

**Augustana Endowment Society**  
**Historical Reflections from April 2026**  
**by Janet Moline**

**Who was Clarence Woodrow Sorensen? #3**

Using various sources, including Newspaper.com I share the following.

This month we continue to hear more about our 6<sup>th</sup> President, Dr. Clarence Woodrow Sorensen. We left off in 1937 when he was travelling around the Midwest giving talks usually about Middle East countries where he had travelled. One of his lectures entitled "Clash of Empires" was made all the more vivid by the use of motion pictures.

The South Bend Tribune noted in November of 1937 that his lecture was expected to attract interest because of the general diplomatic tensions in Europe, especially the Civil War in Spain and Japan's attack on China. The South Bend Tribune mentioned that he was a fellow of the Royal Geographical Society. He had been elected because of the work he did in Arabia as an explorer, newsreel cameraman and foreign correspondent. By 1939 some of his research in the Near East was published for use by any teacher who had no opportunity to travel where he had travelled.

He took many photographs while travelling. On Dec. 26, 1937, the Chicago Tribune published his picture of a rare scene in the Holy Land, Bethlehem covered with snow. The Trib noted that the tower in the distance was of the Church of the Nativity. It was entitled: Bethlehem Snow-Clad.

I couldn't find any newspaper accounts of what he did in the spring of 1938 but two weeks before he went to speak on "Caravan Trails in Arabia" at the International Lyceum Association Convention in Ohio on Thursday Aug. 26<sup>th</sup>, he married Edna L. Schaus of Glen Ellen, Il in her parents' yard on August 13<sup>th</sup>. The pastor was from Nebraska. The Cairo (Nebraska) Record newspaper described the wedding and stated that he was well known in the area as earlier he was pastor of the Baptist church and a teacher at a rural school in the community. The Grand Island Independent added that Sorensen then took a trip to the Holy Land and other places and in the past two years had become a travel lecturer. He and Edna would return from their wedding travels to Chicago. Edna would travel with him and often handle the movie projector.

Globe Magazine Travel, March 1937 First Issue Intimate Journal sold for \$.25 featuring Romance, Adventure and World Interest. Its genre was listed as Travel and Geography. It was based in St. Paul, MN. I don't know when Sorensen became involved with this travel magazine but by Sept 1938 newspaper articles say that he was an associate editor of the Globe. I assume this was the Globe magazine often referred to in newspaper articles about him.

His lecture topic had changed by 1939. Called "Propaganda in the News", he would relate what he had experienced as a reporter. He was in Germany in 1934 witnessing the "bloody 30<sup>th</sup> of June, which took place from June 30 to July 2, 1934. During this period, Adolf Hitler, with the SS and Gestapo, executed hundreds of political enemies to consolidate power making Hitler the supreme leader putting himself above the law and securing the allegiance of the German army. It is hard to imagine what impression this event had made on the 27-year-old reporter from rural Nebraska. In his lectures he would contend that propaganda rules the world and that facts are twisted according to local prejudices. He had photos that could demonstrate the use of propaganda. According to the Daily Times of Davenport in 1939, he had recently spoken about

propaganda before 1000 attendees in Orchestra Hall in Chicago and would address several thousand students at a June convocation at the University of Minnesota. Some of the materials he used were prepared by the Institute for Propaganda Analysis to show how prejudices twist news facts to stir up strife around the world.

At Newspapers.com for May 18<sup>th</sup>, 1939, the Sulphur Times-Democrat in Oklahoma wrote the following: "The program is real. It is neither opinion nor party politics. Every detail is illustrated by natural color slides which are photographic reproductions of actual propaganda materials. It is a dramatic account of methods and machines, secret powers behind guileless fronts, the technique of sifting true and false propaganda."

Germany would invade Poland of 1939. CW was able to describe his experiences in Germany in 1932 and 1933 when Hitler was rising in power. He asserted that the Germans were induced to give up some of their liberties. He felt the real the tragedy was the sincerity of both the pro-Hitler and anti-Hitler followers—both held the unshaken belief that they were right.

Imagine if we could have Dr. Sorensen be one of our Endowment speakers....