

# The NCB News

Volume 18

Summer 2008

No. 3

A Publication of the Nebraska Center for the Book

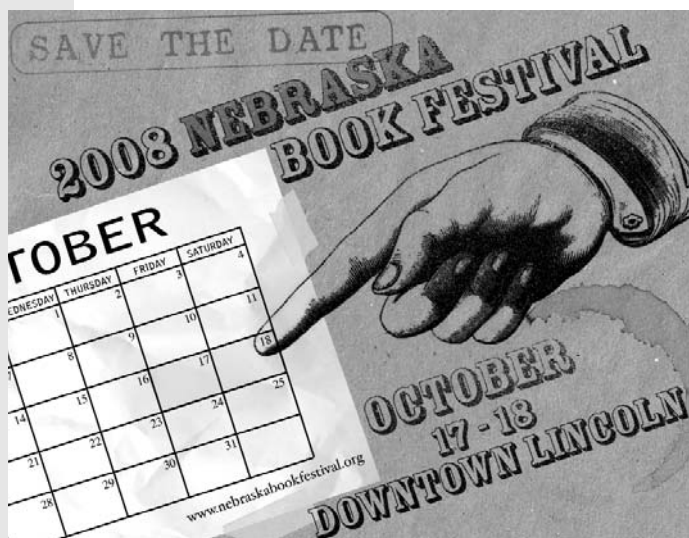
## Join Us in Downtown Lincoln for the 2008 Nebraska Book Festival

The 2008 Nebraska Book Festival, scheduled for **October 17-18**, will be held in downtown Lincoln. The festival opens at the Nebraska State

Capitol on Friday evening, October 17, with an address by Plains author Kent Haruf. Haruf's presentation will be followed by a reception at the Lincoln Woman's Club.

The Nebraska Book Festival will continue October 18 with programs for children and adults at the Lincoln Children's Museum, the Nebraska State Historical Society's Museum of Nebraska History, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Culture Center, and other locations near Centennial Mall. Programs include readings, discussions, poetry slams, writing workshops, music, film, food, exhibits, and book sales (see schedule on pages 4-5).

The Nebraska Book Festival is presented by the Nebraska Center for the Book, Nebraska Humanities Council, and Nebraska Library Commission. For more information see [www.nebraskabookfestival.org](http://www.nebraskabookfestival.org) or contact Michael Cartwright, 800-307-2665, 402-471-4006, e-mail: [mcartwright@nlc.state.ne.us](mailto:mcartwright@nlc.state.ne.us).



## Young Readers Urged to Write to Authors

The Letters about Literature reading-writing contest has been sponsored by the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress for more than twenty years. In partnership with Target®, the contest invites readers in grades four through twelve to write

personal letters to an author (living or dead) from any genre—fiction or nonfiction, contemporary or classic—explaining how that author's work changed the

students' way of thinking about the world or themselves. On March 13, 2008 Governor Dave Heineman signed a proclamation declaring April 13-19, 2008, as National Library Week in Nebraska, celebrated with recognition of last year's Nebraska winners. An example of these winning letters is seen below, as Andy Squires, of Lincoln, writes to Leonard Peltier:

"Through your work, I have personally been changed, and I have made promises to myself to be a more responsible citizen, to vote with care

and knowledge, and to attempt to destroy oppression and racism wherever I see it. Next November I will be of legal age to vote, and I have begun to realize just how much responsibility comes with that right. I will do my research on the candidates and topics that are up for vote, and based on my newfound ideals I will vote with caution for those who are trying to make a change in our system."

The Letters about Literature contest has three competition levels. Winners receive cash rewards at the national and state levels. Nebraska has sponsored this program for several years and has celebrated national and state winners. The contest is sponsored in Nebraska by the Nebraska Center for the Book, Nebraska Library Commission, Houchen Bindery Ltd., and Lee Booksellers. Letters for this year's competition must be postmarked by **December 6, 2008**. For more information see [www.nlc.state.ne.us/publications/lal](http://www.nlc.state.ne.us/publications/lal).



# Why Join the Nebraska Writers Guild?


**Guest Editorial**  
by **Sally Walker**,  
Nebraska Writers  
Guild

The Nebraska Writers Guild (NWG) was founded in 1925 by a few of the most recognized names in literature. Since then the roster of the organization has included some of the nation's best writers of fiction, poetry, news, texts, and drama.

Any aspiring or active writer in any writing discipline is eligible for General Membership. People who support writing such as librarians, teachers, agents, and editors qualify for Associate Membership. And any student, fourteen and older, looking at a future in writing can join at a reduced rate.

A visit to the NWG's Website at [www.nebraskawriters.org](http://www.nebraskawriters.org) will disclose a wealth of data, including the comprehensive bylaws, historical

access information, calendar of NWG and literary events, membership list with speakers designated, information on the Speaker's Bureau, and a list of writing resources, as well as links to writing groups around the state.

The information-rich spring conference in the east and the fall conference out west, the members-only e-mail list, and the free advertising and marketing opportunities are minor benefits when compared to the fellowship and peer support the NWG members enjoy. NWG is actively recruiting members, sending speakers into the schools, and contributing to this state's cultural life. 

## Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor,

For over a decade I have been contributing to *NCB News* with the pretensions of a 300 to 700 word essayist. My book reviews are lightly tooled as are my semi-obsessive quirky vignettes.

Thank you *NCB* editors, Mary Jo Ryan, and the Nebraska Library Commission for patience, attractive typesetting, almost always spelling my name correctly, and granting precious page space for over 50 pieces tallying about 20,000 words.

Readers' corrections are appreciated.

Oliver B. Pollak  
Department of History  
University of Nebraska at Omaha

*The* **NCB News**

Vol. 18 • Summer 2008 • No. 3

### Nebraska Center for the Book Board and Committees

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#### 2008 Nebraska Center for the Book Board Meetings

May 31 . . . . . Hastings, 9:30 a.m.  
August 9 . . . . . Scottsbluff, 9:00 a.m.  
October 19 . . . . . Lincoln, Annual Meeting  
November 8 . . . . . York, 9:30 a.m.

#### 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).

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# Driving, Camping, and Reading

by Robert Trautwein,  
Columbus Public Library

When I reminisce about the vacations my wife and I took years ago with our young sons, the one that first comes to mind was our simplest and least expensive. I had been working at the Columbus library for just a few years and we were living on my salary. The bills were paid and the older boy's baseball games were a week or so away. It was a perfect time to get away for a week, but there wasn't much money for an exotic trip. Instead, we decided to see Nebraska and Iowa. At the time, we were driving an orange and white Volkswagen bus/camper (now a classic) without an air conditioner.

Our first stop was Neligh where we toured the old flour mill and read the tombstone for a famous race horse that is buried near the fairgrounds where we camped. The boys helped me erect our heavy canvas tent while Judy cooked our first meal of the trip on an old green Coleman gas stove. After we ate, the boys walked over to the baseball field and watched some local teams. My wife and I sat at our picnic table and visited with the town's librarian and her husband. Earlier, I had used a payphone to call her and suggest they visit us at our campsite. I can remember the great conversations we had that beautiful evening. The next morning our trip continued. Each evening we would study the state highway maps and decide where to go next. We eventually traveled to Lake Okoboji in Iowa where we spent two nights at a campsite along the lake. It was there that my older son, Nathan, and I taught my youngest son, Luke, who was about five at the time, to catch high baseball flies. Although the

cost of gasoline has skyrocketed, a driving and camping trip like the one described above beats spending vacation time at home.

Nebraska libraries have great travel books for Nebraska and surrounding states to make a driving and camping trip more interesting. *The Complete Roadside Guide to Nebraska*, by Alan Boye is organized by state highways. By following Hwy 81 south, the author first mentions the Oxbow Trail east of the 7-mile corner. That wagon trail once connected Nebraska City with the Oregon Trail. Going north from Columbus on 81, the reader learns of an area called Tracy Valley southwest of Humphrey. Back in 1870, a man with the last name of Tracy came across a flooded stream—probably Shell Creek. He threw his boots to the other side and swam the torrent. This book is great for learning trivia about Nebraska.

*Nebraska, Off the Beaten Path*, by Hannah McNally is arranged by regions of the state and then by counties. The traveler can use the book to explore our state. In the Platte County chapter, I learned that on the night of August 16, 1943, Tarnov was accidentally bombed with 100-pound sandbags by the U.S. Army Air Corps. No one was injured but it was the talk of the community for years to come. All seventy residents could remember where they were and what they were doing when the sandbag bombs fell.

The "Off the Beaten Path" series includes books about Iowa, Missouri, and Colorado and there is a slew of newer books on Kansas City, the Ozarks, Branson, and (if you want to drive that far) Yellowstone and the Grand Tetons. Don't let the high price of gasoline detour an interesting and colorful driving and camping trip through the Midwest. Prepare yourself by visiting the library and checking out some of these informative books.



## 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:

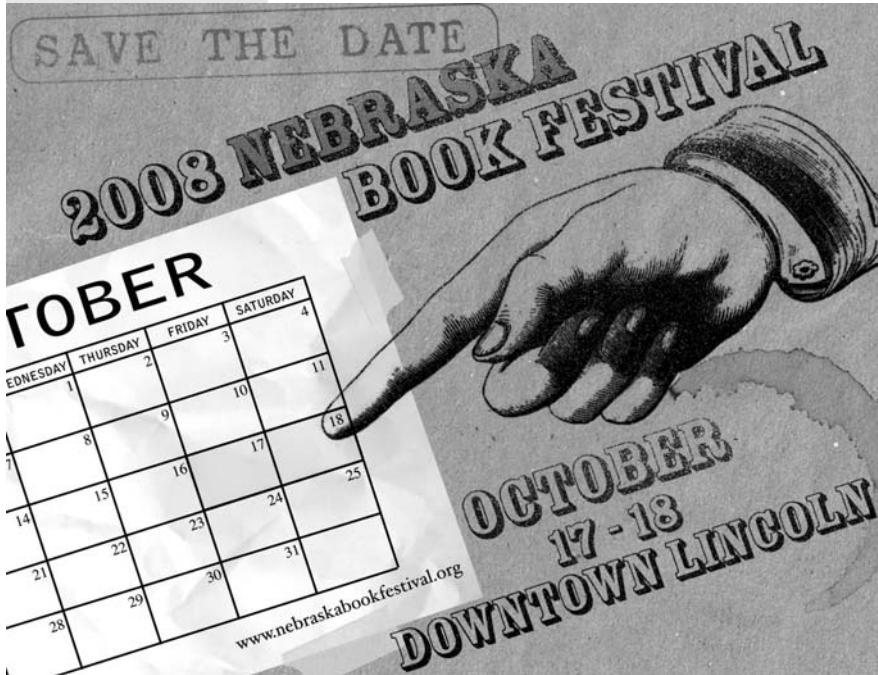
\_\_\_\_\_ \$15 Individual Membership    \_\_\_\_\_ \$25 Organizational Membership    \_\_\_\_\_ \$50 Octavo Membership  
\_\_\_\_\_ \$100 Quarto Membership    \_\_\_\_\_ \$250 Folio Membership

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



# 2008 Nebraska Book Festival Schedule Downtown Lincoln, Nebraska

October 17-18



## Saturday, October 18

### CHILDREN'S PROGRAM

#### Outside the Lines:

**Creative Storytelling Activities for Children**  
Lincoln Children's Museum, 1420 P Street,  
Admission is Free!

- 11:00 a.m.- 12:00 p.m. William Clemente—  
Feathers and Verses
- 12:00-12:45 p.m. Mike Mennard—  
Wholesome Wackiness
- 1:00-2:00 p.m. Leta Powell Drake and  
Margy Ryan—  
*Amelia and Eleanor Go for a Ride*
- 2:15-3:15 p.m. N.L. Sharp—*Today I'm Going  
Fishing with My Dad*
- 3:30-4:30 p.m. Storybook Bingo with Cactus Jack

#### Sponsors:

Nebraska Center for the Book  
Nebraska Humanities Council  
Nebraska Library Commission  
Lincoln Children's Museum

### ADULT PROGRAM

- 8:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. Authors, Booksellers,  
Exhibitors, Vendors  
Museum of Nebraska History  
131 Centennial Mall North
- 9:00- 11:00 a.m. Readings by Nebraska Writers  
Museum of Nebraska History
- 9:00-11:00 a.m. Passing the "So What?" Test:  
Writing Memoir that Matters:  
A writing workshop with  
Kelly Madigan Erlandson  
Museum of Nebraska History
- 9:00-10:15 a.m. The Writing Life:  
Amy Knox Brown, John McNally  
Museum of Nebraska History
- 9:00-10:15 a.m. Science and Fantasy Fiction  
Roundtable Discussion  
Moderated by Milton Wolf  
Museum of Nebraska History
- 10:30-11:45 a.m. Writing About Tomorrow's News:  
Environmental Issues  
Museum of Nebraska History

## Friday, October 17

- 5:30-6:30 p.m. **Kent Haruf, Keynote Address**  
Sponsored by the Office of Nebraska  
Secretary of State John Gale  
  
Warner Chamber  
Nebraska State Capitol  
1445 K Street  
  
**Welcome:**  
The Honorable John Gale,  
Nebraska Secretary of State
- 6:30-7:30 p.m. **Reception Honoring  
Nebraska Authors**  
  
Lincoln Woman's Club  
407 South 14th Street  
  
Sponsored by  
the Nebraska Center for the Book
- 7:30-10:00 p.m. **Night Owl Poetry Slam**  
  
Lincoln Woman's Club  
  
Sponsored by  
the Nebraska Writers Collective
- 8:00-9:30 p.m. **Feature Film**  
*Trumbo*  
  
Mary Riepma Ross Media Arts Center  
313 N. 13th Street  
  
Introduction: Sean Doolittle



# 2008 Nebraska Book Festival Schedule (continued)

Saturday, October 18 <i>(continued)</i>		SPONSORS
10:30-11:45 a.m.	Nebraska's Literary Landscape Moderated by Matthew Evertson Museum of Nebraska History	Nebraska Humanities Council Nebraska Library Commission Nebraska Center for the Book
12:00-1:00 p.m.	Festival Luncheon UNL Culture Center 333 North 14th Street	<b>PARTNERS</b>
12:30-1:00 p.m.	Cookbooks and <i>Dueling Chefs</i> Maggie Pleskac, Sean Carmichael UNL Culture Center	Lincoln Children's Museum Mary Riepma Ross Media Arts Center Michael Forsberg Gallery Nebraska Arts Council Nebraska Cultural Endowment
1:10-2:00 p.m.	Nebraska Book Awards Mildred Bennett Award Jane Pope Geske Award UNL Culture Center	Nebraska State Historical Society's Museum of Nebraska History Nebraska Writers Collective
2:15-3:00 p.m.	Readings: Nebraska Book Award Winners Museum of Nebraska History	Office of the Nebraska Secretary of State UNL College of Journalism and Mass Communications UNL Culture Center
3:00-5:00 p.m.	Readings by Nebraska Writers Museum of Nebraska History	University of Nebraska Press "We the People" initiative of the National Endowment for the Humanities
3:00-4:15 p.m.	Biography: The Politics and Press of Fear: Loren Ghiglione on Nebraska's Don Hollenbeck Museum of Nebraska History	<i>This festival is made possible in part by funding from the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services, provided through the Nebraska Library Commission, under the provisions of the Library Services and Technology Act.</i>
4:30-5:30	Nonfiction: Murder and Racism in Nebraska: Stew Magnuson on <i>The Death of Raymond Yellow Thunder</i> Museum of Nebraska History	
8:00-9:30 p.m.	Reception Great Plains Art Museum 1155 Q Street Host: Twyla Hansen Guest of Honor: Paul Johnsgard Tributes to Paul Johnsgard	
9:30 p.m.	Night Owl Open Mic Box Awesome 815 O Street Hosted by the Nebraska Writers Collective	



# Interview with Elizabeth Berg

by Kit Keller,  
Library Director,  
Nouveau University

## Q. How did you get the idea for this book?

I was out to lunch with some friends (all women) and we went around the table and every single woman at the table ordered a salad. And I just wondered why did we all “want” a salad? Did we really? And I just pondered what would it be like if for one day, I ate whatever I wanted, and what would it be?

## Q. Are your characters based on people you know?

Many are composites of various people that I know. Some are based solely on one person I’ve met. Sometimes they are completely fictional.

I thought it would be a light sort of book, funny, entertaining. And some of the stories are...but some are not. Some are poignant, and sad. The story “Rain” is based on a person I knew, who had a powerful job where he made a lot of money, but the job was not satisfying. So he walked away from that, and built his own house, and lived for many years “hand to mouth” living by growing food, trading services, etc. And in real life, he did die. So that was very sad.

I went to a reading where one woman looked me up and down and said, “Well, you’re not very fat.” But I try to tell groups that I grew up as a chubby kid. I was the kid that got called “lard ass” like the character in one story. And I bought my clothes in the chubby department. So I feel that gives me credibility because I got those looks and comments and I know how that feels.

Recently, I was at a family barbeque, and my evil sister made this wonderful dip with cream cheese, and artichokes, and raspberries. And I took a taste; loved it; took another. Eventually I picked up the bowl and put it in my lap. And I sat there dipping and eating, nearly finishing it all. Pretty soon my brother-in-law came over and said, “Where is that dip? Oh, there it is.” He grabbed the bowl from my lap. I thought he wanted some, but no. I realized he just wanted to get it away from me. I was so embarrassed...I felt again like that kid that got called names.

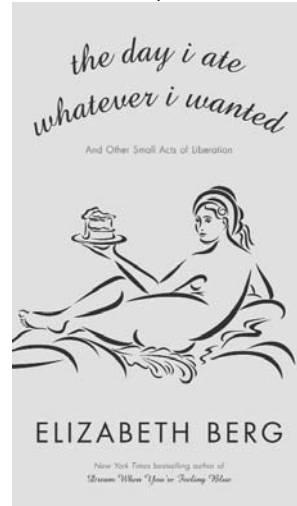
## Q. Tell us about how you got started writing.

I was working as a registered nurse and I really wanted to be able to be at home with my kids, who were four and six years old at the time. So I decided I could be a writer and I could do that at home. So I went to the store and bought a variety of magazines I thought might have the kind of stories I could write. I entered a contest and won. The editor of that magazine, who had children the same ages as mine,

bought everything I sent her. I wrote about my kids and our life.

One day I was home for another snow day with my kids and I was running out of ideas for things to do. I said to my kids, do you want to play Shoe Store? They said, “Yes,” so we gathered shoes from everyone and put them together in our store. I decided I could be the different types of customers – grouchy, fussy, etc. But pretty soon someone came and asked my kids to come out and play and off they went. I was disappointed. I was so looking forward to playing shoe store.

I have a friend who uses a lot of her family stories in her writing. One night she was putting her six-year-old to bed, and he said something that was really cute...she asked him to repeat it and he sighed and said, “Is this going to be in the *Times* or the *Post*?”



## Q. What’s the overall theme of the stories in *The Day I Ate Whatever I Wanted*?

Most of the stories are about women and their self-image, the demands, the needs they fill, and needs they have. The stories here deal with body image, self-esteem, family, and what constitutes a family. One story poses the questions, “Who should be the caregiver at the end of life? Should it be a good friend or a daughter? And what role should family play?”

And you know I sometimes read on blogs and Websites, “She must be under contract to write a book a year, she rushed that last book, etc.” No, no, no...I don’t work that way. I just happen to be a very fast writer. But I don’t write on demand like that.

## Q. Of the books that you’ve written, do you have a favorite book?

*Durable Goods*. That’s my favorite.

## Q. What are you reading now?

One book I’ve read lately that I love is *Olive Kitteridge*, by Elizabeth Strout. She wrote *Amy and Isabelle*, which was also a great book. I am also reading *The Other Side of the Bridge*, by Mary Lawson, which is great.

## Q. Tell us about the cover of this latest book.

First I wanted it to be a figure of a woman made out of food. The publisher didn’t like that so we ended up with this drawing of a voluptuous woman, eyeing this plate of dessert. And I know just what she’s thinking as she looks at that food!



## Bibliofile: Featuring Two Nebraska Bookstores

**C**hapters Books & Gifts is an independent, locally owned book and toy store located on the historic downtown square in Seward. The store opened in August 2004. Local poet Ted Kooser signed books at the grand opening event two weeks after he was named United States Poet Laureate.



Chapters Books & Gifts carries new books for readers of all ages and interests, as well as high quality, educational toys for children. Books by local authors, religious fiction, and children's books are bestsellers. Paperback and hardcover fiction and nonfiction in many categories are offered for adults and children. The toy selection includes science and activity kits, board games and card games, puzzles, classic wooden toys for infants and preschoolers, as well as plush and John Deere toys. Gift certificates in any amount, special orders, and discounts to nonprofit organizations and book clubs are featured. Events at Chapters include an annual local authors' celebration, monthly children's storytime, author signings, and offsite bookfairs, as well as other activities such as Harry Potter parties, children's craft parties, and informative seminars for adults.

Chapters Books & Gifts strives to be a part of the Seward community by working cooperatively with other businesses and organizations to promote area events such as Decemberfest and the Seward Spring Show, participating in local efforts to promote literacy and contribute to many local nonprofit organizations. Chapters will open a second location, in Columbus, upstairs in The Cottage, on September 1. Chapters Books & Gifts is located at 548 Seward Street in Seward. Contact them at 402-643-2282, chapters@windstream.net, www.sewardchapters.com.

**A**pril Fool's Day 1976, saw Jane and Bernie Tushaus asking themselves whether or not it was foolish to buy and run a bookstore. Thirty-two years later, after purchasing the tiny "Book Shop" from Margaret and Si Binderup, and after moving and enlarging the store several times, **Prairie Books & Gifts** is still going strong. Many things have changed over the years, the biggest being the increased competition from the Internet and big box chains.



Many independent bookstores have closed over the last ten years; the American Booksellers Association had 4,500 members in 1995, but less than half of that today. However, this store credits a combination of loyal customers and the desire to have or get the books most people in the region want with keeping Prairie Books & Gifts alive. It's all about special service and special orders. Not only have many stores closed, but many publishers and wholesalers have either consolidated or gone out of business. Couple that with the hundreds of thousands of books that are published every year, these booksellers find the ever-changing landscape of bookselling exciting and challenging.

They are often asked, "How do you decide which books to order?" Jane does all the ordering and bases her decisions on reviews, print runs,

*(continued on page 9)*

## American Life in Poetry: Column 174

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



**I**'d guess you've all seen a toddler hold something over the edge of a high-chair and then let it drop, just for the fun of it. Here's a lovely picture of a small child learning the laws of physics. The poet, Joelle Biele, lives in Maryland.

### To Katharine: At Fourteen Months

*All morning, you've studied the laws  
of spoons, the rules of books, the dynamics  
of the occasional plate, observed the principles  
governing objects in motion and objects  
at rest. To see if it will fall, and if it does,  
how far, if it will rage like a lost penny  
or ring like a Chinese gong—because  
it doesn't have to—you lean from your chair  
and hold your cup over the floor.  
It curves in your hand, it weighs in your palm,  
it arches like a wave, it is a dipper*

*full of stars, and you're the wind timing  
the pull of the moon, you're the water  
measuring the distance from which we fall.*

American Life in Poetry is made possible by The Poetry Foundation ([www.poetryfoundation.org](http://www.poetryfoundation.org)), publisher of "Poetry" magazine. It is also supported by the Department of English at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Poem copyright © 2007 by Joelle Biele, whose most recent book of poetry is *White Summer*, Southern Illinois University Press, 2002. Poem reprinted from "West Branch," Fall/Winter, 2007, by permission of Joelle Biele. Introduction copyright © 2008 by The Poetry Foundation. The introduction's author, Ted Kooser, served as United States Poet Laureate Consultant in Poetry to the Library of Congress from 2004-2006. We do not accept unsolicited manuscripts.



## Review:

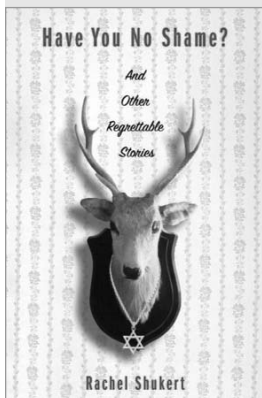
### *Have You No Shame? And Other Regrettable Stories*

by **Rachel Shukert**,

Villard, 2008

ISBN: 978-0345498618

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



If you enjoy *Sex in the City*, *Bridget Jones's Diary*, old Molly Ringwald films, and are anticipating the translation of the German blockbuster *Wetlands*, by Charlotte Roche, then read this first book by a youthful Jewish Omaha Central High School and New York University graduate.

I have known the author, her parents and grandparents for over fifteen years. Rachel's ruminations revel in joy, aspiration, frustration, and sorrow. She merges fact, exaggeration, and fantasy into several edgy essays. Can a less than thirty-something write a memoir or autobiography of hormones and intellect, with her loose anchor swinging between Nebraska and the Big Apple? This book is salty and revelatory. Shukert guides non-Jewish and non-Nebraska readers with explanatory footnotes marked † and N.

How does a daughter of privilege endure Jewish Day School, Hebrew School, Bat Mitzvah, high school, dramatics, and the pursuit of status, sex, and career? Does rumination border on over-sharing? A research team of Chinese ethnohistorians and paleontologists in thirty-first century Shanghai is the basis for "Typical

Bat Mitzvah Speech, United States, c. 1992-1995." In "A Lot of People are Virgins" Shukert writes a letter in 1998 requesting sexual advice from Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich in the midst of the revelations about Monica Lewinsky and Bill Clinton. Shukert, who identifies herself as a hypochondriac, discusses feminine hygiene and eating disorder in "The Anorexic's Cookbook."

"Have you no shame?," the title of this last essay, is based on the life and death experiences of Rachel's grandmother. In 2007 Doris slipped in the shower. The hot spigot scalded one-third of her body with second-degree burns. Skin grafts failed. Ultimately she died of a yeast infection. Your reviewer witnessed Nate, her husband, a rabid Democratic, deliver an un-Periclean peroration at the funeral.

The back cover describes the book as bawdy, "friggin' funny," and twisted. I chortled; my wife could not stop laughing. Rachel, playwright, poet, and actress, hints at a sequel, a future life-revealing volume. Will marriage and maturity bring behavior modification and fresh commentary? ↗

## Review:

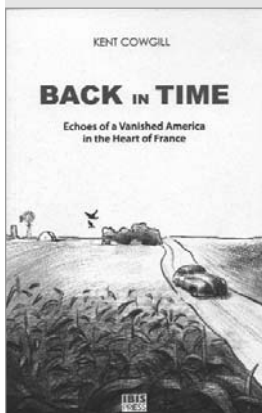
### *Back in Time: Echoes of a Vanished America in the Heart of France*

by **Kent Cowgill**,

Ibis, 2007

ISBN: 978-0345498618

**Review by**  
**Paul Olson**,  
UNL Professor  
Emeritus



Kent Cowgill grew up in Nebraska around Silver Creek, near Columbus and Guide Rock, near Red Cloud. But this is a book about rural France (where he later lived), in relation to rural Nebraska. In his adolescence and early manhood in the '50s and '60s, Cowgill acted as a crop insurance adjuster and local baseball player in the town teams of rural Nebraska. In his adulthood, he wrote a neo-Chaucerian fiction about Nebraska small-town baseball, *The Cranberry Trail: Misfits, Dreamers and Drifters on the Heartland Road*, using some of Chaucer's bawdy as text in text. As an academic in Minnesota he published a great deal of fine Chaucerian criticism in the scholarly journals. He also spent some sabbaticals in rural France.

Cowgill loves an earlier Nebraska, absent Wal-Mart®, endless TV, corporate chemical farming and rural declines. Not uncritically but with the love that only a native son can exhibit. So why did Cowgill go to France in 2004? Partly out of disgust with how the 2004 election turned out—though his father had been a Republican official here. Partly because he had spent time in rural France in the past and loved it, but mostly because he had a sense that the rural Nebraska of his youth might still, in some sense, live in rural France. He hoped that the small towns were still filled with shops that local people owned, farms owned by small farmers proud of their products—the sense of uniqueness and cultivation of a culture that, say, Cather found in pre-1920s Nebraska and celebrated in her novels. His hope

was fulfilled. Though his French was none too good, he went to the towns and farms of northern and southern France: to Pointe du Hoc near where the Americans landed in Normandy, to Souillac at the edge of the Dordogne, to Cahors on the other edge of the Dordogne, to the truffle farms near Cahors, to towns in the Langue d'oc region—Sète, Montpeyroux, to little vineyard farms in the area making their own fine vintage wines, to Lodève, a small town that has a large Islamic population, to Roquefort where the cheese is made, and to Chablis from which a great wine gets its name. Despite his unfinished French, he is brilliant at striking up a probing conversation with anyone—from the old men with beautiful manners in the villages, to the shopkeeper and hotel girls, to the truffle pig owners.

What he finds is a rural France where much that he treasured in the rural Nebraska of his youth still survives—pride in craft, great conversation and time made for it, a sense of place, and a love of roots and resistance to the multinationals with their greedy effort to wipe out all that is rooted and companionable. He finds a sense that the historical relations between France and the United States run deeper than Iraq and liberty fries. Cowgill must have remembered almost everything that happened to him both in his childhood and on his pilgrimage to rural France, and what he comes up with is a great teaching book, crafted in a prose style that is quick and precise. A good read—worth having in any Nebraska library. ↗



**Review:**

***The Death of Raymond Yellow Thunder: And Other True Stories from the Nebraska-Pine Ridge Border Towns***

by **Stew Magnuson**,

Texas Tech University Press, 2008

ISBN: 978-0896726345

Review by **Paul Olson**,  
UNL Professor Emeritus

This book is an invaluable account of the wars against our Native American citizens conducted from the middle of the 19th century and continued off and on until the present either by the American army, bureaucracies in South Dakota and Nebraska, liquor dealers at White Clay, or citizens in the Nebraska-South Dakota border towns. Often Native American bootleggers or complicit Indian officials are part of the wars against their own people. The title of the book probably should be “The Murder of Raymond Yellow Thunder” since no one questions that he was killed. But since Mr. Yellow Thunder only died several days after he was beaten by two white men (and perhaps more), after he was stripped, cast into a dance hall in Gordon nearly naked, and then tormented again and left to die in a second-hand vehicle in a used car lot in Gordon, the jury saw fit to find his tormenters guilty not of murder but of manslaughter. His killers served only two years in a Nebraska jail.

The death of Mr. Yellow Thunder becomes a touchstone to an examination of Indian-white relations in what has been and is a festering “middle border” between South Dakota and Nebraska. Magnuson recounts Red Cloud’s wars and treaties with the whites, Crazy Horse’s battles with the U. S. army, the creation of the Pine Ridge reservation and its destruction as a source of Indian livelihood through bootlegger activity, and the destruction of traditional culture’s authority—through allotment, coercive federal cultural policy, and the leasing of Indian land to whites. The author also tells the less well-known story of what happened in the Pine Ridge border lands, as the five mile strip around the reserve created by Congress to protect it from predatory liquor dealers was eliminated by Teddy Roosevelt, probably illegally, so that land adjacent to the reserve could be taken over by white farmers.

In the main argument of the book, Magnuson shows how Yellow Thunder’s death became a rallying call for the American Indian Movement as it organized around his death, the trials of his tormenters, the Wounded Knee occupation in 1973,

and the continuing sale of 11,000 cans of beer and malt liquor per day at White Clay, Nebraska’s notorious whisky town. This liquor is sold again illegally on the dry Pine Ridge reservation, there to kill and poison a very large percentage of the citizens. Some of Magnuson’s story of recent times is complemented usefully by a brilliant documentary film produced by Mark Vasina, a Nebraska film producer, in his recently released, *The Battle of White Clay*. Both works should be experienced together.

In general, Magnuson writes well and tells a clear story. Sometimes his tendency to tell what is going on in someone’s mind irritates me. I don’t know how he could know. Even if interviewees tell one, they may not remember accurately. He is a little hard on Minitare’s Byron Peterson who apparently said, at a meeting in Lincoln, that three people had died in alcohol-related deaths in White Clay in the previous winter. I am told that Mr. Peterson misspoke, but Kate Allen of Senator Preister’s office has kept a record of the people who have died from alcohol-related causes in and around White Clay, and seventeen people perished there in the period from 1998-2006, three in 2002-2003. One person is too many.

Again Magnuson’s emphasis on white and Indian alcoholism as the problem somewhat obscures the extent to which the canons of justice—treaties, laws, and rules of common decency—have been abrogated for more than a century in the South Dakota-Nebraska middle border towns. The texture of Magnuson’s account of changes in Lakota culture by virtue of allotment and restriction to the Pine Ridge reserve would have been improved through consultation with Gordon MacGregor’s 1946 *Warriors without Weapons*, the most brilliant book I know concerning the conscious and systematic creation of anomie and despair on an Indian reservation and wholly about the Pine Ridge. Despite these quibbles, Magnuson has produced a fine book. Discussions of middle border Indian-white issues will always use his work. ❖



**Bibliofile: Featuring Two Nebraska Bookstores** (continued from page 7)

customers’ interests, and an intuition about what might sell in south-central Nebraska. The ultimate compliment from a customer comes fairly often, “I’ve looked all over for this book, and you have it!” Prairie Books demonstrate passion for children’s books and encouraging young readers by the large selection of kid’s books and the prominence of The Book Barn. Also significant is the collection of

regional-interest books in The Nebraska Room. So the “foolishness” of buying a bookstore in downtown Hastings thirty-two years ago, moving it four times to bigger and better locations, and serving the book lovers of the area has truly been a wonderful adventure. Prairie Books & Gifts is located at 641 West 2nd Street in Hastings. Contact them at 402-462-6205, btushaus@hastings.edu. ❖



# One Book One Nebraska: The First Four Years

By Lisa Kelly,  
Nebraska Library  
Commission

The notion of one book/one city (state, county, church, etc.) was the brainchild of the now famous Seattle Librarian Nancy Pearl, who is the likeness for the librarian action figure. Nebraska is marking its fourth year of One Book One Nebraska ([www.onebookonenebraska.org](http://www.onebookonenebraska.org)), selecting and promoting a title for Nebraska citizens to read to celebrate the literary richness of our state. It is worthy to see how the first four books were selected as we continue on with annual conversations of an author's words related to our great state.

## 2005 *My Ántonia* by Willa Cather

Betty Kort and Susan Maher, of the Cather Foundation, spearheaded the selection of the first title for One Book One Nebraska to highlight and promote the 50th Anniversary of the Willa Cather Foundation. Cather's title, *My Ántonia*, was selected for Nebraskans to read. Partners, including the Nebraska Center for the Book, Nebraska Arts Council, Nebraska Library Commission, Nebraska Library Association, and Nebraska Humanities Council assisted in making this program a success.

"*My Ántonia* by Willa Cather is an excellent choice for the first state reading project. It is an exceptionally successful novel, so successful, in fact, that the book was chosen by the city of Chicago in 2002 for their One Book One City project. In addition, it is a Nebraska book by a Nebraska author. It details the history of homesteading and the making of community in Nebraska; however, it transcends Nebraska to become a story of the making of communities all across America. Thus it is a book that citizens throughout the nation have come to cherish. It truly is a book that all Nebraskans should read, discuss in community settings, and enjoy. This novel employs the art of storytelling and the stories are about us; these stories provide a glimpse into our past and are guideposts to our future." ...[www.willacather.org](http://www.willacather.org).

The Cather Center in Red Cloud hosted a Spring Festival in 2005 as a part of the 50th Anniversary celebration, and along with the University of Nebraska at Omaha and Hastings College, sponsored a writing contest for Nebraska 11th and 12th grade students. Programming events happened throughout the state, primarily in Spring 2005. University of Nebraska Press generously provided books for libraries to use as book club kits. A suggested timeline was developed for future One Book One Nebraska efforts as a result of this first year.

## 2006 *One False Move* by Alex Kava

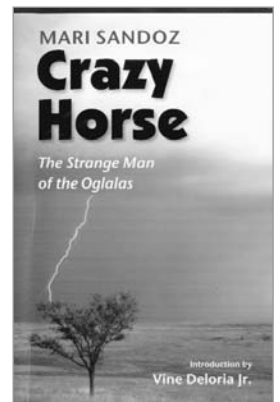
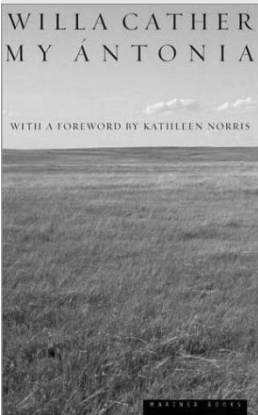
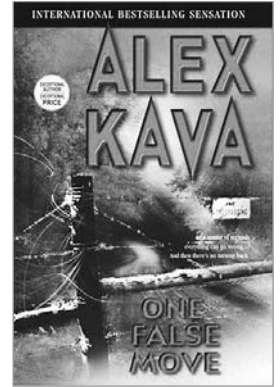
For the year 2006, the Southeast Library System was asked to take the lead in selecting a book for Nebraska to read. By selecting *One False Move* by Alex Kava, Nebraska readers experienced a living author's work and a contemporary novel set in metropolitan and rural Nebraska.

Some of the criteria ([www.onebookonenebraska.org/2006/selection.htm](http://www.onebookonenebraska.org/2006/selection.htm)) used for selection included: "Kava is a Nebraska author with strong roots in Nebraska. *One False Move* is a popular contemporary title that is an international bestseller. This year's committee made an effort to identify a selection in contrast with last year's epic *My Ántonia* ...select an author who was willing to participate in an author tour across the state...Similar to the process library staff use in selecting books for their collections, the committee read reviews of the title, prior to its selection."

This selection caused a great deal of spirited discussion among those who worked to promote this within their communities and book groups. Blog entries from the Panhandle Library System registered more than thirty comments, including those of Kava herself, signing on to talk about the appropriateness of the content for high school students and others who were participating in the program. Kava made visits across the state for book discussions in Fall 2006. Kava generously provided copies of her book, along with book bags and other promotional items to help promote the statewide read.

## 2007 *Crazy Horse: The Strange Man of the Oglalas*, by Mari Sandoz

The Mari Sandoz Heritage Society proposed *Crazy Horse: The Strange Man of the Oglalas*, for 2007 and they mirrored some of the promotional efforts initiated by the Cather Foundation in 2005. Activities included book discussion groups, resource guides, traveling



# One Book One Nebraska: The First Four Years *(continued)*

exhibits, and the Annual Conference of the Mari Sandoz Heritage Society held at Chadron State College in March 2007. University of Nebraska Press again provided books for libraries to use as book club kits.

"Published in 1942, *Crazy Horse* is one of the best-known books written by Sandoz. More than a description of the life of an individual, *Crazy Horse* is an in-depth look at the culture and spirituality of the Oglala Sioux." ...  
www.onebookonenebraska.org/2007/index.html

## 2008 *Restoring the Burnt Child* by William Kloefkorn

The Nebraska Center for the Book Programs/Projects committee solicited nominees for the 2008 selection and the decision was made to read a work of William Kloefkorn. Kloefkorn was named Nebraska State Poet by proclamation of the Unicameral in 1982 and is professor emeritus of English at Nebraska Wesleyan University. He is the author of many collections of poetry and other books including a four-part memoir. *Restoring the Burnt Child* is the second volume of the memoir which, when completed, will cover the four elements: water, fire, earth, and air.

"Kloefkorn has a marvelous prose style that manages to be both plainspoken and fluid, with frequent dollops of humor. ...If you haven't already read the first two installments of Kloefkorn's memoirs, *This Death by Drowning* and *Restoring the Burnt Child*, that's okay, because each of the books stands alone as a collection of linked essays. But if you enjoy this one as much as I did, you'll immediately look for the other two." ...Lori D. Kranz, *Bloomsbury Review*

An important addition to this year's program was the recording of this book by Kloefkorn himself, recorded at the Nebraska Library Commission's Talking Book and Braille Service Studios. Comments about the absence of alternate formats for the 2007 selection led the Library Commission to secure permissions from University of Nebraska Press to make recorded and large print versions available. The Nebraska Center for the Book Programs/Projects committee solicited suggestions for the 2009 read and is currently reviewing the possibilities for the 2009 selection. Let's keep reading and celebrating the literary richness of Nebraska authors...onward to 2009. ♦♦

## People are Talking...

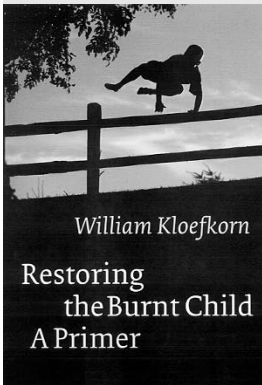
*Susan Maher, University of Nebraska at Omaha, recalls her memories of One Book One State 2005: "When members of the One Book One State steering committee met in Kearney during the 2004 Nebraska Book Festival, we had no idea whether our vision for a statewide reading of Willa Cather's My Ántonia would gain interest or not. Very few states in the nation had attempted a statewide read, putting Nebraska in the avant-garde of this kind of wide-reaching effort...Communities across the state of Nebraska embraced this, scheduling all kinds of events... The people of Nebraska made One Book One State an enormous success."*



*Diana Johnson at Stromsburg Public Library said, "Stromsburg Public Library has participated in all the One Book One Nebraska programs and has had success with all, especially the Cather selection...I think the 2008 selection will be much more manageable for general readers. I'm anxious to get the materials for it, as we are planning to introduce it at the Brown Bag Lunch program the first week of March."*



*Pam Bohmfalk at Hasting Public Library said, "Hastings Public Library and its patrons have participated in each of the One Book One State reading discussions—we enjoyed My Ántonia and Willa Cather and had some lovely activities and discussion; One False Move was livelier and a bit more controversial, but attracted a different group of readers to the One Book movement and Alex Kava was a wonderful presenter; Crazy Horse proved more of a challenge for our readers and the saving grace was the reading guide put together by the Sandoz Center and the set of books I could borrow from my library system. Crazy Horse was not approachable to many of my readers because there was no large print or audio format available."*





# The NCB News



## 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

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Lincoln, NE

Nebraska Center for the Book Annual Meeting  
Join Us October 19



## Calendar of Events:

- Library Card Sign-Up Month: The Smartest Card @your library®** . . . . . September . . . . Nationwide  
Contact: [www.ala.org](http://www.ala.org)
- Seventh Annual Moonshell Storytelling Festival** . . . . . September 13 . . . . Mahoney  
Contact: Nebraska StoryArts, [www.nebraskastoryarts.org](http://www.nebraskastoryarts.org), 402-301-6758 . . . . . State Park
- Reading: Mayor Helen Boosalis, by Beth Boosalis Davis** . . . . . September 14 . . . . Lincoln  
Contact: Linda Hillegas, Lee Booksellers, 402-420-1919, [info@leebooksellers.com](mailto:info@leebooksellers.com),  
[www.leebooksellers.com](http://www.leebooksellers.com)
- American Colony: Pine Ridge Reservation in the 20th Century** . . . . . September 17 . . . . Lincoln  
Contact: Center for Great Plains Studies, Kim Weide, 402-472-3964,  
[kweide@unlnotes.edu](mailto:kweide@unlnotes.edu), [www.unl.edu/plains/seminars/Olson/olsonseminars.shtml](http://www.unl.edu/plains/seminars/Olson/olsonseminars.shtml)
- Reading: The Plain Sense of Things, by Pamela Carter Joern** . . . . . September 17 . . . . Lincoln  
Contact: Linda Hillegas, Lee Booksellers, 402-420-1919, [info@leebooksellers.com](mailto:info@leebooksellers.com),  
[www.leebooksellers.com](http://www.leebooksellers.com)
- Governor's Lecture in the Humanities: David Gergen** . . . . . September 18 . . . . Lincoln  
Contact: Nebraska Humanities Council, Aimee Poor, 402-474-2131 (ext. 102),  
[nhc@nebraskahumanities.org](mailto:nhc@nebraskahumanities.org), [www.nebraskahumanities.org/governor/Gergen.html](http://www.nebraskahumanities.org/governor/Gergen.html)
- the (downtown) Omaha Lit Fest** . . . . . September 19-20 . . . . Omaha  
Contact: Timothy Schaffert, 402-895-1988, [timothy@omahalitfest.com](mailto:timothy@omahalitfest.com), <http://omahalitfest.com>
- Great Plains Poetry Pile-Up** . . . . . September 19-20 . . . . Fremont  
Contact: Matt Mason, [mtmason@gmail.com](mailto:mtmason@gmail.com), <http://poetrymenu.com/gppp.html>
- Banned Books Week** . . . . . Sept. 27-Oct. 4 . . . . Nationwide  
Contact: [www.bannedbooksweek.org](http://www.bannedbooksweek.org)
- Nebraska Writers Guild Conference** . . . . . October 3-4 . . . . North Platte  
Contact: [beu77@juno.com](mailto:beu77@juno.com), 308-530-0659 or [george@northplattebulletin.com](mailto:george@northplattebulletin.com), 308-325-2315,  
[www.nebraskawriters.org](http://www.nebraskawriters.org)
- Plum Creek Children's Literacy Festival** . . . . . October 9-11 . . . . Seward  
Contact: Vikki Gremel, 800-535-5494, 402-643-7483, [PlumCreek@cune.edu](mailto:PlumCreek@cune.edu), [www.cune.edu/about/2040](http://www.cune.edu/about/2040)
- Teen Read Week: Books with Bite @your library®** . . . . . October 12-18 . . . . Nationwide  
Contact: [www.ala.org/teenread](http://www.ala.org/teenread), 800-545-2433 x 4390, [yalsa@ala.org](mailto:yalsa@ala.org)
- NLA/NEMA Annual Conference** . . . . . October 15-17 . . . . Lincoln  
Contact: Nebraska Library Association /Nebraska Educational Media Association,  
[www.nebraskalibraries.org/conference](http://www.nebraskalibraries.org/conference)
- Nebraska Book Festival** . . . . . October 17-18 . . . . Lincoln  
Contact: Michael Cartwright, 800-307-2665, 402-471-4006, [mcartwright@nlc.state.ne.us](mailto:mcartwright@nlc.state.ne.us),  
[www.nebraskabookfestival.org](http://www.nebraskabookfestival.org)
- Nebraska Center for the Book Annual Meeting** . . . . . October 19 . . . . Lincoln  
Contact: Sharon Bishop, 402-723-4434, [sbishop@esu6.org](mailto:sbishop@esu6.org)