choir practice. We religiously tuned in to the celluloid West, hanging on every word from our existential heroes, Rowdy, Matt, Wishbone, Festus, Cochise, Chester, Hoss, and Josh.

Catching our Hollywood heroes in the flesh only enhanced their black and white messages of good, evil, and righteous self-reliance. On *Gunsmoke*, the main characters never married; too wise and world-wary to make a wrong move. They were in Dodge to keep the riffraff out, not to exemplify some idealized version of *Ozzie and Harriet* domesticity. It was post-World War II, the Red Scare was real, the Cold War had hotspots, and our Hollywood heroes drew the sharp lines of right and wrong for our inexperienced minds.

Western movies and television shows are innately a form of American storytelling, a rabbit hole to the imagined simpler, romantic times of the nineteenth century Frontier Movement. Through uncommon hardship, on an ordinary day, the Hollywood heroes handily mastered the wilderness, wildlife and native populations. The heroes wanted nothing of government—unless there was a hitch. In that case, in rolled the cavalry to save the day. Every night of the week these simple television dramas served up the latest popular portrayal of our American identity. We, in turn, dressed in cowboy costumes, rode horses (both real and stick), and carried those honor-bound black and white TV cultural symbols out into our neighborhoods and lives.

Western serials were, however, a relatively short-lived rage. By the late ’60s, television programming passed from its frontier era of cowboy ephemera. Once out of fashion, the genre became easy to misremember, over-romanticize and mythologize, particularly among the anti-government ranks. Nostalgia for simpler times remained a feel-good emotion, but we liked our indoor toilets and city water. TV commercials that hawked new Westinghouse appliances and Chevy Super Sports and Pontiac GTOs caught our attention. The future, going to the moon, was surely full of romantic promise.

Once Hollywood dropped the Hays Code, which dictated good and evil content in television and movie theaters, the industry caught up with the complexity of the times. My celluloid enthusiasms matured in sync with the rest of me. Mel Brooks’ *Blazing Saddles*, the Western spoof, and its all-star cast—the Teutonic Titwillow (Madelaine Kahn), Taggart (Slim Pickens), the Waco Kid (Gene Wilder), Mongo (Alex Karras), Hedley Lamar (Harvey Korman), Sheriff Bart (Cleavon Little), all pulling our lariats, so to speak—pushed the envelope to spotlight our society’s changing attitudes.

Hollywood had moved on; the sun had set on Matt and Kitty and the boys. But that was not true for our beloved Old Fort Parade and Rodeo. Cowgirls, cowboys, clowns, the Parade, and the Grand Entry are still bedazzling kids (and adults) just as they did my cow-licked herd over six decades ago. The Old Fort Rodeo is embedded culture, our fun and rowdy place in the sun, stubborn as old Festus, who might say of the rodeo’s fate: “Safer than chitlins on a city folks supper plate.”

Phil Karber is a native of Fort Smith and is an internationally known author of books about his travels to seven continents.

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Goodbye to Our River

An odyssey into the Piney Woods

By Phil Karber

Basking on the white-sand beach of some impossibly vast ocean blue was an indulgence I would not enjoy until I paid for it myself a few months before turning 16. In the ’50s and early ’60s, my family—Mom, Dad and five boys, John, Stan, myself, Greg, and Kent the toddler—had no money for hotel rooms or cross-country beach vacations. Mom was a homemaker and Dad a county extension agent, an agricultural educator and facilitator, earning the equivalent of a teacher’s salary. He picked up extra income as a weekend pilot in the Air National Guard, flying single engine planes. Simple paycheck economics and depression-era spending values dictated where and how our school breaks and summer excursions came down. Camping at Dad’s old homeplace, near Alpine, Arkansas, down in the Piney Woods on the banks of the Caddo River, was a freebie. An added fringe benefit for camping on the Caddo was calling on our country kinfolk, from both sides of the family, a daily double. Look no further—the choice made perfect sense to Dad and Mom.

As “citified” boys raised on concrete, playing sports year-round, ensconced in the rhythms of school, church and neighborhood, a trip to the country was something of a forced family adventure. Our lack of enthusiasm for a sojourn with our rustic relatives was, however, seemingly at odds with our fascination with television Westerns, wagon trains, stagecoaches, and the whole shebang of America’s settler history that Dad’s old homeplace recalled. It was post-World War II. The Red Scare was real. The Cold War had hotspots. Transfixing ourselves in movie or television westerns, an inherently American form of storytelling, had become the rabbit hole to the simpler, romantic times of the 19th century Frontier Movement, times in which our forbearers ventured West and, through uncommon hardship, handily mastered the wilderness, wildlife and native populations. These heroes wanted nothing of government, unless overwhelmed by circumstance, usually in the form of Comanche warriors, when in rode the cavalry to save the day. Every night of the week these simple television dramas served up the latest popular portrayal of our American identity. We, in turn, dressed up in cowboy costumes, attended rodeos, rode horses (both real and stick), and carried those honor-bound black and white cultural symbols out into our neighborhoods and lives.

On our drives down to Alpine, while scenes of our family’s rural past and the more familiar present unscrolled in colorful vignettes, we usually acted out like a bunch of Mexican jumping beans, kids throwing off tension, after being cooped up in the old Mercury station wagon for three hours. With Dad as trail boss, pit stops, family lore, competitively counting cows, familiar points of interest, took off some of the edge.

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South of Mansfield on U.S. 71, Dad’s windshield tour included directing our attention to Dizzy and Paul Dean’s birthplace at the Lucas turnoff, a cue for John to tune up and sing The Wabash Cannonball. Dizzy was a folk hero in the South, with the St. Louis Cardinals being the most southern and western team during the ’30s reign of the Gashouse Gang. After retirement from baseball, his cocklebur twang, mangling and making up words while plugging and chugging Falstaff beer on the “Game of the Week,” made television baseball watching an existential joy. It traveled well with a carload of Cardinal fans, kids replaying the old hurler’s funny bits: “He slud into third,” or “It ain’t braggin’ if you can back it up,” or “Son, what kind of pitch would you like to miss,” and so on with Dizzy’s boastful sayings.

Lucas existed as a dirt road crossing of poor farms, more as a state of mind than an actual town. We always kept our ears cocked during Dizzy’s broadcasts, but we never once heard him mention Lucas, Arkansas. Didn’t matter. The Lucas thread spooled out like a lasso all the way to wherever Dizzy’s broadcast booth was, around his neck and back again as we passed the sign for the Lucas turnoff. He was our homeboy.

On a clear day, near the community of Needmore, the Ouachita Mountains came into view as rolling blue waves of shortleaf pine forests. Some gumption-filled, seventeenth century Frenchman in buckskins came up with the name Ouachita, a translation derived from the Indian word, “Washita,” meaning good hunting grounds. Wending down the mountainside, into a broad valley and the ramrod straight backwoods of bluish plumes, the highway crossed the Fourche La Fave River, once the wildlife-rich home of Caddo Indians and French

trappers, bear hunters and traders.

Black bear skins, and notably the oil from bear fat—favored for cooking over butter and hog lard—were in high demand in the early nineteenth century markets of New Orleans. Small wonder, in the day, that the popular portrayals of Arkansas brought about nicknames such as the "Bear State" and the "Toothpick State," a reference to the custom of backwoodsmen carrying large belt knives. By the 1950s, Arkansas had fewer than fifty black bears and the fashion accessory of belt knives had gone the way of the horse and buggy

The Midway Park Restaurant announced the turnoff at Y City, signifying the half-way point between Fort Smith and the spa city of Hot Springs. Known by all passersby for its meat-and-three lunches, fresh coconut pies, white painted trunks of its towering pine trees and clean restrooms, Midway was a treasure trove of hexagonal quartz crystal rocks and Arkansas Razorback souvenirs, equally possessed of energy-enhancing powers.

From Y City, for the next thirty-five miles down U.S. Route 270, the Ouachita National Forest (nee Arkansas National Forest) engulfs the highway in a shaded corridor of greenery and south facing exposed rock. In 1907, President Theodore Roosevelt established the national forest out of cutover woodlands once owned by timber companies and depression-era farmers. Seen through the hungry eyes of daily necessity—legacy being a bridge too far—these small-farm-owning Paul Bunyans, mostly of English and Scots-Irish stock, settled in single-pen log homes, cleared the forests by ax, fire, plow, and dynamite and drained the lands. River otter, muskrat, black bear, and other over-hunted wildlife, disappeared, and like our Aunt Pearl's tribe, many of these farmers left for California, gone with the wind. Once the slashed and scarred farms were replanted, the pine was adopted as the Arkansas State Tree and the Ouachita National Forest, taking in more acreage than the state of Delaware, rose from the ashes to become a conservation symbol of an Arcadian past: land and humans striking a chord of harmony.

Dad was fast to point out that the piney ridges of the Ouachita Mountains were the only ones to trend east-west in the United States. In the heart of those oddly-turned mountains, by no surprise, was a town called Pine Ridge, home to Lum and Abner, the fictional characters in the hillbilly-versus-city-slicker syndicated radio sitcom popular nationwide from the mid-'30s till the mid-'50s. The show's creators, Chester Lauck and Norris Goff, grew up in nearby Mena, and attended the University of Arkansas before getting their start doing blackface comedy. Set at the Jot 'Em Down Store in Pine Ridge, image-wise, in the eyes of outsiders, Dad said the sitcom probably set Arkansas back a few decades, but that there was plenty of truth in its hillbilly humor. My paternal grandmother, Myrtle Pierce (aka Maw), was born to Ed and Tinny Pierce in a logging camp near Pine Ridge, and any one of them, Dad asserted, could have been mined as a primary source for the inspiration of Lum and Abner.

Beyond Pine Ridge, the headwaters of the Ouachita River began as a trickle on the slopes of Black Fork Mountain, flowing southward for 610 miles to Jonesville, Louisiana, where it joined the Black River on its course to the Gulf of Mexico. In Charles Portis' travel essay, The Forgotten River, Dee Brown, known for his book *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*, recounts his steamship travel on the Ouachita River in the 1920s. Brown hitchhiked to New Orleans and, for a one-way fare of twenty-five dollars, caught a paddlewheel back through Jonesville, up the Ouachita, and on to the Port of Camden. The steamers ferried sacks of sugar and bunches of bananas upstream and bales of cotton on the return. Brown describes a five-day journey of nightly dances, partaking of Prohibition-era "corn whiskey and ginger jake," and pleasuring in the "fine breakfasts of ham and eggs, when ham was real, with grits and hot biscuits." Steamship service on the Ouachita River sputtered to an end in the 1930s, as cotton fields turned to pine forests and more locks and dams were built.

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Before turning off U.S. Route 270, which ran a New-Age-before-New-Age-was-cool gauntlet of hexagonal quartz crystal shops all the way to Hot Springs, we took a break at our Uncle Carroll Pierce's Mount Ida courtyard motel. Located near Lake Ouachita, newly created by the damming of the Ouachita River, the motel did a brisk business with the summer stampede of recreational boaters and fishermen. At first sight of us roaring out of the station wagon, Uncle Carroll would hurriedly fish out a quarter apiece from his coin-heavy pockets before some paying customer arrived and witnessed the unleashed chaos of five boys. After a few pleasantries about our growth spurts, heights and foot sizes, and Dad cleaning the splattered insects from the windshield with a hose he pulled from beneath the neon "No Vacancy" sign, we were back in the car, quarters burning holes.

Further along on Arkansas 27, Dad would detour at Caddo Gap, a wide spot in the road on the banks of the upper Caddo River. The river surfaced from an aquifer

in the nearby Potato Hills and meandered from there for eighty-two miles before it joined the Ouachita River below a prominent bluff north of Arkadelphia. The Caddo Gap detour lasted no more than five minutes, time to circle the Indian statue and Hernando de Soto marker memorializing the Spanish gold-seeker's arrival in the area over 400 years before, circa 1541. For a few moments outside the car, we stood in awe of the unfathomable reach of time and of this Spanish explorer popping off the pages of our primary school history books.

In a compilation of essays titled *Escape Velocity*, Charles Portis describes what might have been "the forest primeval that de Soto saw when he came crashing through these woods…, with some 600 soldiers, 223 horses, a herd of hogs, and a pack of bloodhounds. He was looking for another Peru, out of which he had taken a fortune in gold, more than enough to pay, from his own pocket, for this very costly expedition. As it turned out there was no gold or silver here in [Arkansas]. What he found was catfish."

Here, at the westernmost point of his historic expedition in a nearby mountain pass, de Soto encountered the hostile Tula tribe who rolled novaculite boulders onto the Iberians, who were armed with arquebuses, crossbows, swords, and lances, as they retreated down the Caddo. "The best fighting people that the Christians met with," de Soto's chronicler wrote of the Tula. Dad told us it was malaria and Tula resistance that convinced de Soto to take his guise as the immortal "son of the sun" in search for gold back to the Mississippi River. By the following year, fate proved not to be on de Soto's side; he died of a fever near Ferriday-Natchez on May 21, 1542. In the dark of night, so as not to give away his mortality to the local Indians, de Soto's soldiers commended his soul to God and dropped him to the depths of the Mississippi River.

As we stood all those times below his statue and memorial, Dad recited how the militant Catholics left in their wake a swath of hostile Indians, a host of communicable diseases and, not least, runaway domestic hogs. In time, those hogs turned feral, became colloquially known as razorbacks and were later adopted as the mascot for the University of Arkansas. The football team's poor performance reminded fans of a bunch of hogs running wild.

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Giddy-upping back into the car, we could smell the barn. We soon crossed the Caddo River at Glenwood's low water bridge, below the Missouri-Pacific railroad trestle, and turned onto Highway 8, following the meander of the Caddo past the abandoned sawmill town of Rosboro. Seven miles on, across the spur tracks and beyond the Barksdale mill, Dad tooled the bottle green Merc wagon into the city square of Amity, Arkansas.

With the completion of the Gurdon & Fort Smith Railroad (later acquired by the Missouri Pacific), sleepy towns like Amity, Glenwood and Rosboro turned into hubs for the timber industry. The Big Cut, as Arkansas historians call the boom period, saw 95 percent of the state's virgin timber harvested, mostly by out of state investors and speculators. Almost overnight, forested hilltops took on the appearance of barren haycocks. It was boom or bust, extractive capitalism at its worst, resembling the European colonialist model for Third World exploitation. Once the timber was exhausted at one location, the sawmillers moved to another, a time and practice that became widely known as "the epoch of cut out and get out."

During the boom, lumber companies employed up to 75 percent of Arkansas wage earners. On the banks of the Caddo River, between Glenwood and Amity, the mill town of Rosboro—a shortened spelling of the Kansas City owner's surname, Rosborough—at its peak, had a population of 500 people (some say twice that), all employed by the Caddo River Lumber Company.

In 1907, according to Kenneth L. Smith's book, *Sawmill*, in order to live near and oversee his timber operation, his double-band mill and his boomtown, Thomas Whitaker "Whit" Rosborough and his wife, Winnie, built a grand bungalow on the west end of Rosboro with ten-foot ceilings, running water in the kitchen, two lavatories, walk-in closets, and screened in sleeping porches. White supervisors constructed homes around Whit and Winnie, but not with the luxury of indoor plumbing. Rosborough brought in African-Americans, who made up half of the company's workforce, to stack lumber in the mill and load boxcars on the Gurdon and Fort Smith Railroad. Due to racial tensions, he had a "high board fence" built around the "colored quarters" and employed trusted white guards at night. On the south side of town, toward Amity, white families took up residence in three-and-four-room shotgun houses. At the height of its development, Rosboro flourished as a full-fledged town, boasting a train depot, single-men's boardinghouse, segregated schools and churches, a turbine for electricity, a theater, water tower, several stores, a commissary, and company offices. As the Great Depression ground on, however, the Caddo River Lumber Company ceased to be profitable.

Whit Rosborough had been drawn to the promise of depressed stumpages in Oregon since his first visit

twenty years before to the Pacific Northwest. The time had come to sharpen his pencil. Calculating that an acre of shortleaf pine would produce only 5,000 board feet while Oregon's Douglas fir would yield 225,000 feet, his decision was easy. By January 1939, he had removed the valuable machinery he would take with him, auctioned the Rosboro mill to salvagers, sold cutover land to the National Forest Service, hauled company houses away, and paid off bondholders. He departed Arkansas in his chauffeur-driven car, while most of his remaining employees, black and white, picked up lock, stock and barrel and traveled to Springfield, Oregon for jobs at his new mill.

By the mid-1950s, a mere fifteen years after the mill closed, the town's welcome sign read: Rosboro, Arkansas, Population 8. "It's a ghost town, everyone's gone to Oregon or California," Dad would trumpet, as we vied for who could spot the novel sign first. He would point to empty spaces, identifying what had been there, the church here, the Negro quarters there. As a teenager, he had witnessed Rosboro teeming with life and commerce and then one day it was no more, like a bosky Pompeii with only sawdust heaps as reminders.

Although the ranks of sawyers, filers, doggers and blocksetters were thinned, the timber heyday left in its tracks a new means for local farmers to make money. By the late '50s, most of the small cotton farms or commercial cornfields in the Caddo bottoms had been replanted in pines. From Caddo Gap all the way down Highway 8 south and east of Amity every roadside pine forest was a field of enterprise for the few remaining out-of-state paper companies and a handful of local timber titans, the Dierks, Barksdales and Beans. Most stands over fifteen years old weren't safe from the pulp mill, though sustained-yield forestry was gaining currency. Slim pickings were the more valuable stands, say with trees having a 10-inch diameter or more, that survived to thirty-five years, the age at which growth of a pine tree slows.

As kids it made us dizzy to show up and discover that our chosen woodsy playground had been flattened. What we came to think of as a magical realm—nature's unchecked exuberance, sacred as any religious sanctuary—the piney woods, was worth no more sentimentality to the small farmer than a bale of hay or a bushel of snap beans, just another commodity, a piece of the small pie called eking out a living; it was their tobacco road.

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My mother, Joyce Fincher, grew up in the Caddo River town of Amity, six miles from Dad's homeplace in Alpine. With no less than twenty preachers, and two Methodist Episcopal churches, North and South, Amity's population was around 500 souls, mostly of Scots-Irish descent.

Fayette Fincher, my maternal grandfather, a kind, soft-spoken gent among gents, preferred the South Methodist Episcopal Church because that's where "the little people worshiped," he would tell us. "The Amity Methodist Episcopal Church North was where the big shots gathered." Aunt Carrie Maddie, a Biggs, the first woman to attend Arkansas Methodist College (1890), was fond of pooh-poohing the South Methodists as nothing more than Catholics. The wealthier wing of the extended Fincher family—the Hays, the Biggs, the Olds—attended North Methodist and were buried in the church's private cemetery. The Wagners and Finchers shared their boot hill with the South Methodists in Jones Cemetery, where the whole kit and kaboodle of Karber ashes and bones are also buried, in the popularly priced plots, downslope, in the sun-bleached, pale red dirt.

Not so many years before we arrived in Fort Smith and joined the First Methodist Church, North and South in Amity had buried the hatchet. At least on paper, our family and we Methodists were all on the same page.

Amity and Fort Smith share a strong connection, if little known to anyone but the Karbers and the Thompsons. In the spring of 1894, when Amity was something of a piney woods boom town, all the merchants assembled for a photo in front of the Hays Store. My relatives in the photo were many: J.W. Fincher, Curt Hays, Jack Thompson and John Thompson. The latter two were father and grandfather, respectfully, of esteemed Fort Smith educator and coach, "Long John" Thompson, born in Amity in 1898. The Thompsons owned a general store in Amity, but as the timber boom petered out, they moved to Conway and opened a haberdashery, leaving behind many cousins along with Thompson's Chapel, in a Methodist cemetery across the Caddo River at Thompson's Bend (and Ford), north of Amity.

Karbers moved to Fort Smith in April 1955, not knowing anyone but the much-older, distant cousin of my mother's, "Long John" Thompson. At 6-foot-4, Long John was in every way a local and statewide colossus: a multi-sport star at Hendrix Academy, state record holder of six track events, an Olympic trials finalist in the decathlon, successful coach and respected science and physics teacher of twenty-seven years. As with Thompson's Chapel, the river's bend and the ford, memorializing his grandfather, Fort Smith would later honor Long John by naming a football field after him

(Mayo-Thompson Stadium), and the state would induct him into the Sports Hall of Fame. A new family in Fort Smith could do worse than having the blessings of Long John Thompson (whose daughter married the son of our venerable Methodist pastor, Fred G. Roebuck). To hear Long John and Mom talk, their memories of Amity, though not present there at the same time, were as ripe and tangible as if they were in the photo and it was taken the day before yesterday.

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Our camping weekend arrival in Amity signaled it was time to make a brief blitz of the Fincher Cafe (and skating rink). Owned by my maternal grandparents, Fayette and Alsia, the café and rink occupied a barnlike -premise across the town square from the WPA-built native stone movie theater, with Sodi's Barbershop to one side facing (Great Uncle) Hall Fincher's hardware store, and on the other side, the Bank of Amity, owned by three spinster aunts, the Olds sisters. It was the quaint hub of a friendly-named sawmill town.

Given finger-wagging warnings not to sow havoc, once we disgorged from the car, Uncle Carroll's quarters flew out of our pockets for sweets either at the café counter, Hays Drug Store across the street or three doors down at Sorrell's Country Store, where we checked out the ample hard candy selection one by one as if each were an object of revelation. On slow days at the roller rink and cafe Grandmother Fincher, with a full apron on to protect one of her three cotton print dresses, would have us line up on counter stools and serve a slice of her Dutch apple pie with a scoop of ice cream. Unbeatable among sweet-toothed descendants of homo habilis. Time permitting, we would get fitted out with skates, someone would plug the jukebox with Hank Williams or whoever, and off we'd go like a party of bonobos slipping on banana peels.

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In late summer, four or five miles southeast of Amity on Highway 8, Dad would turn in at Claudia Dwiggins' family peach orchard and open-air shed, where he and John would sort through a half a bushel of Elberta or Red Globe peaches for our camping weekend. The leftovers went to all the family piemakers—aunts, grandmothers and Mom (who usually stayed back in Amity).

A mile on was Pick Jones' lean-to-size cabin set against the piney woods. When Dad was ten years old or so, and Pick was a full-grown man of thirtysomething, he gave Dad a bee swarm he'd found in a hollow oak, endearing the two for life. Somewhere between suffering from mustard gas exposure on the Western Front in World War I, working the cinnabar mines and furnaces at nearby Jacks Mountain, and being jailed by Sheriff Piggy Widener on trumped up bootlegging charges, it was said that Pick had lost his marbles. Dad knew different. Feared to be armed to the teeth, Pick spent most of his time fading into the piney woods to prowl and roam free with the coons and deer and critters.

As we approached his cabin, with a flutter of anticipation, Dad would pull off on the shoulder of the road, draw a package from beneath his seat, saunter up to an unthreatening distance from Pick's cabin door and coax him out. "Pick, it's Junior. Brought you something," he would say, as we could all but lip-read his words. Pick would at some point stick his head out the latched door, his eyes dark and sunken and squinting to life with a strained discomfort as if just awakening from yet another shitty night of the soul. Dad and Pick would exchange a few words and then Dad would hand him the package of Sebastian County corn whiskey. Dad said the only adornment on his walls was a campaign sign for G.W. Luckidew, a notable Clark County prosecutor who helped Pick beat the bootlegging rap. Though Pick had a wife, Nora, whom we never laid eyes on, we imagined him to have all the makings of a hermit. Dad certainly knew his country characters. If we weren't waiting in the car, he would have stayed a while, which he often did.

Beyond a couple of wide swings down the road, the (Buck) Country Store and Service Station, a dead ringer for Lum and Abner's Jot 'Em Down Store, announced the blink-in-the-road burg of Alpine, Arkansas, population fifty or so. If open, the Buck Mall, as Dad later referred to it, was usually fronted by a slow-talking quorum of tobacco-spitting sages of the sawmills, which on any late afternoon might have included Uncles Mark, James, and Billy. Almost uniformly attired in bib overalls and puffed-up railroad caps, they perched there daily atop a row of Coca-Cola crates like a fence line of over the hill bulls chewing the cud (never to be confused with chattering magpies). Other than an unverified sighting of a monkey leaping out of the pines and crossing the highway, on those crates, chuckles were inspired by the most ordinary happenings, an out of state tag, a convertible, a woman driver. The same boom-time, good-'ol-days stories were told and retold, often filled with deliberate anachronisms. It didn't take a wise old Mississippi literary genius to come up with the maxim, "The past is

never dead. It's not even past."

As we drew closer, Dad would slow it down to a crawl, wave wildly and call out by name Jesse or Clarence or Claude or whoever he laid eyes on first. Wary of sidewinding strangers by nature, once the old timers recognized Junior, as Dad was known in Alpine, they would, more often than not, cast a wan smile and calmly let go a slow-release, welcome-back wave, mimicking the intrinsic pace of life in the pines.

Forget that their potatoes came from the Andes, their tomatoes from Mexico, their corn from the Indians, their pigs, cattle, horses, mules, surnames and genes from Europe, their tractors from Peoria and trucks from Detroit, settler family descendants around Alpine in the '50s and '60s wore their yeoman farmer roots like a tribal totem, proudly different, the real thing, no falseness or fakery, authentic and inward-looking, never out of character. The old timers had held ground in their piney woods Promised Land, while the rising tide of the post-war "River Progress" surged ahead. As during the Great Depression, they never lost their free will, or the ability to stay the course and avert washing up on some alien soil. Although they might dabble in the cultural doings of Amity, six miles to the northeast, they shied away from getting too caught up in Arkadelphia's affairs, 19 miles to the southeast. And Little Rock and Dallas may not have actually been Sodom and Gomorrah, but they were surely phony as a two-headed cow.

Slightly tongue in cheek, as if coming off a Lum and Abner set, Uncle Billy, a cradle-to-grave resident of Alpine, liked to drill down to the core definition and meaning of local character, if not his own self-identity: "Ain't no shame in being a drawling redneck from Alpine. Matter of fact, it's a badge of honor." Pause, kicking up some dirt, he'd carry on. "This rocky red clay is where true red necks thrive. That's the way it is, has been and will be."

Dad was the ideal expression of his generation's rural-to-urban migration—the second wave of Steinbeck's sons of the soil. In Arkansas, the movement was fueled by, among other things, the demise of the timber industry and the rise of mechanized farming, freeing up labor for other enterprises. It was a time when nobody gave a hoot about where you came from, the sky was the limit. Stepping aboard the slipstream of this changing social order, Dad had gone off and got educated, served two years in the Aleutian Islands in World War II, and later trained to pilot single engines and B-17s. He married, started a family, landed a government job as County Agent, and took his showers before work, no more toiling by the cycles of the sun. Still, he never got above his raisin', as they say.

With the assistance of a white midwife and a black nursemaid, Dad came into the world on January 28, 1920, in a logging railroad camp where his father worked, near Graysonia, on a bend of the Antoine River. Among the first sounds he registered would have been of sawmills whining and trains whistling. The family soon settled on a small farm, among the pine forests, beyond Alpine and below Cleavet Mountain (a hill). Like many farm boys of his elemental world, he grew to be a skillful hunter and fisherman and a first-rate naturalist. He came by it honestly, hard work on a hardscrabble farm. Strapping on bib overalls, plowing fields, planting corn, chopping, and picking cotton, castrating and birthing cattle, harvesting the fescue hay meadow, praying for sunshine and rain as seasons shifted. It was either chicken or feathers, some years were better than others. But all years demanded donkey -hard work. That much was certain.

If there wasn't enough money, someone was off to harvest wheat in Kansas or tomatoes in Indiana, or like Dad, to the CCC (Civilian Conservation Corps) camps building forest roads, ranger stations and fire towers. Every able-bodied boy or man did their share in the off season (if such a time existed), repairing fences, putting up a corncrib, expanding the hog pen, fixing the chicken coop, shoveling out the barn, selling calves, mending the steel. The girls and women had it no easier, pickling, combing blue berries, canning, shucking, darning, washing, waxing, milking, sewing, snapping beans, and slaving over a hot potbelly. For every pause on the farm there was an upfront price to be paid. Breakfast was served after the (sulfur-tasting) water was hand drawn, the potbelly stove was fed with fresh-split firewood, the cow was milked, the butter was churned, the hogs were slopped, the eggs were gathered (often in Maw's apron), the squirrels and rabbits were shot, and the peaches and strawberries were picked and preserved. Betty Crocker was three decades away. The Alpine supper menu was Southern peasant fare (or "soul food" as they say at Sylvia's up in Harlem). Staples were turnip greens, collards and pole beans in bacon fat, crackling corn bread, butter beans and hog jaw, ham hocks, red eye gravy, sowbelly, and pickled pig's feet, everything but the squeal. A stringer of fish or gunnysack of bullfrogs was every now and then. Beef, even the tripe, was a delicacy. It was all of a holistic piece, understanding the farm ecology, making the most of the fat of the land.

So, when Dad returned to the piney woods and the barnyard stomping grounds of his youth, he still belonged and always would—the thread was golden.

And, because of the Karber name and my very countrified drawl, a sort of cloaking device for acceptance, they treated me as one of theirs. Once the center of his longing, Dad now saw Alpine through the lucid eye of experience born of travel, more culturally whole than when he left and less likely to return other than for short visits. Home had taken on an internal address, not a roadside dwelling. Alpine lived inside his soul.

Jesse, Clarence, Claude, the Boyds, the Bucks and all of Alpine were proud of him and never forgot the day he and co-pilot Leland Duncan buzzed low over the store when flying on a weekend with the Air National Guard, and dropped a message in bottle: Junior Karber says hello. The old timers were, however, as cultured up as they ever wanted to be right there on the Coca-Cola crates, in the bosom of the piney woods. People, culture and cone-bearing conifer farms inseparable as bacon grease and collard greens. For those who weren't laid to rest in the Alpine cemetery across from the Buck Mall, the boots they would be buried in would travel almost as far to Jones or Thompson's cemeteries, five to seven miles away, as they would have traveled in the last 20 years of their lives. If they had been further afield, it had happened so rarely that they talked about it the rest of their lives as if shipwrecked with Gulliver among talking horses when in fact they had only ventured as far as the county fair in Arkadelphia.

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Shouting distance from the Buck Mall, at the fork with Old Fendley Road, was the home of Claude and Maude Faulkner. Shucking peas with my grandmother (Maw) on her wide front porch, or reading a new book, Maude stood out in Alpine, incongruous as a lone daisy in a harrowed field. Dad said she dressed like a gypsy, wearing long homemade dresses, colorful headscarves, and dangling earrings. But mostly what set her apart was that she was smart as a whip and read everything she could get her hands on. "There's Maude. She should have been a librarian with her curiosity," Dad would remark, drawling extra for effect, giving the horn a light tap, breaking the Sunday afternoon stillness, waving at her on the porch as we passed.

A short stretch beyond Maude's, we approached the old homeplace at the foot of Cleavet Mountain from the back entrance to Palmer Loop, turning east off the pavement at McAnally's red barn onto a dusty forest road you could churn butter on, named for a family with a reputation for moonshining. The Karbers, not opposed to some moon themselves, didn't want the bumpy road paved, not even graded too good. "If they did, the police would patrol it," Uncle Billy maintained.

The Palmers, whom Dad often accused of squatting on a corner of Karber land, were a broil-some bunch and poor as sawmill rats, going whole hog at all the bad behaviors, drinking and dereliction of family and, after a snoot full, prone to pull a knife or a gun. Pat Palmer, the oldest son and always a family friend, was well known for his knee-walking public rants, bearing a striking resemblance to Boggs in the chapter "An Arkansas Difficulty" of Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*.

Ed, the youngest Palmer was born in 1940 with cerebral palsy, and by the time he was a teenager his parents had exiled him into a doll-house sized outbuilding behind their four-room shack. His drooling, grunting speech and spastic carriage scared the bejesus out of kids, including me, until I was around him with Dad at the Alpine store a time or two and got over it. Red blood, it occurred to me, ran in Ed's veins, too. Dad knew how to handle Old Man Page Palmer and his boys, but when on our own, we were told to steer clear. (Years later, a local boy named Billy Bob Thornton, Claude and Maude Faulkner's grandson, made a movie about Ed, *Sling Blade*.)

In spite of the antics, the Palmers and Karbers were always neighborly, pitching in to feed the cows, fence a pasture, bail hay or show up for a barn raising. When the Karber water well dried up in '51, Maw would haul by mule a wash pot on a travois over to the Palmer's spring-fed well, fill it up and do the laundry. Granddaddy Karber had a new well dug in '54, and things went back to normal, heating the water in the warmth of the sunshine. Three years on, the Karbers had running water installed, their first indoor tub and toilet. Granddaddy was seventy-three years old, Maw was fifty-eight.

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Maw always had a sixth sense of when her son Junior would arrive, sitting outside the down-sloping screened in porch snapping peas, with ears pricked and eyes peeled, as we turned in next to the storm cellar and came to a stop under a twisted old cedar tree. The familiar front yard landscape spread from there to the bosom of the piney woods: a cannibalized tractor and propane tank to one side and to the other a two-holer outhouse, rusted-out plough, and slumping tool shed filled with mason jars, traps, mule collars, traces, axes, saws and turn-of-the-century hand tools.

Maw, who had all the traits of an indomitable matriarch, missed having Dad around; he was the only

Karber who went off to World War II and didn't return to live out his days around Alpine. Uncles Mark and Cable had served in the navy in the Pacific. Aunt Maxine had worked in an airplane factory at Long Beach. Uncle James, also known by everyone as Screw, short for Screwdriver, had enlisted in the army but hadn't made it through basic training. Among other challenges, he'd dropped a live pinecone grenade during his practice run at Fort Polk. A drill sergeant reacted in time and tossed it in the grenade pit. That was Screw's last day in the army before coming home.

Maw was so short it was hard to tell when she stood up and hollered with unrestrained happiness over her shoulder for Granddaddy to come on out, "Look who the cat's drug up. Junior's home." Predictably, at that point we would fly out of the car, John with a book heading in the opposite direction of the rest of us. After a cold, wet-nosed greeting from Uncle Billy's Bluetick Coonhound (Buddy), Stan, Greg, and I beelined to the milk barn and corral fence, crawled atop it and, no less than the skulking or slinking arrivals of coons, chicken snakes or foxes, set off a barnyard melee of bellowing bulls (Hereford), squealing swine (Yorkshire), and clucking hens (Rhode Island Reds).

The sound of Maw's voice warned us away from causing more havoc. In a heartbeat, her mood could go from sweet and accommodating to madder than a box of frogs. While out of sight, chunking fresh laid eggs at each other, teaberry shuffling on the salt lick or trying to mount a young bull in the pen awaiting castration, when we heard her yell, we'd make a whooping mad dash through an obstacle course of cow chips to the front pasture where Uncle Billy kept his fighting cocks, mostly of the straight-comb red breed, tethered by a rope next to small mesh cages. If home, he would join us and spar a couple of cocks. Instinctively combative toward each other, they needed no prompting to let loose an aerial buzz-saw-flurry of natural spurs. Much to our relief, like any good cocker protecting his birds, he'd pull them apart before any blood was drawn.

Greg got queasy and was known to barf at the sight of too much blood. A "spitter upper" Granddaddy called his condition. But we knew the whole point in raising gamecocks was to engage in blood sport, just as the ancestors had done for 6,000 years. On scheduled weekends throughout the summer, Uncle Billy would put the metal spurs on his better feathered warriors, cage them separately in the back of his pickup and head South across the Red River to Louisiana, home to the big cockpits and the best prize money east of the Rio Grande.

Beyond the field of gamecocks, up against the piney woods by a hollow oak, Uncle Billy kept his white painted box hives, which smelled of its melliferous dwellers. If lucky, we might convince him to don his veil, light the pine needle smoker, pump the bellows, and fetch with his hive stick some "liquid sunshine," to be passed around and licked clean like a popsicle (as if we needed more of a sugar high).

When nature called, we didn't mind using the outhouse, but more than a few times Maw would caution us that she had sprayed it with DDT (or something) for dirt daubers and yellowjackets. The thought of dirt daubers on our privates in the half-darkness would often set off a wave of wisecracking, eventually sending us to the right side of the front door where the sharp odor of ammonia rose out of the ground. The "piss field" Dad called it, where all Karber men and boys relieved themselves, mostly at night, country style, staring up at the stars.

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On our camping trip weekends, we never burned too much daylight around the nineteenth century plain, practical and unadorned homeplace. In the kitchen, which often smelled of ham hocks, butter beans, and crackling cornbread, a potbelly stove sat near the back wall and in the opposing corner was an icebox that held two 25-pound blocks. In rooms without doors, iron beds were piled high with homemade quilts. Our grandparents' bed was bracketed by two nightstands, each topped with a jar of water for their false teeth. In the narrow hallway a hand-cranked Singer sewing machine took root with enough thread, needles, buttons, patterns and cloth to support a notions shop. We often gathered with forced reverence on the sloping-with-age linoleum floors in the living room around Granddaddy Karber in his rocker, a Maxwell House coffee can spittoon at his side and idle wood burning stove opposite.

Above the stove, next to a gimme clock from the Elkhorn Bank in Arkadelphia, where Aunt Maxine had worked, was a grainy photo of a dark-haired Granddaddy Karber standing in front of the tool shed, circa 1915. He was accoutered Paladin-like in all black, a slouch hat askew and cocked backward, bandoliered with a scabbarded knife and shotgun shells, and with the stub of a stogie in his mouth. A cavalry-style, butt-forward Colt .38 Special revolver was tucked into his wide waist belt. What resembled an old Remington 16-gauge was slung over his right shoulder. With his left hand he held two wild turkeys by their feet. Hamming it up or not, the photo was a convincing evocation of a 19th century woodsman.

Granddaddy Karber was born in Independence

County on August 26, 1884, more than eight months after his father, William Henry, who served in the Dobbins brigade in the Civil War, had died on December 10, 1883. His mother, Martha Youngblood, who was half Cherokee, remarried and by the time he was thirteen, his stepdad had run him out of the house and he had proved his mettle in the logging camps, cutting skid trails through the wilderness to move timber onto steamboats, from the White River Basin to Texarkana and the Red River. This wasn't a mere tree-thinning enterprise: he was in the vanguard of the Big Cut. These rough-and-ready Paul Bunyans were chopping down old-growth forests, clearing the natural abundance for more cotton and cane plantations. Rattlesnakes, water moccasins, and other reptile malefactors were only slightly less common than flies, chiggers, and mosquitoes. Wearing a sidearm just made good sense.

While still a teenager, he had hired on as a straw boss in the cypress swamps of northern Louisiana, supervising mostly black men laying tracks for a sawmill spur and loading logs. Delirious from malarial fevers, he hopped an empty boxcar on an Illinois Central freight train to Arkansas and left behind his five -string banjo (an instrument introduced into the U.S. via the slave trade route from West Africa and picked up by southern whites in the 1830s). Like so many loggers, farmers, railroaders, sailors, and slaves before radio, records and movies, he used banjo and fiddle music and work songs to reduce the boredom of a repetitive task and elevate the mood and efficiency of the workday. When he and other sick and exhausted loggers were discovered by the railroad "bulls," rather than arresting or throwing the young stowaways off the train, the conductor sent them a jug of ice water, a kindness never forgotten. It was an unsensational story he delighted in telling that nevertheless seemed to spring from a page of Jack London's turn-of-the-century tramp diaries.

By his mid-twenties, Granddaddy Karber had saved enough money to buy an Indian motorcycle and soon landed a logging railroad job near Graysonia, Arkansas, where he met my grandmother. Myrtle Pierce was a rural postmistress, carrying the mail by horseback to the railroad camp. My grandfather was twenty-nine years old and Myrtle was fifteen when they married. In that railroad camp, they had four kids, and four more came later in Alpine, over a span of twenty-seven years, one who died at birth and another as a four-year-old. From day one, life was a struggle defined by two stages, work, and death. In between John Karber and Myrtle Pierce lived a love story. Not a fifty-year-long sit on the couch cooing type, but of two imperfect people equally yoked in a shared family vision. Theirs was a daily matching of generosities, defined by personal and practical roll-up-the-sleeves considerations. The older they grew, the closer they stood, the more they laughed.

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Tall and barrel-chested, now with ashen hair encircling a bald pate, Granddaddy Karber only had an eighth-grade education, but was no slouch at reading, writing and doing sums. He also oozed horse sense when he spoke, one of many traits that stood him well as Alpine's representative on the Amity school board for three generations of students. In the mid-'50s, as president of that board (and Maw head of the Alpine PTA), he oversaw the building of a modern new high school and agriculture building. When neighbor Lola Walker came to him about Jack Kirksey (an agriculture teacher) not allowing girls to attend the state fair in Little Rock, he told her he would have Jack stay at home and have someone else take her. Dad told us he had a soft spot for girls. He and Maw had lost two, Geraldine and Dorothy Helen to pneumonia before penicillin came around. Still, Granddaddy never talked much about those things, too personal and not one to toot his own horn about helping people.

Because his father had died before he was born, superstition in the backwoods of Arkansas had it that Granddad had magical powers. That he could blow three times in a baby's mouth and rid them of evil, ill health or bless them as a baptismal rite. Dad told me that he had witnessed many a mother who brought her child to his boyhood home for three blows of Granddad's magical breath. Sounds like voodoo, but it was a medieval Christian practice known as insufflation that migrated across the centuries (and oceans) into a low-key spiritualism in backwoods' Arkansas.

Maw had plenty of folk remedies too that ranged from oak bark tea and steam infusions to herbal poultices and homemade horse lineament. On one occasion, when the Calamine lotion wasn't relieving a bad case of poison ivy, she had me bathe outdoors in a tin wash tub of turpentine and kerosene, which burned my inflamed pink skin to a scorched pale gray and sent me yelping around the yard like a scalded dog, naked as the day I was born. It worked. No more itch to scratch.

On those sloped floors of the living room, as a rule, Granddaddy and Dad would saucer their coffee while they discussed, in a vocal cadence equivalent to pouring cold molasses, the price of steers and hogs on the hoof, a board-foot of timber, a bushel of bumblebee cotton, or flying airplanes or other more far-reaching topics. Dad would always ask for the latest news from Aunt Pearl,

Maw's sister, who packed up her family during the depression and followed Tom Joad down the "mother road" to the San Joaquin Valley, surviving as crop pickers in the early years alongside dark-skinned migrants. More than once, after hearing Pearl's news, Dad would ask us if we knew the difference between an Arkie and an Okie. "An Arkie going west has two mattresses on his car," was the answer, a humorous jibe thought up to make Arkies feel better.

We squirmed and paid half-attention until Daddy got wound up and told us a story he picked up from his two years in Alaska during World War II. It was about some Klondike "stampeder" nicknamed Nimrod who prospected near Eagle, Alaska, and whom Ernie Pyle, the famous war correspondent, had written about. Nimrod had lost all his teeth to scurvy, so he killed a grizzly, forged a set of dentures out of the teeth, and ate the bear with its own teeth. Granddaddy would answer Dad's well-told tale with a dueling version he learned from his brothers, Scott and Mark, who had cowboyed in Montana, about a Sasquatch character, a trapper named Whiskey Ben but Whiskey Ben's molars were from a Big Horn sheep and the incisors were from a grizzly. In either telling, the bear gets eaten by his own teeth, autophagia by proxy. Can't be certain but I believed both stories to be true.

In the late '40s, Granddaddy made his last trip out of Clark County on a family outing with his brother Mark. Driving up the 1,200-foot-high Mount Petit Jean, he got dizzy halfway to the top, turned around and drove home to Alpine. He lived another twenty years staying put, never darkening the doors of our Fort Smith home.

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The rest of our Caddo River vacation was wire-to-wire woods-bound fun, smelling of the barnyard pungency we had just brushed through in our mischief-making arrival. At the Caddo-Brushy Creek camp, down Fendley Road, we were never any farther than a few miles from Palmer Loop, making it convenient for Granddaddy and all the other Karber men and cousin Jimmy to join us around the campfire.

For reasons known only by the Sphinx, we rarely camped in the colorful flush of fall or in the early clear spring air as trees broke their caterpillar green buds and the dogwoods bloomed. It was almost always late May and June, the river a dull shade of jade, the air heavy, the forests humming, all fair game to the voracious appetites of ticks, chiggers, gnats, horseflies, leeches, and mosquitoes. A well-aimed rock or single-shot, bolt action .22 short or the high-tension release of five baby boomer boys, usually scattered the snapping turtles, river otters and cottonmouths below our Caddo-Brushy Creek camp.

The honey hole, jumping with green sunfish and small mouth and spotted bass, the source of many a well spun fishing escapade, was a fine stretch of foam-tipped milky jade a few hundred yards from where Brushy Creek flowed into the Caddo. A soft and springy pine needle deer trail, scalloped with small gravel and sand bars, often scratched in a maze of muskrat, deer, and racoon tracks (identified by Dad), traced the Caddo upriver. Further along was our swimming hole with a bag swing roped to a sycamore bough, the banks below shaded by willow thickets. On the opposite shore we leapt off a rock wall and sandstone boulders the size of cars and swam beneath clear blue waters to the sandy, pebbly bottoms.

Once I was trip-trapping along on that springy pine needle trail, came upon a cottonmouth as thick as a man's thigh, and jumped two feet high and three feet forward. The snake hissed at my landing spot, where I had frozen astride a raisin-like pile of white tail deer scat. Dad heard me screech and hurried down to dispatch it. A solid memory, the venomous viper was left splattered with birdshot on the trail as a reminder of what could happen to things that lay in wait or go bump in the night.

All around, thick stands of loblolly pine and brakes of bottomland hardwood advanced up the mast-laden littorals and abounded in white-tailed deer browsing on young pines and wild turkey pecking the ground for seeds, insects, and berries. In the fall, the forest floor was sprinkled with prickly sweetgum balls and hickory nuts as big as quail eggs, fodder to fatten Bambi for winter's dinner table. As aspiring pole vaulters, we never passed up lassoing and pulling the tops of the sturdier of the young pines—fifteen to twenty feet—to the ground and then catapulting to the sky.

Due west of the best catapulting-worthy pine brake, through tall stands of sweet-scented forest and out into a clearing was an unclipped fence-line, propping up a bushy profusion of briars, drifts of honeysuckle and blackberries by the pail. Beyond the fence line, in a fallow cornfield, we could almost always count on flushing quail and doves or the occasional pandemonium of honking, pinion beating geese. On a good day, with enough grubbing around that cornfield, we might come up with an arrowhead or two.

Dad brought along cane poles, spinning rods, fly fishing gear and a full tackle box. At the time, Greg, Stan and I were not gifted with a fisherman's patience

and discipline, but we occasionally got lucky with a sun perch, crappie or small mouth bass. By the end of our weekend adventure, with all the hooks, lines, leaders, lures, sinkers, bobbers, plastic, and real worms lodged in the trees, it looked as if we had been trying to snag osprey or eagles or some other high-flying birds. Patience poor, full of Huck Finn innocence, we were the polar opposite of Hemingway's young Nick Adams.

John, the oldest and wisest of us all, picked up Dad's (and Nick's) woodsmanship. He believed in paddling his own canoe, goes the saying. We counted on him to be our go-to hunter-gatherer who could fill a creel, bag a squirrel, Peter Rabbit, a deer or a cote of doves, putting food on our plates around the fire. The usual protein fare in our Caddo River camp was squirrel or rabbit and eggs for breakfast and fresh caught and finger-licking fried channel catfish for dinner (nostalgia being the best tasting fish of all).

For Dad, the Caddo had personal and practical meaning. It was the bloodstream of the land, a timeless silt-laden thread in a water cycle that wove together the family farms in the pines on a lazy but true course, shoal-to-pool-to-shoal, tributary by tributary, south toward the sea. The river's intrepid journey ran a motley gauntlet of towering sycamores and sweetgum, corn and cotton fields, old grist mills and thriving whiskey stills, duck sloughs and alligator-infested cypress swamps, pump jacks and bar ditches, and beyond the canebrakes and floodway levees of Louisiana until its drink water changed into salt water and frothed with red fish at the Mississippi and Atchafalaya estuaries. My hardy and hearty piney-woods' ancestors, de Soto's gold-happy Iberians, the sedentary, mound-building Caddo Indians, the footbound and feared fighters of the Tula tribe, the feral goats precariously perched on Cave Mountain's limestone ledges, the southerly hegira of ducks, geese and passenger pigeons, and what have you, had either fished the river's eddies, farmed its fertile lowlands, drank its waters, drawn a bowstring or blasted a musket on its banks, or merely marveled at the hypnotic motion of the aquatic landscape…back through seasons lost in time.

"You never step in the same river twice," Dad was fond of saying. As his father had done before him, he told us of the river's lore and natural history and of those who had threshed the same ground he had. Sometimes our ears were pricked, other times he was casting pearls to the swine, but always the life affirming river and its riparian buffer of forests and fertile fields ran bone deep as an ancestral memory in his sensory world.

Hard to imagine a few properly placed sticks of dynamite could put the quietus on all that Edenic wonder. But it did: The Army Corps of Engineers, authorized by the Congressional River and Harbor Act of 1950, invoked the power of eminent domain to confiscate our land of milk and honey, dam the Caddo River and christen the new body of water Lake DeGray, after a French fur trader. John Graves wrote about the landowner and river lover's helplessness to fight the '50s-and-'60s-era dam-craze in *Goodbye to a River*, "When someone official dreams up a dam, it generally goes in. Dams are ipso facto good all by themselves, like mothers and flags." As with Graves' Brazos River in Texas, they turned our slice of the Caddo into a 100-foot-deep, treeless thoroughfare for a blitzkrieg of sports crafts. Overnight, half the Karber land, 225 acres, and not least the blood, sweat, sandbar memories, Indian artifacts, and settler homesteads, were flushed under to decompose like raw sewage in a septic tank.

Granddaddy didn't live to see the government shakedown, though I suppose he watched restlessly from above, having dropped by the Alpine Presbyterian chapel to be baptized at seventy-nine years old, a month before he shuffled off this mortal coil. I doubt that he knew of Pascal's wager, just running late on squaring things up. Maw, who was sharpened with a flinty resolve and had hands of sandpaper, was as powerless as her small-farm-owning neighbors. They all took the paltry government check. In Maw's case, she bought the old McAnally place and built a modest all-brick house with an indoor privy on a new slash of blacktop. The airy, organic scent of the farmhouse floor on up the fumy walls-that-spoke to us got replaced by the resinous smell of plastic-wrapped couches and fresh laid carpet. All to be avoided more than sat or walked upon or sniffed like musk oil.

For the most part, it should be said that I had been all but sequestered from the wild earthly realities of Arkansas. Certainly, we did not fully comprehend the wilderness regions far beyond our campsite. Until Eden and the cotton candy sunsets were gone and "progress" began, I took for granted the Caddo River farm as our disposable amusement park and shooting gallery. Armed with a sling, bow, the trusty Red Ryder BB gun or Crosman air rifle on up to the single-shot .22, a blue jay or robin red breast here (for our feather collections), cottontail rabbit or a gray squirrel there…ping, ping, bang, bang. Kid's play, nostalgic masculinity, everyone's a little Hemingway, some feathered, furry or scaly creature must die daily.

Within a few years, the decomposition and absolute absence of the farm made me relish what I had kept at arm's length. The Karber boys were citified. Raised on

concrete, the farm was "the sticks," the sad scope of my ecological vision for too long. The only saving grace was that the myopia and generational landscape amnesia was arrested once our "postage stamp of dirt" disappeared. Absence absolutely making the heart grow fonder.

Somewhere between vivid imagination and memory's monkeyshine, those camping trips have now been reified as powerful childhood inflection points, viewed as a lyrical painting hung exclusively for my mind's eye. The flush and glide and cranky cry of a blue heron. The passerines' afternoon song fest: wrens, whippoorwills, robins, cardinals, kingfishers, finches, sparrows, woodpeckers, mockingbirds, meadowlarks, chickadees. The cicadas giddily buzzing their summer symphony. Choruses of bullfrogs throbbing in the night air. Wood smoke curling off a blazing campfire of chopped driftwood and cleared deadfall. The council of elders circled up. Mark and James in bib overalls, rolling Prince Albert. Jerry in Brylcreem-shiny ducktails, Elvis sideburns, rolled jeans. Billy chewing on Red Man, boots to bill a cowboy. Dad and Granddaddy Karber, in Stetsons, puffing on full bent cherry wood pipes. Sipping corn mash from a mason jar. Salty storytelling, spur-of-the-moment country fiddling. A well spun spooky yarn as a nightcap. Granddaddy rattling off home to Maw in the candy apple red '51 Ford pickup. The barred owl's ghoulish hooting. Pulling a catfish off a trotline at three a.m. Sleeping like a log on an aural cushion of rushing water. The avian medley of predawn proclamations. Dewy sunrises creeping through the darkness. Morning fresh textures and mourning doves (coo-OO-oo). Sun perch top feeding on midges. The aquatic ballet of Dad in waders paying out coils of line, casting into fast moving waters gilded by the fresh light. The rising heat drying the moisture from the mayflies, the bumblebees, the butterflies, the lady beetles, the whirligigs, the stink bugs, the katydids, the millipedes, the forest floor and river banks bursting to life.

The banal transforming into the sublime, those are the collected dew-fresh brushstrokes of memory I have of the Brushy Creek-Caddo River camp before the dam builders showed up and it was no more. As much as the passage of time shifted those memories to an abiding abode in my grown-up heart, the sad upshot of those growing-up years is that some of us denied the laudable authenticity of Dad's roots in the rural wilds. His storehouse of farm and field skills and professional duties as county agent, including starting half-a-dozen 4 -H clubs, failed to map onto our daily, coming of age realities.

A dichotomy of urban and rural, as old as the first mud-walled settlement. In *Goodbye to a River* author John Graves addressed why such denials of our family's piney woods past might be ill-advised: "It's not necessary to like being a Texan, or a Midwesterner, or a Jew, or an Andalusian, or a Negro, or a hybrid child of the international rich. It is, I think, necessary to know in that crystal chamber of the mind where one speaks straight to oneself that one is or was that thing, and for any understanding of the human condition it's probably necessary to know a little about what the thing consists of."

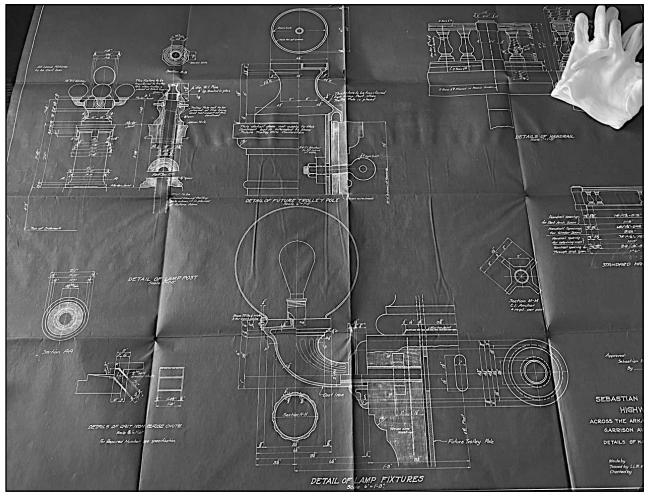
I have been through a lot of trouble to remember that.

Acknowledgments and Bibliography

For three months, in the spring of 2020, while staying at home under a statewide advisory in Cambridge (Boston), a Covid-19 hotspot, my thoughts, writing and reading list often turned to the great outdoors and, small wonder, to my roots in the piney woods of Arkansas. I'd already written the bones of *Goodbye to Our River*, so after stumbling on to two excellent articles in the *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette* by Rex Nelson, *When Everything Changed and Mountains to the West*, an urgency to finish what I had started took hold; a matter of fleshing out the facts and laying on the cocklebur spice. In that reflective, pandemic-induced interlude, the process became a labor of love to revisit and crib the ideas and well-crafted words from Kenneth Smith's *Sawmill*, Ernest Hemingway's *Nick Adams Stories*, Aldo Leopold's *Sand County Almanac*, Charles Portis' *Escape Velocity*, and, most importantly, John Graves' *Goodbye to a River*. The result of that reading, and more, turned into something therapeutic, perusing old black and white family photos, having conversations with relatives and friends in the know, conjuring my own portraits of an unspoiled past, and, chiefly, 'speaking straight to oneself.' Not exactly Zen, but as close as this citified, piney woods' offshoot will come. Until next time….

Author Bio

Phil Karber is a two-time Lowell Thomas award-winning travel writer who has journeyed to all continents and more than 160 countries, lived in Africa and Asia for fourteen years, and authored several books, including *Postmarks from a Political Traveler*; *Fear and Faith in Paradise: Exploring Conflict and Religion in the Middle East*; *The Indochina Chronicles: Travels in Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam*; and *Yak Pizza to Go: Travels in an Age of Vanishing Cultures and Extinctions*.



(LEFT, TOP) Blueprints from the bridge exhibit at the Frisco Station in Fort Smith.

(LEFT) Bridge light blueprint.

(ABOVE) Programs from the bridge event in 1922 are shown at the Frisco Station.

(Courtesy of the Fort Smith Museum of History)

From Conception to Completion

Celebrating the Opening of the Million-Dollar Free Bridge

By Al Whitson

At the end of 1921 a landmark project neared completion. The Garrison Avenue bridge took nearly five years and almost one million dollars to build, and its christening was an occasion worthy of commemoration. The grand opening celebration would be the greatest in the history of Fort Smith, but it didn't happen overnight. The initial planning committee[1] was appointed in mid-November 1921 by the Fort Smith Civic Council. It quickly became apparent, however, that this small committee of only five members would not be enough to properly plan and execute an event of such magnitude. Two months after the initial committee formation, a new working committee was formed, and committee executives were elected.[2] This new "Bridge Celebration Committee" was the result of a coalition between fourteen civic-minded groups and organizations within the city who each sent a representative to serve as committee members.[3] On the 17th of February, the committee set the dates of the two-day celebration for Thursday, May 11th and Friday, May 12th of 1922. Now, with a deadline fast approaching, the real work began.

As is generally the case, funding for the event was a chief concern. While the celebration cost might not rival that of the "million-dollar free bridge" itself, it would be costly. The committee's initial solution was the political

(LEFT) Miss Louise Golden, Bridge Queen.

(ABOVE) The event marking the opening of the Free Bridge in Fort Smith in 1922.

(RIGHT) People walk on the new free bridge in 1922.

(Courtesy of the Fort Smith Museum of History)

equivalent of passing around a collection plate. They enlisted the aid of many of the city's prominent citizens to "press the flesh" and canvas city businesses for financial support[4]. On the morning of Tuesday, February 21st, as Victor Forsgren's Phoenix construction company[5] began preparation to lay asphalt on the bridge, these civic and business leaders[6] began pounding the pavement across the rest of Fort Smith to seek contributions. Their efforts produced the sum of just under $3,000 (about $53,000 in today's money). A figure well below the committee's expectations[7]. While the first attempt at fundraising was insufficient, it ultimately led to an outside-the-box fundraising idea which proved to be one of the biggest hits of the entire celebration.

In a bid to galvanize the community to contribute donations, a contest was announced and a city-wide search for a Celebration Queen was launched, coordinated by chairwoman, Mrs. George C. Packard.[8] The winner of the contest would reign over the two-day event and would also receive a handsome diamond ring from Finks Jewelers. The other contestants would be her Ladies in Waiting and be given commemorative bronze medallions featuring a relief image of the bridge

itself. Outlying cities also participated by selecting a Princess to represent them in the Queen's court during the event. Candidates for Queen were first chosen by local civic organizations and the citizens then cast ballots for their favorite among the candidates. Each vote cost a penny apiece. Lapel buttons were given to citizens who contributed a full dollar to the cause, by casting 100 votes for the queen of their choice. The list of contenders for the role of Queen consisted of twelve[9] of "the most popular young women in the city." Ultimately, however, the contest came down to Miss Louise Golden and Edith Walkord. The two finalists both held court with their supporters at the ticket office of the Missouri Pacific Railroad as the final votes were being cast on Saturday, April 29th. It was almost midnight when the final count was complete, and nearly 200 eager and loyal subjects were present at the ticket office when the winner was announced. It was a close race, with the runner up, Miss Edith Walkord, receiving 116,660 votes and Miss Louise Golden coming in first with 119,555 votes. Miss Golden, who was seventeen at the time, was a well-known socialite in Fort Smith and was often mentioned in the Society Section of the Southwest American. Louise was the great granddaughter of Colonel O. C. Word, an early Fort Smith resident.[10]

Another important source of funds was provided by Fort Smith's Black community. Although the city was segregated at the time, the new bridge was a source of pride for all of Fort Smith, not just the city's more affluent white citizens. The Quinn-Trent post of the American Legion met with Charles Darland (chairman of the Bridge Celebration Committee) at Josenberger's Hall on the 6th of March to collaborate. Four prominent Black citizens, Andy Johnson (chairman of the Black Community Bridge Committee), E. O. Trent, E. J. Rowell, and T. H. Foster were recruited to raise funds for the celebration by hosting entertainment venues and soliciting local black businesses. Black visitors coming to Fort Smith for the celebration would not have access to white establishments, so it was crucial too that the black community be willing to arrange for access to food and lodging for them. Their presence might not always have been welcome in white spaces, but the new bridge belonged to us all and our pride in it crossed the color lines.

While the well-to-do in the city glad-handed for funds, and the average worker cast votes for queen, there was another group of citizens who were notably less enthused and far more disenfranchised by the celebration preparations. In the city's effort to

PEOPLE CHECK OUT THE NEW FREE BRIDGE over the Arkansas River in Fort Smith in 1922.

(Courtesy of the Fort Smith Museum of History)

"beautify" the riverfront property on both sides of the new Garrison Avenue Bridge ahead of the big occasion, Mayor Fagan Bourland ordered the encampments along the river to be torn down as a "health" measure and to "improve appearances." On Saturday, March 18th, police were instructed to give notice to all squatters and trespassers along the river front that if they had not moved within ten days they would be arrested. Additional orders were served five days later with a fifteen-day deadline to vacate or be arrested for trespassing. The "unsightly tents," "scrap shacks," and "houseboats" along the river that had served as homes and shelter for the city's poorest population were leveled under the watchful eye of Commissioner M. J. Miller on the 2nd of May, nine days ahead of the big celebration.[11]

Additional provisions needed to be made for the many visitors who would be coming to Fort Smith for the occasion, lest they end up out on the streets themselves or with empty pockets from encounters with light fingers. The event was set to be a massive one, with the bridge opening coinciding with the annual Wortham Carnival, and with a Boy Scout Jamboree at Andrews, and numerous industry conventions being held in the city, and it was Mother's Day weekend. Many prominent citizens stepped up to help with preparing for the arrival of thousands of visitors to the city. Marshall Yantis was responsible for obtaining the use of automobiles to assist in shuttling visitors during the event and John B. Williams was put in charge of coordinating parking for the hundreds of vehicles in town for the celebration. Mr. Williams identified areas for makeshift parking lots, mostly to the immediate south of Garrison Avenue, and organized horse mounted patrolling of the lots to

ensure vehicles were secure from theft.[12] John's brother, Leon Williams, was given charge of coordinating the three major parades occurring during the celebration. Sol Cohn was made responsible for finding housing for the expected influx of visitors to the city.[13] Many citizens also pitched in to make up for inadequate hotel space and transportation by taking in temporary boarders and providing rides to visitors. Even the Boy Scouts, who set up their headquarters on the Plaza, were pressed into service on the avenue to answer visitor questions, handle traffic flow, and otherwise assist visitors. In fact, in their enthusiasm, the boys did their job a bit too well. On the first day of the celebration, they stopped, and attempted to arrest, the Sheriff and his Deputy (whom the boys did not recognize) as the duo tried to drive their vehicle onto the avenue without displaying the required identifying badge. They were just doing their job!

In addition to the deputized Boy Scout troops, dozens of men were added as augmentees to the police force. Their presence ultimately proved unnecessary, however, as the police reported that, despite the celebration being the largest in Fort Smith history, it was surprisingly also the safest. Chief of Police Mike Gordon stated that there was "not one accident, and there was not a fight or an expression of malice or ill will voiced aloud by any person, so far as peace officers could learn." The only aspiring pickpocket was, according to the chief, recognized and apprehended Thursday night on the outskirts of the crowd before walking even ten feet out onto the bridge itself. He was kept in lock-up until the end of the celebrations on Saturday, just to be on the safe side, and the law-abiding attendees were able to enjoy the festivities without concern for the loss of their pocketbooks.[14]

Three major parades were held during the two-day celebration, along with numerous unofficial parades put on by organizations such as the Elks club and Amrita Grotto. The largest of the major parades, was the Industrial parade, held Friday morning. This parade was estimated to have stretched over two miles from start to finish and represented virtually every industry and trade in the Fort Smith area. But the most spectacular parade, held Thursday afternoon, was the Queen's parade, which went first up Garrison Avenue to the IC Church, and then back to the bridge, led by a contingent of no less than sixteen of Judge Parker's ex-Deputy United States Marshals on horseback. The crowds were huge, completely filling the bunting-bedecked Garrison Avenue, and making the work of coordinating the parade and getting participants through the crowds and to the staging area, very difficult. This caused some of the intended participants to miss the parade altogether, including one large group of ex-confederate soldiers who were left waiting for their rides. When the queen arrived at the point on the bridge where the ceremony was to occur, she welcomed the visitors to our city and then christened the bridge, using three bottles of water, in the presence of the governors of both states and a host of other dignitaries.

The choice of water over champagne (the usual drink of choice for such ceremonies) was, of course, due to the passage of the Eighteenth Amendment in 1920—although, Arkansas had effectively been a "dry" state since passage of the Newberry Act in 1917. The water in those three bottles came from Colorado Springs, Colorado, Hot Springs, Arkansas, and Siloam Springs, Arkansas—representing the terminal points of two important travel routes that would now be connected via the bridge. The travel routes, important at the time, were the Albert Pike Highway and the Sequoyah Trail.[15]

More than 20,000 people attended the ceremonies and more than a dozen bands played music throughout both days. Fireworks were launched both day and night and, during the christening ceremony, a flight of eight army airplanes were airborne over the bridge, having pre-staged themselves at the Alexander airfield across the river, in the area that is now occupied by the stockyards in Moffat Oklahoma. Speeches were given by Mayor Fagan Bourland, by the governor of Arkansas and the governor of Oklahoma, by congressman Wingo, and by representatives of every highway connected via the bridge. Two national news outlets (Fox and Pathé) were represented at the celebration, capturing some 1200 feet of newsreel film of the parades and christening ceremonies, which would have been around fifteen minutes' worth of final footage. The films were released and shown in theatres across the country as well as at premiere showings locally. Still photos of the event also appeared that year in at least one national periodical, the "Good Roads" magazine.

Other speeches were being hosted around the town as well, including one by Colonel Roscoe Simmons, a noted orator, and the nephew of one of Americas greatest orators, Booker T. Washington. That event was hosted by the black community at the Lincoln auditorium emceed by professor E. O. Trent, the principal of Lincoln high and one of Fort Smith's most prominent black citizens.[16] An elaborate reception was held for Colonel Simmons at Josenberger's Hall, Thursday night, following his lecture. The reception included a formal receiving line, music from three orchestra's (Quinn, Frierson, and Griffin) and vocal

solos by some of the area's finest voices. The reception was hugely popular and well attended and it also served, to some extent, as the black community's personal recognition of its own involvement in the Bridge Celebration itself. Black organizations, and black marching bands from Fort Smith and Van Buren also participated in the parades and other activities, but the hosting of such a renowned figure was a singularly proud achievement of the bridge committee members representing the city's black community.

The celebration officially ended on Friday the 12th of May. By this point, the bridge had been "officially" opened to traffic for six days. Unofficially however, the bridge was in operation even before the approach ramp on the Oklahoma side had been completed. The reason given for the early opening, was to allow local traffic to use the free bridge, rather than MOPAC's toll bridge, to attend a baseball game at the newly renovated Alexander field in Oklahoma on the 23rd of April. But, even earlier than that, the honor of being the first person to drive a car across the bridge was granted to Mr. Charles Brown, a prominent planter in the area. On the 14th of April, a week before the bridge was "unofficially" opened, Mr. Brown drove his car the length of the bridge and then returned. On the very next day, Mrs. Fagan Bourland became the first woman to drive across the bridge and then, so as not to be outdone by the men, she also navigated the incomplete Oklahoma approach, and traveled all the way to the Missouri Pacific line before returning .[17] Two days after the festivities had ended, on Sunday May 14th, the Missouri Pacific railroad officially closed the Helen Gould bridge to foot and vehicle traffic and shuttered the toll booth.[18] During the days that followed, the planks used to carry that traffic were removed, ending one era of our history even as a new era, the roaring 1920s, was beginning. And, for the first time in our city's history, our iconic Garrison Avenue, with its stunning IC church on its east end, now had an equally stunning and equally iconic new, million-dollar bridge on its west. And my, but we were proud of our accomplishment.

AL WHITSON poses at a photo during the bridge event at the Fort Smith Museum of History.

(Courtesy of Erin Langford)

ENDNOTES

[1] Wayne Hardin, G.E. Bersen, W.A. Johnson, Louis Cohen, and M.e. Goss (Source: *Southwest American* newspaper, Nov 20, 1921)
[2] Chairman – Charles Darland, Committee Secretary – Ray Gill, Corresponding Secretary – Ruby Stansbury
[3] *Southwest American* newspaper, Jan. 25, 1922; Ibid, Feb. 3, 1922; Ibid, Feb. 5, 1922
[4] Ibid, Sep. 4, 1922
[5] Ibid, Feb. 18, 1922
[6] L. Weinstein, B. Williams, Charles Futral, Sol Cohn, Alvin Tilles, Billy Johnson, R. J. Speer, Arch Monro, G.D. Carney, R. A. Hambrie, W. E. Smith, George Tilles, J. K. Jordan, H. N. Hall
[7] Ibid, Mar. 2, 1922
[8] Ibid, Mar. 14, 1922
[9] Mrs. S. C. Fuller (Knights of Pythias), Miss Bertha Conklin (American Legion), Miss Elizabeth Clendenning (Noon Civics club), Miss Edith Walkord (Woodmen of the World), Miss Marie Eddy (the Degree of Honor), Miss Louise Golden (United Commercial Travelers), Miss Eleanor King (Lions club), Miss Velora Smith (Eagles), Miss Delmaya Dorough (Odd Fellows), Miss Luretha Leming (Realtors), Miss Marie Cabell (Boy Rangers), Miss Lillie Parker (Civitan club) (Source: Ibid, Apr. 16, 1922)
[10] Ibid, Apr. 16, 1922; Ibid, Apr. 30, 1922
[11] Ibid, Apr 23, 1922; Ibid, Apr 30, 1922; Ibid, May 3, 1922
[12] Ibid, May 7, 1922
[13] Ibid, May 6, 1922
[14] Ibid, May 14, 1922
[15] Ibid, Apr. 4, 1922
[16] Ibid, May 12, 1922
[17] Ibid, Apr. 16, 1922; Ibid, Apr 23, 1922
[18] Ibid, May 13, 1922

Little Theatre Endures

FSLT celebrates 75th anniversary — Part 2: 1986-2022

By Joyce Faulkner

THE HARLEQUIN MAN STATUE is shown at the Fort Smith Little Theatre (above) and the sign marks the current home of the Little Theatre on North Sixth Street (below).
(Photos courtesy of the author)

By late spring, 1986, Fort Smith Little Theatre volunteers had settled into their new home at 401 North Sixth Street and were preparing for a musical, *The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas*, directed by Jay Burke and Bob Hugheart. Longtime Little Theatre performer Angela Covey remembers that some in the company were unsure whether Fort Smith audiences would come out for a play that had "Whorehouse" in the title. "We discussed alternatives including renaming it, *The Best Little House in Texas*," she said. However, the show had been a big success on Broadway. It was nominated for multiple awards, winning several attention-grabbing ones like a Tony, a Drama Desk Award, and a Theatre World Award. Then, in 1982, a popular movie starring Dolly Parton and Burt Reynolds debuted. It became the fourth highest-grossing live-action musical film of the 1980s, and the top grossing one of 1982. The board decided that given all of that exposure, Fort Smith audiences were likely well-aware of the content and already loved the toe-tapping musical anyway. *The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas* debuted at FSLT in June 1986—and it was a big success.

The original plans for the new theater building were not all implemented at once—and much remained to be done. The all-volunteer organization was cautious, longtime volunteer and actor Nancy Blochberger explained. To purchase new seats for the audience, the board solicited donations from businesses and longtime theater supporters. In appreciation, brass plates engraved with donor names were mounted to the back of each seat. Even so, the amount of money needed was more than the amount on hand. To remain in the black, the board left some parts of the original plans undone until they could be executed without incurring any debt. Therefore, the first incarnation did not include wardrobe storage, backstage bathrooms, or a space to build sets.

It took an additional twenty years to raise enough funds to complete those facilities. Over the next few decades, board members focused on remaining debt free while maintaining the facility and adding to it. "They started with two main strategies—promoting season tickets and exclusive programming," Nancy Blochberger explained. "Selling program ads also helped as did annual fundraising events. The money raised from these activities allowed the FSLT to fund building maintenance and improvements."

In 1996, the board used money from these funds plus donations from friends of the theater to pave the parking lot and install lighting—not only for the area owned by the Little Theatre but also an adjoining lot owned by the Fort Smith Art Center. In 1999, still concerned about finances, the board established a permanent endowment fund with the Arkansas Community Foundation. Their stated goal

TUESDAY, FEB. 25, 1997 TIMES RECORD 3B

COLUMNS

FSLT cast gives electrifying performance despite storm

The violent storm that ripped through this area last week caused lots of damage, havoc and scary flashbacks to the infamous tornado of April 21, 1996.

But the storm unexpectedly provided at least one good thing — a candle-lit performance unique in the 50-year history of the Fort Smith Little Theatre.

Times Record retail ad salesman Kevin Coney was in the near capacity audience waiting for the curtain to rise on the play, "Love, Sex and the IRS," when the storm hit and knocked out the theater's electricity.

The lights went out and everyone just sat there in total darkness, not really knowing what to do, Kevin said, until the cast of show came onstage carrying candles. The cast members kept the audience calm by talking to them and serving soft drinks. And when it became apparent the lights wouldn't be coming back on any time soon, the cast asked the audience if they wanted to leave, or the play to be performed by candlelight.

"With the storm still going on, that crowd wasn't going anywhere," Kevin said. "We overwhelmingly approved the candlelight production."

Every candle that could be located (Kevin estimates about 50 to 60 of all sizes and shapes were found) in the theater was used to illuminate the stage so the show could go on.

LINDA SEUBOLD
OFFBEAT

Since there was no power, stage crew members had to yell "RING," when a telephone was supposed to ring, and imitate other special effects that would have been done electronically, if there had been any electricity. But that just added humor to the candle-lit comedy, Kevin said.

At one point, he said, he heard a woman say to her companion, "Isn't this romantic?"

At intermission, two pickups pulled up to the front of the theater and illuminated the lobby with their headlights. The audience was served more soft drinks, and the champagne left over from the play's opening night.

"The play was fantastic and so was the experience," Kevin recalls. "And, everyone in the audience that night is now part of Fort Smith Little Theatre history. The theater is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year and the Feb. 20, 1997, performance of 'Sex, Lies and the IRS' was the first time FSLT has done an entire play by candlelight."

The Feb. 20th storm stirred up some history for local HAM operator Charlie Richardson, too.

Charlie said the recent fierce winds, rain and flash flooding reminded him of the aftermath of several killer tornadoes that ravaged this area on April 12, 1945, the day President Franklin Delano Roosevelt died.

Charlie was a private first class in the Army's Military Police at Camp Chaffee (it was Camp, not Fort, Chaffee in those days) and a member of a search and rescue team assigned to Moffett after one of the April 12 twisters had touched down there.

"It was all messed up over there," Charlie recalled. "We were in the bottoms, searching for injured people, but the mud was so deep we could only move one foot at a time."

Charlie said his unit didn't find anyone injured or dead, but they something else that he has never forgotten.

"We found a cow walking around with a 2-by-4 stuck right through its neck. And as far as I can remember, it wasn't even bleeding," Charlie remembered.

Another scary sight Charlie recalled from the time he was stationed at Chaffee, was in 1944, when he had to transport a truckload of troops across the Arkansas River — through debris-filled, raging floodwaters.

"Everyone planning on building things along the river needs to remember that when Mother Nature wants her way bad enough, she gets it," Charlie advises.

Charlie's a native of Baltimore and served several years in the Merchant Marines before joining the Army in 1943. After going through boot camp at Chaffee he was assigned to the 733rd Railroad Battalion in Van Buren. But Army docs learned he had "bad ears," which kept him from being shipped overseas with his unit.

While at Chaffee, Charlie got to liking Fort Smith so much he ended up staying.

Times Record columnist Linda Seubold is a four-time recipient of the Distinguished Service to Journalism Award from the University of Arkansas at Little Rock. She writes this column five days a week. Call her at 784-0468.

TIMES RECORD JOURNALIST LINDA SEUBOLD wrote about a stormy performance of Love, Sex, and the IRS at the Fort Smith Little Theatre in 1997.

(Courtesy image)

was "…to endow a perpetual fund to support and expand theatrical programs, meet facility demands, and ensure affordable ticket prices."

In 2005 and 2006, the board finally addressed their crowding and storage problems by building the already-designed back wing. Spearheaded by Nancy Blochberger, they called the project, "Complete the Plan." The additional space could now house FSLT's growing inventory of costumes and props in one place—in the theatre itself. The new addition also included additional restrooms and a kitchen. Nancy says, "Blessedly, we never had to borrow a penny. A lot of the credit for that goes to our community. Our venders donated or discounted the cost of materials, including cabinetry, paint, tiles, brick, concrete, lumber, toilets, and sinks. And a lot of our patrons contributed also. However, you also need to realize that an FST is a working man's cultural experience. A lot of our patrons gave $25, $50…maybe $100. We don't have a lot of large donors like some arts groups would. We are proud to receive these small gifts—every dollar counts. And frankly, they were pleased to be part of a capital campaign—and to be part of this big expansion."

In 2009, the Fort Smith Art Center (now the Regional Art Center) moved. It was a once in a lifetime opportunity to purchase five of those lots to secure parking around the FSLT facility. And with the support of theatre patrons, the land was secured.

In 2012, the FSLT celebrated its sixty-fifth anniversary and its twenty-fifth year at the North Sixth Street facility. It was an opportunity to celebrate the many directors, actors, singers, dancers, and crews who came together over the years to entertain Fort Smith audiences. During this celebration, the board began collecting and organizing old photos and other material to document the history of the organization. It was also during this era that the lobby, public restrooms, light booth, and box office were renovated. In 2018, the FSLT moved to online ticket sales.

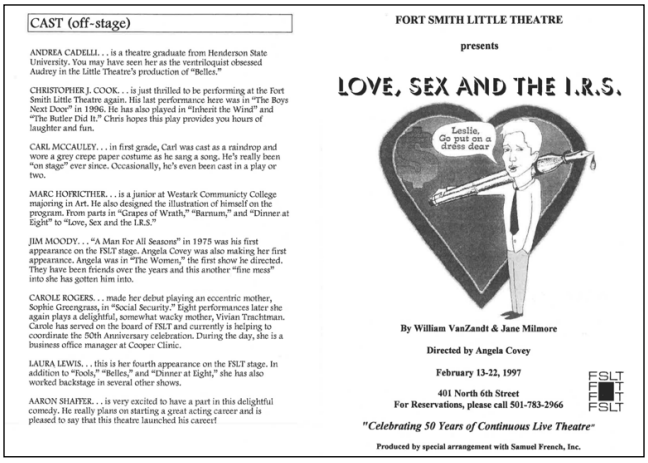
During this era, the pool of Little Theatre volunteers grew. They ranged from folks with no theatre backgrounds to those who had studied the art or had directed or performed in other venues. Although early actor and St. Anne's Academy graduate Lawrence Luckinbill[1] remains the most well-known and prolific FSLT veteran, many participants over the years also have professional credits. Some Little Theatre participants—like Brad Kidder, Sr., Carole Rogers, Angela Covey, Duff Taylor, Micki Voelkel and Paula Sharum—made the transition from performing at South O to the new theatre on North B. And over time, new generations brought fresh approaches and techniques to Fort Smith audiences.

Aside from frugality, FSLT culture encourages growth, both personally and within the organization itself. New volunteers often begin by selling tickets or working in costuming or set decoration or lights or sound. Then as they become more comfortable, many branch out into acting and/or directing. Some eventually serve on the board.

Memories

Most of the volunteers have treasured stories to tell about their time with the Little Theatre. Some are funny, some tender—some nostalgic.

Longtime Little Theatre performer **Angela Covey**



CAST (off-stage)

ANDREA CADELLI . . . is a theatre graduate from Henderson State University. You may have seen her as the ventriloquist obsessed Audrey in the Little Theatre's production of "Belles."

CHRISTOPHER J. COOK . . . is just thrilled to be performing at the Fort Smith Little Theatre again. His last performance here was in "The Boys Next Door" in 1996. He has also played in "Inherit the Wind" and "The Butler Did It." Chris hopes this play provides you hours of laughter and fun.

CARL MCCAULEY . . . in first grade, Carl was cast as a raindrop and wore a grey crepe paper costume as he sang a song. He's really been "on stage" ever since. Occasionally, he's even been cast in a play or two.

MARC HOFRICTHER . . . is a junior at Westark Community College majoring in Art. He also designed the illustration of himself on the program. From parts in "Grapes of Wrath," "Barnum," and "Dinner at Eight" to "Love, Sex and the I.R.S."

JIM MOODY . . . "A Man For All Seasons" in 1975 was his first appearance on the FSLT stage. Angela Covey was also making her first appearance. Angela was in "The Women," the first show he directed. They have been friends over the years and this another "fine mess" into she has gotten him into.

CAROLE ROGERS . . . made her debut playing an eccentric mother, Sophie Greengrass, in "Social Security." Eight performances later she again plays a delightful, somewhat wacky mother, Vivian Trachtman. Carole has served on the board of FSLT and currently is helping to coordinate the 50th Anniversary celebration. During the day, she is a business office manager at Cooper Clinic.

LAURA LEWIS . . . this is her fourth appearance on the FSLT stage. In addition to "Fools," "Belles," and "Dinner at Eight," she has also worked backstage in several other shows.

AARON SHAFFER . . . is very excited to have a part in this delightful comedy. He really plans on starting a great acting career and is pleased to say that this theatre launched his career!

FORT SMITH LITTLE THEATRE

presents

LOVE, SEX AND THE I.R.S.

By William VanZandt & Jane Milmore

Directed by Angela Covey

February 13-22, 1997

401 North 6th Street
For Reservations, please call 501-783-2966

"Celebrating 50 Years of Continuous Live Theatre"

Produced by special arrangement with Samuel French, Inc.

(LEFT) A program publication from the Fort Smith Little Theatre production of *Love, Sex, and the IRS*. **(RIGHT)** Cast photo from *Love, Sex and the IRS*.

(Courtesy images)

remembers one night in 1997: "I was directing my first show at FSLT. We were already in production and the audience was already in their seats. A bad thunderstorm came up and the whole theater lost power. Soon it became evident that it was not going to come back for a while, so we first offered people their money back. But they said 'No!'

"So, we gathered every candle we could find and every flashlight. Two people sat cross-legged in the aisles with the largest flashlights focused on the actors. The rest of them were scattered on stage and throughout the building. At intermission, two people brought their pickups up close to the lobby and shone their lights inside. Then we offered champagne (left over from Gala Opening). On leaving the theater, we were told by many that it was a most romantic evening. Later, the *Southwest Times Record* wrote an article about it. The next morning was not romantic, as me and my producer had to scrape up all the wax of which there was a lot. The play was *Love, Sex, and the IRS*."

Personalities

Angela Covey was born and raised in England and moved to Fort Smith with her husband. Suffering from postpartum blues after the birth of twins, her doctor suggested that she get out and do something she enjoyed. Having been trained as an actress in her youth, she decided to check out the Fort Smith Little Theatre—and immediately got a part in *A Man for All Seasons* at the Theatre on North O. "I was hooked," she said, "They couldn't get rid of me… since then, I've appeared in many, many plays, I've directed, I've produced, I've cleaned toilets. I've served on the board. I've done just about everything, except building sets. I can paint but I sure can't put it all together."

ANGELA COVEY

When **Audra Sargent** graduated from law school and moved back to Fort Smith to take a job at a local firm, she did not know many people and was looking to make new friends. Although Audra was not interested in acting, she enjoyed working on the set—at first to help with props and then as a stage manager. She also interacted with the wide variety of personalities drawn to FSLT. "I made friends," she said. "It wasn't long before they invited me to dinner, and I had a place to go that wasn't home or work." Audra is now a member of the Fort Smith Little Theatre Board of Directors.

Nancy Blochberger began volunteering for the FSLT in 1991. When she and her husband sold their business, Nancy had time on her hands. She had performed in a couple of high school programs and attended FSLT plays with her parents on occasion, so she offered to work on props for the FSLT. However, she was asked to read a part on stage. Before she knew it, she had been picked to play M'Lynn in *Steel Magnolias*. She says, "And here I am today."

NANCY BLOCHBERGER

Although Nancy enjoys being on the stage from

(LEFT) Program from "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest" **(RIGHT)** Carole Rogers and James Richardson in a scene from "Pride and Prejudice." **(CENTER)** The cast photo from the Fort Smith Little Theatre's 1975 production of "A Man for All Seasons."

(Images courtesy of the Fort Smith Little Theatre)

time to time, she felt she would be more useful to the group using her background in business and marketing. In fact, she ended up serving in many capacities over the years. For example, in 1996, she proposed to the board that she spearhead a project to pave and light the FSLT parking area as well as some adjacent land owned by the Fort Smith Art Center. She and her team raised the money to complete that project without having to borrow. She says, "It was a wonderful first experience for me working in a construction improvement project and coordinating things with the Board of Directors."

Nancy also served on the board, worked on various committees to build and update the North O Street theater, and edited the *75th FSLT 1947-2022 Anniversary Celebration Book*. Most significantly, she is committed to a community theater that is financially stable and self-sufficient. Much of her focus over the years has been to help FSLT achieve those goals.

Actor and director **Carole Rogers** performed in some of FSLT's most iconic plays—debuting in *Social Security* in 1992 and repeating it in 2008 with a sly comment in the second program, "Sophie Greenglass is still the same delightfully irascible character she was sixteen years ago. I, on the other hand, no longer need makeup to apply her facial lines and wrinkles."

CAROLE ROGERS IN CALENDAR GIRLS

On the FSLT site, Carole remembers the moment when her life as an actress began in earnest, "I did well until opening night when I was standing in the wings, waiting for my cue. Suddenly, I realized someone had opened the doors and let people in. My heart began to pound, my hands were sweating, and suddenly I couldn't remember my name. But like a robot, when my cue came, off I went. The show was a hit, and I cried when it was over. Because I didn't know anyone at theater, I didn't feel anyone else would ever cast me. But these wonderful people not only accepted me but invited me into their circle."

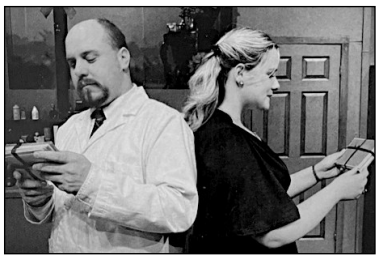
Carole continued turning in hilarious performances in shows like *Calendar Girls* and *Glitter Girls*. However, she also embraced period pieces like *Pride and Prejudice* where she played Lady Catherine to Michael Richardson's Mr. Bennet. Perhaps one of her biggest productions was when she directed the musical, *Beauty and the Beast*.

Carole's contributions to the Little Theatre have been enormous as have those of her late husband, James Rogers, who built many sets for shows that Carole and Angela Covey directed. "He passed away in 2012, and he has really been missed at the theater," said Micki Voelkel.

Joe Graham also found camaraderie, purpose, and fun at FSLT. Aside from acting and directing, Joe guides parties to their seats or works at the front desk. He is often the first familiar face ticketholders see when they arrive at the theater. And currently, he also is serving on the board. On the FSLT website, Joe remembers, "I was fortunate enough to be in two of the most powerful dramas that we have produced. I was the foreman in *12 Angry Men*. We hated to see that show end. It was such a powerful experience. Then I was cast as Scanlon in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. As the production came together and we came to know our

characters, we became the "Boys in Blue." My director told me that I made her cry every night. That made me feel very good…that I was doing a good job."

John Hall was a college student focused on acting when he first found his way to the Fort Smith Little Theatre. At first, he just watched the performances—and learned. Then, he began showing up for casting calls. John is a thoughtful person—more interested in acting than directing. He likes to understand the characters he portrays and spends his prep time pondering what that person might be thinking and how he relates to people in general and to the other characters in particular. An advocate of the Stanislavski Method[2], John thinks deeply about who he portrays. He believes there are underlying truths beneath a character's casual conversations and that understanding what they might be is the key to giving a meaningful performance.



JOHN HALL and Emilee Dale in "Parfumerie"

John's favorite role was McMurphy in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. He was onstage most of the whole show, and he loved that challenge. His character was a troubled, angry liar trying to jury-rig the system to benefit himself. And yet, he was willing to take up for those around him. McMurphy challenged John to work hard and think deeply. "Humans are so complex," he said. "We say so much while saying very little."

When **Tina Dale** first tried out for parts, she was almost always picked to be the pretty girl as she is indeed very pretty. However, as her confidence in her abilities grew with experience—and with the encouragement of her colleagues and directors, she began to try out for—and get—more challenging and interesting parts. Director Micki Voelkel says that getting away from the "girlfriend" roles revealed Tina's inner comedian. Tina says that although she really wanted to be Mrs. Robinson in *The Graduate*, she loved playing Benjamin's mother and throwing the tantrum that made the audience roar with laughter at the universal frustrations of parenting. Like other performers, Tina was interested in and encouraged by others to try her hand at directing. Her directorial debut was *The Holiday Channel Christmas Movie Wonderthon* in December 2021. Tina also serves on the current board.

TINA DALE

Charles Belt was already an experienced actor and comedian when he found his way to the Fort Smith Little Theatre. A native of Muldrow, Oklahoma, he was in a period of renewal when he decided to try out for a role in *The Graduate*. He was more than pleased to get a significant part that was both challenging and fun. Since that run, he has performed in a variety of plays that used his talents in new and interesting ways. On stage, Charles has a presence that draws the eye, and yet he is a team player, working in concert with his fellow actors to create the story. He too is a board member.

CHARLES BELT

Eric Wells got the acting bug as a teenager—and he is still scratching that itch. At the Fort Smith Little Theatre, he has performed in musicals, comedies, and dramas. He has been the unsung hero and the villain. He has played cute and nefarious, clever and slimy, charming and dangerous. He still loves acting, of course—but over the years, he has added a little of this and a little of that to his portfolio, like directing, narrating an audiobook and novel writing. "It's fun to step out of your box…out of your comfort zone," he says. Eric's favorite acting role from his years of performing at FSLT was Lumiere in *Beauty and the Beast*. Created by Hannah Curlin Marsdon, Eric's gold costume with lamps for hands brought a big laugh when he first appeared on stage, but his body language kept the audience chuckling throughout the evening.

ERIC WELLS AS LUMIERE IN *BEAUTY AND THE BEAST*

Jamie Lambdin-Bolin is a seasoned FSLT playwright, performer, and director. In November 2022, her play *Coffee Shop* will premiere as part of the 2022 season. On the FSLT website, she says, "I joined the FSLT family in the 2012 production *Little Women: Meg, Jo, Beth & Amy* (directed by Micki Voelkel), and have enjoyed participating on and off the stage. The magic of FSLT is in the fact that it is

COFFEE SHOP, A PLAY BYJAMIE LAMBDIN-BOLIN

entirely volunteer-operated. Volunteers of all ages put in countless hours every year, creating memories, and staging excellent shows."

"I got the bug early," **Micki Voelkel** said. "I saw a school play when I was seven and went home wrote one and badgered my teacher until she let us do it." That was just the beginning. As a youngster, she went on to perform in school plays and Fort Smith Children's Theater (later renamed the Young Actors' Guild). As she moved into her teens, she became interested in the Fort Smith Little Theatre. Many of the volunteers were the parents of kids she had performed with in the Children's Theater.

However, "I never seemed to get out there. I may have tried out a time or two," she says, "But nothing worked out before I went away to college. The second summer I came home, they were doing a musical at the old theater on South O, *An Evening with Cole Porter*. It was put together and directed by Jay Burke who we just lost this year. Jay was really a brilliant musician and he put together all these Cole Porter songs and fashioned a review out of it. So, I did that one show at the old theater and that's the one and only time I performed there."

An accomplished actor, singer and director, Micki has embraced the Little Theatre for most of her adult life, only taking breaks to get her doctorate. When asked what part she has not played yet but has her eye on, she said, "I want to play Annie Wilkes in *Misery*!" Now that would be quite a show!

THE MANY FACES OF MICKI VOELKEL

Deceased Little Theatre Volunteers

These memories come from the Fort Smith Little Theatre webpage. Many were posted by Nancy Blochburger in memory of her friends and colleagues.

Nancy remembers **Katy Boulden** on the FSLT website: "Katy Boulden, who passed away in November 2019, actively contributed her time and talent over several decades as a board member, producer, director, and actress at FSLT. In addition, she used her love of language to pen countless newsletters and season brochures, even into her later years. I was honored to share the stage with Katy in my first ever production at FSLT in 1991. It was in that show that she fell and broke her arm backstage but refused to go to the hospital until the final curtain closed. She didn't just play a role in *Steel Magnolias*; to me she epitomized the title."

KATY BOULDEN

Nancy describes **Phanita Williams** as an active volunteer performer—on and off stage, an audience member, a season pass patron, and a financial donor. Beginning in the 1960s, Phanita supported the theater for nearly forty years. She stepped in to help wherever she was needed—from props, to wardrobe, to hospitality, to being a show producer. She was a very special lady with an ever-present smile who never sought the spotlight. Nancy emphasizes, "We are all a little richer for having known her as a part of our FSLT family." (Deceased 2017).

*FSLT volunteers from the era who have passed away include Connie Freeman, Betty Connor, Rhed Khilling, Jim Baker, Ed Drimmel, Ed Louise Ballman, Jay Burke, Orin Frank, Wendy Quick, Ray Coleman, Carl McCauley, Bruce Birkhead, and Kaye Birkhead. Their memories are treasured by FSLT veterans and audiences.

*FSLT veterans and current volunteers who will be also featured on the Red Engine Press Blog in the coming months and years are Paula Sharum, Aaron Ray, Brad Kidder, Sr., Brad Kidder, Jr., Brandon Bolin, Jamie Lambdin-Bolin, Rikkee Workman-Black and many others.

FSLT Romances

Given the many hours of hard work required to put on a show, FSLT volunteers often find friends who have similar interests. Sometimes, couples share a love of the theater and volunteer together. Nancy

Blochberger and her husband have participated in many ways throughout the years—from acting to serving on the board to making repairs to handling financial issues. Carole Rogers acted and directed while her husband, James, built sets. Rikkee Workman-Black and her husband, Scott Black, often direct shows together—and sometimes perform together. Jon and Lynne Gustafson do musicals together. Sometimes people find each other at the theater. Romances begin and sometimes those romances turn into marriages.

Jamie Lambdin and **Brandon Bolin** were Facebook friends. However, they met in person in the fall of 2016 when Jamie was cast in *The Game's Afoot: Home for the Holidays* by Ken Ludwig and directed by Duff Taylor. Their meeting led to romance and their romance led to a wedding on May 18, 2019—the day a tornado came to town. "Everyone had to rush to the basement when the sirens went off," Jamie said. "I've met some lifelong friends here and have fallen out in laughter countless times in the green room kitchen with Eric Wells, spent long hours working on sets with my husband, Brandon, and my parents-in-law, and have enjoyed sharing our wedding day with our theater family. I love watching people meet and find their best friends—and sometimes future spouses—here."

JAMIE LAMBDIN AND BRANDON BOLIN

The most recent romance began when **Charles Belt** noticed **Audra Sargent**. Soon he was showing up at the theater even when he was not rehearsing or had anything in particular to do. And while Audra enjoyed his company, she prefers taking things slowly. And so, it took Charles awhile to woo her, but it turned out that they had lots more in common than just the Little Theatre. For example, they share a love of puzzles—and escape rooms. In fact, when their relationship progressed to the point he was sure she would say yes, Charles found an escape room in Eureka Springs to help him pop the question. He called the owners to work out how to make this experience unique. "You know," the owner said, "I have this thing that I've never been able to use. It's puzzle piece that when you put it together, it says, 'Will you marry me?'" Charles decided that was perfect and together with the owner, he arranged the date and time he'd propose.

CHARLES BELT AND AUDRA SARGENT

However, when Charles tried get Audra to go to Eureka Springs, she expressed concerns about travel because of the pandemic. By the selected day, Charles had convinced Audra to go. As they tackled the escape room, they had an hour to solve the puzzle. As the clock ticked down, Audra found the extra "special" puzzle and focused on putting it together. Charles stood behind her and when it looked like she was about to solve it, he dropped to his knee holding the ring. When, it looked like she was not going to solve it, he hid the ring and stood back up. Audra tried again. The moment Audra figured out that the puzzle said, "Will you marry me?" she turned to see Charles kneeling with a ring.

The ceremony took place at the Little Theatre, surrounded with their FSLT friends. Even given how many common interests they share and how much they enjoy each other's company, their lives were so different that had not each of them found their way to the little theater on North Sixth, it seems unlikely that their paths would have crossed.

For all the pleasure the Little Theatre has brought audiences in the last seventy-five years, it will be interesting to watch how those who volunteer in the next ten, twenty-five, fifty and seventy-five years keep the Little Theatre on North B alive and growing.

ENDNOTES

[1] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Laurence_Luckinbill

[2] The Stanislavski system or method is an approach to and film acting developed by Russian practitioner Konstantin Stanislavski. Through preparation and rehearsal, the system aims to create an emotionally expressive and authentic performance. Actors internalize their character's inner life, including their motivations and emotional states. https://www.masterclass.com/articles/stanislavski-method.

Fort Smith, Dardanelle and the True Grit Trail

By Tom Shay

"A lot of people leave Arkansas and most of them come back sooner or later. They can't quite achieve escape velocity."

—Charles Portis

Perhaps that is me. Our beautiful state, its colorful, generous people, and my family history, always kept me coming back. Now I'm home to stay. It's love, not gravity that brought me back though.

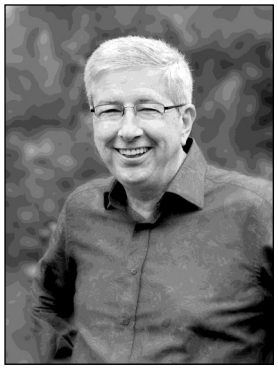
Coming home turned out to be so much more than I expected or planned. The remodeling of the family home in Fort Smith will be completed by the time you read this, and we'll be enjoying being here. Coming home, I knew I'd be remembered as "Buster Brown's grandson" and that I'd hear wonderful stories from people who traded with my grandfather.

Now I am also known as the "Marshal of the True Grit Trail," a fast growing effort by people of the River Valley to bring tourists and their dollars to our area. This is my story of both.

The day I moved to Florida in 1973, I remember telling my parents that while I'd enjoy working and living in Florida, I wouldn't remain as a full-time resident forever. I went there because I wanted to follow in the footsteps of three generations of our family and become a retailer. My parents had bought a store in Sarasota, and I moved there to become a part of the family business. While I found my wife, Marilyn, in Sarasota, and even as we raised our three children on the west coast of Florida, Arkansas never stopped calling.

Jump ahead to 2016. We were still living in Florida, but we were a step closer to returning to Arkansas—specifically, Fort Smith—as we acquired the home on the east side of Fort Smith that my grandparents bought in 1958. While I very well remembered when my grandparents lived on top of the store on 6th street, it was this "new" house that I always considered home.

The significance of 2016 was a call from a friend in Dardanelle. There was land for sale on Mt Nebo. Perhaps we might be interested? It was a short



TOM SHAY

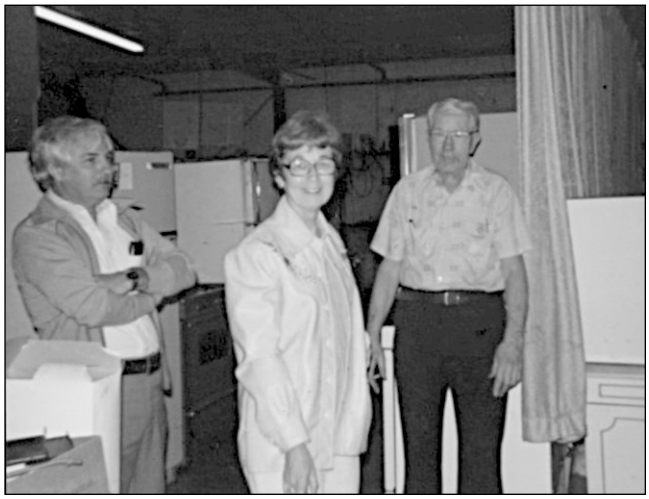
conversation. Marilyn quickly said, "Let's buy it." Another significance to 2016 was that it was the beginning of the True Grit Trail. We'd moved from Fort Smith to Dardanelle in 1961 when my dad bought his first store. Then Charles Portis' book, *True Grit*, arrived on the scene in 1968. The following year, it was made into a movie starring John Wayne and Glen Campbell. Kim Darby played Mattie Ross, who traveled from Dardanelle to Fort Smith to find the man who killed her father.

Growing up in Dardanelle and spending a lot of time in Fort Smith with my extended family, I remember unsuccessful efforts to capitalize on this opportunity to bring attention to the River Valley. Later in 2016, as I was driving from Minneapolis toward the northwest, I saw a sign on the Interstate noting the "Lake Wobegon Trail" which was an ongoing story told by Garrison Keeler on NPR (National Public Radio.)

I thought, "Why not a True Grit Trail?" And that was the beginning of the True Grit Trail posse. While the story of the True Grit Trail will be the subject of another article, it is the trail and a visit with Joyce Faulkner at the Fort Smith Museum of History that created the basis of this story.

While Marilyn had been to Arkansas many times, it was only after we spent Christmas in this new house on Mt. Nebo, along with the impending remodel of my grandparent's home, and this surprisingly strong interest in The True Grit Trail that we said goodbye to our adult children in Florida—and called Arkansas home. Uniquely, with the True Grit Trail, we could call both of my hometowns "home." With the Fort Smith house at least a year away from completion, I understood when folks asked how I was going to get people in Fort Smith to help develop the True Grit Trail. "That's my hometown," I'd say, "… and I have an 'in' that will help with introductions and connections."

This was clearly demonstrated while attending the Bass Reeves trial at the Fort Smith Museum of History



(LEFT) Tom Shay is shown sitting on his mother's lap as his grandfather, "Buster Brown," feeds him ice cream.

(ABOVE) Tom Shay's parents and grandfather, "Buster Brown," are shown.

(Photos courtesy of the author)

as Bill Word introduced me to Joyce Faulkner with a preface of, "He's Buster Brown's grandson." With that, Joyce invited me to write and tell the story of my family in Fort Smith.

The earliest picture I can find of our family comes from January 1924 with what appears to be my great-grandfather, G.W. Brown, standing proudly in his new store. The story I was told was that he had a job working in the Fort Smith scissor factory. That job didn't last long because he didn't like the noise in the factory. Job number two was working as a clerk in a store that was owned by a Mr. Carnes. The store was located across Sixth street from what most will remember as our family store. Apparently, Mr. Carnes was not a progressive owner. My great-grandfather was unable to talk him into adding a gas pump to the business!

In secret, G.W. Brown bought the land across the street from Carnes with the intention of opening his own general store – one with a gas pump. This was a bold move considering my great-grandparents, G.W. and Bessie, had five young sons. The five boys were Orbie, Kenneth, Lecil, Van and Buster. I have no memory of Great-Uncle Orbie. However, the other four are part of my memories of our family and our lives in Fort Smith.

Great-Uncle Kenneth lived on the north side of town and worked at Weldon, Williams, and Lick. While I didn't understand what WW&L did for many years, I do remember great-Uncle Kenneth was an avid Razorback fan, a family tradition that I, my children and grandsons have continued. Several of Uncle Kenneth's Razorback mementos are a part of my collection now.

Great-Uncle Lecil also became a retailer. He owned Interstate General Store which was located on Rogers Avenue in the area of today's Fort Smith Convention Center.

Great-Uncle Van (sometimes spelled Vann) became part of a furniture retailer in Kansas but in retirement returned to Fort Smith. Uncle Van, in words, action and appearance, reminded me so much of my grandfather—much to my joy as my grandfather passed in 1984.

Uncle Van had a standout career in football at Fort Smith High School and was a two-way starter for the Arkansas Razorbacks. He was a part of the team that won the first Southwest Conference championship. In his later years, Uncle Van held the distinction of being the oldest living Razorback letter-man. To that extent, in 2005 we enjoyed Uncle Van being recognized at the first game of the year as a "Razorback legend." It was such a thrill to watch him signing autographs and walking onto the field, wearing his #27 jersey, and getting to toss the coin at the start of the game.

While I have unique memories of and great fondness for each of my great-uncles, it is my grandfather who everyone remembers most. Wandering around Facebook, it seems to be a monthly event for someone to share a memory of him on the "If you ever lived in Fort Smith, Arkansas" page.

Perhaps it was my childhood observations of my grandfather that caused me to become a retailer—those experiences as well as my days as a youth watching my father in the stores that he owned in Dardanelle, Danville and Morrilton.

After my great-grandparents retired and moved to the south side of Fort Smith, my grandparents—Verna and Buster Brown—lived in the house that was above the original store. Together, they owned and managed it. Seventeen-eleven North Sixth Street with a phone number of Sunset 3-1141. Over the years, there were many additions to it. My memory of the store was that there were a couple of free-standing buildings, but the main one faced sixth street with the grocery side facing fifth street as did the sporting goods and hardware section.

It was 1958 when my grandparents bought the home on the east side of Fort Smith. Their older daughter, my mother Shirley, had married eight years earlier to a soldier from Chaffee that she had been introduced to at what was then a Methodist Church on Grand Avenue. The younger daughter, Wilma Jean, continued living with her parents while she was in nursing school and then spent her career at Sparks. They did not spend a long time as a family in the new home as my grandparents divorced. My grandmother and aunt remained in the family home.

Most of the comments in the Facebook group remember my grandparents, Buster and Mary. Mary was his second wife. She came to the marriage with two sons—Kenneth and Leroy. Leroy still lives in the Fort Smith area and Kenneth has passed away. Together, Buster and Mary had a son they named Buster, Jr. Their son now lives in the Tulsa area and operates a bike shop.

Frequently the conversations follow the Facebook tradition of getting onto some sidetrack conversation. When they see the name Buster Brown, the conversation drifts into the shoes that their parents bought them. That is not my Buster Brown. The shoe Buster Brown was based on a cartoon character utilized by National Shoe Company from St. Louis. And no, my grandfather did not sell Buster Brown shoes. They were a bit too pricey for his store.

I can easily ask people if they were a "working class" family. If so, they likely knew and traded with my grandfather. There are many stories I have heard or experienced about my grandfather. I frequently hear him mentioned as, "Sam Walton before we had Sam Walton."

My Aunt Jean called me one day at my home in Florida to share a story. The heating/cooling system in the home was being serviced. There was a label from the service company adhered to the side of the unit and on the sticker, someone had written, "Brown." The technician mentioned the sticker and said the only Brown family he knew was Buster Brown. Confirming this had been his house, the man had a story to share.

He had worked in a furniture factory in town and was laid off from his job just before Christmas. He came to the store and asked my grandfather to hold the ticket until the man got another job. My grandfather told the man to do his shopping and when he came to checkout to call for my grandfather to get his approval. At the checkout counter, my grandfather noted that he remembered the man previously shopping in the store with his family. The shopping cart had groceries but no Christmas gifts for his family. "Your Dad", he told Aunt Jean, "told me to do my Christmas shopping." He did—and he paid off the bill as promised. He also said his family would not have made it if that had not been allowed.

When my grandfather passed, my mom and aunt found a box of register receipts for the unpaid bills. They decided to add up the tickets and found there was over $100,000 in unpaid receipts. I have always said my grandfather was a very rich man—not because of this story, but because of the wonderful relationship he had with the people in the community.

Many people remember a stormy Friday night in April when lightning hit the store. Oddly enough, everything but the original building burnt. I remember being at the store that day and people coming to the store. I don't remember what all they could buy, but both floors of the building were a warehouse of merchandise for the rest of the store. My grandfather also rented several houses in the area which he used as storage for new appliances to be sold in the store. The store continued in that building, and in the new building that Cotton Gramlich built to replace the burnt one. My grandfather closed the store in 1982. Both he and Mary passed in 1984. My grandmother passed in 2000.

As I get older, I realize there are fewer and fewer people that remember my grandfather. The building has been razed as I am told the city now uses the land for buried water and sewer lines. There is, however, a sizable piece of that building that hangs in my home. Most everyone likes to stand on their own reputation. My hope is that True Grit Trail will continue to grow and bring tourists and their dollars to the River Valley. However, I am very proud to be Buster Brown's grandson and honored to be the marshal of the True Grit Trail.

In closing, Buster was his nickname that he had as a child. For now, I'll keep his real name to myself.

Carl Riggins: On the Air

Creating and Saving Media History in Fort Smith

By Sue Robinson

When Carl Riggins was twelve years old, he had a newspaper route. He picked up the daily editions at Prince Drug Store at the top of Towson Avenue in Fort Smith and rode his bike through nearby neighborhoods delivering papers to subscribers. Carl collected his wages and counted his change until he managed to set aside two dollars, plus fifteen cents for postage, which he mailed off to purchase a microphone from the Allied Radio catalog. The microphone the boy received hooked into the household radio, allowing access to the unit's speakers. With the flick of a switch, the youngster was broadcasting in his own home. It was the first time Carl Riggins signed on air.

Like most American families after World War II, the household of auto mechanic Ralph Riggins and his wife, Zadie, considered its radio an essential part of their daily lives. Since Carl was born in April 1942, much of his youth involved listening to international news over the airwaves delivered by local commentator Glen O'Neal, who gave the morning headlines on KWHN radio, and Pat Garner who followed with news at noon.

Radio broadcasting in Fort Smith was not much older than Carl when the young man first heard his voice transmitted through his family's living room radio. According to the book *Arkansas Airwaves*, the John Fink Jewelry Store licensed WCAC Radio on May 1, 1922, broadcasting from a home on North Sixth Street. On September 19 of the same year, the license was renewed for three months. The station's owners never renewed beyond that point and WCAC was deleted from the United States list of radio stations in June 1923.

The *Southwest American* newspaper closely followed the development and eventual failure of the Fink's radio station. Once WCAC was removed from the official government list, the newspaper stepped forward, picked up the license, and came on the air with WGAR Radio operating with twenty watts of power. The newspaper boasted of its venture into the new electronic medium of radio on the front page of its June 26, 1922, issue. Local radio was destined for yet another tumble in

(ABOVE) CARL RIGGINS in the control room of Radio Center, circa 1960.

(BELOW) Radio Center building, 1947.

(Fort Smith Historical Society)

1923 when the newspaper sold to a Tulsa publishing enterprise. The new owners considered radio competition for their newspaper business and closed the station without making proper notice to the government.

For a while, what passed as local radio in Fort Smith came from KVOO in Tulsa, WOAI in San Antonio, WGN in Chicago, and WNOE in New Orleans. It was advisable for listeners to tune after sunset for best reception. In April 1924, just eighteen years before Carl's birth, Reverend Lannie Steward was granted a license for KFPW radio at Saint John's College in Carterville, Missouri. The reverend moved to John Brown University in Siloam Springs, Arkansas,

(ABOVE) September 2018 sketch and photo of the Radio Center building.

(RIGHT) A display of the Radio Center building at the Fort Smith Museum of History in September 2018.

(Photos courtesy of the Fort Smith Museum of History)

in 1928, but returned to Missouri just a year later, leaving KFPW in Siloam Springs. It was during Reverend Stewart's short stay in Siloam Springs that the station's call letter slogan, "Kind Friends Please Write" was said to have been originated by Reverend John Brown during his early morning talk shows.

In May 1930, John England, who was manager of the Goldman Hotel in Fort Smith, and local radio dealer, Jimmie Barry, acquired the license for KFPW and moved the station south. Jessie Miller recounted the details to Carl Riggins in 1982 of how he, as station engineer, moved the transmitter and other equipment to the top floor of the Goldman Hotel. KFPW went on air at 1200 on the radio dial. Its suite at the Goldman Hotel consisted of a studio, a transmitter room, a reception area, and an office. In the 1930s, KFPW added a remote studio at Fentress Mortuary. It was from Fentress that the "Prayer for Peace and Hymn of the Day" was broadcast at 11:55 a.m. daily.

In 1947, Donald W. Reynolds, who owned two local newspapers at the time, received a license to put KFSA Radio on the air. Until that time, KFPW was Fort Smith's only local radio station. Reynolds operated KFSA from the third floor of the Southwestern House at 920 Rogers Avenue. The station signed on the air on March 3, 1947, broadcasting from a tower on Wheeler Avenue with the popular radio announcer, Pat Porta, at the microphone.

It appeared 1947 would be a busy year for radio. Clyde Randall and R. A. Young, Jr., put KRKN Radio on the air in May of that year with studios in the Professional Life Building at North Sixth and North "A" Streets. Found at 1230 on the dial, the station broadcast from a tower located at the intersection of North Fiftieth Street and North "O" Street. KRKN ceased operation in 1949. KFSA Radio purchased the station's studio and KFPW Radio gained assignment of their frequency at 1230 kilo cycles.

As a child, Carl enjoyed listening to the popular program, "No School Today" on KFSA Radio. The

Saturday morning show was hosted by Big John and Sparky and was rivaled for the child's attention only by "The Ella Allen Program," which featured local entertainment. Carl recalls as a youngster eagerly awaiting Dan Crawford's reading of the weekly school lunch menus on his radio program. During summer months, students enjoying a break from classes often listened to the network program, "Don McNeil's Breakfast Club."

Carl received his early education in Fort Smith and carried his love of radio to the classroom. As a fourth grader in Mrs. Kaiser's class at Belle Point School, Carl eagerly responded to his teacher's question about opera by proudly proclaiming before the class, "Oh, Mrs. Kaiser! We listen to it every Saturday night from the powerful station WSM in Nashville." Unfortunately for the boy, the program the Riggins family enjoyed was known as opry, not the style of opera the teacher had in mind.

Religion based on a strong faith was an important part of the Riggins household. Carl's life was shaped by his belief and, when he finally got his own radio for his bedroom in the 1950s, he quickly found the Christian broadcasts on the dial. His favorite was "The Radio Pulpit," which aired on KWHN Radio, followed by "The Holsum Singers." When Carl was sixteen years old, he met Edgar Palser at the First Assembly of God Church in Fort Smith. Palser came into the church as its Music Minister and started "The Family Alter Time" program on a new radio station broadcasting from Van Buren, Arkansas, under the call letters KFDF. Carl accompanied Mr. Palser to one of the program's live broadcasts. It was his first visit to a radio station and the first time he experienced a live broadcast. Much had already changed in the broadcast world by the first time Carl saw an "on the air" light shining above a broadcast booth in Van Buren.

Weldon Stamps put KTCS Radio on the AM signal in March 1956. The new station broadcast from a tower next to Beverly's Drive-In on Towson Avenue in Fort Smith. Little John Gregory became the famous pole sitter at KTCS, bringing tremendous attention to the new station. Weighing in at four-hundred and eight pounds, Gregory climbed the pole at the KTCS studio on August 1, 1956. When he came down the pole on March 3, 1957, Gregory weighed a slender two-hundred and ninety-six pounds. KTCS moved its studios and transmitter from Beverly's Drive-In to the Holiday Inn during the 1960s.

In May 1958, jewelry store owner George Hernreich purchased KFPW Radio from the Griffin Radio Company. That was the same year KFDF-AM went on the air from Van Buren's downtown studio under the ownership of Harry Fisher, Jack Dennison, and Paul Freeman.

CARL RIGGINS AND JIM ROUGHLEY, April 2022.

(Photo courtesy of Sue Robison)

The biggest news of the nineteen fifties came on July 19, 1953. At 4:22 p.m. that afternoon, Don Reynolds, who owned the local newspaper and KFSA Radio, put Arkansas' first television station on the air. The third floor of Reynold's newspaper building was expanded to house KFSA Television, located at channel 22 on the dial. Pat Porta, who was an announcer on the Reynolds owned radio station at the time, often recalled to Carl Riggins and other media personalities how people sat in rapt attention watching a test pattern airing on the signal before the station signed on with programming. "Bow-tie" antennas suddenly appeared in in Fort Smith pointing toward the tall tower extending upward to the clouds from atop the newspaper office on Rogers Avenue.

There were plans to convert the three-story Reynolds Building into a modern television plant for KFSA-TV to be called Television Center, but a fire destroyed the top floor of the building, and the plans were scrapped. Detailed drawings for the ill-fated Television Center were published in the June 6, 1954, issue of the *Southwest Times* newspaper.

When television went on the air in Fort Smith in 1953, First Baptist Church at Grand Avenue and North 13th Street was quick to follow with live broadcasts from its sanctuary. The church aired its first televised service one week after the historic premier of local television. It was the first church service to be broadcast in the Fort Smith area, and the beginning of a years-long programming tradition that began on Channel 22 and continued on KFSM-TV5.

When Ramsey Junior High School opened in 1954, Carl Riggins was one of the first students through the door. It was at Ramsey that he met Fort Smith artist, John Bell. The two formed a friendship that continued into their adult lives. John Bell became a noted local artist, capturing the history of Fort Smith on canvas. Eventually, Carl asked his friend, John, to paint a picture of the old sanctuary of First Baptist Church. At first, the artist explained he did not paint churches, but eventually he granted Riggins his wish and painted First Baptist Church as it looked facing North Thirteenth Street. Titled, "Sunday Morning," the piece became one of the most notable John Bell prints.

During his time as a Ramsey student, Carl took on the responsibility of delivering both morning and afternoon newspapers to raise his own money. The morning papers were delivered at 4:30 a.m., and the afternoon newspapers were ready for the readers at 3:30 p.m. every weekday. His arduous work paid off when the youngster finally raised enough cash to purchase a seventeen-inch black-and-white television set for his bedroom. In 1955, the Riggins family bought its own bow-tie antenna and pointed it toward the newspaper building.

As a graduate of Fort Smith High School, Carl holds dear the memories of days spent in Edna Earl Massey's Mixed Chorus. He recalls learning the music from *76 Trombones* and practicing what he would later call one of his favorite songs, *The Hallelujah Chorus*. Memories of annual Christmas concerts at First United Methodist Church always give him reason to smile, as do the words of teachers encouraging the young man to seek a career behind a microphone.

In July 1960, Carl and friend Alvin Bankston started a Saturday morning radio program, *The Christian Youth Hour*. Alvin was the speaker and Carl was the narrator and producer. The young men used vinyl albums for musical background and produced the show in the KTCS studio while the station was off the air. Tom Fite, who owned Beverly's Drive-In and co-owned KTCS Radio, was Carl's Sunday school teacher and one of his most enthusiastic supporters. After Alvin left town for college, he sent his sermons home to Carl who continued to produce the program for air on KTCS Radio.

A year later, in 1961, Carl and Alvin began working with the youth at Arkoma Assembly of God. The pair recorded a one-hour program from the church until Carl loaded up his 1957 Bel Air and headed off to Southwestern Assembly of God College in Waxahachie, Texas. Carl and Alvin changed the name of their program to "The Challenge," and it was produced on a brand-new reel-to-reel recorder they purchased at Wise Radio in Fort Smith. With Carl functioning as producer, the program aired on KTCS in Fort Smith, as well as a local station in Seattle, a missionary station in Haiti, and from time to time on Dallas stations WRR and KSKY.

Life was not easy for the young student in Texas, who found himself stretched between radio production work, part-time jobs to help with expenses, and his studies. Carl's friend, Edgar Palser, helped the struggling scholar gain employment at the First Assembly of God Church in Dallas, some twenty-five miles from the Bible Institute campus. Carl served as church secretary, occasionally assisting with the church's weekly radio program. Although Carl only spent one school year in Texas, he credits the experience for giving him a better understanding of church ministry. After careful deliberation, Carl decided to return home and continue his education at Fort Smith's Junior College.

With a two-dollar bill given to him by his older brother Roy for emergencies, Carl headed home. His brother's gift was enough for the young student to buy the gas he needed for the trip, a hamburger, and a soft drink to sustain him as he traveled, and still have a bit of change for his pocket. It was the gift Carl never forgot, and one he duplicated to hundreds of friends through the years.

Upon returning to Fort Smith from Texas, Carl took his first real job in media at KFDF Radio at 711½ Main Street in downtown Van Buren, Arkansas. The young student received $1.25 per hour and clocked a total of twenty hours per work week. Carl began taking classes at Fort Smith Junior College, where he joined with his Speech professor, Hugh Carolan, to produce a weekly "College Comments" program on KWHN Radio. Carl also catered to one of his favorite professors during his time at KWHN by being certain to play a popular Al Hirt record between 6:30 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. each evening for the teacher's enjoyment.

It was December 1962 when Glenn O'Neal offered Carl his own radio program on KWHN. His on-air hours were from 6:30 p.m. until midnight, Monday through Thursday, and from 2:30 p.m. to midnight on Saturday and Sunday. O'Neal increased Carl's pay to $1.40 per hour and pointed out to the young man that he would be the only local disc jockey playing top forty music live on air nightly. The show was called the 1320 Club, and Carl Riggins went on the air under a nickname put on him by Glenn O'Neal, Little C.R.

While Little C.R. was spinning the Top 40 on KWHN, it was CBS programming and big band music

CARL RIGGINS in the Media Center in May 2022, left, and the news desk and camera on display as part of the On Air exhibit at the Fort Smith Museum of History in 2019.

(Photos courtesy of Sue Robison)

being played on KFPW Radio. KFSA Radio also featured Top 40 music, but it used the Silent Sam automated system, so no live disc jockey participated in their programs. The Van Buren station, KFDF Radio, was a day-time station featuring religious programming. Carl recalls having "the time of his life" during the four years he spent behind the microphone playing Top 40 tunes. The persona he put forth as Little C.R. lives in the memories of his listeners who still share stories of his radio show and the time they spent as members of the 1320 Club.

The Radio Center building at the corner of North Fifth Street and Garrison Avenue was the iconic broadcast location where Carl Riggins spent his "on air" time. He remembers Studio A on the second floor, and the studio auditorium. To the left was the mostly empty Studio B and, to the right, the announcer's booth where broadcasters reported daily news.

During the 1940s and 1950s, Studio A in the Radio Center building had a stage with two grand pianos and enough space for an audience of one-hundred guests. The studio hosted live programs such as "Saturday Night Jamboree," and was the showcase of the of the beautiful art-deco building that became the home of local radio programming in 1947. Studio "B" at the Radio Centre building was also home for Reverend Doctor Braxton Sawyer's program, "The Radio Pulpit," which aired for nearly three decades. Several of the Reverend's loyal listeners in the 1950s actually hiked through the woods north of Fort Smith seeking a non-existing nudist colony Dr. Sawyer tried desperately to put out of business for years.

In 1964, Bill and Ann Harper put the FM signal of KTCS on the air. Carl went to work for the new station shortly after it premiered but moved quickly to the newer 100,000-watt KMAG when it went on the air later in the year. With its transmitter at Mount Magazine, the station boasted the longest microwave link in the country, extending from Garrison Avenue in downtown Fort Smith to a mountain south of Paris, Arkansas.

The eager young disc jockey found a way to combine the new stations into one career for himself. Carl signed KMAG on the air at 5:30 a.m. with classical and easy listening music. KTCS Radio was strictly country tunes. Carl decided to work for both and with the approval of the station managers, the energetic young Riggins handled both stations with two different audiences with no problem, except when he had a tough time keeping his call letters straight.

By 1968, Carl was working full-time at KTCS. As he made his daily treks to work, he noticed the newer, fancier cars in the station parking lot belonged to the sales staff, not the on-air personalities. Carl made the hard decision to transfer to the sales department, and quickly brought in his first sponsors for the station: Violet Burton, who owned the 22 Drive-In Theater, and Joe McCutchen of McCutchen Pharmacy.

On August 17, 1971, Fred Baker signed KISR Radio on the air from his home on North Greenwood Road in Fort Smith. The new station broadcast from a pole behind the house. Carl knew Fred Baker from KTCS and worked with him when Fred purchased KFSA Radio from Donrey Media. While Carl never worked for the new station, he enjoyed watching its rapid audience growth. KISR Radio was instantly popular with Fort Smith's younger listeners, making itself famous with scavenger hunts featuring golden eggs and offering automobiles as grand prizes.

Carl eventually joined the sales team at KFSA

Radio, where he remained for twelve years. It was during this time Carl met the woman he would marry. On June 2, 1972, Carl Riggins and Teena Jackson Jordon were married. The couple raised four children in Fort Smith.

Changes were rapid and life-altering for the new Riggins family in the early 1980s. When Donrey Media sold KFSA Radio, Carl found himself switching to television, leaving his familiar world of radio. Carl's career change took him to Fort Smith's newest television station, KPOM, the local NBC network affiliate, where joined the sales staff.

Mastering a new mode of communication, Carl experienced a new audience, new friends, and new challenges. Eventually, he heard of a fledgling ministry at First Baptist Church that piqued his interest. While First Baptist had aired its services on Sundays since the advent of local television in Fort Smith, this was a new form of electronic ministry taking shape inside his own church. As his first venture into this new avenue of sharing the gospel, Carl volunteered for the tape ministry at First Baptist. He also went to the control room at TV-5, the station traditionally airing First Baptist services, with Don Moon to operate the character generator and audio during the weekly church broadcasts. It was a firsthand introduction to television that gave the volunteer a glimpse into the reach that medium offered. In 1982, Dr. Bill Bennett, the minister at First Baptist, invited Carl to take over the tape ministry at the church. Carl left KPOM, Channel 24, to become full-time Director of Media at his church.

The American Christian Television System was introduced locally in 1984. This was a venture of the Southern Baptist Radio and Television operation, offering twenty-four-hour Christian broadcasting. A board of eight local churches, with Carl serving as Secretary/Treasurer and Executive Director of the television station, was formed to establish the network in Fort Smith. The group put ACTS, later to become The Inspirational Network, on the local Cox Cable system.

Broadcasting from a studio at First Baptist Church near downtown Fort Smith, the station offered four to five hours of local programming inserted into what was provided nationally. One of the new network's first ventures was to tape the Bailey Smith Crusade at Fort Smith's Harper Stadium for air on the ACTS network. "Fort Smith Alive" was one of the most popular programs on the channel. Hosted by volunteers Cheri Edwards and Joe Riggins, the program offered local non-profits, religious, and educational organizations the opportunity to promote their causes, invite the public to their events, and give a face and a voice to their efforts and projects.

CARL RIGGINS talks to local students in 2022.

(Photo courtesy of Sue Robison)

Carl Riggins served as media director at First Baptist Church for twenty-five years. His official retirement took place in 2007 at sixty-five years old. Deciding he was not ready to back away from his post completely, Carl remained as a volunteer part-time manager for the church's broadcast program until its on-air run ended in 2018.

Carl was well known for several accomplishments during his time as media director for First Baptist—and for always wearing a tie. Saying he wore a tie any time he entered the church, no matter the reason, Carl considered his formal attire a show of respect for the church and its mission.

He was also famous for his microphone collection. Carl had long been on the look-out for discarded media equipment used by local broadcasters. He gathered bits and pieces of non-working machines for his friend, Jim Roughly, to magically bring back to life. However, it was the microphones that held Carl's attention. His office overflowed with them at First Baptist Church—and after his retirement, his house became their new home. Even after retirement, his friends continued bringing him items they considered interesting or important, and Carl kept an eager eye open for those special items you only find if you take the time to search them out.

Finding fellow collectors, Carl took membership in the Antique Radio Club. The new associates were instrumental in increasing his burgeoning collection which included the first KFPW Radio microphone from 1930, the first KFSA Radio microphone from 1947, and the first KWHN Radio microphone from

1947. These treasures were added to the display housing Carl's favorite microphone—the extremely rare, refurbished RCA 77DX, circa 1950, given to him as a retirement gift from First Baptist Church. Retirement opened doors and freed time for Carl. Soon he was focusing more on his collection of historical media artifacts, filling the Riggins home with his treasures.

Carl was joined in retirement by his wife, Teena, who left her position at Arkansas Best Freight. It was during her years at Arkansas Best that Teena Riggins met Diane White. The two women became friends and often discussed the college classes Diane was studying, as well as projects required to complete a master's level course of study in museum management. Teena hit upon the idea of Diane working her projects around Carl's media collection to create a display at the local museum. Leisa Gramlich, Executive Director of the Fort Smith Museum of History at the time, was fascinated with Diane White's proposition and, as a result, the temporary Media Exhibit opened in the museum's Boyd Gallery on August 16, 2012. The majority of Carl's personal collection, along with items donated or loaned to the display, made up the "On the Air" exhibit.

Opening night for the Boyd Gallery display brought together some of the best-known figures from local media. Milt Earnhart, the first television weathercaster in Fort Smith when he went on air in 1953, was on hand to view the exhibit. Jack Freeze, who announced on local radio stations in the 1940s while still attending senior high school, was another notable guest. Earnhart became one of the most recognizable names and faces of Fort Smith media, and Freeze would become a popular Fort Smith mayor.

A telephone radio built in Fort Smith in the 1920s by Jimmie Barry and E. W. Young was one of the items featured in the Boyd Gallery Exhibit. A 1930s radio and a 1939 Peter Pan radio added to the collection of rare units on display. A small version of a 1940s living room took one corner of the space, providing modern families a look at the style of radio that provided news and entertainment during one of America's most historic eras. An audio board, a 1960s era turntable, and a reel-to-reel player were added to the display.

Rock-and-roll had its own space in the exhibit. One wall of the gallery was adorned with 45 rpm records, photos of local and national musicians, and even an operating Wurlitzer Zodiac jukebox straight from the Lotta-Burger drive-in restaurant on South Zero Street in Fort Smith. Television history was on

MILT EARNHART, KFSA's original weatherman.

(Photo courtesy of KFSM)

display, as well. The oldest piece of video memorabilia was a 1928 mechanical television, which caught the attention of many guests. Photos of popular local television personalities decorated the display, as well as a miniature news anchor desk for guests who wanted to sit in front of a camera and deliver their own newscast.

The temporary exhibit was planned for a four-month display, but it stayed in place for ten months. Soon schools were bringing students to tour the museum with a special stop scheduled for the "On the Air" exhibit. Carl started volunteering to meet with those students, demonstrate the equipment and share with them first-hand stories of local media history. It is a service he still offers visiting students.

Carl approached the museum's director about the possibility of building a permanent display for the media exhibit, which had outgrown his original collection. Gramlich was willing to consider his proposal, and it fell to Carl to sketch his idea for the permanent exhibit. There were a few false starts, but Carl eventually produced a diagram Gramlich believed would work for the museum. Carl and the director settled on an estimated cost of twenty-five to thirty thousand dollars for the project, budgeting for donated goods to help offset expenses. Carl already had received an anonymous $5,000 donation, so he set off with unflinching faith to raise the remaining funds. It was less than a week later that one of Carl's friends offered to match the anonymous donation. Handing Carl five-thousand dollars in cash he recently won at a local casino, the man insisted he be the one to match the first gift. After that, donations came from friends and others who shared Carl's love of media until the cost of the new exhibit was completely covered.

With a design meant to imitate the demolished Radio Center building, the exhibit features glass blocks donated by the Fort Smith Home Depot store. Builders Monte Smith and Easy Barber completed the construction on the eastern wall of the Fort Smith Museum of History's second floor. The structure is strong enough to support large equipment and control panels donated to the display, and spacious enough to house the continuing donations received from fascinated fans of media history.

Along with Carl's collection of microphones, the exhibit features a small news desk built for the use of museum guests, a television control panel, walls of photos of media personalities, and uniquely designed vintage radios and televisions. A teletype machine springs to life at Carl's touch and chatters out as it did when sending news to long-ago local announcers. Carl uses the paper from the machine to keep tally of the students visiting the display during a school year. As many as 1,500 youngsters a year have heard music played on a turntable and watched a camera light cue them to action while they stand in front of a chalkboard weather map.

One of the most striking donations to the media exhibit is a camera once used for live broadcasts at the old Channel 22 television station housed in the newspaper office. When the studios at 920 Rogers Avenue closed, Bob Thompson, a newspaper employee, salvaged the camera. He took it to his home—and there it rested quietly until after his death. Approaching Thompson's daughter, Carl was able to confirm the historical camera still existed. With the daughter's blessing, Carl retrieved it from where it was stored in the back of a Volkswagen and gave it a home at the Fort Smith Museum of History. Today the camera rests atop a base donated by ACTS Television and is one of the most popular items in the "On the Air" display.

Jim Roughley has been at Carl's side since the beginning of the exhibit project. As a disc jockey on local radio stations, Jim developed his own fondness for media memorabilia and volunteered his services to help develop of the museum display. He is instrumental in repairing vintage radios and televisions and returning them to service. He also led the installation of radio equipment allowing the exhibit to broadcast its own radio signal inside the Fort Smith Museum of History building. Jim and Carl, along with other local media personalities, developed the "On the Air" exhibit into a true, operating media center.

Current Executive Director of the Fort Smith Museum of History Caroline Speir continues to support the ever-growing "On the Air" exhibit. As the museum welcomes both adult and youth groups for scheduled tours and unscheduled visitors alike, the media exhibit both educates and fascinates guests of all ages, whether they be local, or from distant hometowns.

In March 2003, forty years after Carl Riggins began his career at KWHN Radio, he was invited to join Gary Elmore and Daren Bobb for the final live radio broadcast from the Radio Center Building. The broadcast began with the "Paul Harvey" program and continued with a forty-five-minute call-in show hosted by Gary Elmore and Daren Bobb. Carl listened to the final broadcast from the Radio Center Building, but in his mind, he was remembering the nights he played music by Elvis Presley, The Beatles, and The Four Seasons. Those were the songs of the 1320 Club. Carl collects his stories as he collects memorabilia. His recollections of radio and television history are fascinating and extensive. He is presently recording them into written form, which he hopes to eventually publish.

The Radio Center building could not be saved, but the old music, the voices of the early broadcasters, and the images of the first television broadcasts will never leave Fort Smith. They will exist as long as the "On the Air" light shines over Carl Riggins' media exhibit at the Fort Smith Museum of History.

AUTHOR'S NOTE: It was my honor to sit with Carl and hear this history told in first-person. There is no better way to learn. There is no better teacher than Carl Riggins.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Carl Riggins passed away September 3, 2022, at the age of eighty.

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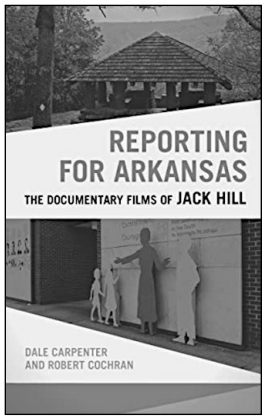
***Reporting For Arkansas: The Documentary Films of Jack Hill*, Dale Carpenter and Robert Cochran, (University of Arkansas Press, Fayetteville, 2022, Paperback 200 pages, index, notes and descriptions of each film in the book, $12.71).**

NOTE: This book is a part of The Arkansas Character Series, jointly sponsored by the Center for Arkansas and Regional Studies and the David and Barbara Pryor Center for Oral and Visual History in the UA's Fulbright College of Arts and Sciences.



This fact-filled tribute to the late documentary film maker, Jack E. Hill, a Rogers native, is filled with the Fort Smith connection of the George T. Hernreich family, and their ownership of flagship television stations of past decades in Fort Smith and Jonesboro.

Hill was never a news anchor in the Fort Smith market but was a stalwart champion of the news desk in Eastern Arkansas in Jonesboro. Station KAIT was a once owned Hernreich family-property in Jonesboro. The fledgling KAIT broadcasting experiment, in Eastern Arkansas, grew from a non-affiliated TV station on local broadcasting to a mega popular local and regional presence, until the mid-1970s, when it was sold to corporate owners.

Darrell Cunningham, the long-time recognized name in broadcast management in both Jonesboro and Fort Smith, was a great supporter and friend of Hill in his early TV days.

Yet Hill's influence as a documentary film maker based in Arkansas, far transcends the state and any regionalism which may be attached to his journalistic battles in Jonesboro behind the TV anchor and news desk.

The son of a star athlete/war hero and school teacher, Hill excelled at sports, academia and public service while a student at Rogers High School. He was uniquely focused on his studies at the University of Arkansas and later at the University of Missouri, for a postgraduate degree.

An ROTC student at Arkansas, Hill transitioned after graduation with a stint in the U.S. military serving in Europe. He used his radio and television writing skills for Uncle Sam and focused on Cold War Europe. Hill returned to the states with a renewed sense of patriotism as he enrolled at the University of Missouri.

With his fresh graduate degree in broadcast journalism, Hill worked for the campus television station, KOMU and was a reporter for KFRU radio in Columbia. Hill began winning awards for his hard-hitting journalism on some topics that were a little beyond his years.

This entire book is dedicated to Hill's documentary works—many of those are indeed eye-opening even today almost two decades after his death.

Dale Carpenter, one of the pair of expert editors on this project, filmed many of these for Hill. Carpenter, a retired UA professor, provides details of how hard and low-budget focused was Hill in making these films.

The last one-third of the book is dedicated to the Arkansas Series, the documentary films Hill made and in a finely constructed manner, describes each in both technical and layman's detail. Fort Smith figures prominently in *The Arkansas Runs Through It* film that showcases the beauty of nearby Altus wine country and the controversial arrival of Vietnam refugees at Fort Chaffee.

The bulk of Hill's quirky personality and tragic biography pace this volume along with its valuable history of early and very well-done documentaries filmed in and about Arkansas.

—Maylon T. Rice, Fayetteville.

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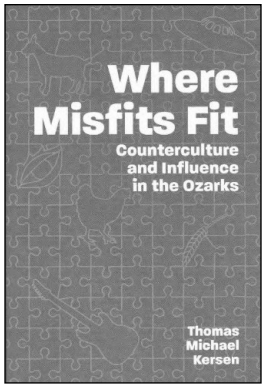
***Where Misfits Fit: Counterculture and influence in the Ozarks*. By Thomas Michael Kersen. (University Press of Mississippi, Jackson, 2021. Pp. 255. Bibliography, notes, acknowledgements, and index, $29.95.)**

Thomas M. Kersen is an associate professor of sociology at Jackson State University.

His book is a treasure trove of late twentieth-century society. It concentrates primarily on stories of young people, mostly from cities, coming as couples or singles, with and without children, who relocated to the Arkansas and Missouri Ozarks seeking land, fellowship, and new beginnings.



In the time before mobile phones, internet, or Amazon, they brought with them their means of sustenance, mainly well-worn copies of *Mother Earth News, Stuart Brands' Whole Earth Catalog*, and guitars.

Kersten writes with love of these American "misfits," as he and his family were among them. His chapter on his experiences near the end of the book explains the "why, where, when, and how" his father and mother decided on this truly life-altering move to Arkansas from a large Texas city.

Kersen begins his book by making sure his readers know the geography of the Ozarks.

Called "mountains," no peak reaches 3,000 feet above sea level. However, the region has steepness, wilderness, running water in abundance, rocks, trees, diverse wildlife habitats, and on benches and creek bottoms, some arable soils level enough to grow crops. Used as hunting grounds by the imperialistic Osage—and then the western Cherokee, the area had drawn American settlement only since the 1820s. Those early settlers came along latitude lines, which meant from Appalachia, mostly whites, but with some free black pioneers mixed in. Few of these people depended on enslaved people. Thus, a traditional mountain culture developed that was akin to what had been a source of migration—eastern Tennessee and western North Carolina.

This is useful to know because Kersen is writing about people attracted to this country by its isolation traditions, seemingly innocent of the capitalist greed that these immigrants wanted to escape.

Eureka Springs, near the Missouri border, Kersen finds "truly quirky." In the late sixties, Eureka with its winding streets, quaint housing, and different lifestyles had—and has—enough "misfits" to cause the town's dual personality. On the one hand, there is the "Christ of the Ozarks" statute and the "Passion Play" tourist attractions spearheaded by Gerald L. K. Smith of antisemitic statements over the radio. And on the other, there was the "Bohemian" element in town, long haired, bearded, sandal-wearing laid-backs, who ironically were often employed as main role actors and set designers for the fundamentalist Christian attraction. In this chapter, Kersen describes, with the help of previous scholars of the region, the anomaly that the land of misfits excludes for most of its areas, African Americans. Quoting Charles Morrow Wilson's observation that their absence (mostly by their choice but in some cases by lame-brained, self- proclaimed, "Sundown Towns") constituted "the gravest sociological loss suffered by the Ozark region." Even though a favorite musical instrument for mountain music is the banjo and one of its favorite foods, okra, were both brought to America by Africans.

In similar detail, Kersen describes people of the "Dog Patch" theme park near Harrison. Based on Al Capps' cartoon characters and village scene, the park never quite achieved lift off as a major destination—and saw nowhere near the success being born 60 miles away at Branson, Missouri.

Other odd type groups and developments in the Ozarks that Kerson spot-lighted have music as a common bond. The Dan Blocker singers, Black Oak, Arkansas, and the Hot-Mulch Band, in particular, have extensive group bios in the book. Kersen does considerable research for his material and picks quite interesting examples of how these musical groups came to be, in his interpretation, Misfits and Counter-Culture icons.

The illustration of counterculture, its causes, difficulties, and benefits is neatly presented in his chapter on "Back-to-the-landers in the Arkansas Ozarks." Here Kersen leans heavily on his own experiences and interviews people of his family's ilk with whom he had contact both as a teenage student and as a returning scholar. He determined to show the worth of all these people, their lives, their dreams, and the meaning of it.

Communes and Back-to-the-landers were treated well by most of the native Ozark people, Kersen finds. I would have thought the author might dwell on specific examples of this harmony between the old and the new that existed at the end of many a dirt road with few houses amidst the Ozark National Forest. Hay hauling, child-care, and barn-raisings were occasions when needs of the community took precedence over judgmental aloofness. For most of those who moved amidst the Ozark culture, those friendly experiences were the reality.

Where Misfits Fit is worth the read and the State Press of Mississippi is to be credited for publishing Thomas Kersen's book. Having lived in the Ozarks at

the time that he writes about, I concur with his statements and hold similar interest in the subjects that he explores.

Kersen concluded that his public school days in Ozark—which he reached by long yellow bus rides over dirt and rocky roads—were successful for he and other students there because with greater autonomy and fewer standardized tests, teachers had better opportunity to encourage imaginative thinking. Perhaps that is the legacy of the hundreds of young people who came to Arkansas and devoted their energy and some of their youth to "making a living on five acres of land."

—Billy D. Higgins, Fort Smith

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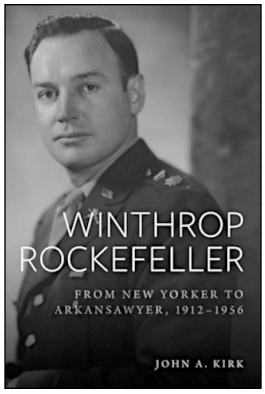
Winthrop Rockefeller: From New Yorker to Arkansawyer, 1912-1956. **By John A. Kirk, (University of Arkansas Press, Fayetteville, 2022. Pp 268. Index, references, footnotes, sources, $34.95 hardback.)**



Although little about the state is available in this first volume, John A. Kirk, does a commendable job in describing the upbringing of a modern resident of the Arkansas Governor's Mansion into an easy to read and understandable account of Winthrop Rockefeller's young adult years.

Kirk's sources, especially the cornucopia of family letters exchanged between the youngest Rockefeller son and his father and mother (and even his older and equally famous brothers), gives the reader understanding of this complex man, who became Arkansas's first elected Republican governor since Reconstruction.

Perhaps the biggest surprise to Arkansas readers may be the friendship of Winthrop Rockefeller and Frank Newell, a well-known insurance broker from Little Rock. Newell, who had been with Winthrop Rockefeller in military training at Fort Benning, Georgia, became a close friend to Winthrop's parents Mr. and Mrs. John Rockefeller, Jr. It was Newell's close relationship with Winthrop's mother, Abby Rockefeller, who supplied Newell with books during his military service and always insisted Newell be seated next to her at dinner parties, that offers insight. The Newell friendship continued throughout both men's lives.

Constant disappointment and troubles with academics, (Kirk surmises that Winthrop had a dyslexic reading disorder), in grade school, private academies and passing his collegiate courses, was a heartbreaking disability that Winthrop Rockefeller and the family endured.

Win Rockefeller, however, thrived at personal interactions with others at all levels of schooling, such as being elected to school leadership positions. His desire to help the less fortunate led to his life-long association in breaking down racial, social, and economic barriers for others. During his life, he served and ran many community boards, charities, and social funds with great skills to help his fellow man.

After struggling with college, Rockefeller finally joined the family's oil business at the bottom rung of workers, learning menial survey work, dirty roustabout duties and eventually working his way up the corporate ladder into an office position in sales. Not satisfied with an office job, World War II came along and Win Rockefeller joined the Army. His wartime service added to his life-lessons learned from the oil patch.

The only Rockefeller son to serve as an enlisted man, he rose to the rank of major. Wounded in combat, Win Rockefeller's privileged family revered him for his service as a true G.I.

Rockefeller suffered burns from a kamikaze attack on the USS Henrico during the battle of Okinawa. Rockefeller was saved from more serious injury or even death, by not being in the Captain's Quarters, where many Army and Naval officers were killed by the attack. He was one deck below, playing cards in the quiet stateroom with a fellow officer, when the surprise attack occurred. He recuperated in Pacific Theater field hospitals and was awarded the Purple Heart .

As the youngest son in the Rockefeller dynasty, he was by all accounts, a very social and spirit-filled young man, prone to parties, drink and a very 1940s young man's lifestyle.

The book does delve into his tragic first marriage to Barbara (Bobo) Sears, the mother of his only son, Win Paul Rockefeller. The long, nasty divorce was often played out in the sensational New York City area press and even across America.

The book ends with Rockefeller's 1956 relocation to Arkansas. His completing Win Rock Farms near Morrilton and being named the head of the Arkansas Industrial Development Corporation end in this volume.

Those who remember the man, the family name, and the great influence he had on his adoptive state of Arkansas will enjoy this volume.

—Maylon.T. Rice, Fayetteville

1922 Newspapers

By Al Whitson

During most of the second half of 1922, the country was in the grip of a nationwide railway and coal strike. The strike began in July and lasted through most of August. Extreme violence plagued many parts of the country and Fort Smith was no exception. But strikes and violence were not the only news happening in our fair city. We had just celebrated the completion of the Garrison Avenue Bridge in May. The city was still exuberant and quite busy building new parks and widening old streets and adding "New" promenades and imagining skyscrapers on Garrison Avenue and helping build roads connecting Fort Smith to locations at every point of the compass.

Yes, there was great excitement in our city, but there was tragedy and pathos and progress as well. There even early signs that perhaps we were facing an environmental reckoning. A massive explosion at a powder factory in Cavanaugh took three lives, the city dump caught fire and a well-known horse business was displaced by the automobile. A new bottle company and a new grocery wholesaler set up shop here—and a Civil War veteran passed the flag to the men who fought the first World War. There were Halloween parties and dead fish in the Poteau and bears on the barbie at Andrews. The KKK continued making in-roads across the South and held their second rally in the southern portion of our town. Sadly, as the year 1922 ended, the bridge we all celebrated on in May, took its first life, in a horrific midnight automobile accident. Yes, it was quite a year for our little city, and for those fortunate enough to live in it.

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Saturday, July 1, 1922

HIGHWAYMEN SHOOT MAN FOR REFUSAL TO OBEY ORDERS

Harrison A. Lee, 809 South Twelfth street was shot by masked highwaymen at 9:30 o'clock last night when he refused to comply with their demands to surrender his cash and what jewelry he had. Lee, in company with a young woman, was on North Fifth street near the Suburban tracks when confronted by the two masked

and armed men.

Lee and his companion were ordered to raise their hands but did not do so. One of the bandits fired a shot a Lee's feet and again ordered him to produce his money, and as Lee did not comply with alacrity the bandit fired a second shot, the bullet taking effect in Lee's left thigh. Both men then turned and ran away, disappearing in the darkness. They failed to obtain any loot.

A Fentress ambulance was summoned, and Lee was taken to St. John's hospital, where surgeons found his wound not necessarily serious. The woman remained at the scene of the holdup until police arrived.

Capt. Robertson arrived at the scene in a few minutes and, though he found one person who had seen a man running through an alley between North Fifth and Sixth streets on North N, he was unable to apprehend the two men. Lee stated that he thought he would be able to identify both of the men if he should see them again.

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Wednesday, July 12, 1922

NEW PLAYGROUND ON SOUTH SIDE

Another playground, known as the Sunshine playground has been opened as a recreation park for the children of the south side. This playground was opened under the auspices of the Westover Sunshine club and is located between Jenny Lind and South Twenty-second street. It covers two blocks of forest ground, the use of which has been donated by Leigh Kelley.

The club has been trying to get a playground for the vicinity ever since it was organized, and as soon as it appealed to Mr. Kelley, he immediately allowed the use of this ground for the playground. The children were entertained Monday night with a wienie roast as an opening feature of the park. W. M. Pate has donated rope to make swings, and there will be see-saws, seats, swings, tennis court and croquet grounds placed in the park for the benefit of the children.

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Friday, July 14, 1922

ANTONIO CONSTANTINO PROMINENT BUSINESS MAN DIES

Antonio Constantino, one of the most prominent Italian business men of the city and proprietor of the Constantino Confectionery, 407 Garrison avenue, died suddenly Thursday morning at 7:30 o'clock at his home, 814 South 20th street, after a heart attack.

Soon after coming to Fort Smith, Mr. Constantino opened a confectionery and fruit business, which has operated continuously on Garrison avenue for the past twenty five years, located first near the Frisco station, and later farther east on Garrison avenue. Two years ago, he purchased the building the business now occupies. It has grown to be one of the largest retail fruit and confectionery businesses in the city and its fountain is especially popular.

Of a genial, kindly disposition with unchallenged business integrity Mr. Constantino has been the advisor to large numbers of his countrymen in both Oklahoma and Arkansas, who placed implicit faith in his judgement. He was never too busy to attend to matters for them, nor too hurried to listen to their troubles. His passing will be a source of grief to large numbers who found him a real friend.

CITY WATER GETS CANADIAN 'KICK' RESULT OF FLOOD

Heavy rains in Kansas and Missouri have caused high stages in the Arkansas river here, and sometime this evening or tonight, the city's water supply again will be impregnated with a salty flavor, is the expectations of water department officials.

City Commissioner Mike Smith, who has charge of the water department said yesterday that in order to prevent impregnation of the water supply as long as possible, the pumps at the water plant were not operated at all yesterday, the city depending upon its reservoir supply. He estimated that it would be necessary to start the pumps about midnight Thursday, however, and this means that some of the flood waters, which have backed into the Poteau river, will get into the reservoir.

"Getting rid of the sediment in the water will not give us any trouble," said Smith. "But if the water has that old, familiar, Canadian river, salty flavor, we will have to stand it—we can't take that taste out of the water."

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Thursday, July 20, 1922

GASOLINE COSTS LESS

A reduction of one cent in the price of gasoline, bringing the retail price to 27 cents a gallon here, has been announced by local gasoline dealers.

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Tuesday, July 25, 1922

BOYS GET TIPSY, OFFICERS LOCATE STILL AND MASH

When three little boys in South Fort Smith were discovered to be tipsy Sunday afternoon, Constable Bob Williamson was notified, and visited the manufacturing suburb. The boys told the officer that they had found the stuff in a building on the property of a manufacturing plant, had brought some home, and drank it after putting sugar and water in it.

At the building named by the boys, the officers found 40 gallons of mash, all ripe and ready for a run, and also a still of 20-gallon capacity. The mash was dumped, except a sample for evidence, and the still and copper coil were brought to the county jail. The still appears never to have been used. The officers are now trying to find out who owned the stuff.

HOTEL COMPANY IS HEAVILY FINED

The Southwestern Hotel company, owners of the Hotel Goldman, were fined $50 and costs in each of three cases in Municipal court yesterday on charges of violating

the state law relative to the employment of women.

The defendant company was charged with having made women employees work more than nine hours in any one day; with having made women employees work more than 54 hours in any one week; and with having failed to post and keep posted in a conspicuous place, a copy of the state law relative to hours of employment for women. In each case, the court assessed the fine of $50 and costs. The company paid the assessment made against it.

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Saturday, July 27, 1922

NEGRO CLUBS TO HOOK UP HERE TODAY

This afternoon Fort Smith baseball fans have the opportunity of witnessing a real baseball game in addition to enjoying some real fun, furnished by two fast negro teams who hook up at Andrews field.

A four-game series is to be played. The fourth game to be played Sunday at Alexander field across the river in Oklahoma.

Manager Harris of the Arkansas Giants announced that his club is all set, and ready to go for the Tulsa Black Oilers.

"Baby" Ragsdale or "Wing" Campbell, star Oiler mounds men, will be pitted against Fuller, the hurler who gave the Russellville negroes so much trouble in their series here.

The price of admission will be 55 cents, the same as that charged in the Russellville series. Special sections of the stands at Andrews and Alexander fields will be reserved for white people.

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Saturday, July 29, 1922

KLANSMEN STAGE PARADE AT MIDNIGHT

Simultaneously, with the peal of the first stroke of the clock in the court house tower at midnight las night, the strangest parade ever staged in Fort Smith started down Garrison avenue, and for thirty-two minutes the few pedestrians on the streets stood in silence and wonder watching 1100 automobiles pass swiftly along the avenue. Turning into the avenue at Thirteenth street the seemingly endless train of cars passed quickly along the right side of the street down to the Free Bridge and turning, passed back to Towson avenue where they disappeared from sight of the spectators on Garrison.

Not a word was spoken aloud by any of the occupants of the cars in the parade. Not a dash-light was burning. Not a face was visible, except for a fleeting glimpse as cars passed beneath the streetlamps.

The autos, with their lights burning brightly were running at a speed estimated at about fifteen miles per hour, and as they were in close formation, it was almost impossible for a person to cross the street as the speed was kept up and the drivers evidently had their instructions and had rehearsed the parade well.

For exactly thirty-two minutes, the strange parade continued. Cars bearing license plates of five different states; Arkansas, Oklahoma, Missouri, Louisiana, and Texas were seen. Cars of nearly every make familiar to persons of this vicinity were in the line.

It was said that it was members of the Ku Klux Klan, for rumors had been received earlier in the evening that a monster demonstration was being staged in a large pasture near the South Fort Smith smelter, where some two months ago, it was reported the Ku Klux Klan held a big ceremonial.

Autoists entering the city from the south earlier in the evening reported that they discerned in the night the illumination from a flaming cross, such as the Klan is credited with displaying when they hold their ceremonials.

At the entrance to the pasture, it was said that men guarded, mounted on snow-white horses, allowing no one to enter unless they satisfied the mysterious guards of their identity.

The guards at the gate, it was said wore flowing robes of white with hoods to match, but the occupants of the autos on Garrison wore no robes.

ONE MAN KILLED, TWO HURT IN BLAST AT POWDER MILL: CAUSE OF TRADGEDY MYSTERY

John Caperton, aged 32 is dead and Archie Kuykendall, 23 and Joel Robinson, negro, 27, are in Sparks hospital suffering from severe burns and shocks, as the result of an explosion of twenty thousand pounds of powder at the plant of the Equitable Powder company near Cavanaugh, five miles south of Fort Smith at 6:56 o'clock Friday morning. Kuykendall and Robinson will recover, it is thought, unless they sustained serious internal injuries. Cause of the blast (was) not ascertained.

Edward Pierce, superintendent of operations, who was emerging from the pumphouse forty yards away when the explosion occurred, sustained a painful cut on the head, by being hurled against the brick wall of the pump house.

Caperton's body was hurled through space for a distance of nine hundred feet, falling through the branches of a large tree. The weight of his body broke limbs of the tree, some of which were four inches in diameter. Searchers located Caperton's body on the ground near the tree. Practically every bone in his body had been broken and one foot was missing. His body was but slightly burned, but it was black from powder smoke.

The three men caught in the explosion were employed in two small frame buildings located approximately five hundred yards from the main plant. Caperton was in the building known as the breakdown, and where the first explosion occurred. No theory as to the cause of the tragedy has been advanced.

The twenty thousand pounds of powder was contained in barrels stacked around the building, and it is thought that a chunk of fire was hurled to the pressroom forty yards away, causing the second explosion. Kuykendall and Robinson were in the pressroom. They could give no explanation of the probable cause, stating that the first they knew of the occurrence was the sound of the explosion at the breakdown and the deafening roar when their own quarters were torn to splinters, temporarily stunning them. They were able to walk when a Fentress ambulance arrived on the scene fifteen minutes after the explosion was heard in Fort Smith.

Chester Thurston, who was employed in one of the buildings wrecked, but who was several hundred yards away when the explosion occurred, was hurled to the ground, and bruised slightly. He was looking directly at the buildings, he said, when suddenly he saw Caperton's quarters rent asunder, boards and barrels hurled in every direction. He did not, however, see any chunks of burning timber hurled towards the pressroom.

No sign of the two buildings remained after the blast except two large holes in the ground, partly filled with burning debris. Delmar Edwards, driver of the Fentress ambulance, on arriving at the scene, found Kuykendall and Robinson, and rushed them to Sparks hospital, afterwards returning for the body of Caperton.

The plant is located several hundred yards from the road and immediately after the blast employees of the company were stationed at the fence to prevent persons from entering the premises. The two buildings which were destroyed, were situated between two ridges heavily wooded. Green leaves by the thousands were torn from many of the trees, but none were uprooted.

Persons in Fort Smith heard the two reports coming but a few seconds apart. Several windows were broken on the south side of the city and along Texas road.

Buildings within a radius of half a mile of the plant were not damaged, but many persons living farther away, reported that all of the windows which had been left closed, were shattered. Two windows on Garrison Avenue were reported as broken by the jar of the blast.

Many of the older residents on the south side of Fort Smith declared immediately that another explosion had occurred at the powder plant. They remembered the two previous tragedies at the plant, one ten years ago when four negroes were killed, and another February 8, 1917, when two white men were killed.

No estimate of the financial loss could be made last night. Charles Farley, local manager, was not at his office in the First National bank building yesterday or last night and it is understood that he is out of the city but is expected back today. J. P. Thomas, manager of the operating department of the Equitable Powder company, with offices at East Alton, Illinois will arrive in Fort Smith today to make a survey and ascertain, if possible, the cause of the tragedy.

The men had gone to work at 6:30 o'clock and it was to have been the last day of the present run. Thirty-five other persons were employed in the buildings of the main plant, several hundred yards away. None of them were injured. When they heard the first blast nearly all dashed from the different buildings and many saw the second building destroyed, but could advance no explanation.

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Sunday, July 30, 1922

LAST WOODEN POLE TAKEN OFF AVENUE

"Gone are the days…" when Fort Smith's favorite swimming hole was on South Seventeenth street, when hitching posts (were) featured (on) Garrison avenue, when chain drive automobiles got stuck in the mud on Towson avenue not blocks off the main street, when sidewalks on Garrison avenue were sawdust and mud.

Yes, and gone with them are the old-time, unreliable fixtures, telephone poles, etc.

Yesterday, the last wooden pole on Garrison avenue was removed and Fort Smith is proud of that one incident. C. A. Lick, manager of the New theatre, yesterday intimated.

The pole was used to hold up the New Theatre sign, which was taken down and replaced with another on Peacock Alley, the New (T)heatre arcade, which will be opened tomorrow night.

"It's a timely thing, the moving of that old pole," Mr. Lick said. "It had about rotted out, and the only support for the heavy sign was the overhead wires."

Now, all poles on Garrison avenue are of steel, including the light and street car trolley poles, which are of the latest construction.

NEGRO SUCCUMBS TO BLAST HURT

Joe Robinson, negro, injured in the blast which killed one man, and injured two, early Friday, was the second victim to die as a result of the explosion of the Equitable Powder company near Cavanaugh, death coming yesterday afternoon.

The condition of Archie Kuykendall, who was also injured is still precarious, hospital authorities last night reported. His injuries cannot be accurately determined yet, physicians in attendance said last night.

Edward Pierce, superintendent, who was not forty feet from the scene when the accident occurred, and who was slightly injured, yesterday conferred with J. P. Thomas, general operating manager of the concern, who arrived here from the general offices of the Equitable company at East Alton Ill.

After careful examination, Mr. Thomas said last night that he could ascribe the accident to no known cause. Theories were that friction caused by scraping of barrels on the floor of the breakdown house, where the powder is broken after pressing, was the underlying cause of the blast which shook windows for miles around.

Mr. Thomas further pointed out that every precaution had been taken to prevent accidents of any

kind. He said that brass hoops are used on barrels moved about the plant to eliminate the possibility of steel striking fire against any objects. Shoes worn by all employees, the general manager said, are without nails. He said all expense entailed in the loss of windowpanes directly due to the explosion would be borne by the company, but thus far no complaints have been received.

Funeral services for John Caperton were held yesterday afternoon from the family residence, Rev P. B. Langley of the Lexington Avenue Baptist church, officiating. Mr. Thomas last night reported the details of the accident to his company. He reported no cause other than the theory advanced could be ascertained. It is probable he will remain here a few days to attend to repair plans, which, it is understood, are already underway.

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Tuesday, August 1, 1922

THIRD VICTIM DIES FROM POWDER BLAST

James A. Kuykendall, 28 years old, died at 10:30 o'clock yesterday morning in a local hospital, bringing the death toll in the Equitable Powder plant explosion last Friday, to three. The other two men killed were John Caperton and Joe Robinson, the latter a negro.

Mr. Kuykendall is survived by his wife, two children; James Allen and Nadine, aged 6 and 2 years respectively: his parents, Mr. and Mrs. J. I. Kuykendall, 1518 Towson avenue: three brothers, L. L. Kuykendall of Braden, Okla., T. G. and Fred Kuykendall of Fort Smith, and one sister, Mrs. Rosie Goff of Fort Smith.

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Saturday, August 5, 1922

ANOTHER BOY BORN AT MATERNITY WARD WELFARE BUILDING

At Thursday morning's Free Clinic in the Welfare building there were two new cases and five patients who returned for treatment and re-examination.

Of the new cases, one was an eye case and the other nose and throat. The mother of these children is herself suffering from pellagra, the father is tubercular. The family is composed of twelve children, six belonging to the father by a former marriage and six by his present wife. Two of the latter are twins, really fine-looking babies. The family lives in a tent and is planning, as soon as possible, to go up on the White River, where the father may be able to support his family by fishing. Two of the first set of children are much under-weight and will be given milk to build them up.

Once more the traditions of the Welfare building held true. Another baby was born there Thursday morning at five minutes to twelve and like all the babies born in the portals of the maternity ward, this baby was a boy, a ten-pound boy. His is another of the tragedies of life. He enters the world under the terrible handicap of being the son of an unwed mother. A group of the girls of the First Baptist church provided a layette for him and have determined to adopt his mother as their protégé and do all possible for her, now and later.

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Sunday, August 6, 1922

CITY MAY WIDEN GREENWOOD AVENUE TO GET PAVEMENT

The agitation, which has been aroused over the likelihood that Greenwood avenue would be paved only from the west curb to the street car tracks, leaving the east side of the street as it is, apparently is likely to result in action by the city to have the street widened, so that the county may pave it from curb to curb.

County Judge T. A. Norris declared yesterday to the Southwest American that he is prepared to pave the street from curb to curb, if there is sufficient space between the car tracks and the east curb for automobile and other vehicular traffic, of if the car tracks are removed from the center of the street.

The streetcar company already has declared that it has no money with which to meet the expense of moving the track to the center of the street, and that even if it had the money, the removal of the track would cause a dangerous condition at Greenwood and Little Rock avenues because of an awkward curve necessary there under the arrangement.

The city commission some time ago, adopted a resolution ordering curbs and gutters placed where needed on the west side of Greenwood avenue. The commission Friday adopted a resolution ordering curbs and gutters placed on the east side of Greenwood avenue, this ordinance to be ready for the next meeting of the commission. The preparation of this ordinance does not mean that the commission has reached any decision in the matter, but merely arranges affairs so that, should the widening of the street meet with general approval, there will be no time lost in carrying it into effect, that there may be no delay in the work of paving the street.

Mayor Bourland and Commissioners Smith and Miller have declared they do not intend to take any decisive action on the question until they have heard from property owners and other citizens, and it is expected there will be many citizens present at the next meeting of the commission, to express their views in the matter.

SCOUTS AND GIRLS ARE ENTERTAINED

Mr. and Mrs. C. H. Wortz, Jr., 1320 May Avenue, were hosts to the members of the Boy Scouts and their best girls, Saturday evening entertaining with a watermelon feast, for 75 or more. Gay Japanese lanterns were strung on the lawn at the rear, and the watermelon feast staged there.

It required a whole wagon load of rich, red, luscious melons, to go the rounds and give the young guests all they could possibly eat. These had been in cold storage at the Ward Ice plant, for two days through the courtesy of Claude Ward, and were iced to crisp coldness.

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Saturday, August 12, 1922

REGRETTABLE ERROR IS MADE IN GREGORY CASE

Through a regrettable error in reporting the hearing in Municipal court of charges of grand larceny against Mr. and Mrs. W. M. Gregory, the *Southwest American* reporter wrote that the defendants are negroes.

The defendants are not negroes, but are white people, and the error was one of those annoying and embarrassing errors which occasionally will creep into newspaper columns, despite the care with which the reports are edited. Mr. Gregory was discharged by the court and Mrs. Gregory was placed under bond to appear before the grand jury.

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Sunday, August 13, 1922

CITY DUMP BLAZE CAUSES COMPLAINT BECAUSE OF ODORS

That reflection in the western heavens last night, did not mean that Oklahoma was burning up, nor that the city's wholesale and manufacturing district was being devastated by a conflagration.

And that odor which permeated the entire city, and its environs, was not the effluvium which ordinarily

arises from a slaughter pen or fertilizer factory. The reflection was caused by the blazing of fire in the city's dump on the river front—and the odors had the same source. The wind, what breeze there was, was blowing from the west, and Fort Smith obtained the full benefit of the nauseous effluvium from the burning automobile tires and other stuff that could be burned.

There was no effort to quench the fires and thus remove the foul smell. The tires have been burning for several nights and can do no damage to property—but residents and visitors to the city did not enjoy the odors last night—they did not even have the consolation of knowing that the odors killed the bugs and other insets, because the bugs and insects appeared to thrive in the fumes.

"PEACOCK ALLEY" TO HAVE ITS FORMAL OPENING TOMORROW

With the completion of "Peacock Alley," the arcade at Tenth and Garrison avenue, Fort Smith enters the truly cosmopolitan class, for every large city has its "Peacock Alley" or its "Petticoat Lane"—Fashion's promenade!

Fort Smith's "Peacock Alley" so named by Cap Tilles Lick, manager of the New theatre, was begun the first of March and will be formally opened to the public Monday, August 14. Little more than five months have been required for its completion. It is said to be the most expensive building in Fort Smith for the number of cubic feet of contents included, costing approximately $50,000. More plate glass is used in the display windows than in any other building of the same size in the southwest. The windows alone represent an expenditure of $5,000.

Designed on straight, graceful lines, two stories in height, the Garrison avenue face of the building is of white ornamental brick, while the side is of buff brick. It occupies the quadrangle between the New theatre and Garrison avenue. With the immense amount of Window

space, the building offers the best possible ventilation.

"Peacock Alley" affords a direct entrance from Garrison avenue to the lobby of the New theatre. The Marquee from the entrance to the street will permit patrons of the New theatre to emerge from their cars at the Garrison avenue entrance and reach the theatre under cover all the way. This Marquee, which is, in itself, one of the most attractive parts of the building, is of bronze over copper and was especially designed and built by the Fort Smith Cornice company.

The interior of Peacock Alley, a well-lighted "way" from Garrison avenue to the lobby of the New theatre, like its feathered counterpart, is in green, peacock blue and gold. The walls are tiled up to the arch of the rounded ceiling. The floor, of inlaid tile, is in natural color with a design of blue in a dark tone. A series of oxidized wall fixtures, manufactured in special leaf design by the St. Louis Brass company and inverted bowls suspended from the center of the ceiling, make a blazing white way.

The daylight electric lighting plan of the Marquee, which sheds a white radiance, prepares the patrons for the brilliant lighting of the interior.

Paine and Son are the general contractors and have been in close personal supervision of the building as it has rapidly progressed toward completion. Porter and Ford did the cement work. The Porter Mirror and Glass company furnished all the glass for the display windows and the large mirror in the Crystal Corner. Cut stone was supplied by the Monumental Cut Stone company. The buff brick of the exterior and the tiled brick of the interior of "Peacock Alley" proper were furnished by the Fort Smith Brick company. Feenberg company furnished the girders on whose skeleton of steel the building has been constructed. Smelts did the interior wall finishing while Koller-McKim furnished the plumbing.

But, why the name? Why Peacock Alley? Classical authors contain many allusions to the peacocks' high appreciation at the most sumptuous banquets. Medieval bills of fare, on state occasions, nearly always included it. In the day of chivalry one of the most solemn oaths was taken "on the peacock," which seems to have been served up garnished with its gaudy plumage. The peacock was termed also the bird of Juno by the ancients. But it remained for moderns to connect the peacock and its gorgeous plumage with lovely woman. It is said—let's whisper this—that the peacock never exhibits the splendors of its gorgeous shimmering "train," save when sure of an audience. However far this allusion may go, Peacock Alley is a favorite wherever found. New York's "Peacock Alley" in the Waldorf-Astoria, London, Paris and Fort Smith.

The McCann Studio will occupy the western half of the lower floor of the arcade of "Peacock Alley," as well as the entire second floor. This lower floor will be devoted to the reception room and offices. The studio proper; dressing rooms and work rooms of the studio will occupy the second floor. When completely arranged this studio will be one of the largest and best equipped in this part of the country.

The corner of the building fronting on Garrison avenue and Tenth street will be occupied by Mrs. T. J. Hays, formerly of the Chocolate Shop, who is calling her new shop "The Crystal Corner." Her son, Mark Davis will be associated with her. The entire interior of the shop will be in black and white. Old ivory tables trimmed in black with heavy glass tops will be used as serving tables. Wall vases in black, with a conventional design of flowers, and a gay parrot, mark the panels between each window on the side toward "Peacock Alley." A valence, of ecru pongee, finished with a fringe, topped by a black guimpe, extended 18 inches down from the tops of the windows, will give the finish to the windows. At the Garrison avenue entrance, there will be a small reception room, with a "Crystal ball," into which the mystically inclined may gaze. The China will also carry out the black and white idea. The fountain, where fountain drinks will be dispensed, continues this black and white motif.

This is one room, on the Tenth street side, which has not yet been leased.

Entrance to the shops in "Peacock Alley," may be gained from the "alley," or from the street, giving tenants a double advantage. The whole building is one of the most cosmopolitan in Fort Smith and is a decided acquisition to Fort Smith's business center, enhancing the New theatre and seemingly enlarging it by almost as many feet, and virtually bringing the New, to Garrison avenue.

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Wednesday, August 16, 1922

'PEACOCK ALLEY' MAKES FORMAL BOW

"Peacock Alley" made its polite little bow to the Fort Smith public Monday, and its "Crystal Corner" proved quite as interesting to the Fort Smith public as was anticipated. The New arcade, with its many brilliant lights, its artistic design, and its different atmosphere, make it one of the show places of the city.

The Garrison avenue entrance to "Peacock Alley" adds another blaze of light to Garrison avenue's white

way, from the copper and bronze Marquee, outlined with blue incandescent bulbs which give the new daylight lighting effect.

With this fashionable promenade, leading from Garrison avenue to the foyer of the New theatre, Peacock Alley suggests the metropolitan.

The Crystal Corner is operated by Mrs. T. J. Hays, formerly of the Chocolate Shop, and her son, Mark Davis. With its harmonious furnishings and up to the minute fixtures, it will naturally appear to the discriminating public, as a place to visit after the theatre, after the matinee, or for afternoon parties.

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Friday, August 18, 1922

FRISCO EMPLOYES ASSAULTED BY CROWD AT VAN BUREN DEPOT; ONE MAN, WOUNDED, IS MISSING

Stabbed, beaten, and suffering from wounds caused by rocks and brickbats—bleeding from head, face and body—Joe Cook, aged about 50 years spent last night somewhere in the hills a mile or more north of Van Buren, where he had run to escape further mistreatment at the hands of a crowd of men in Van Buren.

Search for Cook was abandoned after dark last night, but a posse of special agents and Frisco officials will take up the hunt at daylight again this morning, determined to find Cook or his body, before returning to the city.

Cook, and three other employees of the Frisco shops here, were sent to Van Buren to assist in putting a derailed locomotive back on the tracks. They had finished the job and were enroute to the Frisco station at Van Buren, when they were attacked by a crowd, estimated at 75 to 100 men and youths. Rocks and broken brickbats were thrown at them. One man was badly hurt about the head, another suffered slight injuries, a third was not hurt at all, and the man, Cook, stabbed and beaten, ran north into the hills, pursued by a score or more men.

Information obtained by Frisco special agents and United States deputy marshals late last night was to the effect that Cook evaded his pursuers and had been seen to run across a cantaloupe field and disappear into a patch of woods, with no pursuers following him.

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Tuesday, August 22, 1922

CENTENARIAN NEGRESS DIES

Mamie McDay, 100, said to be the oldest negro in Fort Smith, died at her home in Midland Heights addition Monday. Funeral services will be held from the Mount Maris Baptist church in Midland Heights Tuesday afternoon at 3 o'clock. Interment will be made in Nolan Springs cemetery.

Mamie McDay was a slave in North Carolina prior to the war.

CLUB OWNERS LEASE PARK FOR 5 YEARS

All outstanding indebtedness of the Fort Smith Public School Athletic Association, was retired Monday, following the turning over of a check for $5,000 to President John Andrews, by the Fort Smith Baseball association, for a five-year lease of Andrews field.

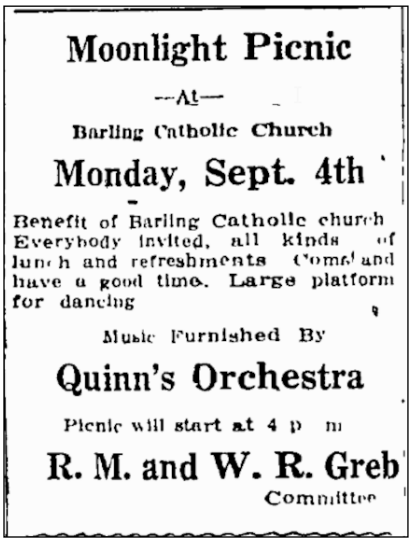
Leasing of Andrews field by the local association, was brought about by the St. Louis National League club, half-owner of the local association. Branch Rickey, president and manager of the St. Louis club, together with President Blake Harper, of the local club, conferred regarding the matter and after serious consideration decided to sign the lease. It is intimated the Cardinals intend to use Andrews field for spring training.

"FRITZ" PASSES TO HIS REWARD

Another unique Fort Smith figure has passed!

Frederick Shermann, known to all boating enthusiasts on the Poteau river as "Fritz the Boatman," died early Sunday morning, after an illness of two weeks from typhoid-malaria fever, aggravated by a weak heart. He refused to be moved from his home on the riverbank until the latter part of last week, when he consented to permit Dr. Joseph Friend, of the West End Drug Store, to move him to the Fenolio boarding house, and later to a local hospital, where he passed away shortly after midnight Sunday morning.

"Fritz" has made his home almost at the mouth of the Poteau river, for more than eight years, living part of the time in a houseboat and more recently in a long, low building, set up on stilts, made of many pieces of



patched lumber, with boarded up windows and little ventilation. He obtained his living from the river on the banks of which he made his home. He kept boats to rent, he cared for those privately owned. He also mended boats.

Living almost the life of a hermit, he refused the efforts of friends to leave his river home, although he had been offered a house rent free. But he loved the water and was happier in his independent way. A German by birth, educated, and of more than ordinary intelligence, by a strange freak of fate he chose the comparative solitude of the riverbank.

According to Dr. Joseph Friend, who had known "Fritz" for several years, he was in the neighborhood of 65 years of age. He came to the United States from Germany approximately 20 years ago. He left a wife and family in Dortmund Germany. Family disagreements were hinted at as his reason for coming to the United States. Since that time, his wife has died and his eldest son, Frederick, Jr., was killed in the world war.

GREENWOOD SUFFERS LOSS IN SUNDAY NIGHT BLAZE; BUSINESS DISTRICT RAZED

Greenwood, capital of the southern half of Sebastian county, suffered a fire loss of approximately $125,000, Sunday night and Monday morning.

Eight store buildings, seven of them two-story stone structures, were totally destroyed, with the greater part of their contents. The aggregate insurance was listed yesterday at just over $40,000.

The fire, of undetermined origin, wiped out the heart of Greenwood's mercantile section, all but two buildings, in the block on the north side of the public square, being razed to the ground.

Discovered about 10:30 o'clock Sunday night, the flames were fought valiantly and ineffectively by citizens of the town, with buckets and well water, until 1 o'clock Monday morning, when a big La France automobile pumping engine of the Fort Smith fire department, joined in the battle. By 7 o'clock, the fire was extinguished, and Greenwood citizens were putting their homes in order again and removed the salvage from the streets and roads.

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Friday, September 1, 1922

AUTO CROWDS PONY EXPRESS OUT; LEON WILLIAMS TO HAVE NEW BARN FOR MULE BUSINESS EXCLUSIVELY

"The Pony Express" has been crowded out of existence by the automobile and the auto truck. The little wagons, which in days past dashed around the city in the conduct of "Pony Express" business are no longer to be found. The auto car and the motorcycle have displaced them. And now, the "Pony Express" headquarters has changed hands, having been sold by Leon Williams, to W. L. Curtis, for a consideration of $12,000, according to deeds filed yesterday in circuit court with the recorder of deeds.

The building will still be headquarters for Mr. Williams mule business for a while, however—until Mr. Williams completes construction of Fort Smith's newest, biggest, and most modern mule barn, which is to be erected on a site 100 feet by 140 feet in South Eleventh street, just south of Carnall avenue, and facing the Fort Smith and Western tracks.

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Friday, September 8, 1922

FOUR BOYS TAKEN TO REFORM SCHOOL

Mrs. Edith Woodward will leave this morning for Pine Bluff, Ark., to take four boys to the Boy's Industrial school. "Thou Shalt Not Steal" seems to be a hard commandment for some small boys to keep.

Three of these four were sentenced by Judge Norris, of the Juvenile court, for stealing—two for stealing chickens, and a third for stealing a bicycle. The trip will be made by automobile.

***

Friday, September 17, 1922

GRIFFIN COMPANY STARTS THIS WEEK

With the receipt of first shipments yesterday, the Griffin Wholesale Grocery company, South Third street and Carnall avenue, expects to open for business within the week. Three salesmen have arrived and probably

will start out on the road immediately. All officials, including President Griffin, are in Fort Smith ready for the start. The Griffin interests announced last week, that the new branch wholesale concern would be installed here by September 18. The building they will occupy has been remodeled. It was formerly occupied by the Ritchie Wholesale Grocery company.

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Friday, September 21, 1922

BRIDGE WRITTEN UP

Pictures and descriptions of the Fort Smith-Oklahoma Free bridge are being shown in magazines all over the United States. In the last issue of the *Good Roads* magazine, published in New York, are three stories on the bridge. In addition to the three stories, the magazine carries a cover page picture of the bridge.

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Sunday, October 1, 1922

MINE DRAINAGE MAY FLOW INTO POTEAU

That water pumped from a coal mine near Hackett drains into the James Fork, which in turns flows into the Poteau river, is the [object] of a report made to Mayor Fagan Bourland yesterday afternoon by E. F. Voigt, city chemist, who recommends that a chemical analysis be made to determine if the presence of chemical reactions from the mine drainage can be determined in Poteau river water.

In his letter, Mr. Voigt declares that under ordinary conditions the water pumped from the Hackett mine is purified before it reaches the Poteau, but because of the low stages of water in James Fork, as well as in the Poteau, this condition may not now exist. He declares that the water pumped from the mine contains iron, which through chemical reactions, puts iron sulfide (pyrites), ferrous sulphate and ferric hydroxide in the water, under varying conditions.

The report will be presented the city commissioners at their meeting Monday, and it is expected a survey of the Poteau watershed and a chemical analysis of the water will be ordered.

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Tuesday, October 3, 1922

SHOPMEN RETURN TO OLD JOBS AT F. S. & W. YARDS

About eighty percent of the total number of Fort Smith & Western shopmen who had been out on strike since July 1, returned to their jobs at the company shops Monday morning as the result of an agreement reached between representatives of the men and the road, Saturday at noon.

A number of the men who have been working at the shops since the strike order went into effect, quit work Monday, it was stated, but no greater number than usually resign at the beginning of the week. All men in the employ of the road at the time the settlement was reached will remain in the service so long as their services are satisfactory, according to the agreement.

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Thursday, October 5, 1922

BOTTLE COMPANY ORGANIZED BY LOCAL CAPITAL; TO EMPLOY 75 MEN; MACHINERY IS ORDERED

Organization of a new bottle manufacturing concern in Fort Smith, which according to the officials of the company is destined to be one of the largest in the country, was completed Wednesday. The firm is known as the Zenor Bottle company and has a capital of $50,000.

The company will make all of the different kinds of bottles, it was announced. Property at South Ninth and D streets, formerly occupied by the Crystal Glass company, has been purchased by C. P. Zenor, president of the new concern, and the plant will be located there. Seventy-five persons will be afforded employment.

A big order for machinery has been placed and now is in transit and is expected within a few days. A contract with one company for 125 car lots of bottles has been closed and a contract with a big-name firm, for 150 car lots yearly is being considered, it was stated.

The following officers directors and stockholders were elected yesterday.

Directors, C. P. Zenor, president, James B.

McDonough, vice-president, W. T. Clemons, secretary, Charles Zenor treasurer, I. H. Nakdimen, director, and J. R. Miller and Frances Zenor, additional stockholders.

Officers stated that they had a number of offers for contracts, but that no more contracts would be closed at present until the capacity of the plant was learned.

Part of the machinery now installed in the building, and formerly operated by the Crystal Glass company will be utilized, it was said, and with the arrival of the new machinery, operations should start in the very near future, it was stated.

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Sunday, October 8, 1922

HUNDREDS HEAR WORLD SERIES GAMES AS BROADCAST DAILY, PLAY BY PLAY, FROM *SOUTHWEST AMERICAN*

Hundreds of persons in the Fort Smith territory have been "listening in" the past four days, to the radio reports of the World Series baseball games at New York, as broadcast play by play from Station WGAR. The *Southwest American*, and the office, has been flooded with telephone, telegraph and mailed messages, telling of the excellent manner in which the wireless telephone bulletins were received. It has been admitted, that the *Southwest American's* broadcasting station has been giving news and entertainment for some months past, to hundreds of persons daily and nightly, but not until this flood of messages was received, did the *Southwest American* itself appreciate the full extent of the service it has been rendering.

There are quite a number of towns in this section, where the baseball play-by-play bulletins were received through a loudspeaker, each of these instruments being surrounded by crowds. At Sallisaw, for instance, Max Reiger, Buick agent, entertained crowds daily in this manner, as also did Sam West, banker at the Bank of Lavaca; Poteau, the tuberculosis hospital at Booneville, Heavener, Fayetteville, all reported crowds entertained through the loudspeaker. W. G. Furry at Van Buren was delighted thus, to entertain parties of his friends daily in this manner at his home.

Loudspeakers were used in Fort Smith by the Smoke Shop, the plant of the Ward Furniture company, the Humphrey-Ellefson company, the Fink Jewelry company, the Masters Electric company and L. G. Fleming, tailor, on Towson avenue, each furnishing entertainment to scores of fans daily.

Then there were the hundreds of private receiving sets which tuned in both in Fort Smith and in the neighboring towns and country. Scores of these reported to this office that they had listened in. Some of these private sets have loudspeakers, and the ball games were enjoyed somewhat as "parties."

Leon Hudson declares there were crowds of friends at his Grand avenue home, to hear the baseball news broadcast, while L. M. Williams of the Otis Elevator company reports that he happened home one afternoon, to find Mrs. Williams listening in, with a diagram of a baseball diamond on the table, and using tacks to indicate the player and positions.

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Thursday, October 19, 1922

CIVIL WAR VET PRESENTS FLAG TO LEGION POST

The Victor Ellig post in its regular meeting last evening had a big surprise presented at the opening of the session. S. W. Bailey, a member of the G. A. R., and formerly a private in Company H, 111th Ohio Infantry, presented to the post a regulation American Flag to be placed in the main auditorium of the Club home. Commander Reichard of the Post received same in the name of the Post, and a resolution was passed directing the Adjutant to prepare a suitable letter of appreciation to Mr. Bailey. Mr. Bailey, in presenting the flag to the post, said that he realized that it was up to the boys of the World War to fall in and fill the places of the Civil War veterans.

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Sunday, October 22, 1922

HALLOWEEN PARTY FOR GIRL RESERVES AND BOY SCOUTS

The Boy Scouts and Girls Reserve will give their annual Halloween party Saturday evening, October 25, on the lawn of Dr. and Mrs. H. C. King, Free Ferry Road, between the hours of 7 and 9.

Ralph Hubbard of Denver will be the guest of honor. The Boy Scouts are requested to dress as Indians and the Girls Reserve to dress as Indian maidens. Among the interesting parts of the program will be an Indian dance given by Mr. Hubbard around a campfire.

The Girls Reserve under the direction of Miss Bonnie, will give a beautiful play. Refreshments will be served during the evening.

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Sunday, October 24, 1922

NEW INFIRMARY CORNERSTONE PLACED WITH CEREMONIES BY BISHOP MORRIS

Crowds began gathering an hour before the scheduled time for the ceremonies which marked the laying of the cornerstone at St. Edwards Infirmary Sunday afternoon. More than a thousand persons attended the services, despite the heavy clouds which threatened rain.

The Sisters of Mercy and members of the St. Edwards nursing faculty took their places on top of the finished part of the building at 4 o'clock. Immediately following them came the physicians. Darby's orchestra was seated at the left wing of the building. The grand procession was headed by the Knights of Columbus. Following came the Catholic Daughters of America, THE Catholic Knights and Ladies of America, St. Edward's Guild, societies of St. Boniface parish, St. Anne's school children, all of which were proceeded by flags and banners.

Right Reverend J. B. Morris, D. D. bishop of the diocese of Arkansas, and his escort of honor, composed of Rev. Father Ficher, his clerk, Rev. Father Stocker of Subiaco, Rev. Doctor P. F. Horan, Rev. Father Lundragan, Rev. Father Harden, Rev. Father Basil, Rev. Father Enright, altar boys, A. L. Hendricks. Mayor Fagan Bourland, A. Klingensmith, Leon Williams, and Joe Ferrari, ended the line of march.

Darby's orchestra played an appropriate selection while the cornerstone was blessed by Bishop Morris, and additional selections later. The tin box containing the records and documents of the new infirmary was placed in the stone and sealed. While the stone was being lifted into place and being leveled by workmen, Bishop Morris and his escort of clergy and altar boys [moved] over the building and blessed it. Upon his return to the cornerstone, he delivered an address. Bishop Morris congratulated the Sisters of Mercy and the citizens of Fort Smith, who had assisted in making the addition to the St. Edwards Infirmary a reality.

"Charity is the outgrowth of religion. There can be no religion without charity. The three principles of religion are faith, hope and charity, but of the three, charity is the greater. The Sisters of Mercy are here to administer to those in need, whether they be rich or poor, and no questions are asked as to religion when one enters a hospital of the Sisters. The first hospital ever erected on American soil was one in charge of the Sisters of Mercy."

"These Sisters who devote their lives to relieving suffering humanity, have given up everything worldly,

homes and comforts. They ask no reward; they receive no salaries—the reward they receive is the reward of the Most High."

"To love God, we must first love our neighbor in his need, or we are hypocrites."

Bishop Morris told of a leper colony on the Mississippi river within telephone communication distance, where the Sisters of Mercy attend the lepers. They are segregated from the rest of the world but are giving relief to those suffering from the most awful disease known to science.

An address by Mayor Fagan Bourland followed the address by Bishop Morris. Mayor Bourland gave a brief history of the plans and building of the new hospital. He, too, paid tribute to the Sisters for their unceasing efforts in behalf of the suffering. Mayor Bourland said the new institution is one of the finest and most complete in the southwest. He spoke of the other institutions in Convent place. He related instances of the manner in which a patient is received into the hospital, regardless of creed, and expressed his hearty wish that the Sisters might continue in the wonderful work in which they are engaged.

The Very Reverend Dr. P. F. Horan received applause as he rose to speak. He made a brief talk, echoing the sentiments expressed by Bishop Morris and Mayor Bourland. He urged the friends to visit St.

Edwards, not as patients, but as visitors, and thanked those who came to witness the ceremonies of the laying of the cornerstone, which services marked the epoch in history of the Sisters of Mercy in Fort Smith, as well as in local charitable [causes] generally.

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Tuesday, October 31, 1922

GOBLINS TO MARCH IN PARADE TONIGHT

Young and old will make merry tonight, this being All Halloween.

Local festivities of an outdoor nature will be confined to Garrison avenue and the business district of the city, the authorities having announced that the usual street parade will be permitted starting at 8 o'clock, with maskers and others in the line of march up and down the avenue. Music will lead the procession and all sorts of masks and costumes will be shown.

There will be many private entertainments and parties and, with favorable weather, Fort Smith will again have a real turn out for an impromptu entertainment of the most enjoyable nature.

While allowing the parade on the avenue, the city authorities have announced that they will not permit any pranks or mischief making elsewhere in the city.

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Thursday, November 2, 1922

ROBBERS BUSY WEDNESDAY NIGHT STAGE TWO HOLDUPS

Two hold-ups were reported to the police last night, one occurring near Barling and the other in South Fort Smith. O. A. Phillips, 1208 Dodson avenue, traveling man for the Morris Packing company, reported that two men had held him up a short distance beyond Barling and robbed him of $10. The robbery occurred about 9:30 o'clock.

The second robbery was staged at the plant of the Fort Smith Coffin company at South Fort Smith, when two masked men held up the watchman. They obtained $15 and escaped. The name of the watchman was not learned as he failed to give his name to the police when reporting the robbery over the phone. Police hurried to South Fort Smith but had not returned at an early hour this (Thursday) morning.

According to Phillips, who was robbed near Barling, he was on his way back to Fort Smith in an automobile when he noticed several logs and cross ties in the road obstructing his progress and was preparing to alight and remove them when two men, with stockings pulled over their faces as masks, dashed from beneath a bridge, and covering him with pistols, demanded all of the money he had collected. He possessed but $10 in cash, the balance of the collections being represented by checks, which were not taken. After the robbery the men disappeared beneath the bridge.

According to reports over the telephone from South Fort Smith the two men who robbed the watchman at the Coffin Company's plant also were masked, but their description did not tally with that of the men who perpetrated the hold-up at Barling. Both were armed though [and] it was said that one was but a youth.

SHOOTS NEIGHBOR WHO "CROWDS" HIM THEN SURRENDERS

Oscar Mitchelltree, white, surrendered at police headquarters yesterday and informed the officers he had shot his neighbor, Silas Blue, because Blue was taking up more than his fair share of the shack on Coke Hill occupied by the two men. Blue is at the County hospital, where he was taken in the Fentress ambulance. He is suffering from a serious bullet wound in the left leg. It is believed by attending physicians that he will recover from his injury.

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Friday, November 3, 1922

ANGELENE CREAM RECIPE EXPLAINED AT CIVITAN MEET

The manufacture of Angelene ice cream was explained by P. C. Schooley at the meeting of the Civitan club Thursday at noon. Mr. Schooley invited members of the club and people of Fort Smith to visit the Watson-Aven plant and see the ice cream manufactured. It was served as the last course through the courtesy of Mr. Schooley.

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Saturday, November 4, 1922

BEAR ATTEMPTS TO EAT KEEPER AND GETS EATEN

Through the courtesy of John R. Williams, J. Foster and company, Fort Smith Biscuit company, Shipley Baking company, O'Leary Produce company and Ed Johnson, the Boy Scouts were served a barbecue supper at 6 o'clock Friday evening at Andrews field.

While the bear Mr. Williams had lent for the occasion was being taken out of the cage Thursday, to be given a drink of water, it arose on the verge of grasping the keeper's leg in the mouth when Mr. Williams rushed up and hit the bear in the back of the neck. It stunned the bear and injured it to such an extent that rather than see it suffer, Mr. Williams killed it. The bear was dressed and put on ice. The meat was barbequed Friday and was served to the boys Friday evening.

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Friday, November 10, 1922

SKYSCRAPER HOTEL FOR FORT SMITH IS BEING PLANNED

Plans for a 12 or 16 story, modern brick hotel, to be located in the downtown district on Garrison avenue or one block to the north of Garrison avenue, are being drawn by architects, It was learned yesterday by the Southwest American. It is said local and outside capital will finance the venture.

Negotiations for two sites have been under way for two or three months, but have not been concluded. Two hotel men from a large city in the east are understood to be working with persons here in Fort Smith for financing the project.

The two proposed sites are of [the] same size and if either is chosen will provide 75 feet frontage with two street entrances.

Plans now being drafted by architects call for a 200 -room hotel with modern conveniences. The building is to be 12 or 15 stories in height. It is said that the 15-story plan is most favored.

Complete details, it is understood, will be made public within the next month or six weeks. Those behind the project would not consent yesterday to be quoted, but admitted architects were at work on plans and negotiations for a site were well underway.

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Wednesday, November 15, 1922

HUNDREDS OF FISH "CAUGHT NAPPING" IN POTEAU RIVER

Tuesday was a gala day for persons living along the Poteau river, especially those fond of fish. Early Tuesday morning, it was reported that hundreds of the finny tribe were basking on the surface of the water, apparently in a lazy, nonchalant mood, taking scant notice of the happenings along the river's banks. Soon the stream was literally lined with persons armed with clubs, who soon were busily engaged in "smacking" the larger fish on the head and hauling them out of the water to decorate the festive board.

Considerable curiosity was evidenced regarding the cause of the "disinterested mood" of the fish, until someone advanced the theory that they were affected by the mineral substance pumped into the river from mines several miles from the city. It has occurred several times in the past, old timers said, after the mines had been shut down for a period and began pumping again preparatory to resuming operations.

Commissioner Mike Smith, in charge of the water plant, said last night that there was no danger of any contamination of the city water supply by the substances, which had made the fish sick. Mr. Smith ventured the opinion that the heavy rains Sunday and Monday had washed into the Poteau waters pumped from coal mines, this drainage water containing certain minerals or other substances, which made the finny tribe decidedly "ill," but which would have no effect on the potability of the water in the city reservoir and mains.

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Sunday, November 19, 1922

CROSSINGS STILL CAUSING TROUBLE TO FIRE TRUCKS

Railroad crossings, supposed to be repaired and maintained in first class and passable condition, are just about the same as they have been for some months past, according to reports from the fire department, which filed the first series of complaints with the city commission.

It was said yesterday, that two or three of the roads here have had crews of men at work making repairs to some of the crossings, but that the work done is not of a permanent nature, and much of it has already been damaged by the heavy rains of the past week.

The city commission adopted an ordinance about a fortnight ago, notifying all the railroads that the crossings must be maintained in good condition, under penalty of the law, and formal notice of the passage of this ordinance was served on the roads by City Engineer W. H. Evans.

Despite the fact that most of the crossings are as bad off now as they were at that time—some of the railroads have been hauled into court for violation of the ordinance.

Fire Chief Maurice Brun said yesterday he tried to "ease" across the crossing of the Fort Smith and Western on Rogers avenue and was forced to hold onto the steering wheel, to keep from being bounced out of his car.

Some crossings have been repaired the past two weeks by workmen who filled in crevices with dirt and cinders—and the heavy rains have washed this dirt and cinders out, so that the crossings are as bad now as they were before the work was done.

VOICE OF THE PEOPLE—KICKER COMPLAINS

With mine water and dead fish in the source of our water supply and nauseating foggy smoke wafting over the city from the waterfront, garbage burning, dumping ground, citizens of Fort Smith have good reason for being out of patience with the city administration.

With the Fort Smith and Western railway maintaining a set of hurdles instead of decent crossings where their tracks cross Rogers avenue, the public in general and owners of automobiles in particular, have a right to complain and complain bitterly.

The inexcusable condition of these crossings, endured for years, has cost automobile and truck owners many fold the sum it would have cost the company to fulfill its duty to the public and maintain them, and has added, and still adds, to the congestion of traffic on Garrison avenue.

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Tuesday, November 21, 1922

COURT FREES FORT SMITH MAN BUT ANGRY CITIZENS PROTEST GIVING HIM A PUBLIC LASHING

Poteau citizens this afternoon at 3 o'clock, administered a "community flogging" to Will Dabney, 35 of Fort Smith, Ark., following his acquittal in police court on charges of immorality. Dabney's whipping came immediately after he reached the door of the city hall and a chase of three blocks through the principal streets of the city.

Two girls, one under the age of fifteen, and the other 17 years of age, were taken in custody Saturday night with Dabney, by police. The girls were held as material witnesses. Today, both refused to testify against the Fort Smith man, when he was brought to trial. Dabney was released for lack of evidence.

As Dabney left the city hall, he was knocked down by the father of the girls. Dabney arose and ran. He was pursued by citizens who were in attendance at the trial. Other citizens on the streets took up the chase. Their quarry was overtaken after a chase of four blocks.

Four men held Dabney while the father of the girls proceeded to wield a heavy rubber hose across the prisoner's body. This drama was staged on Dewey avenue, Poteau's principal street, and was witnessed by several hundred persons. Cries of "lynch him" were heard and only interference of authorities aided by citizens in the crowd, prevented more bodily violence. However, not until the father asked Dabney if he had enough and, received an affirmative reply, did the crowd consent to Dabney's release.

Great excitement prevailed before and after the flogging. The city hall was packed with spectators who also lined the sidewalks outside the building. The tension could be felt. When Dabney was told he was discharged, the crowd did not make a move to leave. Dabney started for the door and spectators gave him room.

The climax came when the discharged prisoner reached the doorway. The father of the girls stepped in front of Dabney and struck him full on the jaw. His victim went down to the pavement but arose and broke into a run. In the meantime, the crowd had surged outside. Cries of "catch him, catch him," went up. Dabney was making a streak down the street and turned the corner into Dewey avenue, the principal street of Poteau, with the crowd in close pursuit.

Running for two blocks down Dewey avenue, Dabney was overtaken in front of the Judkins hotel. Four men grabbed him. The father of the two girls was sent for. In the meantime, a rubber hose was procured from a filling station. This was given to the father, who wielded it with irregularity and great accuracy. The crowd cheered and gave vent to its approval. When the "ceremony" was finished, Dabney was set free, escorted to the city limits and told "to beat it and not to return to Poteau."

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Thursday, November 30, 1922

OLDTIMERS WILL RENEW YOUTH IN SNAKE DANCE AT BIG GAME; TODAY WILL BE EVENTFUL DATE

This Thanksgiving Day promises to be a most eventful date in Fort Smith, due to the gathering of thousands of people from all section of two states to watch the gridiron battle between the University of Arkansas Razorbacks and the Oklahoma Aggies.

There will be music, and noise, and decorations, and flags waving, and shouting, and cheering, and horn blowing, and snake dancing, and all the other usual

Thanksgiving Day football doings. The day's activities will start with the arrival of the special train from Fayetteville, about 10:30 a.m. bearing the Razorbacks and 1,000 or more University students and enthusiastic Arkansas rooters.

The Razorback aggregation will be met at the old Frisco station, at the foot of the avenue, by the local committees, high school students, the Aggies' football squad, the sponsors and others, and there will be a parade to the Hotel Goldman, led by the University band. During the noon hour there will be luncheons and gatherings of alumni, sororities, fraternities and other student bodies, the sponsors will be dined and feted, and then everybody will go to the Stadium for the game. Outside of the game itself, the big feature at the park will be the snake dance by some of the old timers among the University alumni.

The organization, recently, of a Fort Smith chapter of the university alumni, has brought renewed interest in the university among the alumni here and the old timers snake dance is one direct result. There will be two score or more of the old timers in the snake dance, it was said last night, some of the names mentioned being Judge Daniel, Hon. Postmaster W. B. Pape, John M. Andrews, Charley Coffey, Judge W. A. Falconer and John W. Howell.

***

Friday, December 8, 1922

LOCAL BOY BOUGHT FOR FORT SMITH CLUB

A telegram from Louisville yesterday brought the information that President Blake Harper, of the Twins, has completed a deal whereby he purchases the contract of Pitcher Mutt Williams, from the Little Rock club.

The consideration was not mentioned, but it is understood to have been a rather fancy price, paid in cash. Williams will report at the opening of the training season here. He was one of the best pitchers in the Southern league last season, and is expected to set the woods afire in his home town.

***

Sunday, December 17, 1922

YOUNG WOMAN, BOY MAY NOT SURVIVE

Five persons were injured, two probably fatally, when a Dodge touring car skidded and turned over a 35 -foot embankment at the Oklahoma end of the Garrison avenue free bridge at midnight last night. According to witnesses, the automobile was travelling at a rate of 30 or 40 miles an hour as it left the bridge and hit the approach.

Miss Gertrude Vanerman of Moffett, Okla., and C. H. Davis of Fort Smith are thought by hospital authorities to be fatally injured. Harvey Davis, brother of C. H. Davis, was slightly injured. All the injured were taken to St. Edward's Infirmary.

Bill Gordon, negro driver of the car, escaped with minor bruises about the face and hands. He is employed by Katter's garage and had been engaged by the two Davis brothers to take a supply of gasoline from the garage across the river where the Davis' automobile was stranded for lack of gasoline.

According to witnesses, many of whom were pedestrians returning from a dance held at Riverside, a resort near Moffett, the Dodge car coming from the Arkansas side of the bridge was travelling 35 or 40 miles an hour as it neared the Oklahoma end. In order to avoid striking Miss Vanerman, who was about to step upon the bridge, the negro put on his brake and an instant later the car struck Miss Vanerman, knocking her down the embankment.

The automobile skidded and turned over three times as it went down the incline.

Davis had not been arrested up to an early hour this morning, but when seen by the night manager of the Katter garage told practically the same story that was related by eyewitnesses of the accident. Fort Smith police had not been advised by Moffett authorities to hold the negro, who was at his home receiving medical attention.

Fentress ambulance was called and the injured taken to St. Edward's Infirmary Hospital, authorities said the victims, Miss Vanerman and C. H. Davis, were seriously injured, and were immediately taken to the operating room.

Preliminary examination showed that the woman was suffering from Internal injuries and that her back seemed badly hurt. An X-ray examination to determine if her spine was injured was to be taken by physicians.

A hasty examination showed that Davis was apparently paralyzed. He was conscious and complained of his back and neck.

Scores of persons flocked to the scene. The Dodge touring car apparently turned over two or three times in its fall down the embankment, which at this point is 35 or 40 feet high.

The car left the embankment about 10 or 15 feet from the edge of the bridge. It landed upside down across a wire fence and was practically demolished.

That all occupants were not killed instantly, is considered a miracle.

***

Tuesday, December 19, 1922

DAVIS SUCCUMBS TO INJURIES FROM AUTOMOBILE WRECK

Charles Davis, aged 29, former service man, who was injured Sunday midnight when an automobile went down a 36-foot embankment on the Oklahoma end of the new free bridge over the Arkansas river, died at 4 o'clock Sunday afternoon at St. Edward's Infirmary.

Mrs. Gertrude Vanaman, aged 44, wife of Oscar Vanaman of Moffett Okla., who was struck and seriously injured by the skidding automobile just before it went over the embankment, is reported to be improving at St. Edwards hospital, where she was taken after the accident. H. C. Davis and Henry Davis, who were with their brother in the automobile, were only slightly hurt, as was Bill Gordon, negro driver. The machine had been rented from a local garage to take some gasoline to the automobile of the Davis boys, just across the river.

They were returning with the negro when the accident occurred.

Charles Davis is survived his mother, Mrs. Suzune Davis of Moffett Okla., four brothers, Melvin, Henry, Harvey and Hayden Davis, and one sister, Mrs. Hattie Gregory of Pine Bluff. Funeral services will be conducted at 2 o'clock this afternoon, from the Fentress chapel, in charge of the Rev. Chester Grubb, of the First Christian church. Burial will be in the National cemetery.

A warrant charging murder has been issued for Gordon at Sallisaw, Okla., Sheriff Guy said last night, and the local police department has been asked to apprehend him.

"I will make a thorough investigation of the matter and if the negro was exceeding the speed limit or driving recklessly, he will have to answer to the courts of Oklahoma," the sheriff said.

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Saturday, December 30, 1922

OFFICERS SAY TWO YOUNGSTERS CAUSED FALSE FIRE ALARM

Johnnie Wynne, aged 9, living on Coke hill and Thomas Stevens, aged 7 living in ABC alley, were taken in charge last night by Officer Ellig and Fire Chief Brun, when they are alleged to have turned in two false alarms to fire department headquarters. The youngsters were caught at the telephone pay station at the Fort Smith and Western railroad. Johnnie denied turning in a false alarm, saying he was attempting to call his "paw."

The first alarm received was for the Union depot. When the apparatus and firemen arrived, they found it was a false alarm.

Not long after the truck returned to the house, when the second alarm, this time from the Fort Smith and Western depot, was received. Chief Brun and Officer Ellig rushed down there ahead of the trucks and caught the Wynne youth still in the telephone booth, it is said. He was kept at the jail last night. The other youngster was taken to his home.

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Sunday, December 31, 1922

CITY PRISONERS TO MOVE INTO NEW QUARTERS SUNDAY

An order was issued yesterday by Mayor Fagan Bourland to Chief of Police Mike Gordon to have all city prisoners now in the county jail removed to the old city jail by midnight tonight. The order is in accord with the mayor's decision to re-occupy the jail and use it also as a place for "down and outers" to spend the night.

J. H. Templeton, who has been the jailer at the county prison, under appointment from Sheriff Blake Harper, will be retained as day jailer at the city jail. John Robertson, night jailer, also will become a member of the city's forces.

Mayor Bourland announced, when he asked Mrs. Edith Woodward to move the detention home, that he plans to use the jail as a holdover and work the prisoners on the city streets. Under the former contract with Sheriff Harper, the prisoners were kept at the county jail with the city paying a certain sum per day for each prisoner.

Mayor Bourland believes he can save expenses in the long run, by reoccupying the city jail.

Al Whitson is the editor of the Journal's *long-standing feature of reprinted articles, photos, and advertisements from 100 years ago about Fort Smith, a city and a history to which Al is dedicated and serves well.*

Index

NOTES:
 # — Some sort of graphic, other than a portrait, is used.
*** — A portrait of the person(s) named is on the page indicated.**
(—) — For such as title, marital status, degree, etc.
"—" — For nickname or special emphasis
(-) — Dash between page numbers indicates the name of the person, place, etc., is carried throughout the story.
(gp) — Group picture
(pc) — Postcard

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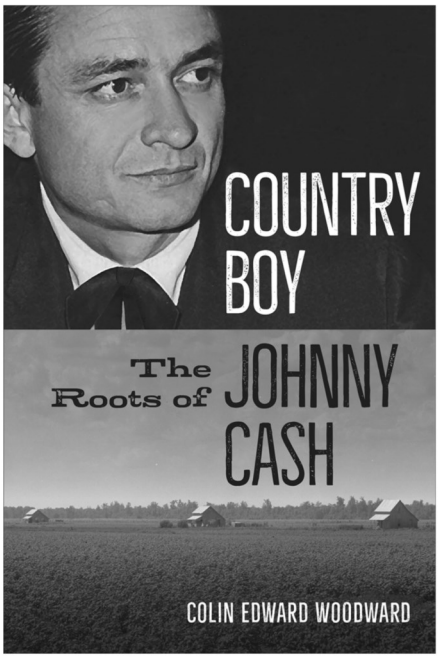

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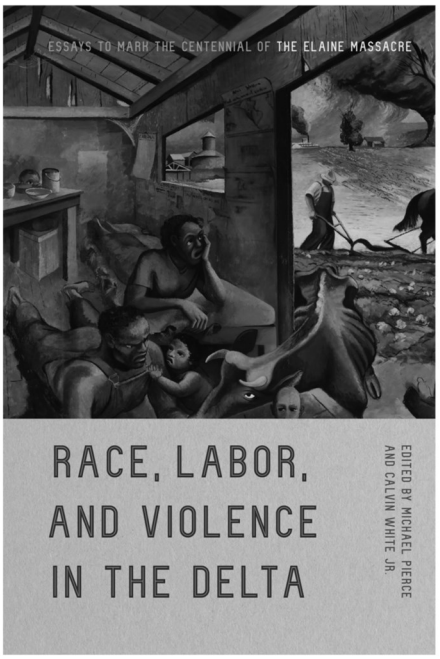

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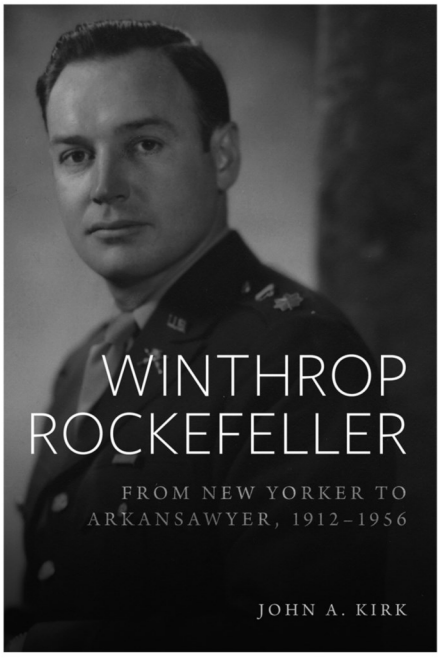

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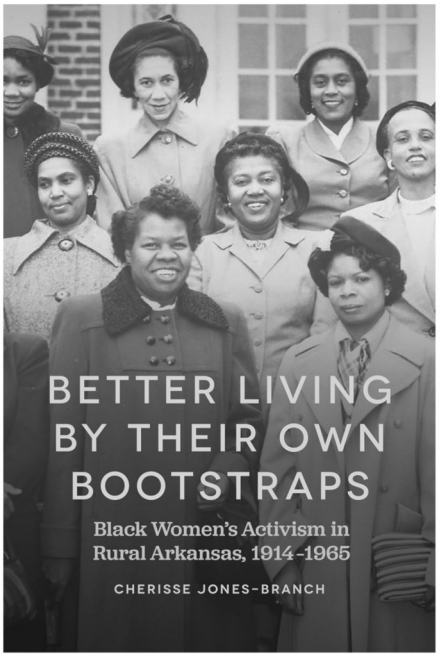

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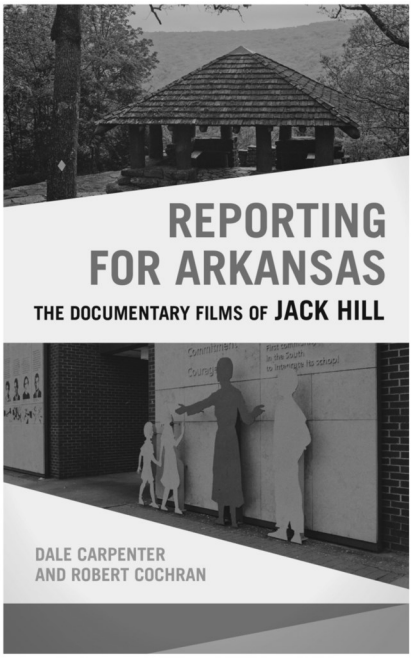

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