

Bonita

From Page 1

made friends. We laughed, joked and enjoyed our time together.”

She also experienced their generosity, whether it was meals, presents or hospitality in their homes. “They are a big gift-giving culture. They gave me material for an African gown that you take to a tailor and have made into a dress,” she said. “They make their own clothes, and they wash their clothes by hand.”

Her African hosts also shared their personal lives. While her life back in Yankton was much different, she learned that she shared many of the same joys and heartaches.

And she embraced the simpler African lifestyle. “They are happy people. They don’t have much wealth, but they don’t need it to be happy. They are not possessed by possessions,” she said.

MAKING THE RETURN TRIP

In 2010, she spent about three weeks in Tanzania before starting her three-week teaching assignment in Uganda. Her students ranged in age from the mid-20s to the mid-60s. While in Uganda, she visited sites ranging from a martyr’s shrine to the “White Nile,” or source of the great African river.

“They were having the World Cup (soccer championship) in South Africa while I was over there,” she said. “We would watch the games (on television) and cheer for the African countries, and I would cheer for the U.S. team whenever they played.”

However, the nuns’ celebration was marred by two terrorist bombings in the Ugandan capital of Kampala and at a nearby village. One attack targeted a sports bar frequented by young people. A nun’s family and friends were killed in the blast.

“It showed me how vulnerable we were in Kampala,” Sister Bonita said. “We heard the blast but weren’t in any physical danger. We had a gated community with a guard and a door that was locked. Still, it was surreal.”

The bombing created a fear that remained among many people, she said.

“We left the center at 1:30 p.m. and expected to return by 3 p.m. but we didn’t return until after 5 p.m.,” she said. “We were in the market, and every time there was an item on the ground, people thought it was a bomb and called the police. It created such a traffic jam — Kampala was a total gridlock for three hours.”

However, Sister Bonita said she never felt fear, even when strangers approached her car shortly after the attack. She didn’t realize her courage was leaving a strong impression on her hosts.

“At the graduation ceremony (for her students), they said they were so amazed that Sr. Bonita wasn’t afraid after the bombing. They said, ‘She was sitting in the front seat with the window down,’” the Yankton nun said. “The Sisters had been so worried that I would be scared and not go anywhere. But I wasn’t the least bit worried. You just live the best you can.”

THE THIRD TIME

Sister Bonita’s most recent trip to Kenya and Tanzania came last year, from July through October.

In Nairobi, Kenya, she taught 58 Sisters representing more than 40 different congregations from five different countries — Congo, Kenya, Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda.

In Morogoro, Tanzania, Sister Bonita taught 25 sisters from a variety of congregations. She worked with nuns who arrived with no computer experience. By the end of the course, these Sisters were able to type, surf the Web, send email and create documents. The Sisters in the web design course arrived with basic technology skills, but by the end of this course, each Sister had created and published a website accessible via the Internet.

“They worked extremely hard,” she said. “When we got done on the last day of classes, they were proud as peacocks.”

With their website skills, the Sisters could help promote local products, bringing income for their people — including women raising families alone because they were abandoned with the children.



COURTESY PHOTO
Sister Bonita Gacnik holds an infant at an African orphanage for children who have lost their parents to AIDS.

“I had a Sister from South Sudan tell me, for the first time, she was able to type out her exams and print them out on the computer,” Sister Bonita said. “And the Sisters could process confidential information about their congregation without someone else seeing it. They didn’t have to rely on other people.”

However, many areas lack infrastructure, which requires creativity in accessing the Internet, Sister Bonita said. People use cell phones, and they purchase data minutes for cards they carry with them until finding a cybercafe or other computer.

Besides teaching the African nuns, Sister Bonita taught math and technology at Bigwa Secondary School in Morogoro. The class consisted of more than 50 girls and Sisters from throughout Tanzania. Sister Bonita put aside the coursework at times so she and the students got to know each other. At one point, they even sang a John Denver song.

Sister Bonita also experienced deeply moving sights while in Kenya and Tanzania. She accompanied the Brothers of Charity and visited slums with deplorable living conditions. Other times, she visited orphanages for children whose parents died of AIDS.

On another occasion, she visited a home for men with disabilities, run by the Brothers of Mother Teresa of Calcutta. She helped feed a man, and she witnessed acts of compassion among the men themselves.

“One man had his legs cut off as a child when he was run over by a train,” she said. “Another man at the home was called ‘Rabbit’ because he didn’t talk and jumped around a lot. But he would pick up this man (without legs) and carry him wherever needed.”

She helped harvest tomatoes and onions, finding herself covered with mud and grasshoppers. She also helped raise the rabbits at the Holistic Center in Morogoro. And she visited a crocodile farm and a rose farm.

She visited with Massai men just outside the Nairobi Game Park. She was allowed to enter one of the tribal huts, considered extremely rare for an outsider.

As a sign of hospitality while visiting a site, she was given traditional piece of cloth which women drape over their shoulders. And she learned that flies in a household are considered a sign of wealth, because it means livestock and other animals are nearby.

As she spoke of her travels, Sister Bonita showed a deep love for people that she will likely never see again. She keeps a picture of one class of nuns, with the name next to each woman. And she prays for them and all the others whose lives she touched, and touched her, if only for a short time.

Would she go back to Africa? It depends on God’s will, she said.

“I have a holy indifference,” she said. “If I’m needed, I will say ‘Yes’ and enjoy every minute of it. But if I’m not needed, it’s not like I have a personal need to return.”

Regardless of whether they meet again, Sister Bonita knows her life has been changed forever.

“These (nuns) are holy women, dedicated women who truly live their faith. I have truly fallen in love with every one of them,” she said.

“The little bit that I shared, my life was so enriched. I found this to be a sacred journey.”

You can follow Randy Dockendorf on Twitter at twitter.com/RDockendorf. Discuss this story at www.yankton.net.

OBITUARIES

Victor Steffen

Victor Joseph Steffen, age 96 of Constance, Nebraska, died on Wednesday, February 5, 2014 at the Golden Living Center in Hartington, Nebraska.

Mass of Christian Burial will be on Monday, February 10, 2014 at 10:30 a.m. at St. Joseph’s Catholic Church in Constance, Nebraska with the Rev. David Fulton officiating. Burial will be in the St. Joseph’s Cemetery in Constance with military honors by the Crofton American Legion Post 131.

Visitation will be on Sunday, at church in Constance, from 3:00-5:30 p.m. with a Vigil Service at 4:00 p.m. Visitation will continue on Monday at church one hour prior to services. Arrangements are under the direction of the Wintz Funeral Home in Hartington.

Victor Joseph was born on a farm four miles east of Crofton, Nebraska on January 19, 1918 to Frank and Mary (Mueller) Steffen. He was the third in a family of ten children. He grew up and attended elementary school in Constance. He graduated from Crofton High School in 1936. He attended Grand Island Business College for two years.



Steffen

Victor was employed by the Federal Social Security Program in Baltimore, MD for two and a half years. He was drafted

into the U.S. Army in 1941. He served 4 and one half years and was honorably discharged in January of 1946 as a Warrant officer. When he returned home he chose to farm rather than continue employment with the Federal Government. He farmed the family farm near Constance and was a member of the National Farmers Organization and supported the Center for Rural Affairs.

Victor married Hilaria Van Heek on June 13, 1950 in Crofton at St. Rose of Lima Catholic Church. Together they raised two sons and three daughters. Victor was a member of St. Joseph’s Catholic Church in Constance and the Catholic Order of Foresters. He served on the parish council, was a lector and sang in the parish choir for most of his adult life. Victor enjoyed singing with the “Men of Note” for more than twelve years. He was also a member of the Crofton American Legion Post 131.

He is survived by his wife, Hilaria of Hartington, NE; five children and their spouses Mary and Edward Sanders of Miami, OK, Rita and Bob Waibel of Minneapolis, MN, Kenneth and Joanne Steffen of Arroyo Grande, CA, Carla and Jim Tressell of Arvada, CO, Michael and LuAnn Steffen of Laurel, NE; 5 grandchildren; 4 great grandchildren; 2 step-grandchildren; 2 sisters — Sr. Irma Steffen OSF of Omaha, NE, Denelda “Nell” Potts of Crofton, NE; brother-in-law Irvin Arens of Randolph, NE; sister-in-law Dorothy Steffen of Yankton, SD; many nieces and nephews.

Victor was preceded in death by his parents; five sisters Adelaide DeBlauw, Irene DeBlauw, Clara Steffen, Sr. Antonelle (Marina) Steffen OSF, Barbara Arens; two brothers Ralph and Clarence Steffen.

Memorials may be made to St. Joseph’s Parish, Constance, Nebraska.

Yankton Press & Dakotan
February 8, 2014



Joe DeBlauw

Joe DeBlauw, age 101 of Crofton, Nebraska died on Thursday, February 06, 2014 at Sister James Nursing Home in Yankton, SD.

Mass of Christian Burial will be on Monday, February 10, 2014 at 2:00 p.m. at St. Rose of Lima Catholic Church in Crofton with the Rev. Michael Schmitz officiating. Burial will be at St. Rose Cemetery in Crofton. Visitation will be on Sunday at the Wintz Funeral Home in Crofton, NE from 5-8:00 p.m. with a vigil service at 7:00 p.m. Visitation will continue on Monday at church one hour prior to services.

Pallbearers will be Jim Beideck, Dan Beideck, Bob Scherschligt, Todd Harris, Rey Sias, Adam Sawatzke, Alex Sawatzke, Luke DeBlauw, Ben DeBlauw, and Mike DeBlauw.

Honorary pallbearers will be Joe’s grandchildren and great grandchildren.

Joe R. DeBlauw was born on April 28, 1912 in LeMars, Iowa to Gerrit and Anna (Reisch) DeBlauw. He grew up in Crofton and then moved to Buffalo, NY in 1935 to work in a bakery. He came back to Crofton in 1936 and worked for several area farmers. Joe married Adelaide E. Steffen on



DeBlauw

March 30, 1937 at St. Joseph’s Catholic Church in Constance, NE by Father Latsch. Joe farmed thru the years

until he retired and moved into Crofton in 1983. Joe was a woodworker and he continued this hobby during his retirement years. Joe still mowed his yard at age 93 with a push mower. In 2006 he and Adelaide moved to Majestic Bluffs independent living in Yankton, SD and later moved into Sister James Care Center in 2011. Joe and Adelaide lived life to the fullest and Joe’s motto was, “What is is!”

Joe was a member of St. Rose of Lima Catholic Church, served as a church trustee, and was a member of the Catholic Order of Foresters. He also was a board member for the Crofton Public School. Joe loved to play cards with Adelaide and their family and friends. He played baseball in his younger years for the Constance Team as a first baseman. He was known for the longest home run shot ever over the center field fence at a

Farmers and Merchants baseball game in Crofton. Joe later umpired many baseball games.

He is survived by his six children and their spouses, Robert and Dee DeBlauw of Englewood, CO, Joleen and John Beideck of Omaha, NE, Sheryl and Richard Scherschligt of Champaign, IL, Irma and Allan Arens of Crofton, NE, Marina and Roger Sawatzke of Council Bluffs, IA, Gary and Linda DeBlauw of Crofton; 15 grandchildren; 24 great grandchildren; 2 step great grandchildren; and many nieces and nephews.

Joe was preceded in death by his parents, wife Adelaide on August 3, 2012 at the age of 97 years; six brothers and sisters and their spouses, Martin and Dorothy DeBlauw, Veronica and Hank Guenther, Pete and Ann DeBlauw, Lou and Catherine DeBlauw, Marie DeBlauw, Tony and Irene DeBlauw.

Yankton Press & Dakotan
February 8, 2014



Terry Bye

Terry Wayne Bye, age 89 was born April 25, 1924 in Yankton, SD. He passed away peacefully on January 24, 2014 in Marietta, GA. He was a beloved husband, father, grandfather and friend to all.

He is survived by his wife of over 66 years, Fern Long Bye; son Bill (Denise) of Portage, MI; daughter Linda (Jim) Mason of Marietta, GA; 5 grandchildren and 2 great grandchildren. Terry was a South Dakota native and long-time resident of Edina, MN. He and Fern were members of Mt. Olivet Lutheran Church in Minneapolis, MN. Terry was a decorated WWII Army veteran. He participated in the D-Day Allied Normandy invasion and was wounded in the Battle of the Bulge. Terry retired from Texaco Oil Company after 42 years of service. He attained numerous sales and management promotions

during his tenure and traveled throughout the Dakotas and Minnesota. Terry cherished his family, friends, loved his country and his fellow veterans.

A celebration of his life will be held in the Minneapolis area at a later date, with interment to follow at Ft. Snelling National Cemetery.

Yankton Press & Dakotan
February 8, 2014

Anna Peitz

Anna C. Peitz, 92 of Crofton, Neb. died on Thursday at the Bloomfield Good Samaritan Center in Bloomfield, Neb.

Mass of Christian Burial will be on Tuesday, February 11 at 10:30 a.m. at St. Rose of

Lima Catholic Church in Crofton with the Rev. Michael Schmitz officiating.

Burial will be at St. Boniface Cemetery in Menominee, Nebraska.

Visitation will be on Monday from 5-8 p.m. with a Vigil Service at 7 p.m. at the Wintz Funeral Home in Crofton. Visitation will continue on Tuesday at church one hour prior to services.

Mary Olofson

Mary Louise Bagstad Olofson, 86, formerly of Mission Hill, died Tuesday, Jan. 28, 2014, in Ogden Utah.

Funeral services are today (Saturday, Feb. 8) at the Trinity Presbyterian Church, Ogden.

Science Camp Opening To Apps. Soon

PIERRE — Two South Dakota high school seniors will have an opportunity to travel to West Virginia this summer for the annual National Youth Science Camp, a residential science education program.

Two seniors from each of the 50 states and students from several other countries will receive full scholarships to attend the camp sponsored by the National Youth Science Foundation. Recipients will get to complete hands-on research projects and exchange ideas with scientists and other professionals from academia and

industry during the nearly month-long experience, from June 27-July 20.

The NYSC program covers a broad spectrum of natural, physical, and applied sciences including biology, physics, chemistry, math, geology, astronomy, environmental science, engineering, medicine, space science and technology.

Participants spend most of their time at the camp in West Virginia. In addition, they spend three days in Washington, D.C. studying national science concerns in meetings with scientists and with behind-the-scenes visits to sites

like NASA’s Goddard Space Flight Center and the National Academy of Sciences.

Applicants must be South Dakota residents in their senior year of high school and demonstrate superior academic proficiency, particularly in math or science; eagerness to explore varied topics; and leadership abilities.

Applications are available at www.nysc.org and must be submitted online by March 1.

For more information, contact South Dakota’s state selection coordinator, Sam Shaw at the South Dakota Department of Education, at (605) 773-5229 or sam.shaw@state.sd.us/.

IN REMEMBRANCE

Beverly Y. Christensen 10:30 AM, Monday
Trinity Lutheran Church
Yankton

Victor J. Steffen 10:30 AM, Monday
St. Joseph’s Catholic Church
Constance

Joe DeBlauw 2:00 PM, Monday
St. Rose of Lima Catholic Church
Crofton

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Volin Town Hall
Feb. 9th
7 a.m. - 1 p.m.
Serving Pancakes, Eggs, and Sausage
Free Will Donation
Pinocle Tournament
Registration at 12:30 p.m.
Starting at 1 p.m.
\$20 per 2 person team

Raffle for 50" LED T.V.