



# The NCB News

Volume 13

Spring 2003

No. 1

A Publication of the Nebraska Center for the Book

## Nebraska Book Festival Returns to Omaha

**T**he 2003 Nebraska Book Festival will take place on October 24-25 in the Skutt Student Center on the campus of Creighton University in downtown Omaha.

Together with the Nebraska Center for the Book and the Nebraska Humanities Council, Creighton will co-sponsor the Festival as part of its celebration of 125 years of providing quality education to young women and men in the Jesuit tradition.

Festival co-directors are Dr. Timothy Austin, Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences and Nebraska Humanities Council board member, and Brent Spencer, Associate Professor of English and Nebraska Center for the Book board member. Of Creighton's sponsorship, Spencer said, "The University is very pleased to sponsor this year's festival. It gives us opportunities to promote this excellent public event and to celebrate an important milestone in the history of our university."

The year 2003 marks a milestone for several organizations in the area. The Omaha Public Library recently celebrated its 125th birthday. The Nebraska Humanities Council is marking thirty years of fulfilling its mission of cultivating an understanding of our history and culture throughout the state and the Nebraska Center for the Book will celebrate thirteen years of bringing together Nebraska's community of the book. In order to ensure that the 2003 Nebraska Book Festival appropriately reflects this rich and lively heritage, this year's festival sponsors have selected as its theme, **Books Alive!**

The Festival is still in the planning stages, but the two-day event will include readings by authors, writing workshops, panel discussions on writing and literature, displays on various aspects of books and bookmaking, and activities on topics ranging from contemporary fiction and poetry to insights into publishing, forming book groups, researching family genealogy, foreseeing the future of the book, and more.

For more information or to volunteer to help, contact Brent Spencer, Creighton University, 402-280-2192, <spencr@creighton.edu>. ▲



Above:  
Creighton  
University  
Reinert Alumni  
Memorial  
Library



Right: St.  
John's Church

## Book Award Nominations Sought

The 2003 Nebraska Book Awards program, sponsored by the Nebraska Center for the Book (NCB), will recognize and honor books that are written by Nebraska authors, published by Nebraska publishers, set in Nebraska, or relating to Nebraska.

Books published in 2002, as indicated by the copyright date, are eligible for nomination. They must be professionally published, have an International Standard Book Number (ISBN), and be bound. Books may be entered in one or more of the following categories: Children/Young Adult, Cover Design/Illustrations, Fiction, Nonfiction, and Poetry. Certificates will be awarded to the winners in each category. Award winners will be announced at the Nebraska Book Festival on October 24. The winning

books will be displayed at the Book Festival. Winners will be entitled to display award stickers on their book covers. The entry fee is \$40 per book and per category entered. Deadline for entries is June 30. Entry forms are available from the Nebraska Library Commission home page, <www.nlc.state.ne.us>, search on 2003 Book Awards or contact Mary Geibel, 402-471-2045, 800-307-2665, e-mail: <mgeibel@nlc.state.ne.us> for print information. Enter by sending the entry form, three copies of the book, and the entry fee to NCB Book Awards Competition, Nebraska Library Commission, The Atrium, 1200 N Street, Suite 120, Lincoln, NE 68508-2023. ▲



# Involvement Opportunities Abound in 2003

by **Kathy Johnson**,  
Nebraska Center  
for the Book  
President

*Each year brings new opportunities for "people who know and love books, and value the richness they bring to our lives." The Nebraska Center for the Book plans many activities in 2003 and the Board hopes that you will enjoy participating in them.*

As of this spring, the Nebraska Center for the Book has a Web site. It is hosted at <[www.unl.edu/NCB](http://www.unl.edu/NCB)>. On the site you can learn more about the Nebraska Center for the Book, check a calendar of book-related activities, discover ways to get involved as a volunteer to promote reading and literacy, connect to other sites of interest to Center for the Book members, learn more about the awards made by the Nebraska Center for the Book, link to the online archive of the *NCB News*, find information about membership and a membership form, and link to the current Nebraska Book Festival site.

Creating this site drew on the thoughts and talents of many people. Special thanks are due to Mary Jo Ryan of the Nebraska Library Commission for her assistance to the Board in planning for the site. University of Nebraska—Lincoln (UN—L) staff Jeanetta Drueke, Associate Professor of Libraries, and Judellen Thornton-Jarunge, Assistant Professor of Libraries, took input from the Board and made a prototype. They are the people most directly involved in turning the dream into the reality. Please let us know what you would like to see on the site as it continues to evolve.

The Nebraska Book Awards program, now in its fourth year, "recognizes and honors books written by Nebraska authors, published by Nebraska publishers, set in Nebraska, or relating to Nebraska." Award categories include fiction, non-fiction, poetry, children's books, and book design/covers. If you or someone you know is a Nebraska author, publisher, or has written a book set in or related to Nebraska, encourage them to enter. See <[www.nlc.state.ne.us/public/ncbawards.html](http://www.nlc.state.ne.us/public/ncbawards.html)> for details.

On October 24 and 25, the Twelfth Nebraska Book Festival, **Books Alive!** will take place at Creighton University in Omaha. This issue and the summer issue of *NCB News* will provide Festival information. The Nebraska Book Festival Web site will open this summer. Check the link on the Nebraska Center for the Book Web site. We are delighted that Creighton University will host the Festival and that it is one of the featured activities for their 125th anniversary celebration.

These are some, but not all, of the Nebraska Center for the Book activities for 2003. With your continued support through membership renewals, encouraging new members to join, and participating in the Center's activities and programs, the Center will indeed enhance the richness that books bring to people's lives. Thank you and keep up the good work. ▲

## The **NCB**News

Vol. 13 • Spring 2003 • No. 1

### Nebraska Center for the Book Board and Committees

#### By-Laws

Kathy Johnson, President; Chuck Peek, Vice President/President Elect; Joan Birnie, Past President

#### Funding/Membership

Molly Fisher (ex-officio), Committee Chair; Joan Birnie, Past President; Shelly Clark; Connie Osborne

#### Nebraska Book Festival

Kathy Johnson, President, Committee Chair; Peter Beeson (ex-officio); Twyla Hansen; Nancy Johnson, Jerry Kromberg, Treasurer; Chuck Peek, Vice President/President Elect; Brent Spencer

#### Programs/Projects

Vicki Clarke; Bob Nedderman; Rod Wagner (ex-officio)

#### Publications/Publicity

Gerry Cox, Committee Chair; Oliver Pollak; Linda Trout; Mary Jo Ryan, staff

#### Awards Art Coordinator

Denise Brady

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

#### 2003 Nebraska Center for the Book Board Meetings

February 8 . . . . . Fremont  
May 23 . . . . . Omaha  
August 9 . . . . . Kearney  
November 2 . . . . . Lincoln, Annual Meeting

#### Advertising

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

*The NCB News* is published three times a year by the Nebraska Center for the Book, The Atrium, 1200 N Street, Suite 120, Lincoln, NE 68508-2023. Subscription is free with membership. Editor: Gerry Cox. Design and Production: Valerie Dayton. Staff: Mary Jo Ryan, Jacqueline Crocker, Janet Greser.

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*This publication was supported in part by the Institute of Museum and Library Services under the provisions of the Library Services and Technology Act as administered by the state of Nebraska through the Nebraska Library Commission.*



# Letters About Literature Winners Announced



Winners of the statewide student **Letters about Literature** contest met at the State Capitol to receive their awards from Governor Mike Johanns at a ceremony commemorating National Library Week. This is the first time that two students were honored from one Nebraska school, Union District 74, a rural school north of Atkinson. All thirty-four of the school's students were welcomed by the governor and attended the other events in Lincoln.

### Grades Nine—Twelve

- ▲ Elliott Scheffler, Blair, Winner
- ▲ Nolan DeWispelare, David City, Alternate

### Grades Seven—Eight

- ▲ Erin Metzler, Arlington, Winner
- ▲ Adam Olson, Atkinson, Alternate

### Grades Four—Six

- ▲ Hannah Potter, Lincoln, Winner
- ▲ Kelsey Butterfield, Atkinson, Alternate

**Letters about Literature** is a national contest sponsored by the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress and the Weekly Reader Corporation. Students wrote a letter to an author, living or dead, explaining how that author's work somehow "gave them wings," became a part of their life, or changed their view of the world or themselves. The young writers attended a luncheon and received prizes, including cash awards from Houchen Bindery and the Weekly Reader Corporation. They presented their winning entries to Curator Joanna Lloyd at the Jane Pope Geske Heritage Room of Nebraska Authors, Lincoln City Libraries. Laureen Riedesel, director of the Beatrice Public Library, coordinated the day's events for the Nebraska Center for the Book. ▲

## Norfolk Schedules Literature Festival and OLIO

An OLIO, an informal evening of storytelling, poetry, and prose with dessert will be held at Norfolk Public Library on July 25. The public is invited to tell a story, recite a poem, share a work of prose, or just relax, have dessert, and enjoy the performances.

The **Norfolk Public Library 9th Annual Literature Festival** is planned for July 26. This year's Festival will feature award-winning authors Jim Aylesworth, Bill Wallace, and Carol Lynch Williams. In addition to writers' workshops and feature presenta-

tions by each author, the Festival includes a preview of titles nominated for the 2003-2004 Golden Sower Awards; sales of Golden Sower items; book displays and sales by the Norfolk Library Foundation, the Williams family, Sheridan County Publishing Company, Warner Books, and Munson Books; an author autograph session; door prizes; and continuing education opportunities. For more information about these events, contact Karen or Marci at 402-844-2100 or e-mail: <kdrevo@ci.norfolk.ne.us>. ▲

### 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

\_\_\_ \$50 Octavo Membership

\_\_\_ \$100 Quarto Membership

\_\_\_ \$250 Folio Membership

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

# Review: *A Year at the Sorbonne*

by **Oliver Pollak**,

Yellow Barn Press,  
2002

ISBN: 1-882916-  
01-8

Reviewed by  
**Gerry Cox**, *NCB*  
News Editor

Had Elmo Elton Shaver known Oliver Pollak, he would have chosen Pollak to work with his diaries for publication. Shaver, born in 1916 in Kearney, became proficient in languages, literature, and religion. He prided himself in reading at an extraordinary pace, but even more extraordinary was his habit of keeping a diary about his interests, including notes and quotations from books. The sixty-three years of Shaver's diaries were distilled into Oliver Pollak's 2002 book, *A Year at the Sorbonne*, a beautifully bound and boxed art book with heavy deckled pages embellished with woodcuts, in an edition of 150 copies.

Pollak's interests in history, religion, and literature led him to Shaver's extensive diaries, housed in Council Bluffs, IA, in the care of Shaver's brother Neil Shaver. Pollak introduces us to an erudite, fascinating, difficult person who spent his junior year of college at the Sorbonne and "spent the rest of his life as a Frankophile." In diaries beginning in 1931, Shaver relates his successes (especially in teaching) and his failures through his accounts of the day-to-day search for relationships and spirituality. He struggled with relationships, few of which were with women (although he considered marriage at one time). In his later years, he saw himself as mentor to younger men, many of whom abused his generosity.

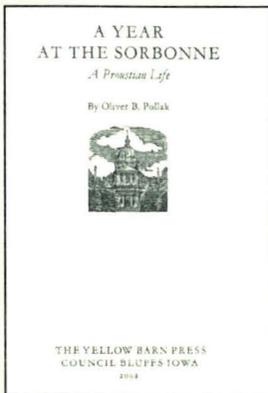
From the time he began keeping a diary, and for the next five years, his reading list contained 380 books. His lifelong reading was diverse. He was aware of the writers from Nebraska, noting Bess Streeter Aldrich's visit in California and Wright Morris's time in Paris. He read books by and about Marcel Proust, eventually identifying with his interests

in relationships, religions, and churches. When Shaver began collecting books, the authors ranged from Oscar Wilde, Gertrude Stein, Willa Cather, Henry James, Andre Gide, and from Thomas Mann to James Joyce, Arthur Miller, and his friend Richard Bach (who wrote *Jonathan Livingston Seagull*). He prided himself in his collection, "Reading is of course an inspiration and stimulus to the mind, but mere legal ownership is very pleasant for its own sake."

Shaver first belonged to the First Christian Church, then he turned to Unitarianism and Christian Science. He studied Judaism and Buddhism, but went back to Christian Science, rejecting the restrictions on movies and alcohol. He sought medical help (another Christian Science restriction) at the end of his life, mentioning it only through appointments for cancer treatment in the last diary entries, which end three days before he died in 1995.

As a youth, he moved with his parents, a sister, and a brother to Omaha and Long Beach, CA. At Long Beach City College, he met a young man who agreed to join him for study at the Sorbonne, something Shaver had planned for three years. When his friend backed out, Shaver went alone for his junior year and thereafter returned as frequently as he could, except for the war years. His diaries tell of artists, musicians, and writers he met, and of the architecture of Paris, especially the cathedrals and museums.

Although Shaver avoided the competition of publishing and other work necessary for his PhD, he would have appreciated Pollak's handling of his diaries which he hoped someone would read. ▲



## Nebraska Center for the Book Debuts Web Site

The Nebraska Center for the Book now has its own Web site at <[www.unl.edu/NCB](http://www.unl.edu/NCB)>. Designing the site involved numerous people and many hours. In 2002, the Board met with Mary Jo Ryan of the Nebraska Library Commission and Jeanetta Drueke of the University Libraries, UN-L to brainstorm ideas for content and organization and to review other states' Centers for the Book sites.

The site was developed by two librarians at UN-L, Judellen Thornton-Jaringe, an experienced designer, and Jeanetta Drueke, who researched Nebraska cultural resources for the Plains Humanities Alliance and writes on the history of the book. In early 2003, the new site was announced to the Board of the Nebraska Center for the Book. The Board enthusiastically welcomed the new presence.

The site consists of a home page with introductory information about the Nebraska Center for the Book; announcements of current events; a Calendar of upcoming events; information about programs, including the Nebraska Book Festival, the Reading and Writing Groups Project, The Nebraska Book Awards, the Jane Geske Award, and the Mildred Bennett Award; current and archived issues of the *NCB News*; and a membership form.

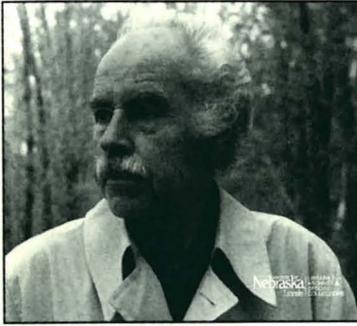
Development and maintenance of the site is ongoing. To share comments/suggestions or to volunteer as a usability tester, contact Kathy Johnson, Nebraska Center for the Book President, 402-472-2553, e-mail: <[kjohnson6@unl.edu](mailto:kjohnson6@unl.edu)>. ▲

## Wright Morris (1910-1998): American Dreamer

**T**his spring, at the *Wright Morris: American Dreamer Symposium*, sponsored by UN-L Libraries, the Plains Humanities Alliance and UN-L Friends of the Libraries, Nebraskans had the opportunity to explore the contributions to literature, photography, and American studies of Wright Morris, author of many novels and photo-texts.

Joseph Wydeven, author of *Wright Morris Revisited*, gave the keynote address in the Great Plains Art Collection gallery in Lincoln.

The symposium celebrated the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's acquisition of the Morris archival materials—including books,



manuscripts, correspondence, and photographs donated by Morris's widow, Josephine Morris (1927-2002). Since the University Library had an extensive collection of Morris materials, this bequest establishes UN-L as Morris's principal repository.

Speakers from around the country, including some who worked with Morris at UN-L, presented papers and panel discussion with topics such as loneliness and connection in his fiction, his use of photographs, teaching Wright Morris, and the possibilities for the future study of this Nebraska author using the newly-available materials at UN-L. Symposium participants also toured sites related to Morris's early life in Central City and Chapman. ▲

## Nebraska Summer Writers' Conference Set



Jonis Agee, the first novelist to win the Nebraska Center for the Book's Nebraska Book Award in 2000, has organized the inaugural Nebraska Summer Writers' Conference for July 12—18 at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Workshops and panels on Novel, Short Story, Poetry, Travel and Nature Writing, Mystery, Memoir, Screenwriting, and Publishing will provide a number of options for improving skills of writers, who may also schedule a manuscript consultation with a literary agent. In addition to the work-

shops, the weeklong participants will have an individual conference with their instructors. Nebraskans Ted Kooser, Hilda Raz, and Mary Pipher are among the dozen professional writer-instructors.

Tuition includes registration in the writing workshops and participation in special events, including the Saturday morning breakfast and the Sunday evening dinner/cocktail party for weekend participants and the Friday evening banquet for the week-long participants, as well as all faculty and student readings, panels, and consultation.

For more information see the Web site at <[www.nswc.org](http://www.nswc.org)> or contact Nebraska Summer Writers' Conference, Jonis Agee, Department of English, P.O. Box 880333, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Nebraska 68588-0333, 402-472-1834, <[jagee@unl.edu](mailto:jagee@unl.edu)>, or <[nswc@unl.edu](mailto:nswc@unl.edu)>. ▲

## University of Nebraska Press to Participate in Holocaust Project

The University of Nebraska Press has been selected to participate in the **Comprehensive History of the Holocaust** project, comprising fifteen to twenty scholarly books by an international team of historians to be published during the next ten to fifteen years in English, Hebrew, and other languages. The first title is University of North Carolina professor Christopher Browning's *The Origins of the*

*Final Solution: The Evolution of Nazi Jewish Policy, September 1939-March 1942*. History professor Alan Steinweis notes that the Press, "...previously had done a lot of important publishing work in the field of Jewish studies and Holocaust studies, so we already had a well-established reputation in this area of publication." ▲



# Checking Out Books, Privacy, and the USA Patriot Act

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

## Lewis and Clark Expedition Online Now Available

The University of Nebraska Press recently launched a new Web site. **The Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition Online**, based on Gary E. Moulton's celebrated edition of the *Lewis and Clark Journals*, will eventually offer the full text of the *Journals*—almost five thousand pages. Currently nearly two hundred pages from Volume Four are available to the public free of charge, at <lewisandclarkjournals.unl.edu>.



Historically, many traditional library book circulation systems employed a pocket pasted on the inside cover containing a card identifying borrowers (in handwriting or addressograph stamp). A date slip with a date stamp was also tucked in the pocket. Between these two records, librarians and patrons could determine the identity of readership and the frequency with which the book was checked out. The date slip revealed whether the book was heavily, lightly, or never used. Was it checked out a couple of times each decade or had it not been checked out since 1952? Had it been requested by another library through Inter-Library Loan? There was no expectation of privacy.

I took pleasure in looking at checkout cards that date back to the late 1940s at the Omaha's Kripke Jewish Federation Library. *Gentleman's Agreement* by Laura Z. Hobson, published in 1947, was accession number 1,788, discarded in 2001 complete with book pocket and two-sided Library Bureau Borrower's Name card. I acquired it for less than a dollar. It was checked out twenty-one times by women and once by a man between 1947 and 1966; thirteen times in its 1947-48 heyday.

J. D. Hicks, a prominent historian published *My Life with History* in 1968. In the University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO) library, I saw the name of friends and colleagues on the Demco-issue card for this book. It created a community of readership, an association copy, one step removed from personal ownership.

An anonymous typescript at the Alliance Public Library illustrates that other people also look at checkout records, "When we used to sign our library cards we could read on them who had already read the book we were checking out. It seemed that there were names of a few great readers which appeared in almost every book in the library." However, the typescript turns sinister, "It is said that one Alliance woman used to read all the cards, whether she was checking out a book or not, to see who was reading dirty books." This may have been resolved by the closing sentence, "Now we have cards with little metallic plates with numbers on them."

When libraries made the transition to electronic circulation, the contents of book pockets became mementos of a bygone age. Their passing was not as

contentious as discontinuing and discarding the card catalog. Under the old regime there was no expectation of privacy regarding what a person had checked out and probably, possibly, potentially, purposely, pursued, scanned, read, reread, or photocopied. But if a potential reader wanted a book that was checked out, it was library policy to recall the book without informing the intended borrower of the current borrower's identity. When I found obscure or arcane books checked out to faculty, I asked the library to disclose my identity to the patron with a request they contact me so we could discuss the book. This has lead to more than a couple of intellectual friendships. Charles Johanningsmeier of the UNO English Department recalled a book I had. The library put us into contact and we now look out for each other in the area of nineteenth century periodical holdings and class structure.

Electronic checkout systems introduced anonymity. Access to these records, which serve as the basis for computer-generated overdue and recall notices, is limited. Reconstruction of the readership community by library patrons is no longer possible. Privacy of library records achieved statutory form in Nebraska in 1983 in 84-712.05 (10), denying public access to "Records or portions of records kept by a publicly-funded library which, when examined with or without other records, reveal the identity of any library patron using the library's materials and services." This privacy could be breached by a court order.

Since 9/11 and the passage of the USA Patriot Act, law enforcement may have easier access to patron checkout records, challenging accepted rights of privacy and academic freedom. Could this chill free library inquiry? Will a patron be concerned that although innocently seeking information, big brother could acquire "point of sale" data in a giant retrieval system and the reader could get labeled a "suspect reader?"

It may be apocryphal, but during the French Revolution and the terror fomented by Robespierre, owning an innocent book of poetry bound with a fleur de lis on the cover could result in the owner being accused of Royalist sympathies and being led away to the guillotine. ▲



# Review: **Local Wonders: Seasons in the Bohemian Alps**

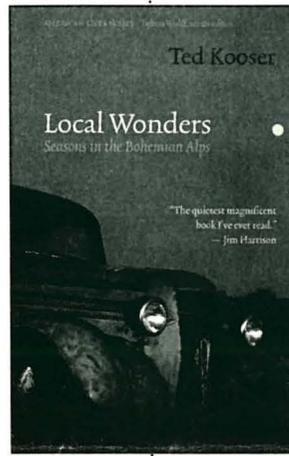
by **Ted Kooser**

University of  
Nebraska Press,  
2002  
ISBN: 0-8032-  
2751-5

**Review by  
Nelson Potter,**  
University of  
Nebraska—Lincoln

In *Local Wonders*, poet Ted Kooser tells us what life is like in rural eastern Seward County, a region called the Bohemian Alps because it is hilly and was first settled by Czech and German immigrants. The book is mostly celebration and appreciation, and it will enrich your life. I grew up in small town rural Illinois, so I recognize at least some of the flavors of encounters with neighbors and the personalized character of mail service. One thing I remember is earthy humor, "Here, you can cut your apple with my knife. That's my pig-castrating knife."

Kooser has accumulated a collection of Bohemian proverbs, which were major eastern European imports. They will mostly be new to readers, and they often have an edge: Where sheep are lacking, the goats are honored. He who wants to know himself should offend two or three of his neighbors. A word which flies out of the mouth like a sparrow cannot be drawn back, even by four horses. Perhaps the main theme of his effortless writing is expressed in a little poem: "If you can awaken/inside the familiar/ and discover it new/ you need never/ leave home./ Local wonders." (p. 94) This has the resonance of "Much have I traveled in Concord."



There are also memories of growing up in Ames, IA and memories of family. The past and the present interweave, leaving a sense that nothing has changed, except oneself. And even then, growing older regularly catches one by surprise. A remarkable non-sensual enjoyment, mostly unmediated by desire or want and loss or failure, provides the substance of life. The elements of this life are presented as discrete: a neighbor's visit, a meaningful chore, a memory, a comment, an apposite proverb, seasonal changes marked by birds, opossums, mice, weather, flowers, trees, his dog. All are closely observed.

Reading this book is like meeting Ted Kooser and spending some time with him, getting to know him. The book is like a friend you will be glad that you got to know.

**Ed. Note:** Nebraska author Ted Kooser won Barnes & Noble's 2002 **Discover Great New Writers Award** for this book, the first University of Nebraska Press title to be named as a finalist in the history of the competition (since 1993). ▲

## Historic Brownville All Booked Up

Historic Brownville joined the international "booktown" in April at the first annual *Wine, Writers and Song* festival. A "booktown" is usually a rural town or village with a concentration of booksellers, mainly secondhand and antiquarian bookshops. Most booktowns are developed around historic or scenic villages, and many older, vacant buildings are restored as bookshops. As a result, the town becomes a destination for book hunters.

Richard Booth, founder of the movement, of Hay-on-Wye Wales, was in Brownville to make the designation. The movement began when Booth, an Oxford graduate, opened a bookshop in the remote village of

Hay. The bookshop grew and turned Hay into an international tourist destination based on books.

Other small towns around the world took up the concept and are now linked on the Web at <[www.booktown.co.uk](http://www.booktown.co.uk)>. At the Brownville festival visitors met Booth, who has designated himself King of Books, attended workshops on book collecting, met authors and heard them read from their works, heard stories, and listened to bluegrass and country music. Festivities included a gala barbecue at Whiskey Run Creek Winery and an evening cruise on the Missouri river aboard the **Spirit of Brownville**. ▲

# Cookbook Confidential: How Omaha Public Library Produced its First Cookbook

by Cynthia Vana, Omaha Public Library

We cooked. Boy, did we cook. Our idea to produce a cookbook started as a whim, a small project among big plans for Omaha Public Library's 125th anniversary celebration throughout 2002. It grew into an endeavor more demanding than we anticipated. We decided to create a *history* cookbook by printing a photo and brief history of each library on the section dividers.

Our research and solicitations for "library stories" yielded enlightening information and fun facts. While digging through dusty old files we discovered a tragic incident. Around the early 1900s, a janitor cleaning the old Main Library encountered a Russian immigrant man who was hiding in the stairwell. The immigrant allegedly mistook the uniformed janitor for the law. Rather than risk being deported back to Russia, he shot and killed himself. Black humor? Maybe, but we didn't use it. On a lighter note, Omaha billionaire Warren Buffett shared an amusing anecdote that we did use. A former librarian at the Benson Branch gave Buffet a copy of a book he checked out many times as a schoolboy, *A Thousand Ways to Make a Thousand Dollars*. He said he's not sure he's exhausted all one thousand ways yet, but he's still working on it.

Nebraska authors Jonis Agee, William Kloefkorn, James Solheim and other notables also contributed recipes and writings for what would become *Literary Bites: 125 Years and Still Cooking*. Morris Press in Kearney supplied an extraordinary cookbook kit that helped in determining costs and the Friends of Omaha Public Library funded the \$8000 project.

We solicited nearly four hundred recipes from staff, administration, library support organizations, authors, community leaders, and the general public. No recipe went untested. Library staff tested recipes using their own ingredients in their own kitchens. The dean of the Metro Community College Culinary Arts program assigned recipes to his students. After

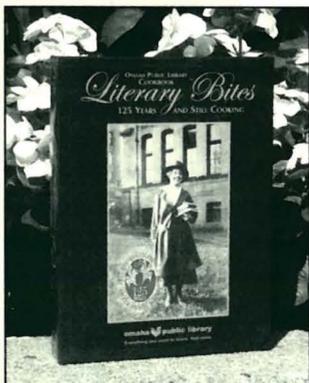
weeding out the flops, like the soggy fruit pizza, three hundred and fifty recipes merited publication. A team of editors, including library staff and *Omaha World Herald* food editor Jane Palmer, proofed recipes for typos, grammar, and general readability. When *Literary Bites* was released, Palmer's review in the Wednesday edition food section spurred sales.

Library staff submitted entries in a Name-the-Cookbook contest, then voted for a title by selecting their favorites from a ballot posted on the library's staff Web page. Despite some humorous but inappropriate submissions, which included cracks about city administrators slashing budgets and staff, and the ballot box being stuffed (one title received more votes than the number of staff), two entries were combined to make the title, *Literary Bites: 125 Years and Still Cooking*. Submitters of the winning entries won a copy of the cookbook.

A book distributor delivered copies to bookstore chains and three of us personally distributed to the smaller bookstores and gift shops in the Omaha area. "It's a great little cookbook!" said James Traylor, proprietor of the coffee shop at Omaha Public Library's downtown location. He has tried the salmon patties, shrimp scampi, and chocolate cake recipes and loved them. "But I'm a freak like that," he said. "I like to eat."

Almost ten months after printing one thousand copies, we've sold, on behalf of the Friends, about five hundred and fifty copies at \$16 (in the libraries) and at \$18.95 to outside retailers. We fully expect to sell the remaining copies to realize a healthy profit. In spite of many unexpected and time-consuming details, *Literary Bites: 125 Years and Still Cooking* turned out to be a rewarding commemorative piece, of which library staff and members are proud. Supporters and the Omaha community will enjoy it for years to come.

To purchase a cookbook, send a check for \$19 (includes postage and handling) to Omaha Public Library *Literary Bites* Cookbook, 215 South 15th Street, Omaha, NE 68102. For more information call 402-444-4800 or see <[www.omaha.lib.ne.us](http://www.omaha.lib.ne.us)>. ▲



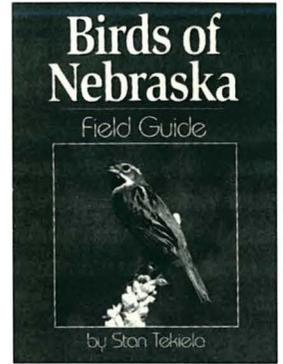
## Review: *Birds of Nebraska*

by **Stan Tekiela**

Adventure  
Publications,  
2003  
ISBN:  
1591930170

This book covers 117 species—only Nebraska birds, so you don't need to flip through pages of birds that aren't found in our state to locate the one you've spotted at your feeder. The book is organized by color for quick reference and contains range maps to show where in the state a bird is likely to be seen in summer, winter, all year, and during migration. Large color photos make identification easy. ▲

Review by **Linda Hillegass**, Lee Booksellers



## Review: *To Bucktail and Back*

by **Tom Allan**

Omaha World-  
Herald  
Company, 2002  
ISBN: 0-  
9723006-2-7

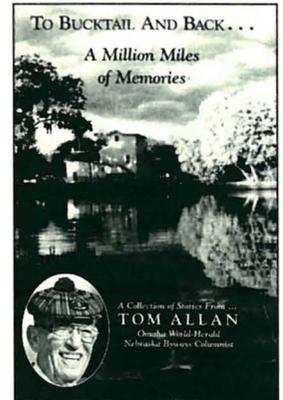
Reviewed by  
**John Keller**

Nebraska journalist Tom Allan recounts his 61-year career as a writer in this delightful and often humorous book. Whether the title is a take off on Audie Murphy's autobiography, one can only speculate, as "Bucktail" is also now a place relegated to the history books!

Scotland-born Tom Allan's love for Nebraska, and the friendliness and camaraderie that so characterizes life in the Midwest, is evident throughout this work. The author takes us back to his early days as an aspiring writer in Kansas to his serendipitous interview with Fred Ware, then executive editor of the *Omaha World-Herald*. Ware noted that Allan was wearing a small track award on a tie chain and steered the discussion to track and field topics. At the end of the "interview" the job was his, beginning a career that spanned six decades.

Allan takes us through backstage stories on the Omaha police beats, giving a rare look at the humor and compassion that is rarely seen in law enforcement, and possibly of a more "personal" and a kinder time in our nation's history. We follow Allan across the state, wearing out twenty #18 vehicles along the way. We are given glimpses beyond Nebraska's boundaries with a return to native Scotland, as well as trips to Finland, to the jungles of the Amazon, and to many other places along the way.

Allan pays tribute to Nebraska's contributions, from its authors and poets to its football legends; the reader is truly treated to a "million memories." ▲



## Nominate now for Mildred Bennett Award

The Mildred Bennett Award provides another way for the Nebraska Center for the Book to honor people who have made significant contributions to the literary tradition in Nebraska.

Mildred Bennett founded the Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial and Educational Foundation in 1955, after she had already done a great deal of research, resulting in her 1951 book, *The World of Willa Cather*. As the founding president of the Board of Governors, she organized the purchase of the first of the Cather landmark buildings in Red Cloud.

The purpose of the award in her name is to remind Nebraskans of the literary and intellectual traditions that enrich our lives. The Nebraska Book Festival local arrangements committee will select the 2003 recipient, who will be recognized on October 24 at the festival in Omaha.

Previous recipients of the Mildred Bennett Award are:

- ▲ 2002: George Ayoub II
- ▲ 2001: Marion Marsh Brown
- ▲ 2000: Linda Hillegass
- ▲ 1999: Ron Hull
- ▲ 1998: J.V. Brummels
- ▲ 1997: Carol Connor
- ▲ 1996: Helen Stauffer
- ▲ 1995: Molly Fisher
- ▲ 1994: Susan Rosowski
- ▲ 1993: Jane Geske
- ▲ 1992: Caroline Sandoz Pifer and Flora Sandoz
- ▲ 1991: Hilda Neihardt

Send nominations by July 1 to Dr. Timothy Austin, Dean, College of Arts & Sciences, Creighton University, 2500 California Plaza, Omaha, NE 68178, 402-280-2431, e-mail: <traustin@creighton.edu>. ▲

# National Conference on Regionalism and the Humanities Planned



A National Conference on Regionalism and the Humanities, hosted by the Plains Humanities Alliance at the University of Nebraska—Lincoln (UN—L) is set for November 20-22. Defining region and regionalism and their relationship to the humanities is the theme of the first annual collaborative conference of the nine new regional humanities centers designated recently by the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). This theme will address a variety of questions, including:

- ▲ How are regions defined?
- ▲ What constitutes a region?
- ▲ How might the humanities respond to ideas of region?
- ▲ What issues predominate in the regional humanities?
- ▲ How might the humanities of a region address public policy issues? What role do identity and memory play in region formation?

Sponsored jointly by the nine centers established under the NEH Regional Humanities Centers initiative, this conference will serve to demonstrate excellent work on regionalism, to identify significant issues that the centers might address, and to develop collaboration among humanities organizations. This conference will be the first in a series that will rotate among the nine regional centers. John Wunder, UN—L Center for Great Plains Studies Director, will serve as conference committee chair. The conference program committee welcomes individual and panel proposals that address the theme and related questions of the conference. For the call for proposals and more details on the conference see [www.unl.edu/rcplains/regionalism/index.html](http://www.unl.edu/rcplains/regionalism/index.html). Keep up-to-date on Alliance activities at [www.unl.edu/rcplains](http://www.unl.edu/rcplains). ▲

## Nominate Now for Jane Pope Geske Award

To honor a Nebraska organization that has been outstanding in its work with readers or writers, book lovers are encouraged to nominate an organization for the Nebraska Center for the Book Jane Geske Award. Established in recognition of Jane Geske's contributions to the well-being of the libraries of Nebraska, last year's award went to the Mari Sandoz High Plains Heritage Center in Chadron. Geske was a founding member of the Nebraska Center for the Book and a long-time active member in many Nebraska library and literary activities.

The Jane Geske Award for 2003 will be presented at the November 2 annual meeting of the Nebraska Center for the Book. The award recognizes a Nebraska association, organization, business, library, school, academic institution, or other group that has made an exceptional long-term contribution to The Nebraska Community of the Book in regard to literacy, books, reading, libraries, bookselling, and/or writing in Nebraska. Nominations and supporting letters are invited and must be received by July 15 at

Nebraska Center for the Book Jane Geske Award, c/o Rod Wagner, Library Commission Director, 1200 N. St., Suite 120, Lincoln NE 68508-2023, 402-471-4001, 800-307-2665, fax 402-471-2083, e-mail: [rwagner@nlc.state.ne.us](mailto:rwagner@nlc.state.ne.us).

### Previous recipients are:

- ▲ 2001: Friends of the Omaha Public Library
- ▲ 2000: Myer and Dorothy Kripke Jewish Federation Library
- ▲ 1999: John G. Neihardt Foundation and Neihardt Center
- ▲ 1998: Friends of the Libraries of the University of Nebraska—Lincoln
- ▲ 1997: The Prairie Schooner and Hilda Raz, Editor
- ▲ 1996: The Nebraska Press
- ▲ 1994: The Cummington Press and Harry Duncan
- ▲ 1993: Nebraska Humanities Council
- ▲ 1992: The Heritage Room of Nebraska Authors, Lincoln City Libraries. ▲



**BIBLIOFILE: Featuring Steve Buttress**

By **Lindsay Lampe**, Omaha Public Library



Lindsay Lampe interviewed Kearney author Steve Buttress in February when he gave a presentation at the Omaha Public Library's Millard Branch. Steve Buttress worked in economic development in several states before beginning to write books. Buttress writes about his friend Tony Burns, an Oklahoma prosecutor who solved 173 cases and told Buttress the intriguing case stories. Steve changed the names, dates, and places to fictionalize the stories. His first novel is *Standing too Close to the Flame*. UNO student Lindsay Lampe is a Secondary Education and Journalism major and works part-time for the Omaha Public Library.

**Q. What is the best part of seeing your books published?**

**A.** The best thing about getting the books into print was the transformation from "going to" to "done." It became real. I could hold the results of my work in my hands. I could hand it to other people and they could react to it. Instead of, "I'm going to be a writer," now I am one.

**Q. What inspired you to write your book?**

**A.** The stories that my friend told me inspired me to write them. I've listened to him tell them and always felt they needed to be shared. Now I see myself as a writer. I know I had the capacity to do it well, and now I see potential books in many situations.

**Q. How long did it take for you to finish the whole process (writing, editing, and publishing)?**

**A.** The novel has been an ongoing process, off and on, for the past three years. The second one is coming together from material that was written as part of that process. Now that I know what I'm doing and how to approach the writing process, I'd say it will take me six months to do the research and write the first draft of the next novels in that series. The non-fiction work took four months to do the interviewing and a month to do the writing.

**Q. What kind of research do you do?**

**A.** For the novels, I spent hundreds of hours interviewing the lead character. I tape the conversations to refresh my memory. I talk to people who know the subject matter to make sure I'm using the right language. For the non-fiction piece, I interviewed fifty-sixty people, dug through old newspaper files, scoured the library for relevant books, and used the Internet to locate material and sources.

**Q. Do you like to give presentations?**

**A.** I enjoy giving presentations. It is another way to share the stories and I get a lot of reinforcing

feedback. I also always get new ideas for stories. A lot of people have great stories to tell and want to share them.

**Q. What advice would you give to aspiring writers?**

**A.** Read Stephen King's *On Writing*.

**Q. How did your position with Enterprise Florida (and other positions) influence you?**

**A.** The Enterprise Florida job exposed me to a new set of experiences, political intrigue, values, and social environment. I don't think any of that has crept into the current work, but it will certainly be grist for the mill for future works. Ohio was a state-level job, working for a governor who would be president. I got an insider's view of high-level politics. The Montana experience was community-based, colorful, politically complex, a great chance to learn how to influence, and to be influenced by, the shaping of a state. Oklahoma exposed me to the character and stories I'm writing about. It all came together in Kearney.

Here I was able to use all that I had learned about building community and an economy in a very nurturing and supportive environment. All of these locales have provided experiences that I draw upon when I write. It's like having an inventory of sights, sounds, smells, characters, and experiences to draw upon. They pop up and get inserted all the time.

**Q. Do you have any future projects?**

**A.** I have completed the first draft of a short children's book, *Chief Many Blankets O'Brien*, which is a story told to me by a fifth-generation Nebraskan. I am near completion of the second in the "Hero" series, and have three more books in that series planned. I have the first draft of another novel completed, one that draws on an experience when I was Director of the Nebraska Department of Economic Development. I am planning on a novel about community, based on the life of an uncle who came to this country as a young boy in 1910. I have the outline of another novel that grew from stories that people shared with me after publication of the Kearney book. There is a lot of imagination in that potential story, which weaves together the lives of Buffalo Bill Cody, an early Kearney pioneer, and the Carmelite order of nuns who operate a Kearney nursing home.

There are a number of ideas that I have worked on and that are sitting on the back burner. Whether or not they make it to the front burner depends on how they rank compared to other ideas that might come along. I need to figure out how to publish all of these. I may spend some time looking for an agent or a publisher, or I may do it myself again. Stay tuned for details. ▲



# 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  
34-00-00

NONPROFIT  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
Permit No. 988  
Lincoln, NE

**Nominate Now for  
Nebraska Book Awards**

- Nancy Friedemann: The Beauty of Writing Exhibition**, Lincoln, Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery,  
Contact: 402-472-2461, <sheldon@unl.edu>, <www.sheldonartgallery.org> . . . . . May 20-Aug. 17 . . . . . Lincoln
- Many Faces, Many Places Lady Vestey Festival**, Superior, Contact: Superior Area  
Chamber of Commerce, 402-879-3419, <superiorcc@alltel.net>, <www.victorianfestival.info> . . . . . May 23-25 . . . . . Superior
- Cather International Seminar: Cather as Cultural Icon, Ripton, VT**,  
Contact: Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial and Educational Foundation, Steve Ryan, 402-746-2653,  
<catherproject2@unl.edu>, <www.unl.edu/Cather/community/symposia/seminar.htm> . . . . . May 28-June 2 . . . . . Vermont
- Mayhem in the Midlands Mystery Conference**, Omaha, Author Jan Burke,  
Contact: Jennifer Kirchmann, 402-444-4828, <jkirchmann@omaha.lib.ne.us>,  
<www.omaha.lib.ne.us/mayhem/index/html> . . . . . May 29-June 1 . . . . . Omaha
- Buffalo Commons Storytelling Festival**, McCook, Storyteller Barbara McBride-Smith, Poet Bill  
Kloefkorn, Writer Linda Hasselstrom, Contact: Director Mary Dueland, <dmandue@ocsmccook.com>,  
<www.buffalocommons.org> . . . . . May 30-31 . . . . . McCook
- Mayor's Art Awards: Literary Heritage Award**, Lincoln Arts Council 25th Anniversary,  
Contact: Executive Director Deb Weber, 402-434-2787, <LACdirector@artscene.org>  
<www.artscene.org/mayors.asp> . . . . . June 4 . . . . . Lincoln
- Land Records and Genealogy Symposium**, Beatrice, Homestead National Monument with  
Folklorist Roger Welsch, Contact: Kelly Schwisow, 402-228-8244; Todd Arrington,  
402-223-3514, <www.nps.gov/home> . . . . . June 11-12 . . . . . Beatrice
- Bess Streeter Aldrich House**, Elmwood, Cookout and Concert on the Lawn with the  
County-Line Brass Band, Contact: Teresa Lorensen, 402-994-3855, <bsafmus@yahoo.com>  
<www.lincolne.com/non-profit/bsaf/upcoming.html> . . . . . June 21 . . . . . Elmwood
- Lewis and Clark Trails Teachers Institute**, Hastings, A ten-day trip along the Lewis and Clark trail,  
Contact: Will Locke, 402-461-7311, <wlocke@hastings.edu> . . . . . June 25-July 4 . . . . . Hastings
- Nebraska Storytelling Festival**, Omaha, College of St. Mary, Contact: 402-551-4532,  
800-551-4532, <storygalore@cox.net>, <www.nebraskastoryarts.org/fest\_info.html> . . . . . June 26-29 . . . . . Omaha
- Chautauqua: Sea to Shining Sea**, Plattsmouth, Contact: Peter Beeson, 402-474-2131, Ext. 17;  
<peter@nebraskahumanities.org>, <www.nebraskahumanities.org> . . . . . June 27-July 1 . . . . . Plattsmouth
- Deadline: Fourth Annual Nebraska Book Awards**,  
Contact: <www.nlc.state.ne.us/public/ncbawards/html> . . . . . June 30
- Nebraska Summer Writers' Conference**, Lincoln, UN-L,  
Authors Ted Kooser, Mary Pipher, Hilda Raz, and others, Contact: Jonis Agee, 402-472-1834,  
<jagee@unl.edu>, <nswc@unl.edu>, <www.unl.edu/nsw> . . . . . July 12-18 . . . . . Lincoln
- Story Telling OLIO and Ninth Annual Literature Festival**, Norfolk, Contact: Karen Drevo,  
402-844-2100, <kdrevo@ci.norfolk.ne.us> . . . . . July 25-26 . . . . . Norfolk
- Neihardt Day**, Bancroft John Neihardt Center, Performance Artist Bobby Bridger,  
Contact: 888-777-4667, <neihardt@gpcom.net>, <www.neihardt.com/center/index.html> . . . . . August 3 . . . . . Bancroft