



The NCB Quarterly

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Literatures of the Great Plains Symposium

April 3-5, 1997; Ramada Plaza Hotel and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Photo Courtesy UN-L Center for Great Plains Studies, J. Wilson, *The Old Chisholm Trail*, N.D. Christlieb Collection, Great Plains Art Collection, University of Nebraska-Lincoln.



Board of Directors

The Nebraska Center for the Book is the 23rd state affiliate of the Library of Congress's National Center for the Book. The Center is a non-profit corporation whose purpose is to stimulate public interest in books, reading, and the written word. The Center acts as a catalyst, bringing together individuals and organizations to build the Nebraska community of the book. The Center serves as a partner and supporter of programs, events, and unique projects which celebrate the written word. The current board members are:

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Nebraska Center for the Book Board of Directors Meetings 1997

Thursday, February 6, 1997, University of Nebraska at Omaha

Friday, May 9, 1997, Elkhorn Public Library

Thursday, August 7, 1997, Beatrice Public Library

Sunday, November 2, 1997, Heritage Room, Bennett Martin Library, Lincoln.

Note: November 2 is your Annual Meeting of the NCB Membership Election of Board members will take place and there will be a public program and presentation of the annual Jane Geske Award. Following the program, the NCB Board will meet.

1997 Board of Directors meetings will begin by 10 a.m. on each of these dates (except Nov. 2nd as noted above). Board meetings will be followed, after lunch, by meetings of the NCB working committees. For 1997 these include: a Membership Committee, a Public Relations/Publication Committee, a Nebraska Literature Festival Committee, and a Catalyst/Networking Committee. Committee membership is not restricted to board members. Please get involved in the work of your NCB!

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Words from the President



It is with some amazement that I find myself writing this note ushering in a new year for the Nebraska Center for the Book. I think of my affiliation with the NCB as a journey

through books. And now that I begin to sketch that journey it seems rather odd, but then books are as numerous — and as different — as people, so I suppose each journey from book to book is unique.

When I was seven or eight a traveling World Book Encyclopedia salesman stopped at the farm in northeast Iowa where I lived with my parents and eleven siblings. My parents looked, talked and agreed to buy those heavy red and blue books. Along with the twenty-six encyclopedias and a two-volume dictionary, came the Childcraft reading series and every year after, a World Book Yearbook. Over the next many years my siblings and I used those books: we memorized stories from the Childcraft books, wrote reports for school and made up guessing games. One winter when there were no livestock to care for, my dad read the encyclopedia, beginning with “A.”

There were many books in the house, and during my teens I began reading for hours on end, especially during the summers. Often the books I chose were ones my older brothers and sisters brought home from college: Kurt Vonnegut, J.R.R.

Tolkien’s trilogy, Orwell’s *1984*, Hesse’s *Siddhartha*.

One summer my mother built two bookcases for the corner of the dining room. The top shelf, only 10 inches below the ceiling, was designed specially to hold my oldest brother’s paperbacks — steamy stories of intrigue and rough westerns that piled up during his college breaks — not quite out of reach.

My own college days got me started reading and writing poetry, keeping journals, and reading philosophy, feminism and biographies. I was especially interested in personal stories from other cultures (which included anything outside the rural mid-west).

My move to Nebraska in 1980 set my book-life’s direction. That year, in conjunction with a book arts conference at the University of Nebraska at Omaha, the *World-Herald* ran an article about Harry Duncan’s work. What stuck in my head was the incredible fact that an individual, with hand tools, was making books — of poetry! I had never known the possibility existed — to make books by hand! — but knew, on that Sunday, what I wanted to do.

All these memories came toppling as I took a break today from my press to write this group of librarians, book sellers, story tellers, teachers, writers, students, readers — all of us readers — as we begin again.

Our board has just completed a day and a

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April 3-5, 1997; Ramada Plaza Hotel and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Literatures of the Great Plains Symposium

Literatures of the Great Plains — the 21st annual interdisciplinary symposium of the Center for Great Plains Studies — is scheduled for a three-day conference. Papers will be presented at the symposium on issues and myth in Plains literature, women writers, Native non-fiction, teaching Plains literatures, Plains classics, and oral traditions.

Grants from the Nebraska Humanities Council and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Research Council will enable the public to attend some highlights of the conference for free. Those include the opening address, the Friday evening entertainment and the Saturday evening mystery writers panel discussion.

Richard Etulain, Professor of History and Director of the Center for the American West at the University of New Mexico, will present the keynote address. The talk will be at 7:30 p.m. on Thursday, April 3 at the UN-L Love Library Auditorium at 13th & R Streets.

Linda Hasselstrom, a Plains poet, essayist,

and rancher from South Dakota, will present a reading from her book, *Land Circle: Writings Collected from the Land*, at the Friday luncheon which is open to the public by prior arrangement for a fee.

Friday evening (April 4), several writers, singer, and poets will present a cabaret at the 7th Street Loft. An Aria from Zitkala-Sa's The Sun Dance Opera will open the show. Other performers or readers will include Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, Hilda Raz, A.B. Emrys, Lisa Knopp, Norma Cantu, and Andy Wilkinson.

Plains mystery writers will gather Saturday evening (April 5) from 7:30 to 9:30 in the Westbrook Music Building on the UN-L campus to discuss their work. A book-signing will follow the panel.

The symposium is scheduled for April 3-5, 1997. Registration is \$50 before March 21, and \$60 following that date. The fee includes all events, sessions, materials, luncheon talks, and breaks. For more information contact Frances W. Kay, or Linda Ratcliffe at (402) 472-3082.

SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR RETIRING BOARD MEMBERS:

**GOLDA BOCKBRADER, FRANK CHIPASULA, BARBARA LEHN,
JUDE RICHARDSON, ROBERT RUNYON, AND MORRIE TUTTLE.**

MORRIE HAS AGREED TO STAY ON AS EXECUTIVE TREASURER.



The Early Life of a Confirmed Bookworm

Mary Anderson

I've just returned from a library discard sale, staggering under an armload of treasures. I ask myself where this love affair with books began. I can't part with a book. Lend, yes, gladly, but eventually I want each one back, tucked away on its shelf or scattered about the house, under the bed, on the kitchen table, on the floor by my favorite chair, and for a bookmark a grocery shopping list, a coupon for coffee, of a letter from a friend.

I suppose this romance started in my Sandhill childhood when a book was a precious belonging. What greater thrill could one experience than to fondle on Christmas Eve that firm square package that must be a boo,; and books for Christmas were as certain as flowers in the spring and haymaking in the summer. They were my most prized gifts to be read again and again. First read quickly to myself, perhaps even begun that night by the flickering light of the little wax candles on the tree. Then they must be read aloud to my little sister as she played with her cat or struggled over a bit of embroidery. Next I entertained my mother, probably as she deftly ran the old stove heated sad irons over our gingham dresses.

Little Women, *Swiss Family Robinson*, *David Copperfield* are still magical names, conjuring up even now images as vivid as they did well more than half a century ago. Any spot was ideal for reading: the broad win-

dowsills of the sod house, the cozy comfort of the kitchen stove with my feet on the open oven door for warmth, or the meager shade of a scraggly mulberry tree.

But our own supply of books was soon exhausted, known almost by heart. There were only textbooks at school and few of those. There was a library in town, thirty miles away, which I haunted when I visited my grandmother. What a treasure house that was. I can still feel the thrill of wandering through those stacks. I soon learned to look for the most worn books. They were always the best. *Uncle Wiggly* and *Burgess' Animal Stories* will never be equaled for sheer adventure!!

But when I returned to my Sandhill home, there was Mrs. Whittington and her library. As I remember, Mrs. Whittington lived about four miles away as the crow flies, or as a pony and its riders traveled. Roads followed no section lines, just straight across the hills from one barbed wire gate to another. But whether we went by pony or with Dad at the wheel of the old Ford, we followed the same rutted trail, and we carried our bookbag, the versatile forty-eight pound flour sack.

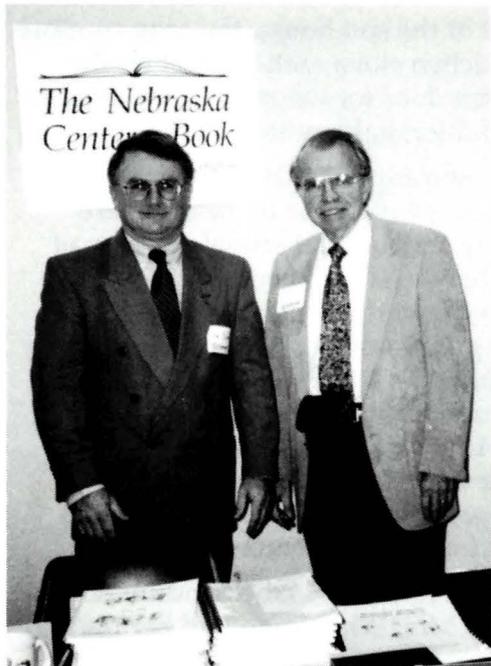
I don't remember the rest of the house. I think it was sod. I don't even remember about the "library" room itself. My sister says the room was always cold, and the

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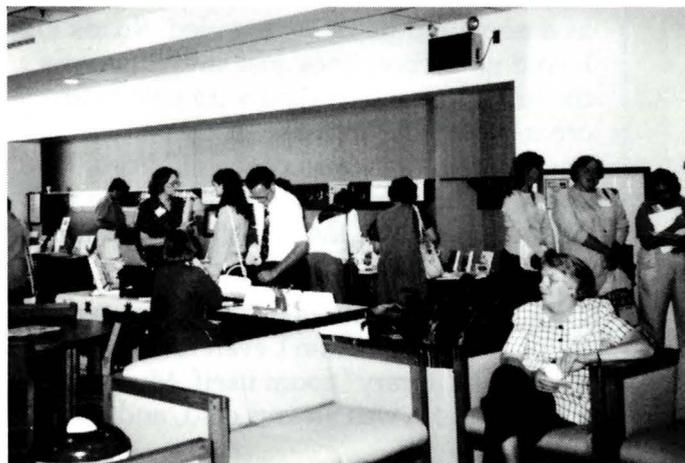


1996 Nebraska Literature Festival

Tom Boyle and John Cole at The Nebraska Center For the Book display.



Helen Stauffer receiving the Mildred R. Bennett Award from Tom Boyle, NCB President. (photo by Jim Rippey)



Book Fair Participants at Nebraska Literature Festival.



Barbara Rippey portraying Mari Sandoz. (photo by Jim Rippey)



More Literature Festival...



Pictured above from the left: Fran Kaye, UNL Faculty Sponsor; Ned Hedger, Registration Coordinator; Tom Boyle, NCB President; Cynthia Schneider, Literature Festival Coordinator.



Helen Stauffer portraying Mary Margaret. (photo by Jim Rippey)



Jim McKee of Lee Booksellers accepting the Jane Geske Award from NCB President Tom Boyle on behalf of the Independent Booksellers.



Founding Member, Jane Getsche with John Cole.



The Early Life of a Confirmed Bookworm

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floor was shiny with varnish, a rare finish for a sod house floor. My sister and I were among the privileged few allowed free access to that enchanted room. It seemed to me that it contained thousands of books. Possibly there were a hundred.

We looked and chose and filled our flour sack. It mattered little that the books were discards from a city library many miles away, hauled lovingly by wagon to the little Sandhill room. We probably read more stories without an ending than we did those completed. The final page is always the one that disappears first from a worn book. I wonder now if our dear friend ever knew how deeply her sharing influenced our lives.

Books were not just to be read. Not only

were they to be read aloud and reread, but they were to be discussed and even played. How many hours we sisters spent sharing the lives of Meg, Joe, Beth and Amy March. Perhaps a certain theologian with several books of his own to his credit and his niche in *Who's Who* remembers our serious discussions of *Enoch Arden* (or was it *The Nuremburg Stove*?) as we sat in the shelter of a Sandhill blowout while our friends played about us.

Perhaps these memories will explain why nieces and nephews so often find a book or a magazine subscription under the Christmas tree rather than that new game described so temptingly on the TV commercial. Maybe these are the reasons I can't discard a book, be it a tattered paperback, a well preserved, but hopelessly outdated, pedagogical text from my grandmother's Normal School days, an old Danish hymnal, or my own now ancient college texts.

Words from the President

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half workshop in which we explored our past and our present, our public setting, our mission, our personal commitments. We have supportive leadership in John Cole at the Library of Congress, many colleagues in 32 state centers around the country, a hard-working board, and a board membership base here in Nebraska. I look forward to a year of long-term planning and setting specific goals to help us in our mission. "...to stimulate public interest in books, reading, and the written

word...bringing together individuals and organizations ... [to] support programs, events, and unique projects which celebrate the written word.

As a state-wide networking organization, a catalyst for the community of the book, I invite your comments and questions, your knowledge of needs, activities, events, and resources. You can reach me through the NCB's Bennett Martin Library address or at UNO by phone 402-554-2773 or e-mail dbrady@unomaha.edu.

Happy New Year, NCB!



New Board Members...

John Butler, an Omaha native, has been employed at Kiewit, Inc. in the Training Department for nearly three years. In this position, he helps edit the company magazine and training manuals. He also coordinates training seminars. Previous to his work at Kiewit, John worked in the Kutak Rock Law Firm, proof reading and editing legal documents as well as EEO and Affirmative Action Policy. He worked with requests for proposals on how the company was qualified for a project. John has a degree in Secondary Language Arts and is completing a Masters in English. He tutors secondary students in English, History, and other subjects.

Mel Krutz, is a retired teacher of College English and Education; Ph.D.; published author; founding chair of the Academic Freedom Coalition of Nebraska, 1988; Past-chair of the National Council of Teachers of English Committee Against Censorship; member of Nebraska English Language Arts Council. She is the Co-originator and chair of the Nebraska Writing and Storytelling Festival; editor of several of the Nebraska Writing & Storytelling volumes of works by Nebraska authors; member of the first Nebraska Literature Festival Board, of the Nebraska Writers Guild, and of the Nebraska Literary Heritage Association Board.

Linda Hillegass owns Lee Booksellers in Lincoln with her husband Jim McKee. They opened their bookstore in 1979 and now have three locations in Lincoln, and the distinction of owning Lincoln's last sur-

viving locally owned general bookstore. Linda received her B.A. in English Literature from the University of Colorado in 1969, and her Master's degree in Library Science from the University of Denver in 1971. She worked 13 years in public libraries, including stints as Director at the Spencer (IA) Public Library and the Carver County Library System (Chaska, MN), and five years as Assistant Director at Lincoln City Libraries (1979-84). For the last twelve years, she has worked at the bookstore. Linda loves children's books, mysteries, modern literature, and garden books.

Richard Miller was born in Emmaus, PA, (home of Rodale Press). He married Rae Jean, also a librarian and they have one child, Eleanor who is a seventh-grader. Richard attended Grove City College in Grove City, PA. He taught 9th grade English for two years before becoming a librarian. Richard returned to college at Drexel University library school in Philadelphia and received his MLS degree. He spent one summer in a penitentiary library in Columbia, SC under an internship from the South Carolina State Library. For 14 years, he was employed at the Missouri State Library as a consultant, public library consultant, regional librarian for the blind and physically handicapped, and acting state librarian. Richard was State Librarian in Montana for 7½ years. Since 1996, he has served as Southeast Library System administrator.



Why the Nebraska Center for the Book Matters to Me

Mel Krutz

When I was in the second or third grade, a branch of the city library was opened in our neighborhood in Lorain, Ohio, one room where the total shelving lined three walls, and the fourth was a windowed store front. I thought it too wonderful to be real and entered it like church, with the deepest admiration for the white-haired librarian, who always smiled at us when we checked out books.

I don't remember there being any children's books as we know them today. The volumes I remember were shelf after shelf of "regular" books without pictures, which stood proud on their spines inviting imagination, exploration, discovery, and engrossment.

Why, when I can't find the spare key to our house, or recall names that were on the tip of my tongue yesterday, does that first library card number jump out on the ready from the depth of my mind: 59570. And why does the recall of the name of my very first check out, real, live library book: *Cherry Street House* (I wonder who wrote it?), trigger the desire for non-stop engagement with books? There is a continued need to experience that same sense of wonder, involvement, and participation with meanings from print — an unfolding only in my (in every reader's) mind at any given reading moment. There is ownership. There is life-sustaining splendor.

The school I attended was also one room.

It held a "library" of books that did not fill the designated three shelves set aside for it. I think that later, when I was in the upper grades, an arrangement with the public library brought books in (before the advent of the book mobile). Why did it take so long?

The very concept of a center for the book brought back those same feelings of reading's meaning in my life. Reading is centering, grounding, securing; a discovered; a center — indeed a key — to life, a key obviously more important than the spare to our house, and one not lost.

Conundrum: the ability to read is a necessary key to enter a book's pages; simultaneously, reading itself is the key to so much more, a key drawn from the pages, found within them to be entered into at anytime through the always unlocked doors of every page, silently or aloud, alone or sharing.

And so I was pleased to be present at some of the early organizational meetings of NCB in Nebraska, and be involved in its first wider project, the Literature Festival, and later more directly involved with its later participation in the Nebraska Writing and Storytelling Festival, though teaching schedules and distances limited my continued participation.

Now that retirement opens my schedule like books open my mind, I feel privileged to be asked to be a part of this board. I hope that I can contribute something to Ne-



Why the Nebraska Center for the Book Matters to Me

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braska through it, for the number of book and literary experiences Nebraska has given to me in the many years we have lived, been educated, and taught in this state.

And should you come to my house and find no one home, please bring a book for sustenance until we come, because the spare key really isn't there. Come to think of it, a book outside of our door for you to read could be a more valuable key than that to any house — a key for the mind, the soul, and the heart, a key that would joyfully not be hidden.

Words from our Sister Centers for the Book: Colorado

The Denver International Children's Book Festival is a celebration of the power of reading. The importance of reading in improving literacy and developing necessary skills for functioning in our society has been documented frequently. Stephen Krashen is the author of *The Power of Reading* (Libraries Unlimited, 1993), a review of 100 years of reading research. He specifically discusses the value of reading aloud, light reading, and reading nontraditional forms of literature, as well as the importance of the library and a print-rich environment. He advocates a program of free voluntary reading in schools and libraries. Regular, sustained reading promotions are a critical component in nurturing free voluntary reading. The following conclusions reached by Krashen, are all activities that are reinforced through the Rocky Mountain Children's Book Festival.

- In 38 of 41 studies, students using free voluntary reading (FVR) did as well or better in reading comprehension tests than students given traditional skill-based reading instruction.
- Reading as a leisure activity is the best

predictor of comprehension, vocabulary, and reading speed.

- Two studies report higher scores on standardized tests when FVR was used.
- The relationship between reported FVR and literacy is remarkably consistent.
- If children read 1 million words in a year, at least 1,000 words will be added to their vocabulary.
- FVR is nearly always superior to direct instruction on tests of reading comprehension, vocabulary, writing and grammar.
- Studies show that reading may be the only way to develop literacy skills.
- Hearing stories has a direct impact on literacy development.
- Children read more when they see other people reading.
- Light reading is how many people learn to read.
- Comic books are linguistically appropriate, not detrimental to reading development, and conduits to book reading.

Downloaded from <http://www.aclin.org/~ccftr/cibf.htm> — Colorado Center for the Book



Calendar of Events for 1997

Lunch Programs

February 5

March 5

April 2

4th Floor at Bennett Martin

Barbara Rix
"Mignon Eberhart"

Mary Jackson
"The Library Was Not—Will Be"

Betty Stevens
"Those Were The Days My Friends"

12:10 p.m.

Ames Reading Series

February 20

March 20

April 2

Heritage Room at Bennett Martin

Carol Miles Peterson
"Bess Streeter Aldrich"

Stephanie Witson
"Christian Fiction"

To be announced

7:30 p.m.

Mark your Calendar

April 26, Annual Cather Spring Conference Featuring Cather's *Death Comes to the Archbishop*.

May 3, John G. Neihardt Spring Conference

Don Doll, Charles Trimble and Duane Hollow Horn Bear will discuss the *Vision Quest*.
Stan Smith and Joe Green will present "*On the Oregon Trail with John G. Neihardt*."

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