

The Story Catcher

Mari Sandoz Heritage Society
Celebrating 50-Years 1971-2021



Celebrating the Life and Work of Nebraska Hall of Fame Author Mari Sandoz

The 2021 Annual Pilster Great Plains Lecture and Mari Sandoz Symposium Set to Take Place at the Center for Great Plains Studies at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in September

The Life and Places of Mari Sandoz will be celebrated during the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Mari Sandoz Heritage Society on September 23 and 24 at the Center for Great Plains Studies on the campus of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. The annual Pilster Lecture and Symposium will also be livestreamed.

Mari Sandoz, 1896-1966, is celebrated for her histories of the Native Americans and homesteaders living on the High Plains. The lecture and symposium will examine her life in the various places she called home as well as her ground-breaking research and writing methods. The Pilster Lecture is at 3:30 PM Central on Thursday, September 23, and an all-morning symposium follows on Friday, September 24. Registrants are invited to both events in person at the Center for Great Plains Studies or via live streaming. All events are free, but registration is required. For details and registration information go to www.marisandoz.org.

The 2021 Endowed Pilster Lecture, "The Untapped Potential of the Mari Sandoz Collection," will be delivered by **Shannon D. Smith**, longtime Sandoz Society board member and Director Emeritus of the Wyoming Humanities Council. She was appointed the sixth Executive Director and CEO for the Council and served from 2013 through 2020. Prior to that, Smith was an associate director and research fellow at EDUCAUSE in Boulder, Colorado, and taught history and humanities for seven years at Oglala Lakota College on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. She is a historian and author of several works on women of the American West including "Give Me Eighty Men": *Women and the Myth of the Fetterman Fight*, a 2009 book award winner from the Wyoming State Historical

Society. A resident of Gordon, Nebraska, Ms. Smith continues to research and write history.

The Pilster Great Plains Lecture is made possible through an endowment established by Esther Pilster, a longtime educator who retired in Omaha, in honor of her late husband Raleigh and his parents who lived on a ranch near Merriman, NE, in the heart of Sandoz Country in the Sand Hills.

Friday's Symposium will include four morning sessions to explore the physical settings where Ms. Sandoz lived, researched and wrote. Those include Lincoln, the Mountain West and New York City, her last home and where she died of cancer.

In addition to probing the influence these places had on her writing, speakers will highlight the extensive documentary record of her life and writing found in the archives in Lincoln as well as at the Mari Sandoz High



Photo from the Helen Winter Stauffer Collection, Mari Sandoz High Plains Heritage Center Archives

Pilster and Symposium continued...

Plains Center at Chadron State College and the Denver Public Library.

Ms. Sandoz was a pioneering historian and writer who sought out the oral histories and voices of the American Indians, especially the Lakota and the Cheyenne, and searched widely for sources for her stories which included the invasion of the Native West by Euro-Americans and the social history of the people who lived on the High Plains, its Indian reservations, ranches, farms, and cities.

Symposium speakers will also explore Ms. Sandoz's relationship with modern mass culture as found in the producers and writers of Hollywood, in particular through the film adaptation of "Cheyenne Autumn," her tragic story of the Northern Cheyenne seeking to return to their native Montana in the winter of 1878-79.

The 2020-2021 Sandoz Scholar, **Broc Anderson**, begins the Friday morning symposium topics with a presentation of his research on "Nebraska Border Towns to the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation Before and After the Wounded Knee Massacre." Anderson is an Alliance native and a history graduate student at the University of Nebraska-Kearney.

A panel discussion on "Mari Sandoz and Her Cities" follows. Panelists include: University of Nebraska-Lincoln graduate English student **Jamison Wyatt** on "Greenwich Village in Nebraska: Mari Sandoz's Bohemian Life on the Great Plains"; **Dr. Meg Frisbee** of Metropolitan State University of Denver, "Plains Spoken: The Voice of Mari Sandoz in the Mountain West"; **Dr. Elaine Nelson** of the University of Kansas, "From the Sandhills to the City: Mari Sandoz, Western Writing and New York City Living." Dr. Renee Laegreid of the University of Wyoming will moderate.

A presentation by **Dr. Jillian Wenburg** of the faculty of Park University, Parkville, MO, "Don't Mind If You Won't Find My Work Salable – I Won't: Mari Sandoz's Writing and Research Methodologies." Editor Heather Stauffer of the University of Nebraska Press will moderate.

Dr. Ron Hull of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln will moderate a presentation by **Dr. David Nesheim** of Chadron State College on "Pretty Hopeless with a Sealskin Jacket: Mari Sandoz and Hollywood."

A limited number of registered participants will be able to get a closer look at the Sandoz Collection Friday afternoon in the archives of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Library's Special Collections. Three groups will each have 30 minutes to explore the treasures via a guided tour. Participants must register and reservations are first

come, first served. In addition to Friday afternoon's archive tours, Jamison Wyatt will lead a walking tour of the places Sandoz frequented in Lincoln.

Registration for the lecture and symposium is now open and information is available on our website at www.marisandoz.org



In Memorium: Alfred Arthur "Bud" Pagel

Former Mari Sandoz Heritage Society Board member **Alfred Arthur "Bud" Pagel** died peacefully at his home on June 30 at age 93. Pagel grew up in Neligh, Nebraska, where his parents, Alfred and Ruth Best Pagel, ran the weekly newspaper established by Bud's maternal grandfather in 1885. Bud began helping as a printer's devil at age 12 and served in the U.S. Army during the Korean conflict. He was stationed in Germany. Following his discharge, he enrolled at Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism. After graduating, Bud returned to Neligh to operate the newspaper with his parents. He sold the Neligh Leader in 1963 and, after short stints at the Norfolk Daily News, the Lincoln Journal and the Omaha World-Herald, he was hired by the Miami Herald as its medical writer. In 1969, he married Alabama-born Anne Burnett. The following year, the couple moved to a small farmstead in Ballaghaderreen, Ireland. They returned to Omaha in 1971, where Bud spent the next decade working for the Omaha World-Herald, first as assistant city editor and, then, as a writer for the Magazine of the Midlands. In 1982 he joined the faculty of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's College of Journalism and Mass Communications. Upon his induction into the Omaha Press Club Hall of Fame, Pagel said: "This award prompted me to look back over the years and ponder what my life was about. The answer was amazingly clear – it was about people, all kinds of people . . . people I worked with, people I worked for, people I wrote about, students I tried to teach, readers I tried to woo. Some of those folks were amazing. Some, like me, were a bit flawed. But each of them made my life better, richer."

Story Catcher Workshop Celebrates 10-Years in June

2022 Event to Take Place at Western Colorado University in Gunnison

After a pandemic dictated virtual Storycatcher writing workshop in 2020, the 10th anniversary of the workshop was celebrated live and in person at Chadron State Park in June. Workshop Director Matt Everston, a Chadron State College professor and member of the Mari Sandoz Heritage Society Board, said that despite unseasonably warm weather, 19 enrollees enjoyed a great four days at the park which was recently spiffed up in honor of its 100th anniversary. Six scholarships were awarded to current CSC students and another six students traveled from Western Colorado University in Gunnison, Colorado, with instructor Steve Coughlin who is also a Society board member. Additional registrants from Greeley, CO, Spearfish, Rapid City and Custer, S.D. joined emerging writers from Thermopolis, WY. and Nicholasville, KY. Two spouses and three children also attended as guests of the participants. A few others from CSC and volunteers for the workshop attended various sessions. There were more than 30 people at the cookout and the readings which were open to the public. Guest instructors Laura Pritchett, Alyson Hagy, Derek Sheffield and Carson Vaughan had excellent sessions and gave terrific readings. "The Writing Life" dinner on our third evening together was a big hit with "fireside" readings curtailed due to the weather but we had an excellent turnout for Pritchett and Sheffield on our second evening, followed by ice cream. The BBQ/ Reception on the first night was well-attended and enjoyable outside. Everston said extracurriculars such as organized hikes and outdoor writing sessions were curtailed this year due to heat, though there were some impromptu birding expeditions that were much appreciated. Participants said the park was a great venue and the meeting facilities worked better than previous events at Fort Robinson. Plans call for the 2022 Storycatcher workshop to be held at Western Colorado University in Gunnison. Coughlin has started assembling a faculty for the event and plans should be finalized later this year.

Northern Cheyenne Author to Lead Next Sandoz Book Discussion August 18th

Gerry Robinson, a member of the Northern Cheyenne Tribe in Montana will lead a discussion of Mari Sandoz book *Cheyenne Autumn* on August 18 at the Bennett Martin Library in downtown Lincoln.

Robinson will sign copies of his new book, *The Cheyenne Story: An Interpretation Of Courage*, at 4pm at Francie & Finch bookstore in downtown Lincoln. The library event will be held at 5:30pm. The event is tentatively scheduled to be livestreamed.

In the autumn of 1878 a band of Cheyenne Indians set out from Indian Territory, where they had been sent by the U.S. government, to return to their homeland in Montana. This saga of their heart-breaking fifteen-hundred-mile flight is the 1953 non-fiction book, *Cheyenne Autumn*, by Mari Sandoz. The Northern Cheyenne struggled to repatriate themselves to the land in and around present-day Yellowstone National Park.

Robinson was born and raised on the reservation in Lame Deer in southeastern Montana. Prior to the publication of his book, he had written short stories and articles for publication and blog posts.

RSVP's to the book discussion is encouraged due to limited space and CDC social distancing recommendations. Refreshments will also be provided.

The Story Catcher

The "Story Catcher" 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 Story Catcher is published four times a year by the Mari Sandoz Heritage Society, a 501(c)(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.

Longtime Board Member Named to Sandhills Cowboy Hall of Fame

Sybil Malmberg-Berndt, longtime member of the Mari Sandoz Heritage Society Board of Directors, was recently inducted into the Nebraska Sandhills Cowboy Hall of Fame. One of eight children born to Nevin & Rachel Ickes, Sybil graduated from Page High School in 1942 and started taking classes at Lincoln University School of Commerce. In 1949 she went to Wayne State Teachers College. Her teaching career began in the heart of the Sandhills at Ashby-Hyannis in 1950 and then back to school at Greely State Teachers College. She finished her teacher training at summer school at the University of Hawaii. From the Aloha State she landed back in the Sandhills, south of Merriman, to teach at the Brandeis and McMurtrey School in 1954. In 1955, she married Don Malmberg and they moved to Brownlee, where she taught at



*Sybil Malmberg-Berndt, September 2012
photo courtesy Tony Malmberg*

the Hanna School. In 1958 they moved to the Dan Hill Ranch, south of Gordon, where they had five children. Here she met and became life-long friends with Caroline Pifer, Mari Sandoz's sister. Sybil helped Caroline memorialize Mari's work in a museum on Highway 27 south of Gordon and started a small satellite "Mari Sandoz Room," in Gordon. In 1976, Sybil and her family moved west to Newcastle, WY, and then further west to a ranch south of Lander, WY. It was here that her first Sandhills Cowboy died an untimely death in May of 1980, one month short of their twenty-fifth wedding anniversary. Following his death, Sybil worked as a real estate sales person but she still kept one foot in the Nebraska Sandhills as she wrote and taught a college course, "Background of Mari Sandoz," at Central Wyoming College through the 1980's. In 1990 Sybil moved back to Gordon and married her second Sandhills cowboy, Fred Berndt. Once there, she rejuvenated the Mari Sandoz museum on Gordon's main street, which became the center for classes, tours and guided busloads of tourists on the Old Jules Trail. She wrote four books with her Mari Sandoz work and a column for The Gordon Journal titled Mari Sandoz Room News, of short biographies about local Sandhillers. Her 1990's decade was capped with the Saga of the Modisett Ranch. Fred died in 1997. In 2005, she was instrumental to moving the Mari Sandoz museum to the High Plains Center on the Chadron State College campus in Chadron. In 2006 she received the In the Spirit of Mari Sandoz Award

for 40 years of service to the board from 1966-2006. Sybil continues to write, penning a memoir of her childhood in *Melanie Rachel's Wish*, in 2011. In 2014 she wrote, "25 Years Don's and Sybil's Story," recounting her life with Don Malmberg. She has four granddaughters, six grandsons and 9 great grandchildren. She has written 12 publications dealing with her own family history and that of Mari Sandoz's siblings.

Reprinted with permission from the Nebraska Sandhills Cowboy Hall of Fame.

Lakota Star Knowledge on Display at Sandoz High Plains Center

Kapemni: As It Is Above, It Is Below, is the current exhibit running through October 15 at the Mari Sandoz High Plains Center on the Chadron State College campus. Kapemni, the X-form used in Lakota iconography, represents the cosmology of reflection, a spiritual view in which the physical world is dramatically mirrored in the sky and stars directly overhead. As above, so below. The form consists of two. The most recognized symbol the Lakota used was the kapemni -- a simple hourglass or X-form—though it's commonly referred by many as the Lakota symbol. The term kapemni also means twisting, which is deeply associated with how the tribe understands the stars in the sky. The exhibit focuses on Lakota Star

Knowledge, Native American Totems (Zodiac), and giving guests a glimpse into the new Math & Science Center of Innovative Learning (COIL) Building. Guests can create their own constellations and color themed coloring pages! Items from the private collections of Floyd Counts, Laure Sinn and Roxanna Puchner, as well as items from the Ohme Collection in the Eleanor Barbour-Cook Museum of Chadron State College complete the exhibit. Two Star Parties – on June 10 and July 28 – were held at Agate Fossil Beds National Monument near Chadron for viewing of the Delta Aquarids and Perseid Meteor Showers. Those events were co-hosted by Chadron State College and the Chadron Public Library.

Celebrating an Emerging Writer: D.C. Leonhardt

Mari Sandoz loved young and emerging writers. That is why she taught many in her day at summer workshops such as our Story Catcher workshop. Here is a glimpse of one of the recent workshop's emerging writers.

D.C. Leonhardt is a poet living in Thermopolis, Wyoming, where he works as an auto body tech in a hot rod shop. He holds a B.A. in Philosophy from the University of Wyoming where he also studied Creative Writing. In his spare time, he binds books by hand, makes specialty coffee and works on his project car (a 1977 Lincoln Continental Town Car). He is currently working on revising multiple full-length poetry collections and chapbooks and is seeking publication for his first collection. His work has appeared or is forthcoming in literary journals such as *Zone 3*, *Waxing & Waning*, *Book of Matches*, *The Owen Wister Review*, and elsewhere.



Getting Mail Is No Great Thing

Consider, then,
The way the light falls
Scattered through the sparse trees:
Cottonwoods and willows,
Carefully curated, yearly cut back,
The suckers removed, the
Cotton fluff burned, the shelf mushrooms picked,
Cooked, eaten.

The light that passes through the leaves
Is small and pocketed.
It dapples the cat that lies below —
Old now — *how did she age*
So quickly?

The grass, the branches, variegated.
What is this if not grandeur?
You pass through it again.

--D.C. Leonhardt



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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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