

West Texas Civil War fighter survived ship catastrophe

SAN ANGELO — When he read the brief item in the "Did You Know" column of the *Standard-Times*, Robert Warner knew he had to respond and set the record straight.

"In 1865, the steamer 'Sultana' exploded on the Mississippi River near Memphis, Tenn., killing more than 1,400 Union soldiers," the item read.

Warner's educated and thoroughly researched guess was that there were at least 2,400 men on the ship whose maximum capacity should have been about 400.

"There may have been 500 survivors," he wrote in a note to the *Standard-Times*.

A historian of sorts and a Civil War buff by hobby, Warner had a unique perspective for how many there were on the Sultana that night and why they were there.

His father was one of the Sultana survivors. "My father (yes, that's right) was one of the lucky ones," Warner wrote.

According to Warner, the Confederates at Fisk feared for their own safety after Lee's surrender "and decided they better not stay around any longer."

"They left," he said, "so the Union made arrangements for the POWs to be taken North by steamboat to be discharged."

The arrangement was that the prisoners would be transported up the Mississippi on paddle wheelers (steamboats) and that the boat captains would be paid

\$5 for each private and \$10 for each officer they carried.

The bookkeeping was done by taking a roll-call list of the soldiers — supposedly as they were getting on the boat, Warner explained.

By the time the Sultana docked in Knoxville, April 25, 1865, three situations were mounting that would lead to the boat's ultimate disaster.

First, the Mississippi River was in flood stage. Second, the Sultana was having boiler problems and was already behind schedule because so much time was spent in repairs.

And third, the Sultana's captain had decided he would not have a high-enough income if he transported only 300 or 400 soldiers at a time — which was the boat's capacity.

But, when word got out of the last load, the soldiers rushed onto the boat. "They never knew how many got on," Warren said.

"They were packed on there so tightly, there wasn't even a place to lie down. One of the officers warned them that if the boat stopped, they shouldn't run to one side because it would turn over."

Warner said his father had gone to sleep — and was still asleep — when 10 miles up the river, the boiler exploded. When he woke up, he figured he was a quarter-mile from the flaming vessel.

There were other survivors out swimming, and several caught on to a floating device.

"But Dad said there were so many holding on, the float was sinking," Warner said. "He let go, and then he grabbed a couple of boards and hung on to them."

Warner said his dad was only wearing "long john" underwear when the Sultana exploded, and, needing something to lash the boards together, he removed his pant leggings to use for a tie rope.

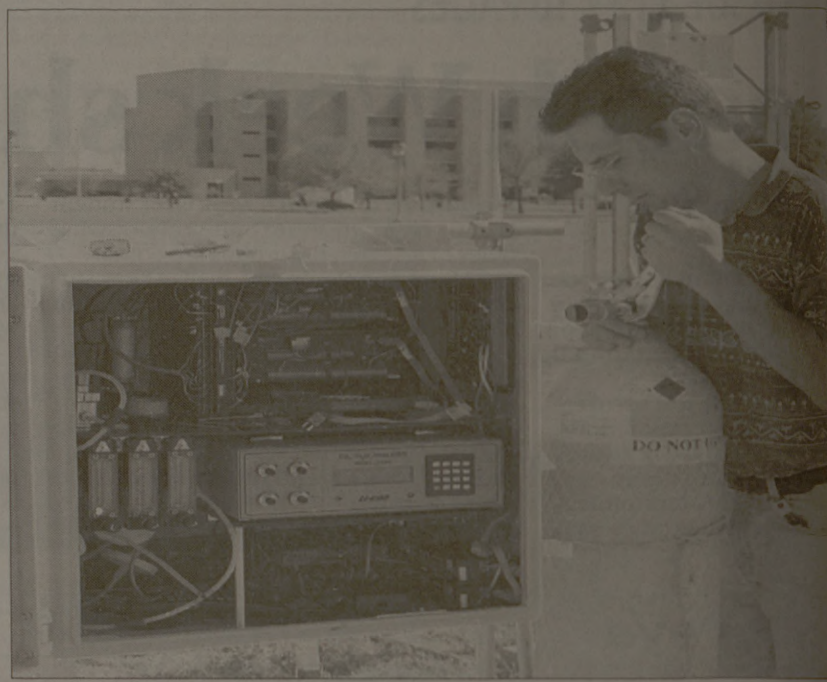
"Then, a hat came floating toward him, and he put that on. When he got rescued, that's what he was wearing, a hat, a shirt and nothing else," Warner said, somewhat amused by the spectacle his father must have been.

That the Sultana disaster in which so many drowned would become a nearly forgotten incident baffles Warner.

"Just two weeks before, Lincoln had been assassinated. . . . So many died in the Civil War. Don't they say more were killed in the Civil War than have died in all the wars since, combined?"

Warner described the sinking of the Sultana as an avoidable tragedy caused by "greed and gluttony." Though the casualties were far more than the drownings of the Titanic, the Sultana has warranted but a small mention in American history books.

System check



Jim Keys, an environmental science major, works on a data gathering system on Campus Thursday. The system is designed to measure the amount of carbon dioxide crops. It will be moved to a rice field in El Campo, Texas, tomorrow.

WHAT'S UP

Tuesday

TAMU Water Ski Club: A general meeting will be held at 8:30 p.m. in the Student Recreation Center. Contact John at 695-8843 for details.

Alpha Phi Omega: Meet to go to the Crestview Retirement Home at 3:30 p.m. in 133 Koldus.

ATM Womens Rugby: Come join! No experience needed. Practices are from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. at the pitch on the corner of Texas Ave. and University Dr. Call Nikki at 694-0084 for information.

Aggie Lutherans: A meeting will be held from 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. at the Treehouse, Our Saviors Lutheran Church. Call 694-6663 for details.

ATM Roadrunners: There will be a meet-

ing in front of G. Rollie White at 5:30 p.m. today. We will run 3-4 miles, and everyone is welcome. Call Steve at 847-7905.

Aggie Anglers: There will be a meeting tonight at 8:30 p.m. in Rudder 404. The program is "Pathway to Fishing" and new members welcome. Please call Tim at 693-5415 for details.

Society of Women Engineers: There will be a meeting tonight at 6:45 p.m. in Rich 101. Come and meet candidates for student body elections, prospective SWE executive board candidates and yell leaders. Spring banquet tickets will be on sale for \$10.

English Language and Literature Society: There will be a meeting tonight at 7:00 p.m. in 504 Rudder. Dr. Jeff Cox

will preview the IGHS Conference on Aesthetic Subjects.

MSC Visual Arts Committee: Everyone is invited to vote for their favorite artwork in the Artfest '98 student art exhibition now on display in the MSC Visual Arts Gallery, 289 MSC. Winners will be announced at a free reception on March 25 at 7:00 p.m. in the MSC Visual Arts Gallery. Call 845-9251 for details.

Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers: There will be a general meeting tonight at 7:30 p.m. in Richardson 114. Officers for next year will be nominated. Call Jesus Giles at 847-2055 for details.

Pre-Medical Society: Guest lecturer Dr. Peek, professor of anatomy, will speak tonight at 7:00 p.m. in 292B MSC.

Hindu Student Council: There will be a

general meeting tonight at 7:30 p.m. in Zachary 342. Call Vijay at 696-4431 for details.

Wednesday

ATM Womens Rugby: Come join! No experience needed. Practices are from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. at the pitch on the corner of Texas Ave. and University Dr. Call Nikki at 694-0084 for information.

What's Up is a Battalion service that lists non-profit student and faculty events and activities. Items should be submitted no later than three days in advance of the desired run date. Application deadlines and notices are not events and will not be run in What's Up. If you have any questions, please call the newsroom at 845-3313.

RESEARCH

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Julie Barker, executive director for Sigma Xi, a scientific research organization, said Sigma Xi will sponsor a symposium Thursday on student based research programs. Sigma Xi will host a banquet at 6 p.m. at the College Station Hilton and Conference Center. Mary Ann Fox, vice president for Research at the University of Texas, will speak.

Barker said Sigma Xi will hold a series of panel discussions and talks throughout the day on student-based research.

Friday, the oral and poster presentations will continue and a chemistry symposium will be presented from 1 to 5 p.m. Various speakers will present their ideas during the day.

Q-DRO

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Jessup may talk to her advisor about a Q-DRO after Q-DRO.

"If a student wants to make that it is something for students to continue to do, Jessup said, she will be paid for the Q-DRO."

Boyd said she is still a graduate student at A&M.

The University of Texas at Austin requires students to complete four weeks of Q-DRO, she said.

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