Helen Thomas
Washington Bureau Chief, United Press International
Oklahoma Library Association 1988 Annual Conference
2nd General Session, March 11, 1988

I am honored to be here, I think. But I always leave Washington with fear and trepidation. Anything can happen and usually does. Today, the President tried to tighten the economic screws to get Panama's strong man out and there are rumors flying that he will be forced to leave soon, but so far he is holding out against the colossus of the north. The special prosecutor in the Iran/Contra scandal also has started what is expected to be a run of indictments, starting with the indictment today of former National Security Advisor Robert McFarland. I'm not here to give you the news notes, but he did plead guilty to charges of lying to Congress.

Well, the big story in the country, Politics is a cruel business and it will remain so until November, is the presidential race. Vice-President Bush has the Republican nomination in the bag, we think. As well he should have. He has campaigned for eight years. He's picked up all the IOUs. The Democratic ticket seems to be shaping up—Dukakis and Gore or vice versa Gore and Dukakis. And in all of this, Jesse Jackson seems to be a wild card. Jackson increased his appeal among the white voters by moving to the middle and toning down his rhetoric. He could be a key player in the Democratic race. He will go to the convention in Atlanta in July with a strong hand and a bunch of delegates. Senator Dole seems to have had it. Gephardt is on the ropes and the others have dropped like flies—Kemp yesterday and Gary Hart today.

Politics is a cruel business and is not for the fainthearted as we know. A woman was on the national ticket the last time around, but not this time. It was a breakthrough and it could happen again, but don't hold your breath. Well, pundit or not, I don't think anyone can call this election at this particular moment. There are some general observations surely. No candidate seems to be truly inspired. No candidate seems to be endowed with those great ideals of serving mankind or is that asking too much. So, let's elect a woman.

Kidding aside, the man who had more opportunities in our national life to light a candle rather than curse the darkness is Bush. His resume sparkles with responsibility, starting with the job he has now. He was CIA Director, UN Ambassador, two-term congressman, charge to China, but he left no tracks in any of these jobs—see no evil, hear no evil. His role or non-role in the Iran/Contra scandal is haunting. Secret dealings with a nation that they had tagged as terrorist went on for two years. I think Bush said he was at an Army-Navy game. I didn't know it lasted for two years. Anyway, Bush headed the anti-terrorist task force and like others in the administration, he kept pounding his fist in every speech, publicly saying we will never deal, never negotiate with terrorists. And no one can remember one word of opposition that he uttered publicly or privately.

All of the candidates bear close scrutiny as well they should. They'll cater to our regional prejudices. They'll tell us what we want to hear. They'll all wear sincere ties or bowties. Meanwhile, back at the ranch sits President Ronald Reagan. The last thing he wants is to be counted out. He abhors the label lame duck. He wants to go down with all flags flying. And then, there is the question of God's involvement in this campaign. Two evangelicals with messages, politicians from the pulpit, now a natural phenomenon in our national life. But, I often wonder, does God really care?

So it appears at this moment that

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Polls. The President has always had a high noon" image in the White House. Washington. Sometimes we were not sure who was at the helm—Ollie North or William Casey. For all who aspire to the role of leadership, credibility and accountability are the sine qua non that make the difference. We do hold them to a high ethic because they hold the public trust. Most things are forgiveable, but lies are not. Candidates should take heed of Johnny Carson's quip, "Only lie about the future." As the late Senator Aiken used to say in the Watergate era, "If you tell the truth, you don't have to remember what you said the last time."

Well, some of the dust has settled in the Iran/Contra scandal. The President has survived, although his credibility has suffered, his leadership has been called into question. The President had two roads to go—complicity, which would have been even more costly, or professing ignorance and he chose the latter as the better part of valor. The President had promised to shout from the rooftops once the devastating hearings were over and to tell his side of the story. Instead, we heard not a bang, but a whimper, with the President saying, "There is nothing I can say that will make the situation right." Well, his likability saved him from the fall and it was operation survival and it worked; an inaccessible president with a very protective staff. Any good PR person would have advised the same, but somewhere the truth was lost forever. The Congressional report says that the President failed to see that the laws of this land would be fully executed and that if he didn't know he should have and his only reaction according to his chief of staff was that he felt put upon.

We saw in the hearings Admiral Poindexter and Colonel North, two military men, both of whom had sworn on the Bible many many times to uphold the laws of this land, publicly boast that they had lied, deceived Congress and everyone else at the top strata, altered reports, shredded and burned official documents after a government inquiry was underway. They shredded the truth to confetti. North said that if he had his way he would divulge nothing to Congress. Poindexter said, "Our goal was to withhold information." This is a man who was touted as having a photographic mind who said, "I do not recall" 184 times. Fawn Hall, North's secretary told the Congress, "Sometimes, you have to rise above the written law." The scandal involved putting American
foreign policy in private hands outside the law, using international arms, profiteers, as go-betweens putting the arm on potentates, rich widows. Some 10 federal agencies, 13 foreign countries were involved. Well, the so-called prying White House Press Corps was the last to know. In the Watergate scandal, John Mitchell's memorable line was, "Watch what we do, not what we say." Last year, Reagan told Republican leaders, "The people like me, but they don't believe me." We are all quite sure that Reagan will pardon Poindexter and North sooner or later. Some fifty years ago, Justice Brandeis said that if the government becomes a lawbreaker, it breeds contempt for the law. He also said that a constant spotlight on public officials lessens the possibility of corruption. Well, great presidents stand up to be counted and they must always rise to unforeseen occasions. They also know that in terms of their responsibility, all roads lead to Rome. One man's courage is a majority.

The President now has what we would call a caretaker government and he is revving up for his last hurrah and in all of his speeches he says he is going to have a "socko third act" and a "triumphant fourth quarter". Nevertheless, the Reagan Revolution is winding down and he feels that he has miles to go before he sleeps. He has two obsessions—Star Wars and knocking off the Sandinista Government in Nicaragua. His chief of staff, Howard Baker, is steering him more toward the middle, more moderation in his dying months of office. His wife, Nancy, is playing a more influential role to make sure that they leave center stage gracefully. Well, Reagan believes that the only role of government is national security. But Lincoln said that government should do for people what they cannot do for themselves.

On the bright side, and there is one, the President has a great sense of humor and after the feud between his wife, Nancy, and former Chief of Staff Donald Regan ended with Regan's ouster (and it was real all right), Reagan said that the two decided to have lunch to patch things up and the only others invited were the foodtasters. And as the devastating hearings loomed, casting a deep shadow over his morning in the White House, Reagan said, "I've been shot, had colon cancer, skin cancer, prostate surgery-those were the good old days." And, when he was shot, he told his wife, "Honey, I forgot to duck." Well, the President has run the White House like a chairman of the board, delegating duties and not worrying about details. It's the style the people like.

Jimmy Carter was faulted for being so immersed in the nitty gritty, nuts and bolts, even to deciding who would use the White House tennis court next. Reagan loves being president and that's refreshing in a way. No sweat. He doesn't agonize over decisions. He sleeps at night. We might not. He's not like all those presidents who call the presidency the splendid misery or the loneliest job in the world.

Last year, we bowed to the foresight of the founding fathers 200 years ago. What could be a more worthy cause in our national life, especially at this moment, than the Constitution. In history, we have seen the vision of the founding fathers in terms of our freedoms and our rights and we have seen the Constitution used and abused. Most of all, we have seen it prevail and endure and, despite the problems, one can be a true believer in democracy. Winston Churchill called it the worst form of government except for all the others that have been invented. And sometimes, in sophisticated Washington, one might think that really isn't the way the game is played. But it has to be because that's the way it works—mutual respect, but never put politicians or, come to think of it, presidents on a pedestal. They don't belong there.

But, if the President has been beleaguered, you should read our mail. Letter writers are ten to one against reporters and we are called vultures, piranhas. Sam Donaldson gets the most mail. I must say that some letter writers do say, go to it, find out the truth, we do have a right to know. Yes, we do urge the President to hold more news conferences because, believe it or not, it is the only forum in our society where a president can be questioned and held accountable. The President had only three news conferences last year. I saw two presidents go down the drain because they could no longer convince, persuade or govern—Lyndon Johnson in the Vietnam War and Richard Nixon in the Watergate Scandal. But I can assure you there is no joy in the fall from grace of any president, shattering of all good faith in the country. On the other hand, there is some satisfaction in knowing that no man, not even a president, is above the law.

I am often asked how I prepare for a news conference. First, I go to the hairdresser. I can assure you, your family and your friends don't care what you ask; they want to know if you are well-groomed. We in the press believe in the people's right to know almost everything for a nation ignorant and free never was, never will be, a democracy. From my view from the bridge, secrecy is more harmful to a free society than any so-called news leak. We know that no dictatorship can operate or survive under a free press. The journalistic creed is to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable. And, of course, cynics that we are, we never believe a rumor until it is officially denied. I try to cover presidents as if they were human beings, tough sometimes, since they do enshrine themselves with imperial trappings.

Every president since George Washington has had his troubles with the press. In our press room at the White House, there is a photograph of FDR inscribed to reporters from "their devoted victim." Truman said, "When the press stops abusing me, I know I'm in the wrong pew." Kennedy said, "I'm reading more and enjoying it less." What LBJ said is unprintable. Once Nixon looked up when we reporters walked into the cabinet room and he said, "it is only coincidental that we are talking about pollution when the press walks in." Carter always seemed to be saying, "Lord, forgive them for they know not what they do." Reagan has had a few choice names for us like "those SOBs" on an open mike. Last year when the Sandinistas fired on a press helicopter near the Honduran border, Reagan quipped, "Well, there is some good in everyone."

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OSU Library Announces New Faculty Appointments

Ella Macleod Melik assumed duties in the Oklahoma State University Library as Assistant Reference Librarian (Library Instruction) on September 6 of this year. Ms. Melik holds the B.A. (1971) and the M.A. (1973) in French and German from the University of Glasgow, Scotland. She received the post-graduate Diploma in Library and Information Studies in 1975 from the Polytechnic of North London. She is currently enrolled in the Certificate of Advanced Studies Program in Library Science at the University of Oklahoma.

Prior to her recent appointment in the OSU Library, Ms. Melik served for two years as Public Services Librarian at the Metropolitan Library System in Oklahoma City. She had previously served as Assistant Librarian with the British Council, London, and as an Information Assistant with the British Broadcasting Corporation.

Jan E. Hester joined the faculty of the Oklahoma State University Library as Assistant Physical Sciences and Engineering Librarian on September 26. Ms. Hester received the B.A. from Southern Methodist University in 1986 and was awarded the M.S.L.S. from Catholic University in July of this year.

Pamela Scales is now a Librarian in McFarlin Library at the University of Tulsa. Pamela holds an MLIS from the University of Oklahoma and an MA in German from the University of Colorado where she has also been a German instructor. Prior to receiving her MLIS in 1987, Pamela was an intern in the University's Law Library and a copy cataloger in McFarlin Library.

OLA SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS AND DEADLINES

1988
December 4-11 Hanukkah
December 9 *Mail Ballots to Executive Secretary
December 16 Executive Board/Program Committee-Guthrie Historical Soc.
December 25 Christmas Day

1989
January 1 New Year's Day *Oklahoma Librarian Deadline
January 6 Sequoyah Children's Book Award Committee Meeting
January 7-12 ALA Midwinter, Washington, D.C.
January 15 *Submit Items for Bulk Mailing to be mailed January 1
January 20 Executive Board/Program Committee-Sheraton, OKC
February 8 Ash Wednesday
February 10 Sequoyah Children's/Young Adult Joint Committee Meeting
February 17 Executive Board/Program Committee-ODL
*Count Ballots for OLA Offices (Nom. Comm. Chairs)
February 21 Legislative Day
February 23-24 CUD/ADRT/OK Chap. ACRL Workshop, Tulsa
March 1 *Oklahoma Librarian Deadline
March 3-4 Oklahoma Reading Council Spring Conference
March 17 Executive Board/Program Committee-Hardesty, Tulsa
March 19 Palm Sunday
March 24 Good Friday
March 26 Easter
March 31 Reference Roundtable Workshop
April 1 Intellectual Freedom Committee Workshop
April 5-8 ALA/Assn. of College & Research Libraries, Cincinnati
April 9-15 National Library Week
April 20-27 Passover
April 21 Executive Board/Program Committee-ODL
May 1 *Oklahoma Librarian Deadline
May 3-6 Annual Conference--Sheraton, Oklahoma City
May 13 *Return Handbooks to Executive Secretary for Updating
May 26 Sequoyah Children's Book Award Committee Meeting
June 1 *Prepare Predecessor's Notebook for OLA Archives
June 16 Executive Board/Program Committee-Norman Public Library
June 24-29 ALA, Dallas

TAKE AN ACTIVE INTEREST IN OLA
I have many memories of covering the White House. There have been times to laugh, times to cry, and times to wonder. I remember in Plains, Georgia, when we were watching Carter play on the front porch with his grandchildren on Christmas Day. He was obviously playing to the camera. His son Jeff walked over to us and the cameraman said, “Don’t you feel sorry for your dad, the burdens, the press always watching?” “No, Jeff said, “He asked for it.” And, I remember riding on Air Force One when Kennedy came back and we asked him what would happen if the airplane crashed. “I know one thing,” he said, “Your name will be just a footnote.” And, I remember when Jackie came down in a restaurant in this town. 

I remember when Kennedy gave a dinner for Nobel Prize Winners and in his toast, he said, “Never have so many intellectuals gathered under one roof since Thomas Jefferson dined alone.” Scientist Linus Pauling, also a Nobel winner, picketed the White House that very day with a “Ban the Bomb” sign, went back to his hotel, changed into a tux and came back to the White House for dinner and I thought it was a splendid moment in democracy. I remember when Martin Luther King came through the receiving line at the White House and Kennedy told him, “I have a dream.” I remember when a rabbi spoke at the Martin Luther King rally at the Lincoln Memorial and he said, “The greatest sin of all in the Nazi era was silence.” And, I remember when Sarah Vaughan sang at the White House and then she danced with Johnson and Hubert Humphrey. Later she cheerfully told us, “Twenty-five years ago, I couldn’t sit down in a restaurant in this town.”

Stories about Johnson would fill a library. We were often invited to the ranch and once at dinner at the ranch, Johnson asked Bill Moyers, who had been a Baptist minister and was then his press secretary, to say grace. Moyers bent his head and began to pray. Johnson commanded, “Speak up Bill.” “I wasn’t talking to you, Mr. President,” Moyers replied. When Johnson was taken to Bethesda Naval Hospital outside of Washington for gall bladder surgery, the psychiatric ward had been transformed into a press room. “What happened to the patients?” Johnson asked Moyers. “We gave them all press cards,” Moyers replied. And I remember when someone said, “I don’t mind Carter being born again, but did he have to come back as himself?” And, I remember asking Billy Carter if he, too, had been born again and he said once is enough. Then there was my favorite, Miss Lillian, Carter’s mother, who said, “Sometimes when I look at my children, I wish I had remained a virgin.” And I remember interviewing Miss Lillian in Plains in 1976. She was fuming over a French woman correspondent who had belabored Carter’s promise never to lie who asked her what she meant by that and so forth and finally she said to Miss Lillian, “Do you lie?” Miss Lillian said, “Well, I might tell a little white lie.” “What do you mean by a little white lie?” the correspondent said. Miss Lillian said, “Do you remember when you came through that door and I told you how beautiful you looked? Well, that was a little white lie.” And on her 82nd birthday, she swept through our press room and asked her what great bit of wisdom she could impart to us from all of her 82 years of living. She said, “I learned never to open my mouth around Helen Thomas.” And I remember the first time I got to say thank you Mr. President. We were getting near to the end of a news conference and Kennedy was trying to work his way out of the question. He kept talking, hoping to find the answer. Finally, I got up and I said, “Thank you Mr. President.” He said, “Thank you Helen.” And I remember Martha Mitchell who said politics is a dirty business. And in the world of political celebrities, there was Henry Kissinger, the man with the mammoth ego. A woman ran up to Kissinger and said, “Oh, Dr. Kissinger, thank you for saving the world.” And he said, “You’re welcome.” And when he teased his secret service agents that he might be kidnapped by terrorists, they told him, “Don’t worry, we’ll never let them take you alive.”

We in the press know that we are not loved and we know that we don’t win popularity contests. We know that the pendulum swings with the times, often with the story. Sometimes we do wish that our role was better understood, but that might be asking too much of a public that wants to kill the messenger who brings the bad news. Still it behooves us all to be fair and responsible and I often think of newspapers as a shared pain. While we are not looking for trouble, we all must remain watchful. Jefferson said eternal vigilance is the price of liberty. Engraved in the mantel in the state dining room at the White House, below a magnificent portrait of Lincoln, is a prayer by John Adams which says, “May only good and wise men live here.” We all hope for that. Lincoln said, “Let the people know the facts and the country will be safe.” I believe that and I have found that people can handle the truth and they deserve no less. And I do believe that we should keep an eye on presidents who have life and death power over all humanity today to keep the people informed and democracy alive. Thank you.

Best Wishes for the New Year

ROUSE RECEIVES AWARD

Roscoe Rouse, Jr., Librarian Emeritus and University Historian, Oklahoma State University, on July 11, 1988, in New Orleans, received the Alumni Recognition Award from the University of Michigan School of Information and Library Studies.

The award was given for Rouse’s professional activities and the many contributions he has made to the field of library and information services. Library organization and management, for him, has covered a period of forty years, with all but three of these as head of an academic library. During a thirty-five year period he served as director of three major university libraries: Baylor, SUNY-Stony Brook and Oklahoma State University where, in each, his successful reputation can be attributed to initiative, a good sense of responsibility, hard work and the ability to cope with administrators, staff and the public served.
As a reference, the Oklahoma Association of School Library Media Specialists recently announced the winner of the first OASLMS Polly Clarke Award at the OASLMS Luncheon during the Encyclo-Media Workshop in September.

Eight library media specialists were nominated for the award, which is designed to identify and reward librarians who practice cooperative planning and teaching. Nominees were judged on the basis of evidence of a well-balanced library program in the areas of curriculum support, instruction and administration of the library program, and professional involvement in the library media field. Those honored were: Sue Langley, Broken Bow Middle School; Colleen Arnold, Longfellow Junior High School, Enid; Sara Copeland, Wright City School; Bobbie Parrott, Parkview Elementary School, Oklahoma City; Vilene Davis, Pocola High School; Donna Richey, Westmore High School, Moore; and Vicki Stewart, Bartlesville Schools.

The OASLMS Polly Clarke Award was named to honor longtime Northeastern State University library science educator Polly Clarke. The winner of this first award was Shan Glandon, library media specialist at Jenks West Elementary School.

Her principal says of the Polly Clarke award winner, “I am of the opinion that she demonstrates an exemplary library media program that deserves recognition, not only on the state level, but also on the national level.” A classroom teacher says of her, “Never give her an idea of a unit on which you would like her help unless you’re sure you want to do it because she will have it organized and ready for you before you can turn around.”

In addition to administering a media center which serves 630 students, she has in just three years in Oklahoma, developed a scope and sequence for information skills at her school, sponsored a yearly Book Fair, and prepared a constitution project and an election project. She was a presenter at Encyclo-Media in 1987 and 1988. Shan developed two episodes of the OETA television program “At Home With an Oklahoma Author”, and she has published articles in the School Library Media Activities Monthly and School Library Journal. Prior to coming to Oklahoma in 1986, Shan was a member of the New York Library Association and vice-president/president-elect of the Buffalo School Library Association.

New York’s loss has been Oklahoma’s gain. Polly Clarke would be pleased to see the first annual award in her honor go to Shan Glandon.
This column identifies government publications that are of special importance to librarians, i.e., those that discuss library problems, reference works, etc. Three publications may be available in any of the U.S. or Oklahoma depository libraries throughout the state or may be borrowed on interlibrary loan. U.S. documents that are for sale may be ordered from the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402. For State of Oklahoma publications, you must contact the issuing agency. Key: "Sudocs" is U.S. Superintendent of Documents; "OPC" is the Oklahoma Publications Clearinghouse. Annnotations for State of Oklahoma publications are written by Vicki Sullivan, OPC.


Basic guide on how to search for technical reports in five U.S. government technical literature report indexes, the Government Reports Announcements and Index, EPA Publications Bibliography, Energy Research Abstracts, Scientific and Technical Aerospace Reports, and Monthly Catalog of U.S. Government Publications. Although written for librarians and library staff members, it is general enough that the public will also find it useful. Includes appendices of sample pages from the indexes.


Major study of the transformation of Federal information from paper formats to machine-readable formats, and how that shift will affect users and distributors of Federal information. Libraries in general, and the depository libraries for the Depository Library Program in particular, need to become familiar with this report. It is certain to have an impact on all types of libraries. It also studies the Freedom of Information Act in the context of electronic publishing.


Intended as an annual publication, this directory is a comprehensive listing of Oklahoma manufacturers, processors, and their products. Similar in arrangement to the index volume of Standard & Poor's Register, it contains three major sections: Alphabetical Section of firms; Geographical Section of firms; Industrial Section of firms. The geographical section is the most detailed, providing firm name, address and telephone number, as well as year established and market served. Also provided are parent firm name and location, managing officer, employment total, and S.I.C. No.-product description. A statistical summary of major products manufactured arranged by S.I.C. number of manufacturer and a product index to the Industrial section complete this volume.


This publication provides a comprehensive list of statewide election results from statehood to present. In addition, it provides a complete index of candidates who have sought office at statewide elections in Oklahoma.
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