ZINGG SEES BRIGHT AND GLOOMY SIDES

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By LARRY MITCHELL

With a slide of John and Annie Bidwell projected on a big screen nearby, Chico State University President Paul Zingg told Chico Rotarians today it’s significant that gifts led to creating the local campus.

The Bidwells donated eight acres of their cherry orchard to be used for the campus, Zingg said. And Chicoans raised $10,000, which at the time was equivalent to $300,000 today.

The money was to “demonstrate to the Legislature they were serious about having a university here,” he said.

The spirit of giving continues, Zingg said, and has helped immeasurably as Chico State has weathered extreme economic hardships.

During the 2010-11 academic year, he said, Chico State received 25,500 gifts of money from 14,000 individual donors, he said. The gifts totaled $7 million.

That demonstrates the great affection people have for the campus and “the enormous trust folks have in what our university is accomplishing,” he said.

He said Chico State has kept doing great things during the last three years, even as the budgetary storms have been the worst.

Rotarians had distributed to them a long list of Chico State’s recent accomplishments, ranging from the record numbers of applicants for admission to high ratings from several magazines.

Zingg was the guest speaker at Tuesday’s regular meeting of the Chico Rotary Club, which was held at Manzanita Place (the Elks Lodge).

While he emphasized positive things, Zingg didn’t ignore the severity of the budget situation. He quoted a former president of Penn State as saying that university had gone from being “state supported, to state assisted, to state located.”
The California State University seems to be heading down that same path, he said, adding at this point it could still be called “state assisted.”

He said it’s sad to think about what happened to a state “compact for higher education” that was born not that many years ago.

“It was supported briefly by governors Davis and Schwarzenegger,” but that was the end of it.

Under the agreement, the CSU and UC were to increase their enrollment by 3 to 4 percent each year, and the state would increase its financial support by 3 to 5 percent annually.

If the state had kept its promise, Zingg said, the CSU would be getting $2.3 billion more from the state this year than it actually will receive, he said.

The situation will improve somewhat if Gov. Brown’s proposed tax measure wins approval from voters in November, he said.

Brown says it would bring in $7 billion a year, and most of that money would go to education, at all levels, Zingg said. However, the state Legislative Analyst’s more-conservative estimate is it would bring in $5 million.

If the measure passes, Zingg said, “there will begin to be a modest recovery for the CSU.”

He estimated the university system might get a $300 million increase from the state that year.

It will hardly make up for what the CSU has lost, he said. “We’ve lost $1 billion over the last three years.”