

# *NCB Quarterly*

Nebraska Center for the Book

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**Black Elk and John G. Neihardt at WWII Victory Celebration,  
Pine Ridge, South Dakota, 1945**

*Photo courtesy of Western Historical Manuscript Collection, John G. Neihardt Papers.*



## 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:

Dick Allen	Lincoln
Golda Bockbrader, Past President	Grand Island
Thomas Boyle, President	Fremont
Denise Brady President-Elect	Omaha
Frank Chipasula	Omaha
Molly Fisher	Lincoln
Mary Heise	Omaha
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Ron Norman	Kearney
Jude Richardson	Omaha
Laureen Riedesel	Beatrice
Robert Runyon	Omaha
F.M. Tuttle, Treasurer	Lincoln
Lori Utecht	Bancroft
Rod Wagner	Lincoln
Katherine Walter	Lincoln
Dee Yost	Hastings

## Nebraska Center for the Book Board of Directors Meetings 1995

March 7, 1996, Anderson Administration Building, Midland Lutheran College, Fremont, NE

June 1, 1996, Grand Island Public Library, Grand Island, NE

Week of August 19-24, 1996, East Campus Union Bldg., Lincoln, NE

November 7, 1996, Heritage Room, Lincoln City Library.

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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Tom Boyle

## President's Message — Tom Boyle

**N**ineteen ninety-six appears to be another exciting and busy year for the Nebraska Center for the Book. The National Center for the Book has a number of projects

planned for 1996 where the Nebraska Center for the Book will play a role. Locally, the NCB will continue to support state-wide programs fostering reading, literacy and the printed word.

The highlight of the past year was another successful Literature Festival in Kearney. Thanks to the work of Chuck Peek and many others in Kearney and on the NCB Board, the Festival presented a wide variety of programs dealing with many aspects of Nebraska's literary heritage as well as the contemporary literary scene. The Festival has again proved itself an important means of celebrating and fostering the printed word in Nebraska.

Likewise, with the assistance of a grant from the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest fund and Laureen Riedesel as Project Director, the NCB sponsored a number of reading groups across the state and produced a resource guide for future reading groups.

Other highlights of the 1995 year were the awarding of the Jane Geske Award to the University of Nebraska Press and the Mildred Bennett Award to Molly Fisher. Nebraska's literary traditions are alive and well.

The coming year will be marked by the same excitement. The NCB Board will meet on March 7th at Midland Lutheran College to plan out the program for the coming year. The Literature Festival is set for Lincoln on September 21st and the preliminary program looks both innovative and fun. The Quarterly will keep you informed on the upcoming activities of the NCB.

The Nebraska Center for the Book depends upon the active participation and support of its members. The Board will work to keep you informed on the NCB activities as well as programs from the National Center for the Book. Help make this the best year yet for the Nebraska Center for the Book.

### Committee Assignments for the Nebraska Center for the Book Board of Directors

Funding, Membership: Rod Wagner,  
Chair; Tom Boyle, Bob Runyon, Morrie  
Tuttle

Reading, Literacy, Books, Publishing:  
Laureen Riedesel, Chair; Barbara Lehn,  
Golda Bockbrader, Frank Chipsaula,  
Dick Allen

Public Relations, Publications: Molly  
Fisher, Chair; Ron Norman, Lori Utecht,  
Mary Heise

Festivals, Conferences: Denise Brady,  
Chair; Kay Walter, Jude Richardson,  
Dee Yost



## Meet Newly Elected NCB Board Members

At its November meeting, the Center for the Book elected the following new members, Dick Allen of Lincoln; Kay Walter, Lincoln; Dee Yost, Hastings and Mary Heise, Omaha. Serving a second term are Laureen Reidesel, Beatrice and Jude Richardson and Denise Brady, Omaha.

Dick Allen is a familiar face to the Nebraska Center for the Book. As its first president and organizer, Dick rejoins the Center. Retired from the Nebraska Library Commission, Dick continues to pursue his avid reading and book collecting. He is President of Coordinators of Adult Literacy. A recent article about books and read-

ing appeared in the *Lincoln Journal-Star* and is reprinted in this issue.

Dee Yost is currently the administrator of the Republican Valley Library System with an office in Hastings. She is a past assistant director of the Hastings Public Library and a former Librarian at Norfolk Junior High. Dee was a former Nebraska Library Association president and has served as one

*Dee Yost*



*Pictured from the left are Laureen Reidesel, Denise Brady, Dick Allen and Kay Walter.*



of the local chairpersons for the Great Plains Chautauqua in Hastings.

Dee is a Nebraska native, born at Auburn, grew up in Geneva and graduated from Hastings College and the University of Denver, MALS. She and her husband Dan have two sons, Kyle, 17 and Kipp, 13.

Katherine L. Walter is a Professor in the University Libraries at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Ms. Walter manages preservation, binding, and serials cataloging activities for the Librar-

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## Meet Newly Elected NCB Board Members

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ies, supervising a staff of 21 full-time employees. Kay is very interested in preserving the literary heritage of Nebraska. She serves as project director for the Nebraska Newspaper Project and Chair of the Nebraska Documents Preservation Advisory Council. Her academic background is in history and English with a BA and an MA in Library Science from the University of Iowa.

*Mary Heise*



Mary Heise is a native Nebraskan and takes pride in her pioneer stock which flavors her storytelling, whether she tells it straight or pulls your leg. She has MS degrees in Computers in Education and Special Ed/Reading, and is now retired from being a Librarian with Omaha Public

Schools. She is a co-founder of OOPS, the Omaha Organization for the Purpose of

Storytelling, has done many workshops and telling and has been an active part of all nine of the Storytelling Festivals of Nebraska. Mary is a co-producer of "Storytelling Tapestry," a half-hour radio show on KIOS-FM, Monday mornings at 10:00. She adds to that the exploration of storytelling on the Internet.

Mary has four grown children and seven grandchildren. She enjoys yoga, Great Books, is a member of the Unitarian Church and has an 18 1/2 year old cat.

*Jude Richardson*



Jude Richardson has been involved with literacy in one way or another all of her adult life. She currently teaches in Omaha. She is a member of two book

groups. Jude has fifteen years of teaching experience, including four years at Boys Town. She served as a library board member and literacy volunteer in rural Iowa. Jude shares her love of books with her husband, Randy, and children, Lindsey and Reid. (Yes, Reid.)

### *Special Thanks to past board members*

*Peggy Benjamin, Carol Connor, Elaine Johnson and Ellen Scott. These volunteer board members, many of them founding board members, have given tireless support to the Center for the Book.*



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## Books, book lovers here to stay

*Reprinted with permission from the Lincoln Journal-Star.*

*Dick Allen*

Lately there has been some talk that the book as we know it — printed pages, bound together — will eventually give away to the computer screen and digitalized information. As a matter of fact, it is already possible to replace a multivolume encyclopedia with a single CD-ROM disc, a disc that provides not only text, but sound and graphics as well.

Fine! Let us acquire all the powerful tools that technology can provide. But where does this leave the traditional book, the bookstore, the library? With a more important role than ever, I would argue. All three, books, bookstores and libraries, have influenced and will continue to influence my life and your life as well.

Let me illustrate.

I GREW UP in a house in Michigan where my parents had a room they called “the library,” a room with built-in bookshelves on one end. These contained a number of “sets” of works by Dickens, Kipling, Wilde, DeMaupassant and others. In addition, there were many single volumes such as novels by Tolstoy and the complete plays of Shakespeare.

Growing up in a house like this, my brother and I took it for granted that every home had its “library” or at least books. Even though we couldn’t yet read any of those “adult” books, we began our own col-

lections of books that we could read, my brother with his “Oz” books, I with the then-popular illustrated Big Little Books. We were strongly influenced by that wonderful home library that we couldn’t yet read!

MY NEXT BOOK experience was at our local public library, at that time a converted frame house. Picture books, easy readers, harder readers, these were followed by my discovery of a book about chemistry and its wonders. I was soon asking for a chemistry set. My generous father bought me one and I was off learning about the reactions of acids, bases and salts.

Our elementary school library/media center was centrally located in the building. We were strongly encouraged to use it. There I came upon books about dogs, horses, American inventors and their inventions. We didn’t get a dog or horse, but I was soon drawing plans of my own “new” inventions, e.g., a machine that would remove and melt ice and snow.

Our junior and senior high school libraries/media centers also contained quality book collections. They were integral parts of the curriculum. I used them both and profited!

OUR HOUSE stood but a few blocks from

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## Books, book lovers here to stay

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the business section of our village. There I first encountered a bookstore, a store where new books were proudly displayed and sold. By simply being there, the bookstore said: "Books are important and worth paying for."

There I first bought a beautiful book, an illustrated edition of Henry Fielding's great novel *Tom Jones*. And there too, I found a copy of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, a work I am still struggling with.

Two more book experiences need to be mentioned, both inspiring, both humbling. While a senior in high school, I had the chance to visit the University of Michigan's graduate library reference collection in Ann Arbor. So much information, so much to be read, so many books and documents assembled in one monumental room!

THIS EXPERIENCE was an important factor in my eventually entering the library field.

Later, at the same institution, I happened upon the Far Eastern Library, rows of books in Chinese, Japanese and other Asian languages. There they were, waiting to be read, but to me totally indecipherable! Then I knew what it feels like to be unable to read! I was justly humbled. I knew so little after all. But now I am trying to learn Chinese; someday I'll return to such a collection, better equipped to appreciate it.

What I am trying to say here about books, bookstores and libraries is that each of

these constitutes a "physical manifestation" of the recorded human experience to date. Seeing a book or many books, even unopened, reminds us that a particular record is there, ready to be read, experienced and enjoyed.

WITH THE computer alone we can certainly and we should certainly access all kinds of information, even the text of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. But the computer keyboard does not remind us that *Hamlet* is there. The volume of Shakespeare in our home library, in that bookstore, in that library does.

Finally let's pay tribute to the people and institutions that support and operate libraries and bookstores: librarians, library boards, our Nebraska Department of Education, our Nebraska Library Commission, our six regional library systems and our bookstore owners and staff.

The recorded human experience is vast. Alas, we have only one lifetime to partake of it!

### Literature Festival 1996

Mark your calendars for the 1996 dates, September 20-21, for the Nebraska Literature Festival. Cynthia Schneider, Coordinator UNL English and Fran Kaye, Faculty Advisor UNL English and Center for the Great Plains Studies are the directors for this year's festival. Plans are underway for a high school day on September 20th with the festival taking place on the 21st.

Contact Cindy Schneider,  
UNL Department of English  
for further information (402) 472-1817



## 1995 Nebraska Literature Festival Deemed Another Success

The 1995 Literature Festival under the direction of Susanne George, Susan Emrys and Chuck Peek at the University of Nebraska-Kearney was a huge success. The festival publication *WELLSPRINGS*, featured Nebraska poets, Twyla Hansen, William Kloefkorn, Marjorie Saiser, Ted Kooser Susan Strayer and Don Welch. Betsy Downey presented "Mari Sandoz's 'Love Song to the Plains'" at the festival luncheon.

Recipient of 1995 Mildred R. Bennett Award was Molly Fisher of the Nebraska Humanities Council. Dr. Fisher was given the award by Tom Boyle who praised her leadership and interest in Nebraska's literary heritage.



*Chuck Peek provided the leadership for the 1995 Festival.*



*Susanne George and Susan Emrys helped direct the successful Literature Festival at UN-K.*

The Saturday night gala featured Nebraska's African American community, Annette Murrell, author and jazz and blues singer; a gospel choir and presentations by Mary Cloud and Rick Wallace.

The festival committee deserves special thanks. It included John Bates, Gail Lowenberg and Jean Keazer-Clayton and countless volunteers. Without the work of this volunteer committee, the festival would not have taken place.



## 41st Annual Willa Cather Spring Conference

**M**ark your calendars now and plan to attend the Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial's 41st annual spring conference on May 3 and 4, 1996, at Red Cloud, Nebraska. This year's conference will center around Willa Cather's novel, *My Mortal Enemy*. The expanded conference begins on Friday afternoon. Several of the restored Cather sites will be open, free-of-charge to conference participants for a do-it-yourself afternoon. A paper session mid-afternoon will focus primarily on *My Mortal Enemy* as will the evening slide program by John Murphy and Beverly Cooper. A new addition this year will be a candlelight Mass at the St. Juliana Catholic Church conducted by Father Steven Ryan of Austin, Texas.

Saturday morning registration begins early (8:00 a.m.) with the traditional coffee and kolaches at the WCPM's Art Gallery and Bookstore. The Rev. Jane Heenan from Lincoln's Church of the Holy Trinity-Episcopal will offer the Eucharist Mass at Cather's church, Grace Episcopal at 9:00 a.m. Dr. George Day (University of Northern Iowa) moderates "The Passing Show" panel discussion which follows Mass. John Murphy, Brigham Young University, begins the session with a specially prepared paper on *My Mortal Enemy*. Panelists JoAnn Middleton, Mary Callandar (both from Drew University and John Swift (Occidental College) then launch into their promised-to-be-lively discussion of *My Mortal Enemy*.

After the noon salad luncheon, the WCPM

Board of Governors will announce and discuss the plans for the 1885 Opera House, the next site for Cather restoration work. A model of the proposed renovation will be unveiled. Conference goers then can see the old Opera House and other sites on the afternoon tour which will also include the restored Burlington depot which houses the new exhibit, **The Burlington Railroad: Colonizing Cather's "Wild Land."**

The one and one-half day celebration concludes Saturday evening when Ron Hull of Nebraska Public Television hosts the banquet at the high school gymnasium. After dinner, Anne DeVries, soprano from Opera Omaha and Marya Lucca-Thyberg of the Omaha Community Playhouse will present music, readings and narration associated with *My Mortal Enemy*.

Call or write to the WCPM for more information and a conference registration form.

**Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial**  
**326 North Webster**  
**Red Cloud, NE 68970**  
**(402) 746-2653**

*Books Don't  
 Just Go with You ~  
 They Take You  
 Where You've Never Been!*



## University Press: Winner of the Jane Geske Award

University press publishing represents a dedication to ideals: ideals of scholarship, ideals of quality craftsmanship and ideals of service to the citizens of the state who may need publishing information. University presses are often defined as the “gatekeepers of knowledge,” because each manuscript is evaluated for scholarly merit before it can become a book.

The history of the University of Nebraska Press exemplifies the striving for these ideals. The Press was founded in 1941 with Emily Schosberger as the first director. The Press had a tiny staff publishing two to three books per year. Money was always a problem. Authors often paid for printing

in return for 1/3 or more of receipts from sales.

In 1956 Virginia Faulkner joined the staff as Assistant Editor and promptly put together an anthology of Nebraska life called *Roundup*. The book became a national success and was favorably reviewed in the *Saturday Review* and the *New York Times*. The Press was then producing six to seven new titles per year.

In 1958 Bruce Nicoll became the director. He was formerly an assistant to the Chancellor, a writer and a founding member of the Western Historical Association. The combination of Virginia Faulkner and Bruce Nicoll was a wonderful one for the Press for it soon began publishing regional, national and even international scholarship of a very high order.

One of the best ideas generated by Faulkner and Bruce was the establishment of the Bison Books line of paperbacks. It was a bold move to put fine and popular scholarship in paperback rather than the more dignified cloth and it was unheard of to sell university press books in drugstores as well as bookstores. Bison Books have been called a living endowment. They provided the Press with strong steady backlist sales. They taught the staff to create and market trade books successfully at a time when most university presses only dealt in the scholarly monograph type of book.

In 1961 *Black Elk Speaks* was published.



*Deb Turner accepted the 1995 Jane Geske Award on behalf of the University of Nebraska Press.*

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## University Press

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This title sold well but not spectacularly until the author, John Neihardt, appeared on the Dick Cavett show and then sales took off. The paperback rights were lost for a number of years but have since returned to the Press and the book still sells 5,000 copies a month.

The late 60s were years when the Press published such titles as Roger Welsch's *Treasure of Nebraska Folklore*, Nicoll's edited volume, *Nebraska: A Pictorial History* and Wright Morris' *The Homeplace*. In addition the Press gained strength from publishing as many of the great Nebraska writers as possible: Mari Sandoz, Hartley Burr Alexander, Willa Cather and Louise Pound. The press also published the works of scholars such as Robert Knoll, Fred Luebke, and English Department scholars such as Paul Olson, helped select and introduce two long-term successful series: *Regents Renaissance Drama* and *Regents Restoration Drama*.

Dave Gilbert became director of the Press in 1975 with a staff of 27 publishing about 35 books per year. Gilbert worked very hard to make the Press fiscally sound. He wanted to retire the debt owed to the university in order to have money to spend on improving operations and to take on some expensive projects.

In 1982 the Press installed inventory and invoicing computer software and made the commitment to the computer age. In 1983 and 1984 the first volume of *The Journals of*

*the Lewis and Clark Expedition* and Karl Bodmer's *America* were published. These two projects have garnered much praise, attention and a number of awards.

Bill Regier became the 4th director of the Press in 1987. At this point the Press was in strong financial shape. Regier left his mark on the Press by concentrating on publishing international scholars such as Jacques Derrida, Sander Gilman and Avital Ronell. He also built a highly respected list of books in translation from French, Spanish, Scandinavian and German languages.

By its 50th anniversary in 1991, the Press had grown to 43 employees and published 100 books per year with nearly 2,000 titles in print. The Press initiated a new prize series: the North American Indian Prose Award. The staff was now completely networked on computers. Some employees worked to develop a relationship with Czech university presses, giving advice on conversion to a market economy. This project branched out to include other Eastern European countries.

At present, the 5th director is Dan Ross. He and the rest of the staff face declining sales to libraries, challenges of electronic publishing and concern over the impact of new technologies on book publishing. However, the Press is still idealistic, still the gatekeepers and still has an opportunity to have a hand in whatever shape the future book may take.

*This article represents remarks given by Deb Turner, Assistant Director, representing the University of Nebraska Press at the presentation of the Jane Geske Award.*



*"Who speaks for Black Elk: Reassessing Interpretations of Black Elk's Vision"*  
**1996 John G. Neihardt Spring Conference**

Issues currently under debate surrounding the writing of *Black Elk Speaks* will be explored at the April 13 day-long conference at the Neihardt Center in Bancroft, Nebraska from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Dr. John Schneider, Professor of Religion and Theology at Calvin College, will examine charges raised by critics about the choices made by Neihardt in presenting Black Elk's vision and about the validity of Neihardt's interpretation in his presentation entitled "Black Elk's Red Road Walk and John Neihardt's Black Road of Deconstruction." Dr. Frances Kaye, Professor of

English at the UN-L, asks "What Is Cultural Appropriation, Anyway?"

Granddaughters of Black Elk, Esther DeSersa and Olivia Pourier, will share memories of their grandfather and the interviews that resulted in one of the most important books in Native American literature. Hilda Neihardt will provide insight into what John Neihardt perceived his role to be in bringing Black Elk's story to the world.

For information, contact the Neihardt Center, P.O. Box 344, Bancroft, NE 68004; (402) 648-3388.

*The Nebraska Center for the Book*

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