

The NCB News

Volume 19

Spring 2009

No. 1

A Publication of the Nebraska Center for the Book

2009 One Book One Nebraska



Proclamation-signing ceremony features (l. to r.) Teresa Lorensen, Bess Streeter Aldrich Foundation; Lt. Gov. Rick Sheehy; Joanne Ferguson Cavanaugh, Nebraska Library Association; Gary Alkire, Nebraska Center for the Book; Bob Clements, Bess Streeter Aldrich Foundation; Sharon Bishop, Nebraska Center for the Book; Rod Wagner, Nebraska Library Commission; Sen. Dave Pankonin; Tom Swanson, University of Nebraska Press; and Erika Hamilton, Nebraska Humanities Council.

Nebraskans are invited to read *A Lantern in Her Hand* by Bess Streeter Aldrich for the 2009 One Book One Nebraska celebration. First published in 1928, *A Lantern in Her Hand* is a classic story of a pioneer woman who withstands the adversity of existence on the prairie to triumph in the joy of everyday life.

This year the reading celebration is hosted by the Bess Streeter Aldrich Foundation, www.bessstreeteraldrich.org. Libraries across Nebraska are joining the Foundation and other literary and cultural organizations in planning activities and events that will encourage Nebraskans to read and discuss this story.

Among the activities to help highlight One Book One Nebraska are:

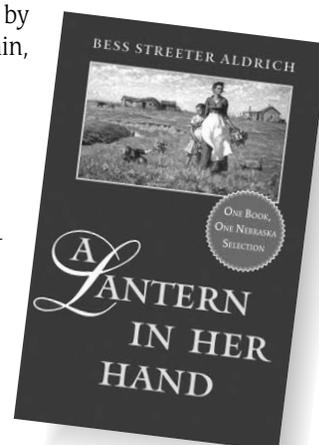
- April 18, 2009: **Bess Streeter Aldrich Foundation Spring Banquet** featuring Carol Miles Petersen's presentation of Bess Streeter Aldrich's story behind *A Lantern in Her Hand*. Winners of the Aldrich short story contest will be honored at the banquet.
- August 15, 2009: **Bess Streeter Aldrich Summer Family Fun Celebration**, in cooperation with the Elmwood Public Library, to highlight the 100th anniversary of the Aldrich family in Nebraska.
- November 14, 2009: ***A Lantern in Her Hand* book discussion** at the Nebraska Book Festival.
- A ***Journey Into Christmas* holiday event**, with the Aldrich House decorated for the holidays and open every Saturday and Sunday in December.

As part of the 2009 celebration, the Aldrich Foundation worked with Nebraska Library Commission staff to digitize Aldrich-related materials and photographs of artifacts. They are available via the Internet through the Commission's **Nebraska Memories** online searchable database at www.nebraskamemories.org.

Also available is an archived broadcast by Bess Streeter Aldrich Foundation Director Teresa Lorensen, Library Commission Director Rod Wagner, and Library Commission Communications Coordinator Mary Jo Ryan. The 41-minute *NCompass Live* session focused on creating a successful local reading promotion using *A Lantern in Her Hand*. Included are brainstorming strategies for reading and discussing the book, and tools to help engage communities in local activities to encourage them to come together through literature to explore this classic work in community-wide reading programs. Access the session at www.nlc.state.ne.us/scripts/training/eventshow.asp?ProgID=8967.

Lt. Gov. Rick Sheehy launched the One Book One Nebraska yearlong celebration with a proclamation-signing ceremony at Elmwood Public Library in January. He was joined by state Sen. Dave Pankonin, Elmwood city officials, and members of One Book One Nebraska sponsor organizations.

One Book One Nebraska 2009 is sponsored by the Nebraska Center for the Book, Nebraska Humanities Council, Nebraska Library Association, Nebraska Library Commission, and the University of Nebraska Press. For more information see www.onebookonenebraska.org or contact Mary Jo Ryan, Nebraska Library Commission Communications Coordinator, 402-471-3434 or 800-307-2665; mjryan@nlc.state.ne.us.



Nebraska Book Festival Continues to Evolve

Guest Editorial
by **Mary Jo Ryan**,
Nebraska Library
Commission

**Noted Nebraska
writers taking
part in the 2009
Nebraska Book
Festival:**

William Kloefkorn
Ted Kooser
Don Welch
JV Brummels
Sean Doolittle
Michael Forsberg
Harley Jane Kozak
**The Loren Eiseley
Society**
Hilda Raz
Joe Starita
**Stephanie Grace
Whitson**

Since 1991 the Nebraska Center for the Book has sponsored the Nebraska Book Festival, with major funding from the Nebraska Humanities Council and support from the Nebraska Library Commission (along with help from a variety of literary and educational organizations).

In these times of uncertain budget futures and reduced financial support, the Nebraska Center for the Book board spent a portion of a recent board meeting planning the 2009 festival. The board voted to rededicate the festival to Nebraska writers and focus the event on the rich literary offerings of Nebraska. The board decided to reduce the festival to a one-day event and combine it with the Nebraska Center for the Book Annual Meeting on November 14, 2009.

The combined event, Nebraska Writers: Cultivating Creativity, will be held at the Nebraska State Historical Society's Museum of Nebraska History and will include a variety of activities. An awards luncheon featuring the winners of the Center for the Book's Mildred Bennett Award, Jane Geske Award, and Nebraska Book Awards

will be held at Chez Hay in downtown Lincoln. A selection of Nebraska writers will read from their 2009 works, along with readings from the winners of the Nebraska Book Awards. Writers Workshops will be offered free of charge. Teresa Lorensen of the Bess Streeter Aldrich Foundation will lead a book discussion of *A Lantern in Her Hand*, this year's enormously popular One Book One Nebraska selection (www.onebookonenebraska.org).

A Conversation with Three Poets will give Ted Kooser, Bill Kloefkorn, and Don Welch the opportunity to share insights on reading and writing poetry. Additional Nebraska author activities and plans for vendors are in the works.

This shorter, more focused event promises to be more fun than ever. We envision a day that motivates Nebraska readers, writers, teachers, and

learners to come together to hear about and talk about the most recent work of a variety of Nebraska writers. We invite you to save the date, November 14, and watch the summer *NCB News* for details on the evolution of the festival.



Booksellers and browsers at the 2008 Nebraska Book Festival.

The **NCB News**

Vol. 19 • Spring 2009 • No. 1

Nebraska Center for the Book Board and Committees

Executive Committee

Garry Alkire, President; Sharon Bishop, Vice-President (and Past-President); Carol Connor, Secretary; Sherry Houston, Treasurer

Funding/Membership

Sherry Houston, Chair; Guadalupe Mier; Carol Connor

Nebraska Book Festival

Garry Alkire, Chair; JV Brummels; Erika Hamilton; Marge Saiser; Maggie Tarelli-Falcon; Mary Jo Ryan (Nebraska Library Commission staff representative)

Programs/Projects

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Publications/Publicity

Mary Ellen Ducey; Molly Fisher; Mary Jo Ryan (Nebraska Library Commission staff representative)

Awards Art Coordinator

Denise Brady

Letters About Literature Coordinator

Laureen Reidesel

Nebraska Library Commission Director Rod Wagner is an ex-officio member of all committees.

2009 Nebraska Center for the Book Board Meetings

May 16 Grand Island Public Library

August TBA

November 14 Lincoln, Annual Meeting, 8:30 a.m., Nebraska State Historical Society

Advertising

The *NCB News* can accept up to four 1/8-page ads for each issue. The advertising rate is \$125 for 1/8-page. *NCB News* is issued May 1, August 15, and November 1. The advertising and copy deadline is six weeks prior to issue date. For details, contact Mary Jo Ryan, Nebraska Center for the Book, The Atrium, 1200 N Street, Suite 120, Lincoln, NE 68508-2023; phone 402-471-3434, 800-307-2665, e-mail: mjryan@nlc.state.ne.us. www.unl.edu/NCB.

The *NCB News* is published three times each year by the Nebraska Center for the Book, The Atrium, 1200 N Street, Suite 120, Lincoln, NE 68508-2023. Subscription is free with membership. Editor: Linda Trout
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All book cover art and photos reprinted by permission of the publisher.

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Books Honored by Nebraska Center for the Book

The Nebraska Book Awards program, sponsored by the Nebraska Center for the Book (NCB) and supported by the Nebraska Library Commission, recognizes and honors books that are written by Nebraska authors, published by Nebraska publishers, set in Nebraska, or concerning Nebraska.

Submit nominations for the 2009 competition (books with a 2008 copyright) by June 30, 2009. See www.nlc.state.ne.us/publications/ncbawards.html for more information and entry forms or contact Maria Medrano-Nehls, 402-471-2045 or 800-307-2665; mnehls@nlc.state.ne.us.

Fill out and print the entry form and send it with three copies of the book and the \$40 entry fee to NCB Book Awards, Nebraska Library Commission, The Atrium, 1200 N St., Suite 120, Lincoln, NE 68508-2023. Winners will be announced and presented at the Nebraska Center for the Book's Annual Meeting and Nebraska Book Festival in Lincoln on November 14, 2009.

2008 award winners were honored at the Nebraska Book Festival on October 18, 2008. The 2008 winners are:

Nonfiction

150: A Commemoration of the Sesquicentennial of Hall County, Nebraska

Edited by Pete Letheby
 Publisher: *Grand Island Independent*

Nonfiction Honor

Africa on Six Wheels: A Semester on Safari
 by Betty Levitov
 Publisher: University of Nebraska Press

Fiction

Dead Ex
 by Harley Jane Kozak
 Publisher: Doubleday

Cover/Design/Illustration

Husker Numbers: A Nebraska Number Book
 by Rajean Luebs Shepherd
 Illustrated by Sandy Appleoff
 Publisher: Sleeping Bear Press

Poetry

Book of Grass
 by JV Brummels
 Publisher: Grizzly Media

Anthology

The Big Empty: Contemporary Nebraska Nonfiction Writers

Edited by Ladette Randolph and
 Nina Shevchuk-Murray

Publisher: University of Nebraska Press

Anthology Honor

Nebraska Presence: An Anthology of Poetry

Edited by Greg Kosmicki and
 Mary K. Stillwell
 Publisher: Backwaters Press



What is the Nebraska Center for the Book?

The Nebraska Center for the Book brings together the state's readers, writers, booksellers, librarians, publishers, printers, educators, and scholars to build the community of the book. We are the people who know and love books, and who value the richness they bring to our lives. Our

Nebraska Center supports programs to celebrate and stimulate public interest in books, reading, and the written word. We have been an affiliate of the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress since 1990.

Join the Nebraska Center for the Book

Name _____ Address _____
 Phone _____ E-Mail: _____

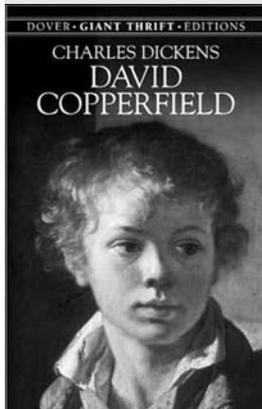
Name/address of a friend who might be interested in NCB membership:

___ \$15 Individual Membership ___ \$25 Organizational Membership ___ \$50 Octavo Membership
 ___ \$100 Quarto Membership ___ \$250 Folio Membership

**Please send this form and a check to: Nebraska Center for the Book
 The Atrium, 1200 N Street, Suite 120 • Lincoln, NE 68508-2023**



What Are You Reading?



Nebraska Center for the Book board members share their thoughts about the books they are reading:

A few years back I saw the BBC Video production of Charles Dickens' *Our Mutual Friend*. It was a great program and immediately made me want to read the book. I loved it! It was intriguing, mysterious, and wow—what great dialogue. This past month, searching my own books for something to read, I pulled down an old hardbound copy of Dickens' *David Copperfield*—another fascinating read and a wonderful life-tale to follow. I enjoy Dickens' descriptions, his many details in his stories, and his subtle addition of humor and kindness. For me, his books have proved to be the sort I just can't put down.

Mary Ellen Ducey
University of Nebraska-Lincoln

I've just recently read *While the Patient Slept*, by Mignon Eberhart. I don't usually read mysteries, but I have been curious for some time to read something by Eberhart, whose reputation as an author has remained solid for over fifty years. I wasn't disappointed. *While the Patient Slept* centers around a murder in a remote home during the employment of Sarah Keate, a private nurse. The characters present in the house are an odd group, and their purpose in being together is at the core of the mystery. Unlike the violent mysteries of today, Eberhart gently leads the reader through the initial murder, the backgrounds of each of the suspects, and on to the answer to "whodunit." I found this book to be quite enjoyable and easy to read. I plan to read more of Eberhart's novels—the difficulty will come in choosing which one comes next!

Becky Faber
University of Nebraska-Lincoln



At the Southern Festival of Books, I had the pleasure of hearing David Wroblewski read from his *The Story of Edgar Sawtelle*. He read the chapter told from the dog Almondine's point of view, and I thought it was beautiful. The book was intense and heart-wrenching. I especially liked the second chapter told from Almondine's point of view. However, this is a story that goes beyond a boy and his dog. I haven't stopped thinking about the book and the family tragedy.

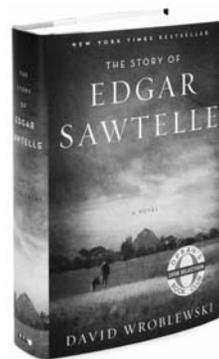
Molly Fisher

I am currently reading *The Piano Teacher* by Janice Y.K. Lee. The setting alternates between 1941 and 1952 (war time and post-war) Hong Kong. It is a romance set against the Japanese occupation of Hong Kong and is a fascinating read.

Maggie Tarelli-Falcon,
Omaha Public Library

My favorite mystery is a "cozy" and I am currently reading a series by Carola Dunn, who was born in England. It is set in 1920s England featuring the Honorable Daisy Dalrymple who supports herself by writing articles for a magazine in England and in the U.S., and who keeps crossing paths with Detective Chief Inspector Alex Fletcher. It is a quick, delightful read.

Carol Connor



Call for Essays: *Letters From Grass Country*

The Backwaters Press in Omaha is accepting manuscripts for a collection of essays on contemporary poets and poetry of the Great Plains. Edited by Greg Kosmicki, publisher, and Mary K. Stillwell, the collection will feature essays that direct attention to the influence of the Great Plains on the poetry and poets of the region.

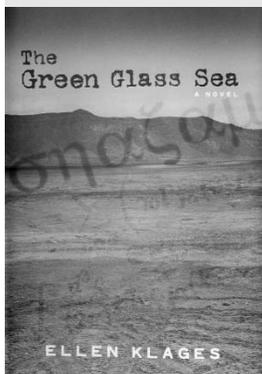
Deadline for submissions is June 30, 2010, with publication set for fall 2011. Scholarly or familiar essays about the poets of the Great Plains, their lives and their work are sought, with focus on new as well as established poets. Cultural diversity is

strongly encouraged, and the publisher is interested in neglected poets of the region. Broader essays about the influence on poetry and poets of the region—culture, ethos, geography, and history—also are welcome. Previously published essays will be considered.

For more information regarding submission guidelines, submitting abstracts, and the length and style of the essays, see the publisher's Website at www.backwaterspress.com, or contact Greg Kosmicki or Mary Stillwell at lettersfromgrasscountry@yahoo.com.



One Book for Nebraska Kids Book Bags Available



The One Book for Nebraska Kids 2009 selection is *The Green Glass Sea* by Ellen Klages, and is aimed at readers in grades 4-6. This book is about Dewey Kerrigan, 11, who travels to New Mexico in 1943 and meets up with her father, who lives on a secret base and is working on a top-secret project with a number of other scientists, including J. Robert Oppenheimer.

The Nebraska Library Commission distributed book bags containing paperback books to each Regional Library System office and has one for the

Library Commission to loan out. To borrow the book bags, contact Nebraska Library Commission Information and Reference Services, 402-471-4016 or 800-307-2665, ready@nlc.state.ne.us, or the Regional Library System offices. Discussion questions, puzzles, and background information are available at www.nlc.state.ne.us/libdev/obonk.html.

For more information contact Sally Snyder, Nebraska Library Commission Children and Young Adult Library Services Coordinator, 402-471-4003 or 800-307-2665; ssnyder@nlc.state.ne.us. ↗

Adventures in Bibliophile Commerce

Books about Books, A History and Bibliography of Oak Knoll Press,

1978-2008,
Robert D. Fleck
New Castle,
Delaware:
Oak Knoll Press,
2008
ISBN 978-1-
58456-248-1

by
Oliver B. Pollak,
University of
Nebraska at
Omaha

This book celebrates thirty years of Oak Knoll Press and its specialty, selling antiquarian books and publishing books on books. This lively, frequently anecdotal genre, engaging booksellers and publishers, is a book romp.

The year is 1977. Bob Fleck gave up the chemical engineering profession and commenced continuous on-the-job training and learning in the book trade. Hiring, firing, continually seeking sufficient space to accommodate "growing the business" (over five locations), making the merchandizing transition from the U.S. mail to e-mail, and the joy of meeting collectors and writers is an odyssey.

Oak Knoll Press has published almost 300 catalogues. They have co-published about 700 titles with eighteen organizations including the British Library, American Antiquarian Society, and Bibliographical Society of America. This bibliography is a catalogue raisonné of Oak Knoll's 320 independently published titles.

I spent a summer reading 285 catalogues cover to cover, encompassing about 170,000 titles, some

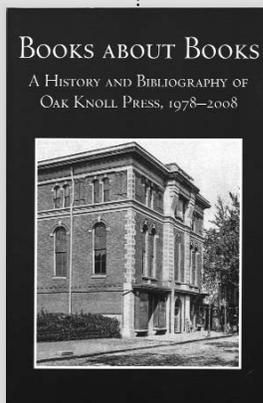
of which were duplicates. I saw the price of books climb over the thirty-year period, and how important condition was. More important, as I left pencil ticks or Post-Its in the margin, it provided a Biblio

Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory of my narrowing interests in the broad swath of the book trade.

Fleck reminisces and, at the age of sixty, assesses where his second profession is headed. He observes that "bibliography as a subject begs to be available online, as any good bibliography is always a work in progress." He believes "bibliographers deserve a special place in heaven for their unselfish efforts."

My copy is inscribed, "To Oliver B. Pollak, Fellow book lover and an Oak Knoll patron! Best wishes from Bob

Fleck." I can only speculate where this "association copy" will find its next owner. Oak Knoll is the creation of Bob Fleck, and he can be forgiven for including twenty-four photographs of himself and demonstrating how well fine wine mixes with the book business. Take a look at the exciting Oak Knoll Books Website at www.oakknoll.com. ↗



Talking Book and Braille Service Featured in *Nebraska Life*

The March/April 2009 issue of *Nebraska Life* featured the **Library Commission's Talking Book and Braille Service** in an article highlighting volunteer Bonni Faimon reading in the Library Commission's recording studio (www.nebraskalife.com/loveofreading.asp).

Faimon, a former teacher, social worker, and legal secretary, began as a volunteer reader seven years ago because, she says, reading is the thing she would miss most if she lost her eyesight. She is one of fifty-two volunteers who record 25-35 books and about 140 magazines and newsletters yearly in the

Library Commission's studios. Emphasis is on Nebraska authors and materials about Nebraska and the Great Plains. The recordings are duplicated and circulated to the 4,300 Nebraskans who subscribe to the free service for Nebraskans that cannot see to read or hold a book.

For more information contact Dave Oertli, Nebraska Library Commission Talking Book and Braille Service Director, 402-471-4005 or 800-307-2665; doertli@nlc.state.ne.us or talkingbook@nlc.state.ne.us. ↗



Center for the Book Awards Presented

The Jane Geske and Mildred Bennett awards were presented at the 2008 Nebraska Book Festival last October. The awards are broadsides designed, hand-painted, and donated to the Nebraska Center for the Book by Bonnie O'Connell. The Jane Geske Award features a poem by Mark Scott with a linocut by Bonnie O'Connell. The Mildred Bennett Award features a poem by Jim Reese with images and type taken from the letterpress archives at the University of Nebraska at Omaha's Fine Arts Press.

The **Jane Geske Award** was given to the **Archives & Special Collections of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Libraries**. The award recognizes a Nebraska association, organization, business, library, school, academic institution, or other group that has made an exceptional, long-term contribution to one or more of these fields in Nebraska literacy: reading, book selling, books, libraries, and writing in Nebraska.

First presented in 1992, the award is given in memory of Jane Pope Geske, a founding member of the Nebraska Center for the Book and a long-time active member in many Nebraska library and literary activities. It was established in recognition of Jane Geske's contributions to the well-being of the libraries of Nebraska.

The **Mildred Bennett Award** was presented to **Dr. Robert Manley**. It recognizes an individual who has made a significant contribution to the fostering of the literary tradition in Nebraska. Its purpose is to remind us all of the literary and intellectual traditions that enrich our lives and mold our world. The recipient is nominated by the local book festival committee and approved by the Nebraska Center for the Book board.

Nominations for the 2009 awards should be sent to Rod Wagner, Nebraska Library Commission Director, 402-471-4001 or 800-307-2665; rwagner@nlc.state.ne.us by August 1.

Talking Book and Braille Service Updates Catalogs

Many borrowers of the Library Commission's Talking Book and Braille Service enjoy books about cowboys and pioneers, frontiersmen and settlers, emigrants and Native Americans. A recently enlarged and updated catalog of *Westerns and Pioneer* books on cassette provides these borrowers with access to fiction and nonfiction about the settlement of Nebraska and the Great Plains. The catalog is available in large print and online.

Westerns and Pioneer is one of a series of catalogs for books in the Nebraska Cassette Books Collection, many of which were recorded in the Library Commission's studios. Another catalog, *Books for Young People*, which describes books on cassette for preschool through eighth-grade students, is currently being updated.

The Nebraska Cassette Books Collection complements the Library of Congress collection of cassette books, which also is circulated through the Talking Book and Braille Service. Starting this year, both collections will transition to digital flash memory cartridges for use with digital players.

For more information contact Dave Oertli, see page 5 for contact information.



A Good Book Is Worth Sharing

Talking books is a free service for anyone who has difficulty holding a book, turning a page, or seeing regular print.



The high-quality recordings and playback equipment are loaned and returned through the mail free of charge.

**Nebraska Library Commission
Talking Book and Braille Service**

402-471-4038 800-742-7691

talkingbook@nlc.state.ne.us www.nlc.state.ne.us/tbbs

Shaffner Trilogy Set in Nebraska, But Where?

by **Barbara Rixstine**,

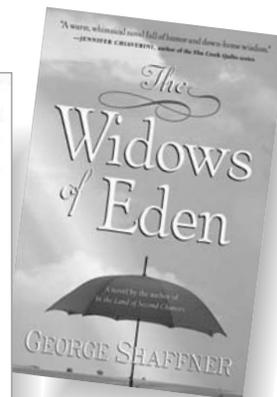
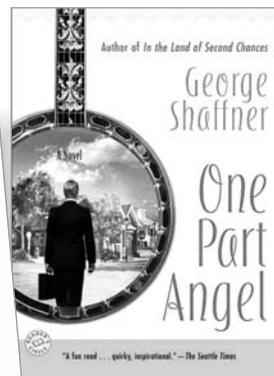
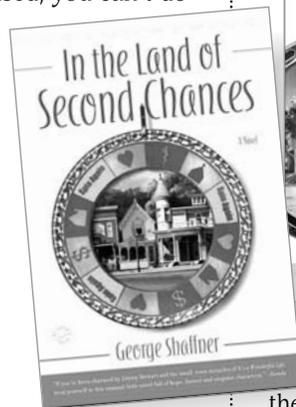
University of
Nebraska-Lincoln

For those who enjoy folksy fables, and who like to guess at where they're based, you can't do better than George Shaffner and his trilogy about the fictional town of Ebb, Nebraska, somewhere south of Beatrice. (Go ahead, think of all the towns south of Beatrice that have their own department store and Starbucks, like Ebb does. It could be a short list.)

Ebb is what you might call a traditional town. At least that's how the proprietor of the Come Again Bed And Breakfast, Wilma Porter, tells it. But into this traditional town come some very nontraditional types. And the question is, are they angels or not?

In Shaffner's first book, *In the Land of Second Chances* (2004), we meet Porter and her irascible friends and neighbors and a very special newcomer, Vernon Moore. Moore is a traveling salesman—he says—but there's much more to him than that, including the fact that he's likely to have died in 1944.

Vernon has some very special philosophic qualities, qualities that Ebb's residents find a need of, time and time again. For example, in *Second Chances*, Calvin Millet's young daughter Lucy is



dying,
and Moore must work

with Millet to find a way to make the end bearable for Lucy and him. In *One Part Angel*,

the second of the series, Moore has to work with Porter's grandson who may be mixed up with a religious sect that's settled outside of town. In the trilogy's last book, *The Widows of Eden*, the drought is on everyone's minds until Moore's friends, "The Widows," come into town via their motor home. Like Moore, research shows that these three women all died years earlier.

It's probably best, but not crucial, to start at the beginning so you understand the character backgrounds, but Shaffner brings you up to date with each book. The *Omaha World-Herald* called *Second Chances* "an engaging book of religious philosophy set within the framework of a novel." I'd settle for just plain ol' fable, myself.

American Life in Poetry: Column 174

by **Ted Kooser**,
U.S. Poet
Laureate,
2004-2006



Don Welch lives in Nebraska and is one of those many talented American poets who have never received as much attention as they deserve. His poems are distinguished by the meticulous care he puts into writing them, and by their deep intelligence. Here is Welch's picture of a 14-year-old, captured at that awkward and painfully vulnerable step on the way to adulthood.

At 14

*To be shy,
to lower your eyes
after making a greeting.*

*to know
wherever you go
you'll be called on,*

*to fear
whoever you're near
will ask you,*

*to wear
the softer sides of the air
in rooms filled with angers,*

*your ship
always docked
in transparent slips*

*whose wharves
are sheerer than membranes.*

American Life in Poetry is made possible by The Poetry Foundation (www.poetryfoundation.org), publisher of *Poetry* magazine. It is also supported by the Department of English at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Poem copyright © 2008 by Don Welch. Reprinted from "When Memory Gives Dust a Face," by Don Welch, published by Lewis-Clark Press, 2008, by permission of Don Welch and the publisher. Introduction copyright © 2009 by The Poetry Foundation. The introduction's author, Ted Kooser, served as United States Poet Laureate Consultant in Poetry to the Library of Congress from 2004-2006. We do not accept unsolicited manuscripts.

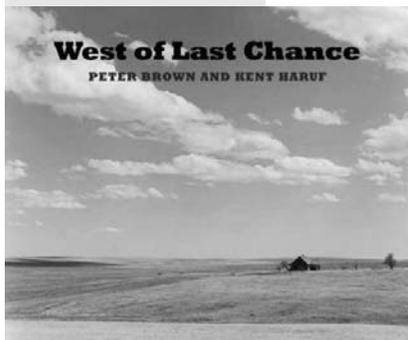
Review: *West of Last Chance*

by Peter Brown
and Kent Haruf,

W.W. Norton &
Company, 2008

ISBN: 978-0-393-
06572-5

Review by
John Wiederspan



Being a native son of the Great Plains (a Nebraskan to be exact), the pictorial presentation of the region did not strike me as exotic or strange. For someone surrounded by water, people, mountains, or trees, the Great Plains must seem extraordinarily alien. The vast emptiness can be beautiful, frightening, and humbling, all at the same moment. The sheer size of the sky and horizon can reduce a person to a possibly dangerous emotional sense of insignificance.

West of Last Chance, with photos by Peter Brown and text by Kent Haruf, truly conveys the stark reality of the region. As I studied the photos and read the text, my reaction went from mild interest to strong admiration. Both men are seasoned professionals and their collaboration has resulted in a showcase for the American prairie. Their appreciation of the land, with all its attributes, is immediately evident.

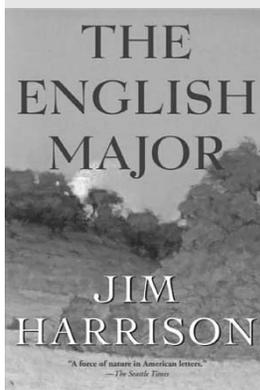
The land can be cruelly indifferent to its residents. Too cold, too windy, too hot, too humid, too much rain, not enough rain, too dusty, tornados, hail. Nature flows strong and fast, with nothing to slow it down. To their credit, the authors do not paint a romantic, idyllic picture of the Plains. The area is shown with all its blessings and curses. Time and technology have allowed humankind to tame the land, but it has not been domesticated. The photos and text pertaining to the human presence on the prairie show that humankind is a natural part of the landscape. After all, since the migration of humans over the Bering land bridge, *Homo sapiens* have been a part of the Great Plains environment.

Unfortunately, only extremely small patches of original prairie remain. Even so, the essence of vastness and grandeur that has been here since the glaciers receded is still evident. This truth is wonderfully presented in this book. ❖

Review: *The English Major*

by Jim Harrison,
Grove Press, 2008

Review by
Oliver B. Pollak,
University of
Nebraska at Omaha



Do English majors have more fun? It depends on how you define fun. Garrison Keillor, the *Prairie Home Companion* impresario indulges English majors. Novels are suffused with romance. The 1983 film *Terms of Endearment*, in part located in Nebraska, exploits monogamy's fragility. Perhaps English majors, more self-obsessed than say astronomers or zoologists, fantasize and fictionalize.

Sixty-year-old Cliff dropped out of teaching after ten years and farmed for twenty-five years. A fortieth high school reunion results in his wife of thirty-seven years being swept away by her high school beau and suing Cliff for divorce. Instead of facing comfortable golden years, he comes out of the divorce losing the farm with a settlement of \$100,000, chump change in comparison to his wife's magnificently profitable multimillion-dollar real estate business and his gay son living in San Francisco who makes \$300,000 a year in the film industry.

Cliff is bereft. To clear his mind and regain his bearings, he takes a road trip from Michigan to the West, shades of Jack Kerouac and Wright Morris. Two chapters are devoted to Nebraska's Valentine area. Cliff

conjures a project to rename the fifty states after their Native American owners—Nebraska becomes Poncapawnee. The endpaper map of the United States depicts Nebraska with a pig, not corn or cattle.

Adolescent (high school) and midlife crises (English professor to farmer) tail into early senior crises. Over the years he kept in touch with Marybelle a former student. Married with children, she joins him on the road trip and they have an exhausting multistate sexual fling. This sweet, imaginative romp to ward off depression includes vignettes of fishing, cooking, and ogling women to demonstrate self-worth in a sixty-year-old's life turned upside down.

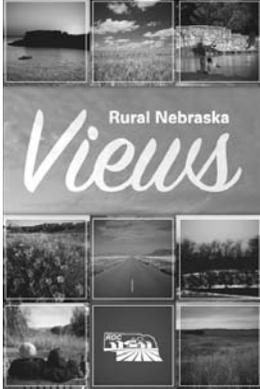
Jim Harrison has written almost thirty works of fiction and poetry since 1965. The best known, *Legends of the Fall* (1974), became a film in 1994. His 1965 poetry book *Plain Song* may have influenced Wright Morris (*Plains Song*) and Kent Haruf (*Plainsong*), who in 1980 and 1999 published novels bearing nearly the same name. Harrison collaborated with Ted Kooser to produce *Winter Morning Walks: One Hundred Postcards to Jim Harrison* (2003) and *Braided Creek: A Conversation in Poetry* (2003). ❖

Review:

Rural Nebraska Views

by The
Nebraska Rural
Development
Commission

Review by
Richard Miller,
Nebraska Library
Commission



The Nebraska Rural Development Commission has produced a charming little booklet, the first edition of *Rural Nebraska Views*, which intersperses essays by invited authors with artwork from the Museum of Nebraska Art (MONA) in Kearney. The overall theme of the publication is the importance of Nebraska's rural areas to the vitality of the state as a whole. It begins with a piece by the Dean of the University of Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture in Curtis, who lays out the current situation: 250 Nebraska communities (47 percent of all our towns) have populations of 300 or fewer; only sixty-six of the state's ninety-three counties have any city of 5,000 population. And yet this essay speaks eloquently of revitalizing at least some of our rural communities through such means as entrepreneurship and teaching our children how to return to their communities after college.

Other essays tell of successful agri-tourism efforts, of a son returning home after college to start

a hunting lodge (that morphs into a visit-the-farm/ranch tourist attraction), and of successful rural schools whose students score higher than state and national averages on tests. Other essayists insist on the need to sustain and improve local infrastructure including libraries, highways, telecommunications, and other amenities that will make rural areas attractive to returning natives, urbanites, and residents themselves. Two of the most intriguing essays look to Native American wisdom, which expresses the need to think of many future generations as we make our decisions and the inextricable link between the urban and rural sections of Nebraska (despite many forces that appear to keep them apart).

This booklet is well worth the read. Access *Rural Nebraska Views* at www.neded.org/files/rdc/library/2009/2009_RuralNebraskaViews_web.pdf. The paintings and drawings alone are worth the visit, but I hope you'll read the essays as well.

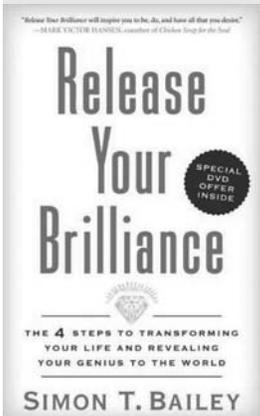
Review:

Release Your Brilliance: The 4 Steps to Transforming Your Life and Revealing Your Genius to the World

by
Simon T. Bailey,
HarperCollins
Publishers, 2007

ISBN: 978-0-06-
145187-4

Review by
Mo Khamouna,
University of
Nebraska



Most people would think you are arrogant or crazy if you dare to say you are a brilliant or genius individual. The author thinks you really could be a shining diamond. Actually you are, but don't know it. Listen to how he puts it: "Each of us is born brilliant. Then we spend the rest of our lives having our brilliance buried by people, circumstances, and experiences. Eventually, we forget that we ever had genius and special talents, and our brilliance is locked away in a vault deep within. So we settle for who we are, instead of striving for who we were meant to be."

The author presents a four-step recipe (using diamonds as a metaphor) to release your brilliance, and says reading and applying the concepts in this slim volume will transform you from a diamond in the rough into a brilliant one. According to the author here's the recipe:

1. Clarity: Seek Profound Insight (motives, values, emotions),
2. Color: Discover Pure, Unwavering Belief (intuition, authenticity),

3. Cut: Take Bold Actions (awaken the lion within), and
4. Carat: Decide How Big You Want to Be (Eureka moment).

This book also will help you crack the code of your "Universal Assignment (UA)." Mr. Bailey says that your UA is the point where your talents, skills, abilities, and gifts intersect with a void or a need in the world around you.

Finding your way to your Universal Assignment is a journey in which you have to dig deep (knowing yourself), strengthen your relationships, and bring value to your team, organization, etc. How do you know that you reached your Universal Assignment? Well, at that level you've become alive, radiate positive energy, and become engaged and passionate to make a difference. This is truly an inspirational book, especially the author's story. The only two points I found wrong with this volume are the lack of bibliography and index, which I think is a weakness in any book. People in academia love an index; it is like a roadmap.

Nebraska Summer Writers' Conference, June 13-19

by **Timothy Schaffert**,
University of
Nebraska-Lincoln

For the seventh year in a row, the Nebraska Summer Writers' Conference will bring together writers from all walks of life for a week of workshops, readings, panels, and more. The conference brings award-winning, widely reviewed writers of fiction, poetry, and nonfiction, as well as influential publishing professionals to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to conduct writing workshops. Scribner's editor Anna deVries will offer insights into the publishing industry, along with literary agent Jessica Regel and publicist/industry insider Lauren Cerand.

Online registration is available for the weekend workshops June 13-14 and week-long workshops, June 13-19. Visit the Website (<http://nebraskawriters.unl.edu>) for full faculty listing, workshop options, and other details. Click on Registration at the top of the page to register. Sign up on the Nebraska Summer Writers' Conference Website for the Conference E-Newsletter, featuring original content (fiction, poetry, commentary, reviews), conference updates, and opportunities to win free books. For more information contact 402-472-3067 or nswc@unl.edu. 

Commission Website Lists Books in Series

Today I stumbled across a wonderful resource for all of you series readers out there. The wonderful Nebraska Library Commission has a searchable online database where you are able to quickly find the title of the next book in your series. You can search using either the series title, author, or book title. Just think, you'll never have to read series out of order again!

– Tiffany Keenan, Alliance Public Library
Reference blog, <http://allpublib.blogspot.com/2009/01/help-with-your-series-searches.html>

The Library Commission's Books in Series Website at ww.nlc.state.ne.us/ref/booksinseries/index.html lets readers search book series by author,

series name, or book title. This is a terrific resource for those who read voluminous series such as Star Wars and Star Trek or who are beginning a new series. Books in Series is one of the Commission's most popular sites and since its inception in 2003, the Commission has received notes and e-mails from customers around the country thanking them for these lists. Many have submitted additional series lists to be included in this database. If you can't find the series you're looking for, click on the Contact Us link and Commission staff will add it.

For more information contact Lisa Kelly, Nebraska Library Commission Information Services Director, 402-471-4015 or 800-307-2665; lkelly@nlc.state.ne.us. 

Nebraska Literary Roots

by **Hugh Reilly**,
Nebraska Writers
Guild

The Nebraska Writers Guild (NWG) has a proud literary history. Founded in 1925, the guild's charter members included Bess Streeter Aldrich, Dorothy Canfield Fisher, Louise Pound, and A.E. Sheldon. In its first year, two members of the guild were included in the *Saturday Review of Literature's* list of the ten writers most representative of American life. Its stated purpose was for the "promotion of good fellowship among Nebraska writers (by residence or affiliation), to encourage the recognition of professional writing and writers in the production of fine literature, and to foster the development of the talent of those who desire to write and who show definite possibilities of authorship."

Some of its earliest members included noted Nebraska authors John Neihardt, Mari Sandoz, and Willa Cather. Our members have always represented a lively cross-section of Nebraska life. Novelists and historians, poets and journalists, agents and publishers, editors and columnists all have shared their insights on the art (and business) of writing at our annual conferences. As members of the Nebraska Writers Guild it is our responsibility to uphold the state's proud tradition of writing excellence.

Ed. Note: For more information about the Nebraska Writers Guild, contact Sally Walker, 402-592-1597, sallyjwalker@cox.net, or www.nebraskawriters.org. 



Letters about Literature contest winners receive the National Library Week Proclamation from Lt. Governor Rick Sheehy (right).



Students Win Writing Competition

Lt. Governor Rick Sheehy presented young Nebraska writers with Letters About Literature award certificates at a proclamation-signing ceremony for National Library Week, April 12-18, 2009.

Letters about Literature is a national reading and writing promotion program sponsored by The Center for the Book in the Library of Congress in partnership with Target Stores. The Nebraska competition is coordinated by the Nebraska Center for the Book, the Nebraska Library Commission, Houchen Bindery Ltd., and Lee Booksellers.

Students across the country participate in the annual contest, writing a personal letter to an author explaining how his or her work changed their view of themselves or the world. They select authors from any genre, fiction or nonfiction, contemporary or classic. Winners are chosen from three competition levels: upper elementary, middle, and secondary school.

The Nebraska winners were honored at a luncheon and received cash prizes and gift certificates to Target Stores and Lee Booksellers. The Nebraska winners will advance to the national

competition, with a chance to win a trip to Washington, D.C., for themselves and their parents.

For more information see www.nlc.state.ne.us, search on Letters about Literature or contact Mary Jo Ryan, Nebraska Library Commission Communications Coordinator, 402-471-3434 or 800-307-2665; mjryan@nlc.state.ne.us.

Winners:

- **Ashley Bowen, Bellevue**, for *Dewey: The Small-Town Library Cat Who Touched the World* by Vicki Myron and Bret Witter
- **Maggie Vinton, North Platte**, for *13 Little Blue Envelopes* by Maureen Johnson
- **Drew Harsin, Blair**, for *Where the Red Fern Grows* by Wilson Rawls

Alternate Winners:

- **Chloe Schwarting, Bellevue**, for *The Giver* by Lois Lowry
- **Katie Cosman, North Platte**, for *Kira-Kira* by Cynthia Kadohata
- **Kayleigh Doll, Blair**, for *By the Light of the Moon* by Dean Koontz

Norfolk Literature Festival Set for July

Norfolk Public Library will host its 15th annual Literature Festival on Saturday, July 25, from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at Northeast Community College in Norfolk. The event will feature Henry Cole, 2010 Golden Sower Award nominee for *On Meadowview Street*; Jacqueline Davies, 2010 Golden Sower Award nominee for *The Lemonade War*; and Cynthia Kadohata, 2010 Golden Sower Award nominee for *Cracker!: The Best Dog in Vietnam*. Also planned are 2009-2010 Golden Sower previews, book displays and sales, sales of Golden Sower items, and an autograph session/book signing with the Golden Sower nominees.

Librarians will earn five continuing education hours from the Nebraska Library Commission and teachers/staff of Norfolk Public Schools will earn five Professional Growth Points for all-day attendance.

Youth tickets are \$5 in advance or \$7.50 at the door; adult tickets are \$20 in advance or \$25 at the door. Admission is free for current Nebraska Library Association School Children's and Young People section members. Advance tickets are available from Norfolk Public Library. For more information contact Karen Drevo at Norfolk Public Library, 402-844-2108 or kdrevo@ci.norfolk.ne.us.



The NCB News



THE NEBRASKA CENTER FOR THE BOOK

an affiliate of the Library of Congress

c/o Nebraska Library Commission
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Enter Now: www.nlc.state.ne.us/publications/ncbawards.html



Calendar of Events:

- Brownville Wine, Writers, & Song Festival** April 24-25 Brownville
Contact: Cinnamon Dokken, 402-475-8663, cinnamondokken@yahoo.com,
<http://brownvillewriters.blogspot.com>
- Willa Cather Spring Conference: Wisdom in the Later Nebraska Fiction** April 24-25 Red Cloud
Contact: Cather Foundation, 402-746-2653, 866-731-7304, info@willacather.org,
www.WillaCather.org
- Nebraska Writers Guild Spring Conference** April 24-25 .. Mahoney State Park
Contact: Nebraska Writers Guild, Sally Walker, 402-592-1597, sallyjwalker@cox.net,
www.nebraskawriters.org/spring09.html
- 28th Annual Neihardt Spring Conference: Neihardt and 21st Century Native Realities** .. April 25 Bancroft
Contact: John G. Neihardt State Historic Site, 402-648-3388, neihardt@gp.net,
www.neihardtcenter.org
- Heartland Storytelling Festival** May 7-8 Beatrice
Contact: Homestead National Monument, Tina Miller, 402-223-3514, tina_miller@nps.gov,
www.nps.gov
- Children's Book Week** May 11-17 Nationwide
Contact: www.bookweekonline.com
- Nebraska Center for the Book Board Meeting** May 16 Grand Island
Contact: Garry Alkire, President, 800-348-4435, ext. 6032, galkire@wncc.net, www.unl.edu/NCB
- Nebraska Literary Heritage Association Annual Meeting** May 20 Lincoln
Contact: Nebraska Literary Heritage Association, Lincoln City Libraries, 402-441-8516,
m.mcgowan@lincolnlibraries.org, www.foundationforlcl.org/NLHA
- Mayhem in the Midlands Mystery Conference** May 21-24 Omaha
Contact: 402-444-4822, mshorr@omahapubliclibrary.org or sallyfellows1@cox.net,
www.omahapubliclibrary.org/mayhem
- Kathleen Norris Presentation/Retreat** June 5-6 Schuyler
Contact: St. Benedict Center, 402-352-8819
- Nebraska Summer Writers' Conference** June 13-19 Lincoln
Contact: 402-472-3067, tschaffert2@unl.edu, <http://nebraskawriters.unl.edu/nswc@unl.edu>
- Red Cloud: Willa Cather's Window to the World Elderhostel** June 15-19 Red Cloud
Contact: Elderhostel, 877-426-8056, www.elderhostel.org
- 2009 Chautauqua: Bright Dreams, Hard Times: America in the Thirties** June 17-21 Broken Bow
- 2009 Chautauqua: Bright Dreams, Hard Times: America in the Thirties** June 24-28 Plattsmouth
Contact: Nebraska Humanities Council, 402-474-2131,
www.nebraskahumanities.org/programs/chautauqua.html



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