

Belles Lettres and Bell Ringers

By KENNETH KAUFMAN, '16, '19

(From the literary page of "The Daily Oklahoman")

A NATIVE Oklahoman, Foster Harris has been writing since 1927. During that time his published stories have mounted to several hundred. He doesn't know himself just how many have thus far seen print. But three of them appear in current August magazines now on the stands, western tales in *All Western*, *Lariat* and *Dime Western Magazine*.

Born August 7, 1903, at Sulphur, in what was then the Indian territory, Harris's life has peculiarly fitted him for the old west fiction and the oilfield action story in which he specializes. His father, W. O. Harris, was then head of an Indian school for the Chickasaw nation. Afterward, the elder Harris entered the oil game, as an independent operator. Young Foster was supposed to become an oil man, too. He was graduated from the University of Oklahoma, in 1925, with a degree in geology. But he immediately turned to newspaper work and magazine writing.

For a time he was a reporter on *The Daily Oklahoman*. Then editor of an oil newspaper in Amarillo, Texas. From there he moved to the editorship of *Western World*, oil and mining publication at Fort Worth. And a term on the editorial staff of the *Des Moines Register*, principal newspaper of Iowa, also was included before he finally settled down to exclusive magazine writing.

Among the magazines in which his stories have appeared are *Adventure*, *Short Stories*, *Argosy*, *West*, *Star Western*, *Detective Fiction Weekly*, *Action Stories*, *Lariat*, *Dime Western*, *Wings*, *Action Novels*, *Frontier Stories*, and *All Western*. Fact articles, some of them ghost written, have appeared in a wide range of publications, from the *Manufacturers Record* to the *Monumental News*. He has also written for *International News Service* and newspaper syndicates.

In 1932 Foster Harris's own story, "The Oil Pup"—partially laid in the Oklahoma City oil field, incidentally—was chosen as the best to appear during the preceding year in *Short Story Magazine*. Syndicated to newspapers by United Features, it was reprinted in papers from New York to the Philippines—"nearly everywhere," Harris grinned, "except in Oklahoma."

Just the same, Oklahoma is a preferable place to live, Harris thinks. He divides his time now between Oklahoma City and Norman. But he has tried other areas all over the west, from the Mexican border to Oregon and California and back again.

"To take his mind off his writing," Harris explains, he has a wife and 2-year-old son, also native Sooners. His hobbies are visiting every oil boom that comes along, gathering early western material—and pipes.

He has several hundred of 'em. All have been smoked at least once. With his favorites, he burns his tongue nearly every day—and solemnly swears off smoking nearly every night.

▲

Through the Stratosphere

Twice he did what no man had not done
Before—

Flying around the world,
Once with a companion,
Again—alone.

Thrice he tried to do what man has not
done—

Cross a continent
Through the stratosphere;
Thrice defeated, repulsed
By that unexplored, hostile space,
Accepting his fate

Like a Trojan,
And with each defeat
Gritting his teeth, resolving
To try again

And again
Until he gained his goal—
Oklahoma's greatest flying son,
One of two greatest pioneers of the air,
Wings his, glorious way from earth
To the skies—

Through the stratosphere.

—Waldo Wettengel, '23.

"Aw, Shucks—"

Ambling along, his shrewd kindly eyes
Shyly viewing the beauties
Of a new land—
Seizing the hand of an old crony,
Or of a president, fellow-ambassador,
Or prince—
Grinning wistfully—and humbly before
his Creator
Perhaps saving, whimsically:
"Y'know, Lord, all I know is what I've
read

In the papers
'N' picked up as I gaddered around
Hither 'n' yon;
But all this stuff that's in the papers
Just now,



KENNETH KAUFMAN

Page on page—'n' all the pictures—
Aw, shucks, Lord,
I wish I coulda earned
A little mite of it.
They mean well, Lord—don't hold it
against 'em,
Let's just call it good-intentioned
Exaggeration;
They're just bein' kind
To an ignor'nt ol' cowhand
From Oologah.
Y'know, Lord, that's a great bunch
You've got down there,
Senators 'n' all;
I'm gonna miss 'em for a while,
But they'll be comin' along.
I had no idy
They felt—that way—about—aw, shucks,
Lord—
After the way I've kidded 'em,
But I've never hurt 'em till now
An' I'm just wonderin', Lord,
If there ain't some way
You can ease it up for 'em?
Just tell 'em that—shucks—it ain't bad
like that at all—
An' that this round-up's just fine an'
Prettier than the song.
Y'see, Lord, that down there gets right
next to me, an'
Shucks, there ain't nothin'
I c'n do about it;
So do what you can, won't you, Lord?
I've got lots of confidence in Your ability
Along that line.
Well, there goes those bells—my time's
up,
So I'll be moseyin' along.
Say, Lord! Ain't that ol' boy over there
From Claremore?"

—Waldo Wettengel, '23 Rush Springs,
Oklahoma.

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