

America's Darling

Cartoonist, Politician & Conservationist

Jay Norwood "Ding" Darling, 1876 - 1962

The Man

Even as a young boy Jay Norwood Darling carried a sketchpad with him everywhere he went. On it he drew anything that caught his eye; but in spite of his natural abilities as an artist, Jay wanted to be a doctor. Although his ambitions were serious, Jay Darling was a jokester; and his humor often got him into trouble. One of his more serious offenses happened when Jay was a junior at Beloit College – a strict Congregational school. The year was 1898 and as Art Director for the yearbook, Darling illustrated the publication with many of his own drawings. The problem started when school officials realized Darling's artistic vision included racy cartoons, mocking the college's faculty and staff. Most notably was a cartoon portraying the entire faculty (all men) dressed in tutus and dancing like chorus girls! Beloit's administrators failed to see the humor and suspended Jay for a year. However, sixty years later at a class reunion, Darling finally admitted that his expulsion had less to do with his yearbook drawings and more to do with his failing grades.



It was also in Beloit's yearbook where Darling's nickname first appeared in print. The young artist wanted a signature for his drawings that would look funny and hide his identity. So, he made a contraction out of his last name, and Darling became 'Ding.'

Jay graduated from Beloit College in 1900 and immediately started looking for a job that would help him pay for medical school. At the age of 23 he began work as a cub reporter for the *Sioux City Journal*; and though his dream was to become a doctor, Darling's talents directed him otherwise. His first drawing was published in the *Journal* after a lawyer refused to let the young reporter take his picture, so Darling drew a picture of the attorney instead. The sketch was so popular that Jay's boss asked him to do a whole series of caricatures depicting the city's leading figures. From there, Darling started drawing political cartoons; and in less than four years the artist was also drawing attention from across the state of Iowa... and the idea of medical school faded into the background.



Ding Darling while working at the Sioux City Journal in Iowa, 1904.

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Jay Darling with grandson, Kip Koss, on his shoulders, 1939.

Lifetime Achievements

- 1924 – Won first Pulitzer Prize
- 1931 – Appointed head of the Iowa Fish & Game Commission
- 1932 – Started the first Cooperative Wildlife Research Center
- 1932 – Visited Russia at Stalin's request
- 1934 – Appointed by FDR to the Beck Committee
- 1934 – Appointed Chief of the U.S. Biological Survey
- 1934 – Designed the first Duck Stamp
- 1936 – Elected first President of the National Wildlife Federation
- 1942 – Won second Pulitzer Prize
- 1945 – Urged Pres. Truman to create Sanibel National Wildlife Refuge

Jay Darling's only grandson and oldest living relative is Kip Koss. Kip spent most of his childhood living next door to his grandfather in Iowa and spent many family vacations at the Darling's winter home in Florida. Kip and his grandfather were close. Darling taught Kip the lessons of life and watched as his grandson grew up to become a man. Kip was 27 years old when his grandfather died. He was "a man of very strong principles," remembers Kip. He also had many interests. When Darling was a boy, he lived near the Missouri River and loved to hunt and fish. When he was in college he played the mandolin and sang bass. When Darling became an adult, he loved to fly airplanes, and talk politics. He passed many of these interests on to his grandson. But, as varied as his interests may seem, David Lendt, the author of Darling's biography says, "Of course, Darling believed they were all intertwined." Darling's grandson further explains that for Darling, "all led back to natural resources and their wise use. Air, water, soil, economics; war; birds and beasts; mankind." Reinforcing this theory is Darling's long list of accomplishments which is broad in scope... ranging from designing the first Federal Duck Stamp to organizing resistance to President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal program. And, even though Darling wasn't always the best student, he had a brilliant mind and a sharp wit.

"...I am not nearly so much interested in the preservation of migratory waterfowl as I am in the management of water resources and the crucial effect of such management upon human sustenance. Wild ducks and geese and teeter-assed shore birds are only the delicate indicators of the prognosis for human existence just as sure as God made little green apples."

- Jay N. Darling

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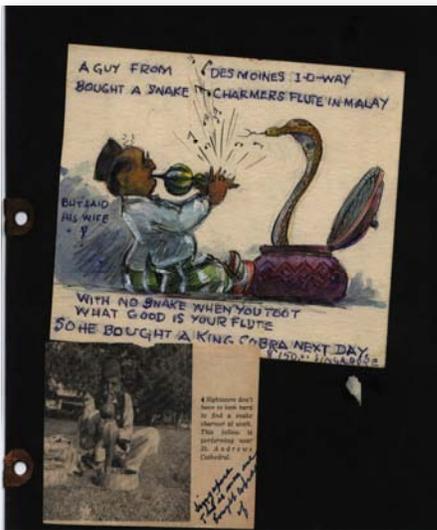
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Jay Darling was an extraordinary man with an extraordinary understanding of the world around him. A modest Iowan, he was an outdoorsman at heart, and yet he was cosmopolitan in spirit. Darling loved traveling to exotic places with his wife and bending the ears of U.S. Presidents.



Jay Darling fishing with his trusted guide Belton.

"Land, water and vegetation are just that dependent on one another. Without these three primary elements in natural balance, we can have neither fish nor game, wild flowers nor trees, labor nor capital, nor sustaining habitat for humans."
 - Jay N. Darling



Page from Ding's scrapbook, 1954
 Top: Darling cartoon

Bottom: Clipping about a snake charmer with hand written note that appears to say, "Singapore, This is man we bought cobra of."

Trip Round The World 1954

Reckless adventurers, Jay Darling and his wife took a cruise around the world with another couple in 1954. During a stop in Malaysia, the other couple bought a king cobra; and all four friends took care of Singapore Pete during the trip. In a letter to his family, Jay talks about giving the snake a bath in their "big porcelain bath tub." He goes on to write, "I don't think he liked his bath very well and has been in a most belligerent mood ever since." After learning that king cobras prefer live frogs to boiled eggs and raw meat, Darling explains, "We only got 2 frogs as an experiment and are now wondering what we are going to do for frogs when we get out in the middle of the Atlantic where we think we are correct in believing frogs are quite scarce." To mark the event, Jay drew a cartoon and wrote this poem about his friends:

A guy from Des Moines I-O-Way,
 Bought a snake charmers flute in Malay.
 But said his wife, with no snake when you toot,
 What good is your flute,
 So he bought a king cobra next day.

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The Film

Never before has a film documented the life of Jay Darling, and there has never been a better time to do it than now. *America's Darling* will profile Jay's extraordinary life and give audiences a sense of hope and inspiration by demonstrating that one person really can make a difference in the world. Kip Koss, Darling's oldest living relative, believes this film should also illustrate that his grandfather's wisdom is just as relevant today as it was nearly a century ago. The Executive Producer agrees and wants to honor Kip's wishes with an amazing film that recognizes how Darling's contributions shaped America. With the modest budget, the Executive Producer will create a one-hour documentary that will include everything from Darling getting kicked out of college - twice - to winning the Pulitzer Prize - twice.



Ding Darling dressed up.

Special Features of the Film

The Executive Producer is excited to announce that the release of *America's Darling* will uncover historic treasures never before seen or heard by the public. From the University of Iowa's Special Collections comes a compilation of nearly ten years of letters dictated by Darling himself. Kip Koss, Darling's grandson, recently donated the audio collection to the University. Through the film, audiences will be the first to hear some of the most engaging clips from this collection. The sound of Darling's deep, strong voice is sure to capture audiences, and hearing him put his thoughts into words will add a powerful sense of reality to this film. In addition, rarely-seen etchings from the National Conservation Training Center's (U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service) Special Collection of Darling's etchings, will be included so viewers all over the world can appreciate this detailed art form as done by Jay Darling. We have also made the exciting discovery of archival film footage never before seen by the public; by showcasing this in the film we will bring Darling and his era to life.

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Ding sitting at his desk, drawing.



*Above: Former FL Governor, Spessard Holland, 1946.
At left: Cartoon drawn by Ding welcoming Herbert Hoover to office, 1929.*

Around the turn of the century it was not uncommon for political cartoonists to have a lot of influence, but Darling's influence went beyond his readers. Some of the most prominent people in the world found him intriguing and brought him into their social or political circles. Starting in the early 1900's, Darling knew **Grantland Rice** - a Pulitzer Prize winning sportswriter - well enough to stay in his New York apartment. During World War I, Darling met **Herbert Hoover**. That meeting was the start of a friendship that made J.N. one of Hoover's unofficial Presidential advisors and lasted until Darling's death in 1962. **Joseph Stalin** - leader of the Soviet Union - personally invited Darling to visit Russia in 1932, and the two ate lunch together in Stalin's hometown. In 1934,



Portrait of Grantland Rice, c1931.

President **Franklin Roosevelt** hand-picked Darling to serve on a government committee. Early in the 1940's, J.N. teamed up with **Governor Spessard Holland** of Florida to save a plot of land from developers. Then in 1945, Darling urged President **Harry Truman** to turn that same piece of land into a National Wildlife Refuge. The cartoonist was also friends with **James Earl Fraser**, the artist who sculpted the Indian head on the Buffalo Nickel.



A 1913 Buffalo Nickel, also known as an Indian Head Nickel.

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The Inspiration

The inspiration for this documentary comes from Kip Koss, Darling's grandson, who is serving as the Senior Advisor for *America's Darling*. Because of the strong relationship Koss had with his grandfather, it only seems right to have him directly involved with this project. Several other historians who are also experts on Jay Darling's life have been invited to serve as Historical Advisors for this project:

1. Mark Madison - Historian, U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service
2. Kristie Anders - Education Director, Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation
3. Richard West - Expert of political cartoons & cartoonists
4. David Lendt's book, *Ding, The Life of Jay Norwood Darling*



L to R: Penny and Jay Darling with daughter Mary Koss and grandson Kip Koss, 1939.

The Plan

Because of Kip's involvement, an impressive panel of historic advisors, and a long list of partners, the Executive Producer of *America's Darling* wants this film to be the crowning point of Ding's legacy. To achieve this goal, the Executive Producer is taking a multi-media approach, which will also help to reach as many audiences as possible. The predominant portion of this project is the documentary. After that's done, portions of it will be converted and further developed for other mediums including a companion website, school curriculum, and possibly magazine articles. National and international distribution for the documentary will be acquired through major television networks, film festivals and possibly DVD sales. The website will cross promote all of the different features of the project and will have any important or interesting information about Darling that does not make it into the film. The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's Division of Environmental Education has already committed to develop school curriculum for the project and to distribute educational packets (that will include a DVD of the film) to classrooms across the country.

The documentary will be created in three phases: pre-production, production and post-production. The initial phase has started with researching all available (and credible) information on Darling, locating images and obtaining permission for their use. This alone will require several trips to personally review Darling's collections at places like: the University of Iowa - Special Collections, Drake University (also in Iowa), and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's National Training & Conservation Center in Virginia.