

Story ^{the} Catcher

Fall/Winter 2019 Issue

A publication of the Mari Sandoz Heritage Society

Pilster Lecture Examines Populist Thinking

What Were the Populists Thinking? That is the question posed by Dr. Charles Postel during the annual Pilster Lecture delivered in September as part of the Mari Sandoz Heritage Society Annual Symposium at Chadron State College. Postel teaches history at San Francisco State University and is a noted historian of American political ideas and social movements. He has written extensively about the Populist and Progressive movements. His new book, *Equality: An American dilemma, 1866-1896*, is about how farmers, women, wage earners, and other Americans confronted the equalities of the Gilded Age.

Postel said populism is in the news now and the term is used by the media to describe politicians who are nationalists and xenophobic. The European populists seem to be characterized by media as “people who hate other people who are unlike them.”

He discredited these definitions and detailed the real genesis of the term ‘populism’ which began in 1891 with the formation of The Peoples Party, a coalition of farmers, industrial laborers, and women’s rights groups. He noted that The Farmers Alliance was the biggest part of the People’s Party, termed POPs which evolved to the term Populist. Originally, Postel said, the goal was education through lectures and the study of history and politics with the belief that “knowledge is power” for the common people who can then make social changes. He said there are many interpretations of this movement and it was definitely filled with politics from the 1890s to 1940s.

This movement ushered in the Progressive era around the turn of the century.

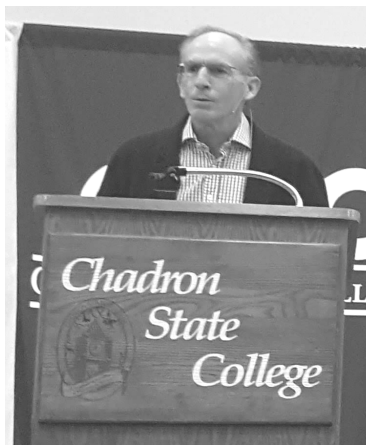
Postel described the People’s Party National Convention held in Omaha on July 4, 1892 as significant in the platform that the Party adopted which they termed the 2nd

Declaration of Independence. It advocated federal farm credit support, a progressive income tax, expanded powers of government to help the common man, and direct election of U.S. Senators. Subsets of the Party included the American Railway Union led by Eugene Debs, the Women’s Christian Temperance Union headed by Frances Willard and many Jewish urbanites who preferred populism as the other two parties were anti-Semitic. He also characterized many of the Party as “bohemian” or counter-culture at that time. Postel noted “at the time, their ideas were terrifying.”

The People’s Party had local and national candidates in elections through the 1890s and early 1900s, but a third party could not prevail in winning against votes being split with Democrats and Republicans. Hence, populism faded due to “institutional obstacles” even though it was a national movement. Many populists moved into the Socialist Party and the progressive wings of the Democratic and Republican parties.

When Postel was asked about Nebraska’s William Jennings Bryan, he responded, “he was a silver inflationist Democrat who was not as enthusiastic about populist

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Dr. Charles Postel delivering the 2019 Pilster Great Plains Lecture (photo Shannon Smith)

Be sure you make your donation, join or renew your membership to the Mari Sandoz Heritage Society before the end of the year!

Join us in keeping the spirit and work of Mari Sandoz alive by supporting the Mari Sandoz Heritage Society. Visit our website at www.marisandoz.org and complete the online form, or download and complete the membership form and mail it to us.

Pilster Lecture continued...

reforms, although he did believe in labor unions.” Postel said that populists did have a lasting impact, specifically on women’s rights and the suffrage movement. He said Mari Sandoz had Addison Sheldon as a mentor and Sheldon had been elected from Dawes County as a populist to the Nebraska legislature. Postel said the use of the term ‘populist’ today is “a creation of journalists, political scientists and pundits and is totally mischaracterized as meaning racism, nationalism, intolerance of immigrants, conservatives. “He emphasized that is not what populism has meant through its history.

Sandoz Symposium Speakers Explore Topics in Populism

Populism, the theme of the 2019 Sandoz Symposium, was explored in depth by several speakers at the Mari Sandoz High Plains Heritage Center on the Chadron State College campus in September. Discussion centered around Sandoz’ writings and her inclusion of Plains populism at the beginning of the 20th century.

Dr. Charles Postel of San Francisco State University was featured as the 2019 Pilster Lecturer and delivered his address at the Student Union on Thursday night, September 19. Postel , a noted Populist author and historian, gave the history and interpretation of the movement of the 1890’s – 1940’s. He contrasted it with today’s description and popular media use of the term “populists.”

The Friday Symposium began with an address by Dr. Jeff Wells, Associate Professor and Chair of the History Department at the University of Nebraska-Kearney. In “The Populism of Jules Sandoz and Mari Sandoz”, Wells noted Jules attendance at Farmers’ Alliance and People’s Party meetings, his correspondence and his unsuccessful campaign for elected office as a Populist were influential in Mari’s writings and her own political stance.

Wells said that Mari witnessed the struggle between the farmers and ranchers and the railroad monopoly and developed her political consciousness. Mari also watched the onset of the Depression as a college student in Lincoln in the 1920’s. Wells believes that Maris’ history professor, John D. Hicks, influenced her views with his book *A Populist Revolt History*. Wells pointed out there was a sympathy for populists associated with the Frontier, and it was a precursor to the Progressive Era. He talked about Old Jules evolution of political activism advocating for homesteaders against the banks.

“*Capital City Viewed through two Lenses*” was an exploration by Dr. Mary Clai Jones, assistant professor of literature at Chadron State and Dr. Chris Steinke, assistant professor of history at the University of Nebraska-Kearney. Mari’s book, *Capital City*, published in 1939 is generally

considered her most political work. Jones explored the uses of anger in *Capital City* and said her novel illustrates the delicacy of democracy. Jones noted the novel’s enduring legacy is “speaking truth to power.” She also noted that in the 1890’s, the populist movement offered a place for women in politics whereas they were disenfranchised and shut out of most political discussions.

Dr. Steinke did thorough research of the role of water in the book *Capital City*. He said water was an allegory for a symbol of inequality and corruption. Specifically, he said Lincoln (aka *Capital City*) was geographically founded along the Salt Creek basin and the city grew up around “stinking little ponds.” The immigrants and impoverished lived there and suffered frequent flooding as the wealthy moved to higher elevations. He believes that Abigail, a character in *Capital City*, is an advocate for the underdog and their constant attempt to escape from tyranny. Steinke also noted the redevelopment and channelization of Salt Creek, renamed Little Grand River in Sandoz’ book, occurred in the 1930s when she lived in Lincoln and wrote the book. He also talked about the whole issue of how water is used, because access to water is a measure of equality or inequality and used the Dust Bowl as a testament to that.

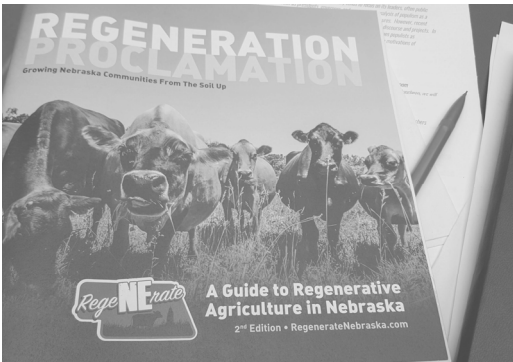
Dr. Maria L.O. Munoz, Chair of the history department at Susquehanna University titled her talk “The People’s Populism: The Shaping and Reshaping of Populism in Latin America, 1950’s -2010’s.’ She pointed out that originally in Latin America, “the populism movement was winning because of their leaders’ ability to reach those who do not believe they have a voice in the political and economic system.” Populism represented the voice of the people vs. the elite or oligarchy. Attempts to redistribute land rights are an example. She reviewed populism history in Mexico, Brazil and Argentina, including the history of working classes and loyalty to unions, imprisonment of dissidents, revolutionary left -wing university students, and evolution to the present meaning as people adapted.

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Symposium continued...



The afternoon program featured Graham Christensen, a current Nebraska landowner and founder of RegeNErate Nebraska which is an agricultural movement advocating practices that contrast to the current “corporate agricultural model.” He discussed the impact of current ag practices on water and air quality using research on an Eastern Nebraska water study, as well as the research done of glyphosate chemical’s long-term impact. He advocates for consumers to “Know your Farmer” and prioritize local food sources. He talked about the 2019 flood in Nebraska and the detrimental impact on our soil and water. He pointed out solutions that are in the beginning stages now to make a regenerative change in farming practices and soil health. He is working with many individuals, and statewide soil health, to build a coalition of environmentalists and food consumers.



The final Friday presentation was a panel of three CSC students who explored populism in the Panhandle in the late 19th century under the guidance of Dr. David Nesheim, associate professor of history at CSC. The students retrieved and read the front-page news of the Hemingford Herald, the Cherry County Democrat and the Chadron Record in the 1890’s. They had read the book “Prairie Populism” written about the 1892 election. As they searched for articles mentioning populism in these newspapers, they were only able to find a few to include 1896 coverage on sending local delegates to the state populist convention. Students participating on the panel included Jodell Schulte, Chase Clasen and Kaylee Peck. Saturday morning’s



Top Photo: Dr. Jeff Wells from UNK; Middle Photo: Materials from Graham Christensen’s session; Bottom Photo: Dr. Lisa Pollard speaking on Saturday morning at the Bean Broker (photos Shannon Smith)

bonus session at The Bean Broker in downtown Chadron featured Dr. Lisa Pollard discussing “Plains Populism in the Writings of Mari Sandoz”.

The Mari Sandoz Heritage Society has a display available for loan to libraries, local museums, visitors centers, conference centers, and school classrooms. The display includes two floor stand 6-foot full-color banners, two tabletop spinner cubes with words and pictures about Sandoz and a digital photo frame as well as tabletop brochure racks. A colorful table cover and runner are also included. You provide the table. Loan can be for a matter of weeks or months depending on scheduling. Interested? Contact the Mari Sandoz Heritage Society at info@marisandoz.org

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.

Long Awaited Opera Brings Sandoz Book to the Stage

The Gambler's Son

When Cozad native Jane Rohman saw Tyler White's first opera, an adaptation of Willa Cather's novel of life on the 19th century Nebraska prairie *O! Pioneers*, she knew there was another to be done.

It was 15 years ago that she approached White about basing an opera on Mari Sandoz' *Son of the Gambler's Man* – about the founding of Cozad and the tribulations of the man who gave the town his name, John J. Cozad. White, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln professor of composition and conducting, premiered "The Gambler's Son" in Cozad and followed up with two performances in Lincoln in November. White told the Lincoln Journal-Star's L. Kent Wolgamott that *The Gambler's Son* had kind of a long genesis after Rohman suggested it soon after the premiere of *O! Pioneers*. "I read it then and found some compelling elements in it. But I didn't get back to it for about 15 years."

That was in 2016, when White returned to Rohman, a longtime opera supporter, for a commission. In 2017, White's wife, UNL English professor Laura White, wrote the libretto. In 2018, he wrote the music. The words of the libretto come before the music in the creation of an opera, Tyler White said. The composer then creates the musical lines that will be sung, fitting them to the libretto, which can be altered as the piece takes shape. "It's nice for a composer to have a working relationship with the librettist so things can develop," White said. "You can refine the libretto to amplify the characters. The wonderful thing is my wife, Laura, is just a master of storytelling. She was able to craft Sandoz's very expansive story into something that can be effectively portrayed on the stage in just over two hours."

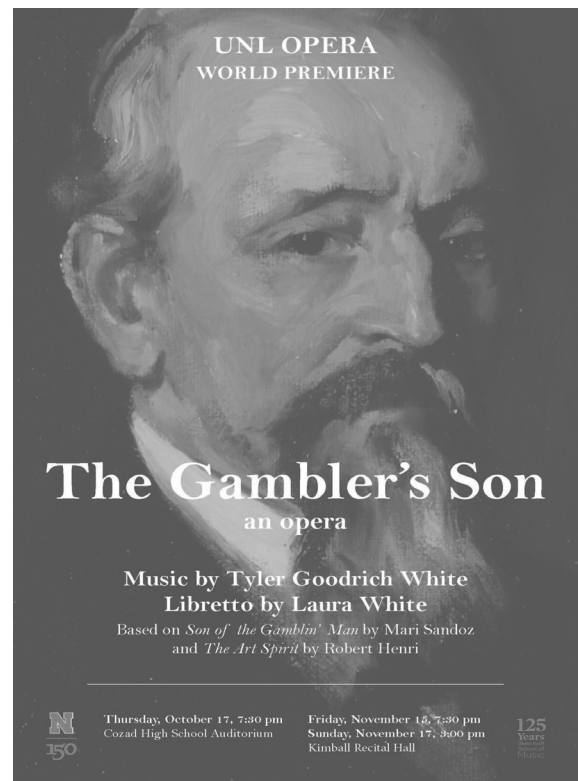
The opera opens with a scenario lifted from the final chapter of Sandoz's book in which the elderly Cozad, then using the name Richard H. Lee, is having his portrait done by his son, the internationally known painter and writer Robert Henri, by far the most famous artist to have been born in Nebraska. "I used that to make a frame story for the whole matter of frontier Nebraska," White told Wolgamott. "One of the interesting things about Robert Henri, the painter, is he believed to paint a psychologically revealing portrait, you have to know that person really well. So there's the parenting thing — how do you get to know your parents as people?"

The opera then follows a dual story intertwining the father-son relationship with the narrative of Cozad, founding the

town on the Platte River. Conflicts there led to the elder Cozad killing a man in self-defense, then taking his family and fleeing to the East Coast, where they changed their names. There, the patriarch became one of the developers of the Atlantic City boardwalk.

The opera was cast in the spring, and the singers worked on the piece since the school year began in August. The symphony began working on it in the last month or so.

"It's a story that, as John J. Cozad recognized, has great dramatic potential. It's got all kinds of conflicts. It's got man against nature, man against man, man against himself. It's got a hint of marital infidelity and violence — all the elements opera really thrives on. And then we move beyond into the psychological realm as Henri comes to know his father and his father comes to understand his son," White said. "The Gambler's Son," White said, is also an accessible piece that could provide a good introduction for those drawn to the production to see the Cozad story on stage. "For people who are not familiar with or not well-versed in opera, it's a great entry point," he said. "It's in English. The singers enunciate extremely well. There will be supertitles, but I don't think you'll need them. You can understand the words. The drama is quite hard-hitting and very approachable and the music encompasses various styles, from the 19th century to today."



The Past Year in Reflection

Lynn Roper, Mari Sandoz Heritage Society President

The Mari Sandoz Heritage Society's goal of sharing the literary and historical works of Mari Sandoz and honoring the land and the people about which she wrote was definitely met during this busy year. 2019 included book discussions, visits to the Sandoz archives at UNL, pursuit of office space for the Society in Lincoln, new carpeting and display space upgrades at the Mari Sandoz High Plains Center on the Chadron State College campus, and the world premiere in Cozad of a new opera, "The Gamblers Son", written and performed by the UNL Opera based on Sandoz's book, *Son of A Gambler's Man*.

We continued our outreach activities with our traveling exhibit displayed in several communities statewide. The Society has a large inventory of Sandoz books that we gave away at the October 2-4 conference of Iowa and Nebraska librarians held in LaVista, NE, as well as a distribution to opera attendees at the Nov. 17 & 19 production in Lincoln.

The annual Story Catcher summer writing workshop was again held June 17-19 at Fort Robinson with 21 attendees lodging in the 1890 brick officer quarters. This writing retreat featured authors Frank X Walker from the University of Kentucky, Marie Mutsuki Mockett from San Francisco and Brad Aaron Modlin from the University of Nebraska-Kearney giving presentations.

The Sandoz Studies book, *Women in the Writings of Mari Sandoz* was released by the University of Nebraska Press, our new publishing partner. Board member, Renee M. Laegreid, serves as series editor for the Society's Sandoz Studies publications. We anticipate a new book to be released every two years to showcase scholarly essays about Sandoz's work to enrich our understanding.

Under the leadership of board member, Christy Chamberlin, our Finance and Awards Committee granted 17 funding requests totaling about \$65,000 from our 15 donor-designated endowment accounts. These funds were able to help re-carpet the walls and floor of the Center, support the Story Catcher workshop, the annual Pilster Lecture and Symposium, partially fund an archival assistant at the Center, provide support for the Mari Sandoz Wacipi (powwow) held November 23 in Chadron, and assist in publishing expenses and other activities.

The annual Pilster Lecture was held September 19 at the college with Dr. Charles Postel of San Francisco State University. The Sandoz Symposium September 20-21 featured speakers on Populism and explored Sandoz writings for their populist themes. The Society board

acknowledged the extraordinary work of Laure Sinn as part-time staff at the Sandoz Center in Chadron and presented her with an award. Also recognized were her two assistants, Courtney Kouba and Holly Counts for their dedication and creativity in producing attractive and interesting exhibits throughout the year, in putting together events to enhance attendance at the Center and to promote the Center and its educational value to the campus and to the community.

The Society board began planning for the 2021 celebration of the 50th year of its founding in 1971 by Judy McDonald, the librarian at Chadron State College. We are continually updating our website, marisandoz.org. We direct your attention there to get current information on the Society and our activities.

2019 Wacipi A Success

The 2019 Mari Sandoz Wacipi held at Chadron State College was well attended despite direct competition from another wacipi on Pine Ridge that was announced after the Sandoz event was scheduled. David Nesheim, coordinator of the event for the Mari Sandoz Heritage Society on behalf of the CSC Native American Club, said attendance included guests from the community and campus. There were 41 dancers and seven drum groups. This year the club added storytellers to the event and that proved to be very popular. After last year's event, the Native American Club was gifted an eagle staff. One of the new club members, Vernon Plenty Bull, carried the staff this year, and it was quite an honor for him. He took the role quite seriously and spoke with Chris Eagle Hawk, the emcee, about how to do the job correctly. Two other new club members helped out with cooking the food and running the registration table, and learned a lot in the process. The word "wacipi" (pronounced Wa chee pee) literally means "they dance." It is a traditional Native American cultural celebration where the generations gather to socialize, dance, sing, visit, renew old friendships and make new ones. Nesheim said the event brings many people together to celebrate Lakota culture and traditions, but it also allows club members to learn about their own culture and gives them valuable experience in organizing and running a complicated event. The Mari Sandoz Wacipi is an important event that makes lasting connections. Mari would have approved.

Story Catcher

Summer Writing Workshop
& Festival

Presented By:
The Mari Sandoz
Heritage Society
and
Chadron State College



2020 Writing Retreat Chadron State Park July 6th – July 8th

Against the breathtaking landscape of the Pine Ridge Region of Northwest Nebraska, our writers-in-residence will lead sessions focused on crafting and improving our writing, providing participants a chance to create new work to then share and receive personalized feedback during the retreat. Participants will be able to spend the nights and days together as part of the retreat. This inspirational setting fosters a wonderful writing community focused on exploring the wild terrains of our lives.



(Above) Field Trip to Toadstool Geological Park; Picnic facilities at Chadron State Park; Writing session at the Ice House Ponds at Fort Robinson

Scenic, affordable, friendly and accessible! A GREAT PLACE TO CREATE!



(Above) Marie Mutsuki Mockett and (Right) Frank X Walker lead sessions in the historic Officers Quarters Living Room at Fort Robinson for the 2019 Retreat



Story Catcher Highlights:

- Staged annually since 2012
- Locations: Chadron State College Campus, Chadron State Park, Camp Norwesca, Fort Robinson State Park
- 2020 will be our FIFTH retreat at a State Park
- Average Cost: \$300 to \$400
- Scholarships available!
- Emerging Writer Contest with an opportunity to lead one of the workshop sessions.
- Fun field trips and activities, shared meals and comradery, a true writing community in an inspirational setting.
- Workshop faculty and draft schedule will be posted in DECEMBER 2019
- Registration OPENS IN JANUARY 2020.
- We attract acclaimed writing faculty every year: Tom and Laura McNeal, Sean Doolittle, Poe Balantine (2012); Jonis Agee, Pamela Carter Joern, Linda Hasselstrom, Kwame Dawes (2013); Dan O'Brien, Todd Mitchell, Dawn Wink (2014); Anna Keeseey, Sean Prentiss, Steve Coughlin, Alison Stine (2015); Robert Wrigley, Kim Barnes, Joe Wilkins, Dan O'Brien, (2016); Mark Halliday, Lisa Sandlin, Ken Ilgunas (2017); Jeffrey A. Lockwood, Nina S. McConigley, H.L. Hix and Markus Jones (2018); Frank X Walker, Marie Mutsuki Mockett, Brad Aaron Modlin (2019)



(Above) Brad Aaron Modlin works with advanced writers at the 2019 Retreat at Fort Robinson. (Below) Writers refresh between sessions in Soldier Creek



Remembering Helen Winter Stauffer

Author of the most comprehensive biography of Mari Sandoz

Helen Winter Stauffer, the author of the most comprehensive biography of Nebraska author Mari Sandoz, died November 21 in Lincoln. She was 97. Memorial services were held for the former Kearney resident on December 14 at Lincoln Memorial Funeral Home. Military honors were conducted by the American Legion and burial will be at Fort McPherson National Cemetery near Maxwell at a later date. Dr. Helen Winter Stauffer was pivotal to the early establishment and development of the Mari Sandoz Heritage Society, said her friend and colleague Ron Hull of Lincoln. "Her decades of service on the Sandoz Board, her scholarship and the publication of *Mari Sandoz: Story Catcher of the Plains*; *Letters of Mari Sandoz*; and her monograph, an insightful study of *Sandoz, Neihardt and Crazy Horse*, are lasting contributions to the study of the history of the High Plains." Hull said she was an early programming advisor at Nebraska Educational Television. "I am forever grateful to Helen for our long-time friendship, her advice and counsel, and her dedication to the cultural and educational growth of Nebraska," he said. Stauffer's biography of Mari Sandoz is considered the most thorough scholarly biography in existence. She was able to interview the widest circle of people who knew Sandoz, including: Mari's sister Caroline Sandoz Pifer, Virginia Faulkner, Eleanor Hinman, Ron Hull, John Neihardt and Rudolf Umland. Mari Sandoz was the theme for Stauffer's doctoral dissertation and she performed Chautauqua-style performances of Sandoz (and of Libby Custer) for the Nebraska Humanities Council and willed her Sandoz research and her personal correspondence to UNL. She also wrote on other women writers of the American West. Among Stauffer's other honors and activities: John H. Ames Reading Series, Featured Reader, February 1994; Alumni Roll of Honor, Grand Island High School; KSC Deans Award for Scholarship; Pratt-Hines Award for Scholarship; Mari Sandoz Award from Nebraska Library Association; Outstanding Alumnus, UNK; Outstanding member award, Western Literature Association; Martin Chair in English, UNK. Consultant National Endowment for Humanities television specialists, 1988, 90. Among her writings: *Mari Sandoz: Story Catcher of the Plains*, 1982; "Two Authors and A Hero: Sandoz, Neihardt and Crazy Horse," 1981 (in *Great Plains Quarterly*); reprinted in the *Distinguished Lecture Series*, 1993); *Letters of Mari Sandoz*, 1992. (editor); *Women and Western American Literature*, 1982. (with Susan J. Rosowski); *Welded Women*, 1983. (edited poems of Nancy Westerfield).

Dr. Helen A. Winter Stauffer (Jan 4, 1922-Nov 21, 2019)

Helen Winter was born in Mitchell, South Dakota, to Fred and Lila (Erie) Winter on January 4, 1922. She had two younger siblings, Mary and Bud, and the family settled in the Grand Island area when she was about 5 years old. Helen graduated from Grand Island High School in 1939 and completed an Associate of Arts degree from Colorado Women's College in 1941. Helen served in the WAVES (Women's Navy) from 1943-1945, teaching aerial gunnery at Alameda Naval Air Base in California. Miraculously, she was stationed closer to her fiancé Mike Stauffer, also of Grand Island, who was serving with the Coast Guard horse patrol. They married on March 30, 1944. After the war, the couple eventually settled on a farm near Grand Island. Their family expanded to include three daughters (Susan, Sally, Melody) and a son (Robin). During this time, Helen worked as a farm wife and stay-at-home mother, but she knew that returning to school for her teaching certificate would also help the family during lean years. When her youngest daughter, Melody, started kindergarten in 1962, Helen enrolled in classes at Kearney State College. When she could, she carpooled the nearly forty-five miles to Kearney from Grand Island with other housewives. These were long days, even with Mike and the kids helping with chores and cooking. Helen woke at 4:30am and left for school when the children did. She was home in time to help with evening chores, then do her homework late into the night. Helen attributed her success as a student to her family's support. She believed most of the women in her carpool never graduated because their husbands did not support them. Helen shared her educational milestones with her children. She graduated with a Bachelor's degree from Kearney State College in 1964, the same year her oldest daughter, Susan, graduated from high school. Helen then taught at Grand Island High School from 1964-1967. She completed her Master's Degree in English from Kearney State College in 1968, the same year her son, Robin, graduated high school. She began her career as an English professor at KSC in 1968, all the while continuing her graduate studies during the summer sessions. About this time, the family left the farm and moved closer to Kearney. In 1974, the Stauffers not only celebrated Melody's graduation from high school, but also Helen's completion of her PhD in English literature from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Helen led a vibrant career. Her dissertation research focused on Mari Sandoz, and she developed the research into the most comprehensive biography of the Nebraska author, *Mari Sandoz: Story Catcher of the Plains* (1982). A few years later, she edited a book of correspondences, *Letters of Mari Sandoz* (1992). Helen served on the board of directors of the Great Plains Chautauqua, 1987-1994; Nebraska Humanities Council, 1987-1993; Western Literature Association (board directors 1976-1979, 82-85, president 1980); Sandoz Heritage Society (board of directors 1988); and was an active member of Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial, Alpha Delta Kappa, Modern Language Association, National Education Association, among others. Always an avid reader, Helen enjoyed discussions in book clubs. Her familiarity of Larry McMurty's *Terms of Endearment* led to the creation of a movie role specifically for her (Flap's secretary). She became professor emerita at KSC in 1990. She and Mike traveled the globe, and Helen never lost her love of reading. Mike passed away in 2014, the year of their 70th wedding anniversary. Helen moved to Lincoln in 2016. She is survived by son Robin (Carol) Stauffer of Fremont, Neb; daughters, Susan (Jim) Toth of Edwardsburg, Mich., Sally Vifquain of Wahoo, Neb., Melody (Rod) Chvatal of Colon, Neb.; 11 grandchildren; and 12 great-grandchildren. She was preceded in death by both parents; husband Mike Stauffer; infant son, Karl; daughter-in-law, Carol Hamley Stauffer; and son-in-law Jim Toth.

Now You Can Hear Mari Sing

New Digital Recordings in the Archives at the Sandoz Center

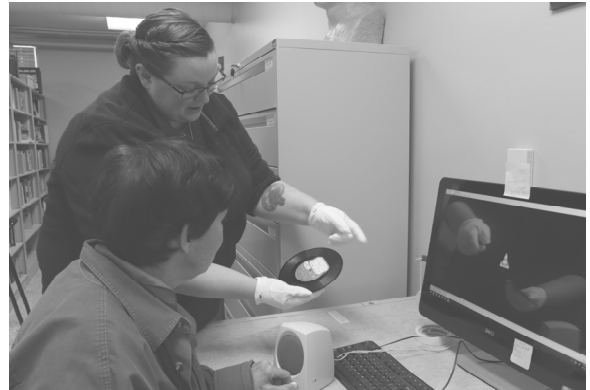
On November 30, 1930, Mari Sandoz recorded a song she composed called "Prairie Lullaby for a City Child."

*Woo-ee, woo-ee
Wind blow back my little one
The day is gone
The dusk in the road
Oh, come my little owl.
All day long you run
Busy through the village
Spilling the beads of your aunts
From the bowl.*

*Notching the arrows
Of your young uncle
Chased by your mother
From the cooking coals...*

Clearly, Sandoz still had Indian country on her mind. Four months earlier, she toured the Rosebud, Pine Ridge, Crow and Northern Cheyenne reservations and interviewed tribal elders about the life of Crazy Horse. After her initial performance, Sandoz rerecorded "Prairie Lullaby" 13 more times onto a series of aluminum- and cardboard-based discs. Additionally, she recorded covers of "Streets of Laredo" and "The Dying Cowboy." She learned the latter from an "old cowpuncher" when she was 9-years-old.

In 1997, Sandoz' sister Caroline donated the 13 discs with 25 individual recordings to the Mari Sandoz Heritage Society. Eventually the discs ended up in the bottom of a drawer at the Mari Sandoz High Plains Heritage Center where they developed palmitic acid coating. Anxious to both preserve the discs and hear the recordings, Sandoz Heritage Society Board member Jamison Wyatt consulted Paul Eisloeffel of History Nebraska for advice. Eisloeffel



Archivist Courtney Kouba showing Laure Sinn the original discs while listening to the digital recordings at the Sandoz Center (photo Courtney Kouba)

recommended The Cutting Corporation, an audio preservation lab in Rockville, Maryland, as an excellent resource for such a project.

This past July, Board member Christy Chamberlin and Sandoz archivist Courtney Kouba carefully packed the discs and sent them to the care of Aaron Coe, the manager of The Cutting Corporation. Within weeks, Coe removed the palmitic acid and digitally transposed the audio. The discs safely returned to the Heritage Center along with a flash drive containing new digital files.

Curious visitors to the center can now easily listen to Sandoz' music:

*...In the dusk you draw near to your father
Sitting so long at the council fire
Waiting quietly as a pipe passes hands
As hands fall gently through your braided hair...*

article by Jamison Wyatt

Helen Winter Stauffer holds a special place in the lives of those who knew her—as professor, researcher, colleague, mentor, friend, daughter, sister, wife, mother. She was the consummate role model of diligence, practicality, and the love of learning. I am deeply humbled to be one of the fortunate few to call her "Gma."

Heather Stauffer, Mari Sandoz Heritage Society Board Member



*Helen Winter Stauffer with Ron Hull in 2010
Photo from the MSHS archives*



Son of the Gambler's Man Discussion Well-Attended

On the heels of the debut performance of an opera based on the book, Cozad native Jane Rohman led a lively book study of *Son of the Gambler's Man* by Mari Sandoz at Francie and Finch Book Store in downtown Lincoln on October 30.

Thirty people attended the discussion which was actually the second on the popular book that tells the story of noted artist and teacher "Robert Henri." A February 2018 discussion of the book was hampered by an ice storm which kept the crowd smaller. That, coupled with the opera debut in Cozad and a pending date in Lincoln, led to the second session.

New York Times book reviewer Victor P. Hass best described the book years ago when he wrote: "Excellent historical fiction ... Deeply interesting and decidedly worthwhile. Moreover, it adds another cubit to our understanding of the flowering of America's heartland, a story of never-ending fascination." The book starts out as the story of John Jackson Cozad, the Gambler's Man and community builder by his true name, but only one of several he used during his career, Sandoz writes. All names of people in this book are those the characters were reported as using in life. Robert Henry was the second son and often called the son of the gambler's man in his boyhood.

In the dedication of the book, published in 1960, Sandoz acknowledged "the early settlers who lived through those trying and turbulent times of the old Cozad and Plum Creek region, and to all those, well over one hundred, who contributed information and encouragement through repositories and by interview, letter, and telegram, I offer my grateful acknowledgement."



Son of the Gambler's Man book discussion led by Jane Rohman at Francie & Finch in downtown Lincoln in October. Photo J.L. Schmidt

In her preface to the book, Sandoz admitted it was a difficult story to tell because Henri, the famous son, had been forced to live under a fictitious name and biography. When she went to the community in 1942 to interview old-timers, she said "Several there must have known the town's connection with the world-famous artist but they studiously avoided any mention of this." She said she respected the community reluctance and put the book aside until the story began to leak out. She wanted to write a non-fiction book, but Cozad "left his trail too shadowed and confused for the complete clarification demanded by non-fiction. I have kept to the facts available and only filled in the few holes necessary to reconstruct something of the crucible in which the dross of the son's youth was burned away and the gold of it freed to find itself."

Mari Sandoz Scholarship Grant Available



The Mari Sandoz Heritage Society awards a grant for scholars researching Mari Sandoz. Please visit [https://](https://www.marisandoz.org/)

www.marisandoz.org/events/activities/mari-sandoz-research-award/ for information about the \$1,000 grant.

The award offers an honorarium as well as the opportunity to give a lecture at our annual Sandoz Conference. I invite you to share this announcement with any interested colleagues or students. I am happy to answer any questions via email.

We are now looking for scholars for the 2019-2020 year and hope to begin reviewing applications soon. The application form is located here: <https://www.marisandoz.org/events/activities/mari-sandoz-research-award/mari-sandoz-research-award-application.html>

Jillian Wenburg PhD
Sandoz Scholar Committee Chair

Center Experiencing Visitor and Activity Increases

These are exciting times at the Mari Sandoz High Plains Heritage Center on the campus of Chadron State College. Sandoz Society Board member Dan Kusek of Alliance, who also serves on the Center committee, said physical changes to the center – new carpet on the floor and some of the exhibit walls and the promise of new paint on the walls soon – has added to the excitement. Kusek said Laure Sinn and Courtney Kouba have been doing a fantastic job scheduling events and exhibits.

Lakota artist Joe Pulliam was an “Artist in Residence” for three days in November, Kusek said. The Pine Ridge, S.D., resident said he is a ledger artist and was inspired noted Native American artist Bad Heart Bull and Mari Sandoz book Crazy Horse. The Bad Heart Bull art display was a huge draw, Kusek said. Another part of the exhibit was a display and information about “Missing and murdered Indigenous Women”. This subject is getting a lot of attention in the area, the Nebraska Legislature and at the Department of Justice in Washington. “I am sure Mari would approve of this,” Kusek said.

Other projects underway include work by a Crawford woman to get the Sandoz sewing machine functional; consideration of loaning a grouping of framed photographs to the Homestead Museum in Beatrice and discussions about loaning the 25 plus Bad Heart Bull prints. Kusek said there is also an artist at the college would like to paint a mural of Mari and other women from Sandoz Country on the wall at the landing of the north basement stairwell at the Center.



The Mari Sandoz Heritage Society welcomes scholarly writing and news contributions to our newsletter. If you have something you would like to share, please contact our public relations coordinator J.L. Schmidt at jlschmidt67@gmail.com

Support the Mari Sandoz Heritage Society Through Membership!

Thank you for your support! Your membership is important to the Society’s 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 discounted registration for the annual Story Catcher Writers Workshop and the annual Fall Sandoz Symposium.

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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 is annual.

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