



From the Bookshelf

Red Blood and Black Ink: Journalism in the Old West

by David Dary

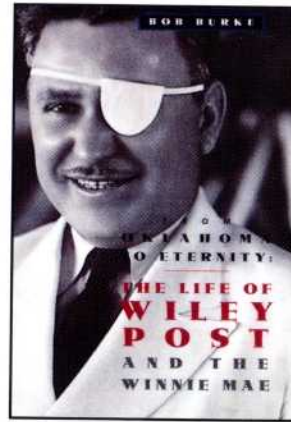
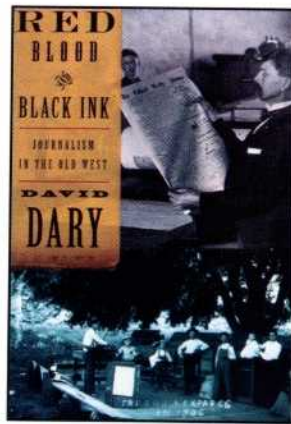
Alfred A. Knopf, Publisher, New York
372 pages. 79 illustrations.
\$30 hardcover.

Readers of the *Barbour County Mail*, a Republican sheet in Medicine Lodge, Kansas, met and decided editor M. J. Cochrane could not be counted as an asset to the community. He was kidnapped from his humble office, stripped naked and rolled in molasses and sandburs—since there was no tar in town, and featherbeds were far too expensive to split open and waste on a lop-eared scribe.

Newspaperman James King, of San Francisco, had a more deadly encounter. King was detested by rival editor James P. Casey, whom he had accused of serving prison time for robbing his mistress, a vile deed even in the Old West. The truth hurts, and Casey lay waiting for King outside the newspaper offices and gunned him down. Casey was hanged for the crime.

Newspaper editors led much more exciting lives in the Old West, according to a new book by OU journalism school director David Dary. *Red Blood and Black Ink: Journalism in the Old West* chronicles the importance of local newspapers in settling Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas and the western territories.

Often right behind the railroad and surely before the preachers, brave entrepreneurial newspapermen and some women set up shops under shade trees or inside tents. Letterpresses, bought second hand from Eastern



newspapers, were hauled over mountains or carried on barges.

Pistol-packing editors were always “against” something, usually attacking the project’s sponsor, most likely another newspaperman. Editors avoided legal action, preferring instead to continue personal wars on the front pages or move to another town.

With no distinction between editorial freedom and personal freedom, editors usually did not let the truth get in the way of a good story. Local news dominated the front pages. The personal columns, often peppered with trite words and phrases, were important, too. Obituaries looked for positives, even in the death of the town drunk.

Editors live a safer, albeit less exciting life these days. Somewhere along the way we newspapermen traded our pistols for calculators, our typecases for computer networks. Hyperbole was replaced by neutral words, and the profession’s romanticism eroded like a sandy riverbank on the South Canadian. Oh, to have lived in another era.

—ANDY RIEGER, '80 B.A., '95 M.P.A.

Managing Editor
The Norman Transcript

From Oklahoma to Eternity: The Life of Wiley Post and the Winnie Mae

by Bob Burke, '70 B.A.

Oklahoma Heritage Association
228 pages. \$24.95 hardcover.

The adage “You can’t judge a book by its cover”—or in this case “jacket”—does not apply to *From Oklahoma to Eternity: the Life of Wiley Post and the Winnie Mae*. Bob

his remarkable life. Post, Burke convinces the reader, lived a life worth remembering.

The aforementioned jacket contains convincing evidence. “Wiley was the most courageous pilot in the history of aviation,” says Amelia Earhart. “Every time I donned a modern space suit, I thought of Wiley Post,” confesses Oklahoma astronaut Tom Stafford. “Wiley Post was a beacon in the sky for man’s dreams of flying toward the stars,” eulogizes President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

This is high praise for a one-eyed country boy who, through raw courage and determination, rebuilt his life after a term in the penitentiary for armed robbery, and who as a man battled the demons of depression and won.

Burke deftly guides the reader through the often tumultuous early days of aviation when rules were being made as the planes took flight. Drawing from news reports, other Post and Will Rogers biographies and files of the Oklahoma Historical Society, Burke puts the reader in the co-pilot seat for a ride through history with a man who had no fear of the unknown and an incredible capacity to adjust to any situation.

Will Rogers, who was to be linked throughout eternity to Post, said, “. . . he is a determined looking little rascal, and when he says quit, you can be sure there would be no more gas, or no more air.” Sadly for all of us, Post ran out of both at the age of 36.

November 22 marks the 100th anniversary of the birth of this remarkable man. Bake him a cake.

—MOLLY LEVITE GRIFFIS, '60 B.A.

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