

# Bierce Is A Fascinating Writer

BY TOBIN BARNES

"PHILANTHROPIST, n. A rich (and usually bald) old gentleman who has trained himself to grin while his conscience is picking his pocket."

That's a definition from American writer Ambrose Bierce's Devil's Dictionary.

Bierce is better known for his Civil War short stories, such as "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge" about a southern saboteur who, as he's about to be hanged, imagines his escape back to his wife. But imagination ends up far from reality as the story concludes with the man dead at the end of a rope.

Bierce can be caustic, if not cynical. Some referred to him as "Bitter Bierce."

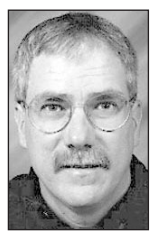
I, on the other hand, find him fascinating, especially for someone who lived most of his life in the staid nineteenth century, serving gallantly as a Union officer in the Civil War.

He disappeared without a trace in the midst of the Mexican Revolution. He was by then an elderly journalist following a rebel band and, evidently, still looking for adventure. It's speculated that he was probably put up against a wall by the Federales and shot to pieces.

So why do I find his writing fascinating, cynical though it can oftentimes be?

Well, cynicism can be a useful tool for both the social critic and the satirist. It can snap us back into a more realistic viewpoint whenever we've been too much seduced into lala-land by the slick spinmeisters and charlatans that besiege us.

Dreams have their uses but they must be fulfilled in reality.



Barnes

And that's where a well-tempered cynicism, albeit one that does not admit defeat, can actually aid humanity.

Bierce's Devil's Dictionary is a satirical masterpiece. Its jaundiced eye spares nothing and no one.

"PALACE, n. A fine and costly residence, particularly that of a great official. The residence of a high dignity of the Christian Church is called a palace; that of the Founder of his religion was known as a field, or wayside. There is progress."

The reconfiguration of accepted definitions is a brilliant ploy.

Perhaps Bierce got the idea from reading definitions from the very first dictionary of the English language that was compiled by another sometime cynic, Samuel Johnson. It took Johnson ten years to single-handedly put his dictionary together, and that, in itself, is quite an achievement. And being the first to do anything, of course, is always significant.

Therefore, maybe we can excuse Johnson for the obscurity of some of his definitions which sometimes need the use of another dictionary to comprehend: "NETWORK. Anything reticulated or decussated, at equal distances, with interstices between the intersections." And "COUGH. A convulsion of the lungs vellicated by some sharp serosity."

The aspect of Johnson's definitions that might have inspired Bierce was Johnson's willingness

to editorialize. For example, Johnson's definition for "OATS. A grain which in England is generally given to horses, but in Scotland supports the people." Johnson obviously did not care for Scotsmen and, it seems, haggis.

But back to Bierce.

Here's one of Bierce's longest definitions (I think it's worth the read and the thought, however): "PAST, n. That part of Eternity with some small fraction of which we have a slight and regrettable acquaintance. A moving line called the Present parts it from an imaginary period known as the Future. These two grand divisions of Eternity, of which the one is continually effacing the other, are entirely unlike. The one is dark with sorrow and disappointment, the other bright with prosperity and joy. The Past is the realm of song. In the one crouches Memory, clad in sackcloth and ashes, mumbling penitential prayer; in the sunshine of the other Hope flies with a free wing, beckoning to temples of success and bowers of ease. Yet the Past is the Future of yesterday, the Future is the Past of tomorrow. They are one—the knowledge and the dream."

Cynical? No doubt. Neglectful of the positives in life? Probably.

Profound and grimly instructive in its wit? Terribly.

**Tobin Barnes, a high school English teacher, gets his skewed viewpoints of life from staring too much at Crow Peak, which looms above his home a few miles outside Spearfish.**

# Psychic Car: My Computer Knew The Spare Was Flat

BY TOM AND RAY MAGLIOZZI

Dear Tom and Ray:

I have enjoyed your column for years and have always admired your bottomless knowledge and advice for car owners, abusers, know-nothings and BYMs (back-yard mechanics). I have but one question I need you to resolve, and then I can drive happily ever after. The "Low Tire Pressure" warning light on my dash came on this morning. So I looked at all four tires, and they appeared OK. Just to be safe, I fired up my air compressor (with apologies to my sleeping neighbors) and topped off all four tires. The tire warning light returned! I eventually checked the manual of my Toyota Tundra, and it told me to check the spare, too. I did, and sure enough, it was low. My question to

you is: How did it know? How does the computer system know that the air pressure is low in my spare tire? Weight? Sonar? Internet? Seismic vibrations? Make me happy and tell me the answer, boys. - Kim

TOM: It works via a wireless transmitter inside the tire, Kim.

RAY: It was first tried with wires, but they kept getting all wrapped up in the axles.

TOM: There's a small pressure gauge and wireless transmitter that are part of the valve stem (where you put the air in) in most tires these days. When the pressure drops below a predetermined level, it signals the car's computer wirelessly, and the indicator on your dashboard lights up. Pretty neat, huh?

RAY: On some higher-end cars, the computer even differentiates



CLICK & CLACK

between the tires. So the computer can tell you, for instance, that your "left front tire is low." Of course, that means you have to reprogram the system every time you rotate your tires, but no one said progress would be easy, Kim. Write to Click and Clack in care of this newspaper, or e-mail them by visiting the Car Talk Web site at [www.cartalk.com](http://www.cartalk.com).

© 2010, King Features Syndicate, Inc.

## SCHOLASTICS

### SPIRIT OF MTI

The faculty at Mitchell Technical Institute announces the eleventh annual Spirit of MTI awards to recognize one student graduating from each program.

These students have been chosen by their instructors as the 2010 graduates who best embody the "spirit" of MTI and exemplify their chosen occupation through study, hard work, reliability, contribution to their program, and future potential in their employment field. Receiving the award for Computer Systems Technology was Kyle Anderson, Yankton. The recipient for Utilities Technology was Vincent Wellenstein, Yankton.

Each was presented a plaque at the MTI commencement ceremonies held Friday, May 7.

### STUDENTS SELECTED TO ATTEND NATIONAL SCIENCE CAMP

PIERRE — Theodore Fennema of Avon High School has been selected to represent South Dakota at the 2010 National Youth Science Camp. Fennema will join delegates from across the country at the all-expense-paid honors program. They will spend June 29-July 23 at Camp Pocahontas in the Monongahela National Forest in the eastern mountains of West Virginia. Delegates will study at the National Radio Astronomy Observatory.

### BYE AWARDED SCHOLARSHIPS

BROOKINGS — Brian Bye of Yankton was awarded the Economics Department Scholarship and the Henry Lewis Leonhardt Scholarship for the 2010-2011 academic year at South Dakota State University.

Bye, the son of Todd and Lynne Bye, is majoring in agribusiness at SDSU, where he is active in golf and SDSU Statesmen.

### MTI STUDENTS NAMED STATE CHAMPIONS

Several students from Mitchell Technical Institute were crowned state champions at the South Dakota SkillsUSA competition and award ceremony was held recently in Rapid City. Placing second in Carpentry was Kenneth Erickson, Wakonda.

Placing third in Motorcycle Service Technology was Tanner Kusel, Yankton.

### NEBRASKA WESLEYAN AWARDS DEGREES

LINCOLN, Neb. - Dr. Fred Ohles, president of Nebraska Wesleyan University, awarded degrees to nearly 430 undergraduate and graduate students during Nebraska Wesleyan University's 121st annual commencement held Saturday, May 15.

Honor graduates are designated below with highest distinction (3.93 or higher GPA), high distinction (3.86-3.92 GPA), and distinction (3.80-3.85 GPA). Area Students who received degrees from Nebraska Wesleyan are listed below.

### BACHELOR OF ARTS

Forldyce: Kelsey Stevens, Psychology; Kristine Sulbeck, Global Studies; Spanish; Melinda Hofstetter, Psychology

### BACHELOR OF SCIENCE

Yankton: Justin Iverson, Psychology

### NORTHEAST NURSING STUDENTS PINNED IN CEREMONY

NORFOLK — Both associate degree and practical nursing students received their nursing pins in a special Pinning Ceremony at Northeast Community College in Norfolk recently.

In addition to the Pinning Ceremony, two associate degree nursing and two practical nursing students were presented the Essence of Nursing Award for their consistent academic effort, caring actions, positive motivation toward classroom learning and clinical experience, and professional behaviors.

Jennifer Williams, Allen, was one of the practical nursing students honored with award.

Area students who were pinned with the Associate Degree Nursing include: • Creighton: Ellyse Shaffer. • Laurel: Sasha Hackney. • Randolph: Jessica Haselhorst.

Area students who were pinned with the Practical Nursing pin include:

- Allen: Jennifer Williams.
- Bloomfield: Alicia Castaneda, Greta Friedrichsen, Ashley Labile.
- Creighton: Candice York.
- Hartington: Crystal Fellmeier.
- Yankton: Jennifer Langeland.

### SDPOA ESSAY CONTEST

The South Dakota Peace Officers' Association (SDPOA) is proud to announce the winners in its 11th annual Essay Contest, "Why I will say no to Alcohol and Drugs," for all of South Dakota's eighth-graders.

The following area student was a runner-up and received \$50 plus \$25 for their classrooms: Kristin Lambert, a student at Centerville School, Centerville.

## BIRTHDAY

### WILLARD HELLWIG

A special invitation to all my friends and loyal customers of Willard Hellwig to attend my 82nd birthday party at 2 PM on Saturday May 22 at the Sunrise apartment dining room at 2015 Green St. and located west of the Credit Union Bank in Yankton S.D. formerly living at 111th 5th St. in Menno, S.D.

Having spent 50 years as a farm machinery dealer and insulation installer also Way Side Cafeteria operation of 10 years in Menno.

## POOL TIME!

**Memorial Pool Hours:**  
1:00-4:45pm and 6:00-8:30pm Daily  
**Summit Activity Center**

**Pool Hours:**  
M/W/F 6:30pm-8:30pm

SEASON POOL PASS	
Family (Immediate Family Only)	\$70.00
Individuals	\$35.00

Summit Activities Center members will receive a discount on the season pass if purchased at the SAC:

Family	\$60.00
Individuals	\$30.00

\*Pass applies only to open swim times.  
Passes good through Aug. 31

**DAILY PASSES**

*Family (Immediate Family Only)	\$8.00
Adults (18 & over)	\$4.00
Youth (17 & Under)	\$3.00

POOL  
OPENS  
MAY  
29TH!!

## BOYS & GIRLS CLUB

1804 Broadway

### Summer Programs open to public

Monday-Friday 1:30 – 5:30pm • June 1st – August 6th  
\$10 per 10-week class – Call 668-9710 to enroll  
Or only \$25 to join the Club for a year!  
Children who will be enrolled in grades 5th-12th by August 2010 are welcome.

<p><b>ImageMakers Photography</b> Mondays 2:30-3:30, Ages 10-18</p> <p>Image Makers delivers a state-of-the-art photography curriculum and encourages girls and boys to learn and practice photography skills and express themselves in creative and innovative ways.</p> <p><b>Money Matters</b> Tuesdays 2:30-3:30, Ages 13-18</p> <p>Money Matters is a financial literacy program designed to help teens expand their knowledge of money management and learn the skills that lead to financial independence and well-being.</p> <p><b>B.O.Y. (Best Of You)</b> Wednesdays 2:30-3:30, Ages 11-14</p> <p>B.O.Y. promotes and teaches responsibility while reinforcing positive behavior in male Club members. Each male age 11-14 is invited on this journey of maturation and personal growth.</p>	<p><b>NetSmartz</b> Thursdays 2:30-3:30, Ages 10-13</p> <p>NetSmartz teaches Internet safety skills through multi-media activities and online interaction with club professionals. Topics include personal safety, shopping safety, and ethical use of the Internet.</p> <p><b>Career Launch</b> Thursdays 2:30-3:30, Ages 13-18</p> <p>Career Launch is a career exploration and mentoring program that teaches teens to make good educational decisions, explore different careers and prepare for the workforce.</p> <p><b>G.I.R.L. (Girls In Real Life)</b> Wednesdays 2:30-3:30, Ages 10-18</p> <p>G.I.R.L. is a health, prevention, education and self-esteem enhancement program for girls age 10-18 that encourages healthy attitudes and lifestyles that enable young girls to develop their full potential.</p>
--	---

**The Club will also offer these activities this Summer:**  
Summer in the Park • Garden Club • Monday Bike Rides  
Scrapbooking • Creative Writing  
Art Class with Inky Doodles • Kiwanis Builders Torch Club

## Yankton Area Concert Association

Proudly Presents Its 2010-2011 Concert Season

**The Marlins**

Sunday, Oct. 3, 2010 • 4:00 p.m.  
Summit Center Theater

You've never heard a group of entertainers quiet like THE MARLINS! These four brothers will entertain you with a repertoire that covers the entire musical spectrum, including country, rock, big band, pop, classical, jazz and bluegrass.

**Forever Plaid**

Friday, Nov. 5, 2010 • 7:30 p.m.  
Summit Center Theater

Sing the songs and have a fun night out. You'll enjoy an evening of 50s music and theatre as you follow the adventure of these four delightful fellows as they return for "another chance."

**River City 6**

Sunday, Jan. 20, 2011 • 4:00 p.m.  
Summit Center Theater

A brass ensemble of 6 dynamic players from the famed River City Brass Band. Enjoy the show as the cast members of the River City 6 dazzles the crowd with lightning-fast licks, laughable antics, and unforgettable charm.

**The Abbey Road Band**

Sunday, April 10, 2011 • 7:30 p.m.  
Summit Center Theater

No smoke and mirrors, no wigs or costumes, this band is the real thing. Not only are they great musicians, they are professional, fun-loving people with great respect for the Beatles songs and sound.

**The Brett Family Singers**

Monday, May 16, 2011 • 7:30 p.m.  
Summit Center Theater

Direct from Branson, the BRETT FAMILY show is jam packed with feel good music, including classic favorites from the 30s and 40s through the 70s. The five members of this family present a varied program ranging from country, gospel, rock and roll, an patriotic to beautiful a cappella singing.

ADMISSION BY SEASON MEMBERSHIP ONLY!

(name(s) listed in the program)

<p><b>Contributing Levels of Membership</b></p> <p>\$2,500 Gold Sponsorship – 20 membership cards</p> <p>\$1,000 Silver Sponsorship – 10 membership cards</p> <p>\$750 Student Concert Sponsor – 8 membership cards</p> <p>\$500 Sponsor – 6 membership cards</p> <p>\$350 Angel – 5 membership cards</p> <p>\$250 Benefactor – 4 membership cards</p> <p>\$125 Patron – 2 membership cards</p> <p>\$65 Friend – 1 membership card</p>	<p><b>Other Levels of Membership:</b></p> <p>ADULT: \$50.00 (1 membership card)</p> <p>CHILDREN: Through 18 admitted FREE</p>
--	---

Makes a Great Gift!

(Contributors have tax-deductible gift & name printed in each program.) We have reciprocity with Mitchell, Norfolk & Columbus. Kristy Wyland, 665-7662; Larry Rupiper, Home 665-9736, Business 665-1212; or Betts Pulkkrabek, 463-2206

www.yanktonaca.webs.com

Please join us for a great lineup of entertainment!

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone # \_\_\_\_\_

Sponsorship Level \_\_\_\_\_

Clip and Mail-In!

Mail to:  
Yankton Area Concert Assoc.  
PO Box 673  
Yankton, SD 57078