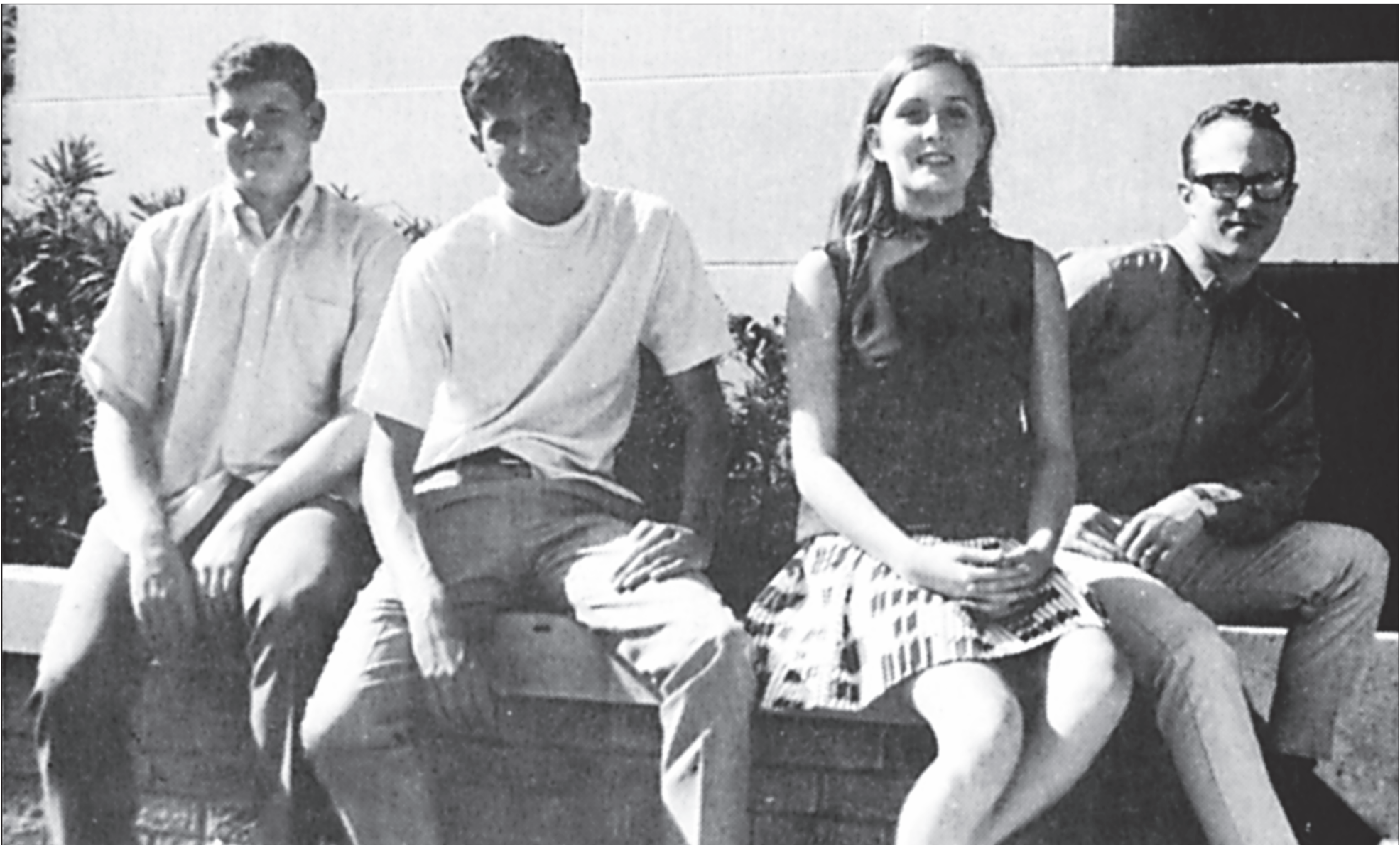


# HISTORY & FOLKLORE



From Illustrated Press of Liberty County, Thursday, April 30, 1970 –

Liberty High School district winners include Bruce Weathersby, Mike Arnold, Cynthia Smith and Jerry Youngblood in the literary meet. Sue Mabry not shown.

The Panther track team won the district title and sent numerous boys to regional. Of those going to regional, three will go onto state, having won first places: David Vyoral in discus (picture below), Cynthia Smith in typing and Jerry Youngblood in science.

From Texas Illustrated, March 19, 1996 –

# Telephone Folklore

by Kevin Ladd

Longtime telephone customers from this area will recall the days when names like “Federal” and “Clinton” defined who we were in terms of the Southwestern Bell Telephone Company. These were the

names respectively assigned to the Liberty and Dayton telephone exchanges. Check your pulse before you read this next statement: All of this came into being 40 years ago.

Southwestern Bell de-

cided to upgrade the antiquated phone system in the two cities in 1956. Folks in both cities still went through the operator and functioned with numbers like 8 (the Rizzo Brothers), 273 (Liberty Supply Company), and 2931 (Tom V. Collins in Dayton). If you wanted to call Mobil Distributor M.E. Shelton at home, his number was a rather complicated 494-W.

The telephone company ultimately decided to combine the Liberty and Dayton exchanges, also consolidating the two places into one telephone directory. The upgrade of the entire service area required the construction of a new “dial building” on Fannin Street in Liberty and numerous other improvements outside my limited realm of technical expertise. The price tag was around a million dollars.

The improvements also required the assignment of new so-called “2-5” telephone numbers, which meant two letters and five numbers. Under this system the Liberty exchange was christened “Federal” and Dayton became known as “Clinton.” Only the first two letters in the exchange name were used, which meant a Liberty number would be referred to as FE6-1111. The last four numbers varied from house to house. Dayton numbers were known as CL8-1111. Over a period of time, the letters were somehow dropped and replaced by numbers, such as 336 and



258.

There are a couple of good stories associated with all of this. Over in Houston a number of different telephone exchanges cropped up, such as MI (Mission), CA (Capital), and ME (Melrose). Justin Wilson used to tell about a guy from Houston who called a Cajun back in some section of Southwest Louisiana. The guy he called was not there, and so another fellow answered the phone and took a message. The caller said, “Just tell him that John Smith from Houston, Texas, called. My phone is Capital 2-1234.” The Cajun said, “Say what?” So the caller repeated all of that information, telling who he was and where he was calling from. The Cajun said, “No, I’ve got all that. I’m

just wondering how in the devil do you make a Capital 2?”

The second story revolves around the actual switchover from the old system to the new dial system. Southwestern Bell announced that the change would take place at 1:01 a.m. on December 16, 1956. Dr. T.O. Davis, the mayor of Liberty, felt the moment should be marked by something important. It was decided that he would be waiting at the new building on Fannin Street and would place a telephone call to Dayton Mayor Wiley Smith. It was agreed that this would be a great symbolic action, but no one thought to tell Wiley that the call would be coming through.

As workers gathered at the old telephone company office and cut the ca-

bles at 1:01 a.m., Mayor Davis sat down in the office of Bell Manager John Blair and dialed Mayor Smith’s home. Everyone was sound asleep over there, and Wiley eventually located the telephone and was frankly not all that happy to be disturbed. Dr. Davis apologized profusely and explained the historic occasion, and Wiley finally understood what was happening. In such manner was history made on the Liberty and Dayton phone system.

BERKELEY  
EYE CENTER

—Preserving your gift of sight—

• Family Vision Care  
*(Glasses to Specialty Contact Lenses)*

• Medical Eye Care  
*(Dry Eye to Glaucoma)*

• Surgery  
*(Cataracts to Custom LASIK)*

• Safety Rx Program



Rebekah Swicegood, O.D.

936-258-0020

306 N. Main, Ste. A • Dayton • berkeleyeye.com

MOST INSURANCE ACCEPTED  
MON.-THURS.: 8AM- 2PM, 1PM-5PM / FRI.: 8AM-1PM



1900 Sam Houston  
Liberty

Insurance  
Agency, Inc.

Business Insurance



Commercial Package:  
– General Liability –  
Property & Commercial Auto  
Workers Compensation & Bonds  
Umbrella Policies  
Crime & Pollution

insurance@flnb.com • flnbinsurance.com  
936-336-3641 • 936-336-9423 (fax)

LIBERTY  
GAZETTE

936-336-6416