

Herbst lived in obscurity, popularized by biography

By Thomas Henderson

Of the Emerald

"Who was Josephine Herbst?"

Herbst's biographer Elinor Langer hears that question quite a bit, and, frankly, she says she's getting tired of it.

People have asked Langer that question for 11 years, the time she spent researching and writing the biography, titled "Josephine Herbst." The book was published last summer, but the question remains.

Langer tried to provide an answer Tuesday night when she spoke about Herbst's life in the EMU Dad's Room as part of Women's History Week. The lecture was sponsored by the Center for the Study of Women in Society and by the Women's Studies department.

A former book columnist for Mother Jones, Langer also has been New York editor of Ramparts and a political reporter for Science. Her articles and reviews have appeared in Ms. and The New York Times Book Review, among other magazines.

Although she is currently on the editorial board of The Nation, she said she gave up journalism when she began writing her book and does not plan to return.

Herbst's career as a writer and social critic spanned the 1920s through the 1960s, Langer said, but her work faded into obscurity. It is extremely rare to find Herbst's writings in even the most extensive libraries, and

they can usually be found only after the most painstaking of searches, Langer added.

Langer herself came across Herbst when she discovered a trilogy Herbst wrote during the 1930s.

The trilogy was a kind of white "Roots," tracing the history of Herbst's family in America. Langer said she was able to find the trilogy, by a



Elinor Langer

stroke of luck, in the Chicago Public Library.

Born in Sioux City, Iowa, in 1892, Herbst gained a reputation as a radical while writing for such liberal journals as the New Masses and The Nation. She also wrote for H.L. Mencken's American Mercury.

Despite Mencken's reputation

as a cranky conservative, Langer said he and Herbst apparently worked well together.

Herbst covered a diverse range of stories, from a farmers' strike in Iowa to Hitler's Germany to an attempted revolution in Cuba. Nonetheless, she lived most of her life in poverty and obscurity.

Langer said Herbst had no more than \$20,000 in her entire life, depending heavily on the kindness of friends.

Herbst occasionally ventured into mainstream journalism, as in a series she wrote on Nazi Germany for the New York Post, but these brief excursions never paid enough to live on, she added.

Herbst's obscurity, however, was another matter. "I think the fact that she was a woman contributed to her obscurity," Langer said.

Although many radicals from the 1920s and '30s found popularity among the discontented youth of the 1960s, Herbst died in 1969 just as she was about to publish her memoirs.

"She was just about on the verge of a rediscovery at the time of her death," Langer said.

However, Herbst's work may be having a posthumous rediscovery. Langer said the biography has almost sold out its first press run and is soon coming out in paperback.

Langer added that Herbst's trilogy, out of print and practically impossible to find, is being reprinted this summer.

Real budget issues are often 'ignored'

By Scott McFetridge

Of the Emerald

The Department of Defense's fiscal 1986 budget will be much larger than the \$314 billion requested this year by President Ronald Reagan's administration, a local expert on defense and nuclear arms told a small group Tuesday night.

In addition to the funds allocated to the defense department, the Department of Energy is requesting \$77 billion for the production of nuclear weapons, said Steve Johnson, a sociologist and researcher with Decision Research of Eugene.

Military assistance to foreign countries, which had been decreased to \$1 billion a year during Jimmy Carter's administration, also has increased, Johnson said. Reagan is asking Congress to approve \$10.7 billion a year in foreign military aid, he said.

When all of the money spent on defense by various government departments is tallied, the total military budget comes closer to \$450 billion, he said. This budget means huge deficits for the country — debts that will have to be paid by the public, he said.

Johnson cites the fact that \$360 billion in personal income tax is paid toward the debt each year, while only \$77.9 billion in corporate tax is paid. The defense budget is responsible for up to 49 percent of this debt, he said.

In addition to the money spent on guns and missiles, millions of dollars have been spent on the development of the space shuttle by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, he said. This is primarily a Department of Defense program, as evidenced by the recent secret launching of a government satellite, he said.

The satellite was launched in secrecy because "the Department of Defense was used to doing things its own way," Johnson said.

The department wanted people to become accustomed to secret space shuttle missions, although there was nothing particularly vital in this launching, Johnson said.

"The real questions are not being asked," Johnson said. "We spend a lot of time talking about the little things and ignore the real issues."

The talk was the first of two workshops on the defense and education portions of Reagan's proposed budget. Johnson's speech was sponsored by Student Campaign for Disarmament, Catalyst Films and Students for a Progressive Agenda.

The second talk will be presented by Myrnie Daut, legislative assistant for the Oregon Student Lobby, at 7:30 p.m. on March 7 in Room 167 EMU.

Correction

A story appearing in Tuesday's Oregon Daily Emerald reported inaccurate information about the long-distance rate structure of the Proto-Call Corp. telephone company.

The company bills long-distance telephone calls in six-minute increments.

The Emerald regrets any inconvenience this error may have caused.

Rent an Electric Typewriter. Rent now! Availability limited. At your Bookstore.



University Neighborhood Dentist

Gentle care for students for 13 years.

J. Scott Baxter, D.M.D., P.C.

680 E. 18th Ave., Eugene (corner of 18th & Hilyard)

344-6371

BROWN BAG FORUM

"Inside Nicaragua" Julie Davis

Thursday, March 7th Room 167 EMU 11:30-12:30

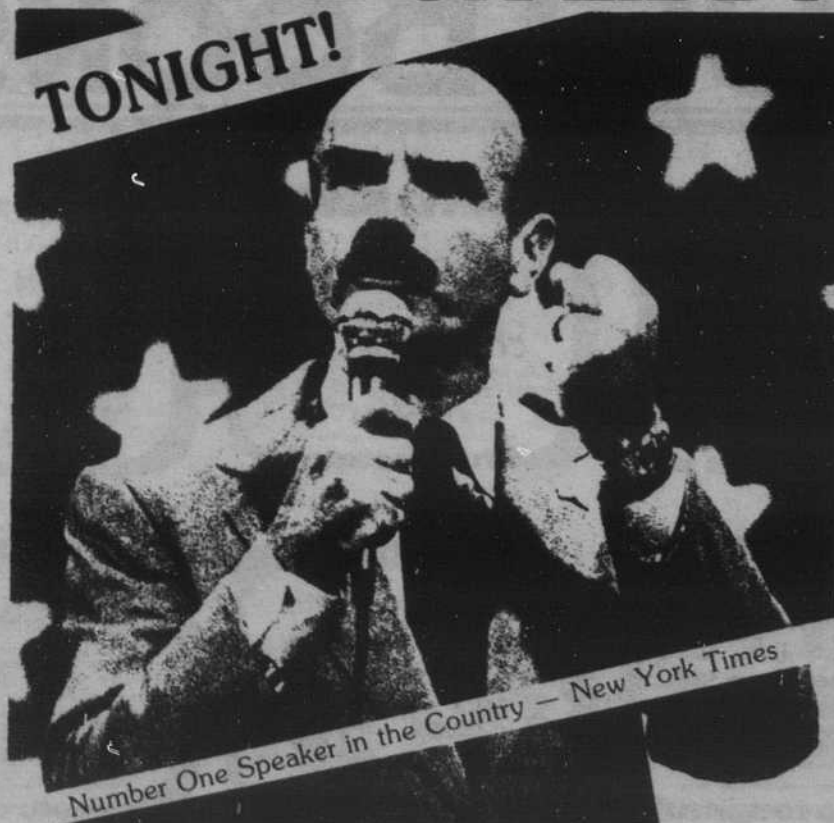
Sponsored By: ASUO and Campus Interfaith Ministry



EMU CULTURAL FORUM PRESENTS

G. GORDON LIDDY

TONIGHT!



Number One Speaker in the Country — New York Times

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 6TH. 7:30 PM EMU BALLROOM

TICKETS

\$2.00 U of O Students, \$4.00 General Public

Available at: EMU Main Desk, Face the Music & Everybody's Records.