

Zane Grey follower keeps interest alive

United Press International
KEENE — Dr. Joe L. Wheeler hooked on Zane Grey. His purple calling card carries the legend, "A Specialist in Zane Grey," and gets its color from the "Riders of the Purple Sage," the best known of Grey's 109 Western novels.

Wheeler's home in Keene, a small town 40 miles south of Fort Worth, houses the largest collection of Zane Grey books in the world.

Wheeler, 46, teaches English and directs the cultural affairs department at Southwestern Adventist College.

He is recognized as the foremost authority on the times and works of Zane Grey.

Since Wheeler picked Grey as the topic for his doctorate at Vanderbilt, he has read about every word Grey wrote — more than 2 million words in 109 books, letters and articles from 1903 until his death in 1939.

For his forthcoming biography on Grey, Wheeler has done 11 years of research. He is one of the growing legions of fans

around the world who buy Zane Grey volumes at the rate of 2 million every year.

Zane Grey books outsell every book except the Bible and McGuffey's readers. They are in the book racks of almost every major airport and railway station in the world. Even in impoverished Third World countries, adolescents avidly form Zane Grey exchange libraries and dream one day of traveling to Texas, Wyoming and Kansas.

"No other popular writer mirrored the age in which he lived so powerfully and so eloquently as did Zane Grey," Wheeler said. "Zane Grey is the logical successor to James Fenimore Cooper as the last chronicler of the frontier which began vanishing at the time Grey began to write."

Fans in Australia say Grey loved and visited their country so often because he believed it was where the frontier ended, Wheeler said.

"Zane Grey's American West, I suppose, has elements of escapism we all look for and that may account for his popularity

not only here, but throughout the world," Wheeler said. "We lead lives where things are so predictable. His books take us to a world in which man is not so circumscribed by a complex society, and is able to accomplish heroic things."

Wheeler said Grey was a loner, a difficult person to get along with and the possessor of an enormous ego.

"But that ego helped him achieve what he did," Wheeler said. "From his childhood he knew he was going to be the greatest author in the world. Once he quarreled with a man and told him, 'Some day you are going to be glad to admit you knew Zane Grey.' He made millions, but he blew most of it away on his other passion, fishing."

Wheeler said Grey's wife, Dolly, stabilized the couple's life. Grey is reported to have earned about \$37 million, but he was so careless with money that, if it had not been for his wife, the couple would have starved during the Depression.

UT hopes winery will uncork revenue

United Press International
AUSTIN — University of Texas officials say a plan to establish a commercial winery operation for the school's west Texas vineyards is still aging.

But they are confident Texans will be partaking of university vines by 1984 and still hold hopes a special bottling from this year's crop can be pulled off to commemorate the university's centennial.

Last spring the UT Board of Regents authorized the start of negotiations with prospective winery developers for the establishment of a medium-sized commercial winery in west Texas on state-granted land.

UT Lands research director Charles McKinney in Midland last week estimated it will be another two months before an agreement is finalized.

"We feel comfortable that we will reach an agreement in time to handle the 1984 crop," McKinney said. "An agree-

ment does need to be reached soon. We're getting closer and closer."

The school has spent more than \$1 million since an experimental grape growing project was established near Van Horn in Culberson County and Bakersfield in Pecos County.

Kinney said the negotiations are at a stage which precludes him from identifying any of the prospective bidders. However, earlier published reports have indicated the university is engaged in intense negotiations with a subsidiary of Joseph E. Seagrams and a group of Texas investors.

Meanwhile, the university's grape growing experiment continues to bear bountiful fruit. Begun in 1975 and financed by \$1 million in school money since then, the university vineyards include experimental tracts near Van Horn and a 340-acre commercial vineyard near Bakers-

field, about 90 miles south of Midland.

McKinney estimates this year's harvest from the commercial vineyard at about 300 tons.

He said plans for the 1983 harvest include committing some of the grapes to experimental use to determine quality. The plan for a special bottling to commemorate the UT centennial may be completed through arrangements with some of the dozen wineries now in the state, McKinney said.

But estimates place the 1984 crop at about 1,000 tons and the university is intent on having a winery operation set up to handle the crush of grapes, he said.

However, McKinney said working out the details that go into an agreement between a winery and a vineyard is much like the very process of producing fine wine — delicate.

"It's a complex issue of trying to pull the interests of

the winery and the vineyard together," McKinney said. "It's not like just going down and buying a car. It just takes time."

"You don't do it in a day," McKinney said. "Some of the complex issues in such an arrangement include a determination of grape quality and the fact that the new winery will be unusual in that it will be privately owned by the winery, but on university land."

But McKinney is convinced the snags will be worked out and he says interest in winery developers has been high.

"There is a certain amount of novelty to it, you know, wine from Texas," he said. "But there is a genuine interest once they taste the wine."

UT has been making at its experimental wine facility since 1978 and also is engaged in a cooperative search project with Texas Tech in Lubbock.



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General meeting to announce spring semester dance class schedules.
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Oklahoma town may die

Postmaster can't retire

United Press International
DAISY, Okla. — Fletcher Harris Jr. is concerned the U.S. Post Office will close when his mother retires and with it might go the town or what is left of it.

Teresa Harris, who is 77, is Daisy's postmaster, succeeding her husband, who had the same job from 1928 until 1968.

Teresa Harris is not ready to hang it up because she too fears

they might shut down the old post office, the only public building in Daisy. The town's population has dwindled from 250 in the 1920s to only 24 now.

"I had in my mind to retire next summer because I'm getting old," Mrs. Harris said. "But I haven't so far because no one else has been willing to take over. When my husband retired, nobody wanted the job and the

post office inspector from Muskogee told me 'Teresa, why don't you take charge until we can find someone?' I just hung on because they couldn't find anyone."

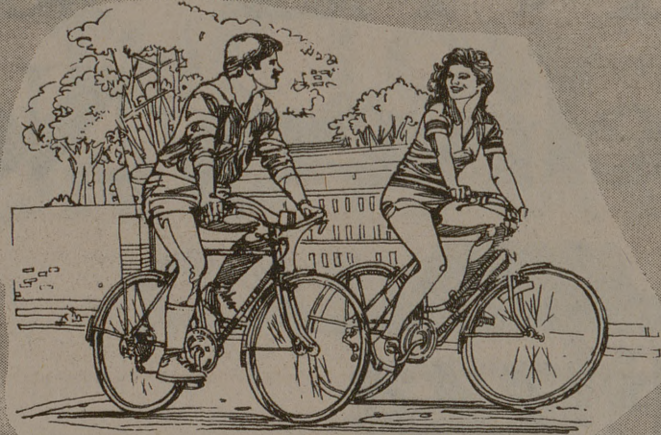
Her son does not want the post office to disappear from Daisy where he was born 56 years ago and where he continues to live because it is a family legacy.

Harris now teaches elementary school in nearby Stringtown. He had to go to Stringtown after county officials closed the only school in Daisy because of falling enrollment.

Daisy is 20 miles east of Stringtown in southeastern Oklahoma near the Indian Turnpike.

"My mother is now 77 and might be the oldest postmaster in the world, but I'm not willing to bet on it," Harris said. "I know she is the oldest postmaster in Oklahoma."

"The post office is just a 12 feet by 16 feet. It was built in 1968. Before that it was a store which my father ran. My mother sells postage stamps, makes out money orders, and just a one-person show. The town is pretty much gone. The only thing left, only the post office



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