

## ***The Meaning of Names* is One Book One Nebraska**

*K*aren Gettert Shoemaker's *The Meaning of Names* (Red Hen Press, 2014), a Nebraska-set novel with a World War I backdrop, is

Nebraska's reading choice for the 2016 One Book One Nebraska statewide reading program. *The Meaning of Names* follows a German-American woman trying to raise a family in the heartland and keep them safe from the effects of war and the influenza panic, as well as from violence and prejudice.

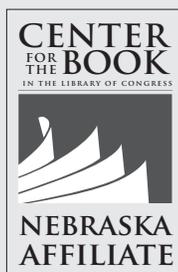
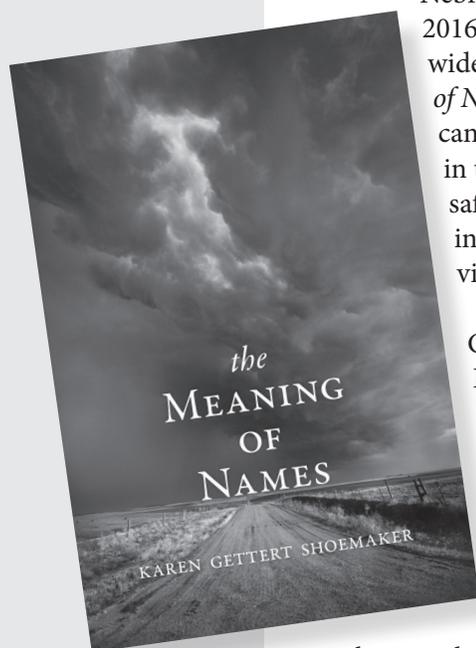
Sponsored by the Nebraska Center for the Book, Nebraska Library Commission and Humanities Nebraska, the One Book One Nebraska reading program is entering its twelfth year. It encourages Nebraskans across the state to read and discuss one book, chosen from books written by Nebraska

authors or that have a Nebraska theme or setting. A Nebraska Center for the Book committee selected this book from a list of twenty-seven titles nominated by Nebraskans from across the state. The book was announced as the 2016 selection at the Celebration of Nebraska Books in Fall 2015.

Libraries across Nebraska join other literary and cultural organizations in planning book discussions, activities, and events that will encourage Nebraskans to read and discuss this book. Borrow a book club kit through your local library. Check to see if your organization is eligible for Humanities Nebraska support for a public program featuring the author. Check out the

support materials to assist with local reading/discussion activities at <http://onebook.nebraska.gov>.

Updates and activity listings are posted on the One Book One Nebraska Facebook page at <http://www.facebook.com/onebookonenebraska>. To post your event or for more information, contact Mary Jo Ryan, Nebraska Library Commission Communications Coordinator, [maryjo.ryan@nebraska.gov](mailto:maryjo.ryan@nebraska.gov), 402-471-3434, 800-307-2665. 



*Karen Gettert Shoemaker*

# Nebraska's Champions of Literacy and Literature Deserve an Award

Guest Editorial by  
Mary Jo Ryan,  
Nebraska Library  
Commission

The Merriam-Webster online dictionary defines award (n.) as “something (such as a prize) that is given to someone or something for being excellent or for doing something that is admired.” Each year the Nebraska Center for the Book honors individuals and organizations that we greatly admire with awards for their “excellent” support of Nebraska reading, writing, and publishing. The **Mildred Bennett Award** honors an individual who has made a significant contribution to fostering the literary tradition in Nebraska. The **Jane Geske Award** honors an organization, business, library, school, association, or other group that has made an exceptional contribution to literacy, books, reading, libraries, or Nebraska literature. Together with the **Nebraska Book Awards**, these serve as the Nebraska community of the book’s “academy awards.”

Since we recently received a grant from the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress to increase communication with and participation by Nebraska literacy organizations in the Jane Geske Award competition, I’ve been obsessed with what it means to receive an award and how to encourage more literacy organizations across the state to get involved in the award competition. In 2015 we were thrilled to present the Jane Geske Award to **Lincoln City Libraries’ One Book-One Lincoln Community Reading**

**Program** for their extraordinary contribution to Nebraska’s community of the book. Since 2002 library staff and volunteers have encouraged the Lincoln community to read the same book together and create a common experience. What an amazing record of unfaltering commitment.

As I reflect on this and all the great award winners throughout the history of these awards (see <http://centerforthebook.nebraska.gov/awards.html>), I wonder how we can reach out to other literacy and literature champions across the state. The Nebraska Center for the Book wants to recognize the Nebraska organizations that promote literacy and Nebraska writing. What is the best way to identify them? Shall we mount an advertising campaign? How about a Facebook contest? Would library staff and volunteers be the best ones to nominate local advocates for reading and writing? Are there other statewide organizations we should seek out as partners? I’m hoping you, the readers of *NCB News*, can help answer these questions. Please contact me with your ideas: Mary Jo Ryan (contact information on page one). And if you want to nominate an organization for the Jane Geske Award, please contact Rod Wagner, Nebraska Library Commission Director, [rod.wagner@nebraska.gov](mailto:rod.wagner@nebraska.gov), 402-471-4001, 800-307-2665.

May I have the envelope, please? 

The **NCB**  
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### Nebraska Center for the Book Board Meeting

April 16 . . . . . 10:00 a.m.,  
Lincoln City  
Libraries’ Eiseley  
Branch

### 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 March 15, June 15 and October 15. 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; 402-471-3434, 800-307-2665, e-mail: [maryjo.ryan@nebraska.gov](mailto:maryjo.ryan@nebraska.gov), [centerforthebook.nebraska.gov](http://centerforthebook.nebraska.gov)

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## Ahead of Their Time

I read Matt Holland's *Ahead of Their Time, The Story of the Omaha DePorres Club* (CreateSpace, 2014) about Omaha's early civil rights movement. "Ahead of her, his, its, one's, the, their time(s)," implying prophetic and visionary accomplishments and near misses, usually appears in obituaries. Two Omaha friends, both 94 years old, died four days apart in December 2012. The *Omaha World-Herald* reported "Omaha woman was ahead of her time," and "Art champion Rogers was ahead of his time." They were remarkable people, certainly forward looking and innovative.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* (Clarendon Press, 1989) indicates the use of "ahead of its time" as early as 1832. The *New York Times* uses the expression mostly in the masculine, thousands of times—177 mentions in the 1980s, 192 in the 1990s, and 185 times in the first decade of the 21st century. *Bartlett's Familiar Quotations* (Little, Brown and Company, 2012) came up blank. Google Book revealed a fund of usage and Abebooks identified over forty titles and subtitles containing "Ahead of \_\_\_\_ time."

The reverse of anticipation is reflection, reading a book where you identify the author's ideas or experiences with some of your own. Other people have lived your life. The problems forebears faced provide guidance or comfort for the human condition. And every so often you see something you thought of earlier in your life, but did not pursue. You congratulate the arrival not with disappointment but with the

pleasure of your good idea, and someone else did the hard work.

Teaching at the University of Rhodesia/Zimbabwe in the early 1970s made me a Doris Lessing fan. I read her feminist classic *The Golden Notebook* (Harper, 2008) while curating "The Nobility of Doris Lessing" at the University of Nebraska Omaha Library to observe her 2007 Nobel Prize for Literature. Alexandra Fuller's memoirs about Rhodesia and her marriage received favorable reviews. Lessing died November 17, 2013. I googled "Doris Lessing and Alexandra Fuller." Fuller's obituary of Lessing, "First Person: Admiring Doris Lessing's Decision to Forgo an Ordinary, Decent Life," appeared in *National Geographic* online. Before I ever knew anything else about her, before I grew to admire her as an unflinching writer often "ahead of her time" and respect her as an unapologetically outspoken woman who opposed war and injustice and who championed the rights of the downtrodden, I knew this about Doris Lessing: she had abandoned her children when they were very young, divorced her first husband, married a German communist, subsequently divorced him too, and then left Rhodesia for England.

Stories starting: "Once upon a time" are about the past. Lives that end with: "She was ahead of her time" are about the past, present, and unfolding future.

P.S. *The New York Times* (June 2, 2015) reminds us that Gertrude Stein wrote in 1926, "No one is ahead of his time..." 

by Oliver B. Pollak,  
Omaha



### 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

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

\$15 Individual Membership  \$25 Organizational Membership  Additional Contribution

Contributions above \$15 are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

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

## New WWI Chautauqua Set for June

World War I will be the focus of a brand new Chautauqua presented by Humanities Nebraska (HN) this summer. “World War I: Legacies of a Forgotten War” will be hosted in Hastings, June 1-5 and in North Platte, June 8-12. Events include workshops, a youth camp, special programming for veterans, and evening tent presentations with scholars portraying historic figures and other entertainment. Local community libraries will host discussions of books that help illuminate this theme.

HN statewide Chautauqua coordinator Kristi Hayek Carley said the upcoming 100th anniversary of the United States’ entrance into World War I and the lasting impact of this war were the catalysts for this particular Chautauqua. “It’s fascinating to look back at World War I and see ramifications still at work today, both in terms of international relations and domestic issues,” she said.

History scholars will appear as key WWI figures to discuss how the war led to changes in America’s role in international relations, how technology shaped the war, and its impact on race, gender, and class issues. Attendees can expect visits from President Woodrow Wilson, Nebraska politician William Jennings Bryan,

humanitarian Jane Addams, author Edith Wharton, and sociologist/activist W.E.B. Du Bois.

Chautauqua is sponsored by a major grant from the Nebraska Cultural Endowment and the National Endowment for the Human-

ities, along with many other generous contributors, state and local sponsors, and volunteers. The complete schedule of all speakers and events at the 2016 Chautauqua, as well as a reading list and more, is available at <http://www.NebraskaChautauqua.org>. For additional updates and information, follow Humanities Nebraska on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. 



### Review:

Reviewed by  
Mary Sauers,  
Nebraska Library  
Commission

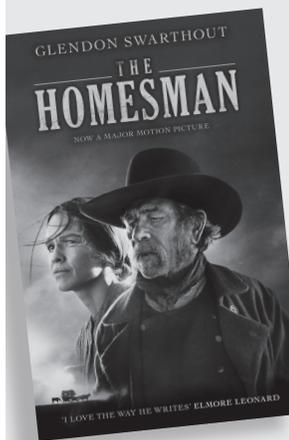
## The Homesman

by Glendon Swarthout  
Simon & Schuster, 2014  
ISBN: 978-1476754260

*The Homesman* is a devastating story of early pioneers in 1850s Nebraska. It celebrates the ones we hear nothing of—the brave women whose hearts and minds were broken by a life of bitter hardship. A “homesman” must be found to escort a handful of them back East to a sanitarium. When none of the county’s men steps up, the job falls to Mary Bee Cuddy—ex-teacher, spinster, indomitable, and resourceful. Brave as she is, Mary Bee knows she cannot succeed alone. The only companion she can find is the low-life claim jumper George Briggs. Thus begins a trek east, against the tide of colonization, against hardship, Indian attacks,

ice storms, and loneliness—a timeless classic told in a series of tough, fast-paced adventures.

Glendon Swarthout’s 1988 novel won both the Western Writers of America’s Spur Award and the Western Heritage Wrangler Award. A new afterword by the author’s son Miles Swarthout tells of his parents Glendon and Kathryn’s discovery of and research into the lives of the oft-forgotten frontier women who make *The Homesman* as moving and believable as it is unforgettable. Having seen a trailer for the movie of the same title, starring Hilary Swank and Tommy Lee Jones, I picked up a copy of the book at the airport while my husband and I were traveling. The minute I started reading it, I was completely pulled in. It was riveting and shocking, all at the same time. I highly recommend this book (and movie) about frontier Nebraska. 



## BiblioFile: Featuring New Heritage Room Curator

The path that Erin Willis took to becoming the new Curator of the Jane Pope Geske Heritage Room of Nebraska Authors in the Bennett Martin Branch of the Lincoln City Libraries was anything but direct. From the time she first worked in a library—as a student at the University of Kansas—to when she assumed her current position last March, Willis had worked at the Ave Maria Law College Library in Ann Arbor, MI, studied for an M.A. degree in History, and earned a Master’s degree in Library Science from the University of Missouri-Columbia. For the latter, she was able to do her practicum at UNL Archives and Special Collections. Then, after receiving her M.L.S. degree in 2009, she took five years off to devote to being a full-time mom to her five children.

Fortunately for Willis and for those involved in promoting Nebraska’s literary history, she was in the right place at the right time when the longtime Heritage Room curator Meredith McGowan retired in December 2014. Willis, a native of Kansas who grew up reading Plains literature, regards her new position as her “dream job,” because each day when she sees the Heritage Room’s books, archival materials, and ephemera associated with Nebraska authors she feels very closely connected to them and to the wonderful places they have written about. Furthermore, she notes, getting to work with all these materials and with the patrons who use them allows her to feel as if she is herself playing “a special part in the literary history of Nebraska.”

Willis certainly hit the ground running when she started her new job last March, and she says that things have been busy ever since. She has enjoyed planning and coordinating the many activities the Heritage Room hosts and supports, including the John H. Ames Reading Series, the Lunch at the Library program, the Nebraska Literary Heritage Association’s Annual Adult Spelling Bee, and the visit of the

young people who have won the Nebraska Center for the Book’s annual Letters about Literature contest. She also spends a good deal of her time working with affiliated authors’ foundations in the state. And of course there is always the satisfaction of helping people with their research projects. One of my graduate students from UNO spent two incredibly productive afternoons there last spring examining the rare dust jackets on a number of Willa Cather books in the collection for a seminar paper. And more recently, Willis recounts, there have been multiple researchers visiting the Heritage Room to look at the materials in its collection related to Cliff Hillegass, the founder of *Cliff’s Notes*.

It’s quite clear, though, that Willis has plans to expand the Heritage Room’s use and outreach even more in the future.

For instance, she would like to further develop partnerships with the author and literary organizations in the state, write grants to fund the acquisition of more materials, and partner with area schools to make teachers and students aware of the importance of working with primary materials. A key component in all these projects, she believes, is publicizing the Heritage Room and its collections through social media, the web, and print outlets.

The Jane Pope Geske Heritage Room of Nebraska Authors is certainly one of the most significant resources in our state, and it’s good to know that there is someone as talented and as enthusiastic as Erin Willis at its helm. 📖

by Chuck  
Johanningsmeier,  
University of  
Nebraska Omaha



Erin Willis with display commemorating one hundred years of Willa Cather’s *The Song of the Lark*.

## American Life in Poetry: Column 547



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

I've seen many poems about the atomic bomb drills that schoolchildren were put through during the Cold War, but this one reaches beyond that experience. John Philip Johnson lives and writes in Nebraska, and has an illustrated book of poems, *Stairs Appear in a Hole Outside of Town*.

### There Have Come Soft Rains

In kindergarten during the Cold War, mid-day late bells jolted us, sending us single file into the hallway, where we sat, pressing our heads between our knees, waiting.

During one of the bomb drills, Annette was standing. My mother said I would talk on and on about her, about how pretty she was. I still remember her that day, curly hair and pretty dress,

looking perturbed the way little children do. Why Annette? There's nothing to be upset about— The bombs won't get us, I've seen what's to come— it is the days, the steady pounding of days, like gentle rain, that will be our undoing.

American Life in Poetry is made possible by The Poetry Foundation ([www.poetryfoundation.org](http://www.poetryfoundation.org)), publisher of *Poetry* magazine. Poem copyright © 2014 by John Philip Johnson, "There Have Come Soft Rains," from *Rattle*, (No. 45, Fall 2014). Poem reprinted by permission of John Philip Johnson and the publisher. Introduction copyright © 2015 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.

## Nominate Now for 2016 Nebraska Book Awards

The 2016 Nebraska Book Awards program, sponsored by the Nebraska Center for the Book (NCB) and Nebraska Library Commission

will recognize and honor books that are written by Nebraska authors, published by Nebraska publishers, set in Nebraska, or relate to Nebraska. Books published in 2015, as indicated by the copyright

date, are eligible for nomination. They must be professionally published, have an International Standard Book Number (ISBN), and be bound. Books may be entered in one or more of the following categories: Anthology, Chapbook,

Children/Young Adult, Cover/Design/Illustration, Creative Nonfiction, Fiction, Nonfiction, and Poetry. Certificates will be awarded to the winners in each category. Award winners will be presented at the Fall 2016 Nebraska Center for the Book's Annual Meeting and Book Awards Celebration in Lincoln.

The entry fee is \$40 per book and per category entered. **Deadline for entries is June 30, 2016.** For more information—including entry forms—see <http://www.centerforthebook.nebraska.gov/awards/nebookawards.html> or contact Mary Jo Ryan, [maryjo.ryan@nebraska.gov](mailto:maryjo.ryan@nebraska.gov), 402-471-3434, 800-307-2665, for print information. Enter by sending the entry form (<http://www.centerforthebook.nebraska.gov/docs/BookAwardsEntry.pdf>), three copies of the book, and the entry fee to NCB Book Awards Competition, Nebraska Library Commission, The Atrium, 1200 N Street, Suite 120, Lincoln, NE 68508-2023.

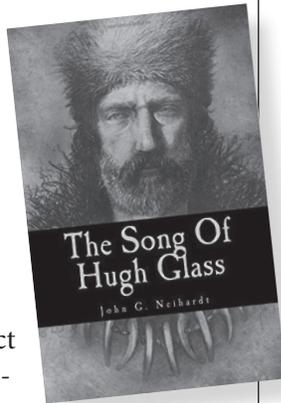
An Invitation to Enter...  
**The 2016 Book Awards Competition**  
Sponsored by the Nebraska Center for the Book

# What Are You Reading?

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

While Nebraska has a wealth of cornerstone poets who help us define our sense of place, I am also on the lookout for books coming from a newer crowd of Nebraskans who can help us think through our experience in the contemporary world. One such example of generative new poetry comes from Laura Madeline Wiseman. Wiseman's collection *An Apparently Impossible Adventure* (BlazeVOX, 2016) uses fairy tales as a point of entry in which to navigate themes of gender, relationships, popular culture, and the Midwest. **Scott Abels**

I am reading *The Song of Hugh Glass* (Leopold Classic Library, 2015) by John Neihardt—for the second time. I recommend it highly. And I'm reading *Gold Fame Citrus* (Riverhead Books, 2015), a doomsday book by Claire Vaye Watkins. The writing is good, so the subject matter makes me uncomfortable. **Kate Borchman**



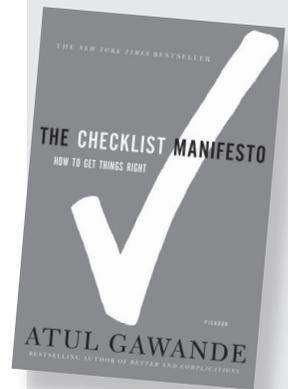
I am reading Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises* (Scribner, 2006). It seemed like the thing to do after just finishing *The Paris Wife* (Ballantine, 2012) by Paula McLain, which is a fictional account of Ernest Hemingway and his first wife Hadley Richardson when they lived in Paris. **Mary Ellen Ducey**

Kent Haruf's book published after his death, *Our Souls at Night* (Knopf, 2015), is a must-read. The seemingly simple style is refreshing and amazing. This story of two elderly people addresses so many issues that older people face, including the relationship to children and those in their own age group. The story is heartwarming and sad, but beautiful. Like other Haruf books it is set in a small town in Colorado,



and as a reader, I am overwhelmed by its dignity and grace. I will read it again. **Molly Fisher**

I just finished *The Checklist Manifesto* (Picador, 2011) by Atul Gawande. If I need surgery I will ask the doctor if they use a checklist. It is a very interesting concept. I would love to hear Gawande speak. **Sherry Houston**

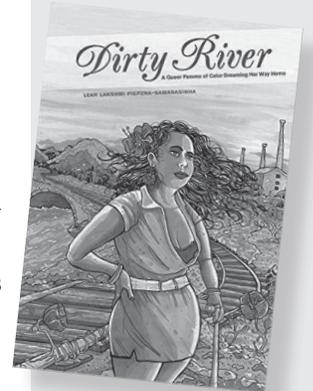


Probably the best book I've read recently was Walter Isaacson's *The Innovators: How a Group of Hackers, Geniuses, and Geeks Created the Digital Revolution* (Simon & Schuster, 2015). It's an account of the evolution of the computer and the Internet, from its beginnings in the early nineteenth century with Charles Babbage and Ada Lovelace (Shelley's only legitimate child), through Bill Gates, Paul Allen, Steve Jobs, and the other pioneers of the late twentieth century. While I didn't always understand the complicated technical descriptions, I did pick up all kinds of interesting bits of information, such as when the first mouse was invented, etc. **Chuck Johanningsmeier**

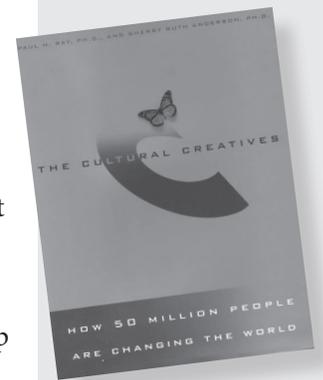


I recently finished *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln* (Simon & Schuster, 2006) by Doris Kearns Goodwin and highly recommend it. **Julia Kennedy**

Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, author of *Dirty River: A Queer Femme of Color Dreaming Her Way Home* (Arsenal Pulp Press, 2015), tells some vivid and very interesting stories. She writes with some great emotion and I loved the depictions of life in Worcester, MA, a once prosperous working class city that is now tired and empty. The stories are humanizing and refreshing... a fast read too. **Donna Kennedy Marvin**



I'm rereading a book called *The Cultural Creatives: How 50 Million People are Changing the World* (Broadway Books, 2001) by Paul Ray and Sherry Ruth Anderson. I found and am finding some real wisdom in this book about how to explore a positive approach to life in the tumultuous times in which we live. **Lois Meyer**

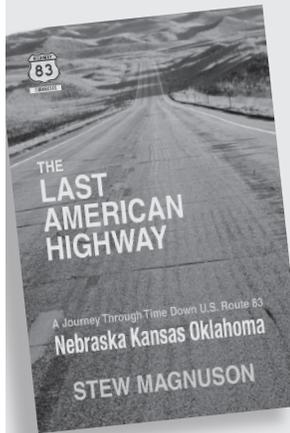


While on vacation in Scottsdale, AZ, our group visited Frank Lloyd Wright's Taliesin West. The estate's purpose was to train new architects

(continued on page 8)

## Magnuson Travels Least Chronicled Landmarks

by Charles Peek,  
Professor Emeritus,  
University of  
Nebraska Kearney



Stew Magnuson's "Nebraska Kansas Oklahoma" volume of *The Last American Highway* (CreateSpace, 2015) situates you in a place—a vast place, but a place nonetheless. First tip-off is the cover logo (Highway 83 Chronicles), then part of the subtitle "...down U.S. Route 83." You don't have to compute the ground the highway crosses—the maps tell you, occasional notes tell you, and it's all added up for you. But you really don't focus on the miles.

And you'll get a sense of the time span, as in the subtitle phrase "A Journey through Time." How long did it take for the Loess Hills to pile up? I'd say the time covered is best described as "then to now!" With **then** maybe being the Pleistocene or the Cretaceous, maybe from when our ancestors were monkeys in the trees to a self-appointed lawman named "Brushy" Bush; from a west "without a connection to the outside world" to Internet shopping; maybe from fossils from eighty million years ago to today's or yesterday's billboards and diners; maybe from before the states were all carved out to a Spanish language television channel; or from the arrival of the horse to the disappearance of local motels and filling stations. Certainly "**then to now**" is from stagecoaches to the Mazda Protégé Magnuson drives on this stage of his travels.

It's a big space and an old place, but what really attracts you as you ride along with him are the stories. Highway 83 (not the old 83—now 183, but the old 183—now 83!) passes or crosses lots of stories and Magnuson brings them to life. Stories of Mennonites and Munchkins. Stories of Native tribes, inept Indian agents, and the atrocities committed among settlers and

soldiers and Indians. Stories of the well known (Buffalo Bill) and not so well known (Buffalo Jones). Stories of the landscape, of the Cottonwoods my friend Scott Taylor sings about, and of the Loup River my friend Emily Uzendoski called "Wolf" in her poem. Stories of the contention between trees and grasses, of disasters and dust, of "flat, flat, flat"—and then hills and canyons. Count the number of times Magnuson refers to how the Ogallala Aquifer "feeds" the land and you will see the importance of water to the stories, to our story, our future. And then there are the back-stories to stories you think you know—the Last Buffalo Hunt, the story of how Truman Capote (you know that) and Harper Lee (maybe you didn't) followed the trail of "cold blood" or how Liberal, KS, got its name, or how Oklahoma came to have a panhandle.

That the reclamation projects in southwestern Nebraska and Northern Kansas were really Bureau of Reclamation and not Army Corps of Engineers is a minor error next to the unfolding of the larger story. If the Buffalo Soldiers' presence is missed at the Last Buffalo Hunt, or the George Norris story is missed as we cruise Norris Avenue in McCook, NE—well there's only so much story space in one short book—223 pages not counting the notes (but the note on sources is interesting in its own right, as well as for its welcome acknowledgement of libraries). Like Magnuson, why earlier generations chose this "unforgiving land" is beyond me, but like him too, "I love the hills; every inch of them." And the roads and highways are seemingly our least chronicled landmarks—but Magnuson's work goes a long way toward correcting that. 📖

### What Are You Reading? (continued from page 7)

drawing on the genius of Wright. Roger Friedland and Harold Zellman provide readers with a fascinating look at life at Taliesin West in their book, *The Fellowship: The Untold Story of Frank Lloyd Wright and the Taliesin Fellowship* (Harper Perennial, 2007). Frank Lloyd Wright fans will find this an absorbing, if less than flattering, look at life in the fellowship. **Cathy Mohnike**

I'm reading Anthony Bourdain's *Kitchen Confidential: Adventures in the Culinary Underbelly* (Ecco, 2007). There are foods mentioned that I've never heard of and many that I will never be adventuresome enough to try. But they are fun to read about. Bourdain's life in and outside the kitchen is fascinating. **Rod Wagner** 📖

## Unique Take on Abraham Lincoln's Presidency

While a member of the UNL faculty, James A. Rawley published notable works on the Civil War. After his retirement he worked on and substantially completed the draft of a long work on the Lincoln administration entitled *A Lincoln Dialogue* (University of Nebraska Press, 2014). Detective work deciphering Rawley's software, discovery of a manuscript, and the editorial assistance of Professor William Thomas III made publication of *A Lincoln Dialogue* possible. The work is not a dialogue in the strict sense of a conversation between two persons, but it is a narrative in which two sides—Lincoln and his Northern critics of all stripes—are quoted at length and thus speak for themselves.

A host of valuable works on Lincoln's presidency are already in print, but *A Lincoln Dialogue* has three features that make it a distinctive contribution to this topic. The first feature of *A Lincoln Dialogue* is the length and quantity of primary sources introduced into the narrative. Readers benefit from lengthy quotation when the speaker—Lincoln, Frederick Douglass, Stephen A. Douglas for example—develop complicated arguments that deserve to be followed step-by-step or when the power of a conclusion depends on its dramatic development in a sustained passage. Lincoln's often quoted defense of Grant, "I need this man; he fights," is so much stronger as the conclusion of a substantial passage than as a single sentence.

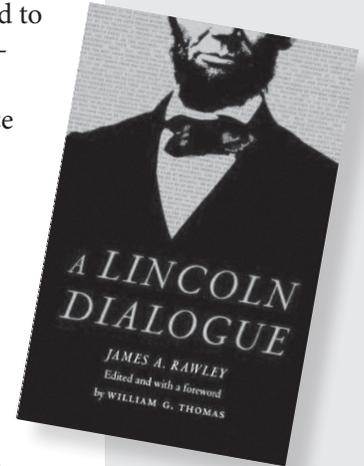
Lincoln scholars often try to explain his skillful political leadership by reference to personal characteristics such as his sense of humor, humility, melancholy, or fatalism, but Rawley doesn't engage in such psychological speculation. Instead, he concentrates on the actual stages of political debate and military planning. We see Lincoln at work—demanding facts and figures, pressing subordinates to sharpen the alternatives and consider the consequences, and patiently explaining his constitutional views to politicians, editors, and the public. We see Lincoln's steady reasoning and decision-making achieved under tremendous pressure, aided too often by erratic, self-promoting associates and too often met by fanatically abusive opposition.

And finally, *A Lincoln Dialogue* is distinctive because it documents the extent to which

Northern racism constantly imperiled the effort to win the war. Rawley had documented the power of Northern racism in his earlier work on "Bleeding Kansas," and in this work demonstrates the strength of Northern opposition to emancipation, to black military service, and to black voting. To what degree Lincoln's hesitance in adopting emancipation was motivated by concern for Border State allegiance or by his own prejudice, Rawley does not attempt to determine. But Rawley stresses the energy with which Lincoln adopted presidential emancipation once Border State resistance to gradual, compensated emancipation was incontrovertible. Without saying so, Rawley shows that Lincoln's planning for reconstruction took too little account of racism, especially the interplay of Southern bitterness and racism. Rawley quotes Horace Greeley, whose prediction in this respect was distressingly accurate, "I look for a great anti-negro reaction the moment the War is over—an uprising...to revenge on the poor negroes the humiliation and [discomfiture] of the slaveholders."

By presenting in sufficient and well-chosen detail the arguments of Lincoln and his critics, Rawley's work gives readers the opportunity to ground their understanding of Lincoln's leadership in the actual debates of the time. The hopes of those who believed in seeing this project through to publication have been justified, and readers wanting to follow for themselves the dialog of Lincoln and his critics will now be able to. 📖

by Spencer Davis,  
Peru State College



### Chat about a good talking book.



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## Treasures of the Heritage Room

by Erin Willis,  
Lincoln City  
Libraries



It has been the tradition of the Jane Pope Geske Heritage Room of Nebraska Authors to honor the artistry of Nebraska authors, poets, artists, publishers, and fine printers in our collection. *What It Looks Like, How It Flies* (Gibraltar, 2015) exemplifies the fine art of the book in all of these forms. This book of sixteen poems by Omaha poet Steve Langan is the inaugural publication of Gibraltar Editions, a fine press publishing company in Omaha.

*What it Looks Like, How it Flies* is an exemplary book in both content and composition—a fitting homage to a Nebraska printing legend who inspired its creation. Harry Duncan, known as “the father of the modern private-press movement,” was a poet and artisan book publisher. Duncan pursued an education and career in both poetry and fine printing and left his mark on the world as a master craftsman in both media. Harry Duncan began printing at the Cummington School of the Arts in Cummington, MA, in 1939. Using a hand press, he published books of contemporary poetry under The Cummington Press imprint. He had a broad understanding of the history of the book and typography, and was interested in bringing contemporary poetry to print. To this end, he moved to Omaha in 1972 to accept a position at the University of Nebraska Omaha where he established a fine printing press, Abbatoir Editions, and taught classes on printing and printing history.

Following his retirement from teaching in 1985, he resumed printing under The Cummington Press imprint from his shop on the University campus in Omaha. In 1989,

Harry Duncan wrote of his work, “I can’t think of anything else that holds a candle to the recurrent fascination of trying to find suitable graphic forms for poetry, whose multifarious development deserves to be read in the light of our great typographical tradition.” Duncan and The

Cummington Press were honored with the Jane Geske Award by the Nebraska Center for the Book in 1994. Duncan died three years later in 1997 at the age of eighty-one. Harry Duncan would be one hundred years old this year.

Duncan is honored now by his son Guy and his student Denise Brady, who developed Gibraltar Editions with the objective that Harry Duncan’s legacy should be preserved. In keeping with Duncan’s philosophy that the book shouldn’t get in the way of the poetry, but that it should act as a window to the word, *What It Looks Like, How It Flies* was crafted to fully illuminate the poetry contained within. The book was hand set and printed from Poliphilus, Blado, and American Uncial types on Gutenberg paper and features three woodcuts by Lincoln artist Karen Kunc. Poet Steve Langan was inspired by Harry Duncan from an early age. In learning about the history of modern American poetry, Langan was drawn to the composition and construction of Duncan’s publications. He admires the fact that Harry Duncan published “some of the best and most interesting poets of the 20th century on his terms and in his chosen medium.” Langan himself is now in the company of the best and most interesting poets of the 21st century, with national renown and many accolades from the poetry community. The poems included in *What It Looks Like, How It Flies* were written one poem at a time, with lyrical intensity and complexity, the title poem ending thus:

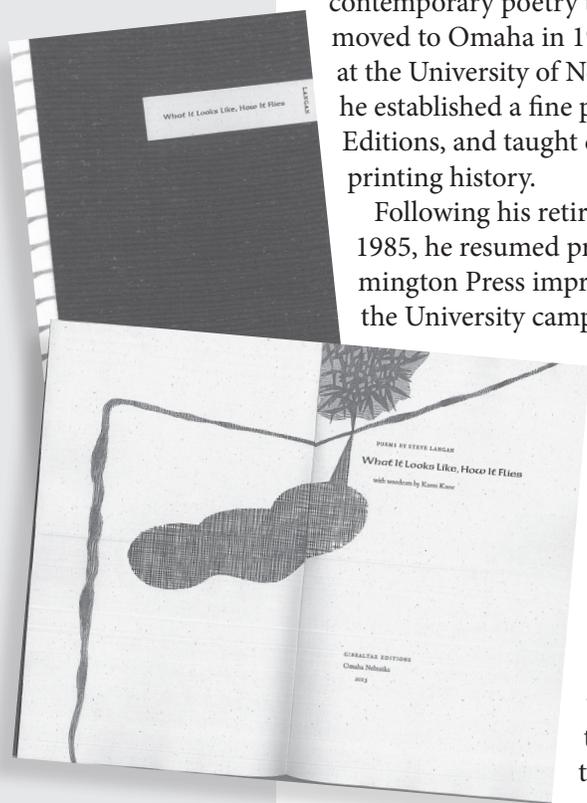
“I’m going to the grocery store,”

And everyone nodded.

That’s the problem with modern life: all this agreement, the comfortable chairs.

The Heritage Room is proud to hold copy number twenty-four of eighty-five printed copies of *What It Looks Like, How It Flies*. This book embodies the proud history of Nebraska printing and exemplary writing—a triumph in the Nebraska literary tradition.

**Ed. Note:** the *NCB News* will run an article in each upcoming edition featuring an item from the Jane Pope Geske Heritage Room of Nebraska Authors. 📖



## The Compact *OED* and Devotion to Words

We lived in a one room bedsitter in a large house in Golders Green for £10 a week. Karen managed to cook duck and lamb on a Baby Belling stove—idyllic for a graduate student researching a dissertation on Burma in London in 1969. We planned to visit Burma but gainful employment in Rhodesia interceded.

My first job, lecturer at the University of Rhodesia, was in a country ostracized and sanctioned for its 1965 Unilateral Declaration of Independence. A liberal academic deportee in London advised, “Have an escape route, don’t drink too much at Sundowners, and maybe read Doris Lessing.” The jerry cans and spare inner tubes were both gone by the time we picked up our 1970 VW wagon in Beira, Mozambique. Trunks and tea chests took the rest of our worldly possessions.

The *Compact Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford University Press, 1971), a marvel for definitions and historical usage, appeared in 1971. It was an “I’ve gotta have that” moment, and after conferring with Karen, the major \$75 purchase occurred. Was this a stylish affectation, a fetish of misplaced intellectualism? The University of Rhodesia had a competent library, but owning one’s own *OED* seemed a necessity.

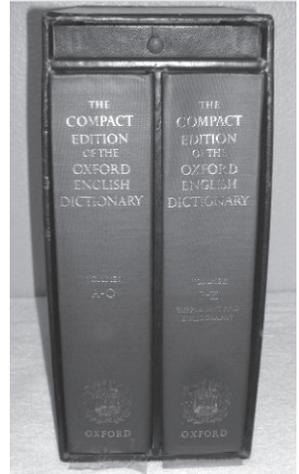
Started in 1857 the cooperative venture reached thirteen volumes. The compact edition appeared in 1971. It had 4,116 pages, reprinting about 16,400 pages on paper similar to the *Guardian* newspaper airmail edition. It weighs 22.3 lbs. Bound handsomely in Oxford Clarendon Press aristocratic blue, it came with a slipcase and quirky magnifying glass. The twenty-volume, 2nd edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary* appeared in 1989. The compact hard copy served us well and was

eclipsed when it went online in 2000—much quicker, less space consuming, and more expansive and up-to-date, with frequency-of-use charts.

The *OED*’s glamour, challenge, and intrigue are well captured by Simon Winchester in *The Professor and the Madman: A Tale of Murder, Insanity, and the Making of the Oxford English Dictionary* (MJF Books, 1998), by Ammon Shea in *Reading the OED: One Man, One Year, 21,730 Pages* (Perigee Books, 2009), and in *The Meaning of Everything: The Story of the Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford University Press, 2003) by Simon Winchester. William F. Buckley Jr., wrote glowingly of it in the *New York Times* (December 19, 1971), which I did not read in until June 2015 while writing this article. Buckley, reminiscent of Benjamin Franklin’s *Autobiography* (CreateSpace, 2015), wrote, “I cannot imagine that anyone who has the money will put off the purchase of a set. . . .there is no literary excitement quite like the ownership of these volumes.” Abebooks and eBay have dozens of *OED*s between \$40 and \$90.

The nation-states Myanmar and Zimbabwe and the electronic information innovations Google and Wikipedia (the latter owing something to the *OED*’s volunteer model of data accumulation) had not yet been invented, as we know them. Neither would the 6,500 words admitted to Scrabble credibility in May 2015 have found favor. *OED* has an allure. If anyone wants my two volumes, complete with slipcase and magnifying glass—for free—please let me know at obpomni@aol.com. You can pick it up in Omaha, postage and handling not an option. We leave for Burma later this year, a trip postponed for forty-five years. 📖

by Oliver B. Pollak,  
Omaha



# The NCB News

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**THE NEBRASKA  
CENTER FOR  
THE BOOK**

*an affiliate of  
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c/o Nebraska Library Commission  
The Atrium  
1200 N Street, Suite 120  
Lincoln, Nebraska 68508-2023  
34-00-12

**Nominate Books for Nebraska Book Awards  
by June 30, 2016.**

## ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL DRIVE

*It's time to renew your NCB membership.*

President Mary Ellen Ducey recently sent out membership renewal reminders. Please show your support and send your check now to the Nebraska Center for the Book.

*Membership form on page 3.*

CURRENT RESIDENT OR:

## Calendar of Events:



*View the complete  
Nebraska Literary  
Calendar at  
centerforthebook.  
nebraska.gov/  
get\_involved/calendar.  
html*

- "For the Love of Words: Poetry, Prose and the Creative Writing Process"**  
Workshop, with Twyla M. Hansen ..... March 29 ..... Alma  
Contact: Twyla M. Hansen, Nebraska State Poet, 402-466-5839, nebraskastatepoet2@gmail.com
- National Poetry Month** ..... April ..... Nationwide  
Contact: www.poets.org
- "From Sampler to Sunset: A Show-and-Tell of Quilt Art and Essays,"** with Phyllis Moore ..... April 6 ..... Lincoln  
Contact: Nebraska Literary Heritage Association, Lincoln City Libraries, 402-441-8516,  
e.willis@lincolnlibraries.org
- WillyConXVII Science Fiction & Fantasy Convention** ..... April 8-10 ..... Wayne  
Contact: ScFanta1@wsc.edu, http://wildcat.wsc.edu/clubs/willycon/
- Bess Streeter Aldrich Foundation Spring Banquet** ..... April 9 ..... Elmwood  
Contact: Teresa Lorensen, 402-994-3855, tllorensen@windstream.net,  
http://www.bessstreeteraldrich.org/events.html
- Nebraska Writers Guild Spring Writers' Conference** ..... April 15-16 ..... LaVista  
Contact: http://nebraskawriters.org/content/spring-conference
- Paul A. Olson Seminar: "The Unsettler's Frontier: The West through Women's History,"**  
with Elizabeth Jameson ..... April 28 ..... Lincoln  
Contact: Center for Great Plains Studies, 402-472-3964, cgps@unl.edu,  
www.unl.edu/plains/great-plains-great-ideas-paul-olson-seminars
- "America & the Great War 1914-1918,"** with David Wells ..... May 19 ..... North Platte  
Contact: Cecelia Lawrence, North Platte Public Library, 308-535-8036,  
lawrencecc@ci.north-platte.ne.us
- Willa Cather Spring Conference: "Both Bitter and Sweet: Cather, Literature, and the Great War" .....** June 2-4 ..... Red Cloud  
Contact: Willa Cather Foundation, 866-731-7304,  
https://www.willacather.org/events/61st-annual-willa-cather-spring-conference
- "World War I: Legacies of a Forgotten War" Chautauqua** ..... June 1-5 ..... Hastings
- "World War I: Legacies of a Forgotten War" Chautauqua** ..... June 8-12 ..... North Platte  
Contact: Nebraska Humanities Council, 402-474-2131,  
info@nebraskahumanities.org, http://NebraskaChautauqua.org
- Story Catcher Summer Writing Workshop and Festival** ..... June 9-12 ..... Chadron  
Contact: http://www.storycatcherworkshop.org, echase@windstream.net