

NCB Quarterly

Nebraska Center for the Book

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THE 4th ANNUAL **Nebraska Literature Festival**





Board of Directors

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

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Nebraska Center for the Book Board of Directors Meetings 1994

September 2 — Host: Board Members, UNO
Program: Lila Wallace Reader's Digest Fund Reading/Discussion Literature Project

November 4 — Host: Carol Connor: Heritage Room, Lincoln City Library
Program: Annual Meeting

Note: All Board of Directors Meetings are preceded by morning programs and committee work convening at 9:30 a.m. All NCB members are encouraged to join us for these activities and become more involved in our planning programs. Members may also attend Board Meetings in a non-voting status.

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President's Message

— Elaine Johnson

"The Bonfires of Liberty: Censorship of the Humanities" exhibit from the Library Of Congress will be displayed at the Omaha Public Library in September and October. This is your invitation to visit the display any time during those two months, or to see it during the Nebraska Literature Festival on September 24, as the library is just across the street from the Kiewit Center.

The exhibit itself includes 18 panels of photographs, drawings, and texts on peach-buff mats behind plexiglass in brown wood frames. Also included in the exhibit is a bookcase for housing copies of challenged books.

Titles of the panels are as follows: Title panel: The Bonfire of Liberties, 2. Forms of Censorship, 3. The Public Forum (motives for censorship), 4. A Reader's Rights, 5. By Faith Forbidden (censorship of religious works), 6. Foreclosing Ideas (censorship of philosophy), 7. Much Ado About Drama (censorship of drama and theatre), 8. Approaches to Literature, 9. Restrictions in Wonderland (censorship of children's books), 10. In Our Image (censorship of art and art history), 11. Examined Lives (biography and autobiography), 12. The Past Revised (censorship of history), 13. America! America! (censorship of American History texts), 14. The Silenced Minority, 15. A Dangerous Book, 16. A Dangerous Writer, 17. A Dangerous Character, 18. The Bonfire of Liberties (image: shelf of books targeted by censor, above a line of fire).

Each of the panels includes text and images such as photographs, cartoons, art work or artifacts designed to create a strong impression to illustrate the panel's focus topic. For example,

the panel entitled "Censors and the Public Forum" is headed with a quotation from the *San Francisco Chronicle* "Did you ever hear anyone say, 'That work had better be banned because I might read it and it might be very damaging to me?'" The panel text reads "Censorship occurs when any governing body removes material from open access. Almost universally, the motive for challenging order, the *one true faith*, or a nation's security. But unlike the parent who monitors a child's reading, the censor seeks, through the public forum, to protect all 'children' without questioning whether protection is warranted."

Following the introductory text on panel three, illustrations and captions focus on specific venue of censorship such as state textbook committees, courts, legislatures, church authorities and local schools. Under "Church Authorities," this label accompanies the graphics. "From 1559 to 1964, the Vatican published an index listing books that Roman Catholics were forbidden to read, entirely or in part." The timelessness of the problem of censorship is sharply illuminated on panel nine of the exhibit with a quote by Plato from *The Republic*. "Our first business will be to supervise the making of fables and legends, rejecting all which are unsatisfactory' and we shall induce nurses and mothers to tell their children only those which we have approved." Just as the issue of censorship can be frustratingly stubborn, this exhibit is ultimately optimistic in its depiction of the struggle against it. Please take the time to visit this tribute to "Bonfires of Liberty" during September and October at the Omaha Public Library



An Author's Collection and a Whole Lot More

Joanne Ferguson, Acting Heritage Room Supervisor

The Heritage Room, currently located on the third floor of Lincoln's Bennett Martin Public Library, assembles in one central location approximately 7,500 books, manuscript collections, and other non-print media items by or about our Nebraska authors as well as other significant Nebraskans. A Nebraska author is defined as someone who was born in or spent their childhood in Nebraska, or received the greater part of their education or produced something literarily significant while living in the state.

According to The Heritage Room files, this special collection began as one shelf of books by Nebraska authors set aside at the Reference desk of Lincoln's Old Main Library in the 1930s and '40s. In 1959, Mr. Charles E. Dalrymple, Director of the Lincoln City Libraries, suggested to Ethel Jane Maurer, Reference Librarian, that the library begin a new collection called the "Nebraska Author Collection." Earlier there had been a circulating "Nebraska Collection" located in the reading room with "Nebraska" stamped on the card and pocket of the book for the convenience of the shelvers. This new collection, however, was to be an exhibit collection only and the books were not to circulate.

Ms. Maurer had been compiling in the Reference Department an individual card tray for Nebraska Author identification complete with the name, identification of the person as a Nebraskan, where to find biographical material, and a list of published books. She used this as her starting point and began collecting some of the better known authors, checking out-of-print catalogs and local used book stores. Then, as now, first editions and autographed copies were sought.

In 1962 when Old Main was replaced with the larger Bennett Martin Public Library, the Nebraska Author Collection was housed in the "Treasure Room," a small room off of the direc-

tor's office on the 2nd floor. By 1968 it had outgrown that space and was moved into the McKelvie Room located on the second floor where Polley Music Library is currently located. This room was named in honor of Sam McKelvie and his wife Martha. Mr. McKelvie had been Governor of Nebraska, editor and publisher of the *Nebraska Farmer*, and a Sandhills rancher. Martha McKelvie was a Nebraska author, best known for *Sandhills Essie*, a biography of her friend and neighbor, Essie Davis. The room was furnished with items given by the McKelvie Estate.

By 1974 the McKelvie Room had run out of shelf space for the Nebraska Author Collection. The Weldon Kees manuscript collection, consisting of more than 4,000 paper items, as well as photographs and film, was being stored in four different locations: a brown packing case which stored some of the Kees letters was being used as a coat rack by persons using the room.

In 1978, an expansion of Bennett Martin Public Library helped to alleviate space problems. In August of that year, the Nebraska Author Collection, which had grown to over 3,000 items, and McKelvie Room furnishings were moved to a new room on the third floor of the library where the collection is still located. This room has henceforth been referred to as The Heritage Room.

Initially The Heritage Room was funded by Lincoln city tax dollars but in 1981 this funding was cut from the budget. The room was closed to public use from February through July, 1981 because of a lack of funds but reopened in July after receiving a grant of \$33,000 from the Junior League of Lincoln. During the next three years the Junior League provided major financial support and volunteers to keep the room open.

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The Heritage Room

Continued from page 4

In 1983 a friends group, The Nebraska Literary Heritage Association (NLHA), was formed under the auspices of the Lincoln City Library Foundation with the stated purpose of providing funds and volunteers for the maintenance and support of The Heritage Room. Through NLHA's programming, special events, and promotion of The Heritage Room, their goal of establishing a \$400,000 endowment fund was successfully completed.

NLHA's goal of collecting and preserving books and related materials that are representative of Nebraska writers and Nebraska subjects is evidenced by a collection which has more than doubled since its move into the room. Once again space issues as well as conservation and preservation issues need to be addressed. Damon Wilson, Heritage Room aide, is currently reprocessing books covered with acidic book jacket liners and replacing 2 mil polyester jackets with a heavier 4 mil jacket.

Today The Heritage Room not only houses the works of our Nebraska authors but supports a broad range of research about them as well. Our collection includes manuscript, vertical file material, as well as a Nebraska Authors Information Link (NAIL) database. In 1992 Heritage Room staff Vicki Pike Clarke and Laura Lacy began the process of creating inventories for the Weldon Kees and Loren Eiseley manuscript collections. These inventories have now been completed and other manuscript collections are now in the process of being inventoried. The Kees Inventory is currently being used extensively by a Kees biographer and was useful in January, 1993, when poet Simon Armitage and the British Broadcasting Corporation came to the Heritage Room to film footage for their documentary about Kees. The Eiseley Inventory has assisted the Nebraska Public Television Network with their forthcoming documentary on Loren Eiseley.

The Heritage Room, as well as collecting, also actively promotes Nebraska literary heritage through programs and educational support. A monthly program, the John H. Ames Reading Series (September through May), features Nebraska poets and authors and is taped for later broadcast on Lincoln's Cable Channel 5. Copies of these videos are made available to the public through the regular circulating collection. This spring and summer we have been showing the Ames Reading Series tapes in The Heritage Room in an effort to increase our visibility to the public.

Each spring the NLHA sponsors a creative writing workshop with Nebraska authors and poets for eighth graders in the Lincoln Public Schools and a nature writing contest for upper elementary students in Lincoln and Lancaster County. For the older learner, an education unit entitled "Nebraska Novelists as Historians" was developed by NLHA members and is available through the University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension office. Heritage Room staff and NLHA Board Members also give tours and talks about Nebraska authors and will do school visits upon request.

We are excited about two new programs which are being implemented this fall. One program will feature Nebraska State Poet William Kloefkorn reading his poetry as well as works by other Nebraska authors on Nebraska Public Radio. For the first time, with the exception of the Cooperative Extension lesson, our programming will be available to all Nebraskans. It will provide state-wide visibility and hopefully will result in a broader-based support for the NLHA and The Heritage Room. In addition, through a mini-grant received from the Lincoln Public Schools Foundation Library Power Project, the NLHA is developing programming and curriculum which will introduce Mari Sandoz to three Lincoln Public School classrooms during the fall semester. Materials developed for this program can be used in subsequent years with other student populations.

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The Heritage Room

Continued from page 5

Financial support for The Heritage Room has been supplemented by several enthusiastic board members. For the past eleven years the NLHA has hosted an adult Heritage Room Spelling Bee. The Heritage Room Garden Tour, featuring some of the best gardens in Lincoln, just finished its fifth year in June. We also have a small gift shop which generates some funds through the sale of Nebraska author books, t-shirts, posters, and other small items. Most importantly, we are supported by those who become members of the Nebraska Literary Heritage Association.

Last year the NLHA entered its second decade of promoting Nebraska's literary heritage. The Heritage Room staff now provide fifteen hours of public service each week and still strive to identify, collect, and organize materials by and about Nebraska authors. If there is a

Nebraska author we ought to know about, or, if you would like to know more about one, please contact us.

We hope you will visit The Heritage Room the next time you are in Lincoln. Our hours are Tuesday through Friday 12:00 to 3:00, and Sunday 2:00 to 5:00. During the month of August, we are closed on Sundays. Perhaps you can attend our Ames Reading Series which is held the third Thursday of the month at 7:30 p.m. in The Heritage Room. The fall lineup includes cowboy poet and singer Otto Rosfeld from Valentine on September 22nd, and Lincoln writers Jim Cihlar and Marilyn Dorf on October 20th and November 17th. We will also have a booth at the Nebraska Literature Festival and invite you to visit with us and join us in supporting and celebrating another decade of Nebraska's Literary heritage.

The Heritage Room • 3rd Floor • Bennett Martin Public Library • 14th & N • Lincoln, NE 68508 • (402) 441-8516

The Lila Wallace/Reader's Digest Grant Reader's Circles

We are sponsoring discussions of works by Nebraska authors at the following locations through a program funded by a Lila Wallace/Reader's Digest Grant.

For more information contact project director Laureen Riedesel, NCB Board Member and Director of the Beatrice Public Library.

[Phone: (402) 223-3584]

Book Discussion Schedules

	August	September	October	November
My Antonia		Minden Sept. 11		
Shingling the Fog		Beatrice Sept. 22	Minden October 13	
Black Elk Speaks	Ainsworth (tba)		Bellevue October 17	Beatrice Nov. 17
White Bird Flying	Broken Bow August 9			
Old Jules	Bellevue August 11	Broken Bow Sept. 13		
Home Place	Bellevue August 11		Beatrice October 27	Minden Nov. 13



The Nebraska Writing and Storytelling Festival was held on June 4, 1994, at Northeast Community College in Norfolk. The following selections were accepted for publication in this issue of the *Nebraska Center for The Book Quarterly*.

DEVOTION

Patriarch of progeny who wing the seas
and journey home from near and distant lands,
how foolish to define your neutered ego
so unwisely. Why measure our devotion
by passion's fire, when true affection from
our alpha to omega years sustains our
precious waning hours, and satisfies with
pleasures far more lasting than desire?

Newly wedded ecstasy has never rung
wild bells forever; let mellowed hearts compose
euphonies of love that nurture with finesse
their golden jubilees.

Such love as savors sharing of communion
cup, that gently clasps arthritic fingers
touching in the night, and searches laughter-
crinkled eyes to claim a kiss.

Love that treasures tear-jerk memories that
linger still of newly married ardor,
subdued by wonderment at babies wailing,
fresh from the womb.

Love that walked with weariness from tender
cares that knew no scheduled hour, and
spawned

a lifelong vigil that consumed the years and
brought us here to sunset all too soon.

Release without regret, my love, our passionate
afternoon, and together let us venture, hand in
hand, into the sunset's swiftly fading light,
for yonder, not too far, beckons the morning
star.

Dorothy Knouse Koepke

Published in National Writer's Association
book of winning works. Placed third in its po-
etry category.

Am I Going Insane?

Laura Jane, Laura Jane, am I going insane?
Even flowers and birds are calling your name.

Love letters are nice but they can't take your
place
Right now I'm just longing to gaze at your face.
All the "Darling, I love you's", we've said on
the phone

Are small consolation as I sit here alone.
The photo you gave me is close to my heart
Each heart beat records the days we're apart.
Your scribbled love notes are cherished, my
dear.

I just close my eyes and pretend you are here.

Laura Jane, Laura Jane, am I going insane?
Even flowers and birds are calling your name.

I whisper you name each hour of the day
And save up my kisses while you are away.
The man in the moon is so sad and feeling blue,
I look for his smile and see visions of you.
I go walking alone in misty-soft rain
And hear raindrops calling for sweet Laura
Jane.

The wind in the pines seems to sing a sad song
That says Laura Jane has been gone for too
long.

Laura Jane, Laura Jane, am I going insane?
Even flowers and birds are calling your name.

Georgia R. Lambert



From City Lights to Open Skies

I was born in the city. Home was an apartment. The foods I ate came from the grocery store.

All that changed when, a few years into our marriage, my husband, a cattleman, decided to return to his boyhood home in Nebraska.

Thus, one summer in the early 1950s, I was introduced to life on a Nebraska sandhills ranch.

I was an alien, an outsider, who quickly learned that life on the ranch was a far cry from the scenes depicted in western movies.

The "highway" leading to our house was nothing but a rough path over the pastures. The house was quite comfortable; the living quarters were on the main floor and the kitchen and dining area were in the dark, dreary basement. We had running water and a bathtub. An old-fashioned outhouse sat in the back yard. Gas lamps provided light after dark.

I soon learned that the young men, who made up our haying crew, preferred simple meals to gourmet foods, as long as there was plenty of it. Propane gas provided fuel for cooking on the modern range.

Breakfast consisted of pancakes with sausage, eggs, hash browns, bread or sweet rolls. Dinner was either roast beef or chicken with lots of mashed potatoes and gravy, a vegetable and a salad. If I served rice, I had to have potatoes also. If I baked dinner rolls, a loaf of plain bread had to be on the table as well. For dessert I baked cakes and pies. The cookie jar was never empty.

At times we were short on help, and my husband recruited me as a substitute cowhand to ride with him over the pastures to count cattle.

Since I was very inexperienced, I was given a gentle horse that must have sensed I was a novice. The horse never threw me and, in spite of sore muscles, I thoroughly enjoyed the experience.

A trip to the nearest village to purchase supplies was cumbersome; if we chose to take in a Saturday night movie, the closest theatre was miles away. We never minded the long journeys; we were young and took it all in stride.

There was plenty of wildlife to watch and hordes of mosquitoes to swat after the rains that fell often.

Berries and fruits grew in abundance on the nearby orchards that were planted by the settlers years ago. Apples were made into pies and sauce. Sand cherries and wild plums filled jars with bright red and purple jellies.

We were one with nature, as we gazed upon the endless rows of sandhills or watched a star-studded evening sky.

It was life at its best.

Hannie Wolf



Ode to Big Bill

"The world is too much with us"
Wordsworth was right.
The world gets in the way
of dreams...
of all that I had planned.
How can I live my life
with all these people in the way?
I was building a beautiful personal tower
But someone stole all my ivory
Now I have to deal with all these people
Here in the mud on the ground
If I could just stand upon Westminster Bridge
or be in London, 1802
The world would be a safer place.

Sue Caryl Voss



Travel Notes

There is a time in each day
when God whispers to me.
The whispers echo in the laugh of a grandchild,
in the teasing of my husband,
in a phone call from my sister Millie.
The echoes call from a yodeling bird, the
roaring wind, or the hum of the
refrigerator.
Do you hear His whisper in the regular on and
off of the furnace, the house creaking as it
settles, the buzz of the overhead fan?
Do you get the taste of God in that sticky
grandchild's snack, or see His glory
through her eyes?
His energy vibrates in that recalcitrant child,
a Mother's complaint,
a brother's regrets.
I see His spirit as the teapot steam whistles
merrily, in an artist's new use of acrylic,
and the fog of a winter's morn.
The majesty of the Nebraska farmlands from
30,000 feet places a new perspective on
personal problems.
I marvel at traveling from Kearney to Alliance
in 20 minutes, the distance it took my
Mom and her family two weeks to travel
in their covered wagon in 1908, and now
takes the Space Shuttle only seconds.
I feel His touch in the feather-light Sun/Son,
my daughter's hug, my comfortable old
shoes.
He caresses me with the hot tub warmth, the
icy sprint to the garage, and the hair
whispering in my face.
He overwhelms me with the force of our
granddaughter running to greet me with
a knee-high tackle, and our grandson
wrestling me around on the floor.
I feel the security of His arms in the Air
National Guard airplanes on the runway,
the patrolman across the street, and the
Air Rescue Helicopter flying overhead.
His arms enfold me as our plane penetrates the

clouds, and we leap above into the
Son-light.
The vapor trails signal His order-out-of-chaos,
as directed by the fallible yet preserving
humans.
His New-Age order sits in the cockpit with the
female right-seat co-pilot and male
left-seat pilot.
His restless promise of a tomorrow, and future
generations, squirms with his mother in
front of me.
His quiet peace fading into death's
consciousness naps in the row behind in
the form of a little old lady.
Even the current "working men" are taking this
opportunity for a power snooze.
In all of this God shows His presence, through
all the senses, the roar of the engines, the
cool puffing air-conditioner, the taste of
my not-so-hot tea, and His glories I see all
around.
I remember feeling His love during the night as
my husband flung his leg across my legs
and cradled me with his arm.
Then again this morning when he sleepily drug
his weary body out of bed to take me to
my early flight.
His hug and kiss before he left demonstrated
God's love in His most caring fashion.
God reassures me through my own
imperfections that He loves me as I am.
If I seek to improve, He gives me the lessons to
help me learn.
The lessons continue even when I am slow to
grasp the message.
I don't need to seek a special time or place, for
He teaches me daily when and wherever I
live.
I plan to read during my flight, but my book is
in the bag they made me check, so I must
write — and why not of God as He is to
me right here and now?
They still won't allow a computer in operation



on a plane so I am forced to pencil and paper.
Even that must cease when turbulence bounces in.
I must stop and smell the engine oil, perspiration, aftershave, perfume and stinky feet.
11:00 a.m. Ottumwa, Iowa after departing Grand Island at 9:05 a.m. and a stop in Sioux City, what takes us eight hours in our Gullwing straight across.
God touched me with each tiny raindrop that spattered the bus windshield leaving Boston after a hectic switch from the plane.
The Massachusetts rocks became brilliant jade, agate and opal, the emerald speckled hillside heralding the birth of spring.
Each drop creating a widening circle in the small smooth pond, merging with others, like the kaleidoscope of the crowd at the opera.
The taste of fresh rain lingers on my tongue and the smell of rain freshened grass tickles my nostrils, as the flapping rhythm of the windshield wipers hum a lullaby.
The harsh winter hangs on with the tenacious fingers of skeletal trees, refusing to end softly.
While the evergreens open their arms to the life-giving moisture, a dry cracker eases my anxious stomach as I yearn for a glass of the wet, moist rain.
The shades of a beige cliff-face remind me of the miniature "White Cliffs of Dover," each house is a miniature world, only to be fantasized.
The early morning interstate is like a roaring dragon just aroused from sleep.
The sign "Buckle Up—It's the Law," causes me to wonder, "When will they make bus passengers safe too?"
The easy ride became more interesting as we leave "the Big Road" and get closer to the real people, although few stir at 9:00 a.m. on this Sunday morning, when

Nebraskans have three or more hours work completed.
The silent serenity is invaded by laughter as passengers become acquainted.
One asks, "Now how can you get "Worster" out of "Worcester?" "You drop your middle," is the reply. (grin)
For us "Big Babes" we'd like to do just that.
The rush to grab my luggage as we change buses reminds me there are no frills here, no luggage automatically transferred, or lunch and drinks on board.
Even the fresh spring rain cannot camouflage the dirty roadside litter.
The defrosters harmonize with the metronome wipers, as we again "take to the Big road."
If Minnesota is the land of a million lakes, then Massachusetts must be the land of a million ponds and swamps.
As we rise into the Berkshire hills the fog envelopes us in the loving embrace of God.
The snow deepens as we ascend, the frozen ponds shout, "Winter has not faded here."
How much more difficult this travel must have been for our pioneer ancestors in the late 1600s.
Little hamlets nestle in the hills.
The small rapidly flowing river reminds me of the Colorado rapids near Vail.
The stone walls and one lane roads resemble the stone walls along the narrow winding roads in the Wales mountains.
The apparent impoverished homes mirror Scotland's country.
Is historical preservation really worth the cost? the obvious decay from waiting too long to restore?
Perhaps retaining the memories of centuries past is the spirit that keeps today alive and strong.
The Lord loves me well today with His touch of the rain.

Anna Belle Campbell Maxfield



Saturday Class

On Saturday morning Riley, 11, and I waited patiently in the car, for the library to open. It was the day of the annual book sale and we were there early.

I was glad Riley was able to come with me, my baby, youngest of five; her siblings so much older meant she and I should be able to spend time alone.

Glancing at the side door of the new brick building, I noticed a tall slender youth waiting; but not so patiently.

He quickly cupped his thin hands around squinting eyes, and pressed his face against the dark window of the door.

Looking again in his direction I surmised he was older than I had first thought, perhaps a young adult; and perhaps mentally retarded.

He fidgeted, skipping and prancing around like he was cold, although he was wearing gray sweat pants and a red sweat shirt. His hair was too long, not ponytail length, but in need of a hair cut.

The young man tried the door; it was still locked, he looked confused. Perhaps he couldn't tell time, and thought the door was mistakenly closed just to him. He again pressed his whole face up to the window, and pulled away in disappointment. His eyes appeared to glaze over, as if he might be on the verge of tears.

My mind raced back in time, thirty years, thirty-five years, to my childhood. I could see my young cousin LeeRay, shaking an old sock wildly in his hand, waiting for me to read him a story book.

He was always waiting for someone to read him a book; satisfied to sit contentedly for hours paging through a pile of dog-eared copies of the *Farm Journal* or *The Nebraska Farmer*.

LeeRay, had been born with Down's Syndrome. Mother explained his illness as best she could. "Aunt Edith was too old when he was born, LeeRay will always be just four years old in his head, no matter how many birthdays he has."

Mother told us something else about LeeRay, I mean besides constantly reminding us to be patient with him. She said, "Remember that God put LeeRay here on earth for a reason too." If she told us once, she told us a million times, "look how little it takes to make him happy, a new magazine and he is tickled to death."

I blinked back to reality. Riley laughed as the strange man bent stiffly forward without bending his knees, and sniffed the juniper bush near the door. He brushed his hand across the prickly boughs. It was merely a diversion, something to take his mind off the closed door.

I scolded her, "Look how anxious he is to get inside to read. We should all be that excited about books and reading."

I realized she didn't have a LeeRay to grow up with like I did, or her older brothers and sister had. LeeRay died when Riley was just six months old. She was cheated out of the "hands on experience" of having LeeRay teach her the meaning of "simple happiness."

It was nearly 10 a.m. We watched his dancing, well worn tennis shoes shuffle restlessly on the pavement. "He doesn't have any socks on." Riley said. He was probably in a hurry, she decided.

He stood proudly at the head of the line that had steadily formed in front of the door. His hands twitched, he grabbed the handle as the door opened from inside.

Riley and I walked toward the door, our books in our arms. The stranger controlled his urge to rush inside the intriguing building; and held the door with two strong hands, his sock-less feet braced firmly on the sidewalk for leverage.

He muttered something to us, I think it was "Hello" or "You first." Whatever it was, it was very pleasant and well rehearsed.

I didn't see the young man again when we left the library; but I hoped Riley would remember him for a long time to come.

Janet Eckmann



My Mother

I never ever knew her really—what kind of
person she was;
She spoke very little, but then, you see,
I was tenth of twelve children she bore,
And words wore out.

Though I don't recall every feeling unwanted,
I don't ever recall feeling special either.
After such a long stretch of births and deaths,
too—

(Two infants and two pre-adolescents—all boys)
I was just there with one older sister and four
brothers.

Eleven months later, another girl,
And two years after that, a last son,
I have no recollection of life before six.

To me, as an elementary student, Mom seemed
old and stern
Now I realize she was only in her 30s when I
was born.

(Five of my seven were born in my 30s.)
What could she have told me of life,
What would she have shared of herself,
Had she the time and energy and words?

I grieve now never really having known my
mother.

Is that why I write
So that my children will have some record—
Some knowledge I was denied?

Then it behooves me to be honest
So that they may know the truth and no lie.
I am who I am.
There is no right or wrong about it.
I just am.

But then, there is a tomorrow
And who knows the self I still may be?
And so I keep on writing until the final chapter
is written
And the book lies open
For another to close.

Norma L. Heinicke

Of Closets and Clutter

I visited a friend once who had a walk-in cedar-lined closet in which to store off-season clothing. I've always wished for walk-in closets and envied folks whose homes were company-perfect whenever I dropped by unexpectedly.

What do other folks do with their stuff? When I have guests over for an evening of pinochle, I spend most of the cleaning time on my dining room table—well, not exactly on it, but going through the accumulation of things I've placed there that must be done immediately.

When friends are coming then, I need to clear the table. Normally I'd put the stacks of things I've organized from the table on the guest bed in the next room, but I need to clear off the mending and the laundered sheets piled there to make room for my guests' coats when they arrive since my reception room closet is too jammed full of boxes, off-season clothing, vacuum sweeper and seldom used projector screen and equipment to hang anything there.

I dream of seeing Ed McMahon at my door so that one day I could build a neat little bungalow in my north yard to live in and turn my present home into what it virtually is today—one huge walk-in closet.

Norma L. Heinicke



Look Out!

On his way to town little Ned,
Fell into the river and got all wet.
When found he was nearly dead;
So ill he took to his bed.
But he got well,
And lived to tell,
What happened on the day,
The river got in his way.
Now he watches where he goes;
Never again will he stub his toes.

Hannie Wolf



The I Never Learned to Bake Bread Blues (In Two Voices)

Am I woman? Or what?
My hand holds a pen, fingers
spread, shuffle paper
yet have never really kneaded
needed dough flattened
upon a breadboard
to define who I am.

*Challah, houska, chleb
Bethlehem/House of Bread
Take this my body
bread of heaven
of unleavened, stuff of life.*

Quite comfortable now, I am
fingers gripping
this instrument, thinking
slipping effortlessly
onto the page flattened
before me, rectangular, lined.

*host, Hostess, Wonder
Bread, hospitality.
Pepperidge Farm, toast
sandwich spread.*

Oh, I've tried,
fingers gripping, attempting
to maneuver those knobby-handled
rolling pins, taking cake recipes
just like the next woman,
the best women, from cookbooks,
off boxes, baking from scratch.

*natural grains, tradition
bigger than a breadbox, bedrock
white, rye, wheat
raisin, pumpkin, sourdough.*

But I failed, fled
the kitchen, failed though I come
from proud lines of aunts, grandmothers,
cousins, nieces, my mother herself
braiding bread that fed multitudes:

*ovenbread, gingerbread,
pumpernickel, Hansel, Gretel,
Manna cannot live by bread.
Alone.*

Kolache, rolls, biscuits,
pies, yeast rising in a bowl
to fabulous heights, pastries
gloriously glazed.

I was raised in that role.

*bred from long lines
breadlines, slabs, slices,
crusts, heels, crumbs, loafs,
bread and roses.*

But never did it fit.

I sit hours at a time
thinking, composing, writing
to understand what it is
to be a woman, a poet,
to discover myself, a poem, my life.
Is this it?

*Bread and water, Breadloaf,
breadwinner,
Give us today this daily word
to cast upon the waters.*

Lorraine Duggin

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Now Is The Season

The time has come for change, the stepping aside to perpetuate the continuity of the generations. The time for our reliving a drama as old as life itself, the passing of responsibility from the older generation to the younger.

Sleep escaped me through the long weary night. Now as I stand before the upstairs window, still reminiscing, the rising sun silhouettes tall shadows across the broad panorama of hills stretching out before me.

I have been thinking of many things as I clean closets and cupboards of the accumulation of those many years of loving and living, and yes, sometimes weeping, in this place where we raised ten beloved children. Years of hard work and struggle, but there were also many fun times. Proud times, too, blessed as we were with so many children to nurture and guide as we prepared them to live a full and productive life.

Along with the surety of our going and a sense of eagerness for a new life lingers a heart-felt home-sickness for the old. One cannot weave forty years of living into the tapestry of a home, the pattern of a lifetime nearing completion, without experiencing a sweet sorrow at leaving.

Although I have my share of comforts now, a wearisome interlude preceded the maze of wires that set me free, when the flip of a switch, rather than a lighted match to the wick of a kerosene lamp, set my lights blazing. That same tamed fire set the pump pulsing water through a network of pipes, and divorced me from the hand pump and the water pail.

The hard curve of the axe handle blistered my hands at the woodpile. The pig pen corn-cob, and even the lowly cow chip, fired the stove that fed and warmed us before I could command heat with a turn of the thermostat.

I drained from my Holsteins their opulence, and like a potter, molded it into sunshine mounds of butter. I dipped my hand into nature's cornucopia, and stored her treasures in

rainbow rows in my cellar shelves for winter feasting. The fragrance of baking bread was daily perfume. Now I am opting for a more leisurely lifestyle, although they were good times, those years, equipping me with dear memories, providing my panacea for any reluctance at leaving.

How often the drudgery of washing dishes at my kitchen sink was diminished by the peace and beauty of these familiar hills, especially the pastoral sight of red-faced herefords, sprinkled with black angus, grazing on the side hill of the south pasture.

I know every inch of that meadow, where, in summer, tadpoles dart through the creek's shallow waters, while dragon flies hover overhead, skimming the rippled surface. I learned it all over the years while bringing home the cows for milking. In my mind, I can still hear the metronome click of cows' hooves as they plodded ahead of me on the path, worn rock hard by the daily pilgrimage to and from the pasture.

Oftentimes, seeking renewal in God's infinite cathedral, I sat on the cistern lid in my own front yard. The day's frustrations evaporated in the soft caress of the south breeze as it cooled the summer night. Seeming to sense my mood of meditation, Towser, our English Shepherd, was content to flop down beside me, and sighing, rest his head on his front paws. Two of God's creatures in peaceful communion, serenaded by a chorus of grogs in the pasture creek.

In the city, no longer will this same Towser warn me by the tone of his bark, whether to expect family, friend or total stranger. Nor will the raccoon's guttural call in the trees back of the house shatter the night's stillness, and remind us to fortify the chicken barn door against their prowling.

Although the eerie wildness of the coyotes howling down by the creek will be replaced by the roar of traffic in the streets, some measure of comfort will endure in picture memories.

Memories of graceful red foxes sheltered in



the hodgepodge brush pile down in the field, parents to a family of pups. Memories of the wonder in a tot's eyes at his first sight of baby chicks scurrying and peeping about in the brooder house.

The long walk down the lane to the mailbox, relishing the sights and sounds of the country, will warrant special recollection. The meadow-lark warbling on the fence post. A neighbor zooming by in his pickup, leaving a friendly wave and a cloud of dust behind. A gray squirrel flowing across the lane in low waves ahead of me, then floating down through the ditch and up the tallest tree in a flash.

My memory's indelible canvas will embrace the immensity of my grounds. The broad expanse of grass and trees, and vast acres of crops growing in all directions. Later, when I am belted by torrid winds and glare bouncing off hot concrete, I can recall the luxurious relief of arriving home to the comparative coolness of country green.

The loss of the almost daily camaraderie with friends and neighbors around my kitchen table will be keenly felt, but my yearning will soon diminish, since old friends do remain faithful, and the company of new friends will grow more precious with the years. My table need not suffer disuse, nor my coffee pot remain cold, in my new home. The conversation will ripen once again, blending the familiar with the excitement of new thoughts and experiences.

I think of all these things as I stand before the upstairs window, looking out across the rolling hills. The sight of our sturdy country church on the high crest in the distance, thrusting its cross-topped steeple toward heaven for all to see, inspires and comforts me.

Then I remember the ringing bell and melodious carillons I heard yesterday, peeling forth from the towering old church down the street from our recently purchased town house. It reminds me that in triumphs and failures, joy and sorrow, sickness and in health, in the country or in the city, the Lord God watches over us all.

I visualize my husband's father, a young German immigrant, riding through the south valley by the creek, over a hundred years ago, and I can feel his excitement as slough grass towered high above his horse.

I can hear him exclaim, "This will be mine!" as he claimed this quarter of land for his home. He raised his family here, as did his son, my husband. Now his posterity is proud to carry on this family tradition.

Yes, once again this house needs to grow with the laughter of children, and the land needs the hustle and energy of a young family to make it live and prosper.

"To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven"...Ecclesiastes 3:1.

Now is the season, now is the time for us. Our purpose and our work here is nearing completion. It will be in good hands. May we go in peace, and may the Lord bless the new generation who will abide here.

Dorothy Knouse Koepke





Reminiscing

Looking back on life
And how it used to be
It's fun to reminisce about
The things that we now see.
How grandpa used to tell the story
Of skippin' out of school
And the whippin' that he got
For being such a fool
Or how grandma used to
Bake us cookies
Whenever we'd stop by
And how she'd let us eat them all
Before we'd say good-bye.
I remember Uncle Ray
And how he'd used to fish —
Wearing hip boots in the river
And how they'd slosh and squish.
I remember how my dad
Used to sing song,
Using old familiar tunes
But words that'd never belong.
How mom used to rock us
In her favorite rocking chair,
Sing to us or tell us stories
With her tender, motherly care.
My list for looking back on life
I know can go forever,
And so I do it often —
It brings me so much pleasure.

Jim Bahm

First Fruits of Spring

Winter weary, I watch the first curling leaflets,
pale, anemic, peering out of the earth,
black, moist soil, rich with the essence of
spring.
Day by day the leaflets uncurl and pink stems
reach upward.
My mind savors the first tart bite, rich in iron
for winter hungry blood.
Eager, I gather crisp, slender stems,
remembering two sisters, long ago, sitting
barefoot, cross-legged, pulling stalks and
tearing off leaves to fashion a bonnet.
Then dipping red stems, first wiped clean on
dust-covered aprons, into salt in a
handle-less teacup, faces twisting in
delicious, mouth-tingling, bitter-sweet
agony.
Remembering, longing, but aged knees and
jaded taste buds call, "NO", most
emphatically.
Sedately I enter my kitchen; roll pie crust (not
flaky with hog lard); slice rhubarb; add
sugar, as always calorie conscious; hear,
in memory the voice of my mother, "Add
sugar a conscience allows, then another
scoopful, eyes closed, for full flavor."
Another scoopful is added and another.
Cut slits in the crust, flute the edges, stand
watching the glass door of the oven (gas,
not stoked with corn cobs or cowchips).
Crust browned to my satisfaction, juice oozing
out through slits and 'round edges, it
rests on my counter.
It cools, and I stand, knife poised in
anticipation.

Mary Anderson



A Gesture of Friendship

"Mr. Hurche, quick!" Tater screamed. He burst through the antelope skin door of Herman Hurche's river hut. "Indians!"

The boy pulled the frontier trapper outsider. Naked except for their breechcloths, Omaha Indians, sun-fired faces stern, were slipping through the slough grass to the Elkhorn River bank. The sun's rays reflected from the keen edges of their hand-hewn flint knives. Their heads were barely visible as they trailed on horseback through the tall Nebraska prairie grass.

"Is that all, boy?" Herman Hurche shrugged. "Shucks, there's nothing to be scared of. Indians are just like me and you, boy. They need water for themselves and their horses, wood for a fire, maybe a prairie chicken for supper. They'll find all that down by the river."

Savages, Tater muttered. What did Hurche know? If a ten-year-old boy was old enough to take on a man's work in this wild, new country, he was old enough to make up his own mind about red-skinned savages.

Tater turned to face the trapper. "They are not like us. I heard the shopkeeper in town. He says we should drive the Indians away for good. Just a while back, by a town south of here, Indians shot an arrow clear through a boy and his brother, not much older than me. Both of them on horseback, they were, and the arrow went clean through both of 'em."

"Whoah there, Tater, slow down..."

Tater's voice rose louder still. "They don't need to live around here scaring us like they do. They could find another place to go."

Mr. Hurche picked up a curing beaver skin, the hide stretched tightly on a wooden frame. Thoughtfully he scratched the cocklebur stubble of his beard and then smoothed the dark brown beaver fur with the back of his hand.

"My Omaha friend, Wahgeeti, showed me a new beaver dam on the river just last week. That's how I was able to trap me this fine big beaver." He handed the pelt to Tater.

Tater tapped the stiff underside of the pelt. He knew that Mr. Hurche was a friend of the Omaha and of the Asch family, showing Tater and his brothers how to catch fish in the river. The trapper added prairie chickens, deer and wild turkeys to the family's scanty meals. But that didn't mean he could tell everybody how to think.

Mr. Hurche took the hide from Tater's hands and set in them instead a dull grey trap with strong jaws and angry teeth.

"See this trap, Tater? These big jaws? When I set this trap and hide it in the weeds in the bank of the Elkhorn, and the beaver grabs the bait off this he springs the trap. The jaws clamp shut on him. That beaver will take for the water and swim upstream to get away. When he does that the weight of the trap pulls him down and he drowns. I reckon each Omaha feels like that. He feels trapped by the white man moving in on his land, and he tries to get away. Even their name, Omaha, means 'ones who go against the current' — upstream."

Mr. Hurche looked into the boy's eyes.

"Where would you like them to go, Tater?"

"Anywhere but here!" he threw back over his shoulder as he ran out the door.

Ma was stirring a kettle over the fire when Tater walked in the door of the Asch dugout, her long wooden spoon scraping the beans at the bottom.

"Ach, you Heinrich, so late for the supper," Ma scolded Tater in her heavy German accent. "Take this bucket and go fetch us some water for the washing up. Herman will be soon on his way for supper."

Tater grabbed the handle of the wooden bucket and started down the trail to the lake.

Just who he wanted to sit across the supper table from: Herman Hurche. He'd probably hear another lecture about the Indians and how we should be just like 'em. Hurche will make us wear feathers next, like the savages tied in their hair and part our hair and paint the center



red like Hurche said the warriors did. Eventually we'll be just like Hurche who wore leather shoes, moccasins, he called them, and got to know Indians like that crazy Indian doctor, that Wahgeeti.

The bucket's handle squeaked and groaned like the Asch's wooden windmill blades did when the Nebraska wind puffed its cheeks and blew the wheel round and round. The bucket hit the side of Tater's leg, his bare feet slapping the packed footpath.

Creak, slap. Creak, slap. Creak, slap. Shhh....

A stab of pain grabbed his ankle. He looked down. A flash of black and brown streaked through the dry grass at his bare feet. The rattlesnake's dreaded chatter became fainter as the snake slipped away.

Tater stared at the two puncture marks on his ankle, the sharp arrow of pain shooting up his leg.

"Help!" he cried to the four winds. "Help!"

He forced himself to swallow the vile, choking knot of panic that came up in his throat.

If I run the poison will spread like wild prairie fire through my body, and if I call for help the Indians will know I'm here. Alone.

All alone.

He found a stick lying close to him by the path. Using as little motion as possible, he sent his cap up on it as a signal. He laid down on the ground, facing the west and his home as he watched the sun begin its descent down the late afternoon sky.

Minutes crept by, as slowly as a coyote sneaking up on one of Ma's unsuspecting hens. A cautious and long-eared jack rabbit kept Tater company, the hare fearful of human scent, Henry grateful for the diversion from his constant pain.

The wigwagging of Tater's cap kept up a quiet signal of trouble in the steadily darkening evening as he tried to remain conscious.

He watched his ankle swell, and grow darker. The twilight settled over the evening, and the night sounds began. A wolf howled, laying claim to the human lying still in the

grassy bowl, patient for supper. A screech owl call, a jack rabbit thump, squirrel chatter, all told the sky that Tater was below.

It was dark now. Pain, delirium, and panic weighted Tater's thin, shivering shoulders.

He heard a rattle on the path. He knew—the snake was back. He closed his eyes and waited for the second bite of death.

Strong but gentle hands slid under the boy's legs and shoulders. The powerful scent of smoke, sweat and musk filled Tater's head. Mr. Hurche? He laid his head back on the man's shoulder and closed his eyes.

The wound on Tater's ankle was blackish-purple when he was carried through the Asch's dugout door. Tater's pa took one look at the snakebite. As silently and swiftly as Indians through the tall grass, he slipped out the door.

Tater sank down weakly on the straw-stuffed mattress in the corner of the dugout. His feverish eyes searched for reassurance on the strained face of his ma.

"Hush now," his ma spoke softly. "Your Papa, he has gone for help."

She filled the big cooking kettle with water and hung it over the fire to heat, as Tater settled back to a fitful sleep.

He woke to find Pa bent over his leg, Mr. Hurche at his side. A tall man stood behind them, blocking the light from the fire. The stranger bent down to look at Tater's foot.

The clatter of a snake's rattle met his ears for the third time that night. He jerked his foot away from the sound. Feverishly and frantically, he searched the bed for a snake. He was back on the footpath, waiting for help, in a race against time, a race against the lowering of the sun, when he would never be found until morning, a cold and unfeeling thing.

"Tater," his Pa called softly.

Lifting his eyes, he faced the source of the rattling. Rows of beads hung from a leather necklace at the front of a man's shirt. Pa never wore a shirt like that. Neither did Mr. Hurche. In fact no one he knew wore shirts like that. No one but....



Indians.

An Indian would never touch him. He would die of snakebite first. He glared into the eyed of Mr. Hurche.

"How could you bring an Indian here?"

Tater demanded. "He'll kill us all. Our whole family. How could you bring him here?"

"I didn't," Herman Hurche answered softly. "He brought you."

In Mr. Hurche's eyes he read the words he'd heard just that afternoon. "Indians are just the same as you and me, boy."

Slowly Tater reached out his foot and let the tall man look at the deep marks left by the snake's sharp fangs.

The Indian medicine man pulled from his fox fur bag the root of the ground cherry, the crooked hop vine, and other herbs, placing them in the water in Ma's big cooking kettle. He took some of the roots and herbs from the boiling water and placed them in a clean cloth Ma gave him. He rested the hot poultice gently on Tater's ankle. The drying pack was fiery hot and tight on Tater's leg. But slowly the poultice pulled the greenish-yellow snake venom from the wound.

He covered Tater with his thick buffalo robe and gave Tater bitter tea to drink, made from some of the herbs.

Far into the night the Indian worked. The sounds of his gourd rattle awakened the healing spirits, and the smoke spiraling through the chimney of the dugout took his prayer to the spirit world and to the great power, Wakoda.

"Ni thu tha-de a-ma, Ni thu tha-de a-ma..." the Indian sang.

Tater slept and when he woke the cheery rays of the morning sun peered through the window of the little dugout. His fever had broken and his swollen ankle was almost back to the size of his other foot.

He stirred, and looked at the Indian waiting quietly at his bedside. The medicine man raised his hand to his face and made a fist, then raised the first two fingers of his hand into a "V".

With his thumb he covered his other two fingers.

Weakly Tater lifted his own hand. He held out his two fingers high in a "V" as the Indian had shown him.

He saw a smile on the face of the Indian, as wide and friendly as his own. Tater knew this was the trapper's friend Wahgeeti. He also knew that he had just learned the Indian sign for "friend."

A fictionalized account based on a true story. Phillip and Wilhelmina Asch settled with their four sons near what is now Pilger, Nebraska, from their former home in Springfield, Illinois. They arrived on their homestead on March 27, 1870, with a wagon and team of oxen. Their descendant, August Asch and his wife Arlene, live on the original homestead, the present farm home about 100 yards from the dugout site. August's family credits the work of the Indian medicine man, Wahgeeti, with saving the life of their forefather, Henry Asch.

Sources

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Know Nebraska

World Book Encyclopedia

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LaRayne Meyer



More Than Life Itself

"Rain again," Sarah sighed looking through the laced window. "I cannot believe the rain we're getting this spring." Grabbing her leather handbag, she glanced in the mirror. Her long auburn hair held to her shoulders by a fine net. Picking up a small heart-shaped box, she fingered the embossed scarlet heart latticed with pink and white rosebuds and ribbon. She opened the lid and sniffed.

"It still smells chocolatey. Oh, John, you're so thoughtful." She blew a kiss and trotted out of her bedroom. "Humm, smells like home-made biscuits."

"Good morning dearest," Mrs. Lewis greeted her daughter. She slid a pan of biscuits onto the black iron stovetop.

"Mother, what would I do without you and your biscuits!" Sarah hugged her mother.

"You'd probably learn to make them yourself!" They laughed and sat at the round table. Mrs. Lewis took Sarah's hands and whispered, "Dear Lord, thank you for all the gifts you give us daily. Thank you for Sarah. Help her teach well today and keep us safe from that horrible cholera. Amen."

Sarah squeezed her mother's thin fingers and she broke a biscuit in half, smothering it with homemade grape jam.

"What's the latest news on the disease?" Sarah asked.

"It's back in our area after almost fifteen years of silence. Oh, Sarah, I worry so." Wrinkles shrouded the older woman's face.

"Now, Mother, we must have faith. Don't be getting all upset." Sarah consoled, faking and covering the fear she also felt.

"You were only four when it traveled up the Mississippi from New Orleans before. How it ever missed Mt. Pleasant, I'll never know." Mrs. Lewis stared out the kitchen window. Spring struggled to bring forth its flowers but the rains mastered this spring of 1851 in south-eastern Iowa.

"Maybe we will be blessed again, Mother,"

she helped herself to another biscuit. Everything about her mother was soft and cozy. Red and white checkered curtains decorated each window. Flowers flourished under her gentle fingers. The house sparkled yet she always had time to talk or help a neighbor. The young woman hoped she would be the same kind of wife to John Sinclair.

"I ran into Mrs. Krieger the other day. She said there is a world-wide epidemic. It's scary," Sarah's sapphire eyes darkened to charcoal.

"And they're not even sure what causes it. Well, we'll just keep praying, that's all!" Mrs. Lewis wiped her lips, swallowing the last drop of coffee.

"What are you going to do today, Mother?"

"Well, your father should return later with the load of flour and supplies, so I'll be busy organizing and cooking."

Sarah loved those times when her father made the thirty-mile trip to Burlington. Every spring and fall, it was like Christmas. The wagon overflowed with spices, sugars, a new tree or flower to plant, a bolt of fabric for Charlotte and a big bag of spun taffy for Sarah. There were several twenty-five pound sacks of flour. Her mother made towels from the sacks, embroidering clusters of daisies in each corner. Sarah learned how to embroider one winter when she was ten.

"I wish I could be here to help, Mother," Sarah said. She enjoyed teaching, but she missed the activities at the Lewis house.

"Well, dear, you can help me plan your wedding dinner. We'll have to do some serious cooking," Charlotte Lewis winked at her daughter. She cleared the table, bundling the biscuits into an embroidered towel.

"I cannot wait, Mother. I forgot to tell you what John did last Thursday. He came to school and gave me a box of chocolates. Each piece had a heart-icing design on it."

"And you didn't bring me a piece?" Charlotte teased.



"Mother, it was so funny. When my pupils saw the chocolates, their eyes grew as big as saucers. There were just enough for each of them to eat one for lunch! I smelled the chocolate all day, but never got to eat one!" The two women laughed until their eyes watered.

"You should have heard them giggle when John appeared at the door! I must have turned nine shades of apple red," Sarah laughed, even now her cheeks flushing. "I love him, Mother, more than life itself!" Her eyes charcoaled.

"He's a fine man, dear. You'll have a happy life."

"Well, I've got to go or I'll be late. We'll chat about the wedding plans tonight. I love you Mother. Bye."

Outside, she opened her amber parasol. The rain bounced on it like a metronome, hurrying Sarah along. She walked the five blocks to the log cabin school every day, much preferring a sunny day rather than one like this.

"Good day, Miss Lewis!"

Sarah bumped into Dr. Schmidt, her head buried in the rain parasol

"Oh, Dr. Schmidt, I am sorry. I didn't see you."

"That's all right. I don't mind pretty ladies running into me at all. How are you?" Dr. Schmidt chuckled.

"I'm well, thank you, doctor. Is there any news of the cholera? Wrinkles furrowed the young teacher's white forehead.

"Well, Miss Lewis, I'm afraid we have our first victim. Sam Krieger died." The doctor slipped his arm into Sarah's when she wavered.

"Are you all right, my dear?"

"I just talked to Mrs. Krieger the other day. I can't believe Mr. Krieger is gone. Is there anything I can do, Dr. Schmidt?" Sarah felt faint. She clung to the doctor.

"No, I'm not

even sure how to treat this venomous disease. If more die, we'll have to close everything down."

They walked past the local bank and grocer. The doctor tipped his hat to the owners.

"We must protect the children. I'm going to bring them from Rome to Mt. Pleasant to isolate them from this. I wish I knew more how to prevent it." Helplessness crashed into his words.

"What about my pupils, doctor?"

"Watch them closely. If they vomit or have stomach cramps, isolate them and contact me immediately, Sarah."

Dr. Schmidt walked Sarah across the street and kissed her on the cheek. "Good-bye Sarah. Give my regards to your parents and that handsome man of yours."

Sarah walked into the small school house.

"Children, how quiet you are. I'm proud of you!" Sarah charmed the children around her little finger with her kindness. She removed her cape and bonnet, but could not remove her apprehension.

By the end of the day, the auburn-haired teacher was exhausted. With sheets of rain all day, the children were confined in the small cabin. The older children helped by reading and giving a puppet show, but the young nineteen-year-old teacher was glad to be heading home.

As she closed the front door of her house on Monroe street, her parents' voices trailed from the kitchen.

"How do we tell her, Charlotte?" Her father's voice cracked.

"I don't know, Thomas, but we've got to do it right away." Charlotte folded and unfolded the yellowed linen napkin next to her coffee mug. Her hands shook.

Sarah walked into the kitchen. "What's the matter, Mother and Dad? You look so sad."

"Sarah, come and sit with us for a moment," her father requested, pulling a chair out for her.

"I'll get you some coffee, dear."

A portentous cloud hung in the room.

"Please, tell me what you are talking about." Charlotte began to cry.

"Honey, we heard bad news today," Thomas began.

"Oh, I know, about Mr. Krieger? I saw Dr.



Schmidt this morning. He told me he died of that hateful cholera."

"No, dear, that isn't what we need to tell you," Thomas continued holding Sarah's hands. "We've gotten word that John came down sick today and the doctor has no hope for him."

Sarah jumped up. "Oh, dear Lord, no, not John?" She paced back and forth twisting her engagement ring round and round. "It cannot be true!"

"We wish it weren't so, dear. Now, please, sit down," her father went to her side and helped her to a chair.

"I can't sit. I must go to him immediately. He needs me." Sarah ran out of the room. She gathered a few things into a bag and changed into a warmer dress.

Charlotte knocked on her daughter's door and walked in.

"Sarah, you dare not go. You may catch the disease yourself." She could tell her daughter would not listen to reason.

"Mother, will you contact the school and tell them I won't be there for a few days?"

"Of course, dear, but...."

Her parents made one last plea as Sarah mounted the wagon.

"Sarah, please don't go. There's nothing you can do."

"I have to, Mother and Dad. I love you both. I'll be back as soon as I can."

Sarah set out for the Sinclair house, five miles away where her lover lay dying. Since the Skunk River flooded over its banks, she left the wagon at Wilbur's Livery and boarded the ferry. She tried not to listen to the people. All they could talk about was the probable epidemic about to engulf their little towns.

"Did you hear that John Krieger died in less than a day... Now his wife and two children are sick... I heard even the pallbearers that carried his coffin now have the disease... They say a son crafts a coffin for his father as soon as he gets sick... I read in the *Tribune* that it has spread to Africa and Europe.

Sarah shuddered more from the conversations than from the chilled rain soaking her feet. When the ferry pulled up, she engaged a man she knew to drive her in his wagon to the Sinclair homestead in Rome.

The young teacher banged on the front door until her knuckles hurt. Mrs. Sinclair answered. "Sarah, what in heaven's name are you...?"

"Please, Mrs. Sinclair, forgive me. I heard John is down with the cholera."

"Yes, my dear, he is, but you should not have come. You may get the disease." Mrs. Sinclair took Sarah's cape and bonnet and spread them by a warm fire.

"I had to come. May I see him?"

The two women moved together to a small bedroom at the back of the house. Blankets could not hide the shivering man. Sarah knelt at his side, tears coming to her eyes.

"John, I'm here. Now you must get well. We're going to be married in July and I won't be widowed before I am even married." She put a cool cloth on his forehead.

John looked at her with uncertain eyes. "Are you an angel?" he muttered in the dim room.

Sarah laughed. "No, darling, I'm real and I'm going to make you well. Now drink some of this broth your mother has here for you. You must not dehydrate, what with the fever and everything."

Sarah held his head in her lap and fed him the broth. After a few mouthfuls, he went blank. Sarah kept changing the cloth, cooling it and patting perspiration. She cracked a window open. Rain still accompanied the night, but more gently now.

"Here, Sarah, put these on. Your feet are soaked." Mrs. Sinclair handed her a pair of lime green crocheted slippers.

"I suppose I'd better. I can't get sick. Tell me what happened to John." Sarah's sapphire eyes darkened.

Mrs. Sinclair sat in a rocker next to the window and took a big breath.

"Well, when he got up this morning, he was terribly pale. I toasted some bread for him, but



he only took a couple bites when he grabbed his stomach. He hurt so badly, he bent over."

"Oh, dear. Poor John." Sarah knelt on the floor next to her lover. She felt his forehead.

"We've got to break this fever. Let's remove a blanket for awhile and see if he cools down."

The two women removed the patchwork quilt, laying it over the bedstead.

"Then what happened, Mrs. Sinclair?"

"He began vomiting. I helped him to bed and cleaned everything the best I could. Whenever he comes to, he's delirious. I feel so helpless, Sarah." Tears gathered on her cheeks.

"I'll help you, dear. You go to bed now. I'll keep watch over him tonight. If there's a change for the worse, I'll awaken you." Sarah hugged her future mother-in-law goodnight.

All through the night, Sarah kept vigil. She sang every song she knew, even the ones she taught her pupils. She told him what a beautiful life they were going to have after they were married. Whenever his forehead felt cooler, she removed another blanket. She ran her fingers through his curly black hair and fed him saffron tea all night long.

The next morning, Dr. Schmidt brought a stranger with him to the Sinclair homestead.

"This is Dr. Martin. He's from the east and is familiar with cholera. May we see John?" Dr. Schmidt lead the way to the sick patient. Sarah knelt on the floor holding a cloth on John's forehead, humming a song.

As soon as Dr. Martin saw John Sinclair, he knew. "John will be all right in a day or so, Mrs. Sinclair."

People were already referring to the good doctor as the mysterious stranger who was sent by providence to rid them of the horrible disease. The East had lost hundreds in the 1830s. Now in the 1850s, it was leaping from town to town, continent to continent again. A doctor in England suspected it was a waterborne disease, but no one would do anything about it. Dr. Martin was so familiar with the disease that he could tell at a glance if there was hope of surviving.

Mrs. Sinclair and Sarah embraced each other. Sarah collapsed in a rocker. "Are you sure, Doctor? He's so sick?"

"I'd say he is over the worst now, but you don't look so well," Dr. Martin remarked.

"I'm just tired."

"You probably saved his life last night. We'll get some medicine for him. You'd make a fine nurse."

Mrs. Sinclair asked them to wait a moment while she filled a basket with canned goods and freshly baked gingersnaps.

"Take this now. Thank you so much."

"We'll send the medicine right away. Get some rest."

Sarah continued to nurse her lover. At noon, he stretched and recognized her for the first time.

"Sarah, what are you doing here?"

"Hello, darling. How do you feel?"

"I feel alive...weak, but alive. Have you been here long?"

"I came yesterday John. You were very sick. I couldn't bear not being by your side. Welcome back, darling. I love you!" Sarah kissed his cheek, her dimples playing with her smiles. "Let's discuss our wedding plans!"

Epilogue

That evening, Sarah Lewis left the Sinclair home never to return again. The following night, she began vomiting and collapsed into a coma on her bed...alone...clutching the empty candy box from her beloved John.

John buried his betrothed in the coffin which was intended for him. He nestled her grave under an old apple tree on his land. Although he lost her in life, in death he kept her close.

A briar rose bush now curls and climbs over Sarah's grave as if to shield her from gaping visitors.

Based on actual family history. The names have been changed.

Mary L. Zachmeyer



The Old Clothesline

"Let's take it down", they said,
"That old clothesline. Two ugly posts.
They interfere with mowing. You don't
need it now. You've the dryer in the
basement."

Oh, yes, Great White Monster.

Gladly I surrender to you numb fingers
fumbling to unpeg sheets, stiff icy boards
in winter. Take into your gaping maw the
steaming jungle in my kitchen, long
underwear, socks, soggy towels, draped
ghostlike over chairs and wooden racks,
sloshing clammily as I dodge past,
defying me to pass unwet.

But take from me the buzz of bees,
the smell of new cut grass and lilacs, the
chirp of nesting robins, the clothespin

clutched between my teeth, both hands
struggling with unwieldy sheets flapping
madly in the breeze?

Never again the rainbow sails billowing over
their green sea?

Take from me the soft clean touch of sun
drenched towel, or the scorching balm of
springtime rays on winter weary
shoulders?

Take from me the luxury of drifting off to sleep
soothed by percale, air and sun perfumed?

No, let it stand.

Two ugly posts (I'll paint them fresh.),
thin strong wires taut between the poles.
Don't take away this one, of few,
childhood chores I cannot gratefully
surrender to the great gods of technology.

Mary Anderson

The Nebraska Center for the Book

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Welcome to

THE 4th ANNUAL Nebraska Literature Festival



GO BIG READ

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**Saturday, September 24
Peter Kiewit
Conference Center
14th & Farnam**

8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.
(Festival Admission – \$6.00
or River City Roundup Discount
Pre-registration – \$5.00)

**Library of Congress Exhibit:
Bonfires of Liberty**
W. Dale Clark Library
Sept. 6 through October
(no admission charge)

Nebraska Literature Festival

Please make checks payable to UNO Alumni – Nebraska Literature Festival. Your cancelled check is your receipt. Please mail to:

**Nebraska Literature Festival
UNO — Department of English
Omaha, NE 68182-0175**

Ron Hansen Reading
Thursday, September 22 \$12 _____
UNO Alumni House – 7-10 p.m. \$10 _____
(student)

Festival Benefit Reception
and Musical Performance
Presentation of NHC Sower Awards
Friday, September 23 – 6:30-9:30 p.m.
UNO Strauss Performing Arts Center \$15 _____

Luncheon with Tillie Olsen
noon– 2 p.m. – September 24
Peter Kiewit Conference Center
14th & Farnam \$12 _____

Festival Admission – September 24
8:30 a.m.– 5 p.m.
Peter Kiewit Conference Center
14th & Farnam \$5 _____
(pre-registration –
\$6 at the door)

Total Enclosed _____

Preregistration is needed to assure space in the free workshops listed below. Check any workshop you will attend.

- Writing for Children – 9:30 - 11:00 a.m.
- Figurative Language – Poetry – 10:00 - 11:30 a.m.
- Journals: Writing for Self-Discovery– 11:30 a.m.- 1:00 p.m.
- Plotting Mysteries – Noon - 1:30 p.m.
- From Literature to Music (songwriting workshop) – 1:00 -2:30 p.m.
- Romance Basics: Writing Romantic Fiction that Sells – 1:30 - 3:00 p.m.
- How to Market Fiction – 2:00 - 3:30 p.m.

Name _____

Phone () _____

Address _____

Please be sure you have checked the events for which you are registering.

THE 4th ANNUAL Nebraska Literature Festival

Registration Form

Pre-registration is encouraged. It is required for Saturday's luncheon with Tillie Olsen and to guarantee space in Saturday's free workshops. Pre-registration for Thursday and Friday evening events will help assure that everyone will have plenty of food and drink.

You may send one check for several registrants, but please fill out a separate registration form for each registrant.

Admission to the Nebraska Literature Festival on Saturday, September 24, will be \$6 at the door. With River City Round-up discount or preregistration, \$5.

Fill out the pre-registration form (turn this page over) and mail with your check to **Nebraska Literature Festival ■ UNO ■ Department of English ■ Omaha, NE 68182-1075**. Please make checks payable to UNO Alumni—Nebraska Literature Festival.

Questions? Call (402) 554-3312.

Clip and save the Festival Program printed at the right.

**Thursday, September 22 ■ Ron Hansen Reading
UNO Alumni House ■ 7-10 p.m.
Refreshments Provided.**

**Friday, September 23 ■ Festival Benefit Reception and Musical Performance ■ Presentation of NHC Sewer Awards ■ 6:30-9:30 p.m.
UNO Strauss Performing Arts Center**

THE 4th ANNUAL Nebraska Literature Festival ■ Saturday, September 24, 1994 ■ Peter Kiewit Conference Center ■ 14th & Farnam, Omaha, NE

WRITING		READING	TALKING	AND MORE	READING	TELLING	LISTENING	TEACHING		AND MORE	
Festival Preregistration required to guarantee space in the free workshops listed below.	8:30 - 9:20 a.m.	The Omaha of Josie Washburn, Margaret P. Killian, Bess Streeter Aldrich, Harl Dalstrom, Orville Menard PKCC 123	Lila Wallace Reader's Digest Fund — Let's Talk About It Discussions Neihardt's <i>Black Elk Speaks</i> PKCC 102B	Wright Morris's Photographic Strategies Joseph Wydeven, Nancy Johnson PKCC 104		Teaching Native American Autobiography Craig Womack PKCC 102A		Teaching Cather's <i>Of Pioneers</i> Steve Shively, Many Lucca-Thyborg PKCC 216	8:30 - 9:20 a.m.	The Business of Writing Bob Doyen PKCC 125	
Writing For Children — Essential Ingredients 9:30-11:00a.m. PKCC 112 Elizabeth Wells	9:30 - 11:00 a.m.	Forming a Successful Book Group — Everything You Need to Know Sara C. Radil, Judy Gacek PKCC 102A	Lila Wallace Reader's Digest Fund — Let's Talk About It Discussions Morris's <i>The Home Place</i> PKCC 102B	Nebraska Women Poets Hilda Raz PKCC 104	Censored Mary Heise Karen Weber PKCC 125	<i>The Cattlemen</i> Sandoz Panel A — Sandhills Ranching Suzanne George, Donald Green, John Wunder and others PKCC 216	Nebraska Writers Reading PKCC 105 9:30 a.m. — 3:30 p.m. Richard Duggin Goerge O'Connell James Reed Jean Delephant Fidel Fajardo-Costa Karen Mockler Eric Jolly Duane Hutchinson Craig Womack Karen Foster Doug Marr Sheila Rocha Cruz Terri Brown-Davidson Season Harper Dowell Annette Murrell Barbara Emry Robert McEwen Mark Sanders Jonis Agee Carol Light Arthur Homer	Bess Streeter Aldrich — Pioneer Author Paula Damke PKCC 121	9:30 - 11:00 a.m.	First Encounters — Indians in the Omaha Area Enter the Written Record Kira Gale PKCC 123	
Figurative Language — Poetry 10:00 - 11:30 a.m. PKCC 114 Ted Kooser	11:00 - 11:50 a.m.	Eiseley for Young People — Universal Values Jane Stillwell Smith Naomi Brill PKCC 121	Lila Wallace Reader's Digest Fund — Let's Talk About It Discussions Sandoz's <i>Old Jules</i> PKCC 102B	Beth Streeter Aldrich "In Person" Maxine E. Cline PKCC 125	Dramatization of Tillie Olsen's "I Stand Here Ironing" PKCC 102A	Writing History: The Upstream People Michael Tate PKCC 104		Teaching Malcolm X in Primary and Secondary Schools Dr. George Garrison PKCC 125	11:00 - 11:50 a.m.	Ron Hansen interviewed by Jim Delemont PKCC 216	
Journals: Writing for Self-Discovery 11:30 a.m. — 1:00 p.m. PKCC 112 David Martin	noon - 1:00 p.m.	Myth and Archetype in the Work of John G. Neihardt Pam Saalfeld Gretchen Ronnow PKCC 102A	Lila Wallace Reader's Digest Fund — Let's Talk About It Discussions Cather's <i>Of Pioneers</i> PKCC 102B		LUNCHEON WITH TILLIE OLSEN reading from and discussing <i>Yonnondio</i> Room 100 Reservations Required			Wright Morris's West Barbara Allen-Langdon, Jerrine McCaffrey John McKenna Joseph Wydeven PKCC 125	noon - 1:00 p.m.	Czech Elements in Nebraska Literature Mila Saskova-Pierce PKCC 123	
Plotting mysteries Noon — 1:30 p.m. PKCC 114 Diane Kirkde	1:00 - 1:50 p.m.	A Shaman for our Time — Loren Eiseley Dr. Bing Chen PKCC 104	Lila Wallace Reader's Digest Fund — Let's Talk About It Discussions Welsch's <i>Shingling the Fog and Other Plains Lies</i> PKCC 102B	Writing Plays in Omaha Doug Marr PKCC 102A				Open Mike PKCC 107 10:00 a.m. — 2:00 p.m. Sign Up At Registration Desk	From Life to Stage: Rachel Snowden Mimi Loring, Stu Lynn, Helen Sundell PKCC 125	1:00 - 1:50 p.m.	ALL DAY Book Fair Author Signings Storytelling for adults and children
From Literature to Music (Songwriting) 1:00 — 2:30 p.m. PKCC 121 John Kunz	2:00 - 2:50 p.m.	"Nebraska" Private Eye — The Novels of William Reynolds Patricia Will Evelyn Whitehill PKCC 104	Lila Wallace Reader's Digest Fund — Let's Talk About It Discussions Aldrich's <i>A White Bird Flying</i> PKCC 102B	Culture as Theatre Laura Partridge Nedds Gerarda Emma Lara PKCC 102A	Jonis Agee <i>Strange Angels</i> PKCC 216	John G. Neihardt: Literary Critic Hilda Neihardt, Lori Utech PKCC 125	Responding to Place in Photographs and Words Phil Smith 2:00 - 3:15 p.m. PKCC 123	CD'S — Teacher's Tool Kit — Interactive and Portable John Gaudreault PKCC 104	2:00 - 2:50 p.m.	Photo Display: Old Jules Country W. Dale Clark Library Bonfires of Liberty Exhibit	
Romance Basics: Writing Romantic Fiction that Sells 1:30 — 3:00 p.m. PKCC 112 Cheryl Ludwig St. John Elizabeth Parker	3:00 - 3:50 p.m.	Omaha's Satirical Tory — Novelist Carl Jones Dr. Thomas Kuhlman PKCC 121	Dramatization of Tillie Olsen's "I Stand Here Ironing" PKCC 123	The Friendship of Willa Cather and Dorothy Canfield Fisher Mark Madigan PKCC 102B	<i>The Cattlemen</i> Sandoz Panel B — Sandhills History Jamie Bell, David Murrah, Helen Stauffer and others PKCC 216		Pioneer Nebraska Women Writers Suzanne George PKCC 102A	Prairie Connections: Land, Family and Culture in Children's Literature Susan N. Maher, Bill Finlaw, Ellen Scott PKCC 125	3:00 - 3:50 p.m.	Authors drawings by Dave Routon	
How to Market Fiction 2:00 — 3:30 p.m. PKCC 114 B.J. Doyen	4:00 - 5:00 p.m.	WILLA! ■ Slides and songs composed and performed by John Kunz ■ Auditorium 102								4:00 - 5:00 p.m.	

PARKING AVAILABLE FOR ALL EVENTS