

# Story<sup>the</sup> Catcher

Summer 2017 Issue

A publication of the Mari Sandoz Heritage Society

## Walter Echo Hawk to present 2017 Pilster Lecture

Native American attorney Walter Echo-Hawk will deliver the 2017 Pilster Lecture on Thursday, September 28 at 7:30 pm (Mountain Time) at the Chadron State College Student Union. A member of the Pawnee Tribe, Echo-Hawk has titled the talk sponsored by the Mari Sandoz Heritage Society “Nebraska before it was Nebraska.” Pawnees lived in the Loup and Platte River Valleys hundreds of years before Europeans arrived in North America, but they were removed from Nebraska in 1876, nine years after statehood. The Echo-Hawk family is distinguished for its contributions to Pawnee Nation and the State of Oklahoma. In that tradition, Echo-Hawk is a noted attorney, author, and speaker with expertise in indigenous history, federal Indian law, and Native American cosmology. He is also a tribal judge and law professor. He represents Indian tribes on important legal issues, such as treaty rights, water rights, religious freedom, prisoner rights, and repatriation rights. His career spans the pivotal years when Indian tribes reclaimed their land, sovereignty, and pride. He has worked at the epicenter of a great social movement alongside visionary tribal leaders, visited tribes in indigenous habitats throughout North America. He was instrumental in the passage of landmark laws—such as, the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (1990) and the American Indian Religious Freedom Act Amendments (1994). He litigated in many of the epic struggles and has written extensively about the rise of modern Indian nations as a Native American author with first-hand experience, such as his groundbreaking book, *In the Courts of the Conqueror: The 10 Worst Indian Law*



*Cases Ever Decided* (2010). Echo Hawk also worked to: Quantify Klamath Indian water rights for hunting, fishing, and gathering, preserving a treaty-protected way of life in an awesome indigenous habitat; Represent Tlingit tribes and clans of southeast Alaska to repatriate sacred objects and cultural patrimony. He taught law at University of

Tulsa College of Law and Lewis & Clark Law School. He has received: the FBA Indian Law Section's "Lawrence Baca Lifetime Achievement Award" (2015); "Governor's Commendation" from Oklahoma Governor Brad Henry "for professional contributions on behalf of Native cultures" (2010); FBA's "Judge Sarah Hughes Civil Liberties Award" (2009) for civil rights work; and Oklahoma State University's "Distinguished American Indian Alumni" (2009). Echo Hawk speaks extensively and appears in film and radio to educate the American public about tribal life, culture, and indigenous justice.

His Nebraska appearance will set the stage for Friday's Sandoz Conference at the Mari Sandoz High Plains Heritage Center where participants and presenters will focus on Nebraska's Sesquicentennial.

*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.*

## 2017 Conference Issue Registration Information Inside!

# Capacity Crowd Benefitted from Story Catcher Workshop



Fifteen aspiring writers joined three veteran writers and support staff from Chadron State College for this year's Story Catcher Summer Writing Workshop and Festival sponsored by the college and the Mari Sandoz Heritage Society. The 1890 Brick Officer Quarters at Fort Robinson State Park in the breath-taking Pine Ridge Region of Northwest Nebraska was the backdrop for the June 14-16 sessions. The event moved to the Mari Sandoz High Plains Center on the college campus on Saturday June 17. Poet in Residence Mark Halliday, Fiction Writer in Residence Lisa Sandlin and Nonfiction Writer in Residence Ken Ilgunas conducted the sessions at the Fort. A free festival open to the public concluded events in Chadron on Saturday.

Plans are already being made for next summers workshop. Watch for information coming soon!

# June Society Board Meeting Provides Glimpse of Lincoln Life

Mari Sandoz life in Lincoln was the focus of the summer meeting of the Mari Sandoz Heritage Society Board in the Capital City in June. Attendees began with a tour of the Sandoz Archives at Love Library on the University of Nebraska-Lincoln City Campus. Archivists provided folder upon folder of notes, letters, rough draft manuscripts and other documents from Sandoz life. A 1936 letter from Hollywood actress Greer Garson (1904-1996) to Mari read, in part: "I look forward to reading your Sloghum House, just for fun, and if your novel writing style is half as lively as your letter writing, it will be a treat in store." Garson was a British-American actress who won the Academy Award for Best Actress in Mrs. Miniver in 1942. She was nominated for Academy Awards numerous times. This was but one tidbit revealed about the life of the prolific Sandhills author who died in 1966. Board members spent two hours perusing the archives before following colleague Jamison Wyatt of Lincoln on a tour of places where Sandoz frequented, worked, lived and wrote while in the city. Following the tour, the board and invited guests gathered at the historic Ferguson House in Lincoln for talks by several board members while enjoying refreshments.



*Sarah Polak, Mike Smith and Shannon Smith looking through books in the archives at UNL (top left). Lynn Roper reading a letter in the archives at UNL (top right). Jamison Wyatt leading a tour of Sandoz sites in Lincoln (bottom left). Brian Rockey reading a passage from "Capitol City" at the Ferguson House (bottom right).*



**Support the Mari Sandoz Heritage Society!** Join us in keeping the spirit and work of Mari Sandoz alive by supporting the Mari Sandoz Heritage Society with a new membership, gift membership or renewal! Visit our website at [www.marisandoz.org](http://www.marisandoz.org) to complete the online form and pay by credit card. You can also download the membership form, print it and mail it to us with a check.

# Polak Explains Sandoz Fights for Indian Rights

Mari Sandoz High Plains Center Director Sarah Polak told attendees at a recent Knight Museum and Sandhills Center Spring Lectures series about Mari Sandoz and her fight for Native American rights. Polak explained how Sandoz overcame only a few years of elementary education in a one room rural school and, at the age of 17, received special permission to attend a summer teacher's institute at Chadron State College (then known as the Chadron State Normal School). She married, taught rural school, got divorced and moved to Lincoln where she took typing and shorthand. She worked as a proofreader for the local newspaper and as a research assistant at the state historical society and continued her education at the University of Nebraska in Lincoln. Polak asked the Alliance audience if Mari were alive today, what she would think about the Native American-led protests of the Keystone XL Pipeline at Standing Rock. One audience member shouted that she'd be on the front lines. Polak said Sandoz firmly believed "If you see injustice, you have to stand-up," which is notable through her extensive studies into Native Americans. Polak also spoke of Mari's love for writing and encouraging other writers, her belief being that "anybody can write" and advising future writers to pick a topic they know well and to write about it. Sandoz was an acclaimed Plains historian and biographer and an authority on Plains Indians. Her honorary Doctorate of Literature from the University of Nebraska in 1950 reads, "Mari Sandoz, distinguished Nebraska historian, biographer, novelist, story writer, authority on Indians of the Nebraska territory and neighboring states ... widely known teacher in creative writing at several state universities."



*Sarah Polak, the executive director of the Mari Sandoz Center at Chadron State College, spoke about the history of Mari Sandoz and her fight for Native American rights at the Knight Museum. (photo Alliance Times Herald)*

## Sandoz Center Seeking New Director

Sarah Polak, director of the Mari Sandoz High Plains Heritage Center on the campus of Chadron State College has resigned after 13 years to pursue other interests. Polak said she appreciates the professional guidance and support she has received during the time. "Since my arrival in 2004, I have worked to develop the regional and national reputation of the Center and to make the Center an active and vibrant part of the region," she said. Polak points to the development of the Coffee Gallery, a celebration of banking and ranching in the Sand Hills, as a high point. There were no exhibits in the space prior to her arrival in 2004. She has also developed external partnerships with the Nebraska Tourism Commission, the Rural Futures Institute, Nebraska Cattlemen and the Nebraska Arts Council. Internal partnerships have also been developed with various college departments touching disciplines from art to agriculture, social work, education, history and English. Implementation and development of Heritage Gardens and the cataloguing of more than 10,000 items have also been accomplished.

### 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(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](http://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.

# Sandoz Family Enjoys Four Days of Special History

They came, they saw, they enjoyed. Members of the Sandoz family, “the cousins” as David Sandoz of Valentine likes to call them, spent four days in June touring the original homesteads and other places mentioned in Mari Sandoz’ writings. They came from all over the country and based their travels from Chadron. “These dear ones came in from: Ottawa, Ontario; Phoenix, AZ; Washington, DC; Los Angeles, CA; Colorado Springs and Denver, CO; Baton Rouge and New Orleans, LA; Ames Iowa; and various points in Nebraska,” he said.

Day One was a trip through Old Jules Country. Stops included Mirage Flats and the location of the first dugout. Vance Nelson of Ogallala, a seasoned Sandoz tour guide, narrated the trip and told the stories. The group also traveled to Indian Hill and saw the site where Old Jules first cabin, store and post office would have stood close to the Niobrara River. On to Alliance to visit the graves of Old Jules, Mary and their daughter Flora. Sandoz, who organized the event, said the group had lunch in the Alliance City Park and traveled on past the old potash plants and stopped at the Spade Ranch Store in Ellsworth. After refreshments, they traveled on to the Pleasant Point Church for a rest break and enjoyed “the deep, huge hills” of Old Jules second home area. A stop at the Mari Sandoz Historical Marker south of Gordon was followed with a visit to her grave where Cash Ostrander greeted us and told us about Mari and her writings. We then stopped by some of the old fruit trees of the Sandoz’ and drove across the meadow to the second home, store and post office of Old Jules, Sandoz said.

Day Two started with a morning at the Sandoz Center in Chadron where Director Sarah Polak helped everyone trace their Sandoz lineage. CSC President Randy Rhine welcomed everyone to Old Jules Country and to CSC. Lunch was provided by the CSC Foundation. Sandoz said “We are so fortunate to have this facility available to our family and friends.” In the early afternoon, the group traveled to Fort Robinson State Park and toured, enjoyed a buffalo stew dinner and attended the Post Playhouse production of “Mamma Mia. The Fort is significant because it was there that Old Jules was taken after the well incident and treated by a young doctor named Walter Reed. He reportedly told Jules that his leg was full of gangrene and it should be removed. Jules informed the doctor that if he removed his leg, he would kill him so dead he would stink before he hit the ground. The doctor’s life was spared and Jules did slowly recover but remained crippled the remainder of his life.

Day Three featured a trip to the Bowring Ranch State Park at Merriman to visit the collections and a video of the Bowring story and the bringing of cattle to the Sandhills. The Bowring Ranch started with the 160 acres provided by the Homestead Act and Mr. Bowring built it into the 7,200 acre ranch that Mrs. Bowring gave to the State of Nebraska as a working ranch. The ranch home has a huge collection of silver, crystal and fine linens. There are 32,000 pieces of crystal and 200 black and white pictures of famous people Mrs. Bowring met while on the federal Board of Pardons. Mrs. Bowring was the first female U.S. Senator from Nebraska replacing Dwight Griswold who died in office. She was appointed by President Dwight Eisenhower in the 1950s. The Sandoz visitors enjoyed a steak fry at the ranch. The group also visited the sod house at the ranch and stopped at the Museum of the Fur Trade on the way back to Chadron.

Day Four was highlighted by a church service and indoor picnic, a special farewell dinner with live entertainment at the Sandoz Center and a group picture to commemorate the visit. The next family gathering will be in Switzerland in May 2020.



*Members of the Sandoz family at the grand farewell dinner at the Sandoz Center at CSC (top photo). Jason Fast Dog performing the Grass Dance as part of the farewell dinner (bottom photo).*

*(photos David Sandoz)*

# Time Capsule Burial Is Recognized Sesquicentennial Event

Participants at the 2017 Fall Conference of the Mari Sandoz Heritage Society on the campus of Chadron State College will have the opportunity to attend a special event recognized by the Nebraska Sesquicentennial Commission as a Legacy Project. The Society's Time Capsule will be buried on the grounds of the Mari Sandoz High Plains Center on Friday afternoon, September 29. Project chair Deb Carpenter-Nolting, a board member from Bushnell, said the project was inspired by Mari Sandoz participation in a similar project years ago. That capsule was unearthed



several years ago in Omaha. She said her committee hopes to have 50 predictions to place in the capsule that will be opened in 50 years. Predictions are being collected from visitors to the Sandoz Center as well as from a list of noted Nebraskans, celebrities and government officials.

That list ranges from financial guru Warren Buffet to entertainer Dick Cavett and astronaut Clayton Anderson. Fourth grade students at Sandoz Elementary School in Omaha have also contributed a packet of predictions. On Friday afternoon, audience members will be instructed how to make their own predictions about the future (general topics: Education, Government, Medical, Musical, Poetry, Art, Agriculture, Language, Communication, Religion, Food, Transportation, Museums, War, Water, Housing, Space Exploration, Animal and Plant Species). The audience will hold on to their predictions, using the backs of the prediction sheets for questions they might have. That will be followed by a reading of Mari's predictions and a panel discussion including: David Nesheim (CSC instructor); Jovan Mays (poet); Martin Gilmore (songwriter); Donette and Mercedes Lone Hill (mother and daughter- traditional Lakota perspective). Mays will lead a workshop and instruct the audience on how to turn their predictions into poetry. At the burial site, he'll read a poem he has written for the occasion and Gilmore will perform a song he has written. Participants will then fill the hole one handful at a time.

# 2017 Annual Conference Theme is Nebraska 150 and the Future

The 2017 Sandoz Society annual conference will be held Friday, September 29th at the Mari Sandoz High Plains Heritage Center on the campus of Chadron State College. A special Saturday morning session on September 30th has been scheduled for the Bean Broker coffee house in downtown Chadron. The conference celebrates Nebraska's sesquicentennial. The Friday morning session begins with Twyla M. Hansen, the Nebraska State Poet, who will be reading from her published works and from new compositions in honor of Nebraska's 150th statehood anniversary. Chadron State College Herbarium Director Steven Rolfsmeier will discuss "Plants of Nebraska." Mari Sandoz wrote vivid descriptions of the Sandhills she loved and Rolfsmeier's talk will highlight that history as well. Robert Roy Foresman, the 2017 Sandoz Research Award recipient, will present "Mother's Joy: Early 20th Century Technological Innovations on the Great Plains." The paper is based on the Sandoz short story, "The Phonograph." Friday afternoon sessions will be dedicated to time capsule events. Shortly before her death in 1966, Mari Sandoz made some astounding predictions of what life would be like in 2017. That time capsule was unearthed last year when an Omaha TV station, where it was encapsulated, moved to another building. After celebrating the truths and errors of those prognostications, a panel of dignitaries will be encapsulating their own projections about what the future is for Nebraska at its bicentennial. Saturday's extra session begins at 9 am at the Bean Broker. Alan Wilkinson will be presenting "Getting in Touch with Mari Sandoz." He is a noted British writer who has spent 25 years pondering Mari Sandoz's work and getting to know the Sandhills. After getting lost a few times navigating the Old Jules Trail, he created and posted an improved on-line guide (<http://www.old-jules-trail.com/index.html>.) His talk allows plenty of time for a journey down to Mari's Grave Site south of Gordon. The Bean Broker is in a beautiful old building and offers great coffee, sweets & food. Beer, Spirits & Wine are also available as is fast internet, a warm fire, good friends. General Manager Andrea Lee Rising has spent hours working on the historic building to preserve its charm and refine the business. Saturday's conference session will be a laid-back affair, so plan to extend your Chadron stay beyond the one day.

Mari Sandoz Heritage Society  
PO Box 6808  
Lincoln, NE 68506-0808  
[www.marisandoz.org](http://www.marisandoz.org)

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# Mari Sandoz

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