

# The NCB News

Volume 21

Fall 2011

No. 2

A Publication of the Nebraska Center for the Book

## Celebration of Nebraska Books October 22 in Lincoln

### SCHEDULE

2:00 p.m.  
Matinee Performance:  
"Local Wonders:  
A Musical"

3:30 p.m.  
Annual Membership  
Meeting

4:00 p.m.  
Presentation:  
2011 Jane Geske  
Award

4:15 p.m.  
Presentation:  
2011 Nebraska Book  
Awards

4:30 p.m.  
Remarks and  
readings by winning  
authors

5:30 p.m.  
Announcement of  
2012 One Book One  
Nebraska

Awards Reception

Author Signings

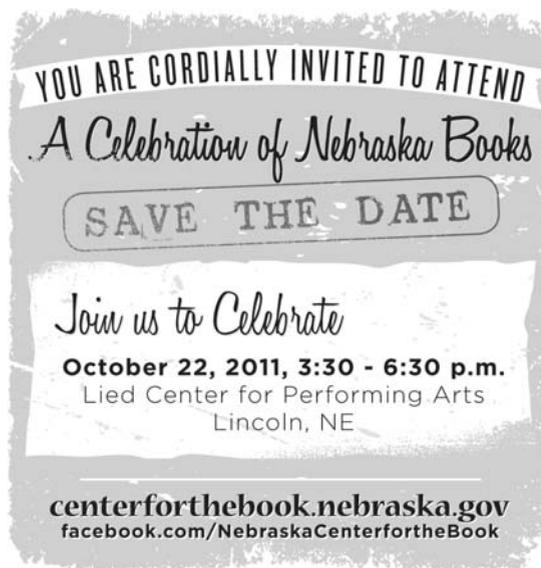
6:30 p.m.  
Closing

7:30 p.m.  
Evening Performance:  
"Local Wonders:  
A Musical"

Join the Nebraska Center for the Book on Saturday, October 22, 2011, from 3:30 - 6:30 p.m. at the Lied Center for Performing Arts, 12th and R Streets, Lincoln, NE for the **2011 Celebration of Nebraska Books**. This event will highlight this year's One Book One Nebraska, honor winners of the 2011 Jane Geske and Nebraska Book Awards, and announce the choice for the 2012 One Book One Nebraska.

The celebration, free and open to the public, will feature presentation of the Nebraska Center for the Book's Nebraska Book Awards and Jane Geske Award. The **2011 Nebraska Book Awards** honor authors and publishers of books with a Nebraska connection published in 2010. Featured winning authors will read from their work and sign copies of their books. The **2011 Jane Geske Award** will be presented to an organization, business, library, school, association, or group that has made an exceptional contribution to literacy, books, reading, libraries, or literature in Nebraska. The Jane Geske Award commemorates Geske's passion for books, and was established in recognition of her contributions to the well-being of the libraries of Nebraska. Jane Pope Geske was a founding member of the Nebraska Center for the Book, former director of the Nebraska Library Commission, and a long-time leader in Nebraska library and literary activities.

In conjunction with the celebration, on October



19-23 at the Lied Center for Performing Arts' Johnny Carson Theatre, six performances of "Local Wonders: A Musical," will be produced by the Nebraska Repertory Theatre, highlighting the 2011 One Book One Nebraska (*Local Wonders: Seasons in the Bohemian Alps* by Ted Kooser). A 2:00 p.m. performance of the musical will precede the October 22 celebration and another performance will be presented after the celebration at 7:30 p.m.

These performances are ticketed events. Tickets are available now as part of a season subscription or individually. For more information see [www.liedcenter.org/events/detail.php?eid=157](http://www.liedcenter.org/events/detail.php?eid=157).

The Nebraska Center for the Book Annual Meeting will also be held at the October 22 celebration. An Awards Reception honoring the winning authors, book signing, and announcement of the 2012 One Book One Nebraska book choice will conclude the festivities.

The 2011 Celebration of Nebraska Books is sponsored by the Nebraska Center for the Book, Nebraska Humanities Council, and Nebraska Library Commission, in partnership with the Lied Center for Performing Arts, Nebraska Repertory Theatre, and University of Nebraska Press. For more information contact Mary Jo Ryan, 402-471-3434 or 800-307-2665, [maryjo.ryan@nebraska.gov](mailto:maryjo.ryan@nebraska.gov) or see [www.centerforthebook.nebraska.gov](http://www.centerforthebook.nebraska.gov) or [www.facebook.com/NebraskaCenterfortheBook](http://www.facebook.com/NebraskaCenterfortheBook).

Thanks so much to all of you that renewed your membership. You will continue to receive this print newsletter in your mailbox. If you haven't renewed your membership, it's not too late (form on page 3). Please continue to support your Nebraska Center for the Book.

# Nebraska Book Festival

Guest Editorial  
by  
Tammy Marshall  
Wright

Since I am a fan of great literature, I like to take part in anything that showcases it. Living in rural Nebraska makes it a bit difficult for me to attend large literary events as most of them take place in large cities, usually near the coasts. Fortunately, though, our great state does offer a variety of experiences for the literary-lover. One of those occurred recently in Lincoln—the Nebraska Book Festival—showcasing Nebraska.

Since a variety of readings and writers' workshops are given at the same times, it is impossible to attend everything they offer. I listened to New York playwright Christopher Cartmill read from his memoir, *The Nebraska Dispatches*, based on his time spent learning about Chief Standing Bear in order to write a play about him called "Home Land." I also heard Mary Helen Stefaniak read from her very funny novel, *The Cailiffs of Baghdad*, *Georgia*, and Ted Kooser read his new children's book, *Bag in the Wind*.

Kooser mentioned how much Bill Kloefkorn would be missed. Sadly, I must admit that until that moment I was unaware that Nebraska's state poet had died. The last time I attended the festival, I had been privileged enough to hear both Kooser and Kloefkorn, and I really enjoyed Kloefkorn's sense of humor. I asked Kooser to sign my copies of his Pulitzer Prize-winning collection of poetry, *Delights and Shadows*, and his book of poetry writing advice, *The Poetry Home*

*Repair Manual*. He willingly obliged, and now my books are worth more both in sentimental value to me and in economical value if I should ever care to sell them someday—although I doubt I will.

I went to my favorite used bookstore, A Novel Idea, to see if they had any copies of Kloefkorn's poetry books. I bought his collection titled *Going Out*,

*Coming Back*, which is inscribed "To Jean - With thanks and affection - Bill Kloefkorn, 7/11/96." My thanks and affection to whomever Jean is for selling this book, so I could buy it and have a book signed by Kloefkorn now that he is no longer with us to sign it himself.

The museum also had a Willa Cather display, where I viewed photos of rare first editions of her books and numerous articles of her clothing and jewelry. Being able to peek into authors' lives intrigues me greatly, especially if they are authors from the often overlooked (literally at least) state of Nebraska.

That is why I love the Nebraska Book Festival, and I applaud the people who organize it, who read at it, who offer writing workshops at it, and who attend it. Great literature is alive and well in Nebraska, and I plan to be at the festival next year.

**Ed. Note:** This guest editorial is taken from a column in the *Norfolk Daily News*: "Reading Wright" by Tammy Wright.

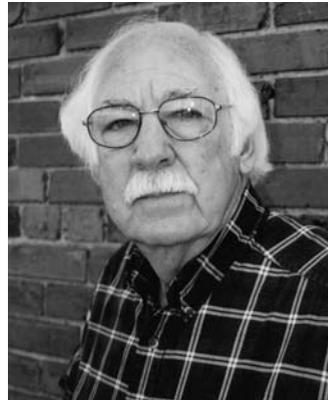


Photo: Jim Reese

**William Kloefkorn**  
Nebraska State Poet  
(August 12, 1932 –  
May 19, 2011)

## The NCB News

Vol. 21 • Fall 2011 • No. 2

### Nebraska Center for the Book Board and Committees

#### Executive Committee

Matt Mason, President; Mary Ellen Ducey, Vice-President; Becky Faber, Past-President; Lois Meyer, Secretary; Sherry Houston, Treasurer

#### Funding/Membership

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#### Nebraska Book Festival

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Mary Ellen Ducey; Molly Fisher; Mary Jo Ryan (Nebraska Library Commission staff representative)

#### Awards Art Coordinator

Denise Brady

#### Letters About Literature Coordinator

Laureen Riedesel

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

#### 2010 Nebraska Center for the Book Board Meetings

October 22 . . . . Annual Meeting  
3:30 p.m.  
Lied Center for  
Performing Arts  
Lincoln

#### Advertising

The NCB News can accept up to four 1/8-page ads for each issue. The advertising rate is \$125 for 1/8-page. NCB News is issued May 1, August 15, and November 1. The advertising and copy deadline is six weeks prior to issue date. For details, contact Mary Jo Ryan, Nebraska Center for the Book, The Atrium, 1200 N Street, Suite 120, Lincoln, NE 68508-2023; phone 402-471-3434, 800-307-2665, e-mail: maryjo.ryan@nebraska.gov, [www.centerforthebook.nebraska.gov](http://www.centerforthebook.nebraska.gov)

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# Mildred Bennett Award to Chuck Peek

RECEIVED

MAY 27 2011

NEBRASKA LIBRARY COMMISSION

May 27, 2011

Nebraska Center for the Book  
%Nebraska Library Commission  
The Atrium  
1200 N Street, Suite 120  
Lincoln, NE 68508-2023

ATTN: MR. Matt Mason

Dear Matt and members of the NCB Board,

I can't begin to tell you how elated I was when Rebecca Faber first contacted me with the news that you wanted to present me with the Mildred Bennett Award.

While I thought you must have lost your minds, I kept my mouth shut in case I might speak too persuasively and you would change your minds.

The award itself and the striking art you chose to symbolize it both spoke eloquently for the affection I felt from all of you, and the warmth of the audience gathered at the Festival only made it better. And it was a wonderful Festival as well, notable for its fresh faces. Nancy and I were most impressed with the quality of the workshop leaders and the readers and especially gratified that some of them were once students where I taught.

Please accept this as my formal thank you. You have honored me beyond belief and I feel privileged to have been able to share in your work over the years. If I have been of any use, credit it to the company I have kept; if not, you can blame Molly Fisher and Rod Wagner who gave me my first opportunities to take part.

All best regards,

Chuck Peek  
1524 Coventry Lane #56  
Grand Island, NE 68801  
308-293-2177  
[twinceeks@charter.net](mailto:twinceeks@charter.net)

## What is the Nebraska Center for the Book?

The Nebraska Center for the Book brings together the state's readers, writers, booksellers, librarians, publishers, printers, educators, and scholars to build the community of the book. We are the people who know and love books, and who value the richness they bring to our lives. Our

Nebraska Center supports programs to celebrate and stimulate public interest in books, reading, and the written word. We have been an affiliate of the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress since 1990.

## Join the Nebraska Center for the Book

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

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

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



## Author Adventure Trip to Cather Country

by Shirley Maly

Do you know the name of Willa Cather's favorite dog? Not that this is important, but it helps bring her to life, in her time. Seven adventure seekers from the Nebraska Literary Heritage Association (NLHA) aimed to "put themselves in the shoes of Cather and in her Nebraska roots." (To answer the question, think early 20th century, old movies, and Rin Tin Tin.)

Cather lived from 1873 to 1947. Born in Virginia, the family moved to Nebraska in 1882. The "adventurers" initiated arrival in Red Cloud, NE with lunch at the Palace family steakhouse. The group walked around the corner to Red Cloud's beautifully preserved Opera House (originally built above the hardware store with a street stairway entrance). The spacious upstairs Opera House is used for programs, dinner and special events complete with stage, electric lights fashioned like the old gaslights, original floors and support columns. A quartet was practicing for a gala that evening. Downstairs, an exhibit of enlarged postcards testified to Opera Houses being the "social networking" vehicle until the radio boom. The first floor houses Foundation offices, a bookshop, and an art gallery. We checked in and met our tour guide.

William Jennings Bryan orated from this stage early on. Willa Cather and seven other children performed "Beauty and the Beast" on stage as a

fund raiser for families of the blizzard of '88. They raised \$40. In 1890, Cather gave the valedictorian's oration here for her graduating class of three.

Many of the places on the tour served as settings in Cather's books. Her childhood home with its 12-foot ceilings and wainscoting is described in great detail in *Song of the Lark*. The Burlington Depot with its brick walkway, maroon siding and deep green trim is part of a scene in *My Ántonia*. The Harling house was the prototype for where Ántonia worked and befriended Annie Pavelka. St. Juliana Flaconieri church is where Annie was married and her first baby baptized, complete with "poor man's stained glass" (lead paint with handmade designs). Though Cather was raised a Baptist, she joined the Grace Episcopal church in 1922 and remained a member until her death. The Good Shepherd window is dedicated in memory of her father.

The final highlight was driving five miles east of town to see the Round Barn, built in 1903. The two-story barn has its original floor with stalls around a brick center silo. It is privately owned and under renovation. Donna Marvin, committee chair, organizer, and driver provided a delightful, educational spring day for Cather fans.

**Ed. Note:** See [www.foundationforlcl.org/nlha.htm](http://www.foundationforlcl.org/nlha.htm) for more information about NLHA. 

## Remnants of a Reading Life, part one

by Oliver B. Pollak

My 90-year-old mother, Ruth Pollak, in Orange County CA recently moved from independent to assisted living. In 1982 she moved from a three-bedroom, 2,000 square-foot, Baldwin Hills semi-suburban corner house to a delightful two-bedroom 1,100 square-foot Leisure World fourplex. Now she is in a charming 650 square-foot one-bedroom apartment, with no offsite storage. For five weeks she sorted a lifetime accumulation into "take" and "leave behind" piles.

Mother's 1940s era, leather covered, gold edged address book contains a Holocaust diaspora of Austrian and German family and friends who survived as refugees in London, Chile, Palestine (later Israel), Montreal, Johannesburg, Melbourne, and Brussels. A rolodex replaced the book. She left behind decades of annual account books exhibiting frugality and accountability. Dad, of blessed memory, kept gasoline receipts from the days of 27 cents a gallon. They drew pensions from England, Austria, Germany, and America—precious records for future social historians.

Shingles seriously diminished her eyesight in 2010. She gave up the daily paper. Even large print

became difficult. Her books did not follow her. Book-cases now contain photographs of friends, family, and four great-grandchildren. The books, many Book of the Month Club selections, reminded me of being a teenager waiting for the mailman. I worked at and frequented libraries; bookstores were not yet part of the action. The selections, many best sellers, were heavily Jewish and World War-themed.

We packed most of the books in small Trader Joe's "Two Buck Chuck" boxes—our backs and doctor's instructions did not permit genuine book boxes—and took them to the politely grateful Laguna Woods Library. They declined the 22-volume World Book (1992) and 38 -volume *Funk & Wagnalls* (1954). Perhaps the first and last volumes can be converted into bookends a la Lisa Occhipinti's *The Repurposed Library* (2011). Instead of writing author and title, I photographed them with my cell phone. I saved my first erotica, Boccaccio's *Decameron*, of which I now own five different English translations.

**Ed Note:** See the next edition of *NCB News* for Part 2 of this series, dealing with Pollak's retirement and his library. 



## Downtown Omaha Lit Fest Set for October

by Ryan Tewell



Sometimes good things happen by accident. That is, at least according to (downtown) Omaha Lit Fest founder and director Timothy Shaffert. When asked how the Lit Fest got started, Shaffert didn't credit a deep desire to launch an annual event that would change the face of Omaha, but rather a whim and an excited art community for the birth of the annual festival. "My partner, Rodney Rahl, and I had hosted some visual arts events as fundraisers, so I wanted to do an event that examined relationships between the visual and literary arts. But then we came up with some other ideas for panels and discussions, too. And when I approached members of the Omaha arts community, and downtown facilities, and other cultural managers, their support was so overwhelming, that it just keeps chugging along," Shaffert said.

Shaffert also told of his recent fascination with pop-up events – gatherings where groups of people temporarily take over public spaces for an arts event, community conversation, or neighborhood project. "The lit fest is kind of a 'pop-up' that just keeps popping up," said Shaffert. "I like the idea of it as a burst of creative energy that's maybe successful, maybe not, but it doesn't matter because at the heart of it is creative conversation, which happens everywhere always, even without the framework of an institution."

The good news is that it's popping up again this fall. The seventh annual (downtown) Omaha Lit Fest happens at the W. Dale Clark branch of the Omaha Public Library and at KANEKO October 13-15, 2011. The theme of this year's festival, *Silk and Sawdust (the heart & mechanics of literature)*, comes from L. Frank Baum's novel *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. "In the original book," said Shaffert, "the Tin Woodman's heart is

made of silk and sawdust. That relationship of trust (between the Woodman and the Wizard), that placement of the heart in the right place, serves as a lovely metaphor for the relationship between reader and writer, and the writers' process of taking familiar forms and fashioning a story with a new, beating heart."

According to Shaffert, the relationship between visual art and literature has been fundamental to the festival since its founding. This year is no exception with the W. Dale Clark branch becoming the home of the event's Friday night art show, "Possessions: Literary characters and the things they carried." "The exhibit will feature artists' interpretations of literary artifacts, in a variety of media—namely: the props, objects, fashions, food, and jewelry of famous literary characters," Shaffert said. "The very first Lit Fest panel was on the relationship between visual arts and literature. And one of the great pleasures of the event is seeing... what area artists contribute to the annual art exhibit. I'm fascinated by design, by typography, by illustration, by visual representation of language...I'm definitely particularly excited about the art show."

On Saturday evening, the festival will shift to KANEKO for a book launch event with Terese Svoboda. The New York City-based author and Ogallala native will return to Nebraska to introduce her new novel, *Bohemian Girl*, to be released from the University of Nebraska Press on September 1. The evening's events will also include a conversation with the author about her methods and process. Other festival activities include a "Defining Omaha" think-tank, an art and lit event at the Joslyn, and a "Lit: Undressed" event on the topic of fashion in literature. For more information, see [www.omahalitfest.com](http://www.omahalitfest.com). 

## American Life in Poetry: Column 329

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



I've gotten to the age at which I spend a lot of time remembering, and it's the fragments that seem to affect me the most, fleeting glimpses into the past that leave me still reaching for something I can't quite grasp. Here Roy Scheele, a fine Nebraska poet, perfectly captures one of those passing memories.

### Produce Wagon

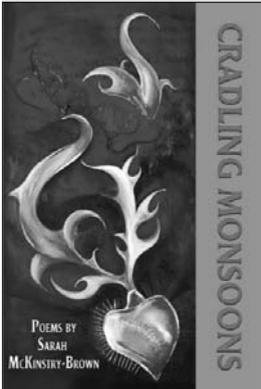
*The heat shimmer along our street  
one midsummer midafternoon,  
and wading up through it a horse's hooves,  
and each shoe raising a tongueless bell  
that tolled in the neighborhood,  
till the driver drew in the reins  
and the horse hung its head and stood.  
And something in a basket thin  
as shavings (blackberries? or a ghost*

*of the memory of having tasted them?)  
passing into my hands as mother paid,  
and the man got up again,  
slapping the loop from the reins,  
and was off on his trundling wagon.*

American Life in Poetry is made possible by The Poetry Foundation, publisher of *Poetry* magazine. It is also supported by the Department of English at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Poem copyright ©2010 by Roy Scheele from his most recent book of poetry, *A Far Allegiance*, The Backwaters Press, 2010. Reprinted by permission of Roy Scheele and the publisher. Introduction copyright ©2011 by The Poetry Foundation. The introduction's author, Ted Kooser, served as United States Poet Laureate Consultant in Poetry to the Library of Congress from 2004-2006. We do not accept unsolicited manuscripts. 

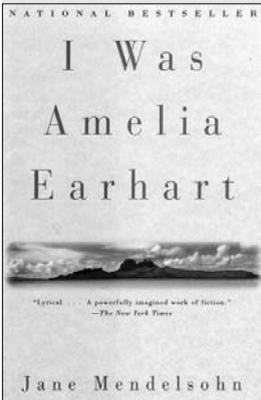
# What Are You Reading?

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



Right now I've made a good start on Sarah McKinstry-Brown's *Cradling Monsoons* (Blue Light Press, 2010). McKinstry-Brown is a young Nebraska poet with a powerful voice. Lots of us know her poems from her readings—she's a performance poet of real ability—and it's a joy to hold the book and read the poems for ourselves. Lots of older favorites are included: "Origami Girl," "Music Appreciation 101," to name just a couple. There's an awful lot of love in these poems, most particularly for her husband and daughters, but the rest of us can bask in it too.

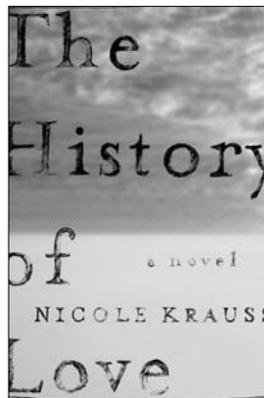
**JV Brummels**



I've been re-reading *I Was Amelia Earhart* by Jane Mendelsohn (Vintage, 1997), a fictionalized account of Amelia Earhart's last flight. First published in 1996, it's a fairly quick read (146 pages). This is my second or third time to read it, prompted by a trip to Atchison, Kansas in May to visit the Amelia Earhart Museum. I was able to stay in the Amelia Earhart room of the Glick Mansion Bed & Breakfast, so I was well immersed in the ambience of Earhart and all things Earhart-related. Even if you can't make a trip to Atchison, I highly recommend this book as a good Sunday afternoon read. It's a well crafted combination of fact and fiction that will keep you wondering what really happened in 1937 when Earhart and her navigator disappeared off the coast of New Guinea.

**Becky Faber**

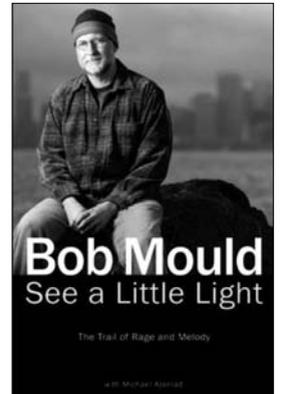
*The History of Love* by Nicole Krauss (Norton, 2006) is one of the three finalists selected for One Book, One Lincoln. I found the book compelling, celebrating the mystery of life and love and loss. The story is one of survival. First Leo Gursky, a Polish Jew, survives the Nazi invasion and eventually escapes to America. The love of his life, Alma (who carries his child), is in America too. But she marries someone else, thinking Leo has not survived. In his day to day life Leo is a locksmith. But in his personal life, he continues to unlock his past and looks to find Alma and his son. What happens, the various threads of discovery, makes this a fascinating read, one that leaves me feeling both sorrow and joy.



**Molly Fisher**

I am currently reading *See a Little Light: The Trail of Rage and Melody* by Bob Mould (Little, Brown and Co., 2011). I've always been fascinated with the American punk culture and appreciate Bob Mould's artistry. It's interesting to read his insights about how his passions fueled his music and ultimately, his life.

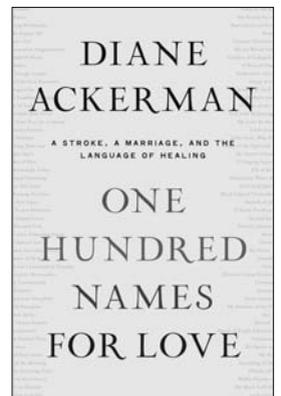
**Cindy Grady**



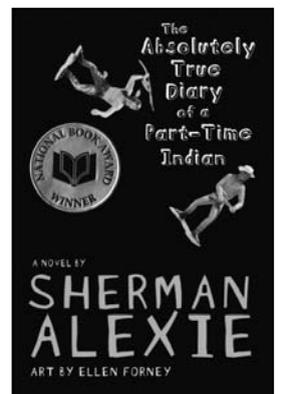
Maybe it is because I knew someone who had the very same kind of stroke or maybe it is that I like to read about brain research and functions, but whatever the reason, reading *One Hundred Names for Love: A Stroke, a Marriage, and the Language Of Healing* by Diane Ackerman (Norton, 2011) is sheer pleasure.

Ms. Ackerman's husband, author and linguistic genius Paul West suffers a stroke which affects his ability to speak, read, write, tell time, or understand numbers. Her account of their journey is a fascinating look at what happens to both the patient and the caretaker—not just with a stroke but with many other debilitating illnesses. One of the best books I have read in a long time!

**Sherry Houston**



As an English professor at UNO, I'm always on the lookout for books that both English majors and my secondary education majors with concentrations in English can enjoy – and which the latter might be able to teach in their own classrooms someday. A colleague recommended Sherman Alexie's *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* (Little, Brown 2009), and just recently I finally had the chance to read it. I found it a wonderful read and couldn't put it down. It tells the story of a gawky teenager named Arnold Spirit who is a member of the Spokane Indian tribe but makes a huge decision to escape many of the



(continued on page 7)

## What Are You Reading? *(continued)*

problems that plague the reservation and instead attend high school in the all-white town of Reardan. What happens afterwards, as he is caught between two worlds, is at times funny, sad, touching, and happy. I like it for the way it unassumingly breaks down stereotypes on both sides and catches the angst of being a modern teenager. Be forewarned, though: the narrator, Arnold Spirit, writes as a true teenager thinks today (which I believe would make it a big hit among teenage readers). As a result, some of the language and images might not please more conservative readers (or parents). Personally, I highly recommend it.

**Chuck Johanningsmeier**

I just finished reading *So Long, See You Tomorrow* by William Maxwell (Vintage, 1996). The book kicks off with a murder and a sex scandal in a small town but handles this in the exact opposite way you'd expect from a description like that. It ends up being more a novel about memory as the book follows a grown character thinking back to events from his childhood in the twenties, where his friend's family went through the tragic episodes. Michael Bay would never make a movie version of it, but it makes for a good read.

**Matt Mason**

A book I read recently was for a class I'm taking at UNL, but it is one that anyone who is interested in our public school system will find compelling: *The Death and Life of the Great American School System* by Diane Ravitch (Basic Books, 2010). Ravitch has been involved in education reform all of her career, and at one time was an avid proponent of the current movement to base analysis of school and teacher performance upon student test scores. Now, however, she recognizes that what was started in the Bush administration (No Child Left Behind) and continues in the Obama administration (Race to the Top) is actually threatening the vitality of our schools. She proposes that schools are just one

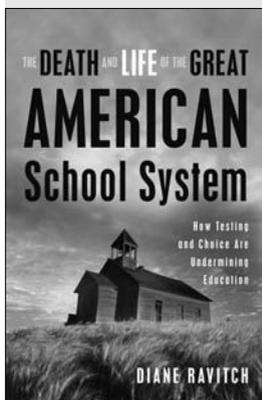
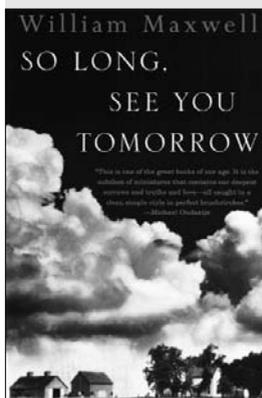
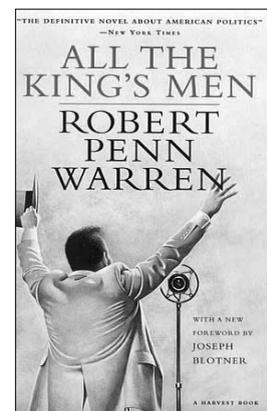
piece of a big picture, and that what really needs to be addressed is the huge income equity gap in our country. Rather than narrowly focusing on what can be tested in a mass produced multiple choice test, schools should focus on offering rich curriculum covering science, social studies, civics, health, literature and math as well as music and the arts. Many "low performing" schools are now reducing their curriculum to a narrow focus on test preparation in order to raise their students' test scores. Her question is, what learning do these tests actually assess?

**Lois Meyer**

I just started reading Robert Penn Warren's *All The King's Men* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2005). As all of us who are bibliophiles have no doubt experienced, my friends will sometimes ask me for a recommendation when they are looking for something to read.

Recently I suggested several titles to a coworker that included works by Cormac McCarthy, John Kennedy Toole, and Erik Larson. I was certain he would return a few weeks later with gratitude and praise for my deft selections. To my surprise, he hated everything on the list. McCarthy was too flowery, Toole was too wry, and Larson too melodramatic. Perplexed and a little indignant, I said, "Well, Mike, maybe I don't know you as well as I thought. Maybe you should recommend a book to me." This was his recommendation. Since it is part of my home library, I started reading it that night.

**Ryan Tewell** ♦



## Book Publishing Grows

"**B**ookStats," a survey conducted by the Association of American Publishers, shows major growth in the book publishing trade during 2008-2010. The survey of 1,963 publishers indicated increased sales in print and digital formats across all markets in the three-year period. In 2010, publishers experienced a 5.6% increase in net revenue and a 4.1% boost in the number of books sold since 2008.

E-books played a role in the growth of the total trade market, increasing from 0.6 percent in 2008 to 6.4 percent in 2010. Sales of ebooks were especially strong in genre fiction categories. See [www.publishers.org/press/44/](http://www.publishers.org/press/44/) for more details on how book publishing has experienced a healthy and much-needed resurgence.



## Contest Opens in September

Young Nebraska readers in grades 4 – 12 are invited to write a personal letter to an author for Letters About Literature (LAL), a national reading and writing promotion program. The letter can be to any author (living or dead) from any genre—fiction or nonfiction, contemporary or classic—explaining how that author’s work changed the student’s view of the world. The reading and writing promotion is sponsored by the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress, in partnership with Target. In Nebraska, Letters About Literature is sponsored by the Nebraska Center for the Book and the Nebraska Library Commission, with support from Houchen Bindery Ltd.

LAL awards prizes on both the state and national levels. The Nebraska Center for the Book has its own panel of judges who select the top letter writers in the state. Nebraska winners are honored in a proclamation-signing ceremony at the state capitol during National Library Week. State Winners receive \$50 Target Gift Cards and additional prizes, and then advance to the National Judging. A panel of national judges for the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress will select six National Winners and twelve National Honorable Mention Winners. The National

Winners will receive a \$500 Target Gift Card, plus each will secure a \$10,000 LAL Reading Promotion Grant in their name for his or her community or school library so that others can experience personal relationships with authors and the stories they tell. The National Honorable Mention Winners will each receive a \$100 Target GiftCard, plus each will secure a \$1,000 LAL Reading Promotion Grant in their name for his or her community or school library.

Students compete in three grade levels: Level 1 for grades 4 – 6; Level 2 for grades 7 – 8; and Level 3 for grades 9 – 12. Teachers, librarians, and parents can download free teaching materials on reader response and reflective writing at [www.lettersaboutliterature.org](http://www.lettersaboutliterature.org). Submissions must be postmarked by January 6, 2012. State winners will be notified in March 2012 and national winners by mid-April. Nebraska-specific information (including letters from Nebraska winners of past contests) is available at [www.centerforthebook.nebraska.gov/programs/LAL.html](http://www.centerforthebook.nebraska.gov/programs/LAL.html).

For more information contact Mary Jo Ryan, [maryjo.ryan@nebraska.gov](mailto:maryjo.ryan@nebraska.gov), 402-471-3434 or 800-307-2665.

## Review: *What Bob Says*

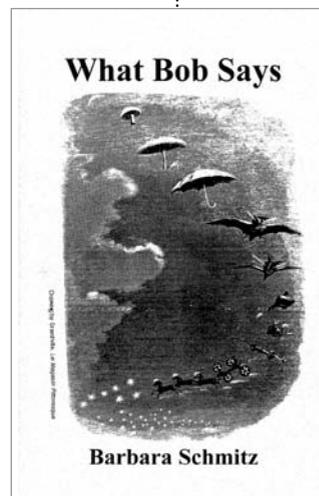
by **Barbara Schmitz**,

*Pudding House Publications, 2010*  
ISBN: 1-58998-939-2

Review by  
**JV Brummels**

I’ve spent a few hours lately reading, and re-reading, Barbara Schmitz’s new chapbook *What Bob Says*, just out from Pudding House. Schmitz is a Nebraska poet of considerable reputation. She’s been writing and publishing for decades out of Norfolk. Her poems are often startlingly fun and always accessible, and I’ve looked forward to new ones for years. *What Bob Says* sets a new standard. The Bob of the title is Schmitz’s husband of forty years, and the poems present him in all his eccentricity in a variety of domestic situations familiar to anyone who’s been in a long-term relationship. We hear the conversations and see the scenes that lead to and constitute marital

discord – “‘Everybody in your family,’/he says, ‘thinks they are always right.’ ‘That’s/because,’ I say, ‘we are usually right.’” (“Bob Said”), but much more often we see scenes of Bob’s good heart and humor. This is all reported from the point of view of a long-suffering spouse. From “Oops!,”



*I was too tired to set it on the table;  
I set it on the bed, he explains.  
I nod, sopping up wine, happy  
that he’s happy. The stains,  
he says, will help us remember.*

*What Bob Says* gives the reader two pleasures, a good deal of laughter and moments of profound respect for the love two hearts can craft over the years.

# Lincoln Librarian Wins Adult Spelling Bee

by Ryan Tewell



Photo: John Keller

MC John Baylor,  
2011 Winner  
Aubrey Mathews,  
and Bee Coordinator  
Michael Page.

Spelling bees have been a part of American culture for hundreds of years. Thought to have been born out of the publication of Noah Webster's spelling books in 1786, the most studios have gathered ever since to spell words the rest of us would mangle without spell check. Since 1984, the Nebraska Literary Heritage Association has hosted their annual Adult Spelling Bee, a spirited competition for those who are inclined to remember the "z" in rendezvous. The 2011 Bee was held in April with all proceeds supporting the Jane Pope Geske Heritage Room of Nebraska Authors at the Bennett Martin Public Library in Lincoln. Fittingly, this year's champion, Aubrey Mathews, is a long-time employee at Bennett Martin and an emerging Nebraska poet. We sat down with the champ to find out the secret of her linguistic dominance.

**NCB: Let's get right to it, shall we? What do you have against spell check?**

Mathews: [laughing] I don't have anything against spell check. I *am* spell check.

**NCB: Aha! So you're pretty confident about your linguistic abilities.**

Mathews: Fairly confident. I took five years of Latin in high school, as well as three years of French and a year of Spanish, and I'm majoring in Classical Languages at UNL. When I get a chance to do something I'm good at, I can be kind of a show-off.

**NCB: It's difficult not to notice that your name wasn't on the contestant list for this year's competition. Were you a last minute entry?**

Mathews: The morning of the Bee, I found an email from Pat Leach saying that she was looking to

sponsor someone from the library. I thought it sounded fun, but it had been years since I'd been in one. After an hour of vacillating, someone told me that a previous year's winning word was "wilde-beest," so I got all arrogant and decided that I could do it. I registered the morning of the event.

**NCB: What about past experience with Spelling Bees? Were you one of those adorable ten year-olds we watch on ESPN every year at the National Spelling Bee?**

Mathews: Would that I had been that motivated at ten! I was in a couple of spelling bees in school, but until the NLHA Bee, the last one I competed in was eighth grade. I got knocked out on the word "reconnaissance." I still have to double-check every time I spell it to make sure I get it right.

**NCB: What were you thinking while you were sitting on contestant's row waiting for your first word? Were you nervous?**

Mathews: Absolutely. It's funny, though, I was more nervous about making sure I spoke into the microphone well than about the competition. After that, it was about making sure I didn't lose my place while I was spelling. They won't let you backtrack to change anything. It would have sucked to lose just because I misspoke.

**NCB: We understand there was some controversy in the semi-final round. Your critics are threatening to retain legal counsel and strip you of your crown. What happened?**

Mathews: There were three of us left, and I was last in the round. The first person got his word right, and the second person got hers wrong and sat down. I got my word wrong, but the judges decided that we needed a head-to-head, so instead of having me sit down, we went into the final round.

**NCB: Since there was no uprising, you faced two-time defending champion Brent Mehling in the final round. Were you intimidated by his celebrity as a speller?**

Mathews: Nah. I just wanted to kick his ass.

**NCB: So what's next for the champ? Will you be defending your title next spring?**

Mathews: I'm thinking about it, but I don't want to go into it with a mind of "defending my title." I'll definitely feel the competitive spirit during the Bee, but what was so great about this time was the spontaneity of it. Sure, I don't have any plans. I'll go win a spelling bee. [laughing] That's not a bad way to spend a Tuesday night.



# The NCBNews



## Calendar of Events:



### THE NEBRASKA CENTER FOR THE BOOK

an affiliate of the Library of  
Congress

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

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Lincoln, NE

Join us for the  
Celebration of Nebraska Books  
October 22, 2011

CURRENT RESIDENT OR:

- Moonshell Storytelling Festival** . . . . . September 10 . . . . Mahoney State Park  
Contact: Nebraska StoryArts, Liz Kumru, ekumru@unmc.edu,  
[www.nebraskastoryarts.org/moonshell\\_festival.html](http://www.nebraskastoryarts.org/moonshell_festival.html)
- Plum Creek Children's Literacy Festival** . . . . . September 22-24 . . . . . Seward  
Contact: Vikki Gremel, Concordia University, [www.cune.edu/about/conferences-and-camps/plumcreek](http://www.cune.edu/about/conferences-and-camps/plumcreek), 402-643-7483, PlumCreek@cune.edu
- Library of Congress National Book Festival** . . . . . September 24-25 . . . . Washington, DC  
Contact: [www.loc.gov/bookfest](http://www.loc.gov/bookfest)
- Banned Books Week: Celebrating the Freedom to Read** . . . . . September 24-October 1 . . . Nationwide  
[www.ala.org/ala/issuesadvocacy/banned/bannedbooksweek/index.cfm](http://www.ala.org/ala/issuesadvocacy/banned/bannedbooksweek/index.cfm)
- Governor's Lecture in the Humanities: Eric Foner** . . . . . October 5 . . . . . Omaha  
Contact: [nhc@nebraskahumanities.org](mailto:nhc@nebraskahumanities.org), 402-474-2131,  
[www.nebraskahumanities.org/governor/currentlecture.html](http://www.nebraskahumanities.org/governor/currentlecture.html)
- Nebraska Library Association and Nebraska Educational Media Association Conference** . . . . . October 5-7 . . . . . Lincoln  
Contact: Michael Straatmann, 402-216-0727, [NLAexecutivedirector@gmail.com](mailto:NLAexecutivedirector@gmail.com),  
<http://nebraskalibraries.org/conference2011/home>
- Mari Sandoz Heritage Society Conference: The Joy of Learning** . . . . . October 14 . . . . . Chadron  
Contact: [www.marisandoz.org](http://www.marisandoz.org), [marisandoz\\_society@windstream.net](mailto:marisandoz_society@windstream.net)
- Teen Read Week 2011** . . . . . Oct. 16-22 . . . . . Nationwide  
[www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/yalsa/teenreading/trw/trw2011/home.cfm](http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/yalsa/teenreading/trw/trw2011/home.cfm)
- NE Center for the Book's Celebration of Nebraska Books** . . . . . October 22 . . . . . Lincoln  
Contact: Mary Jo Ryan, [maryjo.ryan@nebraska.gov](mailto:maryjo.ryan@nebraska.gov), 402-471-3434, 800-307-2665,  
<http://centerforthebook.nebraska.gov>, [www.facebook.com/NebraskaCenterfortheBook](http://www.facebook.com/NebraskaCenterfortheBook)
- One Book for Nebraska Teens Neal Shusterman Author Tour** . . . . . October 24-28 . . . . . Statewide  
Contact: Sally Snyder, Nebraska Library Commission, 402-471-4003,  
800-307-2665, [sally.snyder@nebraska.gov](mailto:sally.snyder@nebraska.gov), <http://nlc.nebraska.gov/youth/obok>
- Spooky Stories for Adults** . . . . . October 27 . . . . . Bellevue  
Contact: Nebraska StoryArts, [http://www.nebraskastoryarts.org/spooky\\_stories.html](http://www.nebraskastoryarts.org/spooky_stories.html)

View the complete  
Nebraska Literary  
Calendar at  
[centerforthebook.  
nebraska.gov/get\\_  
involved/calendar.html](http://centerforthebook.nebraska.gov/get_involved/calendar.html)