

Story^{the} Catcher

Fall/Winter 2017 Issue

A publication of the Mari Sandoz Heritage Society

2017 Sandoz Conference Celebrates Nebraska 150

Attendees at the annual Mari Sandoz Heritage Society conference at the Sandoz Center Chicoine Atrium at Chadron State College celebrated the Nebraska Sesquicentennial in a unique way that would have pleased the popular Sandhills author. Lectures on Poetry from the Plains, 150 years of botanical exploration in the great American desert and a study of early 20th Century technological innovations on the Great Plains delighted the pre-lunch audience. Afternoon festivities centered around Mari Sandoz and her 1956 Fifty-year Predictions which were recently unearthed in a time capsule in Omaha. In the spirit of Mari Sandoz, a time capsule with predictions for 2057 was filled and buried on the grounds of the Mari Sandoz High Plains Center. The burial followed a panel discussion on how the concept of time has changed since Mari's time and how different cultures mark the passage of time. Singer-songwriter Martin Gilmore and poet Jovan Mays both of Denver were joined by Donette Lone Hill and Mercedes Iron Cloud both of Porcupine, South Dakota. Mays led a workshop on the concept of time using audience predictions for the future.

Nebraska State Poet Twyla Hansen led the discussion on poetry from the plains. She read selections from her poetry and explained how the landscapes of the Great Plains in general and the Sandhills in specific inspired her work. She said she is simply following in the footsteps of earlier Plains writers such as Sandoz, using a sense of place to make connections between the natural and human worlds, the land and its inhabitants. Hansen said she had a background in land and nature issues and started taking English classes while she was a grounds manager at Nebraska Wesleyan University in Lincoln. The two disciplines just became inseparable, she said, and led to her poetry writing.

Steve Rolfsmeier, curator of the Chadron State College Herbarium, took attendees on a delightful trip via slides through discoveries in the field and research in the laboratories. The tour was woven around tales from botanists and researchers before him as well as interpretations from Native Americans. He emphasized the importance of an understanding of a healthy ecosystem. There are many biological resources that play a role in our everyday lives. Some plants are natural healing agents and there are many yet to be discovered. While driving down Highway 30 near Ogallala some

(continued on page 2)

The Nebraska Sand Hills

—in admiration of Mari Sandoz

Shifting Earth

In spacecraft images, we marvel at other-worldly and undulating patterns that resemble ocean waves—the prairie- stabilized sand dunes of some thirty thousand square miles—in spring yellows, browns, pale greens and brilliant blues,

highlighting low hills formed from ancient glaciers, blowing sand, and Rocky Mountain sediment washed onto the Plains. Here, large-boned animals once thrived, left their tracks and mysteries, nomadic people

depended on bison, explorers deemed it uninhabitable. Here, a complex system of wetlands and lakes top a vast aquifer. Here, a mere thousand years ago, these hills shifted during drought. They will again, this desert in grass clothing.

Migrant Settlement

Some believe the Earth and its inhabitants are sacred. But while the Pawnee and Sioux hunted, the land beneath them shifted. Beyond their knowing, it became a possession, a commerce, a place on maps to divide and settle.

The cattlemen and Kincaiders battled in their frontier quest, their attempts to grow crops in a hard-table place of brutal heat, relentless wind, drought, thunderstorm, blizzard, and bone-killing cold. The area is tamed, somewhat.

And it is through stories we learn the truth: isolation and struggles, violence and fear, accidents and feuds, the courage and the dreams. An immigrant attempted to shape those hills to fit his vision. His young daughter hid behind the wood stove, inhaling his words.

Blue Unknown

Spacecraft telescopes peer into the far reaches of the cosmos, beam images of firestorms, rings, and craters, remind us of our origins, evolution, a universe ever-expanding. We marvel at our own solar system, its brilliant center, the urge to seek life elsewhere.

Today, we contemplate a great shift. Beneath our soles lie intricate systems upon which living things depend. While we research and debate, the Earth moves on its own trajectory into the unknown.

The first people understood: our planet is sacred. While we search for meaning, there is still work to be done. The timeless body of stories—drawn, shaped, sung, told, bound—offer hope to mortals. As evidence, we each leave our own.

—Twyla M. Hansen, Nebraska State Poet
for the Mari Sandoz Conference, September 29, 2017

(Conference story continued)

years ago, he spotted an unusual plant growing alongside the road. He dug it up and took it back to his office to study and hopefully identify. His research was slow-going until a Native American from Kansas visited his office, saw it and immediately ran from the room. After catching up with him, Rolfsmeier asked if the man knew what the plant was. He replied that it was the same kind of plant that Indian Chief Crazy Horse had used to make himself invisible. That research

continues. Thomas Jefferson, explorer Meriwether Lewis and famous Nebraskan Charles Bessey were all botanists. One became President of the United States, one discovered a vast amount of land after traveling the lengths of the Missouri River and Bessey, who started Nebraska's Halsey National Forest, was the first person to put together a chart of botanicals.

Sandoz Scholar Robert Roy Foresman, a PhD Graduate Assistant at North Dakota State University in Fargo presented his research on the Sandoz book, *The Christmas of the Phonograph Records, A Recollection*. He said that Sandoz' book and the stories it relates give a glimpse into the impact of Edison's musical innovation on a rural home in early 20th Century America and is also representative of how such an innovation was capable of changing that rural household dynamic.

A special Saturday conference session was held at the Bean Broker in downtown Chadron and featured an engaging talk by Alan Wilkinson based on his 6-month retreat in the Sandhills in 2011. The Durham, United Kingdom, resident also talked about his early attempts to navigate the Old Jules Trail. "Generally, getting lost, which is why he evolved a new, improved, online guide," he said.



Nebraska State Poet, Twyla Hansen (top left); 2017 Sandoz Scholar Robert Roy Foresman (top right); CSC's High Plains Herbarium Director Steve Rolfsmeier (bottom left); Dr. John Wunder (bottom right)

(photo credits Jillian Wenburg)

“Nebraska Before It Was Nebraska,” 2017 Pilster Lecture

Walter Echo-Hawk is a Native American attorney, tribal judge, author, activist, and law professor. He knows important legal issues, such as treaty rights, water rights, religious freedom, prisoner rights, and repatriation rights. While his career spans the pivotal years when Indian tribes reclaimed their land, sovereignty, and pride in a stride toward freedom, he also knows about Nebraska's past and has hope for its future. He shared that history and vision with more than 100 people at the 2017 Pilster Lecture at Chadron State College, sponsored by the Mari Sandoz Heritage Society.

Echo-Hawk told the audience they were privileged to be gathered in the shadow of Mari Sandoz, Nebraska's premier historian. He said the 150th anniversary of Nebraska Statehood is a fitting tribute and honor to her

relationship with and stories about the land and the people. "The proud history, diverse population of many faiths and heritage cement our ties to the land," he said.

Echo-Hawk is a Pawnee and the Pawnee were the earliest known, the aboriginal Nebraskans. He spoke of how the world was made, what life in the place we now call Nebraska was like when the earth was young. He shared the story of his own family from the mid-1700s to present.

The night sky in 1,000 AD was sacred. We are children of the stars. There was no prairie, only the heavens and the heavens were without end. It was all blackness. Nothingness prevailed. The world was created thought-by-thought and beauty-by-beauty.

The Morning star was the warrior star in the east and

("Nebraska Before It Was Nebraska" continued)

the bright star in the west was the mother of all things. Wind, clouds, lightning and thunder were the four old men. The North Star, a star that does not move, was the chief. It looked over all things at night. The Spirit star presided over the land of the dead, over the horizon.

In these pre-statehood days, our people learned that goodness comes from the heavens. You are in a holy dwelling place, Echo-Hawk explained. The Morning Star and Evening Star had a child who came to earth at Nemaha and learned from the stars. A village on the Loup River near Fullerton was the first gathering place for the Pawnee who were the people of the area when the earth was young. The Pawnee had stewardship over a vast area and named the many rivers.

The Platte River was an Indian name that meant broad river. The Loup River was many potatoes. The Republican River was water fouled by buffalo. The Niobrara was the swift water. "That's the way it was, the world of the Pawnee with animals and spirits in the stars. We all have roots that extend in the midst of time," said Echo-Hawk whose father was a career Air Force officer which meant the family moved from base to base.

Work on the Echo-Hawk family tree found more than 1,000 ancestors going 10 generations back to the 1700s. Despite tough times through sickness and wars with other tribes which winnowed the Pawnee population from 10,000 people to only 650 alive by 1900, there are more than 4,000 Pawnee today, he said.

As for the next 150 years, Echo-Hawk said the well-being of the grassland is everyone's concern. The Pawnee survived: the buffalo being killed; sodbusters taking the grassland; the dust bowl in Oklahoma; fracking, pipelines and earthquakes. He said adaptation is the big challenge. "Let's hope we learn to live in the prairie without destroying it. Today our threat comes from within and we need a land ethic to guide our relations," he said. "Walk on mother earth and respect it."

Dates & Theme of 2018 Pilster Lecture & Conference Announced

Susan Power, a Standing Rock Sioux, will deliver the 2018 Pilster Lecture at Chadron State College on Thursday evening, September 20. Her topic, "A Dakota Writer on Stories Powerful Enough to Change the World." The lecture sets the tone for the annual Mari Sandoz Heritage Society conference which will be held in the Chicoine Atrium of the Mari Sandoz High Plains Center on the Chadron State College campus. The theme of the day-long session is Native American Activism. Author and University of Nebraska-Lincoln journalism professor Joe Starita will deliver the opening session on Susan LaFlesche Picotte as a Native American Activist. That will be followed by a discussion of Art of the Pine Ridge Region by Mary Donahue and Laura Bentz of the Chadron State College art department. The final morning session will feature Judi M. gaiashkibos, a Ponca/Santee, who is Executive Director of the Nebraska Commission on Indian Affairs. After lunch, attendees will reconvene at the High Plains Center for afternoon sessions which will begin with Oklahoma professor Kimberli Lee followed by Beth Castle and Madonna Thunder Hawk discussing the documentary *Warrior Women*. David Christensen of the Chadron State College faculty will lead an extended conference session on Saturday September 22 at the Bean Broker in downtown Chadron.

The StoryCatcher

The "StoryCatcher" is the title of a book by Mari Sandoz and it is the title of Helen Winter Stauffer's biography of Mari, *Mari Sandoz: The Story Catcher of the Plains*. The StoryCatcher is published four times a year by the Mari Sandoz Heritage Society, a 501©(3) non-profit organization. The vision of the Mari Sandoz Heritage Society is to perpetuate and foster an understanding of the literary and historical works of Mari Sandoz and to honor the land and the people about which she wrote; Native Americans, ranchers, farmers, and the people who settled the High Plains country. The Society hosts an annual conference, the Pilster Great Plains Lecture Series, and a writer's workshop. Additionally, the Society provides collections on loan to the Mari Sandoz High Plains Heritage Center at Chadron State College in Chadron, Nebraska.

Address Changes

Address changes should be mailed to:
P.O. Box 6808, Lincoln, NE 68506

Contributions to the Mari Sandoz Heritage Society are tax-deductible. To join the Society contact visit our website at www.marisandoz.org



Mari Sandoz

The feats, the passions, and the distinctive speech of the West come alive in the writings of Mari Sandoz (1896-1966). As the author of 23 books, including *Old Jules*, *Cheyenne Autumn*, and *Crazy Horse, the Strange Man of the Oglalas*, Sandoz was a tireless researcher, a true storyteller and artist passionately dedicated to the land. With her vivid stories of the last days of the American frontier, Mari Sandoz has achieved a secure place as one of the finest authors in American literature and one of Nebraska's most important writers. As a historian and as a novelist, Sandoz was inducted into the Nebraska Hall of Fame in 1976 and posthumously received the coveted Wrangler Award from the Hall of Great Westerners.

Save the Date for 2018!



The stage has been set for the 2018 Story Catcher Summer Writing Workshop and Festival sponsored by Chadron State College and the Mari Sandoz Heritage Society June 5-8.

Instructors and aspiring writers will gather in the breath-taking Pine Ridge Region of Northwest Nebraska in the historic buildings and scenic spots around Fort Robinson State Park. Participants will stay in the 1890 Brick Officer Quarters and receive instruction from renowned writers.

The instructors include nonfiction writer-in-residence Jeffrey A. Lockwood who began his career at the University of Wyoming in 1986 as an insect ecologist. He has metamorphosed to a Professor of Natural Sciences and Humanities with a joint appointment between the Department of Philosophy and the Master of Fine Arts program in Creative Writing.

Lockwood teaches courses in natural resource ethics, environmental justice and the philosophy of ecology, along with creative non-fiction writing workshops. His essays have been honored with a Pushcart Prize, a John Burroughs Award, the Albert Schweitzer Sermon Award of the UUA, and inclusion in Best American Science & Nature Writing. His most recent books are *Behind the Carbon Curtain: The Energy Industry, Political Censorship, and Free Speech* (University of New Mexico Press); *Six-Legged Soldiers: Using Insects as Weapons of War* (Oxford) and *Philosophical Foundations for the Practices of Ecology* (Cambridge).

The fiction writer-in-residence is Nina S. McConigley, also a teacher at the University of Wyoming and the Warren Wilson MFA program for Writers. She is the author of the story collection *Cowboys and East Indians*, which was the

winner of the 2014 PEN Open Book Award and winner of a High Plains Book Award. It also was on the longlist for the 2014 Frank O'Connor International Short Story Award. She has twice been nominated for a Pushcart Prize and for The Best New American Voices. Her story "Curating Your Life" was a notable story in Best American Nonrequired Reading 2010 edited by Dave Eggers. Her work has appeared in *The New York Times*, *Orion*, *The Virginia Quarterly Review*, *Salon*, *American Short Fiction*, *Memorious*, *Slice Magazine*, *Asian American Literary Review*, *Puerto del Sol*, and *Forklift, Ohio*. She was the 2010 recipient of the Wyoming Arts Council's Frank Nelson Doubleday Memorial Writing Award and was a finalist for the 2011 Flannery O'Connor Short Fiction Award. She currently serves on the board of the Wyoming Arts Council. A poet-in-residence for the workshop will be announced at a later date.

The event moves to Chadron State College on Saturday for a festival (free and open to the public) celebrating the work of everyone involved in the workshop, from published authors to beginners, and featuring additional workshop sessions from select Mari Sandoz Emerging Writers.

The retreat is limited to 15 writers and early registration is encouraged. Watch for updates and registration coming soon! www.storycatcherworkshop.org

Sandoz Society Supports Chadron State College Pow-Wow

With the generous support of the Mari Sandoz Heritage Society, Chadron State College hosted a pow-wow on November 18 at the Student Center Ballroom. The event was presented by the Native American Club, and could not have happened without the generous support of the Sandoz Society.

At the beginning of the 2017 school year, the Chadron State Native American Club was in a tough situation. Do to unexpected turnover in membership the previous spring, the club had ceased to be an active student organization and, as a result, did not have access to the student activity fees as a source of funding. At the first meeting of the year, the newly recruited club members committed to getting the club re-established and making a solid effort at holding the pow-wow during November. Furthermore, the club discussed adding to the pow-wow by feeding all the

(continued on page 5)

(Pow Wow story continued)

participants Indian Tacos, with the club providing and cooking all the food. This is just a small indication of the dedication of a core group of club members, including Casey Savage, Selena Vogel, Richard Klemm, Lisa Pereyra and Molina and Renee Spotted Thunder. Club president Savage put in request to the Sandoz Society to help fund the pow-wow, in the hope that they could also get their student club funding together by November.

In the meantime, the club started contacting last year's master of ceremonies, arena director, judging tabulators, and drum groups in the hope that they would still be available at such short notice. Thanks to the wonders of Facebook, the pow-wow came together, with the largest attendance of dancers and drum groups since the event was re-started three years ago.

Hosting a pow-wow is no small feat, but despite the challenges, the Chadron State College Native American Club has managed to re-establish a strong Native presence during the month of November. For three years between 2012 and 2014, the campus did not hold a pow-wow, and during that time the Native American Club (then known as the White Buffalo Club) ceased to function as an organized club. The club was re-established and re-named in March 2015, and held its first pow-wow that fall, with 27 dancers and six drum groups.

The following year there were 69 dancers and six drums. This year, there were 86 dancers and 8 drum groups. One of the club members suggested Mighty Arrows as the host drum, and they happily accepted, marking the first time they attended the CSC pow-wow. For 2017, seven other guest drums arrived, with several repeat attendees, including White River Crossing, Sons of the Oglala, Lakota Tribe, and Elk Nation. Zuya Luta and Northern Style Singers also attended their first CSC pow-wow, stretching the total number of drums to an all-time high. The ballroom was filled with great Lakota singing and dancing for over five hours, with smiles and laughter abounding.

The club has already begun working on next year's event, setting their sights on moving to the Chicoine Arena and expanding dance categories to include Fancy, Grass, Jingle, and Traditional for the juniors, teens, and golden age dancers. Sixty percent of the dancers this year were 18 or younger, and the club believes it is important to support the rising generation. It is a great partnership with Chadron State and most certainly is in keeping with the spirit of Mari Sandoz.



Carlos Benally, First Place winner in the Men's Fancy at the CSC Pow Wow in November

(photo credit Yen Hai Nguyen)

Sandoz Book Club Discusses *Slogum House*

Mari Sandoz's first novel, *Slogum House*, was banned in Omaha in 1938, a year after it was published. It was also banned by the U.S. Military during World War II. Why? Perhaps it was the fascism, murder and prostitution. The book was also the topic of discussion at the first-ever Mari Sandoz Heritage Society-led book discussion at the Cottonwood Café Bistro Bar in Lincoln in September. More than 20 people attended the discussion on the controversial book which was the first of her trilogy of novels that included *Capital City* in 1939 and *The Tom Walker* in 1947. Retired Chadron State College English professor Kathy Bahr, a long-time Society member, has said that Sandoz draws readers into the past with her narrative in these books while increasing their social awareness and commitment to a just society. She explores the rise of European fascism through the self-aggrandizing

of Gulla Slogum, a "will-to-power individual." Sandoz Society board members Ron Hull, Brian Rockey, John Wunder and Jamison Wyatt led the discussion. Because this first discussion was such a success, another discussion on a different Sandoz book is being planned for 2018.



Participants in the Society's first book discussion met in Lincoln

(photo credit Elizabeth Chase)

Society Time Capsule Buried in Chadron



TOP PHOTO

Becky Herian (left) of the Nebraska 150 Committee presents a certificate to Ron Hull (middle) and Deb Carpenter-Nolting (right) to recognize the Sandoz Time Capsule as an official Nebraska 150 Legacy Project

MIDDLE PHOTO

Singer and songwriter Martin Gilmore (left) and Poet Jovan Mays (right)

BOTTOM PHOTO

Don Green and other Sandoz Society board members shoveling the dirt over the time capsule.

(photo credits Jillian Wenburg)

Shortly before her death in 1966, Nebraska author Mari Sandoz made some astounding predictions of what life would be like in 2017. They were included in a recently opened time capsule.

As part of the Mari Sandoz Heritage Society's Fall Conference, a panel of dignitaries had their own predictions about the future encapsulated as recognition of Nebraska's Sesquicentennial. The time capsule was buried near the Sandoz statue outside the Mari Sandoz High Plains Heritage Center on the campus of Chadron State College.

Sandoz Board member and retired history professor John Wunder of Lincoln, discussed the 1957 and 2017 Time Capsules and Sandoz. His talk, "Mari Sandoz and Her 1956 Fifty-Year Predictions" placed her writing in the context of her life in New York City and the peak of her writing productivity (four books published and two others prepped) from 1953-1957. During that time she also learned she had cancer, survived the death of two close friends and a devastating fire in her apartment.

Board member Deb Carpenter Nolting of Bushnell discussed the new time capsule contents and led the audience in making their own predictions. Martin Gilmore and Jovan Mays of Denver and Donette Lone Hill and Mercedes Iron Cloud of South Dakota talked, sang and shared poetry about the 150th anniversary of Nebraska statehood.

Nebraska 150 committee member Becky Herian, Mays, Gilmore, Lone Hill, Iron Cloud and board member Ron Hull of Lincoln will spoke at the burial of the capsule which was a Nebraska Sesquicentennial Commission recognized Legacy Project.



David Sandoz Receives In the Spirit of Mari Sandoz Award

Valentine resident Dave Sandoz, who hosted the international gathering of the Sandoz family in June, has received the 2017 In The Spirit of Mari Sandoz Award. It was presented at the June 7 -13 gathering at the Mari Sandoz High Plains Center at Chadron State College and again at the Sandoz Fall Conference. He said bringing the family to Old Jules Country was very important. Because of his relentless effort and the extreme amount of planning involved, the Mari Sandoz Heritage Society honored him with the award. Sandoz Society Board Member Shannon Smith made the award to Sandoz at the closing dinner of the gathering. The award was presented again at the annual luncheon at the Society's Fall Conference in September by Society President Lynn Roper of Lincoln.



Seeking The Next Sandoz Scholar

The Mari Sandoz Heritage Society encourages college students to conduct research on Mari Sandoz and her work to apply for our annual research scholarship. The recipient will present their research at the Mari Sandoz Conference at Chadron State College in Chadron, Nebraska in September 2018. Application proposals are due on January 10, 2018 and notification of the award will be made by February 15, 2018. More information about the scholarship and the online application can be found here:

http://www.marisandoz.org/events_activities/mari-sandoz-research-award/mari-sandoz-research-award-application.html

We Encourage Your Support of the Mari Sandoz Heritage Society!

If you have not renewed your support for the Mari Sandoz Heritage Society, don't wait! Send the form below with payment. You may also renew your support online at www.marisandoz.org

Your gift is important to our programs and activities. Each dollar helps us preserve and share the important work of Mari Sandoz. Members receive our newsletter, advanced notice of special events, and discounts for the annual conference and the Story Catcher Summer Writing Retreat.
Thank you!

Name

Address

City, State, Zip

Phone

E-mail Address

- Join
- Renew
- Gift Membership

Please indicate your level of support:

- Student \$20
- Member \$50
- Sustaining Member \$100
- Sustaining Member \$300
- Sustaining Member \$500

To make a secure gift online, please visit our website at www.marisandoz.org.

The Mari Sandoz Heritage Society is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. All contributions are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law. Membership contributions are annual.

MAIL THIS COMPLETED FORM WITH YOUR CONTRIBUTION TO:

Mari Sandoz Heritage Society
P.O. Box 6808
Lincoln, NE 68506

Mari Sandoz Heritage Society
PO Box 6808
Lincoln, NE 68506-0808
www.marisandoz.org

NONPROFIT ORG
US POSTAGE
PAID
LINCOLN, NE
PERMIT NO. 140



“LIKE” us on Facebook
& “FOLLOW” us on Twitter!

Mari Sandoz

HERITAGE SOCIETY

Lynn Roper , <i>President</i>	Lincoln, NE
Dan Kusek , <i>Vice President</i>	Alliance, NE
Brian Rockey , <i>Treasurer</i>	Lincoln, NE
Karen Kelley , <i>Secretary</i>	Denver, CO
Christy Chamberlin , <i>Finance & Awards Chair</i>	Box Elder, SD
Ron Hull , <i>President Emeritus</i>	Lincoln, NE

STAFF

Elizabeth Chase	<i>Executive Secretary</i>
J.L. Schmidt	<i>Public Relations Coordinator</i>

BOARD MEMBERS

Sybil Berndt	Chadron, NE
Holly Boomer	Martin, SD
Deb Carpenter-Nolting	Bushnell, NE
Matt Evertson	Chadron, NE
Kurt Kinbacher	Chadron, NE
Renee M. Laegreid	Laramie, WY
Craig Larson	Scottsbluff, NE
Dan McGlynn	Omaha, NE
Elaine Marie Nelson	Omaha, NE
David Nesheim	Chadron, NE
Michael Smith	Lincoln, NE
Shannon Smith	Laramie, WY
Chris Steinke	Kearney, NE
Jillian Wenburg	Durango, CO
Jamison Wyatt	Lincoln, NE