

Mari Sandoz

HERITAGE

Chadron, Nebraska

Vol. 6, No. 1

Winter 1976

COUNCIL

Vance Nelson
Chairman

Carla Chlouber
Director

Judy McDonald
Executive Director

Maxine Allard
Lloy Chamberlin
William E. Colwell
Judy Gasseling
Linda Hasselstrom

Ron Hull
Ellen Larson
Richard Loosbrock
Barbara Marcy
Kay McCune
Celia Ostrander
Caroline Pifer
Allen Shepherd
Larry Tongeman
Kathy Traphagan

HONORARY

Jules Sandoz
Gordon

James Sandoz
Ellsworth

Flora Sandoz
Ellsworth

Caroline Bancroft
Denver, CO

James Carr
New York

H. Albert Dale
Rushville

Bruce Nicoll
Lincoln

Wallace E. Stegner
Palo Alto, CA

Fritz Wefso
Rushville

MARI SANDOZ AND THE NEBRASKA HALL OF FAME

On August 9, 1976, Mari Sandoz was selected to become a member of the Nebraska Hall of Fame. This was the first year that she was eligible for the honor; since nominees cannot be selected for the Hall of Fame until ten years after their death.

The Hall of Fame was established in 1961, and normally one person is selected for the Hall of Fame every two years. However, the Nebraska legislature passed a bill allowing four persons to be inducted during the Bicentennial year.

Those selected along with Mari Sandoz were social worker Grace Abbott and legal scholar Roscoe Pound. They join an illustrious group of Nebraskans already named to the Hall of Fame. This group includes George W. Norris, Willa Cather, General John J. Pershing, Father Edward Joseph Flanagan, William F. Cody, William Jennings Bryan, Bess Streeter Aldrich, and John G. Neihardt.

Mari Sandoz was nominated for the Hall of Fame by the Mari Sandoz Heritage Society, and members of the Society actively supported her nomination through letters and petitions.

The formal ceremonies for induction into the Hall of Fame will come later, and a bust of Mari Sandoz will be commissioned for the event.

It seems particularly fitting for Mari Sandoz to be named to the Nebraska Hall of Fame on the 200th anniversary of our country's founding, since so much of what she wrote about involves our country's history and the things that went into making us the kind of people we are today.



VOICES OF HISTORY

The twelve pioneer residents of northwest Nebraska interviewed by writer-photographer Ron Speer for the Voices of History project will be honored at a luncheon to be held at the Chadron State College campus on Saturday, Dec. 4, in the Dawes Room of the Campus Center. This will mark the formal premiere of the two slide-tape programs produced for public showing.

The Mari Sandoz Heritage Society has the original taped interviews for the project, which was made possible by a grant from the Nebraska Bicentennial Commission.

**B & B Printing
Publisher**

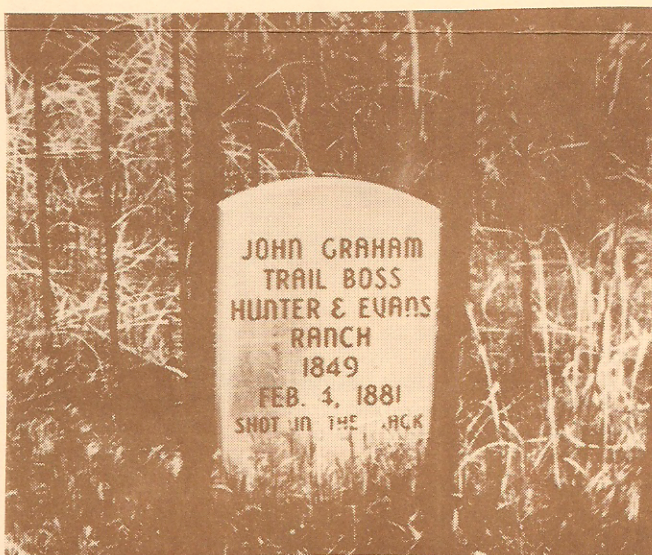


"By understanding this one drop of water, I hope to discover something of the nature of the ocean."

Excerpts from these interviews, along with slides of old pictures and new ones, were combined to create a fascinating glimpse into the history of this area.

Through the eyes of those interviewed we see what it was like when this country was first being settled. We learn of the hardships and joys, as well as details of everyday life, in the early days.

The programs are highly entertaining, with some moments that are humorous and some that are quite moving. One program is 46 minutes in length and the other is 26 minutes. Featured on the longer program are Edward Kearns, a Rushville farmer; Preston O. Gaylord, a Chadron railroader; Marie Surber Hare, a schoolteacher from Rushville; Harry Hartman, a shopkeeper from Ardmore, S.D.; Jennie Lawrence, a farm wife from Whitney; James A. McClary, a Harrison barber; Jules Sandoz, a rancher from the Sandhills and the son of Old Jules Sandoz; and Lawrence Cross, a Sioux Indian from Crawford.



One of the stories told in the Voices of History program is about John Graham, who drove 3,000 head of cattle up the Texas Trail in 1879 to help found the Hunter-Evans Ranch south of Rushville. Edward Kearns, one of those interviewed for the oral history project, talks about John Graham, who was shot in the back by another Hunter-Evans cowboy.

On the shorter program, those interviewed are Theo Anderson, a blacksmith from Gordon; Bill Gregg, an icemaker from Marsland; Lige Thayer, who was a Spade Ranch cowboy; and Grace Francis Pollard, who grew up at Crawford, near Fort Robinson.

We hope that many of these people will be present at the luncheon and program, which will begin at noon on Dec. 4. The public is invited to the luncheon, which will cost \$3.75, and reservations may be made by writing or calling the Mari Sandoz Heritage Society by Dec. 1.

This represents an opportunity to show our appreciation for the men and women who helped to settle this land and also to celebrate our unique heritage, which Mari Sandoz wrote about so eloquently in her many books and stories.

REMEMBER

For reservations for the Voices of History luncheon on Dec. 4 at noon call or write the Mari Sandoz Heritage Society at Chadron State College (432-4451, ext. 274) by Dec. 1.

MARI SANDOZ DAY AND THE QUARTER SECTION CLUB

Mari Sandoz Day, May 11, 1976, will be remembered as the day the Quarter Section Club did a "land office business" and consequently the Mari Sandoz Center for the Study of Man came a step closer to reality. Over \$4500 was raised for the center during festivities at the Chadron State College Campus Center.

Members of the Quarter Section Club are those who have donated \$160 to the Mari Sandoz Society. The Section Club, representing persons who have donated \$640, gained its first member, Flora Sandoz, sister of Mari Sandoz.

Miss Sandoz, a trained botanist, also showed slides of Nebraska wildflowers during the afternoon. Most of the wildflowers were found on the ranch in Sheridan County that her father homesteaded and where she still lives.

Another highlight of the day was a preview of the oral history project produced by Crawford writer Ron Speer for Chadron State College and the Mari Sandoz Heritage Society. He played tape-recorded interviews with people who helped settle this area, and one of those interviewed, Marie Surber Hare, was present. Readers of *Old Jules* will remember the Surber family.



Dr. Allen Shepherd and Caroline Pifer award the Mari Sandoz Scholarship to Chadron freshman Kathy Traphagan during the Mari Sandoz Day activities, May 11, 1976.



Other events on the program were songs from the homestead era by Corinne Tangeman, a display of photographs by David Tipton, and songs by the Chadron State College Eaglaires. An exhibit of recent excavations by Dr. Larry Agenbroad and the Earth Science Department at CSC was also on display during the day.

The Mari Sandoz Society Scholarship was presented that evening to Kathy Traphagan, a freshman from Chadron, by Caroline Sandoz Pifer and Dr. Allen Shepherd, associate professor of history at Chadron State College and a member of the Council of the Mari Sandoz Heritage Society.

Mari's brother James also attended the activities of Mari Sandoz Day, and another family member who was on hand was Blanche Sandoz, the widow of Mari's brother Fritz.

May 11 marked the fifth anniversary of the founding of the Mari Sandoz Society and the tenth anniversary of her death. CSC student Pat Benton served as master of ceremonies for the day's activities.

The paid-up members of the Quarter Section Club include:

Reta King, Chadron
Dr. and Mrs. A. J. Alderman, Chadron
Mr. and Mrs. Fred Chamberlin, Gordon
Mr. and Mrs. William E. Colwell, Chadron
Brenn Realty and Insurance, Chadron
Charles and Barbara Marcy, Rushville
Strain Land and Cattle Co., Martin, S.D.
Mr. and Mrs. Roy Chicoine, formerly of Chadron and now of Newport Beach, Calif.
Caroline Sandoz Pifer, Gordon
Ed and Avis Nelson, Chadron
Stockman's Rexall Drug, Gordon
Doris Gates, Chadron

Those who have paid the first \$40 installment towards membership in the Quarter Section include:

Senator Leslie Stull, Alliance
Mrs. Leslie Stull
Mr. and Mrs. Keith Kemper, Alliance
The Alliance Times-Herald
Arthur Vetter, Denver
Dr. and Mrs. Larry Tangeman, Chadron
Blanche Sandoz, Gordon
Mrs. Winifred Knoflicek, Alliance
Mr. and Mrs. Ed Hollstein, Rushville
Mr. and Mrs. Vance Nelson, Crawford
Mr. and Mrs. James Sandoz, Gordon
Mr. and Mrs. B. Wallace Mills, Hay Springs

All contributions to the Mari Sandoz Society are tax deductible. Next May 11, during Mari Sandoz Day activities, paid-up members of the Quarter Section Club will receive a certificate, signed by the governor of Nebraska, based on the old land patent certificates of the homestead era.

Even though a good beginning has been made through the Quarter Section Club, much more is needed, of course, before the proposed Mari Sandoz Center for the Study of Man can be built.

The Quarter Section Club is still open for new members, and remember that the "home place" will go to anyone who donates the entire amount needed for the center (close to a million dollars).

SANDOZ COUNTRY TOUR

by Meredith Graves

[Reprinted through the courtesy of the Crawford Tribune]

The third biennial Sandoz Country Tour on June 26 was a triumph of the human spirit over sheer numbers, rugged terrain and the popular principle that promises, "If something can go wrong, it will."

Praised for being the first tour to be planned in chronological order, the trek reversed the 1972 and 1974 starting point at Gordon, so a taste of earlier Indian culture and artifacts preceded homestead views.

The 16-hour excursion brought some 200 Sandoz enthusiasts together (including a veteran of all three tours, Charles Dukat, a former student of Mari's) in a caravan of more than 68 widely varied vehicles without accident, in spite of unexpectedly poor trail conditions attributed to last winter's drought.

Vance Nelson, Fort Robinson's curator, was dubbed "Wagon Boss" over the CB communications and served as absolute authority for the expedition.

"Only Vance could have sized up the terrain at each stop and directed parking so as to get all those cars in and out again," said tour director Ellen Larson, who left the leadership of the Mari Sandoz Heritage Society July 1.

Nelson also provided two vehicles equipped with CB radios and a fine traffic director and tail man in Eric Jensen, one of his assistants at the Fort.



A panoramic view of the Sandhills can be seen from Flora Sandoz' front yard. Here, visitors with the 1976 Sandoz Country Tour were served doughnuts, Swiss cookies, and lemonade.

Another hero for the group was Dr. Ron Weedon, Chadron State botany professor, who volunteered his 4-wheel drive and tools for any emergency car repair.

He and chemistry professor Jim McCafferty performed a valuable service by tagging caravan cars with orange crepe paper while they were all parked at the Museum of the Fur Trade, the first stop after campus registration.

Following a relaxed museum tour the group proceeded east on Highway 20, with all traffic stopped by local police to get the caravan underway.

They headed south and east to the well site where Old Jules had been dropped by pranksters, severely injuring his foot. He suffered there on the old military trail for 18



days before cavalymen carried him to Fort Robinson and the care of Dr. Walter Reed, Caroline Sandoz Pifer reminded the crowd.

A man who "quietly saw what needed to be done and did it," Ellen Larson reports, was CSC dean Jack Swanson. He brought a walkie-talkie and bridged the CB gap caused by the length of the caravan, which often stretched several miles.

Except for one overheated engine, one stuck vehicle and perhaps two mechanical failures, the cars did surprisingly well. Although a few Sandhills drivers had been deliberately placed at the head of the procession, most of the motorists were from Omaha or Lincoln. Few had had any useful experience on driving through sand, and only one quailed at a long curved bridge with shaky pilings and not one guardrail.

A stop was made at the Sacred Heart Church of Mirage Flats. An earlier wooden church had been established there after Old Jules and another settler had donated land for it and the nearby churchyard.

Later Mae Manion of Alliance told the crowd that she had been married in the original church, with Mari Sandoz present, in 1912.

It was about 1:30 when a scattered picnic was set up on a curve of the Niobrara, at a favorite Indian camping ground. Indian Hill loomed in the background, and perhaps a fourth of the party scaled this landmark of several Sandoz books.

The highlight for most was probably the warm, seemingly effortless hospitality of Flora Sandoz at her attractive ranch home, which had been her father's third homestead.

Iced tea, lemonade, raised donuts and a Swiss cookie made a happy surprise for the crowd.

Strollers on the velvety grass found the weathered old trading post that Old Jules had used and a charming, fenced "honeymoon cottage" used 50 years ago by James Sandoz and his bride.

Shadowing the cool, sunny day were the serious illness of Jules, who had hoped to be present, and the death of Fritz last December.

Mrs. Fritz Sandoz and James' daughter and granddaughter, Celia and Marlene Ostrander, were on hand, however.

The striking orchards, planted on narrow elevations, and healthy peonies planted in 1916 by Old Jules drew pleased exclamations after the miles of sand and sparse growth.

Mari's library, which was accessible for browsing, and some free postcards and maps rewarded those who went inside the house.

From the farm the group drove two and one half miles to Mari's gravesite, a lonely fenced plot on a hillside as high as possible but conforming to her wish to be buried on the homestead.

Here Dr. Allen Shepherd, CSC history professor, read brief excerpts from *Old Jules* and *Love Song to the Plains*.

"The cooks in Gordon will be furious," Caroline Pifer warned, for the tour was almost two hours late. The caravan sped to Gordon, where the American Legion Auxiliary had prepared a beef and ham buffet for 172.

Scholar Scott Greenwell of Lincoln, who has read all 30,000 letters in the Sandoz correspondence, spoke eloquently to the group, which broke up reluctantly not very long before midnight.

DONORS TO THE SOCIETY

A seal has been donated to the Mari Sandoz Heritage Society by Ed Hollstein, a Rushville lawyer who is a member of the Society. Mr. Hollstein had the seal made especially for the Society to use with the land patent certificates given to members of the Quarter Section Club. The gift is one the Society will use and appreciate for many years to come.

Mrs. Ruth Van Ackeren, a Nebraska writer who grew up near Lakeside and later lived at North Platte, has donated a collection of her writings to the Mari Sandoz Heritage Society. Many of the articles concern matters of historical interest, and the donation makes a valuable addition to the Society's collection of historical materials.

Mae Manion, a former neighbor and teacher of Mari Sandoz, has given the Mari Sandoz Heritage Society a collection of newspaper clippings pertaining to Mari Sandoz' work and the Sandoz family.

Mrs. Manion, who lives in Alliance, has been collecting the clippings for at least 40 years. She grew up about 1½ miles from the Sandoz River Place on the Mirage Flats and taught Mari and Mari's brothers Jules and James during a spring term after the court had ordered the youngsters to go to school.

"Old Jules said he could teach his kids more than that 15-year-old Hollander could," Mrs. Manion recalls. "This was entirely true, because he'd gone to the university and knew a lot about a lot of things."

Mrs. Manion's father, John Peters, and Old Jules never got along very well, but didn't have any big trouble, she relates.

Some of the clippings pertain to Peters, who apparently was interviewed quite often after he was referred to as the "Big Hollander" in Mari's book about her father.

The mother of ten, Mrs. Manion taught school for a total of 21 years before retiring in 1964 after she was over 70 years old. In 1970 she compiled a history of Box Butte County, and she continues to be active, doing church work, helping at the nutrition center in Alliance, and making quilts.

HERITAGE NOTES

With this issue, *Mari Sandoz Heritage* resumes its regular schedule of publication. Because of a lack of staff for a period of time, only one issue, rather than the usual two, was published last year. The Winter 1975 issue should have been labeled Vol. 5, No. 1, and there was no Spring 1976 issue. The next publication for *Mari Sandoz Heritage* will be in the spring of 1977.

Chadron State College will offer a 2½ week workshop on the writings of Mari Sandoz next summer, June 22 through July 8. The workshop will be led by Dr. Richard Loosbrock, an historian who also has a background in literature. More information on the workshop will be included in the spring issue of *Mari Sandoz Heritage*.

Nebraska Educational Television crews were in the Sandhills in early October filming a documentary on Mari Sandoz. Scenes were shot at the River Place, Smith Lake,



and at the Sandhills homestead of Old Jules. Dick Cavett interviewed members of the Sandoz family and will provide narration for the documentary, which will be shown some time next year.

Judy McDonald, executive director of the Mari Sandoz Heritage Society, provided research for the filming. The project was spearheaded by Ron Hull, program manager for NETV and a friend of Mari Sandoz.

Change seems to be the one certain thing we can expect of life (we won't count death, since it comes at the end of life, or taxes, since some millionaires reportedly manage to avoid them), and change has come to the Mari Sandoz Heritage Society. Ellen Larson, who worked many years with the Society and put so much of herself into that work, has returned to Wisconsin to finish the home she and her husband had started before his death. She still has a deep interest in the Society and will serve on the Council.

Her position as director and manager of the day-to-day affairs of the Society has been assumed by Carla Chlouber, who comes from Oklahoma, where she taught English and communication skills at Eastern Oklahoma State College. Mrs. Chlouber is also director of the Teaching Learning Center at Chadron State College.

Judy McDonald remains as executive director of the Mari Sandoz Heritage Society, though, and the goals and purposes of the Society remain the same. But the Mari Sandoz Heritage Society will certainly miss the sensitivity, talent, and dedication of Ellen Larson.

A fifteen minute slide-tape presentation outlining the history of the area and the goals of the Mari Sandoz Heritage Society has been prepared by Ron Speer, a writer and photographer from Crawford. Speer's father, grandfather, and great-grandfather were all homesteaders in the Sandhills, and his knowledge of the area and of Mari Sandoz and her writings is evident in the narrative accompanying the slides.

Old photographs and beautiful color shots of scenes from northwest Nebraska are combined to illustrate the story of the area's history and its foremost author.

The fifteen minute slide-tape program may be ordered from the Mari Sandoz Heritage Society for presentation before groups or in schools by simply writing to the Society at Chadron State College and giving the date when the program will be needed.

The Mari Sandoz Heritage Society, through funds from the American Revolution Bicentennial Commission, has awarded a grant to photographer David Tipton to continue his project of photographing abandoned ranches and homesteads in western Nebraska.

Tipton, whose first one-man exhibit was held during Mari Sandoz Day activities on May 11, 1976, is on the staff of the Chadron State College library. He is a graduate of Kentucky Southern College and has a master's degree in literature from the University of Louisville and a master's

in library science from Indiana University. He is currently working on his Ph.D. in American literature at the University of Kentucky.

He first became seriously interested in photography when he took a course as an elective at Indiana University. Since that time, he says, he has been hooked on cameras.

The grant from the Mari Sandoz Heritage Society will enable him to continue the series he began last spring. Of the old buildings he photographs, Tipton says, "Whenever I see their weathered wood or their sunbleached stucco, or witness the revisions time has made in their original structures, I cannot help but sense the familial ghosts yet lingering in the abandoned halls and rooms, on the porches, and on the lawns."

NOTES ON A VISIT WITH FLORA SANDOZ by Carla Chlouber

On August 11, 1976, my husband Dale, Dr. Ron Weedon, associate professor of botany at Chadron State College and his assistant, Joyce Stotts, and I went to see Flora Sandoz, one of Mari Sandoz' two sisters, in order to take her a plant press from Chadron State College and make arrangements for taping her commentary to her wildflower slides.

The surviving brothers and sisters of Mari Sandoz also include Young Jules, James, and Caroline Pifer, who all still live and ranch in the Sandhills. Another brother, Fritz, died last year. Caroline is the one who has the care of Mari's manuscripts, letters, and business affairs, and she also has been doing research into Mari's career as a writer.

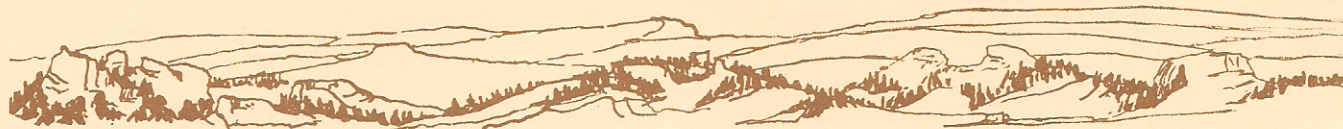
We left Chadron about 5:30 in the afternoon, traveling through the Pine Ridge area, Hay Springs, and Rushville. Then driving south of Gordon through the Sandhills, we entered a world of different beauty. The undulating, seemingly endless hills were green with grass, and masses of wildflowers grew along the roadside and in the meadows. The sun shone through late afternoon rain clouds to highlight the yellow sunflowers, white blazing stars, and purple Rocky Mountain bee plants. Whole fields were purple or yellow or splashed with both colors.

We reached the ranch home of Flora Sandoz about 7:30. The ranch is the one homesteaded by Old Jules when he made his last move, which was to the Sandhills. The old orchards are there, plus younger ones planted and tended by Flora.

When I asked her when the apples would be ready for picking, she said, "What apples?" and laughed, explaining that she had sprayed the blossoms this year to avoid having a crop and had only a few — and those were wormy. She said that she simply had too much work to do to take care of the apples this year, and she had had to choose between looking after the cattle and caring for the orchards.

Flora told us that she does all of her own work on the ranch, including the haying, calving, winter feeding, and caring for a herd of about 150 cattle. She has had the same tractor since 1941 and is pretty good at repairing it herself.

Flora Sandoz graduated from the University of Minnesota in 1933 with a degree in botany, and Ron Weedon was taking her a plant press. She had expressed an interest in using the press to collect specimens of plants from the Sandhills for the college herbarium. She already has a collection of slides of wildflowers from the Sandhills, and the Mari Sandoz Heritage Society had initiated a project to duplicate the slides and tape her commentary to





Ron Speer talks to Grace Francis Pollard, who spent her teenage years at Fort Robinson and participated in the "grand society" of the fort.

them. Making arrangements for the taping was another purpose of our trip.

Dr. Weedon and Joyce Stotts, a former student at Chadron State who is now working for the college as a greenhouse technician, explained to Flora how to use the plant press and what to look for in the specimens she collects. Flora showed us her own books on plant identification, including one rare, out-of-print book that she loaned to the college. She commented that identifying and labeling the pressed plants is something that she can do during blizzards, when she can't work outside. Otherwise, she wouldn't have time to do much more than collect the plants as she goes about her work on the ranch.

The talk then turned to Flora's experience teaching school when she was young. She told us of how she had once taught all nine grades in a one-room country school and stayed three years in a school that had been unable to keep a teacher before.

We then talked about the book **Old Jules**, and my husband commented that Jules may have appeared harsh, but one had to be tough to settle and survive in this kind of country. Flora answered that she had the feeling he would have been that way no matter where he lived. I then asked a question that had intrigued me ever since I first read **Old Jules**: how did the family react after the publication of the book?

Flora told us that she first read the manuscript of the book when she was in college in Minnesota. She and her

roommate sat up all night reading. When Mari sent her the manuscript, she asked Flora if she thought that it was all right to publish such material. Flora said that she told Mari she thought it was.

The manuscript that Flora read, though, was much longer than the one that was finally published, and Flora said that she didn't read the published book until several years after it came out. She said that she was then relieved to find that some of the things she had been worrying about were not in the book. She added that the original longer manuscript had been lost and no one knew what had happened to it.

Flora asked if we had seen her scrapbooks, and we replied that we hadn't. She then brought out three scrapbooks, all filled with fascinating clippings and articles about Mari, from her first public recognition to her death.

I told Flora about Young Jules' comment when Ron Speer, who is a writer and also a Sandhills native, interviewed her brother for the oral history project sponsored by Chadron State College and the Mari Sandoz Heritage Society. Young Jules was asked if he felt that Mari's portrayal of the times was realistic. He answered that yes, he guessed it was, "from a little girl's point of view."

Flora then said that the boys were in a different position from that of Mari. Their dad was crippled and they could run away from him and escape punishment, but Mari wouldn't run away, and she was always held responsible for what the boys did. Flora added that if each one of the six children had told the story of their father, there would have been six different stories.

As we prepared to leave, Flora told us of how she had noticed a male pheasant on the ranch that had taken over the care of a brood of young after the female had been killed. She also expressed her disgust at an incompetent deer hunter who had wounded a deer the year before, leaving the crippled doe for her to care for all winter.

We thanked Flora for giving us her time and told her how much we had enjoyed the evening. It was 9:30, and we then headed back to Chadron, all of us, I'm sure, feeling that we had been privileged to gain a glimpse of a woman who is as remarkable in her own way as her famous sister was in hers.

Copyright © 1976 by The Mari Sandoz Heritage Society.

CHADRON STATE COLLEGE
Chadron, Nebraska 69337

D E MCDONALD

ROCKVILLE

NE 68771

Non-Profit Org.
U. S. POSTAGE
PAID
Permit No. 52
Chadron, Nebr.

Correct Address Requested