

Story ^{the} Catcher

A publication of the Mari Sandoz Heritage Society

Sandoz Society Learning to Navigate a New Reality Adapting to the 2020 Pandemic by Finding Ways to Do Things Differently

After eight years, the popular Mari Sandoz Story Catcher summer writing workshop is in a temporary limbo. Sandoz Society Board Member Matt Evertson, a professor at Chadron State College, and his committee had a faculty and a new venue – Chadron State Park – lined up for July 6-8. Then the Coronavirus put those plans on hold.

“We have a tentative commitment from our faculty to participate in a virtual format if we can arrange it—so we are working on that,” Evertson said. “But I can’t say yet if we will be able to stage something or not this July. If so, it would be on one of those three dates that we had originally planned.”

He said the format would likely involve some recorded readings from some of the workshop leaders we were planning to appear this summer, and maybe a live session with one of the workshop leaders at a distance, to do some sort of short writing exercise. “If not, we have tentative agreement to bring all of the planned events and workshop leaders back NEXT SUMMER, and probably expand the program to make up for the lost retreat this summer). So, if we can pull off the “virtual” workshop this summer, it will mostly be a “teaser” for that which we hope to stage fully in 2021”, Evertson said.

The most important thing that people can do if they are interested is to go to storycatcherworkshop.org and review the program and faculty we had put together and hope to replicate next summer, and watch for updates, and, especially, join our email list for specific updates when they occur.

As with so many other plans that are changing almost daily, stay tuned!

Look for the Q&A on 2020 Sandoz Events on page 2



Photo Credit Chadron State College



JOIN OR RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP! 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. You can also use the membership form located on page 5 of this newsletter. We are grateful for your support!

2020 Sandoz Events and the Pandemic Q&A

Dear Story Catcher readers and friends of the Mari Sandoz Heritage Society,

In the grips of this Coronavirus pandemic, we know you have questions about Society activities. Please, rest assured that we are working on answers.

QUESTION: What about the annual Story Catcher writing workshop scheduled at Chadron State Park in July?

ANSWER: Please see the front page story about the workshop and its future, virtual or otherwise.

QUESTION: When is the Mari Sandoz High Plains Heritage Center in Chadron going to open again?

ANSWER: Likewise, look for other stories in this issue that address ways you can virtually visit the Center by following on social media. Remember, we are at the mercy of Chadron State College and its policies and decisions in this case.

QUESTION: What about Sandoz book studies? Are they a thing of the past?

ANSWER: That's another great question that will best be addressed after decisions by the Society Board. It would appear that media platforms exist that could be utilized to make the discussions even better and bigger.

QUESTION: What about the Pilster Lecture and the Fall Symposium scheduled at Chadron State College and the Mari Sandoz High Plains Heritage Center in September?

ANSWER: The Sandoz Board has scheduled its virtual Summer Meeting for Saturday June 20 with an eye toward finalizing plans and dates and format for the lecture and symposium. At this point, it's an exciting open book. It's fun to contemplate what Mari Sandoz would have written about the pandemic. It's even more exciting to contemplate what she would say about a virtual format – think Zoom meeting – to discuss her favorite topics. Even Esther Pilster, the Sandhills rancher turned Omaha school teacher, whose endowment makes the lecture possible, probably would have weighed in on the format. We can't help but think it all would have been positive.

QUESTION: Is this the beginning of something new for the Society?

ANSWER: As we join the rest of the world in contemplating a new normal for all aspects of our lives, everything is on

the table. Without planning for it, this could be a new beginning for the Society as we prepare for our 50th Year next year. Timing is everything!

QUESTION: Is the program already set and can it be altered?

ANSWER: The great thing is that Board Member and Chadron State College Professor Kurt Kinbacher and his committee have had the Pilster lecturer and panel participants lined up for months. This will make the logistics and technical aspects much easier to apply to the final product. It will be a simpler format with distinct advantages for all who participate. But, more on that after the Board's June meeting.

Thank you for your patience as we explore new ways to bring Sandoz to you!

Seeking Applicants for the Mari Sandoz Scholarship

The Mari Sandoz Heritage Society awards a grant for scholars researching Mari Sandoz. Please visit <https://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

Johns Hopkins Professor Completes Sandhills Road Trip Writer's Residency

Before the pandemic got serious, the University of Nebraska at Kearney and the Mari Sandoz High Plains Heritage Society and Chadron State College's Creative Writing Program sponsored the Sandhills Road Trip Writer's Residency. Leslie Pietrzyk of Alexandria, VA, was the recipient of the residency which included a reading at the University of Nebraska at Kearney, as well as a road trip writing residency through Nebraska's Sandhills. She is the author of the novel *Silver Girl* and the collection of linked short stories, *This Angel on My Chest* (U. of Pittsburgh Press), which won the 2015 Drue Heinz Literature Prize and was selected by Kirkus Reviews as one of the 16 best story collections of the year. Her other novels include *Pears on a Willow Tree* and *A Year and a Day*. She told the *Kearney Hub* that she was excited to witness the annual crane migration in central Nebraska as well as the stark landscape of the pre-spring Sandhills. That, she said, is proof that Nebraska's beauty lies beyond the limits of a photograph. "I have a social media presence and so I've been very diligent in terms of posting photographs and video of the cranes and talking about what I'm seeing and thinking all along the way," she said in an interview on March 16. "I'm not a very good photographer but I got a shot of the last of the cranes taking off from the river and it was so beautiful.

Her March 11 arrival in Nebraska was slightly ahead of the COVID-19 shutdowns. She read from her works at the G.W. Frank Museum of History & Culture in Kearney and toured central Nebraska before traveling through the Sandhills to Chadron for a reading. "I finally got to see the Sandhills," she said. "I posted some pictures but no picture can do justice, really. I talked about that experience of being in that remote, austere landscape. I went to Chimney Rock and posted some pictures of that. I'm very interested in the pioneer experience so I was thinking and talking about that." Pietrzyk is a teacher at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore. An Iowa City native, she moved east, living in Chicago, New York and the Washington, D.C., area. She also lived in Phoenix for a number of years. "I don't think this landscape is at all like my experience of living in Arizona, but I have the feeling that if you put those Sandhills within a half-hour drive of where I lived in Arizona, they would be covered with condos," she said. "People would be swarming all over them. They are so beautiful. It's lucky these really beautiful places are tucked away and we need a little effort to find them." Her current novel features a character with Nebraska connections, a 15-year-old girl who has been abandoned by her father. The father is a famous retired football player with CTE, traumatic brain injury. She said she'll use her Sandhills Road Trip to help her in developing that pivotal character.

The pandemic closings and restrictions began to effect Pietrzyk's travel plans. She considered canceling her airline reservations and driving 20 hours back to her home in Virginia, but a pending blizzard ended her residency a day early. She was unable to do a reading at Chadron State College, but wound up flying home from Rapid City, S.D.

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:
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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.

Northern Cheyenne Author Relates a Story of Courage

Thanks to the archives at the Mari Sandoz High Plains Heritage Center and a grant from the Mari Sandoz Heritage Society, Northern Cheyenne tribe member Gerry Robinson has written a book about his ancestry and life in southeastern Montana. *The Cheyenne Story: An Interpretation of Courage*, is a historical fiction account of events which led to the beginning of the Northern Cheyenne's exile from their home lands, Robinson said. The story centers around Bill Rowland, his great – great grandfather who was sent by the army to help kill his wife's family. Robinson reached back through time to unravel the emotional and complex story which at least peripherally involves Custer and Crazy Horse and the Lakota. Five months to the day after Custer's defeat by the Northern Cheyenne at the Little Bighorn, the U.S. Army descended on the tribe's main winter camp. Rowland, who married into the Northern Cheyenne Tribe in 1850, became the primary interpreter in their negotiations with the U.S. government. On November 25, 1876, he found himself obligated to ride into the tribe's main winter camp with over 1,000 U.S. troops bent on destroying it. Cheyenne Sweet Medicine Chief, Little Wolf, was told they would come and warned his people to leave for safety. But tradition and the protestations of a hot-blooded young leader prevented his warnings from being taken seriously. Robinson's book tells the story from the perspective of both Little Wolf and his brother-in-law, the government interpreter, Bill Rowland. It vividly brings to life the little

known events that led to the end of the Plains Indian War and the beginning of the Cheyenne's exodus. Robinson said he spent years researching and writing to deliver a historically, culturally, and emotionally accurate retelling of how the Cheyenne were extricated from their NW corner of the Great Plains. Reviewers have said the book, written by a Native American intent on providing an authentic representation of Native people, provides context to help readers better understand the hearts and minds of the nation's current indigenous population. It is part of a larger movement by the Northern Cheyenne people, and indigenous people in general, to reclaim their culture and their history. Robinson said his family lived in the heart of the reservation in Lama, Montana. In my early years, our family had intermittent electricity, but no running water in the house. My father had shoved two sheds together, cut a hole between them, put a porch on one, and became a homeowner. Ten of us lived there. The outhouse was in back, down toward the creek, and the hand-levered water pump was across the road in front. I have clear, vivid memories of life in and around that house. Life on the reservation was hard, but so many had it much harder than we did. Both of my parents were raised in poverty but were bright, hardworking and resourceful; traits they passed along to all their kids, though I was usually late getting in line. The folks wanted more for us, and they did their best to provide it.

(continued on page 5)

Essay on Old Jules Included in *The Limberlost Review*

An essay on Mari Sandoz' book *Old Jules*, is featured in the 2020 edition of *The Limberlost Review: A Literary Journal of the Mountain West* edited by Sandoz Society members Rick and Rosemary Ardinger of Boise, ID. The Ardingers say the literary annual carries on the spirit of a literary journal begun in the 1970s and 1980s that was revived in 2019 to feature more poetry, fiction, essays, artwork, and other personal writing by some award-winning contributors. "The reception of *The Limberlost Review* in 2019 was so gratifying, and this new 2020 Edition, at 360 pages, was an adventure to pull together," says Rick Ardinger in the Introduction. "This edition features work by veteran writers and new voices, and the artwork within by seven amazing artists and a gallery spread by an award-winning photographer elevates the entire volume." Of interest to Sandoz fans is a re-reading of Mari's most popular book and the essay written by Marc C. Johnson. Similar re-readings of books by William Faulkner, Kurt Vonnegut, Norman Maclean, John O'Hara, and Robert

Laxalt are also featured. Limberlost Press began in the spring of 1976 with the publication of *The Limberlost Review, No. 1*, a magazine of poetry. The first issues of the magazine were quick-printed, collated, folded, and stapled and distributed like many other small press magazines of the 1960s and 1970s. Ardinger said that in 1986, they winched a couple of Chandler & Price platen presses into the garage and began to set and print the books on their own. The company is dedicated to publishing finely printed books of poetry, fiction and non-fiction by both established and emerging writers. "We feel that fine work deserves to be presented and preserved on fine papers, Rick said. Our poetry chapbooks are letterpress printed on archival-quality papers and sewn by hand into limited editions for collectors and other discerning readers. We want our readers to collect these books as heirlooms to pass along to the next generation." *The Limberlost Review* can be purchased for \$17.95 plus \$3 for shipping at the website <https://limberlostpress.com/>

Sandoz Center Staff Creates Social Media Buzz

The hardworking staff at the Mari Sandoz High Plains Heritage Center on the Chadron State College campus have done their best since being closed due to the pandemic on March 17 to let people get a glimpse of what's inside. If you've not seen their Facebook page, go there soon. Courtney, Laure and Holly have posted almost daily trivia contests to keep even the biggest Mari Sandoz nerds engaged. But the crown jewel is the "Hindsight Is 20/20" video tour of the center which features all three discussing 20 exhibits that were in place when they closed to the public. The 20-minute tour is just the break you need from months of isolation. Thankfully the Center is now one of a handful of campus buildings open again to the public as of June 1st. Please wear a mask and observe social distancing directives. Hours are 10 am to Noon Monday through Saturday and 1 pm to 4 pm Monday through Thursday. The Center is closed Friday afternoons, Sunday and Holidays. Saturday afternoon hours are 1 pm to 3 pm.

The Center is once again a part of the Nebraska Tourism's Nebraska Passport Program to help travelers discover Nebraska's hidden gems. The Nebraska Passport is special because it offers a wide variety of travel adventures, including museums, parks, restaurants, wineries, retail stores and more. The program runs from June 1 to October 31, 2020. To learn more about the Nebraska Passport program visit <https://nebraskapassport.com/>

To stay up to date on what is happening at the Mari Sandoz High Plains Heritage Center, you can connect with them on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/sandozcenter/>

Northern Cheyenne Story Continued...

Between their hard work, God's grace, and good timing, things got better. We moved first to the "Agency House" (with real linoleum, a coal furnace, and a flush toilet) when I was five. Ten years later, via the benefit of having a large family when the tribe issued a per-capita payment from a tribal timber sale, we were able to move over the divide to the Tongue River north of Ashland where they built a new ranch home. Robinson said it was there life became more complex, as it does with most teenagers. He struggled through conflicting emotions while growing up in a world he didn't understand, yet was convinced he knew more about than anyone else. He wrestled with the paradox of both loving and hating all facets of my mixed heritage. He would not begin writing for another 25 years, but said it does not surprise him that so many of his stories are about this place. The Cheyenne Story is also about this place.

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 501c3 non-profit organization. All contributions are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law. Membership is annual.

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