

Professor mingles mother's notes, memories

By Sharon Corcoran
The Goodland Star-News
A University of Kansas history professor mingled notes from his mother's diary, his own memories and things he has learned over the years in telling the tale of World War II as part of the events coinciding with the "Produce for Victory" exhibit at the Carnegie Arts Center. The events continue with a musical tribute to the era at 3 p.m. Sunday at Wheat Ridge Acres.

Presenting the program, "Dear Diary: A Mother's Reflections," Lloyd Sponholtz, a Kansas Humanities Council Speaker, read excerpts from his mother's diary, which she kept from December of 1941 through mid-1943.

The history professor wove in his own memories, political cartoons from the era and things he has learned about the war era into the talk, contrasting different perspectives on the historic events.

Growing up in Chicago, Sponholtz said he wasn't sure his mother's urban experiences would resonate with those from rural areas. But her description of events gives a clear picture of the war years from someone who lived them.

Sponholtz described a scene from December of 1941, when a family had pot roast for Sunday dinner. Afterward, a five-year-old boy turned on the radio; his regular program was not on. It had been preempted for an address by President Roosevelt.

The serious looks on his parents' faces were something the boy carried through his life, the instructor said.

He then tied himself to the experience, saying his mother wrote in her diary that night, beginning, "Dear Lloyd, Because you are too young to understand. . . I'm keeping this diary."



Lloyd Sponholtz, a University of Kansas history professor and Kansas Humanities Council speaker, described events from the World War II era at the Handy House earlier this month, using excerpts from his mother's diary, political cartoons and personal recollections and anecdotes. Photos by Sharon Corcoran/Goodland Star-News

The next day, Dec. 7, 1941, his mother wrote in the diary about the attack on Pearl Harbor. On Monday, she wrote, "the shock of Japan's attack is apparent on the faces of people in the street. . . . National security has been threatened as never before."

"This evening, President Roosevelt addressed the nation, and all in the family but Lloyd ('I missed all the historical events,' the speaker interjected.), who had been put to

bed, listened.

"Roll was called in the legislature; all but one voted to go to war."

"I feel sadness in my heart for the young men called upon to make the sacrifice and for their parents."

"Everyone is determined, despite how they stood on neutrality before, to defend our way of life."

Sponholtz said his mother was a Republican and kept a diary on and off through the middle of

1943. The diary included military news and domestic news, he said, adding the domestic side was what he wanted to focus on.

In June of 1942, Sponholtz said, his mother wrote, "The president made a radio address and appealed to all to donate rubber-based articles."

She wrote about the family taking garden hoses, galoshes and rubber toys to a gas station that was the collection point for the neighborhood.

"Lloyd reluctantly donated a rubber truck," she wrote.

Sponholtz said he remembered looking at the truck so longingly that the gas station attendant said he could take it home.

"I remember my sister ripped it out of my hand and threw it on the pile," he said.

Sponholtz said his mother reported on another threat, needed metal.

He remembered the family emptied tin cans, cleaned them out, took off the labels and flattened them before donating them.

For the brewing industry, Sponholtz said, tin was an important ingredient in caps. Cork was also in short supply, he said, so the industry was looking for an alternative.

"In our household," he said, "there was one bottle of brandy for medicinal purposes. In my entire life, no one was ever sick enough to warrant using it."

He said his mother was so patriotic that if she ever knew the cap was tin, it would have been gone.

Rationing was another domestic war effort Sponholtz's mother recorded in her diary.

"Lloyd and I went to pick up sugar ration coupons," she wrote.

She said her family of five received 10 pounds of sugar per

month, 1/2 pound per person per week, and 1/2 pound of coffee per week and that car owners received four gallons of gas per week.

"I can't understand why people complain," she wrote, "when the boys overseas are sacrificing their lives."

Sponholtz said he needed to clarify his mother's perspective.

"We didn't have a car," he said; "gasoline rationing didn't affect our family at all."

The history professor described a scene from a movie he had seen, a movie starring Jack Warden. He said Warden's character learned it wastes gasoline to stop and start the car, so he would just slow down to pick up passengers.

He said he remembered a stout woman ran alongside the car, a door would open and arms would reach out and pull her in. She'd spend the rest of the time in the car making herself presentable, Sponholtz said, and trying to restore whatever dignity she had.

"I'm sure it was apocryphal," he said, adding that it did, however, illustrate the hardship some felt at gas rationing.

Other sacrifices Sponholtz remembered were Oleo and a lack of Christmas wrapping paper.

Oleo came uncolored, he said, with a separate pack of color that was kneaded in to try to make it look palatable and pass it off as butter.

"Not only was Christmas wrapping by 1944 pathetic," Sponholtz said, "but we unwrapped gifts carefully. . . . and saved the paper."

He said he still opens gifts carefully along the seams, adding that it is partly because it drives his kids nuts.

"Of course, to yank my chain," he said, "they rip theirs open."

Sponholtz showed a cartoon with "John Q. Public" writing a note to

his "favorite nemesis in the pond," reminding him that his fishing vacation had been put on hold because he was giving up his seat on the train.

"I hope the next line I drop will have a hook on it," the cartoon said.

Another cartoon depicted geese flying and said, "Yeah, it's a break for us — all the ammunition's going for the war."

He said the changing draft status also provided material for cartoons. There were many classifications to determine who would be drafted first, Sponholtz said, and the criteria were constantly changing.

Many felt single men should be taken first in the draft, he said, then married without children, then according to the number of children. That didn't take care of the needs at home, he said.

There was a demand for skilled workers, he said, leading to skilled occupations being a deciding factor. That wasn't popular, he said.

Sponholtz also remembered periodic blackouts. Everyone would shut off lights in the house or pull the shades, he said, to keep light from getting out, making it harder for enemies to spot the cities to target them with bombs.

"It was my father's job to go around the block to be sure everyone complied," Sponholtz said. "I went with him one night. I remember a heady feeling of being with my father, apparently having some level of authority since we were the only ones out at night."

Sponholtz also recalled that even though they lived in the city, his family planted a Victory Garden in the backyard.

"The squirrels beat us to it," he said. Sponholtz said that reminded him of the cartoon, "Saboteurs," adding that his dad was "John Q. Public."

corrections

The phone number for the Goodland Regional Medical Center in the box on page 33 of the "Rural Health Care" section in the April 30 edition of *The Goodland Star-News* was listed as 899-3625. The correct number is 890-3625. This was a reporting error.

☆☆☆☆
The Goodland Star-News will correct any mistake or misunderstanding in a news story. Please call our office at (785) 899-2338 to report errors. We believe that news should be fair and factual. We want to keep an accurate record and appreciate you calling to our attention any failure to live up to this standard.

Mt. Sunflower safe as state's highest point

SUNFLOWER, from Page 1

that would be the appropriate dumping ground for that material."

At the end of the story, Bassham said, "Whatever happens to the former Mount Sunflower, one thing is for sure the removal has created some controversy in western Kansas. April Fools."

At the Kansas Tourism Information Center on I-70 west of

Goodland, Manager Julia Krotinger said she thought the story was a great spoof. She thought it was great that Allegrucci, one of her bosses, has a good sense of humor.

She said High Plains Public Radio has been doing these April Fools spoofs for several years. Last year, they auctioned off Wichita. Eldorado was the high bidder.

A check of the log book, kept in a mail box at the summit of Mount Sunflower, shows the spot does get

frequent visits.

In the past 10 days, tourists from Littleton, Colo.; Colorado Springs; Columbus, Ohio; Texarkana, Texas; Wichita; Victoria, British Columbia; and Vancouver, Wash., had signed the book.

Donna Price of the Sherman County Convention and Visitors Bureau said that Bruce Maurer, the visitor from Ohio, was traveling around the country to reach all the "highest points" in each state and

that Mount Sunflower was the 27th on his list.

"We love your No. 27 high point," Maurer wrote in the book.

Jonny Scheilds of Littleton wrote "Because it is there, why else? Thank you Sharon Baboo."

Christopher Morton of Victoria had another take after reaching the summit.

"A little flat, eh?" he wrote.

Other items found in the mail box were a color postcard of Pike's

Peak, and a drawing of Mount Elbert, at 14,433 feet, the highest point in Colorado.

The site of Mount Sunflower is on land owned by Mike and Rae Marie (Harold) Jones north of Weskan. The information at the landmark says the spot is maintained by the Ed Harold farm.

The "mount" isn't much of a peak, just a highest spot east of the state line on a ridge that continues onward into Colorado.

Cattlemen's lawsuit has setback in federal court ruling

By Karen Krien

St. Francis Herald

Cattlemen including Mike Callicrate, St. Francis Feedyard owner and one of the six plaintiffs in the Pickett vs IBP lawsuit, were disappointed when federal judge Lyle Strom threw out a jury's \$1.28 billion verdict against the largest beef packer, Tyson Fresh Meats, ruling last Friday that Tyson did not illegally manipulate cattle prices.

"The ray of hope the Alabama jury gave cattlemen — that a competitive market might return — is greatly diminished with the judge's decision to strike down the Tyson verdict," Callicrate said.

Judge Strom said the cattlemen who sued the beef division of Tyson Foods failed to produce evidence at trial to support the verdict "with respect to both liability and damages."

John Tyson, chairman and chief executive officer of Tyson Foods, in an Associated Press story, said the judge's decision was a victory for

U.S. cattle producers and his company.

"It protects the freedom of producers to market cattle the way they want, and it affirms our strongly held belief that our livestock buying practices are proper," he said.

Callicrate said the power of the Packers and Stockyards Act has been overlooked by the courts since its passage 83 years ago.

"This judge, given plentiful evidence of market manipulation, has now also failed to protect the interest of producers," Callicrate said.

Callicrate said they (plaintiffs) knew the case would be difficult when they filed it.

On Feb. 17, a federal court jury found Tyson Fresh Meats used its contracts with select cattle produc-

ers to create a captive supply of cattle that it used as leverage to drive down the price of cattle on the open or cash markets. The jury found Tyson's actions depressed the cash market by \$1.28 billion between February 1994 and October 2002.

On March 23, Judge Strom said he wouldn't approve a lump sum verdict of \$1.28 billion and his ruling last Friday said there was insufficient evidence to support the damages.

In his ruling, the judge wrote, "Defendant's use of captive supply arrangements is supported by legitimate business justification of competing in the industry."

The cattlemen, when they sued Tyson Fresh Meats (known then as IBP) in 1996, claimed the company's use of these contracts or marketing

agreement, violated the federal Packers and Stockyards Act.

The suit was granted class-action status, with the six plaintiffs claiming to represent as many as 30,000 ranchers.

Asking Judge Strom to throw out the verdict, Tyson argued the jury didn't follow the law closely enough.

Judge Strom said testimony showed the use of a captive supply helps Tyson "ensure a reliable and consistent supply of fed cattle" and that a packer "does not violate the Packers and Stockyard Act when its conduct is undertaken 'in order to have a more reliable and efficient method of obtaining a supply of cattle.'"

"The case will continue to be a big challenge through the appeal

that we will file next week," Callicrate said.

student of the week



Name: Aubrea Winter
Parents: Gary and Deb Winter
Grade: Junior
Age: 17

We've nominated this student because: Aubrea Winter is friendly, cooperative, and an active participant in class. She is involved in student government. She is a class officer and active in clubs and sports. Aubrea is willing to go the extra mile to "get 'r done."

Student Comment:

I love to be around my friends at school. My favorite subject is probably math.

Activities involved in at school: Volleyball, softball, FCCLA, Stuco, Junior Class President, National Honor Society.

My choice of movies, books, and games: I like all kinds of music and movies. My favorite books are non-fiction books. I like to play any sport for fun.

After I leave Goodland High School I intend to: attend a four year college.

And 10 years from now, I think I'll be: doing something with animals or children.

Favorite Quote: "What lies behind us and what lies ahead of us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us."

Nor'West Press

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