

# Richard D. Cleaves

*From My Past:  
Cherokee, Iowa to New York City  
1909 to 1933*

## Editors' Introduction

Dick Cleaves relished telling stories of his adventures of when he was a young man. Knowing that the next generations would not be able to hear them firsthand, in 1983 and 1984 he used a cassette tape deck to record 120 minutes of memories of his early life for his children, grandchildren, great grandchildren, and friends. The accounts date from growing up in the small town of Cherokee, Iowa with his parents – Jane Delaplane Cleaves and Dr. Prentiss Cleaves – and his brother Prentiss Bowden Cleaves. As memories from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, these stories could be of interest to those who also have family and personal links to Cherokee, Iowa.

The stories begin with the 1910 sighting of Halley's comet and conclude with how Dick returned to New York from Puerto Rico on a cruise ship as a stowaway in March 1933 – in order to begin his job as secretary to Congressman Guy Gillette, who also came from Cherokee.

In April/May 2020, Dick's son Peter Cleaves used the Audacity app to convert Dick's recordings from the cassette to a Mp3 document. He then transcribed the verbal account in a Word document. Helped by his brother Richard, he added photographs, documents, news articles and links to other sources – aiming to make Dick's verbal account more graphically representative of the times. Peter and Richard also inserted a few editorial comments to clarify some of Dick's memories, which might have faded somewhat after decades. Peter then reviewed the transcription listening to the tape once again to correct any sections that were erroneously transcribed. The Cleaves sons are willing to share the voice transmission with those interested in a first-person audio account of Dick's early life.

The text below is a nearly exact transcription of Dick's verbal accounts, but in more of a chronological order than on the tape. As a transcription, the syntax and punctuation are not the same as would appear in a carefully edited draft. The stories, however, are easy to follow, and they are enhanced by the photos and images.

We would be interested in clarifying some questions that arose from listening to the original tape. Cherokee residents or researcher might be able to tell us the dates when the Dr. Cleaves family lived at 730 West Main Street, and whether there are any of newspaper ads or photos of the Delaplane Shoe Store that could improve image in the memoir.

The final section of this document includes the obituary of Dick's father Dr. Prentiss Bowden Cleaves, an insert on Guy Gillette and Dick, and a eulogy to Dick from the memorial service after his death.

This document does not include Dick's adventurous bike trip with two friends in October and November 1936 from Laredo, Texas to Mexico City. That account is published in an Amazon/Kindle book entitled *A Mexico Escape 1936: Biking the Pan American Highway (edition 2020)*. Nor does it include his other writings about living on a Martinique beach, his early efforts as an entrepreneur, living in Washington, DC while working for Guy Gillette, and his trade mission to Brazil during WWII. These are available on request.

Dick's surviving sons Peter (b.1943) and Richard (b.1951) hope that those who knew Dick – and those who did not – will enjoy reading and hearing Dick's first-person accounts of life in Cherokee in the first third of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The editors express their deep gratitude to Cindy Lee, who provided magnificent support in making this memoir available to residents and students of Cherokee, Iowa.

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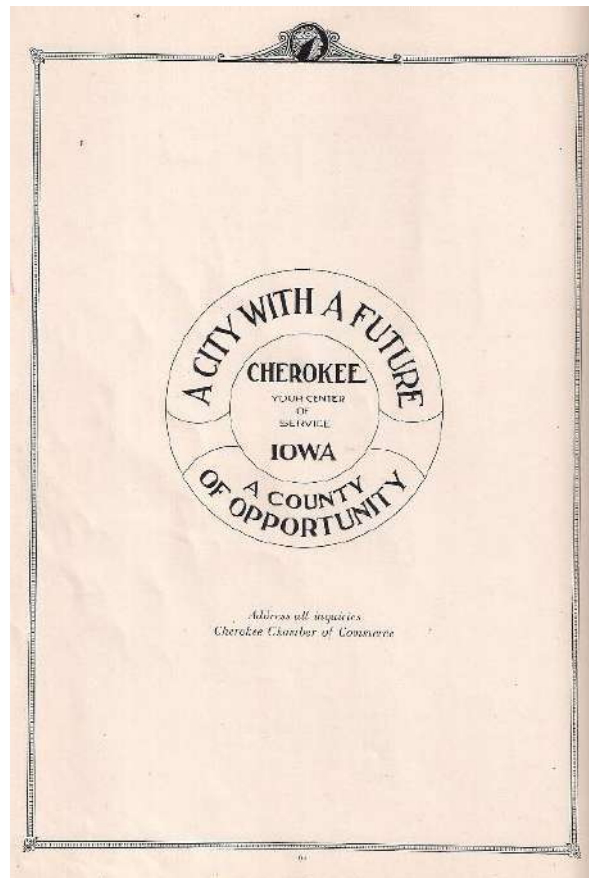
## 1. Dick's Introductory Thoughts on Cherokee, Iowa

Whenever I am asked "Where are you from originally?" and answer, "Cherokee, Iowa," there is usually a knowing look and an "Oh, yes." But I have yet to meet a person other than a fellow Iowan who had ever been there or had even heard of it. And that Iowan will add to "Oh, yes" with "That's where you have the State Hospital for the Insane."

A look at the map will show why no out-of-state drivers on the East-West or the North-South route ever went through Cherokee. US 20 crossing Iowa from Dubuque to Sioux City misses Cherokee to the south by 34 miles. The nearest cross-state highway to the north is US 18, almost the same distance away. With apologies to St. Joseph, Missouri, and Worthington, Minnesota, US 59 through Cherokee goes from nowhere to nowhere.

Nevertheless, Cherokee is a typical and interesting mid-America rural town that more people should know, both Americans and foreign visitors whose impressions of the United States are taken from New York, Washington, San Francisco and Los Angeles. It is in the heart of the corn belt with among the highest yields per acre of anywhere in the country. I remember as a boy that on a hot July day we could lie on our backs in a corn row and actually hear the corn growing. The local legend was that Cherokee Country over the years consistently had the highest corn yields. The reason was that, when there was a tornado or a hail storm in northwest Iowa, the damage never extended over the Cherokee county line.

Cherokee Prospects – Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century



## 2. Halley's Comet

I can start with my earliest memories. One of them is that I was born in 1909 March. In 1910 - as I remember -- that was a year of Halley's Comet. I have a recollection that my dad woke me and my brother Prent up one night.

Young Richard and Prent Cleaves



He had us look out the window to show us Halley's Comet. My recollection is that I was not impressed at all since it just looked like a star with a trailing tail or small burn.

Halley's Comet, between May 14 and 22, 1910





[Editor's Note: Readers of this memoir will be impressed by Dick's ability to recall details from many decades earlier. Dick's memory of his reaction to Halley's comet as a 14-month-old, however, probably came from his parents' description in later years.]

### 3. Grandmother Delaplane

Another early recollection was when my grandmother Delaplane died. She was my mother's mother and I don't know what year that was. But Prent and I were very small boys and they decided it was not a good idea to have these two small children see my grandmother in the guest room, laid out in a coffin awaiting the tomb. Of course, we were curious. When nobody was around, Prent and I went in and saw my grandmother. We sneaked in and out again.

[Editor's Note: Emma Louise Steinhart Delaplane was born 31 Jul 1842 in Pennsylvania. She died 28 Nov 1913 at Tipton, Iowa, when Dick was 4 years old. Grandma Emma had three children, the youngest being Jane ("Jennie") Eleanor Delaplane Cleaves (Dick's mother), born 28 Apr 1875 in Tipton, Iowa and died 12 Jan 1960, in San Diego, California (where Dick's brother Prent was living). Emma Louise's tombstone is in Masonic Cemetery, Tipton, Iowa. Dick's mother Jane is buried in Cherokee, Iowa.]

Emma Delaplane's Tombstone



Prent and Dick in 1914



## 4. Cross-Eyed Bear

We used to go to Sunday school regularly every Sunday. We tell the story that we came home after Sunday school one day and they asked us what we learned or what we have done. We said we'd learned all about the cross-eyed bear. There's a song about it – They said, “What do you mean the cross-eyed bear?” So, we sang the song. “Find me the cross-eyed bear.” That was my recollection.



Dad was a doc, born in Cook County, Illinois. He graduated from the University of Michigan and his uncle Royal was practicing in Cherokee, so Dad took up a practice with him. At the beginning, Dad stayed with him until Royal died. Dad was an excellent surgeon.

Dr. Prentiss' Uncle – Dr. Royal Lewis Cleaves and Wife Carrie



**Dr Royal Lewis Cleaves**

**BIRTH** 26 Apr 1844  
Bridgton, Cumberland County, Maine, USA

**DEATH** 15 Apr 1914 (aged 69)  
Cherokee, Cherokee County, Iowa, USA

**BURIAL** [Oak Hill Cemetery](#)  
Cherokee, Cherokee County, Iowa, USA [Show Map](#)

**PLOT** Blk 8, lot 74, grv 4

**MEMORIAL ID** 65530197 · [View Source](#)

**Caroline A. "Carrie" Chick Cleaves**

**BIRTH** Mar 1839  
Limington, York County, Maine, USA

**DEATH** 4 Dec 1913 (aged 74)  
Cherokee, Cherokee County, Iowa, USA

**BURIAL** [Oak Hill Cemetery](#)  
Cherokee, Cherokee County, Iowa, USA [Show Map](#)

**PLOT** Blk 8, lot 74, grv 1

**MEMORIAL ID** 65530193 · [View Source](#)



**Children**

- Carrie Ellen Cleaves McCulla  
1870–1955
- Bertha Estelle Cleaves Clay  
1871–1946
- Edward L. Cleaves  
1874–1898

**[Editor's Note:** Dr. Royal Lewis Cleaves, born in Cumberland, Maine, was the brother of Benjamin Cleaves, the Prentiss Bowden Cleaves' father and Dick's grandfather. Royal served in the Union Army before earning his medical degree at Harvard University in 1869. He married Caroline "Carrie" A. Chick (1839-1913) in the same year and began his practice in Cherokee in 1870. Thomas McCulla writes: "From the day he arrived...(in 1870, Dr. Royal L. Cleaves) has been numbered among the leaders of the profession in this section of the great Northwest....When he first began to practice medicine in Cherokee, he rode by horseback ....because he did not have the means to purchase ... a first-class two-horse rig (but) his practice soon placed him in good circumstances ....His practice has always been legitimate, clean and successful, and fully up to date." Thomas McCulla, *History of Cherokee County Iowa* (1914) ]

## 5. Seaman's Cancer Clinic

In those years, Doc Seaman had a cancer clinic, called Cancer Clinic in Cherokee. The Cancer Clinic was later was denounced by the American Medical Association because somebody would come to Doc Seaman, say with a bruised growth on his neck. Doc Seaman always said -- This is malignant and under my methods we're going to cure you and so forth. For all the difficult operations, Dad would do for him. He would get ahold of Dad and Dad would operate on this benign tumor. The guy would go back to his farm someplace in Iowa and he would write a glowing testimonial about how he'd been cured of cancer at the Seaman Clinic.

Dr. Charles Ora Seaman's Cancer Infirmary



## 6. Dad and Mother

At the time Dad moved to Cherokee, there were three very eligible bachelors. One of them was Guy Gillette, who later became a congressman and senator and for whom I worked in Washington. And Dad... Guy was a lawyer and of course Dad was a doctor. Ralph McCullough was another bachelor... and they lived together and were just the most eligible bachelors that you could imagine.

Then my mother came to be with her brother -- Galen Delaplaine, who ran the shoe store in Cherokee. Mother came from Tipton where she's been living with her sister Mary France and her husband James France who was a lawyer. She attended Oberlin College and then studied music at Cornell College. She came to Cherokee to continue piano lessons.



CATALOG

or

Cornell College

Mount Vernon Iowa

1899-1900

LIST OF STUDENTS

CONSERVATORY OF MUSIC  
CLASS OF 1905.

Lillian A. Dean,  
Laura Williams Dearing,  
Jane Delaplane,  
Reba Lucile Dobson,  
Lucie Adeline Dodd,

Tipton.  
Mount Vernon.  
Tipton.  
Marshalltown.  
Mount Vernon.

About this time Rose Freeman came to Cherokee as a teacher. Guy, I guess, had gone out with her a few times, and suddenly Guy Gillette said that he was going to marry Rose. This was a surprise that no one could understand since number one Rose was Jewish in a very prejudiced town at the time and number two, she was not nearly as attractive as a lot of the young girls in Cherokee. And it was done very suddenly. My mother I think was in love with Guy Gillette and I guess every other girl was too. My mother always felt that the Rose somehow had more or less blackmailed him into marrying her.

Guy Gillette as a Young Man    Rose Freeman Gillette with Guy and Adopted Son Mark (1944)



Mother married Dad. [Editor's note: Dr. Prentiss Cleaves and Jane Delaplane were married 9 June 1906. Jane was 31 years old and Dr. Prentiss, born July 11, 1879, was a month away from his 27<sup>th</sup> birthday.]

She never liked her brother's wife, Mary Delaplane. My mother was a very strange woman. I think her problem came from the fact that she never felt she had financial security. My Dad was a very bad businessman. For 20 years after World War I he never sent a billing.

He had an office in the Delaplane building owned by the three Delaplane girls -- Peg, Helen and the older sister Lelia. After he died, they told Prent and me that for the past seven years he never paid any rent. But they didn't feel badly about it because any time they got sick, Dad did not charge them for treatment.

More about my mother. She was a beautiful woman when she was young and even when she was older.

## Jane Emma Delaplane Cleaves



One thing about my mother and father's marriage was that Mother never had any sense of security at all, and I think it affected her. She took it out on Dad, she took it out on Prent and me. She had prejudices against people. It started with the Delaplans. They were our cousins and Mother could never stand them. Let's say some new people would come to town. Mother would invite the wife over and be so nice and they would get along fine. The new arrival would think that Mom was the greatest person in the world. Mother would say to this lady, "Have you met the Delaplans?" They'd say, "Yes, I met them," and Mother would say "Well, of course, you mustn't see them anymore." And then Mother would tell what she felt of the Delaplans. At that point, you either had to be on my mother's side or the Delaplans' side. There was no middle ground. If these people would have anything to do with the Delaplans, my mother was all through with them. You were either a friend of my mother or an enemy. If you did anything with the Delaplans, you were an enemy.

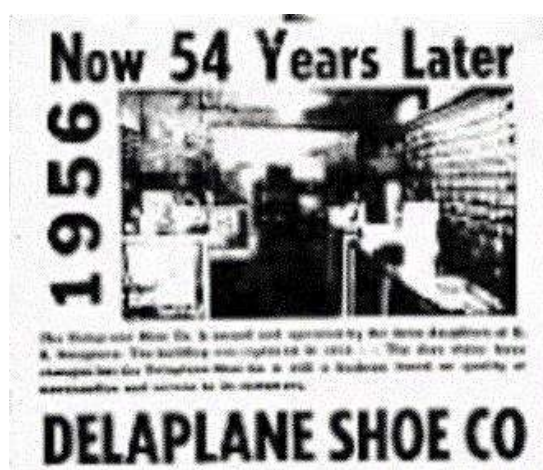
She even carried the Delaplane thing to the point that when Margo and I were going to get married in Peoria and we're making out the guest list, Mother came to me and said "You're not going to invite the Delaplans." And I said "Of course we're inviting the Delaplans. They're my cousins." Mother was very much upset about that.

**[Editor's Note:** We do not know the cause of Jane's resentment, although it might have been related to different levels of family finances between the Delaplans and Cleaves. We chose to retain Dick's comments because Jane's attitude of a century ago was certainly known generally in the Cherokee community "where everyone knew almost everything about everybody," and Jane's views were likely part of local gossip.]

219 West Main Street, Cherokee, Iowa



[**Editor's Note:** In 1909 Galen Delaplane owned this building. Daughters Helen, Lelia and Margaret ran the Delaplane Shoe Store on the ground floor. Dr. Cleaves had his offices on the upper floor.]



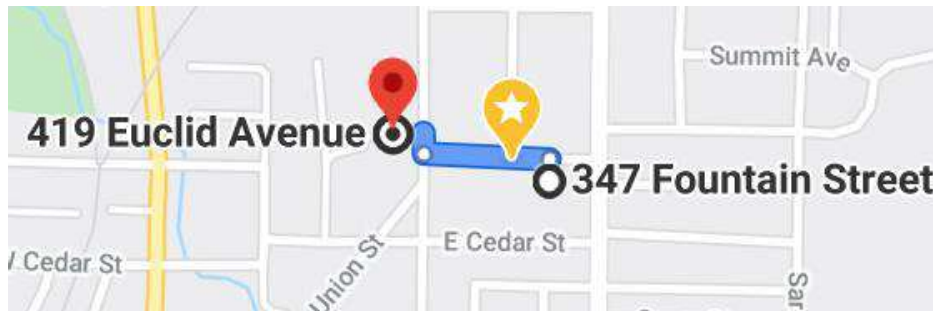
My Dad had a medical practice and of course there were no cars. Everybody used horse and buggy. He'd get a call for out in the country someplace and he would have to take the buggy and go off. Maybe he would stay all night with the farmer and come back the next day. There was no hospital in Cherokee. Dad had his offices on Main Street upstairs and he had I think a three-bed room as a hospital where he used to treat patients there. As a matter of fact, both Prent and I were born in that office hospital.

I remember we lived on Fountain Street before the roads were paved. Prent and I would go out in the middle of the street and it was a great place to play in the dust and the dirt. Then Mother would come running out after us, get us in the house and spank us hard.

Dad decided to take us in hand. Dad got a taxi one day and told the taxi driver what to do. Prent and I were playing out in the street. The Model T taxi driver with Dad in the back seat came right up fast and just before hitting us stopped the taxi. We went screaming into the house and that was the last time we played in the dirt in the street.

[**Editor's Note:** The family address was 347 Fountain Street, as listed in the 1909 General Catalogue of Jane's alma mater, Oberlin College. The Fountain Street home was built in 1900, had 3 bedrooms and 1.5 baths on 1600 sq. ft. The Delaplans lived at 419 Euclid Avenue, a one-minute walk from the Cleaves home. The Cleaves later moved to a larger home at 730 West Main Street, pictured near the bottom of this memoir.]

347 Fountain Street (current photo)



Home of Galen, Margaret, Lelia and Helen Delaplane, 419 Euclid Avenue, Cherokee

|            |     |          |   |
|------------|-----|----------|---|
| Euclid Ave | 419 | ca. 1905 | Hutchinson-Delaplane,<br>G.S. House (Delaplane<br>Shoe Co.) |
|------------|-----|----------|---|



Historic view, ca. 1907 for 411, 415 and 419 Euclid Avenue, left to right, (above) Cherokee Area Archives, Cherokee Public Library; views of the same houses (below) Bruce Meyer, photographer, 2016.



nearby Addition School/ Webster School when it was built 1881 (photo p. 28). The Hutchinson-Delaplane House was constructed at 419 Euclid Ave in ca. 1905 and is shown on the far right side of the historic photo above. The same three houses appear in contemporary color photos below in 2016.

Once I did get hit by a car and it was my own fault. I was just a little boy and Dad was going out on a call in a cab. I thought it would be funny to run to the front of the cab. I was standing on the sidewalk and Dad got in the cab and I tried to run out in front of it. The cab driver didn't see me, hit me, knocked me over, and scraped my leg, my arms, and my face but I wasn't badly hurt at all. I suppose I was about three or four years old. That cured me from running in front of cars.

Dad finally got a car -- Model T of course --- and I learned to drive. I was driving at 16 -- and there were no licenses then. I had the car one winter night. It stalled and I couldn't get it started and of course we had no antifreeze. Very stupidly I didn't do anything. I just left it on the street and of course the next morning it was frozen, and it had broken the head of the car which had to be replaced. In those days it was not inexpensive in terms of the times but was not a terribly expensive job because the Model T was quite simply put together. When I had my own Model T, I used to change spark plugs, change the points and work on the magneto and do all of those things myself because it was a very simple thing to do.

Dad at later got a Studebaker coupe, of which he was very proud. You just figured it was the best-looking car in town. I was out with him one day (this is some years later), we were driving along, maybe East Main Street, and we turned down a street and he said, "You see that house way down there on the end. That's where so-and-so lives."

Main Street in Old Cherokee



The fellow worked in the Ice House. In the winter they used to go out and cut the ice off the ponds and they'd keep in the Ice House covered with sawdust for the summer. Anyway, Dad was talking about the wife -- "She's Doc Weston's patient. About twice a week she would say that she was really sick. Doc Weston would come down and park his buggy in front of the house, go in for an hour or so, and then he'd come out again. It got to the point that the horse knew the way so well that when Doc Weston started down East Main Street, the horse would pull over right in front of the house and stop." Just at that point we were just about to pass the house and Dad's car stopped -- just died right there in front of the house. I started laughing. Dad was very embarrassed, and he didn't take it very well.

## 7. Hooking Bobs

Cherokee in those days was a wonderful place to grow up. I don't know which seasons we liked the best. I think maybe the winter season when the snows came because the streets were not plowed and there were very few automobiles. The farmers would take the wheels off their corn wagons and put on sled runners and would come into town with their sleds. We called them "bobs."

Horse Drawn Buggy (“Bob”)



“Bob” Sled Conversions



Every Saturday was a big day in town. In the wintertime we would go out when these bobsleds and teams of horses would come by. We would jump on the runners and ride along for a ways and then we'd jump off and catch another one going the other way. Sometimes we would take our sleds, belly flop on the sleds and grab hold of the runners and be carried along that way. I remember one time we hooked a bob which was going west on Main Street and the young fella in the back of the bob, the wagon part, grabbed our hats and he wouldn't give them back. And so we rode that bob way up the top of Cemetery Hill, about a mile out of town, and he finally gave us our hats back. And of course, it was late in the afternoon and there were no bobs going into town, so we had to walk all the way back.

## 8. Skis

We also used to go sledding at night in the bright moonlight, sometimes on a bobsled. We had ice skates and we'd go skating. Dad decided to make us skis. He went down to the lumber yard and got some tongue and grooved lumber. He took it to our basement, took off the male side of the ski and sharpened the point. He rigged up a steam box in such a way that he could put the end of the ski in the box and bend it. It would steam and then it would take the shape so that the front of your skis came up so you wouldn't snag on the slump. We tried to ski but we didn't do very well because we didn't have the proper bindings, just a strap across your feet. Of course, every time you turned, you'd come out of the skis and one ski would go down the hill and you'd have to go chasing after it. That was the winters.

Tongue and Groove - Male and Female Sides



Handmade Ski Bindings



## 9. Grocery Truck in the Early Spring

Every couple of years in the spring, after the snows are gone when the spring had come, I'd come home and find we'd had an ice storm. It was beautiful to see the trees all covered with ice. The ice covered the streets and even the lawns. It was great because as long as the ice hadn't melted yet, you could skate any place – you skate across people's lawns, you could

skate down the street, on the sidewalks, or anyplace. It just converted all of Cherokee into a big skating rink.

When the snow would melt on a nice warm day, the gutters would run full. We would like to block or dam the gutters with the water in a pond behind. It was just fun to do. In those days, the groceries were delivered in a grocery truck, which was an open bedded truck with a roof over it.

Grocery Truck



The grocery orders were made up in the store and put in a basket and then they would load the truck and make the deliveries. Once one spring morning after we made our dam, this grocery truck came along. These young fellers on the grocery truck thought it would be a great idea to run through our dam. They turned the truck to next to the curb and they ran through the dam and of course it splattered us and broke our dam. We made the dam again, and again they came through a little later and went right through our dam again. There was a sidewalk being built next to the gutter with pieces of concrete broken up. The third time around we made the dam out of these pieces of concrete and packed the snow around it. And sure enough, pretty soon along came the truck with the young guys laughing and having a great time as they went through the dam. Except this time didn't go through the dam – they hit it. It shook up all the groceries and everybody's orders were all mixed up. By this time, we were on our way. We weren't going to stick around to see what had happened next.

## 10. Spring Flowers

Columbine Flowers



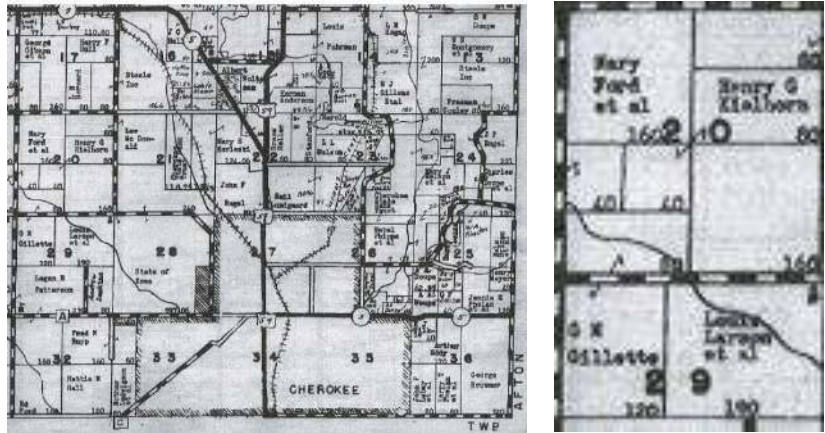
Mayflowers



As I look back, my older brother, Prentiss, and I had about the best of it growing up in Cherokee. Each season had its own special attractions for a young boy. In the spring, it was a wonderful

time. There were wildflowers, and the mayflowers would just cover the hills. I used to go out and gather flowers for my mother. I loved to do it even though everybody called me a sissy. Sometimes we would go out on Uncle Guy's pasture. Uncle Guy was Guy Gillette, who was elected Congressman in the first Roosevelt landslide and later became Senator. He had come to Cherokee to practice law but later gave it up and started farming on about 120 acres right at the edge of town. Part of it was wood lots. And we called it Uncle Guy's pasture. We would go out in the spring and find jack-in-the-box and columbine and all kinds of wildflowers -- just beautiful things.

Location of Uncle Guy's Pasture



[Editor's note: In the above plat map (full and partial) for Cherokee Township in 1950, the Gillette properties were 120 acres in Section 29 (with Guy's name on the plat) and 80 acres across the road in Section 20. The land in Section 28 marked 'State of Iowa' was the Mental Health Institute grounds and farmland, the location of several of Dick's stories. About ten minutes by foot to the west of the Gillette farm is the Oak Hill Cemetery, the final resting place for Dick's parents, Dr. Prentiss Bowden Cleaves and Jane Delaplane Cleaves. (Editors are grateful to John R. Snapp, Cherokee Area Archives volunteer, for the plat map and the location of the Gillette properties.)

## 11. Summer

In the summertime, of course, it was time to swim and fish. Summers in Iowa are very hot but dry. A long heat spell would be broken by a violent thunderstorm with its tremendous display of lightening and thunderclaps that shook the ground before rumbling off into the distance. Sometimes we fished in the Little Sioux River where we caught both catfish and carp. The carp we didn't eat because the water was polluted. We swam naked and fished with bamboo poles in Mill Creek.

Mill Creek





Later they cut a gravel pit. When they stopped mining the gravel, the lake filled up from streams and it became the swimming hole. It had a diving board of course. I became a lifeguard for a couple of summers. There were three of us as lifeguards and I was the only one who never had to save anybody because I was not a very good swimmer.

Gravel Pit Swimming Hole (today, Larson Lake, 8 miles from Cherokee)



As for fishing, there was a Chinese in town, who ran the laundry and he was one of Dad's patients. His name was Wong Chi. Once he was down fishing in the Little Sioux River and he had some carp. He brought the carp to Dad as a present and Dad remarked how fat they were. "Where did you catch them?" Wong said, "Catchem in Little Sioux right next to mouth of sewer." Of course, we never ate them.

Little Sioux River



Another non-edible fish that we caught were garfish. Gars are long skinny fish with hard scales and a horny snout so filled with teeth that it is impossible to set a hook. They used to lie in schools in shallow water and most people who went after them for sport used spears. We had a different method. We would tie a slipknot in the end of a buggy whip and work it into the gar's mouth. A jerk and we usually had our prey. One day my brother and I and a friend lassoed 17 garfish for a record.

Iowa Longnose Gar



We used a somewhat similar method to snare gophers that infested the golf course. We would frighten the gopher into his hole and put a snare with a slipknot about two inches deep in the hole. We'd lie down on the grass a few feet away holding the end of the string. In a few minutes a tip of the gopher's nose would stick up so it could just barely be seen, which was the cue to pull the string. It never failed. If the county had put a bounty of gophers, we could have made more money than with a lemonade stand.

Iowa Gopher Nose



Simple Snare



At Mill Creek we used to catch bullhead, catfish, and something we called white bass. I don't know what kind of fish it was but it was a good eating fish and that was from a clear stream, so we didn't have to worry about contamination. It was quite shallow and every once in a while, there'd be a deep hole where the fish were. We liked fishing there in the summertime.

Iowa Black Bullhead



Iowa Channel Catfish



Iowa White Bass



[Editor's Note: A full list of native Iowa fish is found at <https://www.iowadnr.gov/Fishing/Iowa-Fish-Species/Fish-Details/speciescode/whb>]

## 12. Skookum and Squirrels

We hated to see the end of summer -- but only because it meant having to go back to school. As a season of the year, fall had as many joyful opportunities for young boys as did summer. For one thing, there was hunting.

We had a dog named Skookum, a dog we would take into the woods. Skooks was a Spitz-Shepherd, named after Skookum Chuck in *Rolf in the Woods*. Skooks was a smart dog. We went after squirrels with Skooks. As soon as the leaves had fallen, we would take slingshots and Skooks and go out into the wooded area of Uncle Guy's pasture to hunt squirrels. Our squirrel-hunting method was simple and successful. Skooks would roam the woods and his frantic barking would let us know he had located a squirrel. We had slingshots and what we wanted to do was to get the squirrel running. We would pound on the tree trunk with heavy limbs. We'd shoot slingshots to get the squirrel to climb a tree and we'd shoot the slingshot to get the squirrel to run from tree to tree, from branch to branch.

## Skookum Spitz Half Breed



Finally, he'd reach the end of the branches and would jump to the ground. Then Skooks would get him and swing him around up in the air and kill him. One day we got 11 squirrels just using Skooks without any guns. They are very hard to skin...the skin is so tough. We would take them back home. We would skin and Mother would fry them. They tasted very much like chicken or rabbit...very good to eat.

### Skinning Squirrel



### 13. Skooks on the Golf Course

Skooks was a remarkable dog in many ways. Skooks loved the golf course and was happiest when accompanying my Dad on a round of golf. Dad taught him to shag golf balls. Dad would go out on the first tee – there was no driving range --- and Dad would throw out a ball. Then Skooks would run up to the ball and grab it in his mouth and come running back with it. He would help to look for lost balls and more than occasionally would find one, although it was usually not the one that he was supposed to be looking for.

Dad had taught Skooks to pick his ball out of the cup and carry it to the next tee. One day Dad was playing with Harry Korn who ran the poolhall in town. He had the reputation of being very tight with his money. Harry was very deaf but refused to wear any kind of a hearing aid because he said it cost too much. One day Dad and Harry were playing golf and so Dad on the first hole had Skooks bring the ball back up to the tee, and then on the next hole he had Skooks do the same thing. Harry was quite impressed with Skooks' performance, and after the foursome had holed out on the third hole he said,

"Doc, that's the smartest goddam dog I ever saw! See if Skooks will carry my ball up to the next tee." "Sure," said Dad. "Throw him your ball. Skooks, carry the ball to the next tee."

To get to the fourth tee the golfers had to cross a plank footbridge over a deep pool in the creek that meandered through the course. Skooks was trotting happily ahead and when he was halfway across the bridge, Dad said under his breath,

"Drop it!" Skooks just dropped the ball into a great big pond below.

Harry looked down into the pool where his ball had already sunk out of sight. Harry was so mad that he said, "That godarned dumb dog! That's the dumbest dog I ever saw!"

In the fall, there were jackrabbits on the golf course, and Skooks would jump up and go chasing after them. The jackrabbits are fast, almost faster than Skooks, who was just a little guy. One day Skooks jumped a jack rabbit and got him to take off across the 8<sup>th</sup> hole up to the State Hospital grounds. They had a hog fence there and the jackrabbit stuck his head through a couple times and found he couldn't get through. He turned around and came tearing back from where he had come from, the direction toward from where Skooks was pursuing him. Skooks took one look at this great big jackrabbit charging toward him. He put on the brakes, turned around and went the other way. You looked out and saw the jackrabbit chasing little Skooks.

#### Cherokee State Mental Hospital



#### 14. **Fall Geese**

In our early boyhood there was still a lot of game around Cherokee. Rabbits and squirrels abounded and were fairly easy game. Early in the fall, there were still geese, ducks, and pheasants around, and prairie chickens. Prairie chickens are a form of grouse. They are very dumb, and while not in the countless numbers of fifty years earlier, they were there in the thousands. Once I saw a flock so huge that it was weighing down and breaking the branches of a tree where all were trying to roost at one time. You could walk up to them slowly and hit a

couple with a club before they all few away. Prairie chickens were never very smart, which is why there aren't many left.

Iowa Rabbit



'Not Smart' Prairie Chickens



During the fall migration we thrilled at the sight of hundreds of flocks and thousands of ducks and geese riding a north wind on their way to the Gulf and to Mexico. One night a flock of geese became confused by the Cherokee street lights and flew around the town for hours, honking their distress. Later when I was in high school, we were at our fall football practice in the afternoon and great flights of geese would fly by. The whole team would stop and watch them flying south.

Geese Flock



Teal Duck Flock



There was good duck hunting along Mill Creek and the Little Sioux River, and sometimes the Canadian geese and some swans would light in a cornfield to feed, but we could never take advantage of it because we didn't have a shotgun.

Swans in a Cornfield



Pheasants were there. I never had a shotgun but I did have a 22 rifle. One Saturday I was walking on the railroad tracks which at that point was elevated -- down below was a sort of a valley. I had a single shot 22. I looked down and there was a pheasant, walking along very sedately. I took aim and fired and hit him perfectly. He just dropped down. I was quite satisfied. I ran down the culvert and got to the pheasant. He looked up at me, got up and flew away. I didn't realize he was wounded but still had the strength to fly away. What I should have done was, a few feet away, reload the gun and shoot him again when I got close to him. But I really thought I had got him.

Pheasant playing Possum

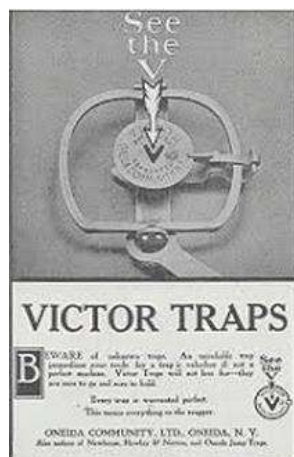
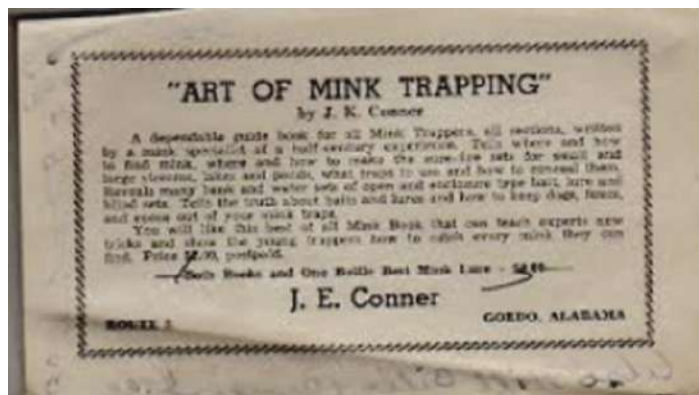
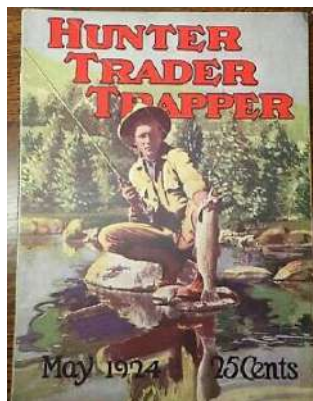


Pheasant Escapes



## 15. Trapping Civets

In the fall also, one year when I was in high school, I decided to trap. There were these wonderful magazines that came out of St. Louis that said, "We pay highest prices for furs." They sold traps and they talked about paying some huge sum like \$12 for a skin of a mink and paying \$0.75 for skunks and civet cats and muskrats and things like that.



So, I decided to go into the trapping business. I had to walk my trapline every morning, or otherwise whatever I trapped would gnaw off its leg and escape. This meant on school mornings I would get up about 4:30, dress quietly and walk my line with a flashlight. Getting to the woods and checking each trap meant a walk of about two miles each way.

The only thing I could trap was civet cats which are a form of skunk. Of course, it's quite difficult because they are still alive in the trap and you had to kill them without being sprayed. I took Skooks with me and Skooks made a mistake once of getting out ahead and, seeing the civet cat in the trap, went charging after him. Of course, he got squirted and was just covered with civet cat oil.

Civet Cat Alive

and

Skinned



I used to hang my skins the pelts on stretchers in the garage. Dad was upset about that because they still stank, and Dad's garage was all stunk up. People were starting to remark that my father's car was getting pretty musty, but I was so enthusiastic about my new career that my parents suffered along.

One morning I went out and set a trap part way up a slight rise. Sure enough, I was quite lucky and there was a great big civet cat in the trap. I stood at the bottom of this little rise and tried to figure out how I was going to get out to him and kill him without getting squirted. I'd forgotten about the fact that the civet cat was higher than I was and he had a perfect trajectory. He just turned around and lifted his tail and got squirt all over me. I had to go to school and I didn't have time to go home and change so I went to school. Of course, they kicked me out.

I had read some place that if you burn pepper in the same room with clothes that have been stunk up with skunk oil, that takes the smell out. The only place where I could do this was in Dad's office. He wasn't there at noon. I knew that there was a place that was partitioned off and there was a back room. I took my clothes down there, I laid them out, started the pepper going up in smoke, and left the office. What I neglected to know was that it wasn't a full partition from the front office; it was just a half partition. When I decided that it'd gone on long enough and probably the clothes are all right, I went back and here was a patient in the outer office with a handkerchief to his nose and he was sneezing and coughing. I went back in the back and about that time Dad came in the door and he was furious. I had to sell the traps and the remaining skins, and that ended my trapping career.

## 16. Our Cabin

One year, Prent and I decided to make our own cabin out in Uncle Guy's pasture. We went up the hill, dug into the hill, excavated, and then we got some lumber, put up the four frames, posts, tacked on the siding, made a door and made a roof so it wouldn't leak. Then we went to the

junkyard and found an old wood burning stove and put that in for heat. We had a very nice camp and of course I had my traps in there. We went out there a few times and we may have had a bunk for two people to go out there to sleep. We were really proud of our camp.

Well, there were some other boys in town that had a camp maybe a couple of miles away, much fancier than ours and bigger. Apparently, they had put the camp on a property and whoever owned it didn't want the camp there and told the boys to get it off. Well, they didn't do it so apparently the owner set fire to it. The boys knew about our camp and they got the idea that we were the ones who had burned their camp. So, we went up there one day and it wasn't there. And that was the end of our camp.

## 17. Animals in Guy Gillette's Pasture

Years later when I went back to Guy's pasture -- and saw that it was not the big wide spread of forest that we always thought it was -- it was a very small place. But we used to see quite a bit of game out there. I'd seen a fox, of course rabbits and squirrels, skunks and civet cats. One year we were out there we saw a snowy owl, which was very rare even in those days. As a matter of fact, it was a pair of snowy owls, pure white. I remember there was a black ring around their eyes. They were big birds. We told Uncle Guy about it, and he was quite amazed that we had seen them. Uncle Guy's pasture was a great place to go.

Snowy Owl in Iowa



I have one more wild animal story about Uncle Guy's pasture. We used to go out with a 22 and see a squirrel's nest up in the trees. We didn't know if there was a squirrel up there or not, but when we saw a hole in the tree, very often we would just shoot into it. I got out there one day. I shot into a hole, and out came a possum and fell to the ground. I went over close to him and they're supposed to be passive animals. But this thing took a lung and gave me a terrific bite on my boot. It broke the leather but fortunately didn't break the skin under the boot. We didn't eat him...they're not supposed to be good to eat so we didn't eat him.

Attacking Possum





## 18. Red Cross Auction

My father Doc Cleaves was extremely intelligent, a crackerjack surgeon, but had many strange ideas. For example, when World War I broke out, he was head of the Cherokee Hospital. Dad decided to leave his practice and enlist. First, he went to training camp, and I think that Guy Gillette was in the same camp with him. Then he was taken to Rush Medical in Chicago to learn plastic surgery because so many of the boys of course were wounded and they had to have their faces, arms or legs rebuilt.

Rush Medical College, Daniel A. Jones Building, 1917



Then when Dad went to France it was decided that they would sell the house in Cherokee and we would move to Chicago to be near my aunts Irene and Ellen Cleaves. Everything was accomplished and we were to leave I believe on a Tuesday. On the Saturday before was a Red Cross auction sale; a charity sale to support the Red Cross in the war. Mother gave us – both Prent and me -- each \$5 to go down and buy something at the Red Cross auction.

Jane Delaplane Cleaves with older Prentiss and younger Richard



We went down to look over the situation. We found a goat that we thought would be very nice but, unfortunately, we were outbid. Finally, we bought three bantam chickens and a great big Airedale dog.



When we had completed our purchases, I had \$0.50 left. Knowing that this was a charity affair, I went up on the platform to one of the auctioneers and said "I have \$0.50 left and I want to give it to the Red Cross."

One of the other fellows on the platform recognized me and he grabbed me and put me up high in the air. Then he announced to the crowd that here was a little boy (I was then I guess about nine years old) ...a little boy whose father is dying in France for his country and he has only \$0.50 and he's giving it to the Red Cross. Of course, I started to cry because I didn't like all the attention. The auctioneer said, "Give me that \$0.50 and I'll auction it off." He auctioned it off and a local banker bought it for \$50. Then he bought me a 50 cent War Savings stamp.



We left the auction to come home and Mother was busy packing of course getting ready for the next Wednesday. She looked down the street and here are two small boys being dragged along by this huge Airedale dog fully grown and carrying a box in which were the three bantam chickens. She was beside herself and didn't know what to do. She said, "Well, let's just think about it." That night we took the dog and the bantam chickens down to the basement. The next morning, we went down there and found that the dog had killed the chickens, which took care of that. On Monday we let the dog out and the Marshall came along. The dog didn't have a tag, so he shot the Airedale. That settled that and we could go to Chicago "in good conscience."

## 19. Chicago and Francis Parker School

In Chicago, we lived only about a block-and-a-half from Irene and Ellen who were on North Troy Street.

ELLEN FRANCIS CLEAVES, m'96-'98. 4926 N.  
Troy St., Chicago, Ill.

We were in an apartment on Kedzie Street and Lawrence. [Editor's note: It was a 5-minute walk from Jane, Prent and Dick's home to 4926 North Troy Street.]



North of Lawrence on Kedzie was the Hollywood Roller Rink. For the less limber, the Alba Bowling Alley beckoned. Movie fans and amorous couples could check out the presentations on the Alba Theatre's screen.

Kitty-corner from the S and L Delicatessen was Deutsch's Bonfire Restaurant, then Hurwitz and Reed Arno's Men's Shops. Esther's Lingerie. Libby Diamond Hats, Siegels Shoes, and Goldstein Drugs.

That was when Prent and I went to Francis Parker School for the first time. I was in 5th grade and Prent was in the 6th grade, I believe. [Editor's note: The boys' aunt Irene Cleaves was a teacher at Francis Parker School.]



Francis W. Parker School, Chicago, Illinois,  
330 W Webster Ave, half block from N. Clark Street

Irene Ingalls Cleaves, A.B. Teacher, Francis W. Parker Sch., 1349 Balmoral Ave.

Irene Cleaves outside Francis Parker School



## 20. Dr. Prentiss Cleaves and WWI

We stayed there until Dad came back from the war. We remember we had a wire from him after he landed in New York saying that he had finally been able to buy the Brooklyn Bridge -- and he was on his way home.

Dr. Prentiss Bowden Cleaves



During the war, Dad was in a field hospital. He said that one of the saddest things that happened was after the Armistice. The word that the official Armistice was signed didn't get down to all of the troops in the field and the trenches. He had to operate on many of our boys who were wounded after the Armistice.

#### Field Hospitals, France, World War One



Before he went over to France, Dad went over to the nearby convent and took French lessons. He was the only one in his immediate group that could speak any French at all. One day he told us that he and another fellow were walking over to a French town near the hospital and they came to a bridge which was being guarded. On top of all the big caissons that held the bridge up were manhole covers. All these covers on the bridge were off their holes. He wondered why these manhole covers were on the bridge. So, Dad went up to one of the guards and said in French, “Why are all the tops off?” The guard told him but Dad didn't understand and so he asked him again, and still he didn't understand. All the way down to the next town and on the way back, Dad was trying to put together the sounds that he had heard to try to figure out what the guard had said. When he came back, there were replacement guards on the bridge. So he asked again, “Why are the manhole covers on the bridge?” The guard told him, Dad didn't understand, so he asked him again. To his dying day, Dad never could figure out why those manhole covers were on the bridge.

When Dad came home, as I said, Dad had been Head of the hospital before he left. [Editor's note: Alternatively. President of the Cherokee County State Medical Society] Now Doc Jones had taken over the hospital. Some of the other doctors, like Doc Hall who was not a surgeon and some of the others came to Dad and said, look Doc, we would like to start working with you again, but Doc Jones has been splitting fees with us. Dad said, “No, I won't split fees.” Dad had a very high sense of ethics and he just wouldn't prostitute himself even though these doctors were his good friends.

## 21. Fire Escape Chutes and “Toots”

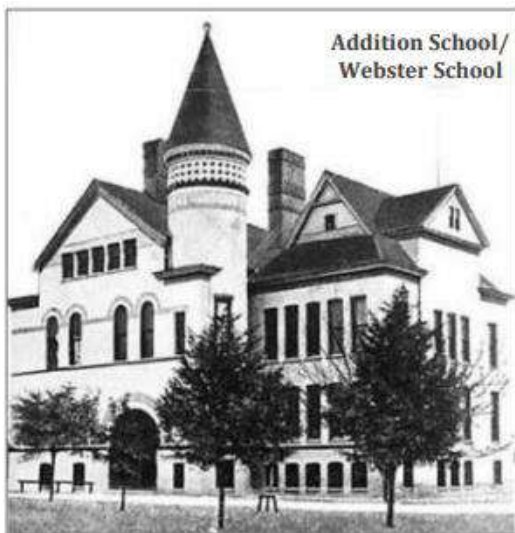
My mother used to dress us up unlike any other boys in the town, with Dutch hats, shorts and Dutch costumes. There are pictures of us as we looked then. We were known as ‘sissies,’ because we were on the other side of the tracks, my dad was a doctor, and we had these outlandish costumes, so everybody used to pick on us.

First, I should explain that at the schools they put in fire escapes which were chutes that went from the second floor and were big round cylinders. If there were a fire, you were supposed to slide down. We found that if we got some wax paper from bread, we could wax the chute so you would go much faster. We would wax them and then we would walk up the chute by keeping our feet on the sides where there was no wax. Then we could slide down.

One time at one of the schools (I can't remember, Webster I think) before school was out, my brother Prent unlatched the door at the top of the chute and later that evening we went in. (Chuck Seaman I think was there with us too; in fact, there about five of us.) We walked up where it wasn't waxed, and we went into the school. We went around and changed books around and we put things on the blackboard and so forth. Then we left.

It happened that after that, some of the bigger boys went into the school and vandalized it. Then it came out that we had been there as well as the other boys. We were taken down to the high school where a group of the local citizens were. My dad said that everybody else had one child and he had two! I remember that they read us the law for breaking and entering and how that works with so many years in the penitentiary. Finally, they put us on probation -- we had to be in our houses every night at 7 p.m., a curfew I think for a month.

Webster School and Fire Escape Chute



Pipe Fire Escape Speeds Emptying of Large Buildings

**A** PATENTED circular fire escape has been developed by which people on the upper stories of burning buildings can slide to the ground below. The fire escape consists of a large tube of galvanized steel which extends from an upper floor level to the ground. As it is set in place,

Construction to this fire escape can be made at any time. Those on the slide are shielded as safety.

with, people can slide through it without difficulty. The upper end of the tube enters the room. Over the entrance is a door, so that no drafts will enter the room through the fire escape. When fire is discovered, the people in the building sit in the upper part of the tube, slide down it, and land on the ground below.

I'm getting ahead of my story because what I wanted to tell was that Prent and I one afternoon were at I think again at Webster School. We were walking up the chute with our feet on the outside and sliding down. One of the bullies of the town named Toots (can't remember his last name) came along and he took our shoes-- because we'd taken off our shoes to get up there. He was going to take them -- he was just bullying us. Prent said, "Look, I'll dive at his feet and you push him over." So Prent dives and grabs his feet and I push him over. We both got on top of him starting to beat him up. Roy Connelly, another one of the older boys who was known as a real tough guy, saw all of this and he came over. Toots said, "Come on Roy -- Help me! Help me!" Of course, we were scared that Roy would enter into it too. He just said, "No, Toots. You got yourself into this and you've got to get yourself out." We let Toots up, finally. After that we never had any trouble with any bullying because they knew that between the two of us, we could handle any situation.



There was a fellow in our class named Ferol Christensen. He was on the basketball team. He was taller than the rest of us, but he never got in next to the basket. He was always the guy who got out of the middle of the floor and let fly with a long one but never made any at all -- maybe he made one and that kept him going but nobody could cure him of it.

Dick Cleaves and Ferol Christensen on the Cherokee High School Basketball Team

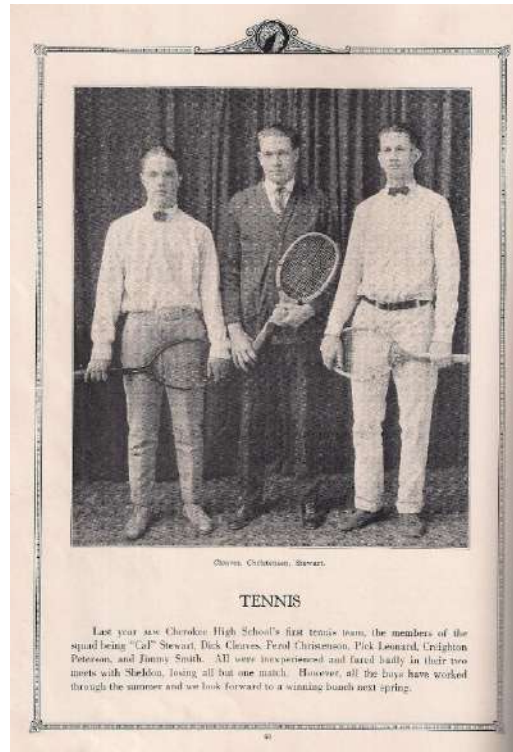


Ferol brought in a bottle of skunk oil and put it all sealed up in his locker. The school principal was named Bates. He had taught in a private school and so instead of calling him "Mister" we called him "Master," which he didn't like. Some way he found out about the skunk oil. He went into Farrell Christensen's locker, took out the skunk oil, took it outside and emptied it right in front of the intake fan for the ventilation system for the whole school. The school had to be let out for three days before they could get the skunk scent out.

Principal Bates



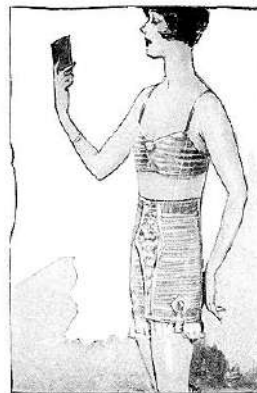
Dick, Ferol, and "Cal" Stewart on Tennis Team



The bad thing that they did was to suspend Ferol Christensen for a year. Of course, he shouldn't have been suspended because it was a stupid idea of the principal that caused the whole problem.

## 22. Stairway Misstep

There was a fellow in Cherokee named Reeve Peare, who ran the Firestone station. Cherokee was a small town and everybody knew everyone else. It was Reeve's wife's birthday, I believe, and Reeve decided to have a surprise party for her. He had advised her that they were going out to dinner. She was upstairs getting ready and Reeve was down in the parlor with all the friends invited to the surprise party who had sneaked into the house. They were all sitting around in the living room waiting for her to come down. She suddenly appeared at the top of the stairs in her brassiere and a pair of panties.





She called down to Reeve, "Oh Reeve honey, would you like to tear one off before we go?" Of course, that became the joke of the town. For instance, Dad would go into the Firestone station and say, "Oh Reeve, honey, do you have any tires today?" Finally, it got so bad that they moved out of town because everybody was kidding him so.

## 23. Dad Drinks Straight Alcohol

Dad was the youngest of six children in Cook County and was only nine when his father was drowned in the Chicago River. Benjamin had gone through the Civil War in the artillery brigade without a scratch and then had his arm blown off while ramming the wadding in a cannon at a Fourth of July celebration. At the time of his death he was working at a bank, and tried to leap across a swinging bridge before it was closed, missed, and fell into the river. My Dad said that, having only one arm, he could swim only in circles and went under just before a boat reached him.

I was always a little skeptical of the story, and one time in that connection asked Father, "Did Grandfather Benjamin drink?" My father got furious at this, plus the fact that my father never drank – beer, cocktails, wine, nothing -- and never served liquor in our house made me think that perhaps my question hit a nerve.



Never drank? I know of two occasions when he did. The first was when he was in a hotel room in Sioux City where the American Legion was holding its Iowa State convention, and where everyone but he was drinking spiked near beer, the most popular Prohibition drink among lowans. It consisted of near beer and grain alcohol. You opened the bottle of near beer, either drank some or, more usually, poured some on the ground or in the sink, as it tasted horrible, and filled up the neck with 180-proof alcohol. You put your thumb over the top, turned the bottle upside down a couple of times and there was the making of the most horrendous hangover that one could imagine.

Anyway, the conversation turned to Dad, and they started baiting him about being such a softy that he wouldn't take a drink. Something was said that made him mad, and he said, "All right, you bastards, let's see any one of you do this!"

He went to the bathroom, got a water tumbler and filled it half full with straight alcohol. He gulped it down without choking and said in a normal voice, "Any takers?" No one spoke. Dad turned and left the room.

I had heard the story as it was the talk of Cherokee. So, one day at his office I said, "How did you do it, without choking or coughing?" "Well," he said, "it's a matter of being able to get it down without getting fumes in your lungs. It blisters your throat, but I just went and threw up and that was it. Here, I'll show you."

He unlocked his medicine cabinet, filled up a tumbler with alcohol, slugged it down and then got rid of it in the sink.

Drinking Spiked Near Beer during Prohibition



## 24. One-Nut Cleaves

I came home from college one summer and when I got home Mother said "Your father has been sick for a week or so and he's up in bed and he won't get another doctor in to look at him. I think you should go up and talk to him." I went up, and Dad was in bed and quite pale and we talked. I said "You don't look well. I know you doctors don't like to get treatment from other doctors. But why not get Doc Hall or somebody over here to take a look at you and tell you what's the matter?"

He said, "Well, I'll tell you. I had an infected testicle, and I wasn't going to have someone else do the operation. So I operated by myself and removed the testicle...I'm just recovering. The reason I did it was because I wasn't going to be known around Cherokee, Iowa as 'One Nut Cleaves.'"

## 25. Confused Couple

Doctors ethically don't talk about their patients but Dad did take me into his confidence a few times. One of the most interesting stories was about a girl in high school who was maybe three classes ahead of me and came off a farm. She married a boy from another farm and they didn't have any children, and didn't know what was the matter. Someone suggested she be examined so she came down to Dad's office.

He examined her and when he got through examining her, she said "Why did you examine me there?" He said, "Where would I exam you?" And she said "Why, back here," pointing to her rear end. Of course, they were both innocents -- farm boy and farm girl -- who had always seen the animals enter from behind. They thought that was the way you did it.



Well, nine months later she had a baby. They thought Dad was the greatest doctor in the world. Once a week this guy would come around to the side door of the house up on West Main Street, bring us some butter and eggs and things like that out of gratitude for what Dad had done. Dad got a lot of produce particularly during the Depression.

He was funny and he had strange ideas. For example, I remember he didn't send a bill to anybody for over 20 years. One day we were at the house. He was about to leave for work and mother said "Prentiss, I have to pay the mortgage today but I don't have any money. I'm really concerned about it." He said, "Don't worry about it." And she said again, "But I need to get to the bank today and pay the mortgage." He repeated, "Don't worry about it" and off he goes down to his office.

Cherokee State Bank, founded 1908, at Smith Ave. and George Ave. in 1920



I went down to his office a little later and I'm sitting there when a farmer comes in and says, "Good news, Doc. I just sold a load of corn. I got a good price and now I can pay you for your delivering my wife last time." Dad said, "Just forget it." And the fellow said, "No, I'm not going to forget it; I want to pay you. I have the money right here." And Dad said, "Forget it." The farmer walked out with this money in his pocket and Dad didn't collect. I think he did this to impress me. I could never understand anything like that. He was a brilliant doctor and very fine man but had strange ideas as far as money was concerned.

## 26. Cherokee High School

I graduated from Cherokee High School in 1925.

Wilson High School (official name of Cherokee High School)



Prent and I had been in the same class because I had skipped a grade and he didn't. He just didn't want to be in the same graduating class. So, he went to Chicago and went to Francis Parker School. I had been a pretty good football player in Cherokee and so when Prent went to Francis Parker he apparently carried my reputation and told them what a great football player he was. He played all of the first game and he played a half of the second game and he played a quarter of the third game at Francis Parker. After that he was off the team. He never played again.

I'll never ever forget our commencement address at Cherokee High School. The speaker was an educator -- superintendent of school or something from Iowa someplace. In his talk, one of those inspiring things was "You think you're when you are leaving high school that you reached the end of a very important time." And then he said "Why do you suppose they call it Commencement? It's called Commencement because after you get out of high school is just the commencement of the rest of your life" and all that sort of stuff. At the end of his speech he said "Now I have a special message for you boys in the class. A few weeks ago, I was up in a town in Northwest Iowa where they had a tornado that had taken down a lot of trees. I came out of my hotel in the morning to take my morning constitutional and I looked down and they had planted trees. It was really quite inspiring -- long row after row of trees, pines on each side of the of the street, each tree with just exactly the same height. But as I looked down the street and was walking, I saw one tree way down at the end that was much smaller than the others. I just couldn't understand, so I walked down and found that it wasn't the tree at all. It was a fire plug." He ended by saying, "Boys, don't be a fire plug."

I'm sure that Prent and I were not the best-behaved students in high school. We got in some trouble and we escaped a lot of trouble maybe we should have gotten into trouble for.

One time Prent was out on a field trip for a biology class, and he saw a big black snake which is a harmless snake in Iowa. He brought it back to school and just before walking into assembly, he put his hand into his pocket and held the snake inside his pants by the tail from his

pocket. As he walked into the assembly, he let the thing go. You could just follow that snake in the assembly by the girls that would jump up and get on their chairs and scream. Finally, the teacher who was monitoring the assembly came down and she saw the snake. She said, "Who brought that snake in?" Of course, nobody answered, so she said -- "Prentiss Cleaves, you take that snake and get rid of it." Prent said "I'm afraid of snakes." So, she said "Richard, get that snake out of here." I said I can't touch a snake. Finally, Clarence Allison picked up the snake and threw it out the window.

One summer Irene had wanted to take me someplace -- I can't remember if it was Niagara Falls or some other place. She wanted to go before I got through school that particular year. So, we got permission for me to leave school a week early. I was in the assembly one morning and there was some kind of commotion that I was causing. The teacher monitor said -- "Richard - take that front seat." I walked up to it and stood there and said, "Where should I take it?" Well, of course, I had to go to the principal's office, and he gave me a lecture. He then said, "We've been lenient with you, letting you go early and now you can't go." Well, that upset everything and finally I guess Dad or Mother went down to talk to him and he let me go anyway.

A trick that we had in class (I think it was in Miss Mann's class; she was an English teacher, an excellent English teacher). We would sit in the back row which is right up against the wall. When she wasn't looking, we would bang our heads back against the wall. This made a pounding noise. She would stop and say, "I wonder why they're pounding out there," and then she goes on with her classroom teaching and we do it again. She never did find out that we were doing it in the back of the room.

As I said, Miss Mann was a wonderful English teacher. She would read Shakespeare to us, and she would act out all the parts. I remember one time in one of the Shakespearean plays, she pretended to be knocking on the door saying "knock knock knock," and then she walked over to the other side and said "Who is there?" Then she walked up to the first side of the room and answered whatever it was. As she was going back again to take the other part, she hit the wastebasket. She looked down and said, "Excuse me." We all got a big kick out of that.

Admired Teacher Lois Mann

High School Yearbook Humor



\* \* \*  
Miss Mann (in English class) : "Now, Banquo comes in on his horse. Of course, I cannot imitate the horse. Hee, hee!"

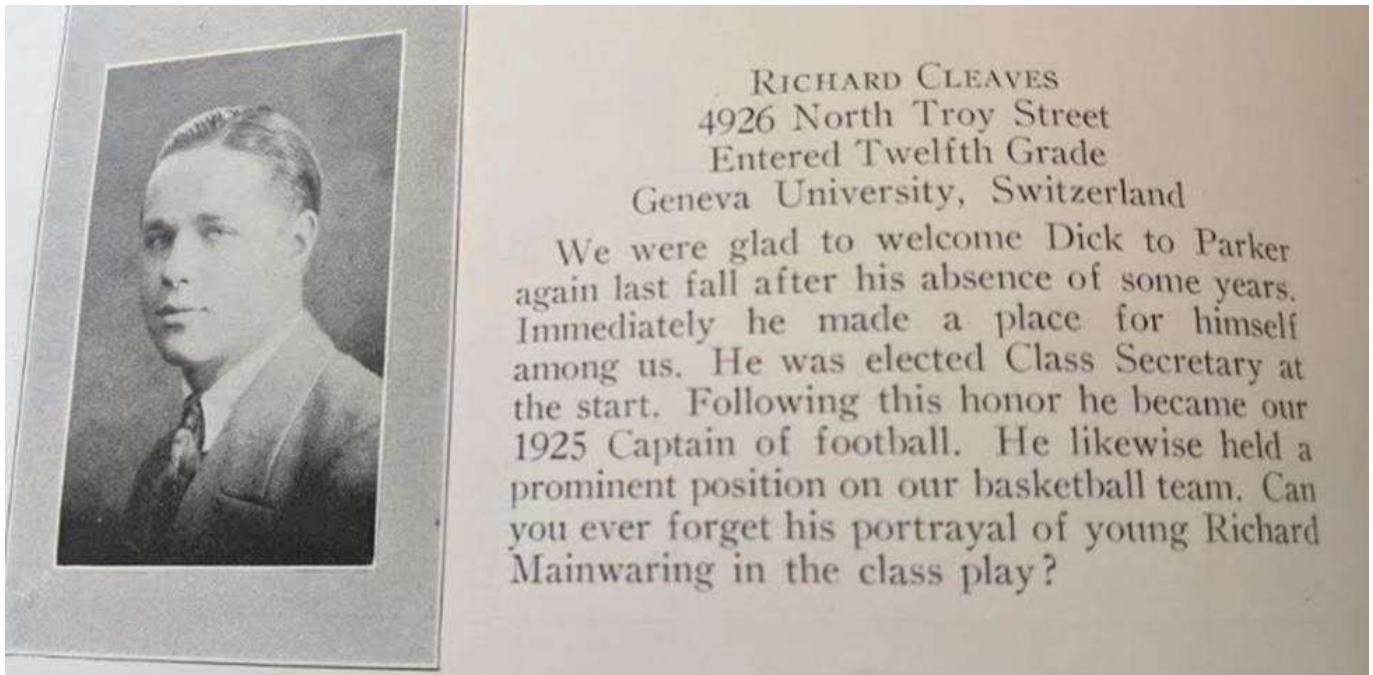
## And a Lasting Impression

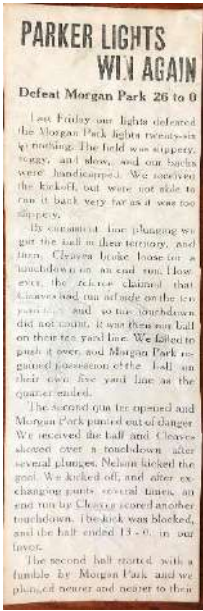
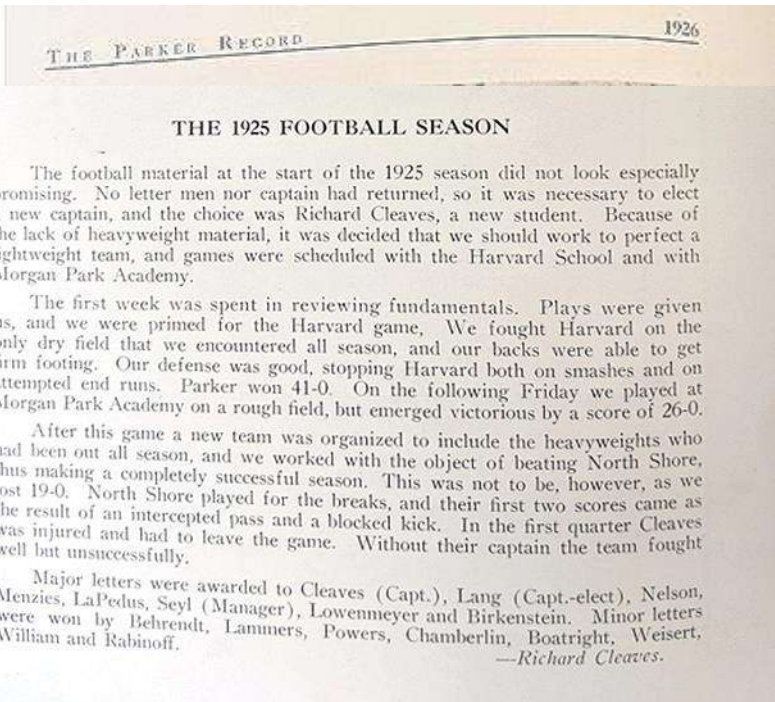
### PSALM OF THE SENIORS

Miss Mann is my teacher: I shall not pass.  
She maketh me give a speech before the whole class and exposeth my ignorance  
to the whole school.  
She restoreth my sorrow. She causeth me to study all night for my grade's sake.  
Yea, though I study until midnight, I shall gain no knowledge; for her questions  
sorely trouble me, and the lessons she assigns distress me.  
She prepareth a test for me in the presence of the whole class; she giveth me a low  
grade: my sorrow runneth over.  
Surely distress and sadness shall follow me all the days of my life and I shall dwell  
in Cherokee High School forever.

[**Editor's note:** Until the editors prepared this memoir, they did not know that their father Dick graduated twice from high school. In 1925 he was just 16 years old when he graduated from Cherokee High School. His parents felt he was too young for college. They sent him up to Francis Parker School in Chicago where Aunt Irene was still the respected 8<sup>th</sup> grade teacher. Like his brother Prent, he lived with Aunt Irene, played football, and graduated in 1926.]

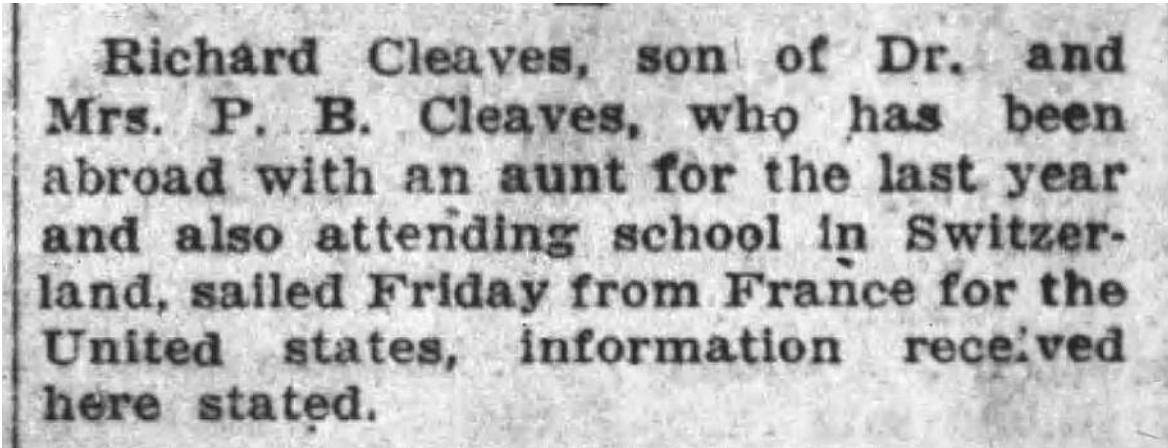
Dick Cleaves returns to Francis W. Parker School





[Editor's Note: Still only 17 years old when he graduated from Francis Parker School, Dick then went to Switzerland to take courses at the University of Geneva, afterwards teaching physical education at a French Girl's school. He entered Dartmouth College in September 1928. We believe he received financial support for studying in Europe and attending Dartmouth from Cleaves aunts living in Maine, Grace Erma McDaniel Cleaves and sister Geneva "Amy" McDaniel (married name Woods and later Stiehl)]

*Sioux City Journal, Sunday, June 19, 1927*



**27. Flying Lesson and Switch Engine with Prent**

Prent took flying lessons and became a pilot. He was working in Wichita and he flew back to Cherokee. In those days, when they flew cross country, they had no navigation aids at all. They would fly along the railroad tracks and then when they got near a town, they would fly down low enough so they could see the name of the town on the railroad station.

One year, Prent was in a single-engine plane that had a rotary motor with 6 or 8 cylinders around the engine with the drive shaft in the middle. One of the things that he did that I couldn't

do -- he wanted to teach me to fly. We went out to the field one day and took off. I was in the co-pilot seat, and he turned the controls over to me. He said, "You pull the stick back a little bit to go up and you put it down a little bit to go down. And if you want to go right to put over to the right if you want to go left you pull up the other way."

I thought I was doing pretty well and suddenly he said, "Let go of that stick!" I let go and he took the stick and went back to the airport to land. I was a little bit upset because I said to myself what am I doing wrong? I must have been really terrible. Prent landed and shut off the engine and said, "I want to show you something." We went down and he pointed to the engine and said, "The engine has four bolts. Three of the bolts had sheared off, and the cylinder was just loose there. If the fourth bolt had come off, the cylinder would have come right through the cockpit." That was my only flying lesson and the end of my flying experience.

Prent was always mechanically very skilled and very interested in mechanical things. When we were quite small, maybe 11 or 12 years old, Prent used to go down to the railroad yards. The engineer on the switch engine let him get in the cab and they'd switch and so forth.

Prent learned how to run the switch engine. One day we were walking down across the tracks and the switch engine was sitting there and the men were in the railroad restaurant, the crew having something to eat. And Prent said, "You know, I can run this engine." There were three of us -- Tony Rassis was there too. We said, "You can't," and he said, "Come on, I'll show you."

Prentiss Bowden Cleaves





We got in and he started the switch engine down the track. The crew inside the restaurant looked out and suddenly saw their switch engine disappearing. Prent took it down maybe 200 yards, put it in reverse, and brought it back again. That was the last time they ever let him ride in the switch engine.

#### Switch Engine



[**Editor's note:** Prent Cleaves was born in Cherokee on January 15, 1908. His career was in the airplane industry in San Diego, California. He invented and patented a spoiler system fitted to wings of small planes like Piper Cubs to smooth their landings. Prent died in San Diego on February 10, 1980.]

When I was working for Guy Gillette, I bought a Ford Phaeton, which was a 4-door convertible. Prent wanted to fix it up and did a terrific job. He built a deck over the rear seat which had latches on it and he got a pump (I don't know what kind of pump it was) and he linked it up to a Franklin automobile compressor. The old Franklins used to have a compressor underneath the hood so that, if you had a flat tire, you could inflate your tire. Prent fixed this thing up so it would work on the pump and lift this deck so you can get in and out of the back seat. We also put glass wings on it, at the side of the front windshield. And we had the second windshield on the deck. So, we had a two-windshield car which was really a very classic car.



That was the best car I ever had. Whip Walser, Bill Kass and I drove the Ford Phaeton down to Laredo before we rode bicycles to Mexico City. We left it there and Prent picked it up and took it to California. I wish I had it today because it would be a real classic, almost unique. There're just not many more now. A 1934 Ford Phaeton.

## 28. Hawkeye Limited Train and Cattle Car

Dad was the doctor for the Illinois Central Railroad there in Cherokee. We could get passes. For instance, Dad got me passes and I would come back and forth from Dartmouth. I'd ride the Erie Railroader I guess to as far as Chicago and then I would ride the Hawkeye Limited, which was the crack train from Chicago to Cherokee.

Erie Limited between Jersey City & Chicago, 1930s



The Hawkeye had the old Pullman cars, beautiful Pullman cars, and an observation car. It went from Chicago to Cherokee where it split into two sections -- one going to Sioux Falls and the other going to Sioux City.

Pullman Car

Cherokee Station



The farmers, of course, used to ship their cattle into Chicago on the IC. When you accompanied the cattle, you got a pass back on the Hawkeye Limited with a berth. The ones who rode the train with the cattle didn't have to do anything really with the cattle but sit. We used to ride the cattle train into Chicago riding in the caboose. The first time I took it, they had a hundred cars, which is 99 cars and the caboose. We would be on the rear platform on the caboose, with our legs dangling over the rear and leaning up against the rails.

## Riding the Vintage Caboose



The train would be going along through the country and it was just beautiful, sitting out there in the sunshine, everything was just great. But when the train pulled into the station or a town and slowed down or stopped, there was a little space in the coupling between each car. When they put on the brakes on the train, the cars would take out the space in the coupling and by the time it came to the caboose, the assembly came to a complete stop -- very suddenly -- about maybe three feet of space taken out. And when they started out it would do the same thing. You'll be sitting there and suddenly you get jerked up against this rail. By the time they reached the last car the train was probably going 60 or 70 miles an hour. It was really quite a shock.

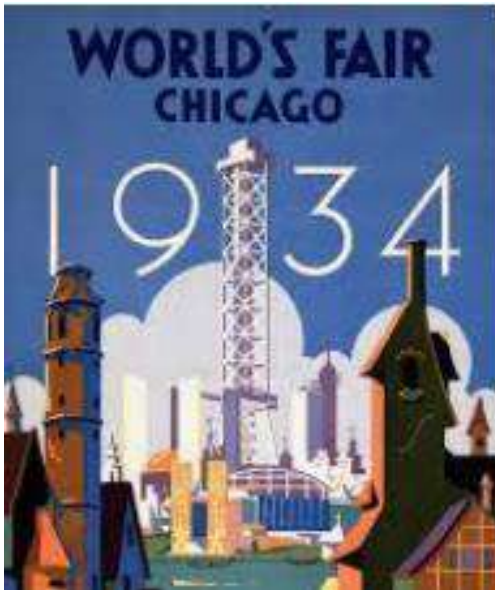
Through the towns, when you were carrying hogs, they would water down the hogs. We'd be sitting in the caboose while some of these men would be on the side with a hose watering the hogs. Of course, we got watered too because they just loved to squirt the water hose on us when we were sitting in the rear of the caboose.

## Modern Train Hog Watering



## 29. Chicago World's Fair Contortionist

I think it was in 1934 when they had great dust storms over the plains. I was working with Guy in Washington, and I drove Guy and Rose and little Mark back from Washington to Cherokee. It was so hot (and of course we had no air conditioning in the car) that we couldn't open the windows because it was hotter with the windows open than it was with them closed. On the way, we stopped at the World's Fair in Chicago where there was a contortionist.



It'd been a long ride and it was hot, and I guess I was a little susceptible. It was while this contortionist went through his act that I fainted. They took me to the emergency place to revive me and I came to. Of course, I was quite ashamed of myself. I said something to the nurse, and she said "Well, out here at the Fair, we have more men fainting and we do women."

A friend of mine -- can't remember his name now -- he worked in Chicago and things were very tough. He had a wife and a baby. He got his pay, and on the way back he got in a poker game. He lost practically all his money and, ashamed, he just didn't dare go home. So, he went to a pawn shop bought a cheap revolver. Then he went down and bought a ticket on the Sightseeing Boat that came out of the World's Fair and went around the municipal pier and out to Lake Michigan. On the boat he held up all the passengers for money. Of course, he didn't get away with it and they threw him in jail. There was a lot of coverage in the Chicago papers. They didn't know whether to charge him with attempted robbery or with piracy -- because he'd been on the "high seas" on the lake. I guess he got off on probation.

Whaleback 1934 World's Fair Sightseeing Boat "Christopher Columbus"



### **30. Cherokee Dust Storm, County Sections, Drummond Island**

When we got to Cherokee, the dust storm was just amazing. You would be looking up from our house onto West Main Street and suddenly it would look as if there was a tremendous thunderstorm coming, just solid dust. It would drift over the town, and it got so dark that they had to turn on the street lights. My mother who was a very meticulous housekeeper had a heck of a time with the dust. Almost every day she was dusting. Even though we had storm windows

on, the dust still came in the house. We had an apple tree in the backyard. It was so hot that on the sunny side the apples became half baked; that half of the apple was just like a baked apple.

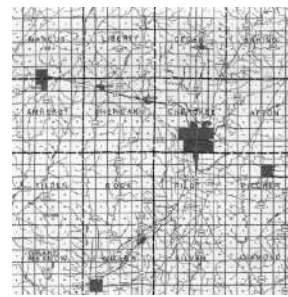
Out at the State Insane Asylum, which was also a farm, they had their hay in the hay mount in the barn. On a very hot day, the manager of the farm got a ladder and climbed up the ladder to the hay mount opening. He stuck in his hand with a thermometer to get the temperature. When he took his arm back, it was all blistered. It was just a terrible situation.

The land in Cherokee County and I guess mostly throughout Iowa is laid out in sections which are one-mile square. All the roads run along between the sections. If Dad got a call from somebody, he'd say "Where do you live out in the county?" And they could tell him exactly. "You go 9 miles north, 2 miles east, one mile north and a mile east and it's the third house past that line."

Iowa, USA



Cherokee County sections (each a square mile)



Toward the end of his doctoring, he really had had his belly full, with calls at night and all that sort of thing. He would get a call and I'd hear him say "Well, I don't know you." Then he would say "Who's been your doctor?" Then he would say, "Well, I suggest you call him." In other words, he was not interested in enlarging his practice and wouldn't take a patient from another doctor.

We had a rustic cabin on Drummond Island in Michigan. We always had a great time, did a lot of fishing. I still have the picture of coming back one day with about 200 perch on a string. Another day we went over to Harbor Island -- of course we didn't have any motors --- and we had taken food to cook. But when we got over there, we were so tired and hungry that all we ate was peanut butter and baked bean sandwiches.

DeTour, Harbor Island, and Fishing Perch on Drummond Island

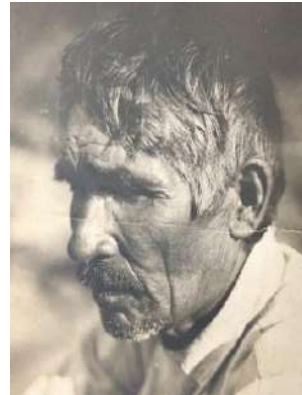


There was an Indian there -- John Lapointe -- a little man --- and Dad met him and said "Let me look at your eyes. Can you see anything?" And John said, "I can't see hardly nothin." Dad said "You've got cataracts. Would you like to have me fix them up so you can see?" John said "Fine." Dad of course didn't have any of his instruments with him so we went over to DeTour on the ferry and he went to the local doctor and explained the situation, saying he wanted to do this operation, to be done for free, for charity. He got the instruments from this doctor and went back. He operated on the cataracts the old-fashioned way (not how they do it now) and cleared up both cataracts for him. Of course, John LaPointe was very grateful.

Drummond Island Cabin



John LaPointe



Dad also operated on a female Pointer puppy we had in Cherokee after I started working for Guy Gillette. We wanted to have her neutered before taking her back to our house in Washington. Dad said, "I can do that." He put her under and operated on her. I stood and watched, giving some help (little help really). When Dad finished doing the neutering, he kept working and finally said "I've never done this before. I can't find some of the blood vessels and she's hemorrhaging. There's nothing I can do except sew her up and see whether everything's all right." So, he sewed her up, and later that day he saw the local veterinarian and explained what happened. The vet said, "You don't have to tie the blood vessels on a dog. I operate on them and then close them up and they coagulate and heal themselves."

### 31. Chautauqua, Donkey Ball, Circus, and Big Bands

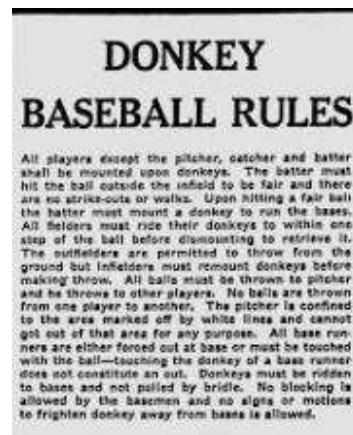
In those days, of course, we didn't have television. As a matter fact we didn't really have radio and I don't think we had a radio at our house at that time. Our diversion, our entertainment was in things that came in -- like Chautauqua.

Chautauqua Functions at Magnolia Park, Cherokee



Chautauqua used to come once a year and it would be there for maybe a week under the big tent. It would have music and speeches, Souza's Band and maybe a good Gilbert and Sullivan play. I remember that Guy Gillette would speak at Chautauqua all over Iowa and Midwest.

Another thing that came to town was the donkey ball.



These fellows had donkeys and they would go around the grounds and choose up two teams. What you had to do was this -- you stood up and they pitched to you and you hit a ball. Then you jumped on your donkey and tried to get him to first base. Well, they had the donkey trained, so that one particular donkey instead of going to first base would go to third, and another donkey would go halfway to first base and he would stop, and so forth. I played in the donkey ball but I never got the donkey to get to first base.

Another thing they had was to bring in the carnivals. I think I was maybe a sophomore in college. This carnival had a boxer and if you could stay three rounds with him, you got a dollar a round. Everybody egged me on. I had so-called boxing lessons when I was in Geneva -- you know, three steps forward each time, you put out your left hand and then your back off three steps and so forth. I went in and I stayed the three rounds and got my \$3. The owner of the show came up to me and he said, "This guy we have is no good. I think you're much better. Don't you want to join our carnival and be our boxing representative?"



One of the great things we had were the big bands, the big-name bands, that used to travel all through the country in their buses. They would stop in little towns and they would have a dance

on a Saturday night or whatever night it might be. Our closest place was Remsen, Iowa, a tiny town maybe about 30 miles from us. The bands would come in and we used to go up there to dance. Sammy Kay and Guy Lombardo's and all these big bands came into this little town.

I remember that it was the first time that I heard about marijuana. I was told that a lot of fellows in the band took marijuana because (well it's hard to explain except that) when they were playing at the normal rate, for example the clarinet player, if he were just playing normally it would seem very slow. He could have the ability to speed up under the influence of marijuana so that what they brought out of their band was absolutely stupendous. The runs that they had -- they never could have done -- if they had not been under the influence.

The other big occasion was the arrival of the Ringling Brothers circus with the big tent. I remember reading in the *Saturday Evening Post* that the biggest attendance under a tent, way back in maybe 1895 or 1900, was in Cherokee Iowa where the people came in from 70 to 80 or 100 miles away in their horse and buggies and wagons to attend the show.



When the circus came in, the thing was to go down and watch them unload and then try to get a job at the circus where the kids could get a free pass. We would go down and they would unload the elephants and they'd have a parade through town. I can't remember how old we were, but Prent and I went down to the circus grounds to try to earn our passes. Our job was to set up chairs. We and a bunch of other young kids set up all the chairs. When it came time to get our passes, we walked up and Prent got his and the other kids got theirs. I came up about the end of the line and the guy looked at me and he said "You're too small. You couldn't have done any work you so you can't have a pass." I was quite upset about this, so I didn't go home. I just hung around the circus all that afternoon. Finally, my dad appeared and just took me by the ear and marched me back home, about 15 or 20 blocks. Not only I didn't see the circus but I was also punished. It was really very unfair.

Cherokee had a nine-hole golf course and once a year they would have a tournament where everybody would get a certain number of strokes -- 57 or whatever it was with their handicaps. The players would carry a wooden shingle.

The Cherokee golf course opened in 1916





When a player got to the end of the number of strokes, he was supposed to write a poem on the shingle and stick it in the ground where his ball stopped. Afterwards they had a dinner party, where the poems and phrases written on the shingles were read. Also, a prize was given out for the best poem and for the player who had won the golf tournament. I remember my dad's poem. It read like this (which they would have really liked) -- "Here I stand broken hearted. Tried to drive and only farted."

One Fourth of July when we were very young, we almost burned up our mother. We were out in the backyard, just little kids with sparklers and so forth. Dad felt that we could handle roman candles, which you just hold in your hand and they shoot up. He explained what we were supposed to do.

Sparklers & Roman Candles Ad

Gossamer Summer Dress



My mother was wearing a gossamer summer dress. Dad lit the roman candles. We were so excited we turned around and said, "Mother, look what we're doing!" We shot these roman candles at her and her dress caught on fire. Fortunately, she was not burned and Dad put it out before anything serious happened.

## 32. Lutheran Churches

When I was working for Guy Gillette, one of my jobs when I got home was to do campaigning for him before he was up for re-election. I went up to Le Mars and went with the Swedish County Democratic chairman. We were going out to a little town that was having some kind of a fair. As he drove through the country, he had a *Saturday Evening Post* up on the steering wheel and he read all the way. It was really very frightening.

We come in over the hills --- there are a lot of hills in northwest Iowa, very beautiful country -- and looked down into this little tiny town. You could see two great big church steeples just across the street from each other. To make conversation, I said, "You have two beautiful churches there for such a small town." He said, "Oh, yeah." I said, "Well what's the one on the left-hand side of the street." He said -- "Dats a Luterin church." I said, "Well, what's the one on the right-hand side of the street." He said, "Oh, Dats a Luterin church." I said, "There two big churches, and they're both Lutheran churches. What's the difference?" He said, "On the left-

hand side, they think that Eve gave Adam the apple and made him sin...But on the right-hand side, they say that son of a bitch ought to die!"

\*\*\*\*\*

I hope I've given you some idea of what it was like to live in and grow up in Cherokee Iowa, a small town that time with less than 5,000 people, with the right side of the tracks and the wrong side of the tracks. Fortunately, with Dad in his position, even though we didn't have really all of the luxuries, we did very well.

Cleaves Home in Cherokee, Iowa – 730 West Main Street



### 33. Stowaway from Puerto Rico to New York

[Editor's note: In March 1933, Dick had come to Puerto Rico from Martinique and was out of cash. He needed to be in Washington, DC by March 11 to begin his job with Congressman Guy Gillette. While the story is not directly linked to Cherokee, it does relate to Guy Gillette and reveals more of Dick Cleaves' personality, formed while a youngster in Cherokee.]

When President Roosevelt closed the banks in the spring of 1933, it caught me in Puerto Rico. Actually, the bank closing didn't make much difference to me, as I happened to have my complete assets, amounting to \$4.35, in my pocket.

What was of immediate concern was the cablegram that had just arrived. REPORT WASHINGTON MARCH ELEVEN. It meant that I had a job with the new Administration, my first since I had gotten out of college. The problem was getting to the job.

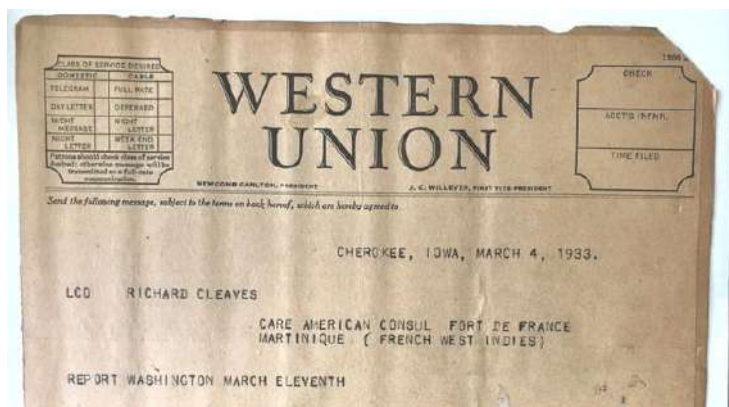
How I happened to be in Puerto Rico right at that time can be explained by saying that I had come up from Martinique as a workaway on a small inter-island tanker. That was a month previous. My plan was to get another workaway to New York, but I hadn't been able to swing it. Every time a boat came in, I would go down to the dock where she was berthed, and try to find

the mate. First, I had to dodge the dock captain. The few times I was able to get to the mate, the answer was always the same. "I can't give you a workaway. You have to get clearance from the office."

So, I would go to the office. There I would be told that they had nothing to do with it, and that I would have to see the mate. By the time that point was cleared up, the boat had loaded and sailed.

As I said, this had been going on for a month. I didn't mind too much, until the cablegram came, as the weather was pleasant and I had succeeded in living within my means. My cot in a flophouse set me back 15 cents a night, and I spaced my two dishes of rice and beans each day so that I was never terribly hungry, just always rather hungry. A dish of rice and beans cost 6 cents.

The morning after I got the cablegram, I discussed the problem with a fellow in the same flophouse where I was living, who had the cot next to mine.



Telegram from Dick's Father Dr. Prentiss Cleaves



Dick Cleaves in his 20s

He had been second mate on a freighter that had dropped cargo at San Juan on her way to the West Indies and the northern coast of South America. He had gotten drunk on shore leave, missed his ship, and was now on the beach.

"You look like a smart kid," he said, "so you ought to know by now that things are bad in the States, and you can't get a workaway to New York. Why don't you stowaway?" I said, "Stowaway, I don't know. How do you stowaway?" While he'd never done it, he said. "You just stow away. Find yourself a spot in the boiler room, or maybe you can slip into a lifeboat. You have to figure it out yourself. Why don't you try the Coamo? The cruise liner Coamo is in port today and is sailing tomorrow. Why don't you go down tomorrow and stowaway?" I said – "Well, I'll see what I can do."

The first thing I had to do was to arrange for my suitcase to be sent to my uncle's in New York. My friend said he would take care of it for me, so I gave him enough money for charges and wrote out the address for him. That was the last time I ever saw my suitcase.

The next day I shined my shoes, wore a knicker suit, slung a camera over my shoulder and walked down to the dock where the Coamo was tied up. Looking at her from a distance didn't give me any ideas about how to start stowing away. There seemed to be a lot of stewards and

passengers milling about on the decks, and I couldn't see much chance of finding an unwatched lifeboat. I walked up to the visitors' gangplank for a better look.

I walked up the visitors' gangplank and there was a question of -- you know -- where I was going to hide till the ship left? She was a beautiful ship, and the going-away atmosphere was very exciting. I could see that everyone was looking forward to a gala trip. However, I had to find myself a hiding place as it was then 12:30, and the boat was due to sail at 1:00. My first thought was that I go to the men's toilet in one of the corridors. I walked down to the men's toilet and just as I went in, I looked at the end of the corridor and there was a steward watching me. I came out again and I looked at other corridors and for other places and there was just no place to hide. I just walked into the First Class Lounge, and I bought a copy of the *Saturday Evening Post* and I sat down and started to read, very nervous of course.

The ship was about an hour late in sailing so every once a while a steward would come through and he would say "All Visitors Ashore... All Visitors Ashore." And I'd sit there, and tell myself I better get off this tub. But I've got to get up to New York and Washington. Pretty soon again he comes through and says, "All Visitors Ashore," looking right at me. But I just sat there. Finally, they cast off the lines and the Coamo left the dock. After we had passed Morro Castle and were out of the harbor, I went out on deck. I wanted to see when they dropped the pilot because I knew that after they dropped the pilot that they couldn't take me back to San Juan.

There was a young couple sitting there with another young girl, very pretty girl from Ohio. As I was walking by them, a steward came up to me, asking "Would you like a chair?" I said, "Yes I would" and he put the chair up next to these people. I started to talk to them and found out that the young couple were on their honeymoon. They had come down on the same Coamo and were on the way back to New York. They had met the girl when they got on the ship. Tea was served very soon, as we had been so late getting away. After a good game of shuffleboard, which the girl from Ohio and I had won, I turned to the young husband and said, "I might just as well tell you. I'm a stowaway."

He said, "What are you going to do?" I didn't have the slightest idea. "Well," he said, "I suppose you could sleep in a deck chair, which wouldn't be bad for the first couple of nights, and probably between morning broth, afternoon tea and what we could sneak from the table, we could keep you fed. But I don't know how you're going to get through Immigration and Customs when you get to New York." Then he added, ". "Why don't you give yourself up and offer to work. They can't throw you off now, and maybe they will make it easy for you. When we came down on the Coamo I got to know the Purser very well and he's a real nice guy. So why don't you go down and give yourself up to the Purser and then after that I'll go down and talk and see what I can do."

I said fine and sat around a while longer, was feeling good with the sun shining on deck and with nice people. It was a wrench to leave, but the deck steward had asked me a couple of times for my name and stateroom number so he could put them on my chair, so I thought I had better get at it.

I walked down to the Purser's office and the Assistant Purser was there behind the cage and said, "Yes, Sir. What can I do for you?" I said, "Well, Sir, I'm a stowaway."

"What?!" His face looked as though he were seeing the Devil. "I'm a stowaway, Sir," I repeated. He looked around quickly. "Come back here before anyone sees you," he ordered. I stepped into his office. The first thing he told me was that I was wasting my time stowing away, as when

the ship got to New York I would be kept in the brig, and then bought back to Puerto Rico. He asked if I had any papers. I replied that I had a regular tourist's passport. He looked it over very carefully, and then said, "Well, don't say anything about this, but they *might* let you off. Don't say I said so. I better call the bridge."

He got on the horn and he said, "Let me speak with Bridge Mate." (I could hear both sides of the conversation. In fact, I could have heard the other end even if there had been no telephone.) The Bridge Mate got on, and the Assistant Purser said, "Sir, I've got a stowaway down here." "WHAT? You've got a stowaway? Keep him there until I can send someone down for him." Soon the quartermaster came down --- a very strict young fellow who didn't crack a smile, who said "Come with me." So, we went up to the bridge and saw the Mate. The Mate looked 70 years old and was a Norwegian -- I think his name was Bergson or Bergman. He seemed to me to be the biggest man I had had ever seen. He stood about six feet five inches, and must have weighed, muscle and bone, about 280 pounds. He stood over me, and called me, and all my confederates, every name he could think of.

He said "So you're the stowaway. How did you get on the ship? Who helped you on the ship?" I said that nobody, Sir. He said "Don't lie to me. It had to be a steward. Did a steward help you? You can't get on the ship without help. How did you do it?" I used 'sir' in every answer. I said, "No, Sir, no one helped me." He tried another tack. "Where were you hiding? In one of the cabins? Or maybe in a locker?" "I was in the First Class Lounge," I replied. His jaw fell. He turned to the Quartermaster, who was standing by the wheel. "I'll be an S.O.B.," he said. "I never heard of a stowaway like this before." Turning back to me, "Well, do you want to work, or shall I throw you in the brig? If you want to work, I'll let you work where you can be out on deck."

I said -- "Well, Sir. I've been trying to get to get a workaway for a month now and so I'd like to work." He said "fine" and asked if I had any work clothes, and I said "No, Sir, I don't have any work clothes." So, he turned to one of the fellows on the bridge and said, "Take him down to the slop chest and find him some work clothes that will fit him."

Down at the slop chest, the fellow pawed around, but all that he could find was a Quartermaster's uniform. I put that on, and it fit me pretty well. By then it was time to eat. You know that you don't eat all at the same time. So while they're taking me down to the crew's dining, the other part of the crew was just going on watch and coming up on deck. This one fellow stopped me and put his hand on my chest and said "I've been on this doggone tugboat for five years. Last week I made Able Body Seaman AB. You come on the first day and you're a goddamn quartermaster!"

I slept in the crew hospital. Every morning I'd report to the bridge and every morning I would wash the bridge or chip paint or rust or something. I guess it was about the second day when I reported the Mate said "Where do you eat" and I said I'm eating in the crew's mess and he said "Eat in the officers' mess; it's a better mess." And it was! There you could have a steak for breakfast or chops or all of the food that they had in first class except they didn't fool around with olives and sardines and the fancy relishes. I did enjoy having steak or lamp chops for breakfast as a welcome change from rice and beans.

The next day was Sunday so I reported in, and the Bridge Mate said "Today is Sunday. Don't you know what day this is? We don't work on Sunday." I'd been given instructions not to talk

any of the passengers but when I was working, this young man on the honeymoon came along and talked to me and said "How are you doing?" I told him and he said here are some cigarettes and said I looked very smart in the uniform. He kept an eye on me all the way up to New York.

We got into quarantine about 5 in the morning and the passengers were to debark at 8:30 that morning. I was in the crew hospital and didn't have a clue. When we left quarantine and steamed up the river at end of the bay, I was quite excited and I put on my good suit. I decided to open the door, get out on deck, go to the can, and look around. Except that I didn't open the door. It was stuck. I worked at it for a moment, then went over to the porthole which looked out on deck. Some of the dining room stewards were going by, so I called to one and said, "I don't know what's wrong with this door; I can't seem to get it open." He said Ok, walked around, disappeared from sight, and came around with eyes as big as saucers. "Boy," he exclaimed, "there's the biggest padlock I ever saw in my life on that door!"

I said "Ok – but let someone know that I have to go to the can." One of the crew members came and let me out and then took me back to the crew hospital and locked the door. We were warped into the dock and tied up a little after eight-thirty. At about 9 a.m., one of the stewards came and he said "Oh my God, I forgot all about you. You haven't had anything to eat. I'll bring you some breakfast – what do you want?" "Ham and eggs or something." Pretty soon the dock captain came on and he looks through the porthole and said, "So you're the stowaway." "Yes, Sir." He said, "You're out of luck, Mac. They're going to ship you back to Puerto Rico."

I waited I would say until about noon. One of the stewards came down and said they want to see me up in the First Class dining room. So I went up there. There were two immigration officers.

One was a normal officer, a very nice-looking older guy, and the other one was a young immigration officer, probably been on the job for just a week. Then there was a representative from the New York and Puerto Rico Steamship Company. The old guy set me aside while they were having their lunch and after examining my passport said, "As far as we're concerned, you're clear. You can get off." He called to the officer from the Puerto Rico Line and said, "As far as we're concerned, he can get off." The company officer said, "I've got to make a telephone call." And he came back and said there was nobody there to give authorization.

They continued their lunch. This young immigration officer said to the older guy "I wouldn't let him off. Obviously, he could find some money someplace to pay for his passage. I just wouldn't let him off. I'd send him back to Puerto Rico." But the older guy said, "Nah, I think he's telling the truth (because I had told him about my job with Guy Gillette in Washington) and I don't see any reason not to let him go on."

After they had finished eating and arguing about me, the company representative disappeared. In a little while he came back and said, "I'm going to let you off, but don't ever get on one of our ships again." I said, "No Sir, I won't!" I shook hands all around and did not fail to compliment the company on the wonderful service that their line afforded.

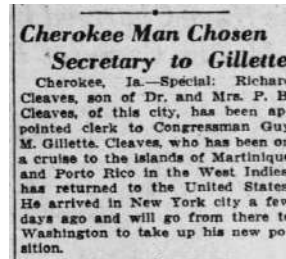
I was quite excited naturally as I walked down the gang plank. At the bottom, whom should I see but my friend, the one who was on his honeymoon. This was about 1 in the afternoon and they had gotten off at 8:30. He said, "So they've let you get off the ship," and I said yes. I said I want to thank you for everything you did...you know, cigarettes and support. He said, "What are

you going to do now” and I said “Well, I’m going to go out and call my uncle and get to my uncle’s. He’s sure to be there and he’ll have some money for me.” He said “Fine.” I shook hands and left and went out and made the telephone call and caught a crosstown bus. And I was halfway to my uncle’s apartment somewhere on 77<sup>th</sup> street and it suddenly hit me. The young husband had waited around for over four hours to be sure that I got off the ship all right. And I didn’t even know his name. By then there was no possibility of knowing it, taking them to dinner or reciprocating in some other way. ....I’ve always regretted that.

Steamship Coamo



Joining Guy Gillette



[Editor’s note: The newspaper article is from the *Sioux City Journal*, April 16, 1933. The passenger ship Coamo was completed in 1925. Dick was fortunate not to be on the ship on December 2, 1942, when it was sunk by a torpedo from German U-604 with the loss of all 186 on board.

Source: <https://uboat.net/allies/merchants/ship/2486.html>.]

### 34. Obituaries for Dr. Prentiss Bowden Cleaves (1879-1951)



# Large Attendance At Cleaves Rites Here Friday

A large crowd, including many persons from outside this city, attended final services for Dr. P. B. Cleaves, the dean of Cherokee doctors, here Friday afternoon.

Rites were at Presbyterian church with Rev. Herman McCoy officiating. Masonic and military services were conducted with burial at Oak Hill cemetery. American Legion and the V. F. W. both furnished colors and color guard for escort. Following Masonic rites, a Legion firing squad fired three volleys and taps followed.

A practicing physician in Cherokee for 48 years, Dr. Cleaves was a past master of Speculative lodge, A. F. & A. M., a past grand warden and past deputy grand master of Iowa Masons.

He was also past commander of Treptow post of the American Legion in Cherokee and a well known booster for Sioux Valley hospital. Dr. Cleaves performed the first operation in the present Sioux Valley hospital location.

The late doctor was a self-styled authority on Iowa history and regarded as one of the better known men in that field in this part of the state.

In his message, Rev. McCoy, said, in regard to death, "We should recall inspiring memories and the good influences left behind" by the deceased.

Rev. McCoy said, "Inspiring memories attest to respect for this doctor."

Dr. Cleaves had suffered a stroke Monday morning at his residence at 730 West Main.

Following services, Masonic wives served lunch for a large number of out-of-town visitors, color guard members and pall bearers.

Present for the services yesterday was Earl Delzell, Cedar Rapids, secretary of the grand Masonic lodge of Iowa. A number of other Masonic notables from northwest Iowa and friends of the deceased were among those at the rites.

Also attending in a body were doctors and nurses from Sioux Valley hospital staff and others of this section of the state.

# Dr. P. B. Cleaves Succumbs Here Wednesday Night

The community was saddened this week by the death of Dr. P. B. Cleaves, 71, long-time physician and surgeon here, who passed away Wednesday evening at the Sioux Valley hospital.

Although he had not been in good health for the past few years, he had rallied from prior attacks mainly due to his indomitable will, and it was not until early Monday morning that he suffered a final attack from which it was apparent he would not recover.

Services will be held Friday afternoon at 2:30 o'clock at the Memorial Presbyterian church, with Rev. H. G. McCoy officiating. Burial will be made at Oak Hill cemetery, under direction of the Boothby Funeral Home. Pall bearers will be past masters of the Masonic Lodge. The body will lie in state at the church from one until 2:30 o'clock, when the casket will be closed. The family has requested no flowers. Masonic and military rites will also be conducted.

Surviving are his wife, two sons, Prentiss of San Diego, Calif., and Richard of Tokyo, Japan, and four grandchildren.

Dr. Cleaves was born at Lake View, now Chicago, Ill., on July 11, 1879, the son of Benjamin L. Cleaves and Mary Bowden Ingalls. He was educated at Bridgton, Me., high school, and received his degree of medicine from the University of Michigan in 1902.

In June of 1906, he married Jane Delaplaine at Tipton, Iowa, and to this union two sons were born, Prentiss Bowden Jr., and Richard Delaplaine.

His early life was full of varied activity, as he largely made his own way, working in his spare time from when he was but a young boy. While attending school at Bridgton, he drove a wagon for a patent medicine salesman, and later was employed in the Bridgton newspaper print shop. During several summers, he worked as bell boy and porter, and as head waiter, cashier and bookkeeper in hotels in Maine and Michigan.

He also at one time was a final inspector in a woolen mill at

See **CLEAVES** on Back

OWA, THURSDAY, JUNE 7, 1951

# Cherokee Courier

TIMES PUBLISHING COMPANY  
and Dwight Clark

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Single Copy ..... 5c  
(Older than 30 days ..... 10c)

## CLEAVES

(Continued from Page One)

Bridgton, and worked as a book binder for a short while at Ann Arbor.

Following his graduation from the college of medicine at the University of Michigan, he served as an assistant there for a year, then came to Cherokee in 1903 to practice medicine, remaining here for the remainder of his life.

During World War I he entered the U.S. army, serving his country in front line surgery from Calais, France, to the Swiss border.

He was one of the original staff members of the Sioux Valley hospital. A past commander of the American Legion, he was also a member of the V.F.W., past president of the Cherokee Medical Society, director of the Cherokee Country club and past master and past grand warden of A. F. & A. M. He was a member of the Presbyterian church.

Dr. Cleaves was esteemed and respected by everyone, especially by his fellow practitioners, who knew him best. He enjoyed the confidence and highest regard of all, and the general public recognized his outstanding ability and trustworthiness.

It is impossible for the many close friends of Dr. Cleaves to be reconciled to his death. To them there is slight consolation that the end, when it came, was relatively brief, sparing him much suffering, for his interests were so many, his services so seemingly indispensable and his value to the community so long established as to constitute a loss difficult of computation. In his death, the community realized that it has lost a good friend, an upright citizen, a wise counselor and a kindly neighbor. In point of character, integrity and devotion to his profession, no country physician enjoyed a higher reputation or deserved it more. His friends and associates will miss him deeply and long hold him in affectionate remembrance. For his failings in this hour of sorrow, their sympathy is profound.



### 35. Guy Gillette, Dr. Prentiss Cleaves and Dick Cleaves

Guy Gillette is known as Cherokee County's most prominent citizen in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Born in 1879, he was a soldier, a lawyer, farmer, congressman, senator, and a United States leader in international affairs. Guy and Prentiss were contemporaries in Cherokee and became lifelong friends, and Dick and Prentiss knew Guy from childhood. After Dick returned from Martinique and Puerto Rico in 1933, he became Guy's congressional secretary until Guy launched his senatorial career in 1936. Aside from helping the Democrat Guy in his campaign, Dick and his friend Whip Walser promoted the reelection of Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1936 by projecting slogans on New York skyscrapers. The Gillette Park and the historical designation of the Gillette home in Cherokee acknowledge the contributions that Guy Gillette made to Iowa in agriculture; to the United States in opposing McCarthyism and supporting equal rights for women; and internationally for promoting international trade and the creation of Israel as a joint Jewish-Palestinian state. Aside from creating the opportunity for Dick to "drop his name" in getting released from detention in New York (after stowing away on the Coamo from Puerto Rico), the Editors believe that Guy probably assisted Dick to join the US-UK Trade Delegation to Brazil in 1945 and the Department of Commerce Trade Mission Japan where the family lived from 1948 to 1951 -- and where co-editor Richard P. Cleaves was born. Preceded in 1956 by the death of his wife Rose Freeman Gillette, Guy passed away in 1973 at 94 years old.

Guy Gillette, son Mark, and Dick 1930s



Guy Gillette Home at 111 N. 11<sup>th</sup> Street



Dick Cleaves and friend Whip Walser Promote Roosevelt's Re-Election in 1936



### 36. Eulogy to Richard Delaplane Cleaves

[Editor's note: Dick was born in Cherokee, Iowa on March 27, 1909. Margaret Grant Shurtleff Cleaves (Margo) was born on September 17, 1915 in Peoria, Illinois. Dick and Margo were married on March 1, 1941. Dick and Margo's other two children were Perri Allerton Rifenburgh (1941-1967) and Susan Hill McCarthy (1947-2005). Margo passed away on December 18, 1993, when she and Dick were living in South Pasadena, Florida. Dick Cleaves passed away in in Louisville, Kentucky on August 7, 1994, while living with son Richard Prentiss Cleaves. Below is the tribute written by Richard and Peter for Dick's memorial service on October 29, 1994.]

Dick Cleaves, our father, had a spirit of adventure. He dreamed of safaris and boat trips down the Amazon, and he realized many of his dreams. He was the first bicyclist to peddle down the Pan American Highway to Mexico City. He lived on a Caribbean beach (a beach comber, according to Mom) and was a physical education teacher at a private girl's school in France. He worked with General MacArthur in Japan, and retired to Spain where he and Mom loved to see the sun set of Gibraltar every night over drinks. Peter will always treasure memories of a photo safari to Kenya when Dick was approaching 80, and his thrill at tracking the jaguar and floating on a hot air balloon above the Serengeti Plain.

Dick would start telling stories about six p.m., and he had a full repertory. He spoke fluent French and Spanish, and he surprised more than a few visitors telling jokes in those languages. Even later in life, we would ask him to recount again when he and his brother Prent, back in Iowa, hoisted an outhouse onto their neighbor's roof as a Halloween prank; when he stowed away on a ship from Puerto Rico to New York; when his friend ordered breakfast in Brazil, only to be delivered riding horses; and when he kept his fraternity brothers in bathtub gin – and the bathtub was in the local constable's boarding house. Frequently some event would trigger his memory, and he would remember a new story, like getting caught by the Spanish police after a high-speed boat chase for smuggling cigarettes from Tangiers. With all of his escapades, he never spent a day in jail!

His approach to business reflected this spirit. His goals were high, and he took risks. He started out in the import-export field before WWII – after his plan to sail a boat from Boston and trade for African gold came to naught. His companies produced textiles and shirts in Japan, mined iron ore in Canada, and served Dogpatch fare at L'il Abner's Restaurants in Kentucky. In the end, he was a government bureaucrat in Washington which did not exactly please him, but it gave him a pension (and a secure retirement) and he never regretted having gone for the brass ring. It's just that the ring eluded him.

Dick was a superb athlete – football player in high school, a lacrosse All American at Dartmouth College, a Golden Gloves champ in Chicago, a skier, and well into his 80s, a tenacious tennis player. Last year his Florida doctor said, "When I looked at the test results, I expected to see a shriveled man barely standing. Imagine my astonishment when Dick told me that he came to my office from playing two sets of tennis!" Dick did not like to lose, and pity the folk who failed to take the game as seriously as he, whether poker or backgammon. Over the years more than one card table went flying.

Dick exuded optimism and loved to be with people. He kept friendships from college, from his residences abroad, and from every stage of his life. He and Margaret treasured their family and

their friends, many of whom who are here today, like Barbara and Flavel, and Bert and Gaham, Jean and Virginia, Louise, Venda, Bob and Ruth. Thank you.

Dick did not do such a good job explaining the birds and bees, but he introduced Perri, Susan, Rich and Peter to fishing, to self-confidence, and to the value of truthfulness. He cheered us on in our careers and sympathized with us in our travails. When we came to him for advice, his judgment was always sound. Though at times impulsive in his own affairs, he urged patience and hard work for things to work out okay. And they did.

Saying goodbye to our father Dick is not easy. But Dad – for your optimism, adventurousness, and your love for life – THANK YOU. “In our Father’s house, there *are* many mansions,” and with your own parents and with your beloved daughter and our sister Perri, may you and Mom rest *there* in peace.

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