

commentary

from other pens...

Journals depict life at Civil War times

By Lawrence L. Knutson

Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON — The man was into everything, knew everyone who counted, had a measure of success, but never climbed as high on the government ladder as he might have wished.

Nonetheless, historians care about Benjamin Brown French. French left behind a written record that opens a window on the people and events of early Washington. His journals make him a source about the drama of the Civil War capital and Abraham Lincoln's White House. French's orderly, chatty and self-revealing journals present a vivid record of capital life from Andrew Jackson through the impeachment and trial of President Andrew Johnson.

French is remembered in the current issue of White House History, the journal of the White House Historical Association. The author, Michael Spangler, is senior archivist in the manuscript division of the Library of Congress which holds French's journals and his correspondence.

French arrived in Washington from his native New Hampshire in 1833. By the time the Civil War began in 1861 he had been a city alderman, clerk of the House of Representatives and commissioner of public buildings. A master Mason, he performed the rites at the laying of the Washington Monument cornerstone in 1848. Three years later, he organized a bucket brigade that helped save the U.S. Capitol from fire.

French recorded the events large and small that caught his imagination and affected his life: He is kept awake by the bell around the neck of an errant cow; loses one wife and marries another; watches as Union troops march outside his Capitol Hill home; observes the rising of the Capitol's new dome; hears Lincoln tell his famous stories; visits Richmond immediately after the Confederate surrender; and asks that "Yankee Doodle" be played on Jefferson Davis' family piano.

French was angling for a job as the Lincoln administration opened and found himself in his old post as commissioner of public buildings. Among his many duties: helping Mary Lincoln manage the White House bills she accumulated in compulsive shopping sprees.

When Mrs. Lincoln overspent a \$20,000 congressional appropriation, she sent French to intercede with the president.

"He said it would stink in the land to have it said an appropriation for furnishing the house had been overspent by the president when the poor, freezing soldiers could not have blankets," French wrote. "He swore he would never approve the bills for flub dubs for that damned old house..."

French, a good bureaucrat, found ways of paying the bills.

In November 1863, French accompanied the presidential party to the dedication of the cemetery at Gettysburg, Pa. An avid amateur poet, he had written the words to a "Consecration Hymn."

The president's soon-to-be-famous speech, was, he wrote, "brief, but most appropriate." And Lincoln himself was greeted everywhere he went by "a hurricane of applause."

Less than two years later, French found himself giving the orders to transport the slain president's body back to the White House, for draping the mansion in mourning and arranging the details of the funeral.

According to Spangler, French's son, Ben, designed and built the velvet-draped catafalque on which Lincoln's remains rested in the rotunda of the Capitol.

In a journal entry in 1869, he noted that his nephew, Daniel, was proving himself "a natural born sculptor" — with talent enough to one day "stand by the side of the best sculptors of America and aye, the world."

Daniel Chester French lived up to his uncle's expectations. He became one of the most famous American sculptors of his time. He saw his statue of a seated Lincoln placed in the Lincoln Memorial, where it has become an indelible American image.

It is a likeness Benjamin Brown French would easily recognize, and almost certainly applaud.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Lawrence L. Knutson has covered the White House, Congress and Washington's history for more than 30 years.



COUNT 'EM AGAIN!!



We can honor all heroes who serve our nation

Hero.

The dictionary defines it as "a person noted for feats of courage or nobility of purpose, especially one who has risked or sacrificed his or her life."

This month, we've had an example of heroism before our eyes, the crew of the surveillance plane, a U.S. Navy EP-3, that was forced to make an emergency landing on Hainan Island, China.

And, of course, one of that crew is one of our own, Lt. (j.g.) Jeff Vignery.

While their recent actions are undeniably heroic, Jeff and his crewmates quietly were doing the same types of duties long before the Chinese pilot collided with them. They were heroes before that accident ever happened. They did not wait for an accident to be American heroes; they just went



roxie yonkey

• star tracks

about their duties. Those duties didn't throw them into the world stage — until now.

Like the crew of that now-famous plane, many servicemen and women are quietly going about their duties out of the spotlight.

While Jeff is certainly a hero — our hero — we should remember to stop and thank the other service members for their service, for their sacrifices

while protecting us from our enemies, both foreign and domestic.

Soon we'll have a famous national hero walking down Goodland's streets and plans are underway to welcome him properly. But while we're honoring Jeff and expressing our gratitude to God that he and the rest of that EP-3's crew came home safely, let's also remember those who are not in the spotlight, who are not being honored.

Many of them are probably relieved to escape the media glare that Jeff and his family have faced, but their desire to remain out of the limelight should not diminish our admiration for and recognition of true American heroes — those who serve in uniform.

God bless our heroes in uniform; God bless the USA!

Peter Piper picked a partner and got himself in a pickle

Peter had a good idea. He was certain the idea was sound, but he didn't have enough money to start the business by himself.

However, the idea kept nagging Peter. He watched industry trends and knew the time was right.

Finally, Peter worked his idea into a business plan. Then one evening he casually mentioned his idea to a friend.

Immediately his friend expressed interest. They met the next night to discuss the details. Both friends were excited and things moved rapidly.

The company started quickly and early sales were strong. Led by Peter's knowledge of the industry and his marketing ability, the company established early profits. Peter was having the time of his life.

Then early in the second year, Peter's partner announced that he was tired of Peter hogging all the glory for their success.

Peter's now disgruntled friend wanted more of the credit for their success, and he wanted more time to spend with his family. He was sick and tired of doing all the work and not receiving any recognition for it. He wanted out, and he wanted \$500,000 for his share of the business.

Peter was shocked and hurt. He loved the hard work and long hours. This was a dream come true for him.

The next day the friend's wife called and said they were hiring a lawyer and wanted control of the company. Peter hired his own attorney and they went to court. Three years and \$40,000 later everybody lost.



don taylor

• minding your own business

Common problems

Situations like Peter's happen every day. I've watched more than a dozen partnerships come apart, and it isn't a pretty sight. It is sad to see a business deal turn friends into bitter enemies.

Common causes of these breakups include lack of planning, unclear objectives, lack of capital and no written partnership agreements. However, the most common reason is that the partners themselves are not compatible.

You should select your partner for skills, experience and compatibility factors.

Good partners will have similar work ethics, ambition and motivation.

Successful partner attributes

Here are some attributes that partners should possess.

• Honesty and integrity. All successful relationships are based on trust. No partnerships can last long-term if one partner is dishonest.

• Willingness to work hard. Though no two people work alike, each partner must be committed to the cause. You should define job responsibilities before you begin.

• Competence and skills. Each partner must bring useful expertise to the business. Money can start a

business, but ability keeps it going.

• A good team player. A partnership, regardless of the number of partners, is a team sport. Partners must work independently when necessary, together when beneficial.

• Good people skills. Good partners get along well with all types of people. They treat others with respect and are enjoyable to be around.

• Can control their emotions. All partnerships will have periods of stress and strife. Good partners control their anger, keep cool under pressure and don't overreact.

• Communication skills. Everyone profits by improving listening, speaking and thinking skills. Listening with understanding is the first step in solving problems.

• Works toward "win-win" solutions. A good partner will see both sides of every situation. They are adept at proposing solutions where everyone comes out ahead.

• Ability to organize and prioritize. Good partners stay focused on accomplishing the most important tasks. When you organize and prioritize your efforts, everyone gets more done.

• Willing to admit errors. "I was wrong," may be one of the least used phrases in partnerships. However, it is a critical element in healing disagreements and going forward toward your common goals.

Don Taylor is the co-author of "Up Against the Wal-Marts." You may write to him in care of "Minding Your Own Business," PO Box 67, Amarillo, TX 79105. Column sponsored by Goodland Area Chamber of Commerce Business Development Committee.

Honoring our pilots shows how much we care

The media circus is coming to our quiet land. We might as well get ready for it.

Whenever Lt. (j.g.) Jeff Vignery manages to get home to Goodland, we're in for another round of television crews, national reporters and general madness.

It's fashionable to crack on the media — those vultures, is one way I've heard it put — but it's not very fair.

Let's put this in perspective. There is only one reason all these "media" people will be in our area, and that is because Americans, millions of 'em, care about him and his crew. The reporters, cameramen, photographers, sound men and technicians and all the other "vultures" care, too, or they wouldn't be here.

Unless Americans cared, and wanted to watch, none of this would be happening. There'd be no homecoming, no yellow ribbons, no media. But we do care, and that is a good thing. The "media" catch plenty of grief for covering what's wrong with the world, that you'd think people would be glad when the cameras flock to something good.

By and large, things should go well. By the time the camera crews leave, I'd be willing to bet a lot of the good people who are making comments about the vultures will be caught standing in front of the lights, smiling and talking about life in Goodland. So much the better. It will be a good opportunity for us to showcase the wonderful life we have in northwest Kansas.

Everyone, reporters, camera crews, plain old folks, need to respect the wishes and needs of the Vignery family. This will be a trying week, and



steve haynes

• along the sappa

they won't have time to do half the things asked of them.

But we ought to remember why the national press is here and treat them as well as we can. They're coming, remember, because America cares, and they have a job to do here. It's not a particularly easy one.

National news is a fiercely competitive business, because we expect our networks and news services to have all the stories. People flock to the channel that has a story. That means multiple camera crews, multiple interviews, satellite trucks, up and down the street, and all that. As consumers, we wouldn't have it any other way.

But consider this hypothetical case: Suppose, in a situation like this, one network crew scores a beat, gets an interview with someone special, and the rest do not. Someone is going to get a pat on the back from the boss, sure, but you can bet the rest of them will take a hard chewing from somebody in New York or Atlanta. It's the kind of thing that can make a reporter's reputation — or get a crew fired.

It may seem harsh, but news is a rough-and-tumble world.

If you can't get down the street for all the television trucks, or you think the reporters are a pack of vultures, remember that their going to be here be-

cause the American people want them to come. Because people care.

That doesn't excuse any rudeness or unpleasantry, and there might be some, but it isn't really a bad thing. Just a bit more than we're used to, out here on the quiet plains.

berry's world



The Goodland Daily News

(USPS No. 222-460. ISSN 0893-0562)

Member: Kansas Press Association

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Published daily except Saturday and Sunday and the day observed for New Year's Day, Memorial Day, Fourth of July, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day, at 1205 Main St., Goodland, Kan. 67735.

Periodicals postage paid at Goodland, Kan. 67735; entered at the Goodland, Kan., Post Office under the Act of Congress of March 8, 1878.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Goodland Daily News, 1205 Main St., Goodland, Kan. 67735.

TELEPHONE: (785) 899-2338. Editorial e-mail: daily@nwkansas.com. Advertising questions can be sent to: gdnadv@nwkansas.com

The Goodland Daily News assumes no liability for mistakes or omissions in advertising or failure to publish beyond the actual cost of the ad.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: In Sherman County and adjacent counties: three months, \$22; six months, \$38; 12 months, \$72. By mail in Kansas, Colorado: three months, \$28; six months, \$50; 12 months, \$95. (All tax included.) Out of area, weekly mailing of five issues: three months, \$25; six months, \$40; 12 months, \$75.

Incorporating:

The Sherman County Herald
Founded by Thomas McCants
1935-1989

THE SHERMAN COUNTY STAR
Founded by Eric and Roxie Yonkey
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