

Story ^{the} Catcher

Summer 2018 Issue

A publication of the Mari Sandoz Heritage Society

Pilster Lecture and Mari Sandoz Symposium September 20-22 at Chadron State College

Susan Power, an enrolled member of the Standing Rock Tribe of the Dakotas and a noted author, will deliver the annual Pilster Lecture on Thursday September 20 at 7:30 pm (Mountain) at the Chadron State College Student Center in Chadron.

Power will speak on "A Dakota Writer on Stories Powerful Enough to Change the World." The event, sponsored by the Mari Sandoz Heritage Society, is free and open to the public. "As a writer of fiction, I certainly hope to entertain readers with the stories I imagine and produce for the published page," Power said. "I never begin with an agenda of any kind, political, spiritual, but as I develop the fictional characters who show up for my novels and short stories, I soon discover that they have stories that are desperately important, stories meant to elicit compassion, understanding, and sometimes a new way of thinking. Though this was never a conscious choice on my part, I've learned I'm a writer seeking to transform my corner of the world. I'll be talking about my process as a writer: discovering story, the research I do in order to find the "truth" of my fiction. I will also touch on the journey of becoming a published writer -- and how some projects require more of a writer than simply showing up to the page."

Power said one novel in particular ultimately transformed her during the seven years she worked on it, so that she would be better able to understand the teachings of some of the characters.

Born in Chicago in 1961, Power was reared to be politically active and socially aware. She met the Reverend Doctor Martin Luther King Jr. when she was 3-years-old. She became active in the Civil Rights movement and was Miss Indian Chicago at 17. She earned a bachelor's degree in Psychology at Harvard/Radcliffe and later received her Juris Doctor at Harvard Law School. She had a brief career in law and recalls that her recovery from an appendectomy was instrumental in her decision to trade law for creative writing. While coming out of anesthesia in her hospital room she had a vision of a Dakota Sioux woman wearing a sky blue beaded dress standing in the room with her. That vision spirit later became a main character of her first novel which won the PEN/Hemingway Award in 1995.



She worked as a technical writer and editor and did creative writing in her spare time. In 1992 she entered the Master of Fine Arts Program at the Iowa Writer's Workshop. She attributes her knowledge of legal writing as the motivation to pursue creative writing. She finished that first novel, "The Grass Dancer" in two and a half years. She says her best work comes under serious pressure.

(continued on page 2)

**2018 Fall Symposium Issue
Registration Information Inside!**

Pilster Lecture continued...

The *Grass Dancer* is a uniquely told tale of a North Dakota Sioux tribe. It's not political, instructional, accusatory or vengeful. It focuses on personal experiences and values while also dealing with relationships. She uses ancestry, dream images and storytelling to fully engage the reader while stressing the harmonious living of Native American communities. Power's mother, Susan Kelly Power, founded the American Indian Center in Chicago and was very dedicated to the Standing Rock Sioux of Fort Yates, ND. She is a descendant of the Sioux Chief Mato Nupa (Two Bears) and would often recite stories about the native lineage to Susan. Her father, Carleton Gilmore Power, was the grandson of the governor of New Hampshire during the Civil War. He would read Susan stories at night. Both of these traditions influenced her writing. Critics say that Power writes of Sioux culture using such poetic language that it reads like a dream world. At the same time, the reader is transported into the reality of the reservation and its situations. Through dreams and visions, she demonstrates their importance to Native Americans as guidance and enlightenment. Reading her work leads to a better understanding of powwows, buffalo hunts, the connection with ancestors and the love that keeps spirits alive. Deceased elders tell their stories through dreams which help teach their descendants how to live their lives. Her books use a variety of first and third person voices to tell the story.

In addition to *Grass Dancer*, Power has written several other books: *Strong Heart Society*; *Roofwalker*; and *Sacred Wilderness*. She has had short fiction published in the *Atlantic Monthly*, *Paris Review*, *Voice Literary Supplement*, *Ploughshares*, *Story*, and the *Best American Short Stories 1993*. She teaches at Hamline University in St. Paul, Minnesota.

The Pilster endowment started with the gift from the late Esther Pilster of ranchland in Dawes County in honor of her late husband Raleigh who grew up there with his parents John and Grace Pilster. Esther, a teacher and school administrator for 44 years, lived in Omaha.

Indian Activism the Theme of This Year's Sandoz Symposium

Indian Activism is the theme of the Annual Mari Sandoz Heritage Society Symposium Friday September 21 at the Mari Sandoz High Plains Center on the Chadron State College campus. Registration is required and activities begin at 8:30 a.m. (Mountain).

University of Nebraska-Lincoln instructor and author Joe Starita begins the day talking about activist Dr. Susan LaFlesche. He said that 24 years after her birth in a buffalo-hide tipi in western Nebraska, Dr. La Flesche graduated as the valedictorian of her medical school class and became America's first Native doctor – 31 years before women could vote and 35 years before Natives became citizens in their own country. His talk is the story of how La Flesche overcame enormous gender and racial barriers to effectively become the chief of her beloved Omaha Indian people. The first hospital built on a reservation without federal funding was named in her honor. It was recently listed on the National Trust for Historic Preservation's 11 most endangered places list.

CSC Visual Art Professors Laura Bentz and Mary Donahue will share, through their art, how they respond to the landscape they call home. The session, *Landscape, Place, and Identity: Two Visual Artists Respond to the Plains* will allow conference attendees to examine the art in the Sandoz Center Gallery and discuss the work with the artists. Nebraska Commission on Indian Affairs Executive Director Judi M. gaiashkibos will also address the conference audience. She has served as the Executive Director of the Nebraska Commission on Indian Affairs since 1995. She is an enrolled member of the Ponca Tribe of Nebraska. This year's Sandoz Scholars, a University of Nebraska class that assembled a display of Sandoz' clothing in Lincoln, will make a brief presentation at the noon luncheon at the Chadron State College Student Center. Beth Castle and Madonna Thunder Hawk will speak about their documentary, *Warrior Women* on Friday afternoon. Saturday morning's free session will be held at the Bean Broker Coffee House in downtown Chadron at 8:30 a.m. David Christensen will present "Who Are the Real Savages?": Uncovering the Complex Story of Western Nebraska's Lakota Activism.

The region where Mari Sandoz grew up and wrote about saw a multifaceted grassroots Lakota civil rights movement during the twentieth century. Scholars often center western Nebraska's Lakota activism around the American Indian Movement (AIM) during the early 1970s. Federal, state, and local archives, however, reveal a more complex narrative that includes numerous Native American organizations and persons, both male and female, pushing for civil rights in western Nebraska.

June Events Highlighted Sandoz' Time in Lincoln

In spite of unseasonably hot weather in the Capitol City, good crowds of people attended a variety of activities commemorating the time that Mari Sandoz spent in Lincoln. Board member Jamison Wyatt began more than a week of activities with a discussion of Sandoz and her book *Old Jules* at the Nebraska History Museum on June 4. Admission to the brown bag lunch was free. Five days later, Wyatt and longtime board member Ron Hull of Nebraska Educational Telecommunications hosted a screening of a 1965 NET interview of Mari Sandoz. The event at the Nebraska History Museum drew more than 40 people. Hull also discussed his long friendship with Sandoz. An exhibit of Sandoz' clothing and accessories opened at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln home economics building on the East Campus. Board members received a tour of the exhibit, curated by a textiles design class as part of the Society's Sandoz Scholar program. The Nebraska Literary Heritage Association hosted an open-house exploration of Mari Sandoz artifacts at the Jane Pope Geske Heritage Room of Nebraska Authors at Lincoln's Bennett Martin Public Library in downtown Lincoln.

Francie & Finch Bookshop hosted a well-attended in-depth discussion of the 1935 biography of Mari's father, Jules Sandoz. *Old Jules* was easily Sandoz' most popular book. It tells the story of her father and his life in the Nebraska Sandhills.

Wyatt led board members and 20 curious visitors on his popular and entertaining *Stalking the Ghost of Mari Sandoz* walking tour of Sandoz' life in Lincoln. The 90-minute, one-mile tour through downtown and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln campus, ended on the west side of the Nebraska State Capitol.

Board member Michael Smith, former director of the Nebraska State Historical Society, discussed the legacy of Mari Sandoz and *Old Jules* in the Warner Legislative Chamber at the Nebraska State Capitol. (See a copy of his remarks in this issue). Attendees walked two blocks west of the Capitol to 1226 J Street (Lincoln Mall) to unveil a Nebraska State Historical Society marker commemorating the location where Mari Sandoz wrote *Old Jules*.

Historic Marker Dedicated

Popular Sandhills author Mari Sandoz spent considerable time in Lincoln where she wrote several books and became a keen observer of urban life. It was a prolific stopping point in her career between the area of Gordon in western Nebraska and her eventual move to New York City. Under the leadership of Sandoz Society Board member Jamison Wyatt of Lincoln, a commemorative historic plaque was erected at 1226 J Street, Lincoln Mall, just blocks west of the historic Capitol building.

"MARI SANDOZ IN LINCOLN "

Mari Sandoz (1896-1966), Nebraska historian and novelist, lived at this site, 1226 J Street, from 1925 to 1937. Here in 1928, she began writing *Old Jules*, the biography of her father. From the J Street curb, she often wrote and watched construction of the capitol, completed in 1932. That same year, Sandoz submitted *Old Jules* to the Atlantic Monthly Press nonfiction contest, but it was rejected seven months later. Frustrated, she burned over 70 short stories behind the house, and in January 1934, Sandoz began work for the Nebraska State Historical Society on the ninth floor of the capitol. In 1935, Sandoz revised *Old Jules* for the Atlantic Press contest. Two days before the deadline, the manuscript fell into a scrub bucket, but Sandoz managed to retype it with the help of friends. Then on June 13, 1935, Sandoz received a telegram at the capitol. *Old Jules* won the first-place, \$5,000 prize. Its subsequent publication launched Sandoz' prolific writing career. "

The StoryCatcher

The "StoryCatcher" is the title of a book by Mari Sandoz and it is the title of Helen Winter Stauffer's biography of Mari, *Mari Sandoz: The Story Catcher of the Plains*. The StoryCatcher is published four times a year by the Mari Sandoz Heritage Society, a 501©(3) non-profit organization. The vision of the Mari Sandoz Heritage Society is to perpetuate and foster an understanding of the literary and historical works of Mari Sandoz and to honor the land and the people about which she wrote; Native Americans, ranchers, farmers, and the people who settled the High Plains country. The Society hosts an annual conference, the Pilster Great Plains Lecture Series, and a writer's workshop. Additionally, the Society provides collections on loan to the Mari Sandoz High Plains Heritage Center at Chadron State College in Chadron, Nebraska.

Address Changes

Address changes should be mailed to:
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.



(1) Mari Sandoz Heritage Society Board Member Jamison Wyatt and Claire Nicholas, Assistant Professor of Textiles and Material Culture interviewed on NET's Friday Live



(2) Mari Sandoz Heritage Society Board Member Jamison Wyatt talking about "Old Jules" at History Nebraska's Noon History Bites [photo credit Brian Rockey]

Photos from the events celebrating Mari Sandoz in Lincoln



(3) Participants discussing Mari's book "Old Jules" at Francie & Finch Bookshop in downtown Lincoln



(3) Attendees of the Sandoz interview screening at the Museum of Nebraska History in Lincoln



(5) Mari Sandoz Heritage Society Board Member Ron Hull introducing the interview tape and reminiscing about his friend Mari Sandoz



(6) Stalking the Ghost of Mari Sandoz tour



(7) Stalking the Ghost of Mari Sandoz tour

Remarks By Michael Smith at the Dedication of the Mari Sandoz “Old Jules” Historical Marker, June 15, 2018

(Printed with permission from the author)

I appreciate the opportunity to offer some remarks on the book and the author that we are commemorating this afternoon in the dedication of the marker out on Lincoln Mall.

In thinking about this talk, I considered three approaches that I could take: first, focusing on the author, Mari Sandoz; second, on her book, *Old Jules*, or third, the subject of the author’s book, Jules Ami Sandoz, himself. Each of the three approaches were inviting.

Mari Sandoz is certainly a very interesting subject to pursue. The first child of Old World emigrants, she was born and raised in a harsh Western environment by disinterested but demanding parents. From her earliest years she literally fought for an education and struggled to become an economically- successful writer, able to live her dream of being a catcher and teller of stories of the American Plains.

Then there is the book, entitled *Old Jules*. Since it was published in 1935, it has remained a classic in several literary arenas... the West, the Nebraska story, the immigrant experience, biography, frontier history, and the struggle for female fulfillment. Of its myriad of readers over the years, I believe it is safe to say that few have ever forgotten the story and the character traits and many flaws of its protagonist.

Finally, there is the author’s subject, Jules Sandoz, himself. Mining the book and gathering what we can learn from outside historic sources, we assemble a picture of a unique personality, an educated man from the Swiss Cantons who came to America in a huff over his parents’ repudiation of his romantic interest, the girl named Rosalie. “Old Jules”, the name given him by his neighboring homesteaders on Mirage Flats in Sheridan County to distinguish him from another more recently arrived Jules, was clearly an individual who burned an indelible impression into everyone with whom he came into contact. Many became short-term friends, but hardly any were friends of long standing, and everyone was of the opinion that he was, in the idiom of the times “crazy”. He was indeed unique and unforgettable.

After considering these three approaches, I decided to take a more integrated approach using author, book and

subject in addressing one aspect of this personality drawn by Ms. Sandoz. That is to look at Jules Sandoz as a community builder, so inspired and committed. Mari Sandoz refers to him repeatedly as such. And while he failed in his quest to build his envisioned community on both Mirage Flats and in the Sandhills, this biography of Old Jules offers insights into the characteristics that we have come to see as essential in building social and economic communities in the Nebraska Panhandle and, for that matter, in many other parts of the West. Thus, the book is more than biography, it is one of character identification that provides readers of each succeeding generation an understanding of their own contemporaries who are able to thrive in some of the most challenging environments that Nebraska, the High Plains and America offers.

The “community builder” as a type of individual appears with regularity in the story of the European settlement of America, but not often do we find as finely-drawn picture of one or one who is so complicated a figure as we encounter in the book, *Old Jules*.

From the turn of the 18th century, European emigrants who came to the shores of what became the United States knew they had to obtain land and to do that they had to dispossess the indigenous peoples living there. Having done that in a long and what we today consider a disgraceful series of martial actions, many of which these colonists themselves provoked, often followed by treaties never honored, these now Euro-Americans had two choices. Not a few took to the woods as individual hunters, traders or small subsistence farmers. More, however, remained true to the European tradition. That is, they sought community, the social ideal of a familiar and common culture, shared and complimentary economies, and family with the purpose of building a future for their children who would carry forward the legacy of the common bond they acknowledged as essential to life here and in the hereafter.

Appearing along the seaboard and especially in Pennsylvania and Maryland, these builders of communities took a number of forms...they included ordained ministers of God, socialists, entrepreneurs chasing a financial payoff, self-promoters, and heads of large families seeking places

(continued on page 6)

Remarks continued...

where not only fellow-countrymen or religious associates could live together, but also where their own children in turn could be located within sight and sound. The pattern established in the eastern colonies spread after the Revolution to Kentucky and Missouri and then throughout the Old Northwest where Germans, Irish, Flemish, Polish and others sought land and the place for church and school. Organizations established in Europe or developed through Catholic or Lutheran church structures recruited leaders and participants and sponsored settlements in Indiana, Michigan, Illinois, Iowa and Nebraska among other locations. It is within this tradition, that Mari Sandoz places her father.

When Jules Sandoz got off the boat, he found an America that was filling up with others also envisioning new beginnings. Searching for land, Jules went west to the northeastern corner of the new state of Nebraska, where land was available after the removal of the Ponca and other indigenous people. Here he found a natural landscape suited to his scientific bent for crops and fruit trees, and here he also found a tool never before available to humankind, that being the Homestead Act of 1862 which made it possible for the drastically-undercapitalized settler to lay claim to 160 acres and with a minimum of improvements realize title in five years. Such a plot of land, such an acreage, such an opportunity was wholly unknown in the Europe Jules Sandoz had left. For a person who had to have a farm to earn of living, it offered opportunity with a capital O.

Moving again, this time abandoning a marriage not to his liking, Jules went further west where he came across Mirage Flats, land that seemed ready to provide everything he would need for a community, everything that is, except regular rainfall. Not a person to just settle in and go to farming, Jules becomes a locater, a promoter, a singer of praises for this place, a dreamer of nights when the lights from neighbors' lanterns would prick the blanket of darkness lying across the Flats. As others arrived-- Swede, German, French, Swiss, (including his own brothers)-- Jules took on everybody, every situation, forever finding a reason to feel persecuted, racked with anger and just plain ornery. His biographer daughter sketches a picture of an embittered man who had been needlessly crippled in a practical joke gone bad, or maybe in retribution for being a nasty cuss. Turns out Jules is also a gunsmith and a crack shot which seems to have kept him alive in his repeated run-ins with cattlemen, sheep

herders, and a host of individuals who were arguing and angling over boundary markers, surveys and the location of the post office. For Old Jules, that post office was as key to the success of his anticipated community which lay out on the Plains, remote from cities and transportation routes. For Old Jules a post office was his lifeline to Rosalie and his family in Switzerland, to federal and state government, to companies from which he ordered publications, seeds and plants for dryland agriculture and horticulture and especially to prospective new settlers for his dreamed of community.

While it is only reasonable for the readers of Old Jules to be put off by Sandoz's violent nature, his misogyny, his rejection of personal hygiene, his prejudices against almost anything and everything that interactions created with others who entered into his daily life —family, neighbors, travelers, townsmen and bankers, among them, — Mari nevertheless saw in him that urge to community, that dream of a settled agricultural and horticultural plain on Mirage Flats, and later in the unique environment of sand dunes where nature had planted grass and provided accessible water. Perhaps her key insight into this man who had fathered, but then physically-abused, verbally-berated, taunted and made every effort to subject her to his iron will, lies in the words she wrote comparing him to his brother Ferdinand. She wrote that the brother lacked “the old man's violence, his sense of persecution, and particularly (was) without his force and his ability to pursue an objective through years and a tangle of obstacles. Least of all was Ferdinand capable of following an objective without visibly nearing it, as Jules had all these years.” (p. 345 Bison Books Edition, 1962)

Yes, Jules had over all the years sought to build a community of industrious, hardy, self-reliant people. Ironically, they rejected him because of his inability to live in community with them. All the while, rain or lack of it, governed the ability of the soil to yield grain or fruit until irrigation arrived, and that lay in the future. So, one by one, singly or in families, those pioneers who Jules had located on the land—those he considered to be the building blocks of his community-- would move on to other places and/or other occupations that did not rely on the rain. The cattlemen he opposed would persist, not in an unfenced realm of roaming bovines, but in orderly cow and calf units arranged by strings of barbed wire, watered by windmills and fed using large rolled bails of the local hay. In the end, Jules was, it could be argued, a failure when he died in 1928.

(continued on page 8)

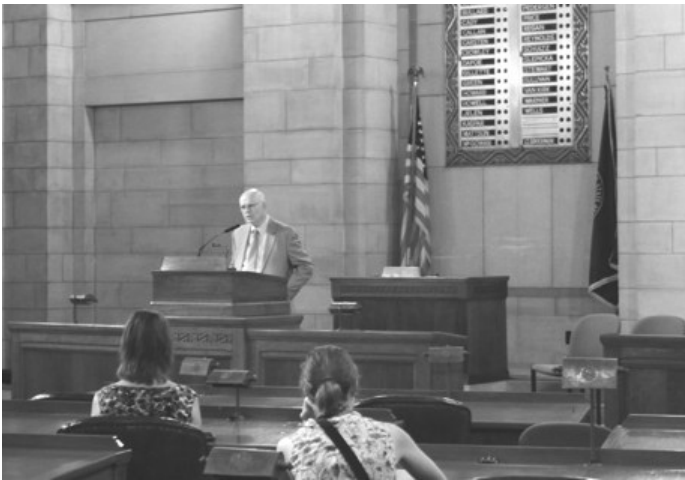
Remarks continued...

Today, however, I ask you, to what degree was Jules Sandoz a failure as a builder of community in the Nebraska Panhandle? In some of the better aspects of his personality, did he not provide a model of the character needed to tame the Panhandle?

Looking back nine decades later, it is clear that the places in which he settled did not become Jeffersonian communities of small yeoman farming families but neither are they vast tracts of emptiness given over to the harsh elements that remain as prevalent today as when Jules and Mary Sandoz huddled in their small and rickety house. What we refer to as “Sandoz Country”, has produced and continues to produce the very type of people that beneath his temper and bluster, Jules sought to model and to attract to his community, those being women and men who are determined, independent, creative, experimental in their approaches making a living from the land, and willing to fight—as he did—for a government that could and would serve their core needs and not solely those of the big places, the big money and only others’ big dreams. Indeed, I suggest to you that the community envisioned by Jules Ami Sandoz exists today.

As a farther note, the words I quoted outlining Mari Sandoz’s description of her father can equally be applied to Mari herself as she learned and wrote, pursuing a goal in a single-minded manner every bit as fiercely as Jules fought off interlopers, grasshoppers, drought and more. Thus, as we stand together today to unveil our historical marker, let us remember the man, Jules Ami Sandoz, the author, Mari Sandoz and the book that forever binds them. All three give us reason to remember who we Nebraskans are and from where we have come.

Mari Sandoz Heritage Society Board Member Michael J. Smith is the retired director of the Nebraska State Historical Society, now known as History Nebraska



Photos from the historic marker dedication. Michael Smith delivers his remarks in the Warner Chamber in the Nebraska State Capitol (top left photo); Mari Sandoz Heritage Society Board Members stand with the newly dedicated historic marker (bottom left photo); Mari Sandoz Heritage Society Board Member Jamison Wyatt and History Nebraska Director Trevor Jones unveil the new historic marker (above photo)

Mari Sandoz Heritage Society Presents

INDIAN ACTIVISM

2018 MARI SANDOZ
SYMPOSIUM

Featuring 2018 Pilster Lecturer Susan Power (Standing Rock Sioux)
& Symposium speakers Joe Starita, Judi gaiashkibos (Ponca/Santee),
Kimberli Lee (Hunka Lakota), David Christensen, Beth Castle &
Madonna Thunder Hawk (Cheyenne River Sioux), Mary Donahue & Laura Bentz

September 20-22, 2018

Mari Sandoz High Plains Heritage Center at Chadron State College
Chadron, Nebraska

For information, schedule, and registration
visit www.marisandoz.org



Story Catcher Workshop & Festival An Overwhelming Success

Three days at historic Fort Robinson in scenic northwest Nebraska set the stage for 18 workshop participants at the 2018 Story Catcher workshop to learn about “writing in the remote.” The workshop, sponsored by the Mari Sandoz Society and Chadron State College, was the seventh annual event started as a tribute to Sandoz who loved to work with young writers. Several writing faculty from the University of Wyoming led the workshops which were attended by 18 people from Nebraska, South Dakota, Wyoming, Colorado and Wisconsin. Mother Nature cooperated with “remote” weather including one very hot day, one pleasant mild day and one day capped by a high plains thunderstorm. The readings and talks the three writers gave on this idea—of both the challenges and opportunities for creating in a sparse or remote landscape and location—was a continuing theme throughout the workshop. The writings and readings by participants were in the same vein.



There were 18 workshop participants, said workshop director Matt Evertson who is a Chadron State College faculty member and a member of the Mari Sandoz Heritage Society Board. There were usually two or three extra people attending sessions. There was also a wait list of three people which shows the growing popularity of the event. Participants came from as far away as Sarona, Wisconsin, and Greeley, Colorado, as well as Bellevue and Omaha, Nebraska. The couple from Wisconsin were English teachers. One of the Greeley attendees was a retired Spanish teacher, the other an English Instructor at a community college. Eight were students in the undergraduate programs at the University of Nebraska – Omaha. Evertson said a couple of the participants were novice or new to workshops like this, but most of the others were experienced at similar workshops. More people from the late stages of a Masters of Fine Arts program were in attendance this year. At least three had attended the Story Catcher workshop before. The venue seemed to be the big winner this year and, because of the large number of attendees, a lot of work was done outside. Instructor Jeff Lockwood led sessions on short form called postcard stories. Participants received random images on postcards and wrote little stories to accompany the images.



The big wrap around porch at the historical officer’s quarters was used nightly for “porch readings” where instructors and some participants read chapters from their published works. As always, the opening night cookout was a popular draw. New CSC faculty member Markus Jones was a fresh new voice for writers this year, Evertson said. His workshop session at the Friday Festival was a big hit. Participants experienced several field trips to the various hiking trails around the Fort and they seemed to appreciate the natural backdrop for inspiration during the afternoon writing time. The third evening was capped by a wildflower and paleontology walk with the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum & Nebraska Forest Service at Toadstool National Park with local guides Jenny & David Nixon. Jeff Lockwood, the nonfiction writer in residence, who began at the University of Wyoming as a paleontologist and has written a lot about the natural world, joined the group.



Photos from the 2018 Story Catcher Workshop. Poet-in-residence H. L. Hlx leads a packed session on “the shadow genre.” (top photo); a wildflower and paleontology walk with the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum & Nebraska Forest Service with our local guides Jenny & David Nixon middle photo); Markus Jones reads from his novel “How the Butcher Bird Finds Her Voice” to cap off our first day of the retreat. (bottom photo) [photo credits Chadron State College]

Exhibit of Sandoz Clothing and Accessories on Display at UNL

The students in the graduate seminar TMFD 809, Museums: Theory and Practice, at the University of Nebraska have assembled a unique Sandoz Scholar project. Under the direction of instructor Claire Nicolas, seven students used clothing and accessories from the archives of the Mari Sandoz High Plains Center in Chadron to dress mannequins and pose them with period furniture and other artifacts to give us a vision of her style. The display will be up through September 7, 2018 in a gallery in the clothing and textiles department of the Home Economics Building on UNL's east campus. Students received additional guidance from: Mari Sandoz Society Board Member Jamison Wyatt of Lincoln; the society; Archives and Special Collections at UNL Libraries; and the Nebraska Educational Television network. Among the revelations of the research, as highlighted in the display: Sandoz fashioned herself as if she were a character in her stories. She carefully



constructed her identity to be taken more seriously as a researcher and writer. This ranged from lying about her age and erasing divorce from her life history, to dying her hair. She tried to present a public self that was more in line with the person she wanted to be. She wrote under the name Marie Macumber in early life and officially became Mari Sandoz in 1929. This may have been the founding of her artistic identity. Her clothing was a non-verbal means of communication. Hats were an important part of a woman's ensemble in the early to middle 20th Century. Sandoz used hats as another medium by which to craft her public identity. The right hat was like the perfect book title. Self-respecting women never left home without a hat. Sandoz began keeping copies of letters she wrote years before she was published nationally. She knew what could be gleaned from the material, so she was careful with the tone and content. They reveal little of her personal life or emotional relationships. Nevertheless, her sharp, dry wit and self-deprecating humor at times nearly jumped off the page. Her sister Caroline wrote, "few writers have been so purposeful in expecting their letters to become part of their literary heritage." It appears she was cultivating her image and legacy even through the medium of her own correspondence, something many authors would never consider. Of her move from Denver to New York City, the students discovered that Greenwich Village was (and still is) a safe haven for those often living on the fringes of mainstream society. Authors, musicians, painters, playwrights and others whose lifestyles and interests did not conform to the rest of societies norms. As such, it



Professor Claire Nicolas gives a tour of the exhibit to Mari Sandoz Heritage Society Board Members (top photo); display of Mari's hats (above left); two of Mari's dresses (above right)

was the perfect place for Mari to move in 1942 after leaving Denver. The Harlem Renaissance had ended by then, but the atmosphere was still alive with creativity, in part because of the number of women writers who lived and worked there. Mari found a community of both struggling and established authors that understood her circumstances. She also gained access to the East Coast publishing companies so critical to her success and with whom she had long done battle over editorial and artistic choices. She enjoyed an active social life, but she never felt at home in New York City. She remained a quasi-outsider from the west whose passions and skills as a writer set her apart. The period of the late 19th Century through the Second World War witnessed dramatic transformations in gender roles and women in the United States. Women gained the right to vote in 1920, increased presence in the workforce (especially during the war), and expanded participation in schooling. There were still many restrictions and social norms dictated that women's lives centered in the home. Her father was a domineering and sometimes abusive man, and she was a frequent victim of that anger. At the age of 19 she chose marriage to escape. It didn't last more than 5 years and she initiated the divorce. Few of her friends knew of it until she died. She dyed her hair red when blonde was considered beautiful. She hosted parties at her Lincoln apartment. She turned down several marriage proposals, prioritizing her career. Mari was a very independent and unorthodox woman, unafraid of challenging or ignoring traditional definitions of "proper" feminine identity. The UNL students involved in the project included: Katie Francisco, Younhee Kang, Bethany Kraft, Andrea Kruse, Ryan Mathison, Amy Neumann and Nicole Rudolph.

Learn More About the Mari Sandoz Exhibit at UNL

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln produced a video about the Mari Sandoz exhibit in the Department of Textiles, Merchandising and Fashion Design through September 7, 2018. You can view the video here:

<https://cehs.unl.edu/tmfd/news/mari-sandoz-exhibit-east-campus-through-sept-7/>

Remembering Kira Gale

Former Mari Sandoz Heritage Society board member Kira Gale died in Omaha in May at age 76. The author and historian is credited with organizing the first Nebraska Book Festival in 1991 and was also a board member of the Loren Eiseley Society for many years. She was a native of Washington, D.C., grew up in Chicago and met her husband, Henry Gale, at the University of Illinois-Navy Pier campus. They wed and moved to Omaha, where he taught physiology at Creighton University's School of Medicine.

Kira was widely known in Nebraska art and history circles and researched and wrote about her theory that Meriwether Lewis was assassinated. In 2007, she co-authored *The Death of Meriwether Lewis: A Historic Crime Scene Investigation*, a transcript with commentary on the 1996 Tennessee coroner's inquest concerning the mysterious death of Lewis. Historic lore says Lewis' death in 1809 was a suicide. Gale developed theories that Lewis was assassinated. She contended he died at the hands of political enemies. She was a co-founder and first president of the Mouth of the Platte Chapter of the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation. She wrote *Lewis and Clark Road Trips: Exploring the Trail Across America*, published in 2006. In the 1970s, Gale taught film and video as an artist-in-residence in schools for the Nebraska Arts Council. Her photographs of the Jules Sandoz homestead in the Nebraska Sand Hills became a touring exhibit of the Nebraska Humanities Council in the 1980s. In 1996 she founded River Junction Press to self-publish booklets and newsletters about the early history of Omaha and Council Bluffs. She also published the work of other authors, including a series of books called *Kids Around the World*, featuring the daily lives of children.

Survivors include husband Henry; son William Gale of Oak Park, Illinois; daughter Beth Gale of Garland, Texas; seven grandchildren; and one great-grandchild.

Your Support Helps Us Preserve and Share the Legacy of Mari Sandoz!

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Mari Sandoz

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