

## WHERE THE CATTLE ARE FAT . . .

by Jane Greer

The good news for Linton, North Dakota, is not that things have improved but that someone with clout has finally noticed how good things have *always* been.

Most of Linton's residents were born there, 65 miles southeast of Bismarck. Lots of people have left over the years, and *no* one ever moves to Linton except by marriage—that is, until two years ago when Hal Rosenbluth discovered the town. The Upper Midwest work ethic and the computer age have combined to put Linton back on the map.

Rosenbluth is the thirty-seven-year-old CEO of Rosenbluth Travel, a Philadelphia-based agency variously cited as being either the third- or fourth-largest in the United States. It was started as a steamship ticket office by Rosenbluth's grandfather in 1892, and that year had billings of \$20 million. Rosenbluth went to work for the company in 1974, and after a year, bored with the vice presidency, he went to work as one of the company's reservation agents, where he shaped most of his ideas on management. Ninety-eight years after its founding, the agency's yearly billings top \$1.1 billion. Excellence expert Tom Peters gave the agency his "Service Company of the Year" award in 1988.

Rosenbluth Travel has offices in 160 cities, including London and Singapore. The smallest *had* been Ponca City, Oklahoma, population 26,000—before Linton, whose population during the 1980's fell sharply from its 1980 figure of 1,561.

At first, Rosenbluth was just trying to help the drought-stricken Midwestern farmers he kept reading about during the summer of 1988. The U.S. Agriculture Department steered Rosenbluth's offer of help toward North Dakota, where state officials told him Emmons County was the worst-hit. The philanthropist decided to bring some temporary part-time jobs to Linton, and hired 40 Lintonites to do electronic data processing at five dollars an hour. To some farm wives, a job with Rosenbluth's agency was the happy alternative to losing the farm or looking for and commuting to a job an hour away in Bismarck.

Then the Linton Industrial Development Corporation—which hadn't previously had a lot of lucky breaks—decided to pull out all the stops in persuading Rosenbluth to stay. The LIDC paid the first two months' rent on a former farm implement building for the temporary workers, and started a formal letter-writing campaign to Rosenbluth's Philadelphia office.

The courtship worked. The part-time temporary jobs became full-time, with benefits. A phone company fiber-



optics line was installed. Rosenbluth Travel started bringing plane-fuls of executives to Linton for training and planning meetings, and the excess spilling over into motel rooms in Wishek, population 1,300, 33 miles from Linton. And Rosenbluth is building a 20-bedroom chateau on 308 acres overlooking the Missouri River, 13 miles west of Linton. The chateau will be used as an executive retreat, conference center, and training center for Rosenbluth employees and clients. Canoeing, fishing, hunting, trail rides, and a "working mini-farm" will help high-pressure city execs ease their stress. The chateau staff will be made up of locals, and most of the building materials and furnishings bought locally.

It may sound like Hal Rosenbluth wears a halo, but he's the first to admit that Linton has been good for him, too. "A major plus is the people—their work ethic, their education, their sincerity, their willingness," he told the *Bismarck Tribune*. "These are things we have had within our company for years, but they're drying up in the big cities. Other companies are constantly complaining, 'We can't find good people.' They're looking in the wrong place, that's all."

Perhaps the only *bad* news to come out of the Rosenbluth deal was that this past April he asked Linton kids to find a new town motto. "Where the cattle are fat and the fish are floppin'" just didn't seem to fit the image of a hotbed of economic development. Linton Chamber of Commerce president Vince Watkins wanted something "a little more sophisticated, but still with a hint of the rural" (a hint of the rural being what one gets when one stands downwind of the aforementioned cattle). Even radio commentator Paul Harvey got into the act, providing his audience with statistics about this "real nice town" in, of all places, "South Dakota." Watkins got calls from disc jockeys and talk show hosts in Las Vegas, Honolulu, and Boston, all of them wanting to poke fun at Linton, but he did his best to use it to the town's advantage.

The new motto, culled from dozens of entries: "Preserving the past and working for the future." Zzzzzzzzzzz. I much prefer the one mailed in from Kansas by a man who heard that Linton has six places of worship and five watering holes:

"Fill the churches,  
Empty the bars.  
Linton, North Dakota,  
Will shine like the stars."



Jane Greer lives in Bismarck, North Dakota.

Advertise In . . .

### Chronicles

A MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN CULTURE

Each month Chronicles offers a sophisticated, well-educated audience unavailable anywhere else. Our exclusive advertising space is uncluttered and surrounded by award-winning graphics and design.

For your free information packet please contact Leann Dobbs or Cathy Corson at 815/964-5054.

DECEMBER 1990/23

## THROWING THE RASCALS OUT by Odie B. Faulk

Note September 18, 1990, as a historic date. On that fateful Tuesday, people in the Sooner State stuck their heads out their windows and, in that great line from *Network*, shouted at politicians, “We’re mad as Hell, and we’re not going to take it anymore.”

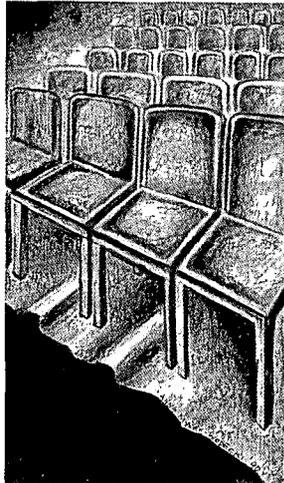
The object of this anger was politicians entrenched in office and seemingly impossible to dislodge through the normal election process, politicians who use lobbyist dollars as well as numerous self-voted tax monies to push their reelection campaigns. According to numerous sources, 98 percent of congressional incumbents seeking reelection are returned to Congress every year, and those holding state offices are not far behind.

That percentage will change for politicians in the state legislature of Oklahoma thanks to oil man Lloyd Noble II. He spent thousands of his own dollars to finance an initiative petition to limit Sooner legislators to 12 years in office: six two-year terms for members of the House and three four-year terms for senators. The 12-year limit begins on January 1, 1991, meaning anyone serving on that date will have to retire from office by December 31, 2002.

Those who volunteered to circulate these petitions were not partisan; Democrats vied with Republicans for the honor. These hundreds of volunteers fanned out across the state last spring—to find that getting the necessary signatures of more than one hundred fifty thousand voters was remarkably easy. One angry citizen gave voice to the feelings of thousands when he said about politicians, during a “man on the street” interview for a television news show, “It’s time to send them all home.”

Naturally those politicians long entrenched at the statehouse in Oklahoma City, as well as those who aspire someday to win office, thundered that this initiative would be bad legislation. “Experience counts,” was the gist of their argument, but a majority of Oklahomans seemed to agree with another angry voter who shouted at one political rally, “Experience counts in learning to feather your own nest.”

Despite cries about the value of experience and seniority, Oklahomans by a vote of 436,347 to 212,318 passed this legislation that, because it originated through the initiative process, was not subject to the governor’s veto. The morning after the vote State Senator Ben Brown (D-Oklahoma City) told a reporter, “This is an effort by the rich and powerful to take away the rights of the ordinary citizen,” explaining that this law denied voters the right to choose their legislators regardless of the number of years they had served. John P. Keast of the Free Congress Foundation in Washington, D.C., viewed the outcome



differently. When informed of the vote, he said, “This is democracy in action. Oklahomans recaptured their legislature.”

Since that fateful vote on September 18, various pundits have waxed in print about this legislation. David Broder of the *Washington Post* argued in a nationally syndicated column that the result would be an increase in the power of legislative staffs, those faceless bureaucrats who haunt the halls of power and who work their own agenda. Thus to limit the terms of congressmen and senators would bring about less democracy, not more. Others have said that state legislators should not be the object of such time limitation because most of them do not serve long before aspiring to higher office. A political scientist making this argument noted that two-thirds of the legislators in Oklahoma have been in office less than 12 years.

Yet a start must be made somewhere to “throw the rascals out,” and the Oklahoma vote is a beginning. It doubtless is true, as some critics argue, that this law is imperfect. However, it is inspiring movements in other states. Moreover, the Free Congress Foundation is trying to do at the national level what Oklahomans did at the state level. It is coordinating an effort to limit congressmen and senators to 12 years—and polls conducted for the *Washington Post* and ABC News show that 70 percent of Americans support a limitation on congressional terms.

Perhaps on September 18, Oklahoma’s voters metaphorically tossed a few bales of tea into a presently murky legislative harbor, the start of a revolution to throw out life-tenured politicians and to return to the Jeffersonian ideal of citizen-lawmakers. ◊

---

*Odie B. Faulk is emeritus professor of history at Northeastern State University in Oklahoma. He lives in Waco, Texas.*

## ’TIS THE SEASON by Harold O.J. Brown

In late September, with eighty-degree temperatures and the foliage still almost totally green even in northern Illinois, it is hard to think Christmas thoughts. And as Nebuchadnezzar’s would-be successor—or reincarnation—raves about imitating that energetic neo-Babylonian empire-builder and destroying Jerusalem, the approach of the Jewish High Holy Days reminds one of the fact that another Arab nation, 17 years ago, took advantage of Yom Kippur to launch a surprise war against Israel. Will the season be jolly this Christmas? Well, that depends on quite a

