

the Story Catcher

A publication of the Mari Sandoz Heritage Society

*Mark Your Calendar for the Annual Conference
 March 25-27, 2010
 at Chadron State College, Chadron, Neb.
 See article on page 2*

Member of Sandoz family from Switzerland visits Nebraska

By Con Marshall

A member of the Sandoz family worked in the Mari Sandoz High Plains Heritage Center at Chadron State College this summer— a Sandoz from Switzerland, no less.

Yvonne Sandoz, a member of the same family that was made prominent by Mari's book, "Old Jules," had a month-long internship at the Center. The internship was necessary for her to complete her work on a master's degree in advanced studies in Archival and Information Science from the University of Berne. She chose Chadron State and the Sandoz Center for the experience.

"I am happy to be here. I made a good choice to come to Nebraska. I had fun and learned a lot, too," said Yvonne, who speaks fluent English although "Swiss German" is her first language.

Back home, Yvonne, 49, is head of the archives and library at the Local Service for Historic Buildings in Basel where she has worked for seven years. She previously worked in a museum and spent

12 years publishing, selling and distributing books.

The master's degree she is seeking will be her second, adding to her degree in archaeology. In addition, she has studied anthropology, with a focus on North American Indians. That interest, she said, made it a treat to attend the pow-wow on the Pine Ridge Reservation in late July.

This was Yvonne's first visit to the United States, but she met some distant relatives from Sheridan County when they attended the Sandoz Family reunion in Neuchatel, Switzerland, in 2000. Among them were Celia Sandoz Ostrander Barth, daughter of "Jules Jr.," and Celia's son, Cash Ostrander, his wife Jecca and their three sons, Stetson, Sterling and Steele. They live in the area south of Gordon and Rushville where Old Jules settled in the early 1900s.

"I have wanted to come to the United States, and especially to Nebraska, ever since the reunion in 2000," she said. "I saw some pictures then that helped make up my mind."



Yvonne Sandoz, from Basel, Switzerland, stands alongside the statue of Mari Sandoz in front of the Mari Sandoz High Plains Heritage Center at Chadron State College.

Yvonne met about 35 relatives during her visit, spend three weekends on relatives' ranches, went to two county fairs and a rodeo, visited the "River Place" on the Mirage Flats where Old Jules initially homesteaded in western Nebraska and bought a pair of cowboy boots.

"I met lots of cowboys and their families," she said with her ever-present smile, after spending a few days on the Ostranderson's ranch and attending 50-year celebration of their church. *Continued on Page 3*

The StoryCatcher

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 StoryCatcher is published four times a year by the Mari Sandoz Heritage Society, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

The Sandoz Society seeks to build an appreciation of Mari Sandoz's body of work, to preserve the literary works and legacy of this premier historian, and to raise funds to support these efforts. Each year, the Society hosts a conference that celebrates and studies the works of the author.

Additionally, the Society provides collections on loan to the Mari Sandoz High Plains Heritage Center at Chadron State College. These materials and financial support from the Society's endowments support the College's academic, archival, research, and outreach programs.

Address changes should be mailed to 2301 NW 50th Street, Lincoln, NE 68524.

Contributions to the Mari Sandoz Heritage Society are tax-deductible. To join the Society, fill out and mail the form on the back of this newsletter. For more information, e-mail marisandoz_society@windstream.net, or www.marisandoz.com.

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*, she was a tireless researcher, a true storyteller and an artist passionately dedicated to the land.

With her vivid stories of the last days of the American frontier she 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.

Identity on the Plains Topic of Sandoz Society Conference

The Mari Sandoz Heritage Society annual conference, which runs from Thursday, March 25, through Saturday, March 27, 2010, will include keynote speaker, Wendy Katz on Thursday evening.

Papers on Sandoz' Work Sought

Proposals for papers are invited for presentation on Friday, March 26, at the conference. The conference committee is especially interested in papers dealing with Sandoz's novel, *Son of the Gambler Man: The Youth of an Artist*, or with the biography and art of Robert Henri, on whose life the novel is based.

"We also welcome presentations on other topics more loosely related to the work," said Katherine Bahr, with the Department of English and Humanities, Chadron State College. "Because the novel concerns a crime and considerations of justice in the early days of Cozad, Neb., related explorations of concealed or conflicted western identities, settlement in and around Cozad"

In addition, Henri's concealment of his origins and identity and his and Sandoz's choice to work in an Eastern environment invite consideration of Nebraskan writers and artists who have relocated and produced major works outside of their home state.

Please e-mail inquiries or a short abstract for your proposed paper or presentation to Bahr at: kbahr@csc.edu

Additionally, there will be a special exhibit relating to the conference theme at the Mari Sandoz Heritage Center.

Sandoz Book was Based on Factual Account

The Western historical novel, *Son of the Gambler Man* by Mari Sandoz is the tale of Robert Cozad, a sensitive, talented boy growing up in the midst of frontier violence. It portrays the fascinating and true story of a family's struggle to stay together after tragedy.

In 1873, John Jackson Cozad established the town of Cozad. But in October 1882, he became embroiled in a dispute with a rancher, Alfred Pearson, over the right to pasture cattle on land claimed by the Cozad family. When the dispute turned physical, Cozad fatally shot Pearson.

Fearing he would be hanged, he fled to Denver, Colo. The rest of the family soon followed.

In order to disassociate themselves from the scandal, family members changed their names. The father became known as Richard Henry Lee, and his sons posed as adopted children (or foster children or as nephews) under the names Frank Southern and Robert Earl Henri.

In the spring of 1929, Henri was chosen as one of the top three living American artists by the Arts Council of New York. Henri is considered by some to be America's greatest portrait painter. His ideas on art were collected in *The Art Spirit* published in 1923 and his style is well-known to today's art students and art lovers. *The Art Spirit* is still used in college art classes throughout the United States.

The childhood home of Henri, which houses the Robert Henri Museum in Cozad, Neb., was designed by his father, John J. Cozad. The building is listed in the National Historical Register. ❀

Sandoz Visits Nebraska (cont.)

"They are such nice people out there. It is a big, open and beautiful area. It was good to see where Old Jules lived and where Mari grew up."

Almost immediately after Yvonne arrived in Nebraska in mid-July, a former neighbor of the Sandoz family, Sybil Berndt, a long-time Sandoz Society board member, made sure the visitor met Caroline Pifer, the youngest of Old Jules and Mary Sandoz' six children. Now 99, Caroline is a resident of Countryside Care Center in Gordon.

"It was a real pleasure to meet her," Yvonne said. "She was very alert and answered some of my questions about the family. She is a really nice person."

While Yvonne brought a book on the Sandoz Family that traces the clan's history back to 1297, she's not sure how closely related she is to Old Jules' branch.

She said Old Jules was from the village of Dombresson and her line is from Le Locle and La Brevine. All three are located in western Switzerland next to France.

The family reunion takes place every five years on the first Monday after Pentecost.

"Anyone who is named Sandoz or has ancestors who were Sandozes is welcome," she said. "We had about 250 there in 2000 when the [genealogy] book came out and there was an exhibition of family materials. Not so many came in 2005. We hope many attend in 2010."

Yvonne said there are at least 3,000 Sandozes in the world. About a third of them live in Switzerland, a third in France and a third in the United States or

Canada. A few also are in Australia, she said.

While Old Jules arrived in Knox County Nebraska in 1881 and homesteaded in the Mirage Flats area south of Hay Springs in 1884, numerous other family members had already settled in Oregon, Louisiana and Alabama as far back at 1773.

Yvonne is certain that Old Jules had a persuasive personality. She points out through the letters he sent back home, he convinced his brothers William, Paul, Emile and Ferdinand, better known as "Nana," and sister Elvina to come to Nebraska between 1881 and

1892.

He also enticed three uncles, Paul-Frederic, Edouard and Frederic Gustave, and an aunt, Marie-Virginie, to join him in the new country.

Only one of Old Jules' brothers, Henri Frederic, a veterinarian, remained in Switzerland.

"From what I've learned, Jules had lots of vision and painted a very bright picture of the Sandhills," Yvonne said.

While meeting more family members and seeing the countryside was fun, the real purpose of Yvonne's visit was to

compare American libraries and archival facilities to those in Switzerland.

Nearly every day, Yvonne said she discussed such matters with Sarah Polak, curator of the Sandoz Center, and Ann Greenia, the archivist.

Polak hopes that Yvonne can obtain more information about Old Jules' life before he came to America and uncover more material about his wife, Mary, who also was from Switzerland and was the mother of their six children. ✨



Yvonne Sandoz had a special treat when she met Caroline Sandoz Pifer, the youngest of Old Jules and Mary Sandoz's six children. Yvonne said Caroline, who is 99 and lives in the Countryside Care Center in Gordon, was alert and in good spirits.

The Mari Sandoz High Plains Heritage Center celebrates the life and literature of Mari Sandoz and the culture of the High Plains. The Center is located at Chadron State College, 1000 Main Street, Chadron, NE 69337. Web site: www.csc.edu/sandoz, 1-800-CHADRON or email spolak@csc.edu.

When I Discovered Mari Sandoz...

Wally Seiler

I first discovered Mari Sandoz through a high school friend, Rex Martin. His mother, Lillian C. Sandoz Martin (later Whitlock) was a distant cousin of old Jules and, on at least one occasion, Rex went to New York City to visit Mari.

He came home with all kinds of fascinating tales about his conversations with Mari. Among other things, he told of her apartment of her views on the way one should write and of the manner in which she organized her note cards. This vicarious brush with fame was exciting to me, a guy who would eventually graduate from college with a degree in English, and it directed my high school extra-curricular reading toward the works of Mari.

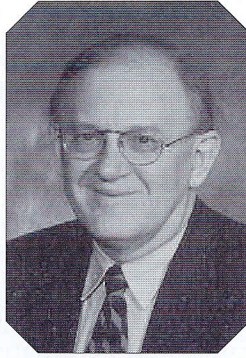
After college, my interest in the literature of Mari Sandoz was kept alive by the late Winifred G. Knoflicek, a friend who had an abiding love of the Mari's writings and for the Native Americans that played such an important part in Mari's life and in her writings. It was through Winnie that I established a goal of obtaining a signed first edition of each of Mari's books. It was through Winnie that I met Mari's sisters, Caroline and Flora, both of whom were very generous with their time in sharing remembrances of Mari.

So, as you can see, my introduction to the literature of Mari Sandoz wasn't of my own doing. Thankfully, I had friends who saw to it that I developed an appreciation for Mari and for what she meant to literature, in general, and to western Nebraska, in particular.

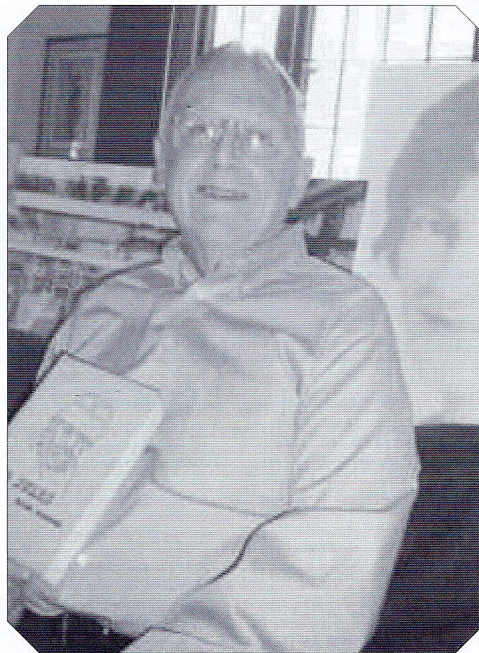
Wally Seiler is the treasurer and conference coordinator for the Mari Sandoz Society.

John Wunder

I first discovered Mari Sandoz my junior year of college at the University of Iowa. After finding my major (from Mathematics through Accounting to History), I resolved to take a class that was then termed "The Westward Movement." It was taught by Professor Malcolm



Wally Seiler



John Wunder is holding a signed first edition of Old Jules. In the background are pictures of Mari working at the Nebraska State Historical Society.

Rohrbough, and it was truly inspiring. In those days, we had M-W-F classes and T-Th-S classes—yes, Saturday classes. I looked eagerly to attending Saturday morning lectures on the American West. One of the books required was *Old Jules*, and I found that book fascinating and life changing. I did then and I still do, especially when I assign it to my West classes.

Now fast forward two years to my first week in law school at Iowa. I did a combined law degree with a History M.A. I had graduated from undergraduate school in the midst of the Vietnam War protests with my B.A. and I then became a law student. In my first property class, the instructor — a somewhat eccentric and gruff professor — came into the large lecture room and looked out at his aggressive class.

There were probably 250 in this first-year class, one of the few where everyone was brought together.

He announced that two works were essential knowledge for understanding the law of property. Every head lowered and prepared to note these God-sent epistles. One, the professor stated, was Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Who has read that? Most of the class raised their hands and felt accomplished. I could easily see the connections.

The second was *Old Jules*. Now, who has read this "masterful book?" I raised my hand — the only one — and I was immediately the subject of scornful, envious looks. The professor then turned himself to look me in the eye. He briskly inquired: "What did Jules do?"

"He was a land locator in the Sandhills of Nebraska who helped his neighbors find nearby homesteads." The professor knew

I knew my stuff. "That is precisely correct." And he moved on. That night there was a huge run on *Old Jules*. Every library in Iowa City had its copy checked out, and Professor Rohrbough's undergraduate class experienced a Sandoz shortage.

With Sandoz, you just never know.

John Wunder is a professor of History and Journalism at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and a Sandoz Society board member.✿

When I Discovered Mari Sandoz...

Ron Hull

I began work as a producer-director at KUON-TV, University of Nebraska Television, in Lincoln, Neb., on Oct. 12, 1955. The show, "Yesterday in Nebraska," was my first assignment, which meant working with the State Historical Society on a weekly TV program.

Since I was new to Nebraska, I asked Dr. James C. Olson, Director of the Society, what book, in his opinion, should be my introduction to the land and people of this state.

"Read Mari Sandoz' *Old Jules*, the definitive homesteading story," he said. "She got it right."

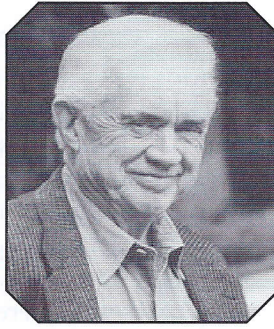
I read *Old Jules* and was overwhelmed by the history recounted and by Sandoz's ability to reveal her family's adventures and encounters with such intense and ferocious honesty. I have been her fan ever since.

Some months later, quite by accident, I met her in the lobby of the society building, and this conversation led to an enduring friendship until her death in 1966. She was curious about everything and it was television, the new "kid on the block," that intrigued her and piqued her interest in me and what we were accomplishing in educational television.

During her first appearance in our studio, a few minutes prior to the beginning of the program, I brought her a glass of water and asked if she was comfortable. She replied, "I know this—I would rather face a rattlesnake than that camera of yours."

In the following 10 years she gamely got over that and faced those cameras for us many times.

Ron Hull is a senior adviser to Nebraska Educational Telecommunications and professor emeritus of broadcasting, University of Nebraska-Lincoln. He helped found the Mari Sandoz Society 28 years ago and has served as president.



Ron Hull

Richard F. Voorhees

More than 20 years ago, when I was living in Minneapolis, a neighbor came to the door and put Slogum House into my hand.

"You should read this," he said.

Sandoz got my attention. Shortly after that reading my daughter Rachel and I were headed to Arizona for a visit with my mother. I wanted to see the Sandhills, so we went out along northern Nebraska and the Niobrara. I had always thought Nebraska to be flat. We stopped in Gordon where I purchased several additional Sandoz volumes in the drug store. Rachel picked up a pamphlet that suggested a visit to Caroline Sandoz's ranch. I was reluctant to call but Rachel insisted. Caroline invited us down. This turned out to be the first of many visits to the ranch.

At the time Rachel had red hair and a likeness of Mari. Caroline and Rachel hit it off and I was free to peruse the basement collection of artifacts from Mari's New York apartment and the portion of her library which is now at the Sandoz Center.

I saw that Mari's library overlapped the bibliography that I acquired while attending the graduate faculty of the New School for Social Research. Amongst other connections, Sandoz was well acquainted with Nebraskan Alvin Johnson, the economist and first president of the New School. That position is now held by former Nebraska governor and senator, Bob Kerrey.

Mari lived in Greenwich Village for 20 years. During my 1992 sabbatical I met and interviewed several of her friends, including Marguerite Young and Marianne Hauser. I had lunch with Jane Towner, the daughter of the landlords of her Hudson St. apartment.

While following along various Sandoz paths, I have come to an ever broadening acquaintance with American geography and literature. I am now aware that Nebraska is not flat. In fact it is as deeply textured as its literary tradition.

Richard Voorhees is a Professor of Sociology and Anthropology at Inver Hills Community College and Sandoz scholar. ✨

Council Requests Naming Highway 20 for Crazy Horse

The Chadron, Neb., City Council has taken the lead in an effort to have Nebraska Highway 20 from Valentine to Fort Robinson State Park designated the Crazy Horse Memorial Highway.

Although Crazy Horse was born in what is now South Dakota, and made his name in battles against the U.S. Army in Wyoming, he lived part of his life and died in Nebraska's Pine Ridge. The highway designation would recognize the importance of Crazy Horse in the region's history.

A 5-0 vote by the council on Tuesday, Sept. 8, supporting the designation came after much work on the proposal.

The council's action is the first step in getting the highway named. The city must now seek letters of support from other communities along the highway and then submit its application to the Nebraska Department of Roads. If approved by the NDOR, the city's request will be forwarded to the governor for final approval. Letters of support can be sent to Highway Commissioner Jerome Fagerland, 87590 Hillcrest Road, PO Box 391, Atkinson, NE 68713. ✨

I Do Not Apologize for the Length of This Letter: The Mari Sandoz Letters on Native American Rights, 1940-1965

About the Author

Kimberli A. Lee is a professor in the Writing, Rhetoric, and American Cultures department at Michigan State University.

Lee, who is a board member of the Mari Sandoz Heritage Society, is passionate about the works of Mari Sandoz and believes that Sandoz is the most fascinating person she has ever known.

She wrote her Master's thesis on "Crazy Horse" and has published several works on Sandoz and an online finding aide to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's Mari Sandoz Collection.

Lee has taught American literature and writing courses at various institutions and has presented papers at numerous conferences, including the Mari Sandoz Annual Conference, Native American Literature Symposium and Western Literature Association.

Additionally, she has begun another book-length project entitled Rez-N-Nation that focuses on contemporary Native American music as resistance.

Book Description

Author Mari Sandoz was as passionate about plains people as she was about language and literary acclaim. This book is a collection of letters to and from Mari Sandoz, an activist who worked on behalf of the Native Americans. That the mastery of Crazy Horse's biographer spilled into her zealous advocacy for Native Americans is scarcely surprising.

An avid letter writer, Sandoz kept carbons of everything. Fortunately these came into the Sandoz Collection at the University of Nebraska Archives, organized by Kimberli Lee, a foremost expert on Sandoz's writings. Through the correspondence, Lee traces an intimate, long-standing interaction with tribal communities, for whom Sandoz vigorously sought social justice. Sandoz was not above using her celebrity as leverage, yet the letters prove her a respectful and responsible ally, sensitive to the communities' best interests and solicitous of Native leaders.

Though Sandoz richly deserves attention, recent scholarship is scant. In arranging and analyzing this correspondence, Lee reinstates Sandoz as one of the most significant non-Native chroniclers and advocates for Plains Indian cultures. There is much here for historians and other scholars of American Indian, Great Plains, rhetorical, and women's studies. Yet Sandoz's wider fan base should not be surprised to hearken to a voice and ardor they will find well familiar. ✨

By Kim Lee

Sandoz had an interesting connection to the Lakotas and Northern Cheyennes because she spent a good many of her childhood years growing up so close to them— even having playmates who were Native.

As a younster, Sandoz heard their side of the "stories" first-hand from the Indians themselves and this made quite an impact on her. I think that her ideas and high regard for Native people began then. But as she

became an adult, and began to study Native cultures at the University, she saw how falsely many of the tribes were portrayed in popular culture of her time.

She felt a certain obligation to make sure the Native side of the story was told and appreciated. Sandoz admired the ways in which Lakotas embraced their extended families, and the ways they cared for one another.

Moreover, Sandoz became politically active on behalf of the tribes during an era (the 1940s-1960s) when the tribes were under great stress from federal policies and legislation designed to detribalize them — the termination and relocation policies — and terminate the tribes' status with the federal government. She knew that these were attempts to divest the tribes of what little land they had remaining to them and felt that these policies were every bit as sinister as the extermination policies of the 19th century.

In fact, she said as much in one of her letters. She'd visited the reservations, and she knew just how bad the poverty was, and just how demoralized the Native people were. She felt she had to do something.

My sense of her changed almost daily when I worked in the archives. She was complicated and complex, with a certain sense of "lonesome" about her. Many people said she could be "prickly," but I think she just spoke her mind. A lot of women were too inhibited to do that during her era.

That she took the time to answer as many letters as she did is really amazing. I've said many times, that I don't know how she got so much work done—it seemed as if each day she was answering letters.

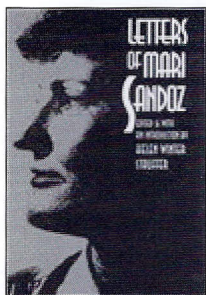
There were so many wonderful finds in the archives and I had several favorites.



Kim Lee

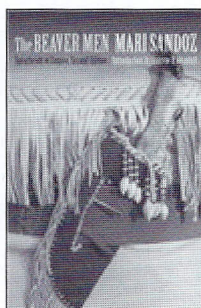
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Letters of Mari Sandoz on Sale at Sandoz Center



The hard cover of Helen Winter Stauffer's, *Letters of Mari Sandoz* is now available at the Sandoz Center for \$35—a little more than half of the original cover price. All books are new and direct from the publisher.

Also, the second edition of *The Beaver Men* will be coming from the University of Nebraska Press in January. The new edition features an introduction by Andrew R. Graybill, associate professor of history at UNL and author of *Policing the Great Plains: Rangers, Mounties, and the North American Frontier, 1875-1910*.



The book will retail for \$16.95 in paperback and can be pre-ordered from the Sandoz Center.

Please contact the Mari Sandoz High Plains Heritage Center to place an order for these books, 308-432-6606 or email spolak@csc.edu. ❀

I Do Not Apologize (cont.)

Sometimes she could be funny or snarky or just downright disgusted with someone. It all comes through in the letters.

But there was one letter in particular I found (that didn't make it into the book) in which she says something to the effect of "fifty years from now, when someone is researching my correspondence and papers, the truth will come out— that I learned just as much from my colleagues and friends as I did from any book I ever picked up and read. I am fortunate to have such people in my life."

I thought to myself, "Oh, my gosh! I AM that person she's talking about!" I felt a sense that she'd written that letter for me to find. It was a moment I'll never forget.

I want the book to appeal to a wide audience. Like Sandoz, I believe that every American should have an understanding of this nation's history from a Native American point of view. I don't believe anyone can understand or appreciate American history or culture unless they understand the important and crucial contributions Indigenous peoples of this continent have made, and are still making. Yet, most Americans give little thought to Native peoples and it's shameful, really.

Additionally, I hope the book appeals to those folks, especially women (but men, too) who would want to become activists. This needs to be done respectfully and responsibly, but there is much work left to do. ❀

Sandoz Biographer Meets with Sandoz Board

Helen Winter Stauffer, Mari Sandoz's biographer, met with the Mari Sandoz Heritage Society board of directors in July.

She entertained the board with anecdotes about Mari, items she had discovered when researching her books and how she did her research.

Winter Stauffer is donating her research and material relating to the publication of her two books, *Mari Sandoz: Story Catcher of the Plains* and *Letters of Mari Sandoz* to the Mari Sandoz High Plains Heritage Center. ❀

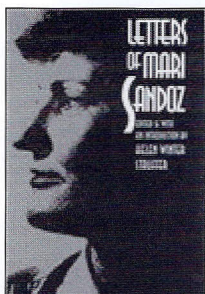


Helen Winter Stauffer answers questions from the Sandoz Society board. She is pictured (on the left) with Lynn Roper, Society president.



New Sandoz Society board member, Christy Chamberlain and her husband, Bob Reich, chat with Winter Stauffer following the July board meeting.

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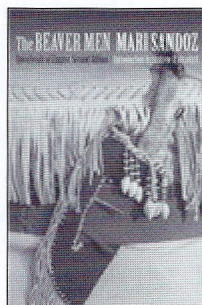
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Mari Sandoz Heritage Society Membership Form

Yes! I would like to support the work of the Mari Sandoz Heritage Society. I have enclosed \$_____.

Your membership payment/gift is tax deductible according to IRS guidelines. We will provide a receipt for tax purposes. To join, mail this form with your check, payable to the Mari Sandoz Heritage Society, to Treasurer, Mari Sandoz Heritage Society, 1208 Laramie Avenue, Alliance, NE 69301.

Type of Membership: Renewal New
 Gift Membership Company Matching Gift (form is enclosed)

Please list my/our name(s) as: _____

Address	City	State	Zip Code
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Telephone	E-mail
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If Student, Name of Institution attending: _____

Organization/Library/Corporation/School contact person: _____

Name/Address for person giving gift membership: _____

Date: _____ Signature: _____

Please check level of support. \$40 - Family/Library
 \$10 - Student \$100 - Corporations/Schools
 \$30 - Individual \$200-\$10,000 - Patron Level