



# The NCB News

Volume 10

Fall 2000

No. 3

A Publication of the Nebraska Center for the Book

## Nebraska Book Awards 2000

by Dick Allen

The Nebraska Center for the Book sponsored the first annual 2000 Book Awards Competition this summer. The winners are as follows: Fiction, *Jonis Agee* for *The Weight of Dreams*, Viking Penguin, publisher; Nonfiction, *Michael L. Tate* for *The Frontier Army and the Settlement of the West*, University of Oklahoma Press, publisher; Nonfiction Honor Book Award, *James Potter and Robert Puschendorf* for *Spans in Time: A History of Nebraska Bridges*, Nebraska State Historical Society, publisher; Poetry, *Marjorie Saiser* for *Bones of a Very Fine Hand*, *The Backwaters*



*Press*, publisher; and *Cover Design/Illustrations*, Larry D. Underwood for *Abilene Lawmen*, Dageford Publishing, publisher. All of the books were published in 1999.

Books entered in the 2001 competition must be professionally published in the year 2000 as indicated by the copyright date. Books must be bound and have an ISBN. Books must be written by a Nebraska or Nebraska-related author, published by a Nebraska publisher, or have a Nebraska theme or setting. Books may be entered in one or more of the following categories: Nonfiction; Children/Young Adult; Fiction; Cover Design/Illustration; and Poetry. Entry forms will be available in Spring 2001. ▲

## Short Story Contest Announced

The Wayne State College Science Fiction and Fantasy Club is sponsoring a short story contest. The contest is open to those who have not professionally published a novel or short novel, more than three short stories, or more than one novelette in any medium. Entries will be accepted in three categories: Elementary/Middle School, High School, and College

or Adult. All types of science fiction, fantasy, and horror with fantastic elements are welcome. The deadline is February 16, 2001. For more information contact Stan Gardner, <SGardner@WSCGATE.WSC.EDU>, SF/F Club Short Story Contest, c/o Conn Library, Wayne State College, 1111 Main Street, Wayne, NE 68787. ▲

## Nebraska Author Wins Award

Peggy Adair of Omaha won the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) Support for the Learning and Teaching of English Affiliate Intellectual Freedom Award. Adair is a writer, a Court Appointed Special Advocate in Sarpy and Douglas Counties, a juvenile justice consultant, and a member of the Board of Directors of Owens Education Services, with offices in Omaha, Lincoln, Crete, and Columbus. Nebraska English Language Arts Council, an affiliate of NCTE, nominated Adair for her work as a child

advocate and for her novel, *Chance*, which deals with child abuse. *Chance* has been challenged by a Nebraska school district. Adair has also defended high school students who were punished for writing and distributing an "underground newspaper." NCTE, with 77,000 individual and institutional members worldwide, is dedicated to improving the teaching and learning of English and the language arts at all levels of education. ▲

# A Brief Look at Books

by Gerry Cox,  
Nebraska Center  
for the Book  
Editor

**T**he Nebraska Center for the Book receives dozens of complimentary books throughout the year. This Editor's column will take a brief look at a few of them.

Dageforde Publishing of Lincoln, NE, produced Larry Underwood's *Abilene Lawmen*, the winner of the Cover Design/Illustrations category in the Nebraska Center for the Book's 2000 Book Awards Competition for books published in 1999. Angie Johnson was the artist. The children's books category had no winner (see story on page 1), but take heart—some of the books published this year by Dageforde Publishing are for children. Cindy Zuby's stunning cover and illustrations enhance *When Chloë Comes to Tea* by Pat Pike. This is a short book for both long and short people who love brightly colored drawings with a story poem. Pike lives in Lincoln.

Children, small and not so small, who love trucks will reach for this little, brightly colored, spiral book, *Color on the Road: Book and Travel Game*. Published in 1998 by Hughes Haven Publishing, owned by Ord Teacher Dianne Hughes, it includes a simple "bingo" game that can prove to be entertaining for children in preschool and the early grades.

Margaret J. Dolezal retired from teaching at Lincoln Northeast High School in the '80s and has since been writing stories. Her collections, *Stories To Remember*, *Christmas Tales & Poems*, and *Stories*

*To Share & Riddles To Solve*, are appropriate for middle school readers and others who like riddles and twists to present day stories. Each book bears a 2000 copyright, published by Dageforde Publishing.

In 2000, Dageforde published *Poor as Church Mice: Children of the Orphan Train*, by Roselyn Ogden Miller of Osceola. This novel—suitable for children in the upper grades—is set in post-Civil War New York and Nebraska. It tells of four children who were forced into an orphanage after their widowed mother was taken to a tuberculosis sanitarium and the eldest daughter, who kept the family together during the illness of their mother, could no longer care for the others. It is illustrated by Janet Miller.

Adults will be pleased to find alternatives to their usual publishing house fare by exploring Infusionmedia Publishing, also based in Lincoln. *Lunar Laws* by Lincolnite Joseth Moore has a 2000 copyright. Set in the middle of the twenty-first century, this science fiction chapbook tells of the construction of a lunar base that provides conflict among the workers, and between them and their human predecessors to the moon. This is a compelling story that reflects today's underlying mistrust of and challenges to our global cooperation efforts.

A book of Steve Ward's cartoons, "*BUZZ the Fly*" is also available from Infusionmedia. Ward, who lives in Lincoln, has made his comic strip available on the

*continued on page 10...*

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## The **NCB**News

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### Nebraska Center for the Book Board and Committees

#### By-Laws

Molly Fisher, President; Joan Birnie, Vice President/President Elect; Katherine Walter, Past President; Dee Yost

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#### Awards Art Coordinator

Denise Brady

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

### 2001 Nebraska Center for the Book Board Meetings

#### February 10

Seward Civic Center, 9:30 A.M.

April 7 (tentative)

#### August 11

#### November 4, Annual Meeting

Broken Bow

2-4 P.M., Annual Membership

Meeting/Program

4-5 P.M., Board Meeting

#### 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 402-471-2045, 800-307-2665, e-mail: <mjryan@nlc.state.ne.us>.

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All book cover art reprinted by permission of the publisher.

# Governor's Lecture in the Humanities

by **Tom Ineck**,  
Public Relations  
Officer, Nebraska  
Humanities  
Council

**D**elivering the *Fifth Annual Governor's Lecture in the Humanities*, Nell Irvin Painter beseeched her listeners to renounce the "privilege of unknowing" that allows historians to rewrite history and ignore the truth about their subjects.

Speaking to an audience of about 600 at Kimball Recital Hall on the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UN-L) campus, Painter said that when it comes to subjects who are relatively powerless, biographers and readers tend to ignore what made these people uniquely individual. More conventional subjects, especially privileged white men, are regarded as if they did not live in a society and a time that often were politically incorrect. "We choose not to know the racism and the sexism of the cultural context," Painter said. "If you exercise the privilege of unknowing, you're not knowing something you could easily know. You're choosing not to know."

Painter expanded on her topic, "Historical Biography and the Privilege of Unknowing," with examples from the life of Sojourner Truth. Painter's own biography of the black abolitionist, *Sojourner Truth: A Life, A Symbol*, is widely acclaimed for its debunking of myths surrounding Truth. "Sojourner Truth did not say, 'Aren't I a woman?' She did go to a women's rights meeting in Akron, Ohio, in 1851. She did say something to that effect, but she didn't say those words. But many readers desperately want Sojourner Truth to have said, 'Aren't I a woman?'"

As another example, Painter referred to a biographer of William Randolph Hearst who expressed dismay over Hearst's cozying up to Hitler and Mussolini. "Looking backwards, we ought to be able

to know that there existed in the United States in earlier times bigotry, anti-Semitism, racism, sexism, and a host of other ideologies that I hope we're moving away from," Painter said. "I want to leave you with the hope that you will renounce the privilege of unknowing in order better to know individuals, in order better to know our past."

Painter is Edwards Professor of American History and Director of the African American Studies program at Princeton University. The Fifth Annual Governor's Lecture in the Humanities was a collaboration between the Nebraska Humanities Council and the University of Nebraska, with the financial support of UN-L's Humanities Program, State Farm Insurance Companies, Ameritas Charitable Foundation, and Information Technology, Inc. ▲



## 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 Library of Congress National Center for the Book since 1990.

## Join the Nebraska Center for the Book

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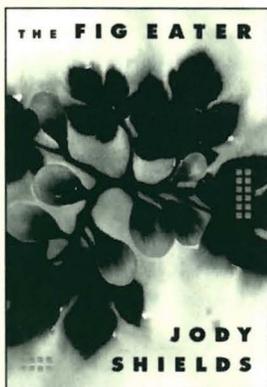
- \_\_\_ \$15 Individual Membership
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**Please send this form and a check to:  
Nebraska Center for the Book  
The Atrium, 1200 N Street, Suite 120  
Lincoln, NE 68508-2023**

## Review: The Fig Eater

by **Jody Shields**,  
Little, Brown and  
Company, 2000,  
ISBN 0-316-  
78564-4.

Reviewed by  
**Christine  
Pappas**



When Lincoln native Jody Shields' first fiction manuscript sold at auction for \$400,000, she reports that her reaction was to scream. The resultant novel, *The Fig Eater*, is an immensely engaging foray into turn-of-the-century Vienna featuring the intrigue of a murder mystery. Jody Shields, a Lincoln East High School and University of Nebraska graduate, is a writer and artist living in New York. She has written books and articles on fashion and most recently served as the *New York Times Magazine* fashion editor.

The plot centers on a police inspector's search for a young woman's killer. The woman, named Dora, was strangled late at night in a park and there are seemingly no suspects. As the inspector interviews Dora's family and friends in his methodical and scientific way, he senses an odd current of deception and intrigue. In his perversely invasive search, the inspector finds a partially digested fig in Dora's stomach. The fig is presumed to be her last meal.

Despite his perceptive brilliance, the inspector cannot solve the case.

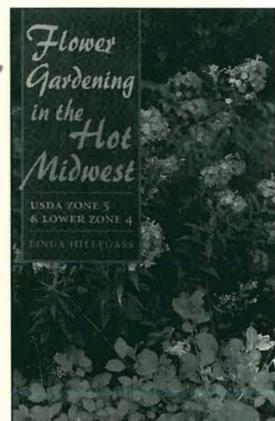
The inspector keeps his wife, Erszebet, informed about the investigation. Erszebet is from superstitious Buda Pest, and unlike the coldly pragmatic inspector, places great weight on signals from the supernatural world that she reads in Tarot cards or duck carcasses. Erszebet and her sidekick, an English governess named Wally, mount their own investigation. Erszebet and Wally are guided by intuition and superstition. As opposed to the inspector who mainly interviews men, they turn up far more information by turning their attention to the women in Dora's life. Shields' book contrasts analytical versus intuitive ways of knowing. In a haunted but satisfying ending, the parallel investigations culminate with surprise.

When Jody Shields came to town last spring on her book tour, she told me that the "holy grail" for every author is to write a successful novel. There is no doubt that with *The Fig Eater*, she accomplished her goal. ▲

## Review: Flower Gardening in the Hot Midwest: USDA Zone 5 and Lower Zone 4

by **Linda Hillegass**,  
University of  
Illinois Press,  
2000, ISBN 0-252-  
06885-8.

Reviewed by  
**Anne Senkbeil**



Living in the Midwest is a difficult thing for a plant. Not only must plants be winter-hardy, they must survive our hot, windy summers. In her book, *Flower Gardening in the Hot Midwest: USDA Zone 5 and Lower Zone 4*, Linda Hillegass has created an excellent guide for gardening success. The American Horticulture Society published heat zones in 1997 (the color map is opposite page 66) and Hillegass makes good sense, using heat zones to rate plants as to summer survival in our location.

Her book is full of advice, given as a trusted friend would. It is easy reading, perfect for the beginning gardener and for the intermediate gardener seeking reassurance. With great patience, she offers encouragement, warm and comforting. Hillegass has learned from experience, passing on the advice others have given her. Her enthusiastic love of gardening is obvious. She understands obsessions and spreads good humor everywhere, but she lets you know that bad things will happen in the garden. You just have to get over it, plant something new, and move on in your gardening adventure.

Here are definite recommendations: Good soil is a must. Stick with a color scheme. Don't be squeamish in destroying pests. (Hillegass uses the "two bricks" method.) You get wise, common sense advice on how to use your time and money. You don't have to take the advice, but you've been warned. My husband Lynn especially appreciated the chapter on plants listed according to blooming sequence. This section is detailed and is an excellent resource for creating interest in the garden throughout our long growing season. She includes a helpful section on how to organize a calendar of gardening work. The last chapter gives suggestions for building a garden library.

Hillegass and her husband, Jim McKee, to whom she dedicated the book, supplied the charming photographs—many in color. This book should definitely be included in Nebraskans' libraries, because gardening in the hot Midwest is challenging and rewarding. ▲

# Two Nebraska Poets Today

by Dick Allen



**MARGE SAISER:**

*In the beginning, perhaps everything was one, and creation broke it, a plate falling on stone.*



**TED KOOSER:**

*Fresh snow standing deep on the phone wire. If you call me, speak softly.*

Two Nebraska poets recently received achievement awards. Ted Kooser received the Nebraska Library Association's Mari Sandoz Award for his "significant contribution to the Nebraska book world." Marjorie Saiser won the 2000 Book Awards Competition for Poetry for her book, *Bones of a Very Fine Hand*. Dick Allen conducted a joint interview with the two poets.

**Q: What is a poem?**

**TK:** In addition, I would say that the test of a good poem is one in which you can't change a word, a punctuation mark, the syntax, or the rhythms in any way without lessening the effect.

**MS:** Language that catches connections, but doesn't pin these connections down.

**Q: Do you have a favorite poem or poet? Do you have a favorite poem of your own?**

**TK:** Right now, Nancy Willard. Right now the poem "The Couple" by the Swedish poet Thomas Transtroemer, translated by Robert Bly. The most recent poem that I have written!

**MS:** No, I couldn't pin one down. Nor do I have a favorite poem of my own.

**Q: Why is poetry less read than prose? More often written (by would-be writers) than prose?**

**TK:** Teachers have frightened many of us away from poetry by making it a puzzle to be solved. I don't know if would-be writers write more poetry or more prose. I do know that we give people permission to say things in poetry that we do not give them in writing prose.

**MS:** Poetry needs to be read aloud. This makes such a difference. By reading it aloud it is changed—you get the rhythms. People write poetry when they experience loss, death, love. You can't get these things down on the page with prose.

**Q: Poems and photographs—how much are they alike?**

**TK:** Photos are more inclusive and contain everything in view of the lens. The poem selects for an effect. The poem includes time. The photo does not.

**MS:** Poems are like paintings. The artist needs to show me the picture and the things behind it. The poem is visual and more, just as is the painting.

**Q: Does a sense of place in a poem enhance the poem or does it restrict it to a regional or local appeal?**

**TK:** Most of the poems that I hold dear have a sense of place or moment, or even of weather. Such a sense of place doesn't limit or restrict the poem's appeal.

**MS:** The finest poems that I have read have that sense of place. But this place doesn't have to be one familiar to me. These same poems go beyond the sense of place and show me a new connection, a new intimacy, what it is like in that place, in that time.

**Q: Is poetry primarily made to be read aloud (unlike prose)?**

**TK:** Most good poets actually hear the words they are writing. The words are more than mere meanings and ideas.

**MS:** Even in reading a poem silently you want to hear it. The syllables and the language are so important. The poem has sound and sense together. It is like looking at a sheet of music and hearing how it will sound.

**Q: Is one's gender a factor in one's poetry?**

**TK:** Of course it is. One's gender is a part of one's total experience. A specific gender doesn't make one a better poet.

**MS:** Just as is one's age, just as is living in the year 2000. One's gender is less important than one's own world of experiences.

**Q: How important is surprising or shocking the reader or hearer of the poem?**

**TK:** Surprise is important. A "moment of recognition" needs to be in the poem for it to work.

**MS:** I don't like to be shocked, but I like to be surprised. Shocking for some seems to be the only reason for their writing the poem.

**Q: What should be the effect of the poem on the reader/hearer, on society/the world, on the poet her/himself?**

**TK:** A state of exhilaration, even hilarity. Even a poem about a most unpleasant, dismal subject can delight you for its having been well written. An example is James Dickey's poem "Falling." Poetry can change the way we look at things. If a person in power reads poetry, it can affect his or her outlook. When I write a poem, I feel worthy.

**MS:** Poetry is really important. It does make a difference. The points on the plane become connected and you do look at the world differently, you do live differently. There are different poems for different people.

**TK:** Metaphor is a way of making connections in a chaotic world. The more connections we can make, the better. ▲

# My Favorite Reference Book

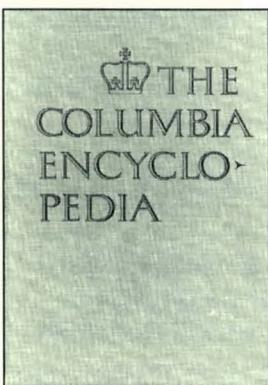
by **Oliver B. Pollak**,  
Department of  
History, University  
of Nebraska at  
Omaha

My favorite reference book is *The Columbia Encyclopedia*. First published in 1935, I have a Third Edition from 1963, probably acquired through the Book of the Month Club. A “classic reference book,” it has been “generally conceded to be the best one-volume encyclopedia in the English language.” It is so valuable that when I sent my children off to college, I promised they would be accompanied by this nine pound, 2,388 page tome. Like another promise, a play-set in the back yard, it will have to await the arrival of grandchildren.

I usually made a checkmark by each article I read. For the letter “A” I marked Abbasid, Abdur-Rahman, Abelard, Abu-Simbel, Henry Adams, John Adams, Alcuin, Alfred the Great, ancestor worship, and animism (probably in 1964 when I took an anthropology course with the politically incorrect name Primitive Religion), Antichrist, Arthurian legend, and Saint Augustine. No surprises, I was interested in history and religion. Daunted by flipping 166 pages, I did not pursue a review of the letter B. There were no checkmarks in Q, X, or Z.

Besides checkmarks, there were eight pieces of paper, marking Martin Luther, nihilism, Peasant’s War, Reformation, Voltaire, the Diet of Worms, and two markers for pages that I cannot determine why I was looking at them. I used the encyclopedia to check facts when writing student and professional papers, and for teaching. I still use it, as well as my Encarta CD-ROM.

The encyclopedia also contained some pressed and dried wild flowers, and a typed carbon copy of a poem on onionskin paper written in December 1963. The encyclopedia is a tertiary source. But my marks comprise an original manuscript notation. For the past ten years I have written about twenty-seven entries for a dozen encyclopedias, including an entry on Henry Monsky, a Jewish leader from Omaha, in *American National Biography*. By the way, I exorcised my promise to my sons. I found two used copies of the out-of-print, 3052 page, Fourth Edition, on the Web at reasonable prices and had them shipped. Conveying authority with economy of words is a challenge. ▲



# Book History

By **Oliver B. Pollak**,

*A Handbook for the Study of Book History in the United States* by Ronald J. Zboray and Mary Saracino Zboray, published in 2000 by the Center for the Book and the Library of Congress, is a most handy little guide to the study of book history. It traces the interest in this subject and the resources to pursue it. The topics include authors, writing, editing, translating, publishing, marketing, readership, and dispersal. The Zborays suggest that book history is at our fingertips.

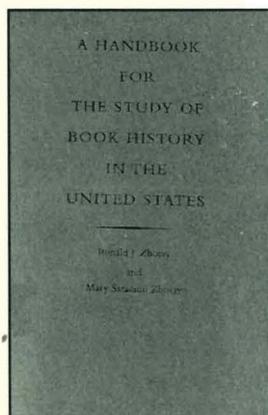
This book is so useful that within three hours of starting it my thoughts were conceptualized and galvanized on three book history projects emanating from Nebraska. In rising order of significance, they are:

▲ A diary by a Kearney-born student who was in Paris in 1937 where he saw an over-four-hour French play based on Jules Verne’s 1889 novel, *Around the World in Eighty Days*. The play contained a scene in which Phileas Fogg, Passepartout, and Auoda take the Union Pacific Railroad across Nebraska. I remember the 1956 film quite nostalgically. I probably saw it at the Egyptian Theater in Los Angeles. I went to the library to look at the book in translation. Let me share my bemusement. One translated the title, *The Tour of the World in Eighty Days*, and the town

along the rail line from Colorado to Omaha was either Grand Island or “Great” Island.

▲ A three-inch-thick volume from the Jackson Street Booksellers in Omaha called *Catalogues of the Library of the Late David Laing*. Laing, born in 1793, served as Librarian of the Signet Library in Edinburgh, edited the works of John Knox, and belonged to several Scottish intellectual societies. He died in 1878. I borrowed the book for a weekend, but after holding it for over a month felt it incumbent upon me to purchase it. Bound in it were four catalogues representing the 11,743 volumes, a “collection of a long and busy lifetime.” It was sold in four auctions sales at Sotheby, Wilkinson & Hodge in London over a period of thirty-one days between December 1879 and February 1881. The prices received were printed in separate pamphlets following the sale catalogue. The total receipts were £16,575. An added feature was a pasted-in 229-inch long newspaper clipping, in five and one-half point nonpareil type, with between twenty-three and twenty-eight characters to the inch. Probably from an Edinburgh newspaper, it covered the first eleven days of the sale indicating some of the high points of the sale, the bidders, and the purchasers.

▲ The history of the book is intriguing, as is the history of manuscripts and typescripts that were NOT published. From 1977 to 1985 I was the editor for a reference series, *International Historical Statistics*,



# Talking Books Facilitate Greek Literature Discussions

by **Diane  
Potter**

Since the characters and stories contained in the earliest of Western literature recur and are frequently alluded to in modern day culture, familiarity with them is essential. For this reason, a group of avid readers have been meeting at the Omaha Public Library Abrahams Branch on Sundays since September to listen to and discuss *The Iliad*, Robert Graves' *Greek Gods and Heroes*, *Three Greek Plays*, and *Euripides, Medea, and Other Plays*.

I am legally blind and I have found no advantages to being in that condition. There are, however, a few compensations. The most important of which is access to the marvelous recordings of the National Library Service (NLS). Early Greek literature was of course part of an oral tradition and is best experienced by listening. Frank Kurt Cylke, NLS Director, has provided copies of the texts we will be using on long-term loan, and I am delighted to share them. We are having such a good time that other workshops are being organized to study these classics.

You may be surprised, as I was, to discover how little human nature has changed since the Bronze Age and how much of our current day vocabulary is derived from Greek mythology. We do not do sophisticated literary analyses. Our goal is simply to familiarize ourselves with the classical characters and the situations in which they find themselves. Whenever possible we will take advantage of community

resources such as theatre, opera, restaurants, and of course public libraries. If you would like to rediscover the origins of such terms as Achilles' heel, titanic, the Orpheum, labyrinth, Pandora's box, tantalize, mnemonic device, aphrodisiac, and music, please join us to revisit the wisdom of Ancient Greece. Along the way we will listen to some amazing stories. To be included in the planning for the next set of classics discussion groups, call Diane Potter at 402-493-0169 with suggestions for meeting times. I look forward to hearing from you.

**Editor's Note: The Nebraska Library Commission's Talking Book and Braille Service** provides free books and magazines on cassette, on record, and in Braille, as well as videos that include audio descriptions, to individuals with a visual or physical condition or a reading disability that limits use of regular print. The collection of books and magazines is similar to those found in a public library. Special cassette and record players are also provided free of charge. All are mailed to and from the Library Commission postage-free to individuals, as well as schools and other facilities (e.g., nursing homes, hospitals, senior citizen centers). For more information contact the Library Commission Talking Book and Braille Service at 402-471-4038, 800-742-7691, e-mail: <readadv@nlc.state.ne.us>. ▲

## Review: **Goodnight, Nebraska: A Novel**

By **Tom McNeal**,  
Vintage Books,  
1999, paper, ISBN  
0-375-70429-9.

Reviewed by  
**Rod Wagner**

I was aware of but had not read Tom McNeal's *Goodnight, Nebraska: A Novel* until I found it in a New Orleans bookstore while attending the American Library Association annual conference. It was in a "staff recommends" section. Looking for something to read, I picked it up somewhat by chance. Once I started reading it, I didn't want to put it down and I didn't want it to end. The protagonist is Randall

Hunsacker, a troubled teenager who moves from Utah to a northwestern Nebraska town (Goodnight) for a fresh start. Randall and the other characters in this novel are colorful and real. The story is compelling. Regardless of the title, it is a book worthy of shelf space in any Nebraska library, and would be a terrific book for a discussion group. ▲

### Book History *continued from page 6...*

published by G.K. Hall in Boston. We published eight volumes including Brazil, Cuba, Mali, and Thailand. My one and a half linear feet of files contain original incoming correspondence and carbon copies of outgoing mail on yellow flimsy paper. They relate the conception of the series, head hunting for writers, the editing and publication process, and marketing the volumes. This author-publisher-editor correspon-

dence on published and unpublished works reveals some of the interior life connecting the academic world and the commercial publishing industry. I assigned this project to a lucky (or hapless) student as a Historical Research term paper. More anon.

What better testimony is there to the good work of the Zborays' than to say the book is not only useful, but also inspiring. Read this book and see what sparks it sets off. ▲

# Jane Pope Geske Award Presented

by **Oliver B. Pollack**

**T**he 2000 Jane Pope Geske Award was recently presented to the Dorothy and Myer Kripke Jewish Federation Library of Omaha at the Nebraska Center for the Book Annual Meeting. The award, established by the Nebraska Center for the Book, is presented annually to an organization, business, library, school, association, or other group that has made an exceptional contribution to literacy, books, reading, libraries, or Nebraska literature.

The Jewish Federation Library was started by Paul Veret in the 1940s and was housed in downtown Omaha at the Jewish Community Center (JCC). The

JCC moved to west Omaha in 1974. In 1999–2000 the JCC campus between Dodge and Pacific Streets on 132nd Street underwent a multi million dollar upgrade and expansion. A major result of reorganizing Omaha's Jewish communal agencies has been to relocate the Jewish

Federation Library from the side of the JCC campus to the entrance of the building.

The new library, a bright, open space, is now the most visible section of the building. The library was

recently renamed in honor of Dorothy and Myer Kripke. Dorothy Kripke published several children's books, and a substantial portion of the library is devoted to a children's room.

The library contains approximately forty thousand volumes in English, Hebrew, Russian, and Yiddish. There are about sixty subscriptions to journals of Judaic content. These statistics give the library the claim to be one of the major Judaic collections in a several state area. Recently a large collection of long- and short-playing records was transferred to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. For more than twenty years, the library has sponsored discussion groups, Book Report Contests (for K–8), and Jewish Book Month (November–December). It is staffed by a professional librarian. The Library publicizes its collection through the weekly *Omaha Jewish Press* and is free and open to the public.

The Jane Geske Award commemorates Geske's passion for books, and was established in recognition of her contributions to the well being of the libraries of Nebraska. Jane Geske was a founding member of the Nebraska Center for the Book and a long-time leader in many Nebraska library and literary activities. The award this year was a Polaroid transfer print, "Fast Food Basilica-Tel Aviv," by Gliska Morsel Greenspan.



Norman Geske looks on as Jeannette Schaffner receives the Jane Pope Geske Award from Kay Walter.

# Dollhouse Raffle Winner Announced

Congratulations to **Felicia Cogley, Volunteer Coordinator, Hastings Public Library**, who purchased the winning ticket in the recent Nebraska Center for the Book Dollhouse Raffle. What do dollhouses have to do with the Center for the Book? When asked this question, Oliver Pollak submitted the following reply:

Enter the word "doll" under title in WorldCat and you get 4,324 responses. "House" will get you 308,434 hits. "Doll House" will limit you to 185 entries, several of which are duplicates, triplicates. The greater challenge is dolls, doll makers, and dollhouses as part of the substance of the story, but not mentioned in the title. For instance, Charles Dickens's *Our Mutual Friend* features a doll maker but doll is not mentioned in the title.

**Editor's Note:** If you are interested in doing some searching of your own, **WorldCat** is a database of more than 40 million records describing material cataloged by the Online Computer Library Center

(OCLC) member libraries around the world. It includes bibliographic information on books, manuscripts, videos, sound recordings, periodicals, maps, newspapers, musical scores, and computer programs. Access to WorldCat is provided to hundreds of Nebraska libraries by the Nebraska Library Commission through funding from the State of Nebraska.



## River of Words Contest Announced

The **River of Words Project** is an international environmental poetry and art contest designed to nurture respect and understanding of the natural world by encouraging children to learn their "ecological address" and to describe through poetry and art their own "place in space." Cosponsored by International Rivers Network, The Library of Congress Center for the Book, and United States Poet Laureate (1995–1997) Robert Hass, the project hopes to foster responsibility, imagination, and action in young people and to publicly acknowledge their creativity and concerns. Nebraska schoolchildren in kindergarten through twelfth grade are invited to participate in River of Words, exploring and interpreting their local watersheds through the arts. Each year eight National Grand Prize winners (four each in poetry

and art) and one international winner will be chosen to go to Washington, DC, with their parents. They will be honored at an award ceremony, luncheon, public reading, and art show at The Library of Congress.

There is no charge to enter the contest. Every entry will be acknowledged. Entries must be post-marked by February 15. International entries must be received by March 1. For more information see the River of Words Web site at <http://irn.org/row/index.shtml>. The State Coordinator for Nebraska is Laureen Riedesel, Beatrice Public Library, 100 N. 16th Street, Beatrice, NE 68310, 402-223-3584; Fax: 402-223-3913; E-mail: [lriedesel@beatrice.lib.ne.us](mailto:lriedesel@beatrice.lib.ne.us). ▲

## Ninth Nebraska Literature Festival held in Lincoln and Beatrice

The Beatrice Public Library, Lincoln City Libraries, the Nebraska Center for the Book, and the Nebraska Humanities Council cosponsored this year's Literature Festival.

**Linda Hillegass** received the Nebraska Center for the Book's **2000 Mildred Bennett Award** at the opening activities of the ninth Nebraska Literature Festival this fall. Hillegass was honored for her continuing efforts to nurture literacy through Lee Booksellers, the Lincoln bookstores she owns with her husband, Jim McKee, and for her work with the Center for the Book and the Lincoln City Libraries.

Eighteen Nebraska writers read from their works, and audiences heard presentations about classic writers Willa Cather, Loren Eiseley, John Neihardt, and others. People attended writing workshops, literary tours of locations connected to authors in Lincoln and Beatrice, as well as tours of the Archives and Special Collections at Love Library and the Jane Pope Geske Heritage Room of Nebraska Authors at Lincoln's Bennett Martin Public Library.

State Poet William Kloefkorn led a writing workshop for high school students at the Homestead National Monument near Beatrice. Students and teachers rated the workshop a success with responses such as "Wonderful place to write!" and "Great people to work with!" ▲



*Nebraska Center for the Book President Kay Walter presents the Mildred Bennett Award to Linda Hillegass.*

# Great Plains Art Collection Moves

by Sharon Gustafson,  
Interim Curator  
Great Plains Art  
Collection

In October, the Great Plains Art Collection moved to Hewitt Place, 1155 Q Street, Lincoln. Its downtown location promises greater accessibility and convenient parking in the nearby Que Street Parking Garage. Exhibition space is nearly doubled in size compared to the gallery's previous location in the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Love Library. The gallery's extensive storage area is well planned to provide plenty of workspace for the staff while accommodating the

permanent collection and allowing room for growth. The Great Plains Art Collection's research library is located on the mezzanine level. Here visitors can enjoy quiet moments in the

reading room overlooking the main gallery or find research material among the 4,000 volumes on American and Canadian Plains topics.

The building also houses the Lentz Center for Asian Culture, located on the lower level, and the Center for Great Plains Studies in the four-story office tower above the lobby entrance. The galleries will hold receptions for their opening exhibits in the lobby space on both the main and the lower levels. The lobbies and galleries are available for receptions by University of Nebraska departments and other public organizations.

In November, the Great Plains Art Collection opened to the public with its first exhibition in its new home. Curated by Sharon Gustafson, *Art of the American West* features the permanent collection and highlights new acquisitions. Gallery hours are 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday, and 1:30 to 5:00 p.m. on Sunday. For more information contact the Great Plains Art Collection at 402-472-6220, <sharong@unlserve.unl.edu>. ▲



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## Brief Look at Books

continued from page 2...

Web site, <buzzthefly.com>, for many years with growing success. He writes that the content is "clever, edgy, adult-themed humor...a hit with Web surfers, crossing age and gender lines."

And from Lone Willow Press in Omaha comes a beautifully printed poetry chapbook by Eric R. Hoffman, *Things Like This Happen All The Time*. Unfortunately, he does not give credit to the cover artist. These poems deal with loss, and trips to and from relationships that range from Kansas and Nebraska west to the coast. Many of the poems are dark, but bright spots flash when he appreciates a moment in nature, when he is with his daughter, and when he is going home.

The local publishing companies that produced these selections are merely a small percentage of businesses that provide valuable publishing services for Nebraska's writers and readers. Look for them and patronize them. ▲

## Bibliofile: Featuring Molly Fischer, Nebraska Center for the Book President

By Gerry Cox

Molly Fischer recently retired as Deputy Director of the Nebraska Humanities Council (NHC) after fourteen years in a variety of positions. In 1986, she was hired as coordinator of the NHC Museums Exemplary Award Project and an award-winning project on the Constitution. She also served as Director of Grants and Director of Programs, and in 1999 she was named Deputy Director. This fall, *NCB News* Editor Gerry Cox interviewed her about what books and reading mean to her.



At a special alumni luncheon this fall, Molly was awarded an oil painting by Nebraska Artist Bob Hanna, as a token of the Council's appreciation of her work.

**Q: Your career has involved education and literacy. What encouraged you to enter your work in teaching and the humanities?**

**A:** I really think my mother encouraged me to pursue a teaching career. She was an English teacher, and she recited rhyming poetry to my sister and me when we were growing up. She was a poet herself and continued to write until she died. She was one hundred percent Welsh, and she made us feel a part of a literary tradition. When I entered college, I knew I wanted to be an English major, and I never changed my mind. I loved teaching at the college level and I probably would have continued had I been something other than an adjunct. When I saw the humanities position advertised more than fourteen years ago, I quickly applied. It was like teaching, and I quickly grew to love the people, the many communities, the variety of organizations, and the board that I served.

**Q: What has been your most satisfying experience in your work?**

**A:** The most satisfying experience that I have had is to see people work on a cultural project, help people develop that project, and then see it come to fruition. For example, it's seeing people do an oral history project and knowing how much satisfaction those same people have gained from accomplishing their goal. It's also knowing that the same information can be shared way beyond the original group of people.

**Q: What do you think is the biggest change in the literary world during your lifetime?**

**A:** I think Nebraska's literary world is a growing, changing group. There are many young writers and recently at the Nebraska Literature Festival in Lincoln, the most popular sessions were the young writers and poets reading their work. The Nebraska Literary Map added so many authors to its predecessor, and I am sure that more could be added.

**Q: What book are you reading now?**

**A:** I am reading three books. For fun, I love cookbook mysteries, and I am reading Patricia Mott's *Prime Cut*. I am also reading *Like Water for Chocolate*, a book that I have had for a long time and am just now reading. I am reading a wonderful nonfiction book called *My Grandfather's Blessings*, by Dr. Rachel Remen. Remen is a doctor at the Commonweal Cancer Help Program in California and uses the stories of the dying for healing, refuge, strength, and belonging. An earlier book called *Kitchen Table Wisdom* is equally wonderful. I first learned of her work through a Storytelling Festival grant the Nebraska Humanities Council had funded on Healing Stories.

**Q: Who is your favorite character?**

**A:** I love Eudora Welty's Edna Earle in *The Ponder Heart*. Edna tells the story of her Uncle Daniel. She is a great storyteller.

**Q: When and where is your favorite time to read?**

**A:** I like to read anytime, anyplace. Because I travel so much in my work, I listen to lots of books on tape. Since I always enjoyed being read to, I love to have someone read to me.

**Q: Who would be your ideal literary dining companion?**

**A:** Eudora Welty—she celebrates life.

**Q: What poem or lines do you wish you had learned "by heart?"**

**A:** Shakespeare's sonnets.

**Q: What poem or lines do you like to recite?**

**A:** I can recite bits and pieces from lots of poems and literature, but I can't hold a candle to my mother. I wish I could recite entire poems, as she did. ▲



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**Nebraska Book  
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**An Interview with  
Two Nebraska Poets**

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<b>John H. Ames Reading Series</b> , Novelist Jonis Agee Jane Pope Geske Heritage Room of Nebraska Authors, Contact: 402-441-8616	January 18	Lincoln
<b>The Storytelling Festival of Nebraska</b> , Jim May, Barbara McBride-Smith Museum of Nebraska Art (MONA), University of Nebraska at Kearney Contact: Julia Van Meter, 308-468-5721, <jimeter@rdu10.k12.ne.us>	January 18-22	Kearney
<b>Gateway Shopping Center Used Book Sale</b> , Lincoln Area Retired Teachers Contact: 402-466-9022 or 402-489-6438	February 1-4	Lincoln
<b>Telling Stories About Stuff</b> , Durham Western Heritage Museum Contact: 402-457-5231	February 7	Omaha
<b>Revealing History: Digital Imaging in Historical Collections</b> Handling and enhancing old photographs, Jill Koelling Contact: John Neihardt Center, 888-777-4667, <neihardt@gpcom.net>	February 11	Bancroft
<b>John H. Ames Reading Series</b> , Poet Constance Merrit Jane Pope Geske Heritage Room of Nebraska Authors, Contact: 402-441-8616	February 15	Lincoln
<b>Birthday Celebration</b> , Bess Streeter Aldrich House & Museum Contact: 402-994-3855	February 17	Elmwood
<b>Storytelling: What's It All About?</b> Storytelling Workshop Contact: 402-457-5231	February 21	Omaha
<b>Nebraska State Reading Council Conference</b> Contact: Tom Hansen, 308-865-8537, <hansent@unk.edu>	February 22-24	Kearney
<b>Storytelling Intensive: Family Stories and Family Life</b> Countryside Community Church Family Life Center, Contact: 402-457-5231	March 10	Omaha
<b>Nebraska Through Song and Story</b> , Dr. Dan Holtz, Peru State College Contact: John Neihardt Center, 888-777-4667, <neihardt@gpcom.net>	March 11	Bancroft
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