

## Dennis Weaver and the "OU Mafia" Remembered

*Editor's Note: The Dennis Weaver article in the Winter 1982 Sooner Magazine reminded one reader of the following Thanksgiving Day feature by OU journalism graduate Paul McClung, managing editor of the Lawton Constitution, where the story first appeared on November 26, 1981.*

Remember your "salad days," the times of youthful inexperience and struggle to get ahead?

The OU Mafia couldn't afford turkey that year, but we roasted two guinea hens on Thanksgiving Day, 30 years ago in New York.

The OU graduates stuck together, the self-styled "OU Mafia." Most were drama school graduates, making the rounds of auditions, hoping for a break.

I was going to graduate school on the GI bill, and Old Mom was one of the few with steady employment. She worked for the Harry Conover Modeling Agency, and was always trying to get one of our actor friends a one-shot modeling job, an hour or two of work that would earn a few dollars — anything to keep everybody going until the big breaks came.

Dennis Weaver, former track star and drama student at OU, found himself a job as superintendent of an apartment complex. He and his wife, Gerry, had one baby then. Weaver had trouble in his attic apartment. There was an apartment radiator, but the heat never got up from the basement. There was an old fireplace, and Weaver went down on the avenue and gathered some firewood from the avenue's trees.

The chimney had long been plastered up, and his fire smoked up the apartment terribly before he got the plaster pulled out.

We had a small child, but considered ourselves pretty prosperous in our fifth floor walk-up apartment in upper Manhattan. We weren't prosperous enough to buy turkey, but the occasion demanded something fancy, and guinea was more fancy than chicken and just as cheap. I spent a couple of dimes and several hours to ride the subway to the market downtown and buy them.

Rance and Jean Howard helped prepare the guest list, and they and the others brought the trimmings. The little apartment was crowded with people and laughter.

I can't remember how many of the Oklahomans were there. I know Lonnie Martin was with us that day. Lonnie, beautiful inside and out. She was in some traveling shows and summer stock. We lost track of her, but we always remember her, always look for her in movies or on television.

Dennis Weaver went on from his "super" job at the apartment to "Gunsmoke," "Gentle Ben" and "McCloud."

Lonnie Chapman is an actor in Hollywood. Don May starred as Adam Drake in the daytime series "The Edge of Night" for many years.

Jean Howard, who grew up as Jean Speegle of Duncan, and her husband, Rance, became producers in Hollywood and their son, Ronnie, is the "Happy Days" star.

The salad days with their guinea hen Thanksgivings were happy days.

Paul McClung, '49BA  
Lawton, Oklahoma

## Our Man in La Paz

Thank you for the copies of the Winter 1982 *Sooner Magazine*, including my address to the Peruvian-North American Chamber of Commerce and the "Sooner Spotlight" article on "The Corrs." I was extremely pleased with the article which you so ably edited and its presentation in the magazine. I was also delighted with the article on Junior and myself. I particularly liked the last paragraph which affirmed our intention to return home to Oklahoma to live within the next few years.

Edwin G. Corr, '56BS, '61MA  
Ambassador  
Embassy of the  
United States of America  
La Paz, Bolivia

## A Few Warm Words

The new *Sooner Magazine* is a real plus! The content, style and presentations reflect the high standards that have always been the hallmark of OU. Keep up the good work.

John F. Heckinger, '50BS, '58MBA  
Daytona Beach, Florida

## "Middle-Aged Marriage" Goes to a Workshop

Thank you for a fine magazine. I especially want to commend you and Maggie Hayes for the article "Middle-Aged Marriage: Going, Going, Gone?" in the Winter issue. I will be giving a workshop next summer on mid-life crisis, and this article addresses one significant facet of this problem very well.

Forrest E. Ladd, Ph.D.  
(OU MS 1950)

Professor of Psychology  
Bethany Nazarene College  
Bethany, Oklahoma

## More About Ballet

You might be interested to know that the OU dance department, which was featured in *Sooner Magazine* recently ("The Ballet," Summer 1981) brought home three gold medals — the most earned by any university — from the regional competition of the American College Dance Festival in Beaumont, Texas. Miguel Terekhov was recognized as director of the "best trained company in dance technique;" Mary Margaret Holt, as choreographer of "Dvorak Quintet," which tied for first place with a dance from the University of Texas. Ko Yukihiro took honorable mention in choreography for "Autumn Shadows."

All of the above mentioned were also featured recently in "Coppelia" and the "Modern Dance Repertoire." I hope these achievements help gain the attention of future audiences.

Robin Seagraves  
Norman, Oklahoma

## Huston Huffman Center

I enjoyed the fine book on your University, being particularly happy to see the Huston Huffman health center in "operation." Thank you!

Betty Pratt Wallace  
Dayton, Ohio

*Editor's Note: Mrs. Wallace, in memory of her husband, Col. John Moore Wallace, U.S.A.F., was one of the many private donors to the new OU physical fitness center, which is named for Col. Wallace's cousin, the late Huston Huffman. (Sooner Magazine, Winter 1982)*