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Depression era comes alive for Colby

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Five historic figures told stories of the Great Depression – with many lessons that apply today – under the tent at the Kansas-Nebraska Chautauqua last week and over the weekend.

If you didn't want to hear fun poked at a political party, you may not have wanted to listen to Doug Wilson's portrayal of Will Rogers. Rogers was not hard to pick out; Wilson looked the part even before the crowd heard him speak.

"The luckiest guy I know is Will Rogers, and I believe that a fellow oughtta' say what he knows and sit down," he said as he began his introduction of President Franklin Roosevelt.

He rattled through the names of all the presidents he had known on a first-name basis. His view of Calvin Coolidge was typical in the language of his humorous style.

"Coolidge didn't talk much," he said. "He's what we in Oklahoma would call a 'tight chawer and a close spitter.' But he was sort of like everybody that runs for president. They all tell the people they'll take common sense to Washington, and then when they get there, nobody speaks the language, so they never get to use common sense."

Rogers was known as a movie star, writer, broadcaster and a person who won the admiration of American audiences for his observations on life from a nonpartisan viewpoint.

Wilson says he has performed the role more than 500 times nationwide in schools, theaters, libraries and Chautauquas. As moderator, Wilson introduced each act.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt

President Franklin D. Roosevelt, portrayed by Patrick E. McGinnis, professor emeritus of history at the University of Central Oklahoma, gave a magnificent speech Thursday to the American people – or at least those gathered under the tent – explaining how the government was working, what the bills that Congress was passing meant and how everything would benefit the country.

Roosevelt took office in 1932,



KEVIN BOTTRELL/Colby Free Press

Actor Doug Wilson, as humorist Will Rogers, showed off his roping skills under the tent at the Kansas-Nebraska Chautauqua on Saturday.

when the nation was at a low, during the early days of the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl era in the Midwest. His first day in office, he took a drastic measure and closed all the banks by declaring a bank holiday. He created the Agricultural Adjustment Administration to stop a flood of farm foreclosures and boost the price for farm products.

Historians say Roosevelt's first hundred days in office restored a measure of hope to America, although some viewed his actions as experimentation through new federal programs.

Because or in spite of the changes he made, the economy did begin to recover, and by 1935, the president said, unemployment had fallen to about half of what it had been after he took office.

Roosevelt addressed the Chautauqua crowd as "friends," something he always did when he spoke in person and in his famous "fireside chats" on the radio.

McGinnis, in his portrayal of Roosevelt, had the body language and facial expressions that were so well known by those in the crowd who remembered the Roosevelt days.

He answered questions after the speech, noting that the speech was, in part, from a 1935 address to the American public, and in part, some of what McGinnis thought

the famous president would have said here.

Aimee Semple-McPherson

Aimee Semple-McPherson was many things, both an evangelist who believed the Bible was the literal word of God and a reformer who challenged gender and race barriers that prevented women from becoming leaders in their churches and Hispanics and African Americans from receiving help. She was both a staunch anti-communist who thought Bolsheviks should be given a passport out of the country and a liberal who supported Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

McPherson started the presentation with two words, "America Awake." Compton's talk included the evangelist's effort to describe the role religion should play in the Great Depression. She told the Chautauqua audience that America needs to undergo both an economic and spiritual recovery.

She criticized scholars who didn't believe the Bible was the literal word of God. True science doesn't argue the word of God, McPherson said.

She asked the audience if they knew the true nature of American faith. She went on to talk about the Pilgrims and Puritans who came

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Aaron Faber answered questions about his portrayal of Colby banker and state senator August Lauterbach at the Youth Chautauqua performance Saturday. Faber and the other Youth Chautauqua performers spent the week researching characters from Thomas County's history and performed as those characters Saturday night.

Grainfield Opera House opens Saturday

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A piece of yesteryear will return to Grainfield at 4 p.m. Saturday, when live entertainment will return to the historic Grainfield Opera House.

"The Grainfield Opera House has been on the state's Historic Register since the mid-1980s, but nothing was being done to preserve it," said Janet Ziegler, a restoration volunteer. "The city of Grainfield stated that if they had possession of the building, they would bulldoze it down. So in 1998, Grainfield Opera House Inc. was formed."

The Grainfield Lions Club owns the building, and members of the club and others make up the the corporation doing the restoration.

Ziegler said the city gave the group \$10,000 as seed money to get the work started. The southwest corner of the building was badly deteriorated when they began, she said.

Seven or eight volunteers have stayed pretty steady at the job for the past eight or nine years, she added. People donated use of equipment and the group got two \$90,000 grants from the Kansas Heritage Fund. They have been able to put in restrooms and finish the ground floor to be ready for the celebration this weekend.

An Elvis impersonator from Schoenchen, Frank Werth, will bring "Frank's Attribute to Elvis" to the opera house following a day-long car show and community celebration. Proceeds will go for continued restoration.

Ziegler said the performance will take place on a makeshift stage on the ground floor since the main stage on the second floor is still to be

restored.

"Werth's performance will be packed with great love songs, rock-n-roll and gospel music that will please all ages," Ziegler said. "He has the look, sound and moves of the King himself, which landed him a performance spot in Branson."

The town's celebration, Cruise, Shoes and Barbecues, will include an old car show, horse shoe tournament and barbecue cook off, beginning at 10 a.m. on Saturday to raise money for other community improvements. Prizes will be handed out at 3:30 p.m., with the Elvis performance starting at 4.

Advance tickets, at \$15, can be purchased from Diana Kaiser, (785) 938-4416; Ziegler, (785) 938-3021; or Ron Eberle, (785) 673-9798. Tickets at the door will be \$20. For information, call any of those listed.

Shawnee official files for state office

TOPEKA (AP) – Shawnee County's top elections official has filed her candidacy for the Republican nomination to be the next Kansas secretary of state.

Elizabeth Ensley signed the paperwork and launched her bid Monday outside the secretary of state's office. She has been elections commissioner in Shawnee County for more than 18 years.

The filing deadline is Thursday, with the primary scheduled for Tuesday, Aug. 3.

Also seeking the GOP nomination are former Kansas Republican Party Chairman Kris Kobach of Piper, a University of Missouri-Kansas City law professor, and J.R. Claeys of Salina, a former chief executive of the National Association of Government Contractors.

Democratic incumbent Chris Biggs, appointed last year when Ron Thornburg resigned, is seeking a full term. He faces state Sen. Chris Steineger of Kansas City in the primary.

Briefly

City to begin mosquito fogging

Colby city crews will be fogging for mosquitoes beginning this week. They start south of Webster on Mondays and Tuesdays and north of Webster on Thursdays. Check your yards and empty anything holding stagnant water, such as cans, swimming pools or tires, officials said. For information, call the Public Works office at 460-4420.

Alumni Chorus begins practice

Colby High grads are invited to join the CHS Alumni Chorus, which will rehearse at 7:30 p.m. Wednesday June 16 and 17 at the United Methodist Church. Out-of-town alumni coming in for the five-year reunion can join in at 5 p.m. Friday, June 18, and 9 a.m. Saturday, June 19, to be ready for a performance at the assembly later that morning. For information, call director Jan Wolf at (785) 460-3535.

Firemen testing hydrants

The Colby Fire Department is testing hydrants. Assistant Chief Sean Hankin said the testing will take about a month and may disrupt some water lines near the hydrants. For information, call Hankin at the Colby Fire Department, 460-4454.

Singles dance set for Saturday

The Colby singles and couples dance will be from 6:30 to 10:30 p.m. Saturday at the Meadow Lake Golf Course clubhouse, 1085 E Golf Course Dr. Craig Stevens will provide the music. For information, call Lue Duffey at (785) 269-7057.

Picnic, music Wednesday

Colby's Picnic in the Park lunch-and-concert series continues at noon Wednesday at Fike Park with entertainment by the Bugbee Sisters. For informa-

tion, call the Colby/Thomas County Chamber of Commerce at 460-3401 or the Colby Convention and Visitors Bureau at 460-7643.

Signup open for food program

Sign up for the Prairie Land Food is open through Friday at State Farm Insurance, 905 E. Fourth Street in Colby. Delivery will be at 1:30 p.m. on Saturday, June 26, at the Sacred Heart School gym, 1150 W. Sixth St. For information, call Gene Griffin at (785) 460-3579.

Flyers plan fun day, lunch at field

The Colby RC Flyers will hold their annual fun fly from dawn to dusk Saturday and Sunday at the club's field seven miles north of Colby on K-25. Flying events and prize drawings will be held each day. Lunch will be served. For information, call Dave

Backus at 460-6941 or Nick Nichols at 460-6357.

College pool open weekdays

The Colby Community College indoor swimming pool is open to the public for lap swimming from 5 to 7 a.m. Monday through Friday this summer. Open swimming is from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Monday through Friday and 1 to 5 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. Cost for general admission is \$3, but monthly and yearly passes are available. Call manager Kipp Nelson at 460-5476 for information.



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