

Prairieland Talk

# 'Odie' Biglin Founder of Firm

By ROMAIN SAUNDERS, Retired, Former Editor The Frontier

LINCOLN—Side by side facing the sunset for more than three score and 10 years, the allotted span of human life, the one telling the story of life on prairieland, the other laying forms out to be taken to the abode of the dead.

The Frontier still goes on its living way, handed on from Mathews to Riggs, from Riggs to King and Cronin, from them to Cronin and from Cronin to the present editors and publishers.



Romain Saunders

Next door, Biglin's continue to bury the dead. I think how many lifeless forms have passed through its portals.

The name springs from the original Biglin. Friends knew him as Odie. He had been mayor, council member, school board and county board member. I counted him among my friends and often spent a little time in visits with him, just two fellows that had neither political nor religious sentiments alike, but each respected the other. A day in the long ago there lay upon a slab the form of a man prepared for burial. Biglin and I looked upon that form, and Odie said in solemn earnestness, "What shall it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul?" The form lying there before us was that of a man whose life had been spent grasping for another dollar.

John Bower, an oldtimer who rode the cowtrails in Swan, punched the swivel chair cowboys in the snoot when they undertook to dictate to him how he should handle his herds. Charley Petersen, probably heading Holt county's most extensive cattle ranching operations, goes to court to determine whether he shall continue handling his herds as he sees fit after many years in the cow country or do as the state and federal representatives that may not be able to tell a Shorthorn from a Hereford say he must do. A real or fancied thing they call "brucellosis" is said to have caught onto the tail of a prairieland cow here and there and the swivel chair boys have got busy to corral the herds and give 'em a shot. When Prairieland Talker lived close to the grassroots not so many years ago a roan cow of his herd was overtaken by something those less qualified might have diagnosed as "brucellosis", and we caught her up and emptied the household can of soda down her. She quickly recovered.

I see them as they play about in the doorway and come running to me expecting a bit of candy. If you can make a child happy with a bit of candy, why not. Just at that happy, care-free period of life when childhood stands between the cradle and the school desk, I asked them today if they were brother and sister. The little Miss said No—he's my friend and explained that she had a mamma but her little boy friend did not have a mamma as his parents were separated and the daddy had the little boy under his care and was living in the same house with her folks. There he was eagerly taking the paper wrapper off the candy I had handed him not yet sensing the tragedy of a broken home, cut off from the rightful heritage of childhood, a mother's love and care. Can daddy supply the love and care in addition to his full day in college preparing for life's stern duties. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him."

My Remington portable prints a clear unmistakable letter "m". It may have been the cultured gentleman with the blue pencil bearing the honored title of editor, the proof reader at a desk over in the corner or a typographical artist in the back shop. One of the trio decided that the author of Prairieland Talk was haywire and needed correction. But just how they could make "Hans" out of "Ham" is anybody's guess. There may be a few readers of "North-Central Nebraska's biggest newspaper" who can tell you that O'Neill once had a master of billingsgate in the person of Ham, not "Hans", Kautzman, who made The Beacon Light shine with the fires of hell for a year or two. We excuse The Frontier functionaries, but don't let it occur again.

Our state senators decided to not lower the voting age but may effect a lowering of the smoking age, legalizing the 16-year-old to puff the stuff medical science now concludes to be responsible for lung cancer. Maybe some of our statesmen think if the kids are to head down the cancer route they should get an early start.

State Engineer Ress joins the amalgamated assault on public funds with a budget of 88 million dollars to spread gold pavement over state highways during the next four years. A sizeable pile of dollars to be put into circulation and maybe prairieland patriots can pocket some of it. Pioneers got around over the mud and sand and sod and not a dime spent on highway construction. Of course we got around in those days in covered wagons, buckboards or parked in a double-cinch saddle aboard a horse on a dog trot. Prairie trails of those days witnessed romance and adventure. The present day highways daily witness killings.

Congressional investigation of the Teamster union discloses a charming bit of romance. A gent having access to his union "stock pile" stuck in his thumb and pulled out, not a plum, but three thousand in cash with which he bought an automobile and presented it to his lady friend. Maybe our congressional sleuths will yet bring the blushing miss before them on a charge of receiving property secured with stolen money. But prairieland patriots' guess no doubt is that the gallantry of their congressmen would not permit them to become involved in such a thing.

Duty comes first. What is due comes when the job is done. Free men have rights; they also have duties. It is because he did his duty as office boy that John today is president of the corporation.

Alone this storm-tossed day I turn the leaves of memory and there in fancy see upon the screen in shadowy design a face and form to me divine, as I once had called her mine. A dozen years ago she crossed the swelling tide and I go my way alone to dream the old dreams again until I too shall be a memory.

A foot of snow out where the west begins, all night rain down at Lincoln followed by a heavy snow as March marches toward April first, so the corn belt of prairieland has been adequately wet down as another planting and growing season comes this way.

## When You & I Were Young . . . President Without Carb: 'Teddy Bear'

### That's Alleged Joke Making Rounds

50 Years Ago  
Someone started this joke: "If Roosevelt is president with his clothes on, what is he with his clothes off?" Answer: "Teddy bear". The Spencer schools are reported closed because of smallpox. . . John M. Grutsch, Jr., and Miss Pearl Moler, two of our most popular and agreeable young people, were married at O'Neill. . . Rose Hahn, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Jacob Hahn of Atkinson and Charles Coleman were married in Omaha. . . Bert Parshall surprised his parents by arriving from Fremont in time for supper.

20 Years Ago  
Out in Dorsey, a few potatoes were put in the ground on Good Friday. Our correspondent asks, "I wonder if they will freeze in the ground?" . . . Velma Johring, Melvin Johring, Roxie Puckett and Marvel Borg were guests at the William Hubby home. . . Roy Spindler has recovered from pneumonia. . . Mrs. Emmet McCaffrey of Emmet, who has been ill at the home of her mother, Mrs. J. P. Mullen, is "much improved". . . Mr. and Mrs. Harden Anspach and three children of Inman, who spent several months in California, returned.

10 Years Ago  
Deaths: Edward C. ("Cotton Top") Alberts, 69, a baseball star, died in Norfolk; Leo Jurden Vaughn, 85, of Scottville; James O. Adams, 18, of Chambers in a car accident; John Frederick Borgelt, 77, a homesteader of Cherry county. . . Only 244 votes were cast in the city and school election. . . Mr. and Mrs. Victor Snyder of Chambers have a son, David Eugene. . . The latest registrants to be officially released through the selective service office here were: Quentin L. Pajar of Inman; Merle E. Lee of Ewing; Jack Neal Sessler of Atkinson and William D. Sammons of Amelia.

One Year Ago  
Deaths: Lt. (jg) Harold D. Tegeler of Page in a plane that crashed near Pittsburg, Pa.; Donald E. Rhode, 29, of Lynch and Bryce Witta, 22, formerly of Butte in a plane crash 4 1/2 miles southeast of the Stafford school;

Mrs. Christian C. Henkel, 76, of Des Moines, Ia., formerly of the Phoenix community; Mrs. George Ries, 32, the former Gertrude Schollmeyer, of Seattle, Wash. . . Mr. and Mrs. Deemer Corner of Ewing, celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary.

### 74 Participants in Two Classes Here

Increases ranging up to 27 percent in the number of persons taking advantage of education by extension from the University of Nebraska were recorded during the past 12 months. Off-campus courses have been held at 52 Nebraska cities and towns during 1956-57. Figures include:

| O'NEILL   | Enrol. Class. |
|-----------|---------------|
| Atkinson  | 74            |
| Bassett   | 18            |
| Butte     | 21            |
| Norfolk   | 13            |
| Burwell   | 49            |
| Ord       | 21            |
| Albion    | 134           |
| Plainview | 167           |
| Greeley   | 121           |
|           | 64            |

### \$150 Turned Over to Grattan Library

The O'Neill Woman's club Friday turned \$150 over to the Grattan township library. The money represented proceeds from the recent style show, "Suddenly It's Spring." It was stipulated the funds were to be used for the purchase of books for grade school and high school students, according to Miss Bernadette Brennan, librarian.

Visit at Greeley — Dr. Robert Wallace and his mother, Mrs. M. J. Wallace, visited Saturday and Sunday with Mr. and Mrs. Harold Coners at Greeley.



### To Be Honored

Miss Lorraine Gail Ernst (above), who is bound for the Belgian Congo, Africa, via Europe, will be honored Friday evening by Mr. and Mrs. J. C. Parker. Miss Ernst is a daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Homer Ernst.

### Letters to Editor

Redondo Beach, Calif. Enclosed find \$3 to renew our subscription for another year. I am also sending our local paper which has the announcement of our son's wedding. He was one of the polo victims of 1952 of Holt County.

We really enjoy The Frontier as it has all the news of all our friends back home.

—KENNETH BRAASCH  
Mr. and Mrs. Alvin Vorce visited Sunday with Mr. and Mrs. Ray Harmon at Page.

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**WILLIS ROCKEY**  
AGENT  
Ewing, Nebraska

Return to Omaha — Mrs. Dean Van Every and children of Omaha spent last week visiting her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Lloyd Brady, and her husband's parents, Mr. and Mrs. George Van Every. Mr. and Mrs. Brady took their daughter-in-law and children to Omaha Monday.

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— CHAMBERS —

Editorial

## Amelia Wins Round One

The Amelia school patrons have triumphed over the bureaucrats—at least in one phase of a running battle that went to the courts last year. The Nebraska supreme court has ruled a segment of the Amelia-Chambers road as not "reasonably improved". The effect of the ruling, a reversal of the Lancaster district court edict by Judge Paul White, is that the Amelia school district 228 will continue to be entitled to receive free high school tuition and thereby keep in operation its two-grade high school.

The victory, however, has greater implications. It means, that the Amelia patrons, all of them, and 100 percent of the patrons in the adjoining districts, all bent on sending their children to high school for two years in their home community, have scored a victory over the arbitrary and dictatorial tendencies of officers who view-all and know-all from the ivory tower of the state capitol.

The Amelia people, real champions for the American way, decided to take the state board of education and the state commissioner of education, Freeman B. Decker, to court when the state education wheels undertook to close the school.

Oh yes, the Lincoln officials will say they didn't say the school had to close. They simply wanted to strip the school of the free high tuition privileges, which would have amounted to the same thing. And, before that, the state education office helped to sponsor legislation that would lead to the closing of the doors of small high schools like Amelia's on hairline and arbitrary grounds.

But Amelia school officials were not to be denied a two-grade high school, regardless of its size, as long as a reasonable course of study was followed and good instruction was offered. The high school teacher, Duane Carson, regularly turns out pupils that rate in the upper half of their classes when they finish high school at Atkinson, Burwell, Chambers or O'Neill—and a check of the records proves that. Moreover, the Amelia people reasoned that America is still a free country and, if they want to pay the cost of operating a small high school, it is their business—not the heartfelt responsibility of do-gooders 'neath the massive capitol dome.

The state board had refused to approve the two-year Amelia high school on the grounds that for three consecutive years the school had had less than 10 pupils and lay within 15 miles "over a reasonably improved highway" of another high school (Chambers), as provided by statute, which the state education people helped to fix.

The Amelia school officers took their case to court in Lancaster county district court about a year ago. They claimed that the law allowing the state board the power of high school approval was unconstitutional, that there were administrative errors, and that Amelia was not in fact within 15 miles "on a reasonably improved highway" from another school.

State Engineer L. N. Ress and state education officers testified the highway was "reasonably improved". Judge White held that it was. But the high court held differently.

The court took into consideration the intent of the legislature in ruling that the road, south from Amelia to highway 95, was not "reasonably improved".

The state supreme court, however, did not rule on the constitutionality of the powers, holding its decision to the 15-mile part of the appeal. Thus, unanswered are the questions in another area of disagreement with the bureaucrats.

Best guess is that Decker et al will be back for more and will continue to exercise all influence possible to mend the laws to their convenience and to the inconvenience of the folks at Amelia and others similarly situated. Thus is the nature of do-gooders.

That Amelia has won round one brings to mind a widely-quoted statement issued before the start of the current legislative session by Sen. Frank Nelson. He said the state education office had helped to sponsor more unconstitutional legislation during the past eight years than all other departments of state government combined. At that time, Senator Nelson said he had serious doubts concerning the constitutionality of the Amelia case, which was then pending before the high court. As usual, his concern was vindicated by time—and, in this instance, by the state's supreme court.

Add the Amelia case to the sins of Mr. Decker and his staff. And, if you leave the decision to the folks at Amelia and others similarly situated, Mr. Decker will be walking something less than a tight wire from now on out.

The Frontier, here and now, offers its sincere congratulations to the Waldo, Widmans, Whites, Fullertons, Dierkings, Doolittles and other good citizens of the Amelia locality who refused to accept the theory that the capitol dome knows what is best for sandhills children; that do-gooders can mean well but turn out to miserably wrong.



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