



Community
Huron man named Volunteer of the Year by Miss S.D. Foundation.
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The Daily PLAINSMAN

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Local author to appear at the State Fair

BY PLAINSMAN STAFF
HURON — Richard Skorupski of Frankfort has been chosen to participate in an exhibit of the “Arts at the State Fair” this year at the South Dakota State Fair.
Richard is the author of three novels portraying the positive virtues of rural South Dakota living. “Flyover Country” was his first in 2012, followed by “The Fred Weber Story, A Flyover Country Novel” and then “Tom and Sarah: The Beginning,” this past summer.
Skorupski will present his books in the State Fair Arts Building from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturday, Sept. 5. He will discuss his books, his reasons for writing them and the stories soon to follow. He will be happy to answer questions about writing and self publishing.
Skorupski moved to South Dakota with his wife, Cheryl, in 2004. He was so impressed with

AUTHOR - Page 3

Commission passes ordinance to allow Sunday liquor

BY ROGER LARSEN
OF THE PLAINSMAN
HURON — Sales of liquor on Sundays becomes legal in Huron near the end of September, after the City Commission supported a request made by local bar owners and retailers to align the ordinance with state law.
After they explained their reasons for their support or opposition, the commission voted 4-1 to approve the change.

It takes effect 20 days after publication of the ordinance in the newspaper.
Mayor Paul Aylward said while the issue is not a new one in Huron, it still generated many calls and emails in the week since first reading was approved and publicized.
State law allows cities to be more restrictive with Sunday sales of on- and off-sale liquor. Most major South Dakota cities allow it. It's also permitted in smaller towns in Beadle County.

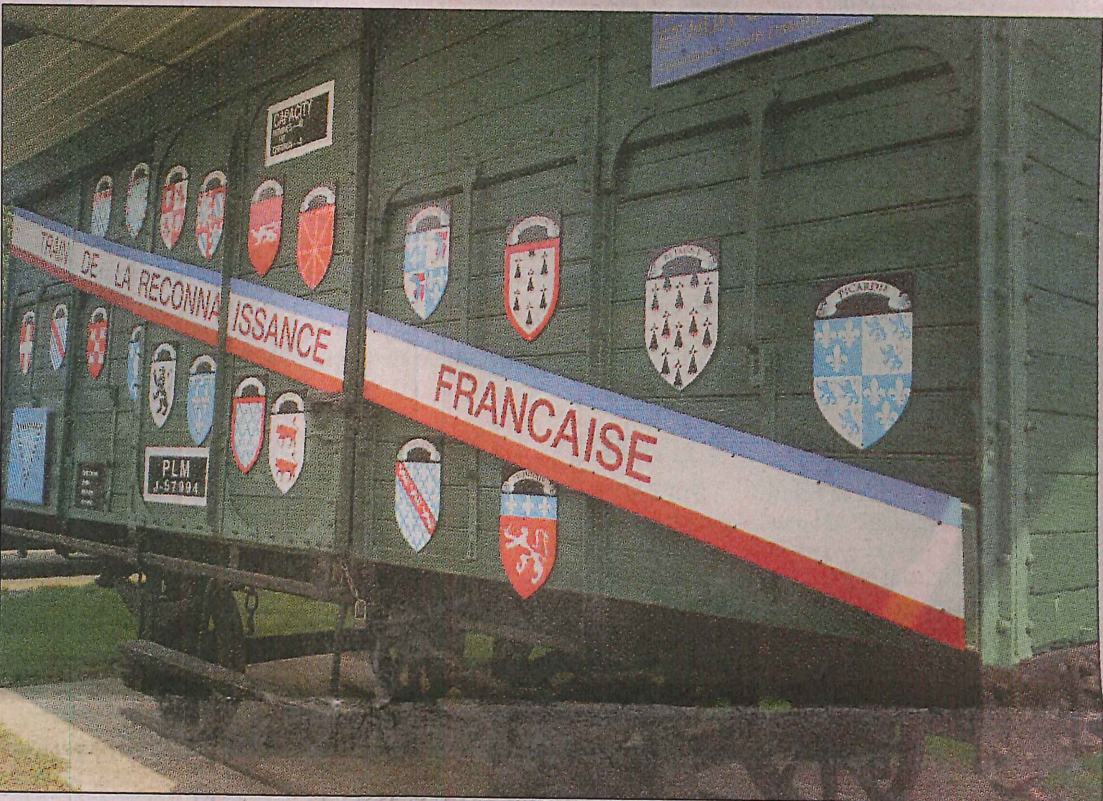
Commissioner Doug Kludt said most of the callers he heard from oppose Sunday sales.
He said it's a personal freedom issue and, as a lawyer, believes Huron's prohibition may be unconstitutional.
In his two and a half years on the commission, Gary Harrington said he has never had such a response to any of the heady issues the board has considered.
He said he would like to get all city

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COMMISS

The Merci Train of Gratitude

BY LOUISE VAN POLL
FOR THE PLAINSMAN
HURON — Huron is fortunate to have South Dakota's French Merci boxcar in town. And what better place than on the State Fairgrounds where thousands of visitors are able to visit it annually?
But this was not the original destination for the Merci Traincar and Huron had a little help from the weather in landing this beautiful symbol of friendship and gratitude as its resting place.
The story of the rail cars actually begins in 1947, after the end of World War II.
During the war, the German army had pillaged and ransacked France. Most of the food was used to feed the occupation forces. Machinery and equipment was sent back to Germany for the war effort. Anything of value was looted by the invading army.
By the time German forces



LOUISE VAN POLL/PLAINSMAN
This Merci Train boxcar arrived in Huron in 1949, bearing gifts of thanks from the people of France for the role that the United States played in the outcome of World War II.

On of state's richest men claims he is insolvent

SIOUX FALLS (AP) — A man believed to be one of the wealthiest in South Dakota says he is insolvent.
Tom Vucurevich, of Rapid City, heir to the late banking magnate and philanthropist John T. Vucurevich, has notified creditors including the City of Sioux Falls that he and his wife, Claudia, do not have the money to pay debts, the Argus Leader newspaper reports.
"Taking into account the liabilities and claims against Mr. and Mrs. Vucurevich, together with the assets that Mr. Dell and I have been able to identify and reasonably value, Mr. and Mrs. Vucurevich are insolvent," said the report compiled by Michael Dell, an accountant

for Vucurevich, and independent economist Donald Frankenfeld.
Vucurevich referred questions to his attorney, Mark O'Leary, who said he doesn't publicly discuss matters related to his clients.
About 20 creditors have claims of more than \$11 million. The claims were generated when Vucurevich struck deals with some of the former lenders and business partners of his son, Kent Vucurevich, who declared bankruptcy in 2011.
The city of Sioux Falls is suing to recoup \$279,000 in utility costs from a housing development. Assistant City Attorney Diane Best declined comment.

Same mountain, new name

JOSH LEDERMAN
MARK THIESSEN
ASSOCIATED PRESS
WASHINGTON (AP) — The Obama administration will change the name of North America's tallest mountain peak from Mount McKinley to Denali, the White House said, a major symbolic gesture to Alaska Natives on the eve of President Barack Obama's historic visit to Alaska.
By renaming the peak Denali, an Athabascan word meaning "the high one," Obama waded into a sensitive and decades-old conflict between residents of Alaska and Ohio.
Alaskans have informally called the mountain Denali for years, but the federal government recognizes its name invoking the 25th president,

born in Ohio and assassinated early in his second term.
The White House said the renaming is part of an effort to improve relations with Native Alaskans.
Julie Kitka, president of the Alaska Federation of Natives, said in an interview Sunday that the new policy announcement would have a concrete as well as psychological effect on Alaska Natives. "It's symbolic," Kitka said.
McKinley was an Ohio native, elected president in 1896, who never set foot in Alaska.
"With our own sense of reverence for this place, we are officially renaming the mountain Denali in recognition of the traditions of Alaska Natives and the strong support of the people of Alaska," said Interior Secretary Sally Jewell.

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DR: From Page 1

the state he started writing about it. He created the imaginary town of Helen, S.D., and is building stories about the people living in and around that small town.

The author's wife is the cover artist for all of his novels and a sample of her work will also be on display.

During the time on Saturday, all copies of Skorupski's books purchased at the fair will be signed by the author.

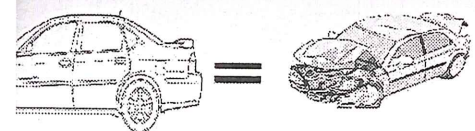
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CLAIM:

From Page 1

Some creditors are hoping for a better resolution.

"Tom is a great man," said Jason Appel, executive vice president at Plains Commerce Bank, which has the largest claim, \$4.7 million. "He has said he is going to sort his way through this."

John T. Vucurevich built a banking empire before dying in 2005. A foundation in his name distributes about \$5 million annually to charities, universities and nonprofits.

ing community support.

A TIF could be a way for the city to develop areas such as the South Town Addition south of Coborn's.

As Monday's meeting began, Aylward showed a photo on the commission room screen of sacks of garbage.

A resident sent the photo to the mayor, explaining that it was garbage she had picked up during her walks. She challenged the mayor to have other residents also pick up garbage before the State Fair opens on Thursday.

Aylward announced that challenge to the public and urged people to clean up for the thousands of visitors coming to Huron.

"If we all do a little bit, no

Monday in observance of the Labor Day holiday.

City offices will be closed on Monday.

The solid waste department rubble site will be closed this Saturday and on Labor Day. The Monday garbage, recycling and grass collection routes will be done on Wednesday, Sept. 9. Residents are reminded to have their containers at the regular collection points the night before as the drivers will not be rerouted.

arrested for driving under the influence, drove her car into a clothing store.

Morning fire destroys Watertown sales barn

WATERTOWN (AP) — An early morning fire destroyed a sale barn at South Dakota Livestock Sales in Watertown.

The blaze started about 1:30 a.m. Monday. Assistant Fire Chief Don Rowland says the cause wasn't immediately determined.

No people were injured, and no animals were in the barn when it burned. State Highway 20 was shut down for a few hours while fire fighters battled the blaze.

MERCI:

were finally driven out of France, they took everything they could carry and tried to destroy what they couldn't. The French survivors had nothing left and were dependent on foreign aid.

Drew Pearson, a newspaper columnist and radio commentator, in response to a letter to the editor, began a food drive for the people of France. The response far exceeded his wildest hopes.

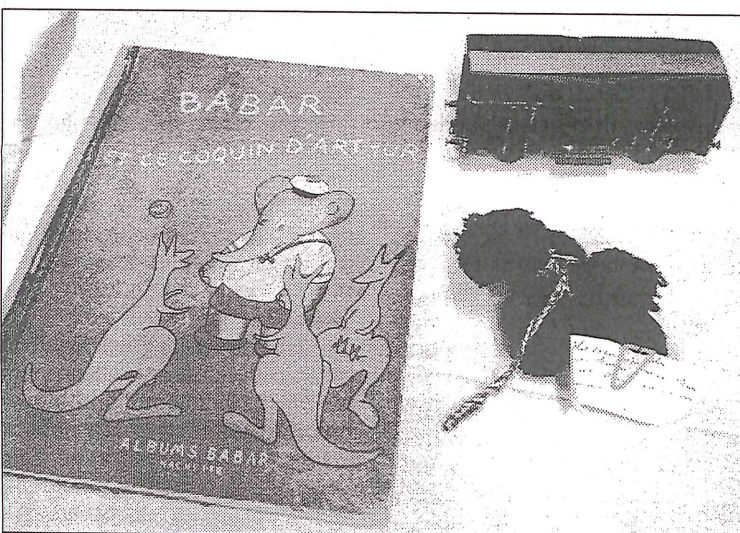
Hawaii, which was not even a state, donated two box cars full of sugar. Texas supplied 29 rail cars full of supplies. A 22-year-old student in Alabama collected donations from classmates to contribute 7,200 pounds of food to the Friendship Train, as it had been dubbed.

When the grass-roots effort was completed two months later, more than 700 freight cars filled with supplies were shipped to France. The value at that time was \$40 million.

Supplies continued to pour into New York for months and were sent to 14 European nations in all.

At the Merci Train reception in Huron, the French consul to the city of Chicago explained to the crowd how deeply touched the French people were with the Friendship Train, saying, "This train meant so much, particularly for the children of France, some of whom for the first time in their lives were able to taste cake and chocolate and have a little bit of extra sugar."

In France, a railway worker and Army veteran, Andre Picard, came up with the idea of sending a Merci or Thank You boxcar full of gifts to the people



LOUISE VAN POLL/PLAINSMAN

These items, part of the gifts from France on the gratitude train, were auctioned off in Huron in February 1949 and were donated to the Dakotaland Museum this past summer by Cherie Thompson Egger.

of America. In all, 49 boxcars were sent to America in 1949, one for each state plus one for Washington D.C. and the territory of Hawaii to share.

Because thousands of World War I veterans were still living, it was decided to use the nearly antique boxcars that soldiers from both world wars would recognize. The 40 and 8 cars were so named because they could hold either 40 men or eight horses for transport to the front lines.

All the gifts were precious or had special significance to the people who donated them. The items, more than 52,000, included 49 dolls from fashion designers, soil and trees, a pair of worn wooden shoes, a jeweled Legion of Honor medal, 49 wedding dresses, books, works of art, clocks, and many, many toys from the children.

One stuffed dog was donated by 10-year-old Helen Petit, who included the following note:

"I am sending you one of my preferred children, my big LouLou. It seems that I was one year old when Meme offered it to me for my father who was a prisoner of war in Germany. I love my LouLou very much, but I offer it to you in gratitude for all the Americans have done for my country and also because the dog represents fidelity. I thought that I would keep it all my life, so it is with sorrow that I embrace LouLou for the last time. You will take good care of him and speak to him sometimes of his little French mistress. I am also sending you a picture of myself so that you can see me and show me to my LouLou. I know that you will take my place near him. Without knowing you, I love

From Page 1

you and embrace you with all my heart."

South Dakota's Gov. George Mikelson had appointed a Merci Train committee and by Feb. 10, 1949, was ready to welcome the Thank You train at Pierre. But it was a brutal winter that year all across the plains with blizzards, sub-zero temperatures and blowing gales. Travel into Pierre was impossible.

The Feb. 10 edition of the *Huron Plainsman* reported that Pierre was buried in snow and that the governor had decided to officially welcome the Merci Car in Huron on Feb. 15, the day after the train's arrival in Huron. Huron had escaped the worst of the region's snowfall and was more accessible to folks traveling from other cities.

According to the same *Plainsman* article, the largest and most expensive items in the boxcar would be distributed to the State and Custer Museums. The nine Voitures of the American Legion 40 et 8 in South Dakota auctioned off the other items to raise money for a whirlpool bath for polio victims.

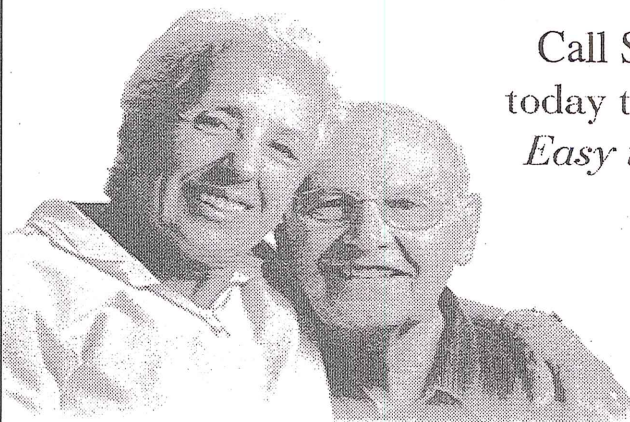
This summer the Dakotaland Museum received a few artifacts from the South Dakota boxcar. They are a "Babar the Elephant" book in its original French and a French poodle, made of yarn, both purchased at the 1949 auction by Donald Thompson, a World War II vet, and a toy replica boxcar purchased by Charles Horine, a World War I veteran, both of Huron. The replica boxcar had been on display at Huron's American Legion Post for several years.

On his Web site, Earl R. Bennet, who made several journeys to visit all 49 boxcars, wrote, "The Merci Train played an important, but little known role in the historical friendship that has existed between our two nations since before America gained its independence. In fact, the French people fought with us to achieve that status and also gave us another gift which has become an important symbol of America's freedom around the world: The Statue of Liberty."

So take a moment to stop by the old boxcar on the Fairgrounds during the State Fair and then visit the Dakotaland Museum to see these artifacts from the Merci Train on display.

Louise Van Poll is a columnist and freelance writer for the *Plainsman*.

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