

Wilder packs 'em in at Big Read Kickoff

By Steve Tool
Wallowa County Chieftain

People from all over the county jammed into the Hurricane Creek Grange Hall to eat pie and hear Tappan Wilder, nephew and literary executor of author Thornton Wilder, expound on his uncle's life and works. The Jan. 21 event celebrated the 10th Fishtrap Big Read, which features two of Thornton Wilder's works: the play "Our Town" and the novel "The Bridge of San Luis Rey."

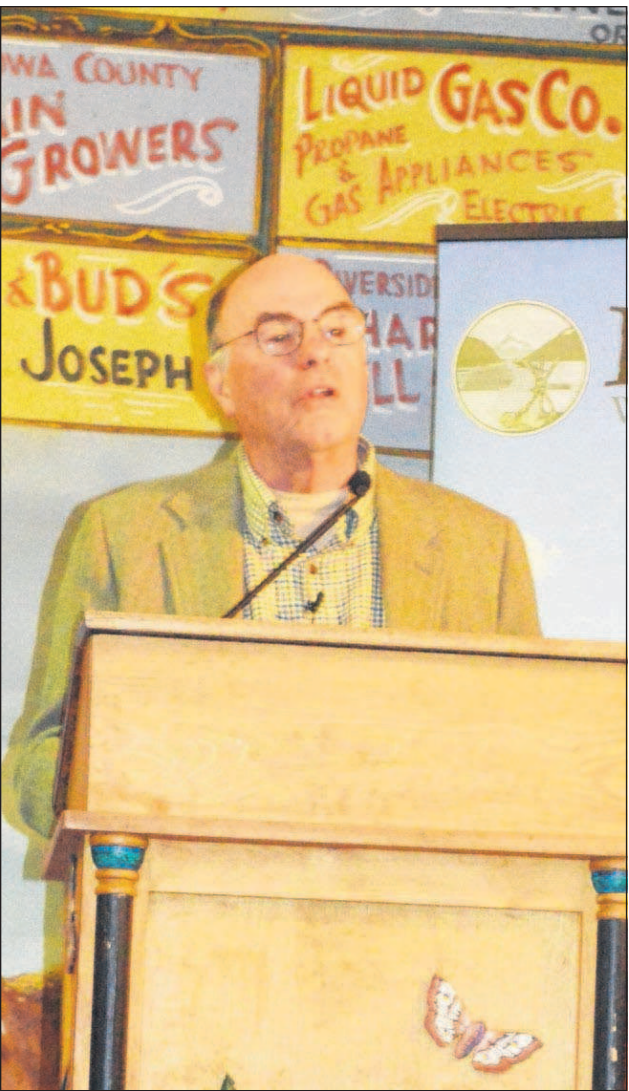
The 7 p.m. event started with a pie social featuring a large variety of the desserts before a highly animated and always humorous Wilder took the stage. Wilder made his presentation in a compelling PowerPoint narrative that featured the judicious use of Wilder family memorabilia to give some historical context to his uncle's writing and life philosophy. Along with the comprehensive view of Wilder's life and literary legacy, Tappan Wilder answered a number of questions from audience members. As a bonus, he also had several of the Fishtrap staff perform one of Thornton Wilder's three-minute plays. Enterprise resident Julia Zeise, who has seen a stage production of "Our Town," is participating in the Big Read and came away pleased with the kickoff event. After win-



Fishtrap development coordinator Eric Greenwell, left, hashes out a Thornton Wilder scene with Fishtrap program manager Mike Midlo during the Jan. 21 Big Read Kickoff.

ning a copy of the play at the event, she is reading both of Wilder's Big Read works. "I'm a reader who needs lots of encouragement," Zeise said. "It helps me when I'm reading with the community and learning all about the author and the background of the book. I enjoyed the nephew a lot. I thought he had a very similar (to his uncle's) sense of humor and way about him." "His energy and enthusiasm to share stories about his Uncle Thornton was contagious," said Fishtrap program manager Mike Midlo. "We couldn't have had a better guest to kickoff The Big Read." Wilder, who said he enjoyed his Wallowa County visit, also appeared at two of the county's senior centers as

well as two schools that are participating in the Big Read. "The pleasure for me is introducing the students to something they don't know," Wilder said. "It's my job to make them interested in the prospect of reading the play or novel. I try to build up their expectations and give them a few ideas on things to keep in mind while they go through it." Wilder said there's more to managing his uncle's estate than being in a room slaving over paperwork. "I always remember that my uncle was writing to reach people. How can I run the estate of a writer without going out to see who is reading or producing him? It's not a question of getting out and about — it's assumed."



Tappan Wilder during his presentation of Big Read author Thornton Wilder at the Jan. 21 Big Read Kickoff event.

THE SCENE

Thursday, Feb. 4
•Fruition, 7 p.m. at the OK Theatre in Enterprise. Folk-Rock, Americana, Soul, Blues.

Friday, Feb. 5
• Open mic, 7 p.m. at Terminal Gravity

Friday, Feb. 12
• Fishtrap Fireside, 7 p.m. at Fishtrap

Saturday, Feb. 13
• Tunesmith Night, 7 p.m. Lear's Main St. Grill in Enterprise. \$10.

Sunday, Feb. 14
• Open mic, 4-6 p.m. at the Josephy Center

Saturday, Feb. 20
Old-time Community Dance, 7 p.m. at Hurricane Creek Grange Hall.

Sunday, April 10
• Asleep at the Wheel, OK Theatre in Enterprise. Tickets: \$38. Email oktheater1@gmail.com or call 541-263-0941 to reserve.

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