



By Jan Rahn

Tribune Staff

The newly crowned queen of the Ak-Sar-Ben Ball has ties to Perkins County, as does one of the standard bearers taking part in the event held in Omaha on Saturday evening, Oct. 19.

The theme of this year's coronation and scholarship ball, "The Golden Road to Quivira," at the CenturyLink Center was likened to "The Wizard of Oz." The ballroom, the dress, and the music carried through with resemblance to the classic movie.

Linking Grant to Emerald City was Queen of Ak-Sar-Ben Carolyn German whose father Cal German graduated as a Plainsman in 1974. He now serves as president and CEO of DMSI Software in Omaha. Her mother Karen is an active community volunteer through the Ak-Sar-Ben organization and other groups.

Cal German is the son of Lee and Leola German who at one time lived in Grant and started New Tribes Mission. Lee was also a flight instructor, passing along his skills by teaching locals how to fly.

Selected as king of Ak-Sar-Ben was William Cutler, 65, of Omaha, a partner in mortuaries in Omaha and Council Bluffs. He and wife Susan are very active in the community and give generously of their time.

Another ironic link between this year's 117th ball is that 16-year-old Claire Wilson of Omaha, who served as a standard bearer, has grandparents in Grant.



She is the daughter of Tim and Beth Wilson. Her grandparents are Pat and Rex Wilson—and here's one more little twist—the new queen's grandfather Lee German taught Rex Wilson how to fly!

Carrying the ties to western Nebraska just a little farther, Queen Carolyn's father Cal German has an uncle Cal and aunt Barbara German who live in Imperial.

It's a small world—but the unique, regional Ak-Sar-Ben Coronation and Scholarship Ball is a big world event promoting, recognizing and celebrating volunteerism, philanthropy and civic pride.

Proceeds from the ball will fund Ak-Sar-Ben's scholarship endowment in awarding 50 college

scholarships annually to deserving youth from the heartland of Iowa and Nebraska. The program gives \$300,000 a year in scholarships.

More than 1,000 students from Nebraska and western Iowa applied for scholarships. Partnering with Horatio Alger Association, Ak-Sar-Ben offers \$6,000 scholarships. This year, there were 51 high school seniors selected who come from households with an average income of \$15,845. Many of the recipients represent the first member of a family to attend college. Five of the students live without their parents or on their own.

Queen of Ak-Sar-Ben

Carolyn German is studying English and will graduate from Creighton University during the 2014-15 school year. Teaching at the high school level is her goal.

The young woman with a big heart has a history of wanting to be involved and help young people.

While in high school, she helped classmates raise money to buy computers for students attending Catholic school in Africa and to help pay their tuition.

Following her sophomore year, she traveled to Uganda with classmates to visit the school and the students who benefited from their efforts.

She helped raise money through a book drive for literacy programs while a college student at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

She has other interests, such as running and learning to fly, but said helping others is the most fulfilling part of her life, saying she learned the importance of giving from her father, mother and grandparents.

Grandfather Lee German, originally from Cozad, was a missionary bush pilot in the Philippines in the 1950s and 1960s, flying food, medical supplies and missionaries into remote tribal areas. He also flew sick villagers to hospitals in Manila and other cities.

Carolyn's father, Cal, was born in the Philippines and lived there until 1971 when his family moved back to Nebraska.

While there, he saw the need for housing for college students and provided funds for dorms in a city in the north-central area of the main island of the Philippines. A second dorm was completed this summer—her grandfather provided the bulk of the funding, with help from her father.

Carolyn got to see the villages that benefited from her grandfather's missionary work decades ago by being fortunate enough to travel to the Philippines with her father in 2010.

Carolyn has also learned from her mother Karen about serving others. Karen is involved in several organizations, and follows in the footsteps of her parents who were involved in the community and sought ways to give back. Although never attending college himself, Carolyn's grandfather on her mother's side raised all six of his children to attend Catholic schools and graduate from college.