

Mari Sandoz

HERITAGE

MARI SANDOZ HERITAGE

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LEGISLATURE OF NEBRASKA EIGHTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE FIRST SESSION

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION 54

Introduced by Cullan, 49th

WHEREAS, Mari Sandoz is a famous Nebraska author who was born and raised in the Nebraska Sandhills; and

WHEREAS, she devoted a lifetime of scholarship, research and writing to accurately portray Nebraska pioneers in their true light; and

WHEREAS, Mari Sandoz gave her fellow Nebraskans an honored place in the history and literature of the American West; and

WHEREAS, she has been selected to be remembered in the Nebraska Hall of Fame in the Nebraska State Capitol; and

WHEREAS, the 11th day of May, 1979, is the 83rd anniversary of her birth in Sheridan County, Nebraska; and

WHEREAS, the Mari Sandoz Heritage Society, located at Chadron State College, in cooperation with the Nebraska State Historical Society will hold a special day of events at Fort Robinson on May 11, 1979, in honor of Mari Sandoz and the 100th anniversary of the Cheyenne Outbreak which is recounted in Ms. Sandoz's book *Cheyenne Autumn*; and

WHEREAS, the Nebraska Educational Television Network has produced and will broadcast a documentary on May 11, 1979, at 9 p.m. entitled "Song of the Plains: The Story of Mari Sandoz" about the life and work of Mari Sandoz as remembered by her brothers, sisters, friends, co-workers and editors.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE MEMBERS OF THE EIGHTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE OF NEBRASKA, FIRST SESSION:

1. That May 11th be recognized throughout the state by the citizens of the State of Nebraska as a special day to honor the contributions of Mari Sandoz.

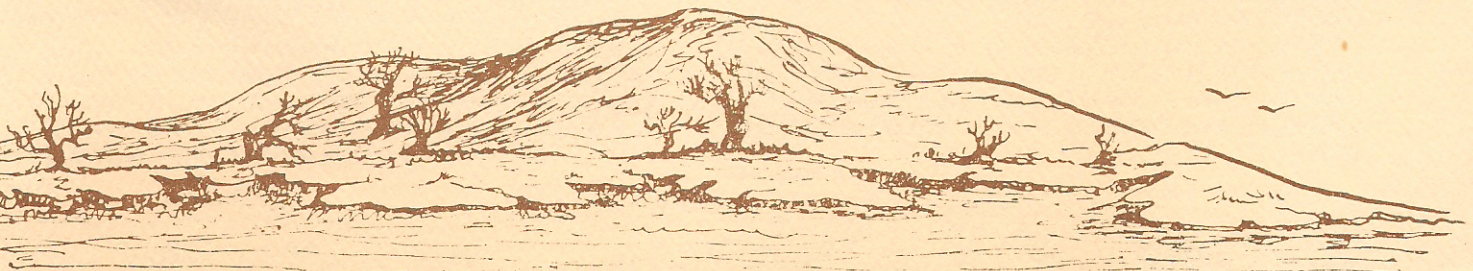
2. That the people of the State of Nebraska reflect on their heritage and remember their ancestors on this date.

3. That this Legislature send its greetings to Caroline (Sandoz) Pifer, Flora Sandoz, James Sandoz and Young Jules Sandoz, brothers and sisters of Mari Sandoz, in recognition of this special day.

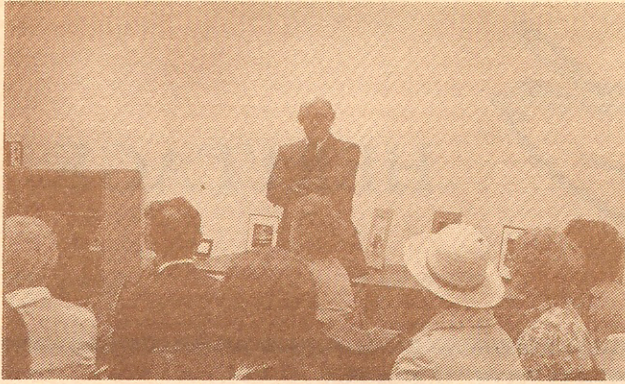
4. That the Mari Sandoz Heritage Society, the Nebraska State Historical Society and the Nebraska Educational Television Network be praised by this Legislature for preserving and maintaining the heritage that Mari Sandoz has given to us and the generations to follow.

5. That a copy of this resolution be sent to the above named groups and individuals.

(S) Richard D. Marvel
President of the Legislature



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



Dr. Edwin C. Nelson, president of Chadron State College, addressed the participants in the annual May 11 Mari Sandoz Day activities. The day's agenda began at Chadron State with a special viewing of the Nebraska Educational Television Network production of "Song of the Plains: The story of Mari Sandoz," and ended with a tour based on Sandoz's book "Cheyenne Autumn." (Photo by John Mosher)

MARI SANDOZ DAY 1979

by John Mosher

The annual May 11 Mari Sandoz Day activities began with a viewing of the program SONG OF THE PLAINS: THE STORY OF MARI SANDOZ and continued with a tour of sites of importance to Sandoz's book CHEYENNE AUTUMN.

The tour, led by Fort Robinson Museum curator Vance Nelson, centered around Sandoz's telling of the story of the last desperate struggle for freedom by Dull Knife and his Cheyenne Indians. The theme for the tour was taken from CHEYENNE AUTUMN because January 9, 1979, marked the 100th anniversary of the Cheyenne Outbreak, when 149 of these people escaped from a barracks building at Fort Robinson, Nebraska, and were all ultimately killed or captured some 22 days later.

CHEYENNE AUTUMN, first published in 1953, is part of Sandoz's Trans-Missouri series, which also includes CRAZY HORSE: THE STRANGE MAN OF THE OGLALAS, THE BUFFALO HUNTERS: THE STORY OF THE HIDE MEN, OLD JULES, THE CATTLEMEN: FROM THE RIO GRANDE ACROSS THE FAR MARIAS, and THE BEAVER MEN: SPEARHEADS OF EMPIRE.

The story of the events leading up to the famous outbreak actually began in 1878, when the Cheyennes quietly stole away from their reservation in Indian Territory (now Oklahoma) and started out on an incredible trek north, successfully avoiding the U. S. Army's efforts to recapture them every step of the way.

On the journey north, the Cheyennes split into two factions, one led by Dull Knife and the other by Little Wolf.

Little Wolf and his band went on north to Yellowstone country. Dull Knife and his people, weary from the long miles traveled from Indian Territory, chose to seek refuge with Red Cloud and his Oglala Sioux at the Red Cloud Indian Agency near Fort Robinson.

This goal was not to be realized, however, since, unknown to the Cheyennes, the Sioux agencies had been moved to Dakota Territory the year before.

The Sandoz Day tour picked up the events narrated in CHEYENNE AUTUMN at Chadron Creek, near the spot where Dull Knife's band of Indians were captured by troops from nearby Fort Robinson in a severe blizzard in October of 1878.

Throughout the tour, Nelson summarized the events told of in CHEYENNE AUTUMN and frequently read passages pertaining to the sites visited.

On the way from Chadron Creek to Fort Robinson, the tour visited Dull Knife's intended destination, the White River site of the Red Cloud Agency.

The moving of the agencies to Dakota was another step forward for the army in its efforts to gain complete control over the Plains Indians. For the most part, the Indians opposed moving the agencies, but, by the late 1870's, were finding themselves less and less able to resist the will of the white man.

The Indian Wars were, indeed, nearing an end at this point. The eventual defeat of the Cheyennes, in fact, was one of the last victories needed by the army.

After visiting the site of the Red Cloud Agency, the tour continued at the old officers' row at Fort Robinson. At this point, tour participants had their first look at the Cheyenne Outbreak site, from the same spot that many of the post's troops first saw the incident as they were racing across the snow-covered parade ground in 20 below zero weather, clad only in night clothes.

The weather added a touch of realism to this scene for the tour participants, having covered the area with a layer of snow the day before.

Following the initial chase across the parade ground, the troops were called back to dress more properly for what would become a 13-day pursuit of the Cheyennes into some rugged country northwest of the post.

After a lunch break and a brief look at Fort Robinson's historical museum, the tour group moved across the parade ground from officers' row to the site of the log barracks building where the Outbreak took place.

For some time after their capture on Chadron Creek, the Cheyennes were allowed to come and go from the barracks, providing that everyone returned for a head count at night.

Finally, it was decided to return them to Indian Territory, however. The Indians' refusal to go back to the hated reservation prompted Captain Wessels, the commanding officer at the post, to resort to cutting off the supplies of food, fuel and water to the barracks in order to force the Indians to follow his orders.

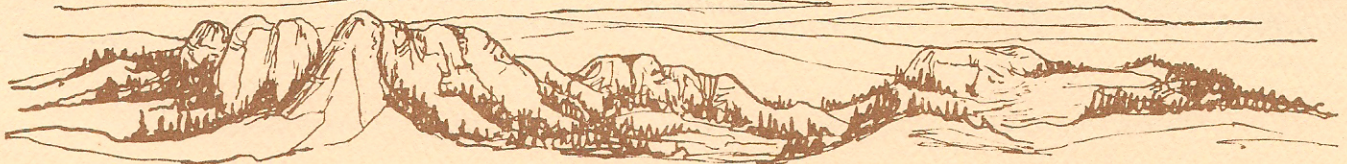
Dull Knife and his people, determined to remain in their homeland, said that they would die rather than return to Indian Territory. Approximately 65 of the Cheyennes did die in the skirmishes that followed the Outbreak and their attempted flight to freedom.

The Indians assembled the meager supply of weapons they had managed to smuggle into the barracks and hide beneath the floorbeds, and began what would evolve into one of the major battles of the Indian Wars.

The tour followed, as closely as possible without leaving passable roads, the route that the Cheyennes took as they fled from Fort Robinson.

Continuing on Highway 20 toward Harrison, Nebraska, a stop was made for a view of the Cheyenne Outbreak Buttes, a group of steep sandstone bluffs near the fort that the Indians sealed in their flight.

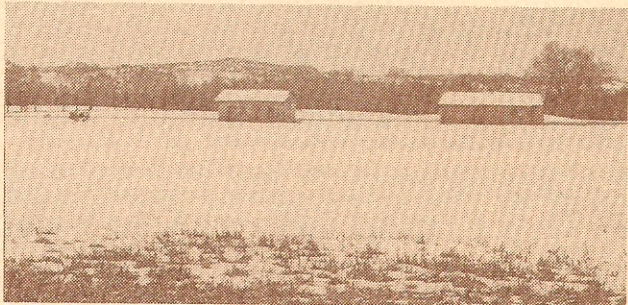
North of Harrison, at the Warbonnet Bluffs (the final stop on the tour), Nelson pointed out that Mari Sandoz mislocated the site of the final skirmish when she wrote CHEYENNE AUTUMN. In Sandoz's book, the location of the battle is identified as the Warbonnet Bluffs, but it actually took place on Antelope Creek, some distance away. It is Nelson's speculation that Sandoz did this purposely in order to discourage souvenir hunters from finding the



correct site.

The final encounter between the Fort Robinson troops and the Cheyennes on January 22, 1879, resulted in the death or capture of virtually all of the remaining Indians.

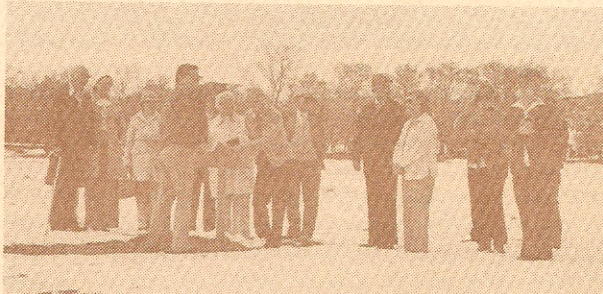
This made the incident one of the major battles, and one of the last battles, of the Indian Wars. Only the Ghost Dance-Messiah Craze resulting in the Wounded Knee Massacre in 1890 was left in the unsuccessful attempts on the part of the Plains Indians to regain some of their past greatness.



A late spring snowstorm formed a realistic setting for the tour by covering the old Fort Robinson parade ground as it was on January 9, 1879 when the Cheyenne Outbreak took place. The reconstructed log buildings are (left to right) the post adjutant's office and the guardhouse. The log barracks building that held the Cheyenne was located at the far left of the photo. (Photo by John Mosher)



Several of the Sandoz family participated in the day's activities. Pictured from left to right are: Marie Sandoz (James' wife), James Sandoz (Mari's brother), Vance Nelson, Fort Robinson Museum curator, Wayne Britt, Mari Sandoz Heritage Society director, Blanche Sandoz (Mari's sister-in-law), Caroline Sandoz Pifer (Mari's sister), and Celia Ostrander (Mari's niece). (Photo by John Mosher)



Fort Robinson Museum Curator Vance Nelson describes the Cheyenne Indians' January 9, 1879 flight from Fort Robinson at the site of the log barracks building from which they escaped. (Photo by John Mosher)

SONG OF THE PLAINS: THE STORY OF MARI SANDOZ

by Russ Reno

"From the time I saw her first writing, I felt that her writing was going to be important some day." — Flora Sandoz, sister.

"She was, of course, a very professional writer. She knew all the ins and outs of publishing." — Virginia Faulkner, editor, University of Nebraska Press.

"The thing I remember about Mari Sandoz was her willingness and ability to work harder than any person I've ever known." — Ron Hull, program manager, Nebraska ETV Network.

Mari Sandoz, Nebraska author who is loved by millions for her vivid portrayal of life on the Great Plains, is remembered by her family, friends and colleagues in an hour-long documentary, SONG OF THE PLAINS: THE STORY OF MARI SANDOZ, which was shown on May 11, 1979, the 83rd anniversary of her birth, on the Nebraska Educational Television Network.

Native Nebraskan Dick Cavett, who hosts a public television week nightly talk show, discusses the Nebraska author with those who remember her best. Actress Dorothy McGuire, also from Nebraska, narrates the program and reads selections from Ms. Sandoz's works.

Reminiscing with Cavett about Ms. Sandoz are her sisters Flora and Caroline, and brothers James and Young Jules, who live south of Gordon, Nebraska. Also interviewed are Nebraska ETV Network program manager Ron Hull, University of Nebraska Press Editor Virginia Faulkner and the late Dorothy Switzer, a fellow student.

Her brothers and sisters react to their sister's success and her works, which sometimes included them as subjects.

Ms. Sandoz is featured in film clips from television interviews and a creative writing telecourse made for KUON-TV. The film clips add a revealing glimpse of how she developed her 21 books and her effort to combine historical fact with a fictionalized story.

Through the interviews and film clips, Ms. Sandoz's character, talent and love for the Nebraska Sandhills and the pioneers who settled the Great Plains are revealed.

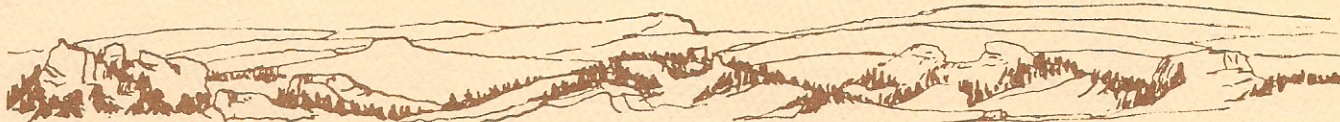
Her character, formed under the heavy hand of her father Old Jules, is brought out during the program as she recalls entering writing competitions, which angered her father who considered all writers the "maggots of society." She tells that when she became bored, because there were no stories to read or storytellers around, Mari would conjure up fantasies to tell her brothers and sisters.

The Sandhills author was 40 years old when her first book, OLD JULES, was published. She had sent the book to 12 different publishers before it finally won the ATLANTIC MONTHLY Non-Fiction Contest in 1935. She earned a \$5,000 prize and was then able to devote the rest of her life to writing.

In an interview, Ms. Sandoz recalls the day she received the telegram from ATLANTIC MONTHLY announcing that she had won the prize.

However, her next book, SLOGUM HOUSE, met with controversy and was banned from use by soldiers or volunteer agencies on Army bases during World War II. The book was one of five banned for "containing political propaganda . . . designed or calculated to affect the result of a federal election.

Throughout her life, Mari continued to receive threats from people incensed by her writing. In an interview segment with Cavett, Ron Hull tells of her active involvement in politics.



The central focus of her writings, however, was her six-book study of the progress of man on the Great Plains. The series describes episodes in three centuries of Plains history that brought the white man in and drove the Indian out.

THE BEAVER MEN covers the days of powder and iron; THE BUFFALO HUNTERS, the slaughter of buffalo; OLD JULES, the homestead period; CRAZY HORSE, the agency period; CHEYENNE AUTUMN, the rebellion against the agency period; and THE CATTLEMEN, the great cattle era to the present.

In film clips, Mari comments on the series and tells of plans she had to include a seventh book about the development of oil on the Plains. She died of cancer in 1966 before the book could be completed.

SONG OF THE PLAINS: THE STORY OF MARI SANDOZ was produced by the cultural affairs unit of University of Nebraska Television. Gene Bunge, senior producer of cultural affairs, produced the program and Rod Bates directed. Judy McDonald was the researcher-writer and University of Nebraska-Lincoln music professor Robert Beadell composed the original score. Funding was provided, in part, by Nebraskans for Public Television, Inc. and the Mamie J. Meredith Memorial Fund.

Assistance and cooperation also were received from the Mari Sandoz Collection in the UNL archives, Mari Sandoz Corporation, Nebraska State Historical Society, Ralph Mueller Planetarium, Chicago Public Television, University of Nebraska Press, Helen Blish and Amos Bad Heart Bull — authors of A PICTOGRAPHIC HISTORY OF THE OGLALA SIOUX. Quotes from five of Ms. Sandoz's books were used by permission of Hastings House Publishers.

Available free to viewers is a list of Ms. Sandoz's books currently in print. A CHECK SHEET FOR THE NEW NOVELIST'S EXAMINATION OF HIS WORK, which was prepared by Ms. Sandoz for the television series MARI SANDOZ DISCUSSES CREATIVE WRITING, is being offered for \$1. Both may be obtained by writing to: Information Department, Nebraska ETV Network, P. O. Box 83111, Lincoln, Nebraska 68501.



Dick Cavett, standing near the grave site of Mari Sandoz, surveys the Nebraska Sandhills that were so vividly described in Ms. Sandoz's books. (Photo by Don Tremain, NETV)



Sandhills scenery provided the backdrop for Cavett's interviews with Mari's family in the program "Song of the Plains: The Story of Mari Sandoz." Here he talks with Ms. Sandoz's sister Flora. (Photo by Don Tremain, NETV)



William E. Ramsey, left, 1978-79 President of the Old West Trail Foundation, and Deputy Director for Development for Boys Town in Nebraska, presents the Old West Trail Foundation's William F. Cody Television Award for "Song of the Plains: The Story of Mari Sandoz" to Wayne Britt, Director of the Mari Sandoz Heritage Society, who accepted the award on behalf of the Nebraska Educational Television Network. The award was presented at the recent 3rd Annual Old West Trail Foundation Awards Program in Omaha. (Amato Photo courtesy of the Old West Trail Foundation)



NATIONAL AWARDS

The third annual National Awards Program of the Old West Trail Foundation was held at the Western Heritage Museum in Omaha, Nebraska, October 12, 1979. Presentations of awards honoring those who have contributed to the preservation of the West and its heritage were made at an awards banquet and ceremony concluding the Foundation's 15th annual meeting.

Winner of the William F. Cody award for television was *SONG OF THE PLAINS: THE STORY OF MARI SANDOZ*. John Flower, Senior Producer, Program Development, Nebraska ETV accepted the award for Dick Cavett and Wayne Britt, Director, Mari Sandoz Heritage Society, accepted the award for the Nebraska ETV Network.

The other Cody Awards were presented to: Ted Long, North Platte, Nebraska, for art; Kenny Rogers, music; the National Geographic Society, writing; *THE CHISHOLMS*, motion picture; Winston Rodeo Promotion, R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Company, advertising.

The Foundation's highest award, "The Westerner," was presented to James A. Michener for his book *CENTENNIAL*. "The Trailer Blazer" award was presented to Dr. Harold McCracken, Director Emeritus of the Buffalo Bill Historical Museum in Cody, Wyoming. This award was accepted on behalf of Dr. McCracken by Bill Cody, grandson of Buffalo Bill Cody. The Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Award was won by the Theodore Roosevelt National Park, Medora, North Dakota.

BOB PIFER MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP

The Bob Pifer Memorial Scholarship has been awarded to Max Lovitt, a senior majoring in agriculture at Chadron State College. Max is from Stapleton, Nebraska, and his program of study includes a minor in construction technology.

Max has started his own herd of cattle and hopes to add a small hog operation and furniture and cabinet construction to his business ventures. He is married and has one daughter.

This scholarship was established by Caroline Sandoz Pifer in memory of her late husband.

JULES SANDOZ'S MEMOIRS

The second installment of Jules Sandoz's memoirs was published in the Omaha *SUNDAY WORLD-HERALD MAGAZINE OF THE MIDLANDS*, October 21, 1979. This installment concerns the winter Old Jules, Jules and Mari's father, spent 30 days in jail.

The first installment of the memoirs appeared in the November 12, 1978, issue of the same publication.

GRAVES PHOTO EXHIBIT

A portion of the Graves Photographic Collection has been hung for viewing in room 105 of the Chadron State College library. The exhibit can be seen by appointment only. You may view the collection by making an appointment with Reta King, Director of Library Services, or Wayne Britt, Director of the Mari Sandoz Heritage Society.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

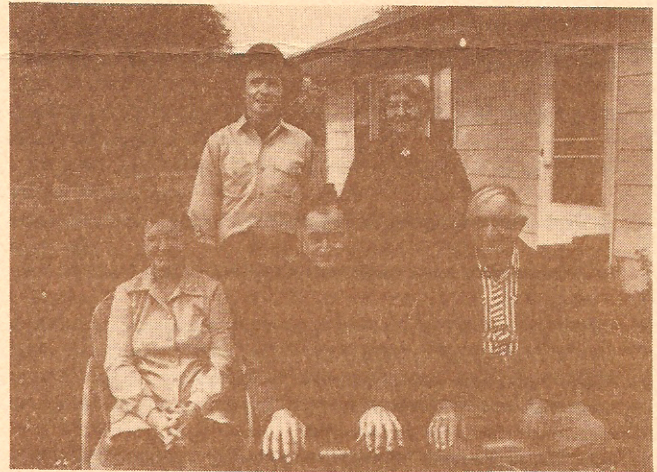
The response to our letter for membership renewals was excellent. Within two short weeks over 100 individuals had returned their renewal forms and we are receiving more daily. We thank you for your response and support.

SANDOZ COUNTRY TOUR

Plans are being made for the Sandoz Country Tour 1980. The tour is tentatively scheduled for Saturday, June 14, 1980. The arrangements and details will be finalized during the next several weeks and you will be receiving the details shortly thereafter.

NEBRASKA HALL OF FAME

It is possible that Mari Sandoz will be inducted into the Nebraska Hall of Fame in early May, 1980. The bust has been completed and the corresponding plaque has just arrived in Lincoln, Nebraska's capital. As the details and plans are finalized for this event we will notify you of them.



Native Nebraskan Dick Cavett is posed with author Mari Sandoz's brothers and sisters (seated at left) Caroline, Young Jules, James and Flora. (Photo by Don Tremain, NETV)



Native Nebraskan Dick Cavett talks with Mari Sandoz's family in the hour-long documentary on her life, "Song of the Plains: The Story of Mari Sandoz," airing Friday, May 11, at 9 p.m. on the Nebraska ETV Network. (Photo by Don Tremain, NETV)

