

The NCB News

Volume 16

Spring 2006

No. 1

A Publication of the Nebraska Center for the Book

2006 Book Festival at Nebraska Wesleyan

Beyond Borders: *Nebraska and the World*, the Nebraska Book Festival, will be held on October 6-7 on the campus of Nebraska Wesleyan University in Lincoln. Jointly sponsored by the Nebraska Center for the Book, Nebraska Humanities Council, Nebraska Library Commission, and Nebraska Wesleyan University (NWU), the festival is already taking shape. NWU professor Michael Dumanis, program coordinator, has assembled a planning committee including representatives of the sponsors and other members of

the Nebraska book community. Initial plans include writing workshops for high school students on Friday, October 6 followed by a full day of events on Saturday. According to Michael Cartwright, Nebraska Book Festival Director, "Planning is moving along very well this year because we are building on the experience gained last year by the able people at NWU." Professor James Schaffer, program coordinator for 2005, is serving as mentor and back-up coordinator for Dumanis. "There is a lot going on right now," Cartwright reports. "We are working on the schedule of the program, a list of participants, grant applications, publicity, and a host of details." Further program plans will be featured in the Summer 2006 *NCB News* and on the Nebraska Center for the Book

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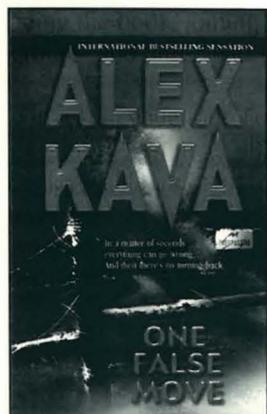
Web site,

www.unl.edu/NCB/2006.html.

For more information contact Michael Cartwright, at the Nebraska Library Commission, 402-471-4006, 800-307-2665, e-mail: mcartwright@nlc.state.ne.us.



One Book One Nebraska Reads *One False Move*



Nebraskans are invited to read the contemporary novel *One False Move* by Omaha native Alex Kava as a part of the 2006 One Book One Nebraska statewide book read. Governor Dave Heineman launched the statewide initiative with a proclamation in January. Southeast Library System, the Nebraska Regional Library Systems, the Nebraska Library Association, the Nebraska Library Commission, and the Nebraska Center for the Book (along with other statewide organizations) encourage all residents of

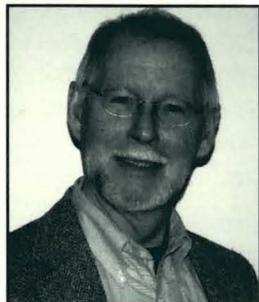
Nebraska to participate by reading the book, joining community book discussion groups, and participating in local community events.

The author will participate in a statewide tour. For information, contact Southeast Library System at 402-467-6188, 800-288-6063, bsealey@alltel.net or jennip@alltel.net.

For more information about activities and resources, see www.onebookonenebraska.org.

Dr. Michael P. Cartwright Serves as Book Festival Director

Guest Editorial
by **Jeanetta Druke,**
University of
Nebraska-Lincoln



Dr. Michael P.
Cartwright

Mike is an English professor at Chadron State College, a rancher/farmer in the Nebraska Panhandle, and an elected commissioner of the Upper Niobrara White River Natural Resource District. He sits on the board of the Prehistoric Prairie Society and the Mari Sandoz Society. He has been a member of the Nebraska Humanities Council, a member of the Nebraska Public Radio Board, a Dean of Arts and Sciences, an English department chair, and mayor of Whitney, Nebraska.

Mike is a bicoastal Nebraskan, splitting his time between Whitney and Lincoln. An eight-hour drive across the state is a normal day for Mike. Having found the route with only two stoplights between Lincoln and Whitney, he is now searching for the one

with fewer than three stop signs. One day it's 501s, cowboy boots, and his dad's '59 Ford truck. The next it's tweed jackets, suede shoes, and a briefcase. In a given week, he might help a neighbor drive cattle to the Fort Robinson Wood Reserve, teach world literature to undergraduates at Chadron State College, and lounge at the Coffee House in downtown Lincoln. Now, he may also be found directing the Nebraska Book Festival and reading for the Nebraska Library Commission's Talking Book and Braille Service.

Sometimes, Mike's many interests come together. Recently he published "The Sand Café," a short story about a gracefully aging rodeo cowboy, in *Nebraska Life*. Mike shares the traveling life with a reference librarian, a one-eyed dog, and a twenty-year-old cat.

Nominations for Geske Award Due in July

Nominations are sought for the Nebraska Center for the Book's Jane Pope Geske Award. Established in recognition of Geske's contributions to the well-being of the libraries of Nebraska, 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, book-selling, and/or writing in Nebraska. Geske, former Nebraska Library Commission Director, was a founding member of the Nebraska Center for the Book and a long-time, active participant in many Nebraska library

and literary activities. The Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial and Educational Foundation received the 2006 award.

Nominations and supporting letters must be received by July 15 at Nebraska Center for the Book Jane Geske Award, c/o Rod Wagner, Nebraska Library Commission Director, 1200 N Street, Suite 120, Lincoln NE 68508-2023, 402-471-4001, 800-307-2665, fax: 402-471-2083, e-mail: <rwagner@nlc.state.ne.us>.

The 2006 Jane Geske Award will be presented at the Annual Meeting of the Nebraska Center for the Book on November 5 at the Center for Great Plains Studies, 1155 Q Street, Lincoln, at 2:00 p.m.

The **NCB News**

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2006 Nebraska Center for the Book Board Meetings

August 5

November 5 Annual Meeting, 2 P.M.,
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: <mjryan@nlc.state.ne.us>, <www.unl.edu/NCB>.

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The Dictionary: Words about Words and Prosopography

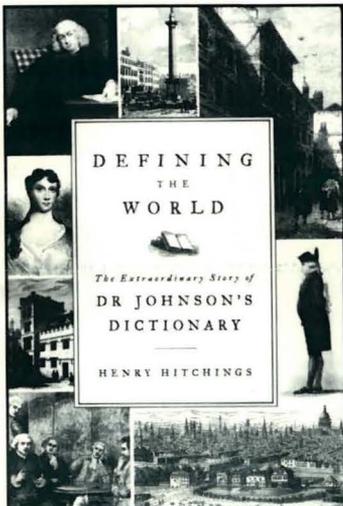
by **Oliver B. Pollak**

University of Nebraska at Omaha

Based on *Defining the World, The Extraordinary Story of*

Dr. Johnson's Dictionary by

Henry Hitchings, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005, ISBN-0-374-11302-5



The alphabet is the basis for written language. The dictionary guides pronunciation, spelling, definition, and etymology through a maze of millions of possible combinations of letters. Crossword puzzlers and Scrabblers (and Will Shortz devotees) take note.

Samuel Johnson's 1755 *Dictionary of the English Language*, eight years in the making, contained 42,000 entries. *The Oxford English Dictionary (OED)*, has 500,000 entries.

Henry Hitchings' *Defining the World, The Extraordinary Story of Dr. Johnson's Dictionary* is the most recent reminder of Johnson's contribution to culture and humor. Hitchings' 35 chapters are arranged alphabetically, Adventurous through Zootomy. Of course some letters provide more than one chapter as in the case of Lexicographer and Library.

"Prosopography" is not Johnson. The 3,194 page unabridged 1959 *Webster's International Dictionary of the English Language*, defines it as "description of the face or personal appearance." The more common definition of this uncommon word is group or collective biography, the drawing of social or literary relationships between individuals in a particular historical period. Johnson lived in an age of spirited intellectual organizers. His contemporaries, Adam Smith, Edward Gibbon, David Hume, and Benjamin Franklin (a veritable silicon valley of information age intellectual moguls) were linked by the publisher, William Strahan. Their books were in Thomas Jefferson's library.

The history and development of the *Oxford English Dictionary* has been well told by Simon Winchester in *The Meaning of Everything*. His

The Professor and the Madman, the English edition

being titled *The Surgeon of Crowthorne*, tells the story of a fascinating tortured contributor to the *OED*, itself an early example of *Wikipedia*, a compendium relying on public volunteer effort.

Johnson and his commentators tell us that language is complex, encompassing, and masterful. There are words with foreign derivation, Anglo-Saxon heritage, old words that become obsolete, and new words that enter usage. Professions develop vocabularies, "terms of art," seeking precision in reception and transmission.

Dictionaries can present a dilemma. What if you can pronounce the word but cannot spell it? How do you find the word in the dictionary? Phonetics is no guarantee of locating the word. What if you think you know how to spell the word, like prosopography or sphragistics but cannot find the word in the dictionary? Or your computer spell checker underlines words in red? Who is right? Who is wrong? Is there an explanation, an arbiter?

The two-volume 1950s *Funk and Wagnalls* (probably a dollar book from the Book of the Month Club) as well as a three-post binder *Webster's Encyclopedia Dictionary* (1957) (built by shopping at a particular supermarket) get dusted. My 2nd edition blue "thin paper" (an allusion to the venerable 11th edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*) 1960 *Webster New Collegiate Dictionary* is still in service. A colleague retired and gave me his well-worn 2nd edition. People of a certain age have books in common. The invaluable online *OED* is available through the Omaha Public Library.

No dictionary is perfect or complete. As the poet and linguist, John Ciardi (1916-86), the predecessor to Romanian Andrei Codrescu, National Public Radio language guru, said when signing off from his NPR program, "Good words to you."

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



Mayhem in the Midlands Mystery Conference May 25-28

The 7th annual Mayhem in the Midlands Mystery Conference takes place **May 25-28** at the Sheraton Hotel in downtown Omaha. Sponsored by Omaha Public Library and Lincoln City Libraries, Mayhem attracts more than two hundred mystery fans and writers. This year, Laura Lippman (award winning author of the Tess Monahan series) is the Guest of Honor and Denise Hamilton (best-selling author of the Eve Diamond series) is the Toastmaster. They, along with local authors Alex Kava and Sean Doolittle, are among approximately fifty authors signed up to attend the four-day conference.

The weekend kicks off Thursday evening with a "get-acquainted" cocktail party, followed by panel

discussions, book-signings, and conversations with the authors on Friday and Saturday. The River City Rogues (local Sisters in Crime group) will host the light buffet supper on Friday evening, followed by an auction to benefit children's materials for the Omaha Public Library and Lincoln City Libraries. The Omaha Press Club is the venue for this year's "Pookah Murder" mystery dinner on Saturday evening, starring Cathy Nelson and Jim Ross, who will invite the diners to solve the crime. The weekend concludes with the Laura Lippman interview during Sunday brunch.

For more information see www.omahapubliclibrary.org/mayhem/index.html or contact mtarelli-falcon@omahapubliclibrary.org.

Saving Our Treasures: Heirloom Health Clinic

Do you own a family heirloom, a valuable book, a time-honored treasure, or a wacky relic with an interesting story behind it? Would you like to know more about how to preserve it for the future? If so, the Nebraska State Historical Society (NSHS) may be able to help.

Conservators from NSHS's Ford Conservation Center will conduct a Heirloom Health Clinic on **Saturday, May 20, from 10:00 A.M.-4:00 P.M.** at the Conservation Center, 1326 South 32nd Street, Omaha. They will examine objects, identify materials of which they're made, analyze previous care, and offer tips for storage and handling to maximize preservation. As appropriate, they will also discuss conservation treatment possibilities. Monetary value will not be assessed.

Their work is part of "Saving Our Treasures," a two-year project that will include a one-hour NET television documentary to be broadcast statewide, distance learning workshops, and more. The heirloom health clinic is part of the project's first steps to find historic objects with intriguing stories that should be preserved, and which might be featured in the upcoming television show.

If you'd like to make an appointment for a free health check for your heirloom, contact the Treasures project at 402-471-3271 or e-mail: treasures@nebraskahistory.org. Nebraska Educational Telecommunications (NET) and the Nebraska Library Commission are also partners in the project. Funding is provided in part by a grant from the Partnership for a Nation of Learners program of the Institute of Museum and Library Services and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

American Life in Poetry: Column 054

by **Ted Kooser**,
U.S. Poet
Laureate



Poet Ruth L. Schwartz writes of the glimpse of possibility, of something sweeter than we already have that comes to us, grows in us. The unrealizable part of it causes bitterness; the other opens outward, the cycle complete. This is both a poem about a tangerine and about more than that.

From "Dear Good Naked Morning," (c) 2005 by Ruth L. Schwartz. Reprinted by permission of the author and Autumn House Press. First printed in "Crab Orchard Review," Vol. 8, No. 2. This weekly column is supported by The Poetry Foundation, The Library of Congress, and the Department of English at

the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. This column does not accept unsolicited poetry.

Tangerine

It was a flower once, it was one of a billion flowers whose perfume broke through closed car windows, forced a blessing on their drivers. Then what stayed behind grew swollen, as we do; grew juice instead of tears, and small hard sour seeds, each one bitter, as we are, and filled with possibility. Now a hole opens up in its skin, where it was torn from the branch; ripeness can't stop itself, breathes out; we can't stop it either. We breathe in.

Some Books Go to the Dogs

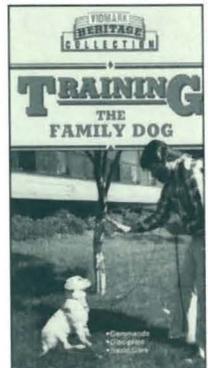
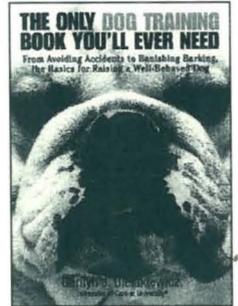
by **Robert Trautwein**,
Columbus Public Library

I'm always apprehensive when a new book on the subject of dog training is added to the library's collection. Over the years of library work, I have had to withdraw many such books from the collection after only a checkout or so. It's not that the books were poorly bound, or that a patron found something objectionable about them, or that they were not accurate. The major reason I have had to discard them is that they are returned to the library chewed beyond recognition!

I've been known to caution a patron about checking out dog training books. I explain that the book must never be placed on a coffee table, a couch, or a porch swing. The book will have a much greater chance of surviving its loan period if placed on top of a refrigerator or on the uppermost shelf in a bookcase. Sometimes, upon returning a chewed and shredded book, the borrower will explain the damage by saying that his five-year-old dog must be teething,

or that the dog mistook the book for a chewable toy—like a bison bone.

New books on the subject include *21 Days to Train Your Dog*, by Colin Tennant; *Dog Training for Dummies 2nd ed.*, by Joachim Volhard; and *The Only Dog Training Book You'll Ever Need: from Avoiding Accidents to Banishing Barking, the Basics for Raising a Well-Behaved Dog*, by Gerylyn Bielakiewicz. In addition, the 55-minute video, *Training the Family Dog* would be a good introduction to dog training, as long as the borrower keeps it in the videotape player.



Review: *Train Time in Nebraska: The Post Card Era*

Michael M. Bartels & James J. Reisdorff,
J & L Lee Co.
Publishers, 2005,
ISBN" 0-934904-53-7

Reviewed by
John F. Keller,
Photography
by Keller

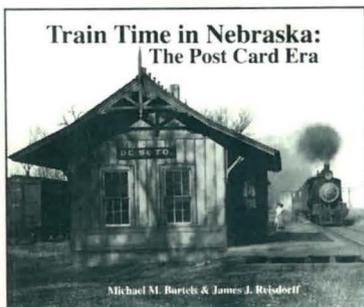
The Union Pacific Railroad had already been serving Grand Island for three years when the "last spike" was driven May 10, 1869 in Promontory, Utah. That event might be the single most important historical event in transportation on the continent. Prior to the connection of the Central Pacific and the Union Pacific, the journey made by pioneers took four to six months. The reduction to six days ensured Western life could catch up with the life and aspirations in the East!

The post card made its debut at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago. It quickly caught on as both an art form and a means of communication, becoming an overnight sensation. In a twelve-month period in 1907 – 1908, 667 million post cards were mailed in the United States, at the bargain postage rate of just two cents. In 1902, Eastman Kodak Company introduced a paper capable of easily printing

images from negatives, and a year later, a special post card camera – the Folding Pocket No. 3A.

These events and rapid changes in technology combined to give us a look back in time at the major gathering place in communities in the early 1900s – the railroad depot. The arrival and departure of the daily passenger train came to be known as "Train Time".

In less than one hundred pages, we are presented with a visual feast of the incredible variety of architectural styles of the depots, frozen faces of both the people who rode the trains and the workers on the railroads – all in the black and white images we associate as the colors of bygone ages, and all from the short period from 1900 to 1915. Often with inscriptions, these post cards depict scenes from primarily three of the five major rail systems serving Nebraska. For someone who has always been intrigued by railroads, I had little difficulty imagining the whistle announcing the arrival of each daily train and the hissing of steam as the engine pulled into the depot.



Literary Festivals in Nebraska

Cather Spring Conference in June

"Willa Cather's French Connections" will be held in Red Cloud, **June 1-3**. The program will feature discussions related to Willa Cather's novel, *Shadows on the Rock*, and "Willa Cather's International Connections," as well as presentations by internationally known Cather scholars. For more information or to register, contact Cather Foundation, <www.willacather.org>, 866-731-7304.

Bess Streeter Aldrich Event in June

The fifth-annual Cookout and Concert on the Lawn will be held **June 17** at the Bess Streeter Aldrich House. This fun event utilizes the yard and garden of the historic home. A brass band plays old favorites while guests enjoy the Sloppy Joe supper and ice cream sandwiches. The Bess Streeter Aldrich Foundation in Elmwood holds four additional annual events to celebrate the author. Mrs. Aldrich's February 17 birthday is celebrated with an open house on the weekend closest to that date. A Spring Banquet is held annually on a Saturday evening in April. Since 2003, the winners of the Aldrich short story contest have been honored at the banquet. Bess Streeter Aldrich Remembrance Day is held every fall as a day dedicated to celebrating the author's life. The *Journey Into Christmas* holiday event rounds out the year's activities, with the Aldrich House open every Saturday and Sunday in December. For more information on any of these events, call 402-994-3855.

Nebraska Summer Writers' Conference in June

The Nebraska Summer Writers' Conference, planned for **June 17-23**, offers weekend workshops, as well as a week-long workshop in writing. Special categories include, the Novel, Short Story, Poetry, Memoir, and Creative Nonfiction. Consultations are available with publishers and literary agents. Hosted by Jonis Agee, author of eleven books and UNL Writer-in-Residence, the conference includes master writers, who teach classes and read from their works.

The High School Writers' Workshop, **June 18-23**, will give high school students the opportunity to work closely with UNL creative writing instructors, Jehanne Dubrow, Jim Reese, Daryl Farmer, and Kati Cramer. For a full schedule of events (including public readings) see <www.nswc.org/>.

Norfolk's Twelfth Literature Festival in July

The Norfolk Public Library will host a day-long literature festival on **July 29** at the Northeast Community College Lifelong Learning Center. It features award-winning authors Keiko Kasza, Marty Crisp, Michael O. Tunnel; Book Displays and Sales; Golden Sower Award Previews; activities; and prizes. For more

information contact 402-844-2108, e-mail: <kdrevo@ci.norfolk.ne.us>.

Plum Creek Children's Literacy Festival in September

The Eleventh Annual Plum Creek Children's Literacy Festival will be held **September 14-16**, at Concordia University in Seward. The festival includes author visits to schools and on-campus student and teacher activities, as well as a professional conference for teachers, administrators, media specialists, and others. **Ted Kooser**, U.S. Poet Laureate and Seward-area resident, will keynote the event. The Nebraska Library Commission will make copies of the Plain Poetry video available for Festival participants. For additional information see <www.cune.edu> or contact Vikki Gremel, Concordia University, 800 North Columbia, Seward, NE 68434, 402-643-7483.

Downtown Omaha Lit Fest in September by Timothy Schaffert

At the first-ever Downtown Omaha Lit Fest, held in September of 2005 in art galleries throughout the Old Market, we decided it was hip to be bookish. We drank wine, and enjoyed a panel discussion on the vagaries of writing funny. We indulged in dinner, desserts, jazz, and literary readings on the subject of cuisine and cocktails. We browsed an art exhibit featuring reconceptions of covers of banned books as imagined by local artists. We also enjoyed stage readings of excerpts of new plays and screenplays, readings by poets and authors with new books, and panels on various topics, including memoir, crime fiction, and the relationship between art and literature.

Authors from across the country, each of them with some Nebraska connection, offered words of wisdom and literary insights (they'd published well over fifty books among them, most of them with major presses). Meanwhile, we raised over \$5,000 for the Omaha Public Library, which speaks to the philanthropic tendencies of booklovers, since practically all the events were free. The many events were standing-room-only; some of the discussions proved controversial, others calmly contemplative; but they were all wildly entertaining. Plans are underway for Lit Fest 2, to be held **September 15-16**, with a "literary outlaws" theme, paying tribute to the fringe. For more information see <www.omahalitfest.com>.

Plains Poetry Festival in November

Wayne State College hosts the Plains Poetry Festival every year on the Thursday before Thanksgiving (**November 16, 2006**). Readings are presented on campus throughout the day. The Downtown Slam (the longest running poetry slam of the Great Plains) is held on the evening following the festival. For more information contact J.V. Brummels, 402-375-7401 or <jvbrumm1@wsc.edu>.



Neihardt Conference Held Each Spring

The 25th Annual Neihardt Spring Conference was held in April at the Neihardt State Historic Site in Bancroft, with the theme, *The Poet and the Public*. Bill Kloefkorn, Nebraska's State Poet, was the Keynote speaker. The conference culminated with a poetry slam.

Turning the Pages of Romance Held in April

Lincoln City Libraries and the Omaha Public Library co-hosted the Turning the Pages of Romance conference in Lincoln in April. This popular event was keynoted by Rachel Gibson, author of many novels including *True Confessions*, awarded the RITA, Romance Writers of America's highest honor of excellence. Romance writers shared their experiences on topics like "So you think you're funny?" and "e-Romance: navigating online resources for readers and writers."

Sandoz Conference on War and the West by Sarah Polak and Lucinda Mays

This spring's annual conference of the Mari Sandoz Heritage Society was held at the Mari Sandoz High Plains Heritage Center on the campus of Chadron State College. The conference focused on Sandoz's 1947 novel, *The Tom-Walker*, and its themes of the aftermath of war and its effects on society. The keynote speaker was Senator George McGovern, presenting on, "A Time for War. A Time for Peace." Presentations and panel discussions were presented on war in the west, veterans' issues, and the literature of Mari Sandoz.

Fifteen Years of Plains Writers, Great Readers

The Nebraska Book Festival (formerly the Nebraska Literature Festival 1991-2001) has been co-sponsored by the Nebraska Center for the Book, Nebraska Library Commission, and Nebraska Humanities Council since its inception in 1991. Each year, a local educational institution or organization hosts the Festival, providing local arrangements and programming. Each Festival is a statewide celebration of plains writers and readers, designed to lift up Nebraska's literary heritage in a unique way. Fifteen years of themes and locations are listed below:

2006 October 6-7

Nebraska Wesleyan University, Lincoln
"Beyond Borders: Nebraska and the World"

2005 October

Nebraska Wesleyan University, Lincoln
"Local Wonders"

<www.unl.edu/NCB/2005.html>

2004 September

University of Nebraska at Kearney
"Voices of a Different Plain"

2003 October

Creighton University, Omaha
Photos available at "Books Alive"
<http://mockingbird.creighton.edu/ncw/nbf/nebraska_book_festival.html>

2002 September

Stuhr Museum of the Prairie Pioneer, Grand Island
"A Sense of Time, A Sense of Place"

2001 September

Peru State College
"The Writing Life"

2000 September

Beatrice--School Day
Lincoln (Cornhusker Hotel)--Public Day
"Prairie Visions: Nebraska Authors and Their Art"

1999 September

Chadron State College
"Borders: Geographical, Ethnic & Literary Frontiers in Plains Literature"

1998 September

"The World in the Plains: Plains Literature as World Literature"

1996 September

University of Nebraska-Lincoln
"In Our Own Write"

1995 September

University of Nebraska at Kearney
"Voices of Color in Nebraska: The African Americans"
<www.unl.edu/NCB/1995.html>

1994 September

University of Nebraska at Omaha
"Go Big Read"
<www.unl.edu/NCB/1994.html>

1993 September

University of Nebraska-Lincoln
<www.unl.edu/NCB/1993.html>

1992 September

University of Nebraska at Kearney
<www.unl.edu/NCB/1992.html>

1991 September

University of Nebraska at Omaha
"Nebraska: The Authors' State"
<www.unl.edu/NCB/1991.html>



Author's Query—an Inquiry into Inquiry

by **Oliver B. Pollak**

Sunday morning, first read the *New York Times Book Review*. A glance at the *NYT Magazine* will suggest further pleasures for the day, then and only then, look at the first section with its tales of woe, mishap, mayhem, and perhaps a feel-good human interest story – and a WOW if it has a Midwest or Nebraska connection.

Between 1949 and 1999 the *NYTBR* published about 3,500 "Author's Query." Writers at various stages of their research put out the call for letters, documents, manuscripts, photographs, reminiscences of their chosen, usually under recognized and under-documented, subject. I had one such subject that had been lurking around in my consciousness for more than twenty years. Gerhard Solomon (1903-1956) a Berlin-born Jew in a somewhat Christian Science family changed his name to Hans Roger Madol and fled Germany in 1933. He was a journalist and biographer of European royals, pretenders, and hangers-on. He was also a ghostwriter, antiquarian manuscript dealer, cultural attaché to the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, and he edited the *Yearbook of the United Nations* in 1945.

My grandmother was his housekeeper and when he died, she inherited the house in Richmond, south of London. I met him in the late 1940s and would see him occasionally at grandma's house. My mother talked about his diaries going to the Smithsonian Institution during the Second World War. I had some

letters, fragments of an autobiography, and carbon copies of short stories.

A search of the Library of Congress revealed his dozen books in English, German, French, Italian, Spanish, and Bulgarian. The royalties allowed him to buy a small castle in Denmark which was under SS surveillance during the 1930s. Madol's brother, Berthold Jacob, a leading anti-fascist journalist, whom Varian Fry did not rescue, has yet to receive his own biographical treatment.

He was in my consciousness and subconscious—how to expiate the thoughts and actualize the story. In March 1997, *NYTBR* agreed to print my author query and on February 22, 1998, voila:

Within ten days I had four responses, including an octogenarian bookseller, two brothers from Younkers who lived near Madol, and a researcher at the Library of Congress who found the diaries hiding in plain sight in the manuscript department. Google directed me to further diaries in the *Deutsche Literaturarchiv*. The rest is history. In 2003 the *Germanic Review* published my "The Biography of a Biographer: Hans Roger Madol," with an additional familial twist, it appeared in a *Festschrift* to my cousin Inge Halpert.

So now a new Author's Query begins. Within a ten-day period in March, I came across two poems, Timothy Steele's "The Carnegie Library" and "In the Book Store" by Ruth Eis. Is it possible to prepare an anthology of poetry about libraries, bookstores, reading, and writing? My **Author's Query** to *NCB NEWS* readers requests leads for this contrived genre. I can be reached at <OBPOMNI@aol.com>. ♦

Author's Query

For a biography of the biographer and diplomat Hans Roger Madol (1903-56), I would appreciate hearing from anyone with relevant documents, letters, anecdotes, insights or reminiscences.

OLIVER B POLLAK

Department of History
University of Nebraska, Omaha
Omaha, NE 68082

Review: *In the Land of Second Chances*

by **George Shaffner**,

Algonquin Books
of Chapel Hill,
2004, ISBN: 1-
56512-440-5

Reviewed by
Mel Krutz,

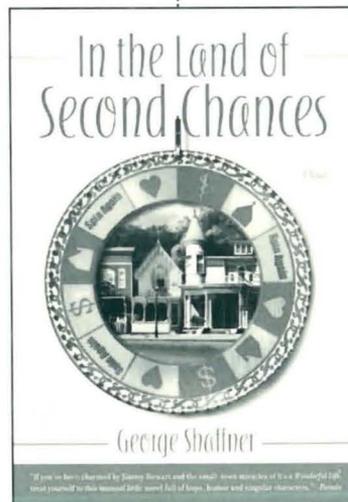
Nebraska Center
for the Book
President

A newspaper article began with the question: Should parents talk to their dying children about death? The conclusion of the article and this book agree. Finding that conclusion in the book alone makes it worth the read. Other issues are resolved as well because a salesman, Vernon Moore, came to town, charmed the citizens, cared about them, and shared a philosophy with them that may or may not have had anything to do with the games of chance he purported to be selling. You decide.

The book is a kind of gentle fantasy that makes hope a reality,

much of it centered on Wilma Porter's Bed and Breakfast, where Mr. Moore is staying in the imaginary town of Ebb, Nebraska (somewhere between Lincoln and Beatrice). The references to real places in Nebraska are recognizable and help draw the reader into the drama that develops and resolves beautifully, with a bit of mystique and levity.

Who is Moore, and where has he come from? Only a few have any true concern about it. He is dashing, rich, personable, knowledgeable, and a graceful mediator in helping to bring a family together to give love and support to one young child facing death. No one wants him to leave. ♦



Review: *America's Agatha Christie: Mignon Good Eberhart, Her Life and Works*

by **Rick Cypert**,
Susquehanna
University Press,
2005, ISBN: 1-
57591-088-8

Reviewed by
Devra Dragos,
Nebraska Library
Commission

A biographer is much like a detective, real or fictional. He digs for clues, interviews witnesses, checks facts and alibis, creates a timeline, consults experts, and tries to determine motive and opportunity. Cypert does all this in his biography of Nebraska-born mystery writer Mignon Good Eberhart. Archived papers of Eberhart, her friends, and business associates; newspaper articles and book reviews; interviews with her nephew, goddaughters, and other authors; input from an expert on family relations; and other sources provide pieces to the puzzle of Eberhart's life, character, and work.

Born in Lincoln (University Place), Eberhart attended Nebraska Wesleyan University and met her husband Alanson while working at the Lincoln City Library. Her first full-length mystery novel, *The Patient in Room 18*, was published in 1929, and Eberhart was on the path to becoming one of the most popular mystery writers of her time.

Eberhart's early writing career reflects the demand for mystery stories in the 1930s. Publishers printed

mystery stories by the dozen, book clubs devoted to mysteries formed, mystery magazines multiplied, women's magazines printed short and serialized mystery stories, and Hollywood cranked out mystery movies. Eberhart sold to them all. She even co-wrote a mystery play that appeared for a short run on Broadway. Later, as magazines folded or changed focus, Eberhart concentrated on her novels.

Unlike fictional puzzles, real life does not follow a single plot line (with a few subplots) or reveal carefully constructed clues. There are some ambiguities in Eberhart's life, such as her relations, or lack thereof, with her family; her illnesses; her four marriages—three to the same man; and her judgment in some business matters that can only be answered with speculation. But, as Eberhart found when covering a real murder mystery, everyone comes to their own opinion after reviewing the facts they know. So, take a look at the available facts in Cypert's book and come to your own conclusions. ♦

Review: *Sculpture from the Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery*

Edited by **Karen O. Janovy**
Bison Books,
2006, ISBN: 0-
8032-7629-X

Reviewed by
John F. Wiederspan,
Art Patron

Robert Hughes, the art critic, stated that "the three genuinely great sculptors this country has produced" were Augustus Saint-Gaudens, David Smith and Richard Serra. All three are featured in *Sculpture from the Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery*.

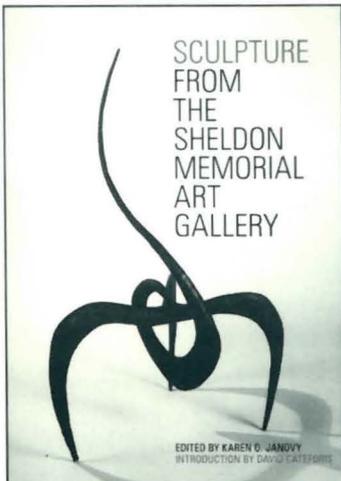
One has to be impressed by the depth and breadth of the Sheldon sculpture collection and one cannot help but be impressed by this book. For anyone interested in art, art history, sculpture, the history of sculpture, artist biographies or all five, this book is a must. With over 350 works to choose from, David Cateforis uses works from the collection to outline the history of American sculpture from the mid-1800's to the present. Well written, informative and comprehensive, it well serves both the seasoned patron and the novice.

The directors of Sheldon deserve much of the credit for building up the collection. Norman Geske (1953-1983), George Neubert (1983-1999), and Janice Driesbach (1999-present) have all played a pivotal role in establishing "one of

America's finest collections of twentieth-century sculpture." The Forwards present historic developments and Ms. Driesbach's Forward also covers the Neubert years. The work done by the editor, Karen Janovy, warrants the highest praise. High praise also goes to John Spence for his excellent photographic work. The book is truly a treat for the eye.

Each work is presented with a fine article about the artist and the art by one of fourteen excellent contributors. Pick a work of art or an artist or dip into the book at random and be educated and inspired. Each piece is a joy to read. Who knew that Brancusi worked in Rodin's studio? Sheldon has four bronzes by Augustus Saint-Gaudens, generally regarded as the greatest American sculptor of the 19th century. David Smith worked as a welder and riveter for Studebaker. With ninety works featured, the images and knowledge gained by this work is grand indeed.

Purchase the book, enjoy the photos of the sculptures, read and learn; and then, if at all possible, visit Sheldon and the Sculpture Garden for a long look at the real works. ♦



Review:

The Exception to the Rulers

by Amy Goodman, with David Goodman, Hyperion, 2004, ISBN: 1-4013-0131-2

Reviewed by John Keller

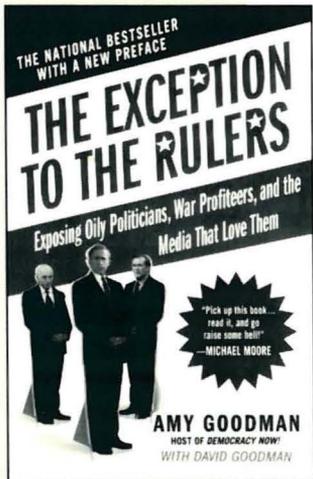
Amy Goodman and her brother, David, have offered up a challenge to us, as responsible citizens, in *The Exception to the Rulers*. While the American public, spoon-fed misinformation by a media largely complacent and disinterested, is content not to question why over a thousand American service men and women (at the time of printing) have died in a "war" that actually profits its perpetrators, Ms. Goodman is not. While the American media is content in reporting – no, "funneling," information directly from one of the most corrupt administrations in memory, the host of the national TV and radio program "Democracy Now" adheres firmly to the belief that the very document this democracy holds so dear in defining its freedoms also demands that the media become responsible to reveal the threats and actions that undermine those freedoms.

The subtitle of this book is "Exposing Oily Politicians, War Profiteers, and the Media that Love Them" – and that is precisely what the Goodmans do. September 11, 2001, has become synonymous with the current fight on global terrorism. A number of related events received little or no media coverage. During the hours and days following the attacks on the World Trade Center, the director of aviation at Boston's Logan Airport received orders to allow members of the bin Laden family and other Saudis to leave the country – the only such aircraft in the entire country with such

authorization. This plane included 140 Saudis, 24 of them members of the bin Laden family. During the days and weeks following the attacks, hundreds of contracts were signed, including SAIC, Fluor Corporation, DynCorp, Vinnell Corporation and many others, all with histories of huge contributions to the Bush/Cheney election campaigns and other ties to the Republican Party. These were, on the surface, contracts to help rebuild what would become a war-ravaged Iraq. In truth, however, Iraq was not the nation that had launched those devastating attacks, and the contracts were made to increase the wealth of certain individuals – not for humanitarian reasons...and while all this information has been available, the media has been silent – with the exception of some small, independent media groups, with "Democracy Now" in the lead.

The Exception to the Rulers is not a scathing attack on America and its values. This reviewer found, to the contrary, Amy Goodman and her brother share optimism that is evident throughout the book and that clearly shines in her closing statement. Whether you consider yourself a conservative, liberal, Democrat or Republican – this is a book well worth your time and serious consideration, as an American citizen. Our future as a nation might just depend on the independent media and on our actions.

Ed. Note: "Democracy Now" can be heard in Lincoln on KZUM, 89.3 FM or at <kzum.org>.



Review:

How Much Our Dancing Has Improved

by Barbara Schmitz

Backwaters Press, 2004, ISBN: 0-9726187-5-9

Reviewed by Shelly Clark, Nebraska Center for the Book Past President

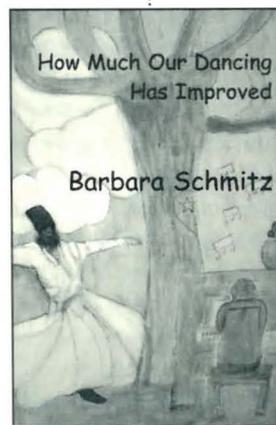
In Barbara Schmitz's newest collection of poetry, *How Much Our Dancing Has Improved*, she writes, "When I see with the eyes of compassion/everybody/everything/is my home." If you are a reader of Schmitz's poetry, then you already know that she indeed views the world with eyes that "see." Her poetry speaks to her inner world (a rich landscape of vision, compassion, memory, and passion), as well as to the world at large—swelling with people and place, noise and flavor.

Her poems that speak to her inner world are richly interwoven in the language of dreams, memories, and the rich experience of "now." From her poem "Singing," "Sometimes now, angels/let me see them walk/boldly beside me, whispering/to teach me a few spirit words./And oh, they comb my hair/with gold and

silver brushes/weaving years of pain, years/of joy in between my own/fine strands, 'Love means,'/they say, 'taking care of/someone.' Singing."

In the chapter entitled "Second Honeymoon,"

Schmitz includes a rich variety of love/tribute poems to her husband, Bob. From "It's Our Anniversary," "We grin so wide at/each other pearls, old coins,/roses and rubies spill/out of our lips..." One cannot read Schmitz without feeling a strong spiritual thread pulling the reader through her rich tapestry of words. From "After India," "After dancing, praying, chanting for Peace, Peace, Peace for this/land and the horsemen saying, 'You came all this way to pray/for peace. It isn't even your country.'" Schmitz's newest collection is a beautiful dance of



words, of imagery, of spiritual testament, but finally and most of all: love.

Young Nebraska Letter Writers Honored



Governor Dave Heineman signed a proclamation declaring April 2-8, 2006 as National Library Week in Nebraska,

celebrated with recognition of the **Letters about Literature** state award winners. Six young writers were honored for their letters to authors, living or dead, describing how the authors' books or stories changed their way of viewing the world.

The winners are:

- ☞ Sallie Dietrich, a Senior at Lincoln High School, for a letter to Hannah Green about *I Never Promised You a Rose Garden*.
- ☞ Ellen Muehling, in the 8th Grade in Lincoln, for a letter to Lurlene McDaniel about *A Rose for Melinda*.
- ☞ Connor Goecke, in the 5th Grade at the Walt Disney Elementary School in Omaha, for a letter to Lois Lowry about *The Giver*.

Alternates are:

- ☞ Cody Sedlacek, a Junior at St. Patrick's High School

in North Platte, for a letter to Gary Paulson for the book *Woodson*.

- ☞ Melissa West, in the 8th Grade at Beadle Middle School in Omaha, for a letter to Amelia Atwater Rhodes about *Hawksong*.
- ☞ Julia Stanislov, a 4th Grader at Loveland Elementary School in Omaha, for a letter to Lois Lowry about *Number the Stars*.

The Nebraska Center for the Book, as an affiliate of the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress, hosted the young writers at a luncheon. Copies of the winning letters were signed and presented for inclusion in the archival collection in the Jane Pope Geske Heritage Room of Nebraska Authors, Lincoln City Libraries.

The Center for the Book in the Library of Congress, in partnership with Target Stores, sponsors Letters about Literature, a national reading and writing promotion program for children and young adults. The contest is sponsored locally by Nebraska Center for the Book, Nebraska Library Commission, Houchen Bindery LTD, and Lee Booksellers.

Nebraska Book Awards Nominations Sought



The Nebraska Book Awards, sponsored by the Nebraska Center for the Book and supported by the Nebraska Library Commission, recognizes and honors books written by Nebraska authors, published by Nebraska publishers, set in Nebraska, or relating to Nebraska. Submit nominations for the 2006 Competition (books with a 2005 copyright) by June 30.

Books 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: Anthology, Children/Young Adult, Cover Design/Illustration, 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 7 at Nebraska Wesleyan University in Lincoln. The winning books will be displayed at the Book Festival. Winners are entitled to display award stickers on their book covers.

For more information and entry forms see <www.unl.edu/NCB/programs.html#awards>.

Librarians Pick the Best of the Best

Nebraska librarians are voting to determine their favorite Great Book of the Great Plains. What books will top the list of librarians' favorites? Will it be *Karl Bodmer's America* or *Local Wonders* by Ted Kooser or another from the list?

Ballots for Books, a partnership of the Plains Humanities Alliance, the Nebraska Library Commission and the University of Nebraska Press, provides the opportunity for librarians across Nebraska to help develop a short list of Librarians' Picks for the Great Books of the Great Plains Web site <libr.unl.edu:2000/plains/bibs/index.html>. The Plains Humanities Alliance at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln seeks your input on the Great Books of the Great Plains Web site, a fully searchable, annotated

bibliography of five hundred useful and easy-to-locate books about life on the Great Plains.

Librarians representing Nebraska public libraries will receive a free book for their library from the University of Nebraska Press after they vote. Books can be chosen online from a selection of University of Nebraska Press titles.

Nebraska libraries are encouraged to take advantage of this fantastic opportunity.

Vote now! All votes must be tallied by June 1.

Ed Note: To determine if someone from the library has already voted and picked out the free book for the library, see the list of public libraries that have already voted at the bottom of the Web page.

The NCB News



**THE NEBRASKA
CENTER FOR
THE BOOK**

an affiliate of the Library of

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

Nominate Now for Nebraska Book Awards
See Announcement <www.nlc.state.ne.us>



Calendar of Events:

- Get Caught Reading Month** May Nationwide
- Saving Our Treasures: Heirloom Health Clinic** May 20 Omaha
Contact: 402-471-3271, <treasures@nebraskahistory.org>
- Mayhem in the Midlands Mystery Convention** May 25-28 Omaha
Contact: Maggie Tarelli-Falcon, 402-444-4851,
<mtarelli-falcon@omahapubliclibrary.org>, or Sally Fellows, <sallyfellows1@cox.net>,
<www.omahapubliclibrary.org/mayhem/>
- Book Release Poetry Reading: Matt Mason** June 1 Omaha
Contact: <poetrymenu@novia.net>, <www.poetrymenu.com>
- Willa Cather Spring Conference: "Willa Cather's French Connections"** June 1-3 Red Cloud
Contact: Cather Foundation, <www.willacather.org>, 866-731-7304
- Buffalo Commons Storytelling Festival** June 9-10 McCook
Contact: <dmandue@ocsmccook.com>, <www.buffalocommons.org>
- Cookout and Concert on the Lawn** June 17 Elmwood
Contact: Bess Streeter Aldrich Foundation, 402-994-3855
- The Clean Part Reading Series**-Paula Cisewski, Sarah Fox, Juliet Patterson June 17 Lincoln
Contact: <thecleanpartseries@excite.com>, <www.thecleanpart.blogspot.com>
- Nebraska Summer Writers' Conference** June 17-23 Lincoln
Contact 402-474-2131, <www.nswc.org>
- Lee Booksellers Reading: Anna Monardo** June 22 Lincoln
Contact: Linda Hillegass, Lee Booksellers Edgewood, 402-420-1919,
<info@leebooksellers.com>, <www.leebooksellers.com>
- Great Plains Chautauqua, "From Sea to Shining Sea"** June 30-July 4 ... Alliance
Contact: Nebraska Humanities Council, 402-474-2131, July 7-11 Albion
<nlc@nebraskahumanities.org>, <www.nebraskahumanities.org>
- Third Annual Frolicking Frog Festival** July 15 Papillion
Contact: Sump Memorial Library, 402-339-9077,
<treese@monarch.papillion.ne.us>, <www.omahastorytellers.org>
- 12th Annual Literature Festival** July 29 Norfolk
Contact Norfolk Public Library, 402-844-2108, <kdrevo@ci.norfolk.ne.us>,
<www.norfolk.ne.us/library>
- Neihardt Day** Aug. 6 Bancroft
Contact: John G. Neihardt State Historic Site, 402-648-3388,
<neihardt@gpcom.net>, <www.neihardtcenter.org>