

NECROLOGY

(From Corb Sarchet, Ponca City, Okla.)

COL. GEORGE L. MILLER

A man who could and did meet every occasion as it arose, who responded quickly to any crisis, was the late Col. George L. Miller of the 101 Ranch near Ponca City, whose death occurred early in February in an automobile accident while he was driving from Ponca City to the ranch. So many things happened so continuously at the ranch, a center of so many activities, that it was impossible for George L. Miller to anticipate all of them, and he formed the habit of taking them one at a time as they came and solving each situation quickly, whatever it might be. Perhaps no man could excel him in this. In business and social circles he was busy all the time and had no difficulty whatever switching from one to the other, or from one line of business to another.

Miller was a native of Kansas, born at Baxter Springs, when that town was the end of the railroad. It was the shipping point of his father, Col. George W. Miller, who at that time had a ranch in extreme northeastern Oklahoma, near the present site of the city of Miami. The Millers were native Kentuckians, the father having come westward following the Civil war. George L. Miller always laughingly said: "I am a southern gentleman; born in southern Kansas."

George L. Miller bore the name of his father and that of Col. Lee Kokernut, prominent Texas cattleman of 50 years ago, and partner of the elder Miller in bringing southern cattle up across the old Indian Territory to the ranch near Baxter Springs. His full name was George Lee Kokernut Miller, but the Kokernut he dropped many years ago. Col. George W. Miller, the father, died about 25 years ago, and the mother about 15 years ago. It was only 18 months ago that Col. Joe C. Miller, eldest brother of the present ranch owners, was killed by monoxide gas poisoning.

The only remaining of the famous trio of brothers is Col. Zack T. Miller, although there are two sons of the late Col. Joe Miller, who have been trained by George L. Miller to step into his shoes and take care of the ranch management. They are George W. Miller, jr., and Joe C. Miller, jr. They have been associated with George L. Miller for several years in the ranch management.

Formed Pioneer Oil Firm

George L. Miller had been well known in the oil industry in this section for many years. He organized the pioneer company here, known as the 101 Ranch Oil Company, 20 years ago, and induced Lew Wentz, E. W. Marland, John McCaskey and others to locate here, where they made their immense fortunes. Miller has been associated with them and others of the big producers during the intervening years and was very successful in his operations. In addition to contracting recently to drill two wildcat tests in Texas, he was drilling two in the Wichita, Kan., area, one in the proven field and another farther west in the wildcat territory. For years he has been a persistent wildcatter, working alone as a rule.

Only recently Miller closed the sale of the former Cosden ranch at Okeechobee, Florida, together with ten thousand head of cattle. They

took the ranch over about fifteen months ago, following the shipment of 36,000 head of Florida cattle earlier in 1927, the largest cattle movement in a quarter of a century.

With the death of Col. Joe C. Miller in October, 1927, the management of the ranch wild west show, which was put back on the road five years ago, fell to George L. Miller and he was on the road with the show during the season of 1928, giving it the same business direction that has always marked his handling of ranch properties and problems. He had been getting ready to put the show out again in April of this year as usual.

Proud of Ranch Name

George L. Miller was extremely jealous of the 101 Ranch and the name of the Miller brothers. His greatest desire was that the ranch should be a genuinely outstanding institution, successfully operated, with a name that in itself should be a guarantee. This was his pride and frequently his boast. This was recently demonstrated again. The Millers had sold the ranch show, with every detail agreed upon, and had assembled to sign the contract. At the last moment the purchasers demanded that they be permitted to use the name of the Miller brothers on stock certificates that would be sold to finance the corporation. Immediately George L. Miller, although very anxious to sell the show so that he could devote his time to ranch and oil affairs, called off the deal, declaring the name of the Miller brothers could not be used in any such financing scheme.

Miller was active and prominent in Ponca City affairs. A director of the Chamber of Commerce for ten years, member of Rotary club, thirty-second degree Mason, Shriner and lifelong Elk. He participated in every movement for the advancement of this community and was an unusually liberal subscriber to community funds. Ponca City had no more prominent citizen, nor none more popular. He was known as one of Oklahoma's keenest business men, a square shooter always, loyal in his friendships.

The 101 Ranch is ever a busy place and its White House the center of entertainment for this section of the country. Miller was known as a prince of entertainers, and as a result everybody came to the 101 Ranch. This has included many celebrities from over the world, all of whom became warm friends of the ranchman. They could not have helped it, even if they had desired to do so.

Held Ranch Intact

It was always Miller's wish that the big 101 Ranch be held intact. He has had the most to do in assembling such an immense acreage under fence, and exerted every effort to hold it together. He was the business head, the financial director, the one who met every problem.

When his oldest brother, Col. Joe C. Miller, was killed in October, 1927, by monoxide gas poisoning, George L. Miller assembled the others in business conference and outlined the policy whereby the ranch would be held intact. Immediately he started the training of his two nephews, George W. and Joe C. Jr., so that they could follow in his footsteps whenever it might be necessary and continue his policies. Frequently he spoke of the splendid manner in which the younger men had accepted responsibility and were making good. It was a source of great pride to him. These two and Col. Zack T. Miller, the only remaining brother of the famous trio, must now take over the managerial reins.

No man in all Oklahoma had so befriended the Indians as had George

L. Miller and it always hurt him to have anyone question his motives in dealing with members of the Ponca, Otoe and other tribes. He has fed them when they were hungry and had nowhere to eat; nursed them when they were sick; provided them with the necessities of life for themselves and children; clothed the older members of the Ponca tribe on many an occasion; paid the burial expenses when they died; performed the obsequies at their funerals, remembering even the slightest details that might lessen the mournings of friends; advised them in business and domestic transactions; watched over them like a father.

Preached Indian's Funeral

George L. Miller had even preached the funeral sermons, on occasions when older Indians died. On one occasion he went to the Indian cemetery, six miles southwest of Ponca City, knowing that one of the old tribesmen had died and that his funeral was in progress at the grave. Always have the Millers seen that a basket of fruit was taken to the cemetery on such occasions, to place on top of the covered grave, as per long Indian custom. Frequently this service was performed by George L. Miller personally. On this occasion the Indians were short of an orator, to deliver a funeral address, and they called on Miller. Again he was equal to the occasion, speaking for about half an hour on the good qualities of the deceased warrior.

The rule is that the Indians have believed in George L. Miller implicitly. He had made many business deals with them. When several years ago the federal government began investigating these deals, it was said that many attempts were made to influence Indians against Miller, even being offered their lands back, which Miller had bought, if they would turn against him. Whether this is true is not known.

The understanding remains, however, that after one young Indian had turned against Miller, that he came home and was so remorse stricken that he killed himself. Miller had knowledge of this act on the part of the young Indian, but always forbade its use in his behalf or its publication in the papers.

His Soul in Ranch

Miller's untiring aim was that the 101 Ranch should be everything prominent that was claimed for it. To him 101 Ranch meant dignity and stability. It has been known for many years as one of Ponca City's chiefest assets, and Miller delighted in this fact. He was averse to criticism of the ranch and when one citizen whom he had known a long time, declared that the ranch and wild west show were getting too much publicity, Miller was grieved and disappointed, taking the statement to heart, for to him the ranch was his life work.

George L. Miller numbered many of the celebrities of America as his personal friends—Irvine Cobb, Rex Beach, Mrs. Mary Roberts Rinehart, Frazier Hunt, Art Goebel, Mrs. Randolph Hearst, Ray Long, Roy Howard, Tom Mix, Will Rogers, Will Irwin, Commander Byrd—a list that could be prolonged indefinitely.

Col. Art Goebel, the trans-Pacific flier, owes his title of "Colonel" to George L. Miller. When Goebel returned from his ocean trip he visited Oklahoma with his "Woolaroc" and George L. Miller accompanied him on several flights about the state, including one to Ponca City. He was here a guest over night of Miller at the ranch "White House."

"If Lindbergh has a military title," said Miller, "I can't see why Goebel should not have one, too." Miller immediately got in touch with

Walter Harrison newspaper man of Oklahoma City, with the suggestion that Harrison see the Governor and have him make Goebel a colonel on his military staff. Miller's suggestion was carried out and Goebel was so designated.

It was Mr. Miller's intention all the time to build up the 101 Ranch to its highest efficiency, making it most modern in every way. He had succeeded in completely electrifying it, building a power plant in connection with an ice manufacturing plant, a meat packing house and an oil refinery, all almost under the same roof, although distinctly separate.

Had Big Livestock Program

Every effort of Mr. Miller during the past year had been to turn the big ranch into special livestock lines, growing sufficient feed to take care of them, particularly beef cattle and hogs. In 1928 Miller let it be known that he would expect a pig crop of 10,000 during that year and of 20,000 this year. The 1928 crop met his expectation, and only recently he said that 1929 would also measure up to his program. It was his intention to supply ample raw material in pigs and cattle for the ranch packing plant.

George L. Miller will be greatly missed by the two hundred or more ranch employees and those also of the show. He was known as a just boss, but one who expected each employee to perform the service to which he was assigned. For several years Mr. Miller conducted at the ranch a club of his own making, patterned after Rotary, with the heads of all ranch departments as members. He always attended the meetings in person. He said they were productive of good.

All places of business closed in Ponca City during the funeral ceremonies for George L. Miller, and all citizens turned out to do him reverence. Longtime friends vied with each other in recalling and extolling his many virtues. A movement is on foot now to erect a monument in his memory and also a "cowboy" monument of him is completed for the Marland group to accompany the Pioneer Woman statue. Thousands of telegrams were received at the ranch from all over the world when the news went forth that George L. Miller was dead. Two weeks after his death the Ponca Indians held a post-funeral ceremony for him, as is the custom of that tribe.

Unusually interesting among the telegrams received at the ranch, following the death of George L. Miller, was one from a party of Arabs, living in New York City at the present time, but who have been an attraction with the ranch wild west show for several seasons. This wire says:

"When one of our people pass, we commend him to Allah and then go into the desert to mourn. There is no desert in New York or vicinity, so we have commended the spirit of Mr. Miller to Allah and are meeting to-night to mourn for him."

Another unusual communication is from Henry Knows-his-country, a Ponca Indian. "It is too far for me to come to George's funeral. When my mother died, not many people came. But George was there. No preacher came, but George spoke for her better than any preacher could."

This recalls an incident of less than a year ago. George L. Miller was at home at the ranch on a visit from the show. A young Ponca Indian died, and as had been their custom the Poncas called on the Millers for suitable clothing in which to bury him. George L. Miller had noticed that his evening dress suit was becoming worn and had just bought a new one. He decided to turn the old one to the Indians for the burial

garment, someone at the ranch put the new one out instead, and when Miller learned the mistake, it was too late.

The ranch management now falls upon Col. Zack Miller, sole survivor of the famous trio of Miller brothers, and his two nephews, George W. Miller, Jr., and Joseph C. Miller, Jr., both sons of the late Col. Joe C. Miller.

JUDGE HARRY D. HENRY

HARRY D. HENRY, descended from the Henry family of Virginia of which Patrick Henry was a member, born at Bethpage, Sumner County, Tennessee, November 26, 1876 and died January 8, 1929. His father was Mark S. Henry, born in Tennessee October 8, 1842, and died April 5, 1919, at Bethpage, Tennessee, where both the father and son are buried. His mother Louise Matilda Henry was born February 20, 1842 and died November 29, 1917. William Henry, his grandfather, was born in Virginia, whence he moved to Tennessee, and was the father of five children, Mark S., John F., Moses S., William B., Mrs. Anna W. Wilks, of Garden City, Kansas, and Mrs. Cloe Harper, of Scottsville, Kentucky. Harry D. Henry in his youth lived on a farm, attending common schools, and afterwards attended the Southern Normal School at Bowling Green, Kentucky, where he studied law. He was admitted to the bar at Gallatin, Sumner County, Tennessee, in 1901; moved to Mangum, Oklahoma Territory, in the early spring of 1902, and became assistant county attorney in July of that year, in which capacity he served until the erection of the State on November 16, 1907, when he became county attorney of said county, to-wit: Greer County, having been elected at the election for the adoption of the constitution. He held that office for two terms, until January, 1915. In 1918 he was elected to the state legislature, serving in that capacity during the regular session of the legislature begun in 1919. After its adjournment he resigned to accept the office of County Judge, which office he held until January, 1921, when he retired to the practice of the law. He served as a special justice of the Supreme Court in 1928, and was elected as a member of the state senate at the regular election held in 1928 but died before the legislature convened in regular session. Some of his ancestors participated on the side of the colonists in the War of the Revolution. His grandfather, crossed the Appalachian Mountains into Tennessee where he took up land in the new state. His father was a captain in the Confederate Army, later organizing a regiment of Cavalry. On January 26, 1910, he was married to Miss Jeannette B. Keeling, of Caldwell, Kansas, who with one child, Donald M. Henry, born October 17, 1913, survive him. He was a member of the Methodist Church, an Elk and a Democrat.

OLLIE S. WILSON

OLLIE S. WILSON, 52 years old, vice-president of the Walker-Wilson-Tyler Printing Co., 504 West Grand avenue, died in a city hospital early Wednesday night May 16, 1929 of peritonitis.

Wilson for many years had been prominent in city politics and at one time was city commissioner of public works. He has been connected



GEORGE B. KEELER

with the printing firm for the last four years. He is survived by his wife, who lives at 2621 West Fifteenth street; one daughter, Edith Hildeman, 115 East Sixth street, and also has a sister and mother living at McAlester.

GEORGE B. KEELER

GEORGE B. KEELER, the subject of this sketch, was born in Hennepin, Illinois, February 7, 1850. He died January 20, 1929.

The burial services were held by J. C. Charlton, Tuesday afternoon, January 23. The body was placed in the White Rose mausoleum. The Neekamps in charge.

Mr. Keeler's death followed a short confinement, although he had been in ill health for some time. Little hope for his recovery had been held for several days before his passing.

Mr. Keeler had not been actively engaged in business for several years.

Survivors of the city builder include three of his nine children. They are, in addition to Fred Keeler, Frank and Maude. Mrs. A. D. Morton of Tulsa and Bruce Cass of Los Angeles, Cal., a daughter and son of Keeler's second wife, also survive as do two brothers, Warren of Portland, Ore., and Charles of New Mexico; two sisters, Mrs. Mattie Barns and Mrs. Addie Coe, both of Los Angeles, and eight grandchildren, Mrs. Kenneth Adams, Billie Keeler and George Keeler of Bartlesville, Evelyn Keeler of Los Angeles, Alberta and Dixie Keeler of San Antonio and George and Frank Hinkle of Tulsa.

Mr. Keeler came to this section in October, 1871, when the only settlement between Coffeyville, Kan., and the cow camp on the old Chisholm trail at Sapulpa was the Osage Indian agency near Silver lake, south of the city.

Mr. Keeler often declared that Indians, bears, wolves, panthers and wild cats were practically the only inhabitants of the present site of Bartlesville when he arrived here October 13, 1871. Cherokees, Delawares and Osages roamed the vicinity.

Mr. Keeler had been hired by E. P. Choteau, son of Edwin Choteau, president of the American Fur Company at St. Louis, to take charge of the trading post at the Osage agency near Silver lake. Keeler had met Choteau in Coffeyville where Keeler had been working for a railroad company. Choteau hired Keeler for \$75 per month.

Mr. Keeler, the late William Johnstone and Jake Bartles, founded a trading post on the north bank of the Caney River. The location was chosen because at this point was the best ford on the Caney River in this vicinity. Cyp Tayrien had established a small trading store in what is now the Bartlesville tourist park before the advent of Bartles, Johnstone and Keeler.

Later, in August, 1884, when Keeler was 34 and Johnstone 24, the two opened their own store on the south side of the river, opposite the Bartles mill, as the other establishment was known.

They erected the first business building on the present site of Bartlesville. It stood on Delaware avenue south of the old Caney River ford. Later Keeler erected the stone store building on the northwest corner of Second street and Johnstone avenue and conducted a mercantile establishment there for more than 15 years.

Johnstone and Keeler's business at the original Delaware avenue site

flourished and during the administration of Grover Cleveland they succeeded in obtaining the appointment of a postmaster from the south side of the river, establishing a post office in their store, calling the settlement Bartlesville. In 1899 the first railroad was built and they were successful in obtaining a depot located on the south side of the river. The two men had surveyed 40 acres and laid the tract out in lots with alleys and streets before the arrival of the railroad.

Keeler was one of the founders of the First National Bank of Bartlesville and for years acted as a vice-president and director. He aided in financing the first of the larger buildings in the city, the present home of the First National.

Through his initiative the first oil in Oklahoma was drilled in Bartlesville. In 1893, Keeler obtained a lease on 13 sections of land and in 1897 the Cudahy Oil company drilled the first oil well in the state on Keeler's lease, the present site of Johnstone park.

The pioneer also played an active part in the completion of the Santa Fe railroad through Bartlesville. Up to 1899, the Santa Fe had graded a road bed to near Bartlesville but was unable to continue construction. Through Keeler's aid the road was financed.

Keeler's memory for dates and details of his early Indian Territory experiences everywhere was considered unusual.

He recalled that the Indians who traded at the Osage agency, which he began managing at the age of 22, were paid \$5 every six months and they had come to the agency to receive their money. This resulted in a small settlement being established about the store. The young manager early learned that the most attractive articles of merchandise for his customers were beads made in Germany and known as "hair pipe." These were small round beads. Then there was "wampum," a longer bead. Another salable article was a Michigan product similar to the mackinaw. This was popular with all ages of Indians. Indian women never came to the store, their purchases being made by the bucks. Purchases for the squaws were largely of a material known as "strouding" and made in France. The women made skirts out of this material by winding it about their bodies. A unique ceremony usually conducted on payment days at the agency was not designated by any particular name but consisted of preparing the young bucks for the wearing of ear-bobs. They were caught and tied down and their ears punched. Sticks were put into the holes and left there until the place healed.

Each fall, after the trade at the agency store slackened, Mr. Keeler would take a guide and a wagon train of from 20 to 30 wagons and invade the Indian country farther to the west to trade. He was one of the most successful fur traders of his time. The caravan never was driven home by the severity of the winter. Buffalo robes and furs were bought and traded for with beads and blankets as the principal exchange. The wagon train came home each spring loaded with the furs and hides and these were sent to the nearest railroad for shipment to the St. Louis fur market. Mr. Keeler's trading territory was to the west line of what is now Oklahoma. Other traders for the American Fur company traded in the territory beyond that line. He said that he purchased otter, beaver, muskrat, fox, deer hides and buffalo robes on these trips. In his later years Mr. Keeler told some thrilling stories of his escapes from raiding Indians during his trips into their country. He told of his first sight of the "Main Trail" through western Oklahoma which had been used for countless years by the migrating buffalo. It was a half mile wide and

worn to a depth of three feet below the surrounding prairie. "My first sight of a buffalo herd," he said, "was one I shall never forget. It looked like the whole earth was moving. Thousands of animals closely packed on the 'Main Trail' were moving south from Canada."

The next year after Mr. Keeler arrived in this county the Osage nation was surveyed and it was found that the agency was located in Cherokee country. It was moved to Pawhuska and Mr. Keeler worked there for two years until his employer was killed by an outlaw.

In April of 1872, Keeler witnessed the first Osage Indian payment at Pawhuska.

Mr. Keeler married Miss Josie Gilstrap in August, 1872. She lived near the agency and he became acquainted with her there. Mrs. Keeler died in July, 1893 and in 1895 he married Mrs. Josephine Cass, Vinita, sister of Mrs. Ellen Howard Miller of this city. His first wife was related to his second wife and both were of Cherokee blood. He, himself, had been adopted into the Cherokee Nation in 1872 and was also adopted into the Osage tribe. To the Osages he was known as "Little Horse," or in their tongue, Ki-wah-Shin-Ka. He had learned to speak the Osage language and could converse freely with the full bloods. Only recently Chief Baconrind and the latter's son paid Mr. Keeler a visit at the hotel and the two older men enjoyed a two hour chat in the Osage tongue while the chief's son, a well educated young man, sat by, not understanding a word which was being spoken. Mr. Keeler was also one of the few white men who have become adept in the sign language understood by practically all American Indians.