

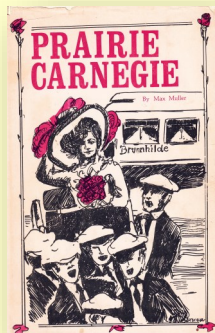
# Vår Historia

## SMOKY VALLEY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

*Max Muller*



Photo by Lee Becker,  
For book back cover.



**PUBLISHED  
BI-MONTHLY**



<b>Max</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Max</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Max Photos</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>SVHA Programs</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Donations</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>SVHA Info</b>	<b>4</b>

All the world's a stage, but Max Muller found Lindsborg's bandshell located in Swensson Memorial Park to fulfill his dream.

Born in Marquette, KS. to a Pioneer family May of 1920, Max Julian Muller found his voice early in life. As a boy, Max became heavily inspired by the many concerts held at Bethany College's Ling Auditorium and Presser Hall. Enough so that later in life he would write a book about some of those artists that graced Lindsborg stages called "Prairie Carnegie".

He attended Lindsborg grade school but moved to Salina during high school years. His theatrical and vocal development started in school, but it was attending Bethany College right out of high school where his rich, baritone voice came through, under the direction of another bass vocalist, Professor Thure Jaderborg.

At age 21, Max did what most American boys did, filled out his DSS, or Defense Security Service Card September 2nd, 1941. Three months later Japan attacked Pearl Harbor and we went to war. Max enlisted in the US Navy January 10th, 1942 and served until October 2nd, 1945.

One year before being fully discharged, Max married Marie Lindberg

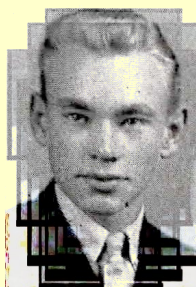
November 22nd, 1944. Marie also came from a Pioneer family of McPherson County. Max had utilized his baritone voice while serving. At the Great Lakes Naval Training Station Max sang with the Bluejacket Choir. And later, while serving as quartermaster at the Olathe Naval Air Station, Max received more vocal training from Connie Eberhardt at the Kansas City Conservatory for a couple of years.

October of 1945 Max and Marie had a son, Max, Jr., and it wasn't long after the family moved to New York.

Max pursued acting, and studied both vocal and acting at the American Theatre Wing for the next five years. Marie became a nurse.

In 1951, Max landed a touring play of Peter Pan, as a pirate. This was a huge boost to his acting/singing career, partly due to such actors as Boris Karloff and Jean Arthur holding starring roles, following their on Broadway musical of the same. It traveled through several states, sometimes performing two to three shows a day.

In 1954, Max and Wesley Swails were doing high school assemblies around the country. Max began to develop a chronic case of Iritis, which ultimately put a halt



## MAX MULLER {CON'T}

in his traveling. A rigid treatment of staying in dark rooms only left time for part time jobs, like being a messenger for Wall St. and working in a publishing house. Though the treatment helped, and Max was later able to resume acting, the disease would plague him for the rest of his life.

This brought the Muller family back to Kansas in 1955, where Max and Marie grew up. By this time, Max had accredited two New York Concert awards, appeared on radio, sang in both Opera and Operettas, acted in several off-Broadway and one on-Broadway performances, and sang more than 300 concerts, and for most people in the Smoky Valley, they don't even feel his story had even started yet.

On their return, Marie quickly got a job at the Lindsborg Hospital, Max had returned to Kansas with Wesley Swails, who was to sign contracts with the Kansas University Lecture and Concert Bureau for a Fall tour. Mr. Swails, another Kansas native, had been a vocalist for the Philadelphia Opera Company prior to touring with Max.

Assaria, KS. had started a Village Square Concert Series June of 1957, using a brick stage in the city square. KSAL radio had set to record them and broadcast at a later time. The first one drew in 300 people. That August, Max Muller was scheduled to perform for their fourth concert, and was it being dubbed as "Max's Come-back" from his forced retirement, the weather wasn't favorable that day so the performance was moved indoors, and more than 800 people attended. That broke all attendance records that summer.

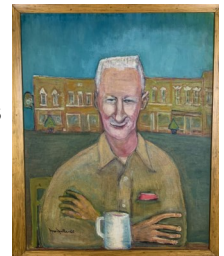
In 1959, Max seized an opportunity to jump in to directing. Lindsborg's Svensk Hyllnings Fest (*as it was written then*) was looking for activities during the festival. Max was asked to direct a play titled "Annie Get Your Gun", and everything had to be top-notch. Connie Lamascus, a Lindsborg HS Senior, played the starring role, and anyone who wanted to experience theater found a place in this two-performance play. After it ended, Malcolm Esping, Dale Hoag, and Max was driving around with the prop flats on a trailer. Max threw it out there that he wanted to save the sets, he had an idea to start a summer theater in Lindsborg. A place where college students and kids could have something to do during the summer, and with that, Broadway RFD was born.

Lindsborg's Anton Pearson heard about Max's plan and donated the first \$100 to make it happen. Anton then pledged downtown merchants to do the same, and before long eight more matching donations came in, bringing the Broadway RFD budget up to \$900.

The first summer show was "Showboat", and featured many actors from the Anne show. At that time, 1960, Lindsborg had a population of 2,000. The attendance of Showboat was also about 2,000. With Malcolm Esping being a master technician, the sets were always of greatest quality, and Max's directing ability transformed everyday people in to Broadway stars.

The second show that summer, "Oklahoma", drew more than 1300 people each night, and as a result extended its run for two more shows the next week. Max directed three more shows the following year, 1961, before moving on to other projects.

Max expanded his artistic ability by taking up oil painting, like this 1965 portrait of "Haggie", who shared "Fika" with Max and others while swapping stories. This also came in handy for the many set designs Max created for Broadway RFD and other theater

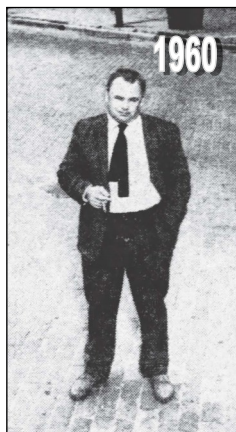


groups. In 1968 Max returned to directing Broadway RFD for one show, and was made President of the Broadway RFD Board.

Marie had become Director of Nurses at Ashbury Hospital in Salina, and Max became more involved with starting other theater and summer theater groups, one being the Sunflower Summer Theater at Marymount College in Salina.

Max Muller could be loud, forceful and gruff, and at first glance often scared some, but those that did know him knew he presented himself differently to each situation. And his voice...the voice of an angel. Max's love for theater and his youth also inspired him to write the book "Prairie Carnegie" which was published 1977.

Max passed away August 26th, 1984 from a long battle of Cancer. His legacy though, at least in Lindsborg, lives on every summer in Swensson Memorial Park.



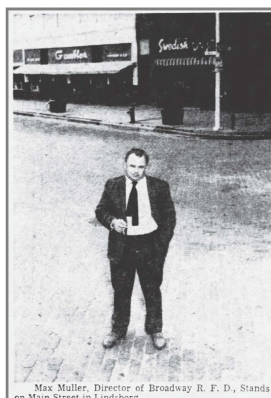


Max and Marie enjoying a walk in the snow, and a good snow-ball fight.



Max on Main St. 1960

Just one of Max's favorite beverages.



Max Muller, Director of Broadway R. F. D., Stands on Main Street in Lindsborg.



## Upcoming SVHA Programs

July 12th, 2022

Bethany Home (tentative)

Kris Erickson, CEO



Sept. 13th, 2022

Bethany College Update

Dr. Beth Mauch, President



Nov. 8th, 2022

The Santa Fe Trail Lives On! 1821-2022

Linda Colle, Santa Fe Trail Association



All programs  
start at:  
**7:30 pm**

Location:

**Messiah Lutheran Church—Fellowship Hall**  
402 N. 1st Street—Lindsborg, KS.

Please cut along the dotted line

**Smoky Valley Historical Association**  
P.O. Box 255  
**Lindsborg, KS. 67456**

☐ \$25 ☐ \$50 ☐ \$100 ☐ Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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Memberships are renewed in the first quarter of each year



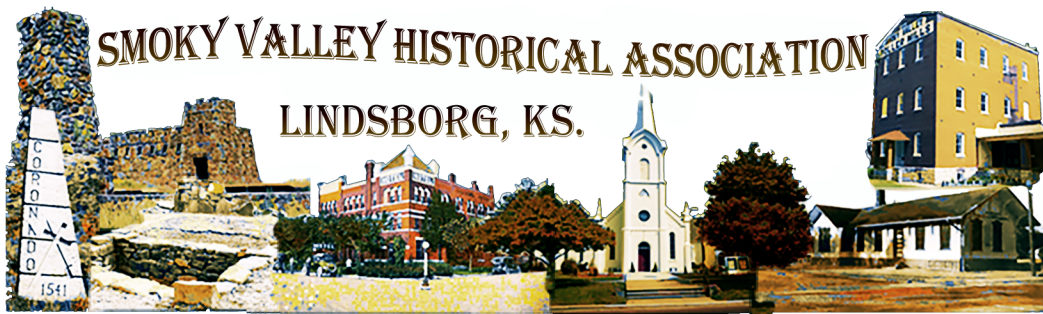
Smoky Valley Historical Association is a non-profit organization and is registered under 501(c)3

All Membership Donations, Bequests, Trusts, and Legacy Donations are tax deductible.

Please mail to P.O. Box listed above.

Thank You!





## SMOKY VALLEY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Tim Stewart - *President, Newsletter*  
 Vince Rocco - *Vice President*  
 Julie-Ann Neywick - *Secretary*  
 Lenora Lynam - *Treasurer*  
 Elly Ostlind - *Program Chair*  
 Leland Nelson  
 Christine Rocco  
 Chester G. Peterson - *Emeritus*

*We currently have two Board positions open*



### Meetings/Programs

Smoky Valley Historical Association hosts bi-monthly meetings on the odd months, held on the second Tuesday. Programs start at 7:30 pm with topics of local historical interest. Location is listed on page three along with schedule.

**Come join us!**



### Funding

Membership contributions are the SVHA's major source of on-going funding. A free-will donation in any amount will secure your membership in the Association for the year. Memberships are renewed in the first quarter of each year.

Grants, such as those awarded by the Kansas Humanities Council, are also available from time-to-time to further the mission of the SVHA.

### **Smoky Valley Historical Mission**

*The purpose of this association shall be to collect, arrange and preserve historical data, books, pamphlets and manuscripts pertaining to the early history and settlement of our community in general and the City of Lindsborg in particular; to preserve and beautify places of historical interest in our city, its vicinity, and properties entrusted to the association; and to promote the study of history of our settlement and its cultural growth by lectures and other available means.*

### Contact info:

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or mail to:

**SMOKY VALLEY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION**  
 PO BOX 255  
 LINDSBORG, KS 67456

**WWW.SMOKYVALLEYHISTORY.ORG**



TACK SÅ MYCKET!



SMOKY VALLEY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION  
 LINDSBORG, KANSAS 67456

**Bumper Stickers**  
**Available at Old Mill!**

*Check our Facebook page for the most up to date information concerning the Smoky Valley Historical Association.*



*Thank you for your contributions, and supporting the historical preservation of Lindsborg and the Smoky Valley of Central Kansas.*

*Our pioneers left their legacy long after they were gone, so can you. Managing estates, bequests, and gifts through retirement plans can help keep our preservation ongoing and long-lasting.*

*All donations are tax exempt, we are a 501-(c)3 organization*