



## from the Bookshelf

### Letter from Home

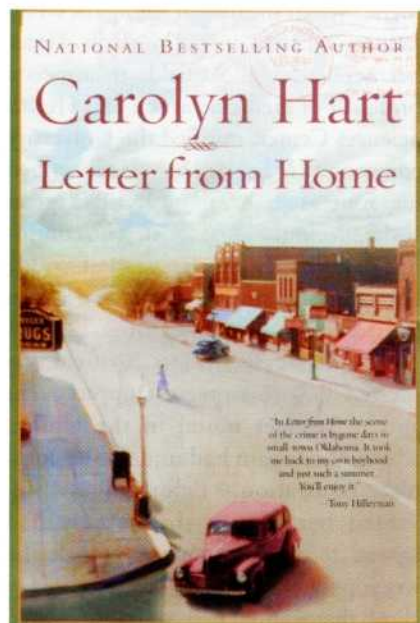
by Carolyn Hart, '58 *ba* *journal*

\$22.95 hardcover

Berkley Prime Crime

If you have time to curl up with only one book this winter, make it *Letter from Home*, the latest gem from Oklahoma's master of the cozy mystery, Carolyn Hart. Hart has two prize-winning, best-selling series going in the classic cozy style, but in this book she steps back from formula for a stand-alone tale that is her best yet.

Oh, there is a murder all right—it wouldn't be Hart without a murder—but the crime here is the vehicle for a bittersweet look at the era, setting and



heroine of this book—World War II in a small Oklahoma town with its struggling local newspaper and a 13-year-old cub reporter whose life is drastically altered when her best friend's fun-loving mother is killed and the victim's jealous husband pursued. Years and a highly successful reporting career later, a grown-up Gretchen Gilman receives a letter that draws her back to her hometown and the never-solved crime that has haunted her.

Every acclaimed author seems to have that one book he or she must write regardless of his or her established commercial guidelines. John LeCarre did it, so did John Grisham; *Letter from Home* is Hart's. One publisher told Hart that adult readers wouldn't want to read about a teenage heroine. This adult did and highly recommends the experience.

—CJB

*NOTE: In October 2003 Carolyn Hart was one of 10 mystery authors appearing in the Mystery and Thriller Pavilion at the National Book Festival on the Mall in Washington, D.C., where Letter from Home was released. The Oklahoma Center for Poets and Writers has nominated the novel for the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction.*

### Notable from the OU Press

#### Prelude to Greatness

by Jay Smith with Jim Willis

\$28.95 hardcover

A first-hand account of a blue-chip high school football star's college playing career under four different OU coaches, Gibbs, Schnellenberger, Blake and Stoops.

#### 47 Straight: The Wilkinson Era at Oklahoma

by Harold Keith

foreword by Berry Tramel

\$19.95 paperback

A classic reprint account of the age that set the stage for Oklahoma football greatness that continues to this day. No serious OU football fan should be without it.

## UNIVERSITY BOULEVARD

FROM FLATBELLIES TO FRESHMEN



A.B. HOLLINGSWORTH

The award-winning author of FLATBELLIES

### University Boulevard

by A. B. Hollingsworth, '71 *ba*, '75 *md*

\$22.95 hardcover

Clock Tower Press

A. B. Hollingsworth's first novel, *Flatbellies*, was an Oklahoma-flavored, coming-of-age tale centered on members of a championship high school golf team, circa late '60s. You didn't have to be a teenage boy or a golfer to enjoy that critically praised book. Now comes *University Boulevard*, which takes the boys off the golf course and into the fraternity house. You need not have been a frat rat or a veteran of the Vietnam-era college campus to relish this well-written sequel either—but it helps.

The campus, not surprisingly, is full of familiar landmarks, and if the people and happenings are veiled at all, they are thinly so. Hollingsworth's characters are skillfully crafted composites of the eccentrics that populate nearly all our lives. We all have known wheeler-dealers like Peachy, spellbinding gurus like Smokey Ray, preordained leaders like Chipper.

If the dialogue turns preachy as our heroes speed toward graduation, we have to remember that this was the ultimate era for soul-searching, a John Wayne world splintered by social upheaval and a war nobody wanted. Some make it through; some do not; and *University Boulevard* is a book you can't put down until you know which ones are which.

—CJB



# *postscript.* The Will Rogers Mural



Robert Taylor

In 1958, an artist named Mary S. Scofield bravely climbed onto the scaffolding erected specially for her inside Oklahoma Memorial Union's Will Rogers Room and began recreating the massive mural she had first painted eight years earlier. Scofield spent the next five months on that scaffold as her brushes retold the life story of Oklahoma's favorite son, from his ranch boyhood in the Cherokee Nation near Oologah to stage and screen fame to the fateful 1935 flight that ended his life and that of aviator Wiley Post.

The original 83-foot Will Rogers mural had been painted in Galveston and shipped to the Norman campus, where it was mounted on the east wall overlooking the dining area of the Union's cafeteria. When a cafeteria fire damaged Scofield's mural beyond repair, she agreed to repaint it directly on the wall.

The project, both in 1950 and 1958, was replete with anecdotes. Scofield later told family members of a daily observer she had as she worked on the scaffold, a Cherokee man who suggested the wording in his native language that she used in the schoolhouse scene.

In portraying Rogers as a newspaper columnist, Scofield reproduced two of his most famous sayings, "All I know is

what I read in the papers," and "I never met a man I didn't like," the artist's misplaced apostrophe generally being attributed to Rogers' notoriously poor spelling. When Scofield repainted the mural, her research revealed that Rogers used "ent" for the contraction "n't" and "... a man I didnt like" became a favorite piece of OU trivia as students searched for the error in the mural.

The Will Rogers mural was the third such major work Scofield painted during a long, distinguished career as artist and teacher—and the only one to survive. Her first mural adorned Texas A&M's new Student Union, constructed immediately following World War II; the second was commissioned for Houston's most elegant and sophisticated hotel of the day, The Shamrock. Both murals fell victim to later renovation and demolition.

Having come through the '58 fire, Scofield's Will Rogers faced an uncertain fate once again when the Union cafeteria was converted into a food court in 1990. However, the Will Rogers theme and the mural ultimately were retained. In the 1998 renovation, larger-than-life photographs of Rogers, handpicked by OU President David Boren from those made available by the Will Rogers Memorial in Claremore, were

added to the huge room's other walls. At the same time, in the spirit of the Scofield mural, Boren commissioned Louise Jones to paint a corresponding mural, depicting OU students through the ages, on the back side of the west wall facing the food court.

While Scofield's mural has become a campus landmark, viewed daily by hundreds of students and other visitors to the Union for more than five decades, the artist herself remains largely unknown to them. When she died at the age of 84 on January 24, 2003, in Wichita Falls, Texas, her nephew, Hal Scofield, an associate professor of medicine at the OU Health Sciences Center, notified the University community of her passing. He described his aunt as "a great optimist, a great storyteller and a great artist, who continued to paint until the last years of her life both for her own enjoyment and for an occasional commissioned work."

In the late '90s, Mary Scofield was invited back to a special campus event and to see her mural in the Union, which once again had undergone complete renovation. Before illness prevented her return, she happily had agreed to attend—but only with the wry stipulation that she not be required to climb that scaffold ever again. —CJB