

A Sampling of South Dakotans

This is South Dakota Magazine's 25th anniversary year, and we're celebrating with special features about people and places we've visited. I was lucky enough to travel with my dad while growing up, so I had the chance to meet some of the great characters who have graced our pages.

I'll never forget meeting Gladys Pyle in her Huron home in 1986. I was eight years old, but she treated me like the U.S. senators she served with a half-century earlier. She showed us her beautiful home, which had been built by her parents, and lamented that no one would probably care for it when she died. Fortunately, she was so wrong. The community of Huron has lovingly preserved the house as a tribute to her public service.

Tub Rath of Wasta was one of the sweetest men we ever met. Every Valentine's Day, Mother's Day, Easter and Christmas, He delivered flowers or candy to every lady in Wasta (population 72). When he was healthy and able, he delivered the gifts to the ladies' front doors; when he was old and connected to an oxygen tank, he honked his pickup horn and the women hurried to the curb with a smile and a thanks. Holidays in Wasta are quieter since Tub died in 2007.

Alvin Carlson of Trojan was as spirited as Tub was sweet. Carlson was the last man living in Trojan, but no one seemed to notice. The tiny Black Hills mining town had officially ceased to exist in 1959, and some in Lead had taken to promoting it as a ghost town. That's when Carlson visited the Chamber of Commerce. "I told those people if they didn't stop tellin' folks this was a ghost town that this old ghost was gonna start shooting a few people. They'd come here with out-of-state license plates, walk-in, snoop through my stuff and just take it. I come unglued when people take my stuff and that's when I decided to move the whole town back down the road a ways," said Carlson. And board by board, that's exactly what the ghost of Trojan did.

Some of our favorite characters died before the magazine was started, but we feel like we know them. No doubt Archer Gilfillan (who died in 1955) would have loved being acquainted with both Tub Rath and Alvin Carlson. Gilfillan was a Harding County sheepherder and philosopher who kept extensive notes on the people he met and then became a noted writer and humorist. After studying Latin and Greek at the University of Pennsylvania, he squandered his investment in a sheep ranch,

but he loved South Dakota and herded for other ranchers for 20 years. Gilfillan was known for his three Secret Sorrows — ranchers who knew less about sheep than their sheepherders,



Gladys Pyle and Katie Hunhoff at Pyle's Huron home in 1986.

the notion that cowboys are superior to sheepmen, and women. Of the latter he wrote, "You profess sincere and unbounded admiration for the beauties of the opposite sex and you practically lay your heart at their collective feet; and then you meet some individual who combines the poorer qualities of a mama wildcat and a bitch wolf, with a voice like a buzz saw, the temper of a slapped hornet and a disposition that would curdle the milk in four adjoining counties."

Gilfillan would have softened on women had he met Katharina Redlin. In 2005 she told me of her experiences as the widow of a German officer when Allied Troops occupied Munich in 1945. Already starving, she thought she and her son would be assaulted and killed. Instead, the American troops persuaded her that she was safe and they delivered groceries for them.

U.S. troops encouraged her to come to the United States for a better life, but she needed a sponsor so she participated in a match-maker program. The pretty brunette's photograph



By Katie Hunhoff
Editor at South Dakota Magazine

appeared in a St. Paul, Minn., newspaper and soon her Munich mailbox was overflowing. As she sorted the letters, she was charmed by a note from Alfred Redlin, a Summit, S.D., farmer who said he would build her a house and send her son to college.

They met at a New York harbor, where Alfred told her he'd rented two rooms and she didn't have to marry him to stay in the U.S. They married in Dell Rapids on the way home to Summit. Katharina loved farm life, and especially enjoyed tending the Redlins' popular purebred Hereford herd. On Veterans Day and Memorial Day, Katharina often called David J. Law's popular Water-town radio show to remind listeners of America's greatness. "The good Lord put me here," she said.

Katie Hunhoff is the assistant editor of South Dakota Magazine. Read more about these and other South Dakotans in our January/February 2010 issue or our book South Dakota's Best Stories. To order, call 1-800-456-5117.

Slagle/ from page 1

pected things happen, but nothing big enough to move back the date of completion.

The auditorium's ceiling posed a bit of a challenge to planners and the contractor.

"The biggest one was the ceiling because from the ground level, it looks like plaster, but it's softer and was made out of something like horse hair," Wagner said. "We reevaluated and it's something not even the experts prepared for and all the documentation we had for it was that it was plaster."

This summer is the likely completion time of the auditorium's reconstruction. Once that is accomplished, technical crews will devote their attention to the auditorium's audio system. The organ will be installed, and the workers will make improvements to Slagle's chandeliers.

Total cost of the improvements is an estimated \$8.1 million, to be paid, in part, by Higher Education Facility funds.

The university has received about \$3.6 million for the Slagle renovation and the USD Foundation is also raising \$18,000 in order to repair and restore the 10 chandeliers.

"This is a great example of using both sources in order to get a needed project done," Van Den Hul said. "The gift funds were crucial to getting this project done."

The chandeliers weren't originally slated to be a part of the project, but the USD Foundation approached Van Den Hul for fundraising opportunities and came up with the idea to improve them.

Last year, the Foundation's project was to replace the windows in the Danforth Chapel, which Van Den Hul calls a great success.

"This year, the chandeliers seemed like a great idea and something they could raise the money for in one year," Van Den Hul said.

The university also received \$700,000 in gifts in order to restore the organ, which is being worked on right now.

According to the Dean of the College of Fine Arts Dr. Larry Schou, Ernest M. Skinner, an important builder of that musical instrument during that time period, constructed the organ in 1925-26.

The organ is one of five or six of its kind that hasn't been altered.

The historical instrument was the first thing taken of Slagle Auditorium before construction began so that it wouldn't be harmed by dust. Schantz Organ Company in Orville, OH is currently restoring it.

The organ will be cleaned



A portion of the \$8.1 million needed to renovate Slagle Auditorium has come from private funds raised by The USD Foundation. This amount includes \$700,000 for the restoration of the Skinner Opus 548 organ, pictured here being played decades ago in the auditorium. The identity of this young woman, and the year that this photo was taken, are unknown. (Archives and Special Collections, USD)

and since it was never officially finished, the rest of the pipes are also being added.

"It will be nice to get to the rest of the pipes," Schou said. "They won't change the sound of the pipes. They will also clean it, because there is 80 years of dirt in it, and updating the wiring which was starting to wear out."

Schou just isn't excited about the renovations currently being made to the organ, but also for all of the improvements being accomplished to improve the Slagle facility. He is planning to bring some major acts to the renovated auditorium.

"We are really excited to be in the room again, and it's going to be more attractive and comfortable for the audience," he said. "Performance wise, it will be more attractive for theater performance and concerts."

Some of the groups Schou is hoping to schedule are the South Dakota symphony orchestra, musicals and silent movies with improved sound played by the band.

Since the Fine Arts department has not had access to Slagle Auditorium for over a year, it has been using Wayne S. Knutson Theater, the Vermillion High School and area churches.

However, Wayne S. Knutson wasn't made for many musical performances.

"Knutson is more for spoken words because it's a drier room," Schou said. "For music, you want a more resonate room

that blends with the music." Schou and the College of Fine Arts did have a good amount of input of what would be done to Slagle Auditorium, Wagner said.

"We tried to work with what they needed," she said. "We did include lecture options, but Fine Arts was main focus."

Some of the major changes include the stage jutting six to eight feet further into the room, motorized curtains and the ability to change the acoustics according to the events.

The lobby will also be bigger and side lobbies have also been added, which Schou said will make it easier to get into the building.

There will be new seating, but in order to keep a historical feeling to the building, some of the old seating will still be intact on the balcony.

Schou said the audience will notice a huge difference. "It's going to be great; several steps above what it was," Schou said with a smile. "The rock hard chairs were not pleasant, and the sound wasn't projected out too well."

Other new features include more bathrooms and air conditioning.

So far, nothing is planned to take place in Slagle because it's not completed, but Wagner is working monthly with the events planner.

"We don't know yet what the first thing will be that will take place in it," she said. "It could possibly be the Neuharth event."

Guitar/ from page 1

South Dakotans who served in the Vietnam War was dedicated Sept. 15-16, 2006. Two concerts were held at Hollister Field in Pierre as part of the dedication events.

The Beach Boys with special guests Red Willow Band performed on Friday, Sept. 15. The Steve Miller Band with special guests Creedence Clearwater Revisited performed on Saturday, Sept. 16. Both concerts sold out 10,000 tickets.

Planners of the concert decided, as a special touch, to ask the performers to sign the guitar while they were in Pierre.

"Not only did they sign it," Rounds said, "but they also decorated it. What we ended up with was a commitment that we would find some way to honor the veterans on a longer-term basis with a remembrance of that time in Pierre when we literally had the entire state participating and celebrating in this 'welcome home and thank you for your service' ceremony."

Planners at one time had thought of selling the guitar to help offset the costs of the celebration.

"As we looked at it, we realized this is too precious to ever have it leave our state," the governor said.

The guitar's home since the concert has been Rounds' office.

"Realizing that I only have eight months left in office, we knew that we needed to do something which would allow the guitar to not only be celebrated, but also would be available for people to see and to help people remember that this was a very special time," Rounds said.

Steve Miller's signature stood out clearly as the governor held the guitar so that everyone at Friday's gathering at the museum could get a good look at the instrument. Miller added a flourish, extending a line from the last letter of his name up much of the face of the instrument, and embellishing that line so that it resembles a long feather.

Under his name is printed "Fly Like A Eagle," the title of one of The Steve Miller Band's best known songs.

Rounds recalled that after Steve Miller and Mike Love had signed the guitar, Stu Cook and Doug Clifford of

CCR prepared to add their personal touches to the instrument.

"When they started to do that, the first thing that happened was a big blob (of ink) had dropped on it," Rounds said. "And they were so upset. They said, 'Oh no, look what happened!'"

"It was kind of funny because here are two guys who are clearly well known as musicians, and yet to them this was something special because these other guys, who they respected, had already signed this," the governor said.

Rounds quickly grabbed his handkerchief and wiped off the offending spot.

"Those two said, 'We never could have talked to those guys

again if we had ruined that guitar,'" Rounds said.

The governor handed the guitar to Randall during Friday's ceremony, officially adding it to the collection of instruments in the National Music Museum.

"Arian Sheets, our curator of stringed instruments, will be taking this shortly, and it might be the last time that bare hands get to hold this," Randall said. "Most guitars have a few years of anonymous use and then go into closets and die. This guitar was blessed to be signed by these wonderful musicians, and now it comes here and gets to rub shoulders with world-famous musical instruments."

"From the guitar's perspec-

tive, I don't think you could do any better than this," he said.

"This is an interesting instrument because it has a lot of high-profile, recognizable names on it," Sheets said following the presentation. "For the general public, getting to see the actual signatures of their favorite stars from the 1970s and '80s can really be meaningful."

The instrument presented by the governor will fit in well with other guitars at the National Music Museum linked to famed musicians.

"We have a guitar autographed by B.B. King, and we also have a guitar autographed by several country music stars," Sheets said. "This is the first guitar that we received

that is autographed by several great rock musicians."

In addition to the guitar, Gov. Rounds is also donating a collection of documentary materials related to the 2006 War Memorial dedication.

Founded in 1973 on the campus of The University of South Dakota in Vermillion, the National Music Museum & Center for Study of the History of Musical Instruments has become well known as one of the great institutions of its kind in the world.

Its renowned collections include more than 14,500 American, European, and non-Western instruments from virtually all cultures and historical periods.

PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT
Program Offers New Computers to Public for \$179

Finally... A new program makes computers affordable. Act now to claim your new portable computer loaded with programs used for email, internet, web surfing etc. Great for students, grandparents, small business or anyone. These Windows powered PCs are limited to the first 225 Callers. These sell for up to \$600 in stores, but call now and claim up to two for \$179 each through this special program. Phone lines open today at 9am. While supplies last, no rain checks!

1-877-285-7304
*Have Visa or Mastercard Ready

Get a new kitchen, Get **Cash Back.**

Top-quality Showplace Cabinetry, with manufacturer direct cash rebates. You better get started - your new kitchen will last for years, but this offer won't!

SHOWPLACE Wood Products

the Kitchen Place

Yankton Showroom
309 W. 11th St., Yankton, SD 57078
605-668-2138 • 1-800-249-3837
www.tkplaceyankton.com

Activity Coordinator

Are you creative?
Do you like helping people?
Position requires originality and ability to execute programs in daily basis and some weekends. Background in music, art, or crafts a plus. Part-time.

WEL-Life at Elk Point
600 E. Lincoln St.
Elk Point, SD 57025

Apply in person, mail original copy of resume or fax to
Cherilyn at 605-356-2097
or call 605-356-2774 or
email hrdept@lantisnet.com

EOE