

Mari Sandoz

HERITAGE

Chadron, Nebraska

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THE MARI SANDOZ COLLECTION, UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA-LINCOLN

By Scott Greenwell

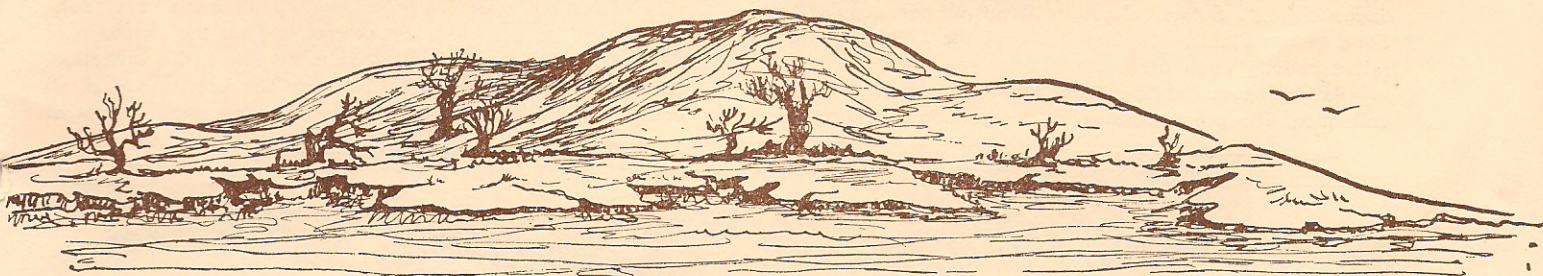
As the career of Mari Sandoz progressed it became increasingly apparent that she occupied a substantial place in western American history and letters. For this reason a number of major universities across the country began as early as the 1950s to solicit her papers for identification with their institutions. The universities of Wyoming, Colorado, Nebraska, Texas, Virginia, Syracuse University in New York, and Boston University were among the institutions which sought actively to acquire this valuable collection. It has been suggested that some institutions may have been willing to pay large sums of money for the privilege of housing the collection.

No one was more aware of the potential value of the collection, however, than its originator. The collection is important both as a source of Nebraska and Great Plains literature, history, and lore, and as a record of the life and labors of one of the persons most responsible for making the region known to the rest of the country and to the world. Yet for almost a decade Mari Sandoz refused to make a commitment regarding the collection. She could not decide where the collection would receive the best care and do the most good. At one time she even contemplated the establishment of a Sandoz foundation and repository in America similar to the one which had been in existence in Europe for hundreds of years.¹ And, too, the collection was still a necessary adjunct to her work and continued to grow right up to the time of her death. Sandoz was certain about one thing, however. The materials in her collection would remain west of the Mississippi River. In her opinion, too much western material had already gravitated to the East. She frequently commented on the irony in the fact that such great sources of western Americana as the Coe and Streeter collections at Yale and the Rollins collection at Princeton were located along the Atlantic coast. The location of such sources as these had prompted her to leave Nebraska and move to New York City in the first place.²

Sandoz was determined to keep her materials in the West, but she was equally insistent upon keeping them together as a unit. She considered her collection a living, working one, useful to her or anyone else only if kept intact. Her vast card index to the interviews, letters, documents, and notes and maps used in her work would, in her opinion, "be valueless without the large files of notes and other material immediately available, in one safe place."³ As a unit Sandoz could readily retrieve information from the collection for her own purposes or to satisfy the needs of magazine editors, publishers, historical societies, libraries, and other writers all of whom frequently called upon her for assistance. It has been reported that such facilities as the New York City public library, with its vast holdings, called upon Mari Sandoz on occasion to consult the collection.⁴

But Sandoz' desire not to have the collection broken up resulted from emotional as well as practical reasons. After all the collection had produced fifteen books by the end of 1961, and with the addition of still more research data would result in a half dozen more.

For these reasons, when Mari Sandoz finally decided in January 1966 to give her materials to the University of Nebraska, she first requested that the chancellor give her "hard and fast assurances" that the collection would be kept intact.⁵ This request was promptly met, but amounted to a mere formality since the University had offered as early as December 1961 not only to house the collection in a manner acceptable to her, but offered working space as well hoping that she might make her headquarters on the Lincoln campus.⁶ In letters dated January 18 and March 9, 1966, Sandoz was given every assurance



"By understanding this one drop of water, I hope to discover something of the nature of the ocean."

on behalf of University officers, faculty, and staff that the collection would be housed, space made available for researchers to carry out their work, and appropriate safeguard taken to "insure that the material would be kept completely intact." It was also agreed that the papers would be made available for the use of "interested persons qualified to do research and writing in the fields of endeavor reflected in the collection."⁷ A year later the Board of Regents took the necessary action to confirm these arrangements.⁸

In accordance with the wishes of Mari Sandoz her collection is now securely located in Don L. Love Memorial Library on the Lincoln campus of the University of Nebraska. The collection occupies more than two hundred linear feet of shelving space and contains most of the author's files, her vast accumulations of notes and interviews, documents, letters, maps, and what she describes as "the extensive cross index necessary for the use of so much material."⁹ She considered the latter not only essential to the use of the collected material, but as a reference index to materials outside the collection. It served as a kind of memory for the author allowing her to keep track of the galaxy or sources used in her writings. The Sandoz collection also includes such personal items as paintings, hand-drawn maps, and awards for literary achievement.

Sandoz divided her collection into six major sections. The first is comprised of approximately 22,000 3 x 5 index cards which she called her Indian Collections. Roughly 7,000 of these cards refer to the Northern Cheyennes — to interviews and notes from the period 1850 to 1880 — and was described by her as "the most comprehensive and extensive index of Northern Cheyennes and events in existence, including the relationships from all agency probate cases of individuals of the period."¹⁰ According to her account many of these records have since been destroyed. These notes were used primarily for the writing of *Cheyenne Autumn* and *The Horse Catcher*. An additional 15,000 cards deal with the Teton Sioux from 1840 to 1880. Included here are interview and research materials on the "hostiles" which are perhaps available nowhere else but in her files. *Crazy Horse, These Were the Sioux, The Story Catcher, and Battle of the Little Bighorn* are all products of this portion of the collection.

"White Man Collections" is the name used by Sandoz to refer to part two of the collection. Again, this section is made up primarily of index cards. Included among them are materials from the trapper-trader period — 1604 and the era of Champlain through the last stages of the trapping industry in the West and homestead period; the destruction of the buffalo; western trails and the individuals who followed them; settlers and the homestead period; the youth of artist Robert Henri; Indian wars of the Great Plains from the advent of the Spanish to 1877; War Department records, military posts on the plains, and military campaigns from as early as 1825 to 1880; records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs from 1840 to 1883; maps, including some hand-drawn originals used by Sandoz for her nonfiction writings; and finally the author's photograph and picture files on Indians and the West. This section serves as the backbone for the so-called Trans-Missouri Series, although three of her novels, *Love Song to the Plains*, and *The Battle of the Little Bighorn* all relied heavily upon these materials.

Sandoz' personal files form the third major part of the collection. The preponderance of this section is comprised of

her extensive letters of correspondence — numbering well into the thousands — which concentrate on the last forty years of the author's life. Included among these are carbon copies painstakingly preserved of most of her replies. Of particular interest are the long story of rejections of her work by editors and publishers prior to 1935, and the fight to preserve her books from what she considered "eastern editorial rewriting and pressure to recast [her work] on popular western notions" or to rewrite works of regional flavor such as *Old Jules* in "Barrett Wendell English."¹¹ In addition to the letters, Sandoz' personal files contain her criticisms of the manuscripts of students involved in the eight weeks Writers Institute, University of Wisconsin, from 1947 to 1953, and again from 1955 to 1956;¹² the carbons of her criticisms of the top short stories in the several contests she associated herself; with her voluminous assortment of newspaper and magazine clippings representing over thirty years, including reviews, notices, and comments on all her books; and finally her photograph collection of herself and her family.

Over one thousand books, pamphlets, magazines, and journals make up section four of the collection. These represent the major part of Sandoz' personal library of special source books — many of which contain her marginal notes — volumes presented to her with inscriptions, and books dedicated to the Nebraska writer by friends and former students.

Her own publications make up the fifth segment of the collection. These publications are practically complete by editions, foreign and domestic, and most of her shorter published works are included as well. These selections comprise what must surely be the most complete collection of Sandoz' works contained anywhere in a single location.

The last phase of the collection, as outlined by Sandoz contains one or more manuscripts of every book published prior to her death. For several books there are complete revision sheets from the first rough, longhand draft, along with much of the original galley proof.

Mari Sandoz anticipated the addition of yet another section to her collection, although it was not included as part of the original gift. It is comprised largely of secondary studies — both published and unpublished — of Sandoz and her writings and will continue to grow as long as there are people interested in the life and works of the Nebraska-born writer. Also included are new editions and reprints of her works, materials written by Sandoz but published after her death, and newspaper articles relevant to the author including accounts of all posthumous awards and honors. An effort is also underway to tape and collect oral interviews with persons who knew Sandoz personally.

Since the Mari Sandoz collection was acquired before the establishment of an official University archives, little could be done initially besides providing a safe place to store the accumulation. Following the appointment of a University archivist in 1968, however, an effort was begun to examine and arrange the materials, particularly those items most in demand by researchers. Then in the spring of 1974 the University of Nebraska Foundation appropriated 17,000 dollars so that an in depth analysis, arrangement, and description of the collection could be effected. The money was earmarked specifically for the appointment of a "subject expert" to carry out the project and for the purchase of needed equipment and supplies to complete the operation. Since that time a complete inventory has been made of all books and periodicals within the collection, manuscripts of



literary works have been sorted and filed under publication title, maps have been cataloged and assigned identification numbers, the massive card index has been analyzed and hundreds of dividers typed to facilitate its use, and a comprehensive index to the letters of Mari Sandoz is being prepared. In the future each book in the personal library will be assigned a Library of Congress catalog number and will be arranged and indexed accordingly, the file drawers of source material will be sorted, labeled, and arranged in proper sequence, the thousands of clippings ranging from art history to the CIA will be organized and filed according to subject, and the numerous miscellaneous items will be identified, cataloged, and filed for easy access and permanent preservation. As a final project a complete descriptive guide to the Sandoz collection will be prepared and copies printed for distribution. This guide will make the collection more widely known and its contents more readily usable. The results will be a collection preserved in accordance with the wishes of Mari Sandoz and a lasting monument to this most gifted and deserving personality. Perhaps the collection will become a nucleus for a more extensive accumulation of materials on Nebraska and Great Plains writers and literature. Mari Sandoz would have favored such a development.

NOTES

1. Mari Sandoz to Clifford M. Hardin, April 10, 1962, University of Nebraska Archives.
2. Fanny Butcher, "The Literary Spotlight," *Chicago Sunday Tribune Magazine of Books*, June 1, 1958.
3. Sandoz to Hardin, Jan. 12, 1966, UNA.
4. Butcher, "The Literary Spotlight," *Chicago Sunday Tribune Magazine of Books*, June 1, 1958.
5. Sandoz to Hardin, Jan. 12, 1966, UNA.
6. A. C. Breckenridge to Sandoz, Dec. 11, 1961, UNA.
7. Hardin to Sandoz, Jan. 18, 1966, UNA.
8. Joseph Soshnick to Hardin, April 5, 1967, UNA.
9. Sandoz to Hardin, April 10, 1962, UNA. It has been estimated by Sandoz and others that her collection contains between 200,000 and 400,000 individual research notecards. A more accurate estimation would place the figure at no more than one fourth of the smaller number.
10. Sandoz, "Mari Sandoz Collection," MS dated Jan. 12, 1966 and signed by the author, UNA.
11. *Ibid.*
12. No staff member was to be hired more than one summer. Sandoz was invited back nine times.

Ed. Note: Scott Greenwell is currently a Ph. D. candidate at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, holding a special research assistantship through the University Libraries. His speciality is American intellectual history with an interest in American literature. He is doing his dissertation on the historical writings of Mari Sandoz.

Greenwell, a native of Utah, received his B.A. in 1970 from Weber State College, and his M.A. in 1972 from Utah State University. During the 1970-71 academic year at Utah State, he served as a Graduate Student Editorial Assistant for *Western Historical Quarterly*, and from 1972-74 he held a teaching assistantship in the University of Nebraska-Lincoln history department. In the spring of 1975 he received an Addison E. Sheldon Research Fellowship from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln for his dissertation research on Mari Sandoz.

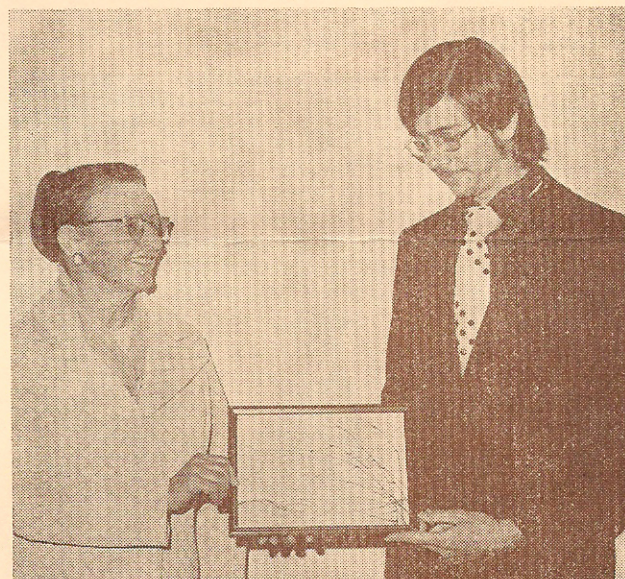
MARI SANDOZ DAY



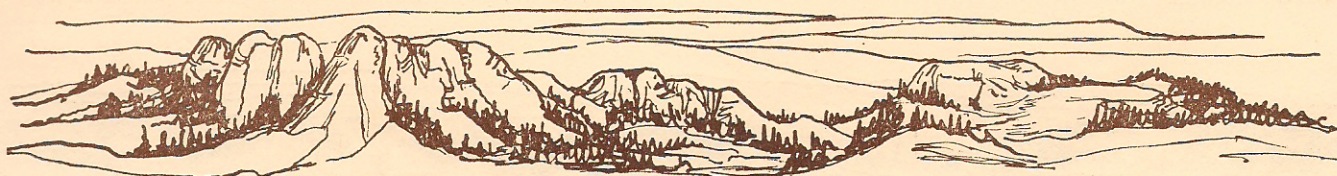
Mari Sandoz

For the first time in its history, Chadron State College has presented its distinguished service award posthumously. The recipient was the late Mari Sandoz. The date was May 11 — Mari Sandoz Day in Nebraska — and the occasion was spring commencement at Chadron State College.

Chadron State College officials hosted a pre-commencement luncheon attended by members of the Sandoz family, specially invited guests, Sandoz Society council members, and college representatives. Larry A. Tangeman, CSC president, served as the master of ceremonies. During the luncheon activities, CSC professor of history, Richard Loosbrock, announced that the winner of the 1975 Mari Sandoz Scholarship was Dan Hanson of Hot Springs. Hanson, a CSC sophomore, was instrumental in the discovery of a mammoth site in Hot Springs that is to be excavated late this summer under the direction of CSC professor of earth science, Larry Agenbroad.



Caroline Sandoz Pifer presents the Mari Sandoz Scholarship funded by the Mari Sandoz Corporation to Dan Hanson.

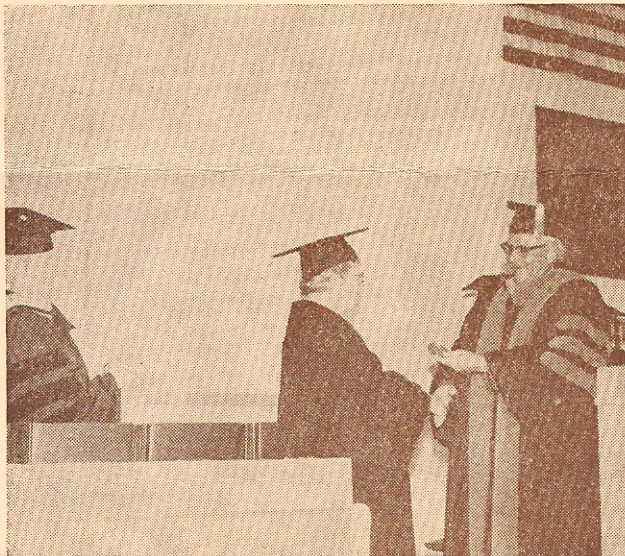


Honored guests at the luncheon included both of Mari's sisters, Flora and Caroline, her brother, James, and his wife Marie. Her other two brothers, Jules and Fritz, were unable to attend, but Blanche, wife of Fritz Sandoz, was present. Also present were Mae Manion of Alliance, Mari's former classmate and teacher; Marie Surber Hare of Rushville and Evelyn Sturgeon Mills of Hay Springs, both who have long time family associations with the Sandoz; and Ron Hull of Lincoln, who was also the commencement speaker and a close friend of Mari's. In response to the question from the audience as to how Mari would have regarded this day, Caroline Sandoz Pifer responded by saying that she would have been honored to be recognized in her homeland. "When she died, Mari was better recognized in New York than she was in Nebraska." The Sandoz family members were presented with reproductions of the family seal brought over by Old Jules from Switzerland, courtesy of the Mari Sandoz Heritage Society.



William Colwell, 2nd from left, Nebraska Board of Trustees member from Chadron, shows the distinguished service award medal to members of the Sandoz family, Caroline, Flora, James, Marie, and Blanche.

Following the luncheon, the group moved to the commencement proceedings. Larry A. Tangeman announced the distinguished service award which was presented by William Colwell, Vice-President of the Board of Trustees of the Nebraska State Colleges. Flora Sandoz accepted the award



Flora Sandoz accepts the distinguished service award from William Colwell.

for her late sister. The citation honoring Mari read, in part: "In recognition of her scholarship, research and writing; in admiration of her struggle to immortalize the history and spirit of our people; and in appreciation of her devotion to tolerance between the land and its creatures, the Board of Trustees for Nebraska State Colleges is proud to confer the 1975 Distinguished Service award, posthumously, from Chadron State College upon Mari Susette [i.e., Susetta] Sandoz."

Ron Hull, program director for the Nebraska Educational Television Network, was the commencement speaker. He told the graduates to use their special gifts. "Take what you've got, spread it around and, if possible, give it away. If you do that, I know you'll have a very successful life."

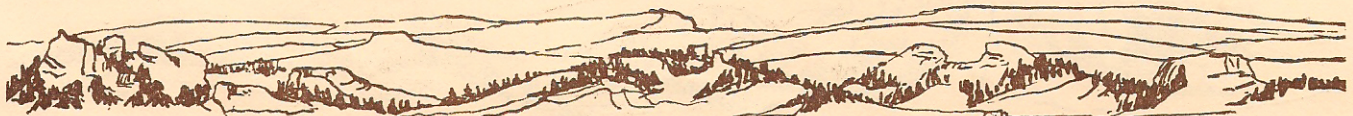
LOREN C. EISELEY

Mari Sandoz was a part-time special student at the University of Nebraska during the late 1920's and early 1930's. She was older than most of the students, and she had a working and writing schedule that prevented her from being on the campus for little else but classes. Her writing interests, however, did bring her into contact with a cadre of students with extraordinary intellectual and creative abilities. One of these was a young man from Lincoln, Loren C. Eiseley.

Eiseley had graduated from the old University High School on the campus, after transferring from Lincoln High. He was in the Nebraska field party that excavated the Scottsbluff Bison Quarry in 1930 and 1931. The quarry was located on Kiowa Creek below Signal Butte. The butte was being excavated by Dr. W. D. Strong in cooperation with the Smithsonian Institution, and Eiseley and his fellow students frequently walked from the quarry to the butte to watch the exposure of three distinct and superimposed levels of human occupation.¹ In time, the Signal Butte excavation was to contribute "important information on the time relations between the western potteryless hunting cultures, and the better known pottery-making peoples of the Central Plains."²

Back on the campus, Eiseley continued his studies as an anthropologist and also pursued his interests as a writer. He and Mari Sandoz came into contact through their associations with the English department and the **Prairie Schooner**. After receiving his bachelor's degree from the University of Nebraska, Eiseley went on to the University of Pennsylvania for both his master's and Ph.D. degrees. He began his professorial career at the University of Kansas, and later went to Oberlin College, Oberlin, Ohio. He has been associated with the University of Pennsylvania since 1947, where he is currently the Benjamin Franklin Professor of Anthropology and the history of science. He also serves as the curator of early man at the University museum.

Loren Eiseley has become an internationally known anthropologist, writer, and poet, and from June 19-21, 1975, the native son was in Nebraska under the sponsorship of the Mari Sandoz Heritage Society. He was brought back to participate in the Society's distinguished person series —



a program funded by a grant from the Nebraska American Revolution Bicentennial Commission, the Wood's Charitable Fund, Inc., and contributions from interested citizens and organizations.

Larry Agenbroad, professor of earth science at Chadron State College and a Sandoz Society council member, has frequently commented on the fact that Eiseley is both a scientist and a writer who has gained recognition during his lifetime in both the fields of literature and science. His historical study, **Darwin's Century**, received the national Phi Beta Kappa science prize for 1959 and the literary award of the Athenaeum Society of Philadelphia. He also received the latter award for **The Night Country**. In 1961, his book, **The Firmament of Time**, won the John Burroughs medal for the best publication in the field of nature writing. The American Library Association in 1969 chose **The Unexpected Universe** as one of the notable books of the year. Among his other well-known books are **The Immense Journey**, **The Invisible Pyramid**, **Notes of an Alchemist**, and **The Innocent Assassins**.

Since Eiseley began his field work career at Scottsbluff, the Sandoz Society council felt that that was the appropriate site in which to sponsor his appearance. An autograph party was held for him at the Scottsbluff Public Library during the afternoon of June 20. His books were on sale there by the Sandoz Society, and interested people were also invited to bring their personal copies of his books to autograph.

Following the autograph party, a press conference was held. Most of the questions dealt with his opinions on scientific matters, and Eiseley repeatedly pointed to the fact that the American public has come to expect miracles from scientists. Using cancer and pollution research as examples, he said that scientists cannot be expected to provide the solutions by the mere appropriation of dollars or through the development of a singular pill as a "cure-all." Contemporary problems need the social scientists as much as they need the scientist, he said.

The highlight of Eiseley's appearance came at a public lecture which he delivered the evening of June 20 at the University of Nebraska Panhandle Station. Larry Agenbroad introduced the native son to the audience. Eiseley began his lecture by reading selected poems from his **The Innocent Assassins**. Then he read a chapter from his forthcoming autobiography that has the southwest as its setting. His style was, as the **Christian Science Monitor** has often said, clothing the dry bones of paleontology with the stuff of poetry. As he informed the receptive audience, they would be able to read the chapter by itself in a future Smithsonian periodical or as part of the autobiography which he expects to have available in published form by October. At the conclusion of the lecture, Eiseley once more made himself available for autographing purposes.

The Mari Sandoz Heritage Society is pleased and honored to have had the opportunity to bring this literate, history-conscious scientific scholar to a Nebraska audience.



NOTES

1. Interview with Loren C. Eiseley, June 19, 1975.
2. Waldo R. Wedel, **Prehistoric Man on the Great Plains** (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1961), p. 247.

HERITAGE NOTES

A new publishing venture of special interest to western history buffs is the **Western Writers Series** published by Boise State University. To date, fifteen pamphlet-style booklets are in print, covering such authors as Owen Wister, Vardis Fisher, Wallace Stegner, and George Frederick Ruxton. Judy McDonald, executive director of the Mari Sandoz Heritage Society, has been signed by Boise State University to write the booklet on Mari Sandoz, with a tentative publishing date set for 1977 or 1978.

The **New Republic** has praised the series for its "simple straightforward style," and for accurately conveying the essence and richness of western American writers. A brochure on the series may be obtained by writing to the Boise State University English Department, Boise, Idaho, 83707.

A special announcement from Hastings House reports that six Mari Sandoz titles are back in print. They are: **The Buffalo Hunters**, **The Cattlemen**, **Cheyenne Autumn**, **Crazy Horse**, **Miss Morissa**, and **Old Jules**. According to Caroline Sandoz Pifer, she has signed a contract to bring nine of Mari's books back in print, but there is a possibility that some will be available only in paperback.



State Senator Leslie Stull of Alliance introduced a bill in the 1975 Nebraska Legislature calling for a \$20,000 appropriation to the Mari Sandoz Heritage Society for planning the proposed Mari Sandoz Center for the Study of Man. Contemporaneous with the bill, the Board of Trustees for Nebraska State Colleges approved a Chadron State College budget request for a full-time director for the Sandoz Society.

Neither request reached the floor of the legislature, as both were killed in the appropriations committee, but the Sandoz Society will continue to seek financial support for both a facility and personnel.

Apologies and an explanation are due all Society members for the tardiness of this issue of the newsletter. Ordinarily the spring issue comes out before May 11, but because

of the spring commencement at Chadron State College in honor of Mari Sandoz, and because of the appearance of Loren Eiseley under the sponsorship of the Sandoz Society, the decision was made to wait with the newsletter until both events had happened.

In turn, this has also gotten the renewal notices off schedule. Some of you have already renewed your membership in the Society, but for those of you who have not, keep in mind that WE still NEED YOU! Please fill out the coupon below, and return with your check at your earliest convenience.

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 Edited by Judy McDonald.

MARI SANDOZ HERITAGE SOCIETY

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