



Making a Difference

By Gina Kelly Ellis

It is Spring Break week as I write this. Steve and I had big plans for this week. We were going to head east for a few days. No real destination in mind. Just a break for a while before farming really kicks into gear. The plan was to leave Sunday after preaching. I toyed with the notion of just leaving after Sunday school and then I decided after preaching was a better choice. Now, bear with me, because this is a long story to get to the point! Our preacher has been preaching a series on scriptures that we need to memorize. He told us about a book that goes through each scripture and I had purchased it. I hadn't taken the time to actually start reading it, though. Anyway, I carried the book with me Sunday and he preached on Galatians 5:22, the fruit of the Spirit. It was a wonderful sermon that got me really thinking about it all. As I was going home from church to head out on vacation, I decided to throw that book in the car to read

a little while we traveled. But before I could make it home, I had a call that my dad had fallen and the ambulance was on the way.

So, now as I write this, I have spent the week in a Lubbock hospital sitting with my daddy. Today, I pulled that book Dr. Moman had told us about out of my bag and began to read. One of the verses we were to memorize was simply, "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want." Psalm 23:1. This is a verse we have all already memorized, I am sure. But today as I walked the floor and read in my daddy's room, I read it the way Dr. Moman had taught it. Today, I needed to know that the Lord was MY shepherd. Not a shepherd. Not the shepherd. But MY shepherd. As I face this week of changes in the life of my family, it was just exactly what I needed to hear. That my God is watching after ME. Not everyone, everywhere, even though He certainly is. But my God is watching over ME! I watched as

both my sisters had to drive away to take care of responsibilities where they live and I thought, "Can I make the decisions that have to be made? Can I do what all I am going to have to do?" And then I remembered, the Lord is MY shepherd.

We are so very blessed to know a Father who has everything in place for us even before we know we are going to need anything. God knew how my day was going to go. He knew I wasn't going to head east. He also knew I would need a little reassurance along the way and that is why He prompted me to put that little book in my car. How wonderful it is to have a God who deals in the details of our lives! Isn't it great to have such a marvelous Father who knows our needs before we even ask. He sure makes a difference for me!

Are you letting Him make a difference for you?

Small Town Teens Grab Any Job Available

Texas Journalist...by Willis Webb

At my age and with grown children and grandchildren, I've pretty much lost touch with the daily goings and comings of teenagers. Today's teens, I'm sure, have jobs similar to what we did 55-60 years ago, but so much else has changed. Youngsters today face different challenges at work than we did.

Growing up in a small town, as the four Webb boys did, we took just about any job we could get. Two of us got our business/work beginnings at the feet of Teague's leading variety store owner, O.H. Forke (pronounced fork-ee). Of course, a couple of us had early morning paper routes all the way through high school, in addition to other jobs such as Forke's. Another son was a shoeshine boy at one of the barber shops. And, the youngest managed to get in a little grocery bagging, just like his three older siblings.

As you might imagine, in a town of 3,000-plus one might have a relationship on more than one level with another individual. Such was the case for me with Forke's.

Mr. and Mrs. Forke had a

daughter, Louise, who was a teacher. I was in English classes taught by her in junior high and in journalism in high school. She sponsored the school newspaper and I was on the staff all the way through high school. Later on, she told me I was her only journalism student who went into the profession.

Our jobs with Forke's changed somewhat with a city council ordinance banning the sale of fireworks within the city limits.

Forke's carried fireworks in the store and it was a nice revenue producer during several holidays, more particularly July 4, Christmas and New Year. Forke was very enterprising, so he decided that on the particularly good-for-fireworks holidays, he'd set up an open-air fireworks stand just past the city limits sign on U.S. Highway 84 east toward the county seat of Fairfield. And, the Webb boys were chosen to man it.

But, we spent more time, year round, in the store than at the fireworks stand and we learned to handle all manner of customers and all kinds of products that Forke had in his display cases and

on counters.

O.H. Forke himself instructed us on a variety of issues throughout our time in his employment.

In time of segregation, Forke maintained that everyone's money looked and spent the same so we were to treat everyone alike.

If any customer showed any signs of trouble, we were to summon the owner and let him handle it. As young teens, that suited us just fine.

You'd have to be a veteran of several years with Forke's to have enough time to learn something about every section of the store. The merchandise was, as "variety" in the store name indicated, quite thoroughly varied. You could find anything from a sheetrock screw for a penny (one cent) to elaborate cookie jars and other pottery with a nice price tag. There was also a big section for toys.

There was one rather small, obscure section of the store that produced a disclosure that shocked my uncomprehending young mind -- toiletries, shampoos and all sorts of personal grooming products.

O.H. forgot to warn me about that one.

One day, a man came in and asked for a bottle of Bay Rum Hair Tonic, which was said to keep your hair laying down and looking well-groomed.

I sold it to him and he walked through the front door onto the sidewalk, unscrewed the lid and took a swig.

Apparently, my chin must've fallen to my chest. I turned back toward the interior of the store and saw O.H. looking at me and chuckling.

"Did I do something wrong?" I asked.

"No," O.H. replied, "I just forgot to tell you about our Saturday runs on Bay Rum. It's the drink of preference for some folks."

Yuck!

Later, I looked at the label and found out it was probably the quickest, cheapest drunk available in dry Teague. It was 30 percent alcohol. I figured it would probably burn your scalp not to mention your insides.

Willis Webb is a retired community newspaper editor-publisher of more than 50 years experience. He can be reached by email at wwebb1937@att.net.

Paper 'n Ink:

it's the drought...

By Lynn Brisendine

Hardly a month goes by without some wildlife biologist declaring a species living in our part of the world endangered.

With those pronouncements come a lot of paperwork and regulations which can stifle human activity up to closing down businesses by limiting their ability to work their properties.

We experienced such a prospect over the last couple of years concerning the Sagebrush Lizard. This little critter with its declining numbers became a huge issue among oil field developers and the people depending on this industry to produce.

After years of study, it was determined that these little crawlies were doing pretty well in their habitat despite humans.

This year we see another species threaten projects from the lower South Plains to the Upper Panhandle and various tracts of land in between which surround the limited range of the Prairie Chicken. Some of this "range" hasn't seen one of these furry footed birds in decades, but environmentalists continue to push for pretty strict remedies.

The chicken isn't really any more in peril than so many other wild animals trying to make a living in a tough world. This environment sees increased hardship on all that depend on a depleted resource due to a lot of extraneous factors.

Reading some of the research on the Prairie Chicken, the experts say that they live in country without high structures around. No trees, in other words. These folks who study the species claim that the hens will not nest under tall structures because their predators can perch above and watch for movement which they then can spring from that perch and attack.

This of course means that all of the tall Wind Turbines being constructed to harvest the wind cause these birds some real grief.

While all of that may have a basis in fact, it seems pretty simple to me what is really putting these beautiful birds in peril. The loss of habitat over the last century must rank right at the top of problems.

The real culprit in these last few years is the drought. Without moisture, especially during the nesting season, these birds can't raise a clutch of eggs. No rain means fewer insects and that is what the hens feed their chicks to fatten them up in a hurry.

The Prairie Chicken isn't the only species taking a huge hit in these extremely dry conditions. Quail have dwindled in numbers. They also depend on insects, not to mention a good drink from time to time. Another non-native bird which had established decent numbers across the region, the Ring Neck Pheasant has also died off in big numbers due to different farming techniques and a lack of water.

The drought has been a game changer, not just for wild things, but for people as well. Last month's closing of a major employer in the Panhandle, the Cargill Plant at Plainview, is another victim of no rainfall. This plant closing cost over 2,000 people their jobs.

Ranchers have sold off their herds in much of Texas. They have seen their grass die and the price of feed stocks, also in short supply, forced many to move their herds to market. They are selling everything including their mother cow herds which means no calves next year and the process of reducing numbers continues. A facility which processed hundreds of animals a day cannot continue to operate if those cattle are no longer available.

Other plants taking a hit from the dryness are the Ethanol distillers. The loss of a corn crop in Kansas, Iowa, Illinois, Nebraska, all across the grain belt, have seen supplies curtailed until these plants have stopped production. Many of them have put their employees on clean up details and are trying to wait out the crisis.

Those of us who live on the South Plains have seen dryland crops fail. And even with some good water from the ground, nothing grows quite as well as when mother nature wets them from above, which means that even the irrigated crops just didn't make all they could have with just a couple of good rains.

It was disheartening to watch this country go dry in 2011. Field crops hurt, yards suffered and many never turned green. Even the Prairie Dog towns around saw numbers die off and dusty brown was the color most seen in that memorable greenless year.

2012, while a little better, really never saw enough moisture to make up that loss in the year before. And, sadly, it appears at this writing that 2013 hasn't seen moisture profiles gain over the first three months.

This arid condition isn't only a Panhandle, South Plains event. The entire state of Texas, most of New Mexico, much of Oklahoma, and a lot of the Great Plains has also suffered a lack of rain.

In a few words it isn't just a bunch of wild chickens hurting and the only real answer to all of the problems above is some good rain.

Letter to the Editor

P.O. Box 1200 Seminole, Texas 79360

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Avoid Post-Disaster Scam Artists and Swindlers

By Jason Alderman

Have you ever turned on the light in a dark basement and shuddered as cockroaches scurried away? I get that same sense of revulsion whenever I hear about unscrupulous swindlers taking advantage of the victims of natural and manmade disasters.

The Better Business Bureau has dubbed these human cockroaches "Storm Chasers" because they creep out of the woodwork after every major storm or disaster. In fact, because fraud was so widespread after Hurricane Katrina, the Department of Justice created the National Center for Disaster Fraud, a central information clearinghouse for more than 20

federal agencies where people can report suspected fraudulent activities tied to disasters of all types.

One common scam is where supposed repair workers blitz impacted neighborhoods, hoping to ensnare frazzled homeowners. Their typical line is, "We're really slammed but with a cash deposit you can ensure a spot on our busy schedule." Or, they'll scare people into thinking their home is dangerously unsafe, sometimes actually creating damage during their "inspection."

Often, these Storm Chasers just take the money and run. Or, if they do show up and make repairs, their work or materials are shoddy. This could leave you on

the hook financially since your homeowners insurance probably won't cover unauthorized or fraudulent repairs.

Here are a few tips from the Better Business Bureau to avoid becoming a Storm Chaser victim:

- Ask your insurance company about what's covered under your policy and specific filing requirements. Also ask them to survey the damage and see whether they have approved contractors.

- Never hire a laborer or contractor on the spot. Get at least three estimates based on the same specifications and materials. Check their references, licensing and registration information with the National Association of State

Contractors Licensing Agencies (www.nascla.org/licensing_information); also read reviews posted by the Better Business Bureau.

- Require written contracts that specify work to be done, materials to be used, start and end dates, responsibility for hauling away debris, and costs broken down by labor and materials. Verify that the contractor's name, address, phone number and license number are included, as well as any verbal promises and warranties.

- Read the fine print. Some shady contracts include clauses allowing substantial cancellation fees if you choose not to use the contractor after your insurance

company has approved the claim. Others require you to pay the full price if you cancel after the cancellation period has expired.

- Ask your contractor to provide proof of current insurance that covers workers compensation benefits, property damage and personal liability.

- You'll probably be asked to pay an upfront deposit to cover initial materials – one-quarter to one-third is reasonable upon delivery of materials to your home and once work begins.

- Never pay in full in advance, and don't pay cash. Have the contract specify a schedule for releasing payments, and before making the final payment, ask

the contractor to provide proof that all subcontractors have been paid – if not, you could be liable for their fees.

And finally, remember the adage, "If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is." If someone uses high-pressure sales tactics, requires full payment upfront, asks you to get necessary permits or offers to shave costs by using leftover materials from another job – run. They're potentially disastrous to your bottom line – and you've been through one disaster already.

Jason Alderman directs Visa's financial education programs. To participate in a free, online Financial Literacy and Education Summit on April 17, 2013, go to www.practicalmoneyskills.com/summit2013.

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