The NCB Quarterly

Volume 9 Fall 1999 No. 3

A Publication of the Nebraska Center for the Book

International Cather Seminar Planned for 2000

by Marge Rine,
Graduate Student,
Department of
English, University
of Nebraska-
Lincoln

The International Cather Seminar 2000: Willa Cather's Environmental Imagination *is planned for June 17-24, 2000 at the Arbor Day Farm's Lied Conference Center in Nebraska City. The conference is sponsored by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and the Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial and Educational Foundation.*

The 8th International Seminar on Willa Cather will represent the rapidly emerging field of environmental literature and will highlight the approach of ecocriticism, which adds place to the categories of race, class, and gender used to analyze literature. The seminar will embody interdisciplinary research and writing, with its interaction between the biological sciences and literature. It will encourage interregional scholarship by its recognition that ecological issues are both regional and global. And it will translate naturally into curricular development for teachers in the schools, as well as universities and colleges.

> ***"It fortified her to reflect upon the great operations of nature, and when she thought of the law that lay behind them, she felt a sense of personal security. That night she had a new consciousness of the country, felt almost a new relation to it...Under the long shaggy ridges, she felt the future stirring."***
>
> – O Pioneers!

Major lectures will be featured by the following seminar faculty:

William Howarth, professor of English, Princeton University, teaches courses in environmental literature and history. His books include *Nature in American Life, The John McPhee Reader, Thoreau in the Mountains, The Book of Concord, Traveling the Trans-Canada*, and *Mountaineering in the Sierra Nevada*. In 1972-80 he was editor-in-chief of *The Writings of Henry D. Thoreau*.

Glen A. Love, Professor Emeritus, University of Oregon, is past president of the Western Literature Association and the author of *NewAmericans: The Westerner and the Modern Experience in the American Novel* and *Babbitt: An American Life*. He is coeditor of *Ecological Crisis: Readings for Survival*.

Thomas J. Lyon is former editor of *Western American Literature* (1974-1996). He was editor of *A Literary History of the American West, This Incomperable Lande: A Book of American Nature Writing*, and *On Nature's Terms*, as well as co-editor of *Great and Peculiar Beauty: A Utah Centennial Reader*. Lyon is past president of the Western Literature Association. He is currently working on a book entitled *Good Walking: How (and Why) to Write About Nature*.

Joseph Meeker is a human ecologist with a Ph.D. in comparative literature and a master's and postdoctoral studies in wildlife ecology and comparative animal and human behavior. A former National Park Service ranger, he produced and hosted the radio series "Minding the Earth," which aired on National Public Radio during the 1980s. He is currently a Core Faculty member at the Graduate School of the Union Institute. His books include *Spheres of Life, The Comedy of Survival*, and *Minding the Earth*.

The Institute sponsors are issuing a Call for Papers. Papers on all aspects of Cather's work, life, and times, as well as on approaches to teaching Cather, are invited. Those focusing on the Seminar theme are encouraged. Proposals or abstracts of 500 words along with a cover letter and resume are due February 15, 2000. Persons whose proposals are accepted will be expected to submit final papers by May 15, 2000. Send papers to Susan Rosowski, Seminar Director, Department of English, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Lincoln, NE 68588-0333.

For more information, see the Seminar Web site at <www.unl.edu/cather_seminar>.

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Look Both Ways, Then Look Again

by Gerry Cox,
Nebraska Center
for the Book
Editor

The familiar admonition, "Look both ways, then look again," is appropriate as Nebraskans note the turning of the century and the increasing importance of reading and writing about the past and looking at the future. Evidence of this importance is demonstrated by the impressive list of the Nebraska Center for the Book's accomplishments and the promise of its increased involvement in the state's literary health.

Organized in 1990, the Center for the Book has provided special programs and supported the activities of other organizations to stimulate public interest in books, reading, and the written word. The Center for the Book's Nebraska Literature Festivals have been hosted by a variety of Nebraska communities. This edition of the *NCB News* looks at the Eighth Nebraska Literature Festival, hosted by Chadron State College and Oglala Lakota College, marking the first time an Indian college and its rich culture has been involved, the first time a school west of Kearney has sponsored the festival, and the first time two colleges have jointly sponsored the event. The Center for the Book also honors people and groups who have made significant contributions to the written word in Nebraska, provides speakers and panel presentations, and promotes activities sponsored by memorials, festivals, and centers devoted to specific authors

A few years ago, the Center for the Book scheduled Reading Circles, monthly discussions of books by Nebraska's Big Six authors (Bess Streeter Aldrich, Willa Cather, Loren Eiseley, Wright Morris, John G. Neihardt, and Mari Sandoz) in Alliance, Bellevue, Broken Bow, Chadron, and Minden.

Formation of writing groups provides incentives for people to keep writing and can serve as sounding boards to motivate writers. The same idea has helped readers share their reading experiences with others in small gatherings, as many adults need encouragement to make time for reading and writing.

In order to nurture adult groups, this issue of the *NCB News* includes a "Bibliofile" feature about the North Platte literary scene (see page 7). Future issues will explore the writing and reading activities of groups in other Nebraska communities. In addition, to foster the twenty-first century Nebraska Community of the Book, reading or writing groups are invited to register with the Center for the Book. This issue of the *NCB News* includes an article explaining how to register.

"We treasure these connections. A town needs its writers," notes Ron Block in the "Land of the Midnight Blonde" from his collection of short stories, *Dirty Shame Hotel and Other Stories*. We agree. A state needs its writers and readers. ▲

The **NCB***News* **Fall 1999 Vol. 9 No. 3**

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2000 Nebraska Center for the Book Board Meetings

February 5
May 6 or 13
August 5
November 5
Time and location to be announced.

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@neon.nlc.state.ne.us>.

The NCB News is published three times a 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: Gerry Cox. Design and production: Valerie Dayton. Staff: Mary Jo Ryan.

Join the Excitement!

by Dee Yost,
Nebraska Center for the Book President and Republican Valley Library System Administrator

The literary muses have been good to the Nebraska Center for the Book and to all lovers of literature in Nebraska this fall. The Eighth Nebraska Literature Festival took place in September on the campus of Chadron State College in the beautiful (and rather daunting) Sandhills.

Chadron and the Oglala Lakota College continued the tradition of hosting a stimulating literary event and added to that the unparalleled gift of western hospitality. Participants could not only discuss their favorite Nebraska authors with scholars or hear the poetry of those writing today in Nebraska but could also attend a powwow, an evening of country western music, or open mike readings of cowboy poetry.

Vendors allowed us to indulge in purchase of a book, a mug, sweatshirt, or stationery. An additional ingredient that added to the flavor of the event was being in Mari Sandoz country. I doubt that a reader can truly appreciate much of Sandoz's writings until they have experienced the vastness of that ranch land. And there is also that unexplained element—the excitement of being with other people who love literature and love to discuss it. It can't be captured for marketing but it always seems to arrive when the Nebraska Literature Festival takes place. If you have missed the opportunity to attend the Nebraska Literature Festival in the past, make it a point to treat yourself to the next one.

Another literary event marked a first for the state. The first literary landmark in Nebraska was designated at the November 7 annual meeting of the Nebraska Center for the Book, held in Red Cloud. Literary Landmarks is a program of the Friends of Libraries USA. The Center for the Book requested and was granted the privilege of naming Cather's Prairie as the first Nebraska Literary Landmark. Terry Evans, noted prairie photographer, presented the program at the meeting. It is a great time to be a reader/writer/lover of literature in Nebraska! You are invited to join the Center for the Book and join in the excitement. ▲

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, 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's National Center for the Book since 1990.

Searching for Reading/Writing Groups

The Nebraska Center for the Book is collecting information about groups of writers and groups of readers in Nebraska for statewide outreach and networking. Nebraskans that belong to book groups or writing groups, no matter how informal, are encouraged to share information about the groups. Even though many of these groups meet in homes and aren't public groups, information about the groups helps to define Nebraska's community of the book.. Include the name of the group, whether it is a Book Group or a Writing Group, the number of members and the time and place it usually meets (if desired). Specify if the group has a focus, writing poetry or family stories, or reading mysteries or novels. Share a contact name, address, phone, and e-mail address. Send information to: The Nebraska Center for the Book, attn: Mel Krutz, The Nebraska Library Commission, The Atrium, 1200 N St., Suite 120, Lincoln, NE 68508-2023 ▲

Join the Nebraska Center for the Book

Name _____

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

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___ $15 Individual Membership
___ $25 Organizational Membership
___ $50 Octavo Membership
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___ $250 Folio Membership

Please send this form and a check to:
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Jane Geske—In Memoriam

by Rod Wagner,
Nebraska Library Commission Director

Jane Geske died on September 8. She was a former Library Commission director, a founding member of the Nebraska Center for the Book, and a forever champion of books, readers, and libraries.

She was one of a kind, a wonderful person of remarkable generosity and spirit. Jane was a great friend to those who care about books, reading, libraries, literature, and the arts. Her indomitable spirit touched many who had the pleasure of knowing her.

Jane was born in Sutton, Nebraska. She received her bachelor's degree from the University of Omaha and her professional library science degree from the University of Denver. She held positions at the University of Omaha, Louisiana State University, University of Denver, and the University of Chicago. In 1960, Jane left her academic library career and returned to Nebraska to serve as a library consultant for the Nebraska Public Library Commission. Her affection for the plains of Nebraska and its rural libraries was a part of her wonderful character. Following Louise Nixon's retirement in 1969, Jane served as the Commission's interim executive secretary until 1971 (the executive secretary title changed to director in 1972). She returned to the Commission in 1973 and served as Commission director until 1976 when she retired. Her passion for books and reading didn't end when she left the Commission. Jane and her husband, Norman, started Niobrara Books, and later the Estuary Bookstore. Jane also stayed close to her lifelong interest in libraries and helped found the Nebraska Literary Heritage Association.

When a Nebraska affiliate to the Library of Congress Center for the Book was considered, Jane was among a small group who led efforts to create the Nebraska Center for the Book. In recognition of Jane's lifelong commitment to books and libraries, the Nebraska Center for the Book created the Jane Geske Award to honor her as a founding member and to give annual recognition to an organization that has made an exceptional contribution to literacy, books, reading, libraries, or Nebraska literature.

Jane will be remembered for many things, but certainly for her infectious and remarkable spirit, her passion for books and the arts, and for her devotion to Nebraska and its libraries. ▲

Fore-edge Painting Book First in Special Collection

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

According to a history of the University of Nebraska Library, James Thomson's 1793 edition of The Seasons *is the first book accessioned in UN-L Special Collections. It received that status because of its fore-edge painting.*

A fore-edge painting is achieved by "fanning" the pages of a book and painting on the expanded surface. The painting "disappears" when the book is closed. Opening the book from the opposite direction and painting a second picture creates a double fore-edge painting. Fore-edge painting started in the seventeenth century and reached its height in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, a period associated with "picturesque" views. Establishing provenance is difficult, as the date on the title page and that of the actual painting may be a few to more than a hundred years apart, and the artist rarely signed the picture.

The classic book on fore-edge painting is Carl J. Weber's *A Thousand and One Fore-Edge Paintings* (1949), which surveys America's fore-edge holdings

from the Pierpont Morgan Library in the east to the Huntington Library in the west. The most frequently adorned works were the *Book of Common Prayer,* works by Sir Walter Scott, Cowper, as well as Thomson's *The Seasons*.

A double fore-edge of Thomson's *The Seasons* and *Castle of Indolence* (1837) is listed for sale on the Web for $750. This three by five inch volume includes London from the Thames, St. Paul's Cathedral with billowing clouds, spires, chimneys, reflections in the river, sailboats, and a bridge with many arches. ▲

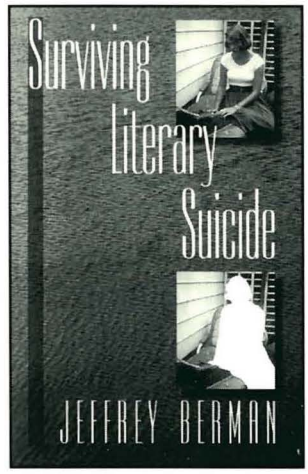
Review: Surviving Literary Suicide

by Jeffrey Berman, *Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999, paper, $18.95, ISBN 1-55849-211-9*

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

This is a brave book about a dark subject. The litany of twentieth century writers who took their lives includes Hart Crane, Jerzy Kozinski, Primo Levi, Vachel Lindsay, Jack London, John Kennedy Toole, and Michael Dorris. In 1992 and 1994, Berman taught a graduate seminar on literary suicide at the University at Albany. Using the clinical work of Emile Durkheim, Sigmund Freud, Karl Meninger and Edwin Shneidman, Berman directed his students to the featured authors—Kate Chopin, Virginia Woolf, Ernest Hemingway, Sylvia Plath, Anne Sexton and William Styron. The students kept a journal of their reactions, and these are generously interlarded in italics throughout the book.

The result is a multivoiced engagement of student personal growth, teacher-author coordination, and the ideas of the chosen writers. At least two intriguing themes emerge. Is reading about suicide dangerous to the reader's health? Do depressed and suicidal authors write about suicide, perhaps even romanticizing or glorifying self-death? Does self-destructive behavior become part of the imagination? Suicide, like cancer, is spoken of in hushed voices. According to Berman, when Willa Cather reviewed Chopin's *Awakening*, she declared it was not a subject for respectable readers. The past's silence and whispers become today's subject of frank and open discussion. Shame and guilt give way to catharsis and the hope of understanding, as the subject of suicide enters the university curriculum. ▲



Review: Bones of a Very Fine Hand

by Marjorie Saiser, *Omaha, NE: Backwaters Press, 1999, paper $12.00, ISBN 0-7392-0284-7*

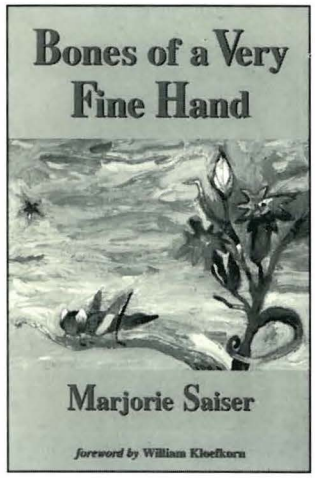
Reviewed by Christine Pappas, editor of the *Plains Song Review*

In his introduction to *Bones of a Very Fine Hand*, Nebraska State Poet William Kloefkorn describes Marjorie Saiser's poems as "fresh and accessible." The title for the book is taken from the poem, "I Tell Her of the Downy Gentian," in which Saiser likens the roots of that blooming prairie plant to a hand reaching down into the darkness, "reaching down, staying."

Saiser uses the theme of photographs to set the tone of this book. Photos and memories act as prisms through which the past is selectively interpreted. Several poems, such as "Once" explicitly describe the act of composing a photo and the decision of what to capture and what to crop out, "my father taking my mother's picture/ loving the length of her legs and/ her daring, coming into sunshine . . ." The ultra-realistic images that result from describing photographs provide firm anchors for the reader and serve as lasting images that leave a residual burn on the mind's eye. Saiser's pictures really stick—a mother's green coat or a frugal grandmother searching for dropped coins in the grass.

The primacy of familial relationships is the major theme in *Bones of a Very Fine Hand*. Tracing relationships from ultrasound images to birth, from death to memory, Saiser probes the love of family. In "We Get the News," the unconditionality of a grandmother's love is revealed as she writes love notes to her grandchild. "Keeping Mother Warm" contains blessings for an independent mother who resists care and comfort. Saiser writes, "May your feet be warm as/ waffles, warm as buckwheat cakes, warm as/ sweethearts . . .May all your/ pies be chocolate. Love, Me. Love me. Love me."

The poems within *Bones of a Very Fine Hand* can be envisioned as a stack of photographs from a treasured family album. Some glitter in their clarity and some are more fuzzy, less focused in the image that they render. All are redolent with the warmth of love and family radiating from Saiser's carefully chosen words. Marjorie Saiser, born in Texas and raised in north central Nebraska, holds a master's degree in creative writing from the University of Nebraska. ▲

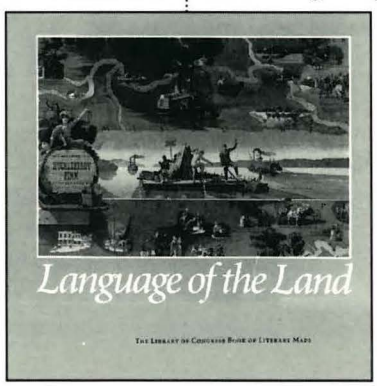


Review: Language of the Land: The Library of Congress Book of Literary Maps

by Martha Hopkins, Interpretive Programs Office and ***Michael Buscher,*** Geography and Map Division, Washington DC: The Library of Congress, 1999, hardcover $58, ISBN 0-8444-0963-4

Reviewed by Dee Yost, Nebraska Center for the Book President

When the *Language of the Land*, an annotated guide to the more than 200 literary maps in the Library of Congress, landed on my desk, my first instinct was to see if any Nebraska maps were included. Three illustrated Nebraska literary maps (do more exist?) made the book: *Nebraska Authors* (a poster from the First Nebraska Literature Festival in 1991); *The Nebraska Centennial Literary Map and Guide to Nebraska Authors*; and the *Nebraska Literary Map with Native Wildflowers*. One non-illustrated map of *The Old Jules Home Region* is listed. Interestingly enough, the compilers of this guide found no literary maps for Washington, D.C. or a number of the New England states. As I flipped the pages and studied the maps, I became fascinated with the variety of literary maps–from the usual state and regional maps, to *The Sherlock Holmes Mystery Map, The Ian Fleming Thriller Map* and *A Disproportionate Map of Points of Literary Interest in Philadelphia*. My personal favorite has to be the *Map of Good Stories*. You can't get any plainer than that. Although you need a magnifying glass if you really want to read some of the maps and I was wishing that more were pictured in color, this is an intriguing collection of the cartographic genre. As Mark Twain said via Tom Sawyer, "There ain't anything that is so interesting to look at as a place that a book has talked about." Or a map of the latter, either! ▲



Eighth Nebraska Literature Festival Held

By Katherine L. Walter, Chair, Archives/Special Collections Dept., University of Nebraska Love Library

From the readings by Plains poets and fiction writers, to the cowboy poetry, Native American drum corps and dancers, and the closing sessions by Nebraska Author Groups, the Eighth Nebraska Literature Festival was an unqualified success.

This fall, the Nebraska Center for the Book continued its new tradition of sponsoring the Festival in various locations around the state. This year's festival was hosted by Chadron State College (CSC), Oglala Lakota College (OLC), and the Mari Sandoz Society in Chadron Sept. 17-18. More than 500 people of all ages and ethnic groups attended this wonderful event in the heart of Sandoz country.

The theme of this year's festival was "Crossing Borders: Geographical, Ethnic, and Literary Frontiers in Plains Literature." Poetry, fiction, oral traditions, and music writing were highlighted through readings, workshops, and cultural events, such as a community powwow. Exhibitors displayed out of print books, Native American jewelry and crafts, contemporary books of poetry and fiction, informational booths about Nebraska Author Groups (Sandoz, Aldrich, Cather, Eiseley, and Wright), the Nebraska English Language Arts Council's *Nebraska Literary Map*, the Nebraska Newspaper Project, and other items of interest to the community of the book. Evening events included "Taste of the Old West" featuring Jerry Kennedy, with an open mike reading for area poets and a performance by Country Oak, a country western and oldies band.

One reflective note at the Festival was a tribute to Larry Holland, who died last year in a car accident. Neil Harrison read from Larry's poetry and related how much Larry touched the lives of other writers through mentoring and friendship.

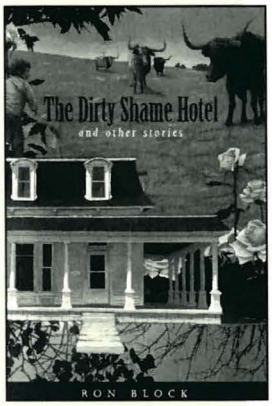
The Nebraska Center for the Book thanks this year's program planners, headed by Andrew Elkins of CSC and Deb Carpenter of OLC, and also thanks contributors including the Nebraska Humanities Council, the Mari Sandoz Society, the Heartland Art Fund, and the Nebraska Division of Travel and Tourism for support of the Festival. Special thanks for contributions to the Nebraska Center for the Book go to the Best Western West Hills Inn in Chadron, Community First National Bank in Chadron, Houchen Bindery Ltd. in Utica, Media Productions and Marketing Inc. in Lincoln, and Pollak and Hicks Law P.C. in Omaha for their help to make the Festival possible.

The Mildred Bennett Award Winner was Ron Hull of NE Educational Telecommunications. He is President of the Mari Sandoz Society and a founding member of the Nebraska Center for the Book. The prize was accepted on Ron's behalf by Michael Cartwright, Chadron State College English Department Chair and Mari Sandoz Society Secretary. ▲

Bibliofile: The Writing Life in North Platte

by Linda Deeds.

"I felt something different in the air at North Platte," Sal says in Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*. "I didn't know what it was." Hitchhiking out of town, he discovers it is the West, a *terra incognita* "so far you couldn't see to the end." Out here past the 100th meridian, cultivated cornfields give way to deer grazing in open hay meadows. The low, undulating line of the Sand Hills appears on the horizon. Geography becomes capital letters—Earth, Sky. Towns and people are far apart and writing is often a lonely, Kerouac-like literary road trip.



Here's Ron Block. "Bad neighborhoods don't scare me nearly as much/ as the middle of nowhere, the flatlands make me want/ to grab at fences to keep from floating off/ ... The ghosts of thistles roll about/ in the afterlife of tumbleweeds...." Block's first book, *Dismal River: A Narrative Poem*, describes a winding, mind bending canoe trip through the Nebraska Sand Hills. "In its...straightforward yet magical depiction of a place, it calls to mind Sherwood Anderson's *Winesburg Ohio" (Prairie Schooner)*. Originally from Gothenburg, where his family has lived since before the town was founded, Block left Nebraska, moving as far east as Syracuse, NY, but returned to teach writing at Mid-Plains Community College in North Platte.

Block's second book, *The Dirty Shame Hotel and Other Stories* is a collection that "turns the dreariness of existence in Nebraska or the Dakotas into something approaching musical hymns to humanity" (Kirkus Review). Checking into the *Hotel* ranges from the hilarious "The Gothenburg Marching Band," to the haunting "Saint Anthony and the Fish." Block's other short stories and poems have appeared in numerous magazines and anthologies, including *Prairie Schooner* and *Iowa Review*. Hayden Carruth calls Ron Block a "lone artist-adventurer." whose "power of...mythic vision and many voices makes them essential elements in the new literature of the West."

Farther down the road, Robert Richter writes from the "remnants of a family homestead" at Grant. His novel, *Homefield: Sonata in Rural Voice*, from Greg Kosmicki's Backwater Press, centers around Vietnam veterans returning home. Other works include *Windfall Journal: Plainscape;* essays and stories in various journals, including *Bloomsbury Review* and *Prairie Schooner*; and a series of "Mexico mysteries." The first of these is *Something in Vallarta* (1991), "a lazily unreeling spool of intrigue" (*Kirkus Review*) starring the young American expatriate Cotton Waters, "an illegal gringo alien" hanging out in Mexico. Cotton ("algodon" in Spanish) is nicknamed "algo" by the locals, which translates as "something." *Something Like a Dream* is due from Perception Press in Guadalajara, and Richter is writing a third, *Something for Nothing*. An ex-expatriate himself, Robert Richter leads tours to Mexico, including Puerto Vallarta.

Again on the road, at Imperial, Wayne Lee has authored a number of popular Western histories that are standards in Nebraska bookstores. One is *Wild Towns of Nebraska*. Joyce Lierley, an Eastern transplant who has lived 50 years in Paxton, first published *Early Paxton*. Her current *Affectionately Yours* is a collection of family letters written from England between 1851 and 1892. North Platte's Marlayna Blanchard has written a children's book, *Wanna Be, Wanna Be, Wanna Be*. From Brady, Maxine Bridgman Isackson's works include *The Sandhills Beckon*, short stories in various anthologies, including the 1997 collection by Western women, *Leaning Into the Wind*, and feature articles and stories in magazines and journals.

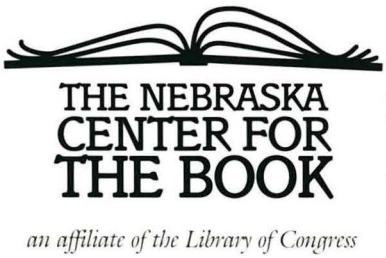
Poets are also on this literary road trip. At Hyannis, Georgeann Sheets' verbal collage of poetry, music, and stories earned her Female Cowboy Poet of the Year 1999 at the Academy of Western Artists in Fort Worth, TX. Jack Ostergaard is a cowboy poet at Gothenburg. Bruce Messersmith "takes the old two-lane" from Alliance. His "displaced cowboy" poetry readings range from Canada to Arizona, and include his research into the history of the genre. Lyn DeNaeyer, who ranches in Cherry County, is a freelance writer and a regular columnist for *Midland News* and *Nebraska Life*. Her first book of poetry is *Downwind from the Smoke. Ground Tied* is forthcoming. DeNaeyer has partnered with Deb Carpenter of Rushville on *The Heart's Compass*, music and poetry in the voices of pioneer women, available through the Nebraska Humanities Council and the Nebraska Art Council. A book and CD is expected from Grey Horse Press.

Taking the road back to North Platte, Ron Block's *Dismal River* is joined by poet Ted Florea's observations, ranging from "Championship Billiards" with "slow old men ... playing cards, discussing the whole weather/ since '29," to a metaphorical "Bindweed." "rooting itself ... into every acre of his life." His poetry has appeared in the Nebraska Poets Calendar and a dozen different journals and magazines, including *Platte Valley Review* and *Arkansas Review*. Mary Beth Dodson's poem "Seasons of the Cranes," from her book, *The Same Moon Rises*, will be included in an anthology, *Legends of the Cranes*.

Like Block's *Dismal River*, the writing winds its way through the immense expanse of earth and sky here. There is something about the West that resists definition but that is impossible to ignore. It creeps into the writer's words, a vast, compelling metaphysical landscape scattered with solitary travelers. In Florea's "Championship Billiards" the speaker says "... so I head home/ and I hear a lone/ coyote along/ the road and I know...just how he feels." ▲

Deeds has an M.A. in English from UN-L and edited a literary 'zine, Dragonfly, *in the North Platte area. She lives in a canyon south of North Platte.*

The NCB News



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Community of the Book Remembers Jane Geske

International Cather Seminar Call for Papers

Calendar of Events:

Holiday Happenings: Bess Streeter Aldrich House & Museum Contact: Lorri Kentner, 402-994-3855	December 5 & 6, 12 & 13	Elmwood
Willa Cather Birthday Mass Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial, Contact: 402-746-2653	December 7	Red Cloud
National Book Month	January	
Paul A. Olson Seminar: Joel Sartore on Endangered America Contact: Center for Great Plains Studies, 402-472-3082	February 16	Lincoln
John H. Ames Reading Series, Poet Jim Reese Heritage Room of Nebraska Authors, Lincoln City Libraries Contact: 402-441-8616	February 17	Lincoln
Nebraska State Reading Council Conference Contact: Shirley Snyder, 402-274-4161	February 24-26	Kearney

Poetry and Art Contest Deadline February 15, 2000

The River of Words poetry and art contest encourages 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, entry forms are abailable on the Web at <http://www.irn.org> or from River of Words, P.O. Box 4000-J, Berkeley, CA 94704, 510-433-7020, 510-848-1008 (fax) or row@irn.org.

Center for the Book Sponsors Contest

This 17th annual Letters about Literature writing contest invites students to write a letter to an author, living or dead, explaining how the author's book changed their way of viewing the world and themselves. The contest has two competition levels: Level I for students in grades 4-7; Level II for students in grades 8-12. Five students with the national winning essay in each level will receive cash awards of $1.00. In addition, the Nebraska Center for the Book, Nebraska's state center for the book affiliate, will present awards to the top essayists in the state. Contest entry forms can be found at the Nebraska Library Commission home page, <www.nlc.state.ne.us>, search on Letters about Literature, or contact Mary Geibel, 800-307-2665, 402-471-2045, e-mail: <mgeibel@neon.nlc.state.ne.us> for a print copy. Entries must be postmarked **by December 17**.