

Mari Sandoz

HERITAGE

Chadron, Nebraska

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THE WRITING OF CRAZY HORSE

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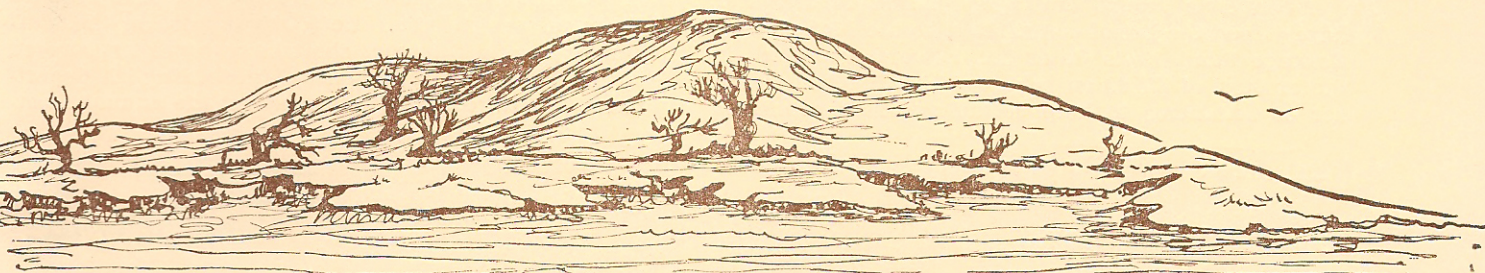
When Mari Sandoz won the Atlantic Non-Fiction prize in 1935 with **Old Jules**, she established her reputation as a writer and vindicated her many years of dedication to her art, years in which she had received innumerable rejection slips. (**Old Jules** itself had been returned by thirteen publishers before its acceptance.) But her life did not automatically become smooth because of this success, as we can see by her experiences in the writing of **Crazy Horse**, the "strange man of the Oglalas," the Teton Sioux war chief who is generally considered the finest war leader of the Plains Indians in their battles with the United States Army in the 1800's.

Miss Sandoz did not originally set out to write that biography. It is true that she was very much interested in the Sioux, having known them since childhood, and in the summer of 1930 she and a University friend, Eleanor Hinman, made a 3000 mile trek through the Pine Ridge and Rosebud Indian reservations in a Model T Ford and camped out, locating famous Indian sites and interviewing the ancient survivors of the Indian wars. But it was Miss Hinman who planned to write the story of Crazy Horse; Miss Sandoz was interested particularly in the Man-Afraid-of-His-Horse family. However, Young-Man-Afraid was a fellow tribesman and contemporary of both Crazy Horse and Red Cloud, the subject her friend A. E. Sheldon hoped to write about, so Miss Sandoz planned to wait with this book until her two friends had finished theirs. 1

Instead, she planned to write various articles about the Plains Indians, her first major work to deal with the flight of a small band of Northern Cheyennes from Oklahoma, where they had been exiled, back to their reservation in Montana, pursued by thousands of U. S. troops, in the winter of 1878-79, the flight that ended in death at Fort Robinson for many of them.

However, late in 1939, after she had spent three years and much of her **Old Jules** earnings on research in government archives and in various libraries and museums for the Cheyenne background, she learned that Simon and Schuster, a New York publishing company, had commissioned Howard Fast, a writer of popular novels, to research and write the Cheyenne story and publish it before she could finish hers. She felt this was unethical because it was well known that she was researching this particular material, but an author or researcher has no legal recourse before publication, so she felt she would have to shelve this book for at least ten years, until Fast's was long-forgotten, "in the garbage dumps," as she wrote a friend. 2

At this point, Miss Sandoz's good friend Eleanor Hinman came to her rescue. It had been ten years since their trip to the reservations, and she still did not have the time or money to do the research needed to authenticate her material, so when she heard about the situation she offered to the author her claim to the



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

Crazy Horse story and turned over all her Indian interview and research notes. Not only did she share her information, she also encouraged her friend to feel that the material was hers and that she was the right person to use it. 3 With this encouragement Miss Sandoz put aside her Cheyenne material and began to concentrate on Crazy Horse. 4

Even after **Crazy Horse** arrived at the publishers there was difficulty. Rumors reached Miss Sandoz in Denver, where she was living at the time, that someone in New York was trying to "rifle" her manuscript and write his own version. She refused to send the publishers her bibliography until she was certain no one could get it, for she could not bear to lose this book at this point. She became so ill with worry that she could not leave Denver, otherwise she would have come to New York to collect her manuscript. Although her publisher assured her that no one was after it, she insisted on an early fall publication in order to beat any rivals. Meanwhile, she had done what she could through influential friends in the historical research field to scotch any such book. Whether it was this pressure, or whether the rumor was only that, no such book appeared.

Crazy Horse was published in the fall of 1942. In gratitude to her friend for her generosity in giving up her priority rights Miss Sandoz dedicated the book to her: ". . . to Eleanor Hinman, who spent many faithful months on a biography of Crazy Horse and then graciously volunteered to relinquish her prior claim to me." Thus, because of unethical claim jumpers—real or rumored—on the one hand, and the kindness and generosity of a friend on the other, the author published what many consider to be her finest book.

Sources: Letters in the Mari Sandoz Collection, University of Nebraska Love Library, Lincoln, Nebraska.

Interview with Miss Eleanor Hinman, Lincoln, Nebraska, August 1970.

NOTES

1. Neither finished his book. After Dr. Sheldon's death Miss Sandoz persuaded Dr. James Olson to write Red Cloud's biography.
2. Howard Fast's **The Last Frontier** was published in 1941, but by Duell, Sloan and Pearce. Simon and Schuster probably recognized their actions would tarnish their reputation; Miss Sandoz's publisher wrote them to protest the commissioning of Fast for this work.
3. Hinman-Sandoz correspondence, Sandoz collection, University of Nebraska.
4. The Cheyenne research material was later used for **Cheyenne Autumn**, published in 1953.

DONORS TO FUND

Two civic groups and one business organization have joined the list of contributors to the Mari Sandoz Heritage Fund. Doris Gates has forwarded a check in the amount of \$25.00 on behalf of the Chadron Chamber of Commerce to help defray expenses connected

with the Sandoz Country Tour, and Jerry Jones, representing the Rotary Club of Chadron, has presented a check in the amount of \$50.00 to the Fund. For the second consecutive year the Chadron office of the Kansas-Nebraska Natural Gas Company has demonstrated its support of the Fund by participating as a commercial member.

The Mari Sandoz Heritage Fund Committee is pleased to acknowledge these groups and all of the individuals who have contributed to the Fund through membership renewals and life memberships, as the Fund depends upon you for its continued existence. Mari Sandoz and western American artifacts, letters, papers, photographs, and publications are also welcomed as donations.

BY AND ABOUT MARI

The Mari Sandoz Heritage Fund Committee has been notified by Mrs. William Hasebroock of West Point that its program is one of four being considered by the Nebraska American Revolution Bicentennial Commission to be advanced for recognition as Nebraska's observance of the American Revolution Bicentennial Celebration in 1976. The Festival of '76 is a nationwide emphasis to observe the 200th anniversary of the American Revolution through a three pronged theme: Heritage, Festival, and Horizon—past, present, and future.

According to Mrs. Hasebroock, member of the Nebraska Bicentennial Commission, a Mari Sandoz Cultural Center in Chadron has been nominated in preliminary form by the Commission. The Sandoz Center has been suggested as part of a trio of cultural projects which also would include similar centers for Willa Cather at Red Cloud and John G. Neihardt at Bancroft. The three other programs which have been nominated are: riverfront development in the Omaha area, a new agricultural hall on the state fairgrounds, and a park in the Platte River basin. One of the four projects will be selected as the state focal point for the 1976 celebration.

Such a center has been one of the long-range goals of the Heritage Fund, and the Committee is now actively preparing a program and a proposal to be presented at a future meeting of the Bicentennial Commission.

Three awards named in memory of Mari Sandoz have been presented since the last issue of **The Heritage**. Mary Buford, a sixteen year old junior at Omaha Northwest High School and daughter of Mr. and Mrs. John Buford, was announced as the winner of **Nebraskaland** magazine's Mari Sandoz Essay Contest at the annual Nebraskaland Days in North Platte in June. Earlier in the summer, Vicki Pulos, a sophomore in journalism and daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Christos E. Pulos, was awarded the \$50 first prize in the Mari Sandoz **Prairie Schooner** short story contest sponsored by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln English department. The third award was made at the annual meet-



ing of the Nebraska Library Association in Kearney in October. Mrs. Dorothy Lessenhop was presented the Mari Sandoz Award "for her continued high excellence in performance of professional duties during 42 years with the Nebraska Public Library Commission and her significant contribution throughout her career to the book world of Nebraska."

In response to the suggestions and inquiries concerning current and retrospective research on Mari, the Heritage Fund will attempt to serve as a clearing house for making this data a part of the public record. On the basis of information available at the time of publication, the following research projects have been identified:

1. Clark, Felie Woodrow. "Mari Sandoz, Daughter of Old Jules: A Study of Her Life and Literary Career." Unpublished Master's thesis, Florida State University, 1956.

A bio-bibliographic survey of secondary sources, with an emphasis on bibliography.

2. Lusk, Linda M. H. — Research in progress on several articles and a biography.
3. McDonald, Judy. "Antaeus of the Running Water." Master's thesis in progress, University of Denver.

A biographical study of Mari Sandoz in Nebraska, i.e., until after the publication of **Capital City**.

4. Pederson, Ruby V. "Portrait of Mari Sandoz as a Teacher." Unpublished paper read at the Humanities and Social Sciences Development Program Research Conference, Lincoln, Nebraska, December 12, 1969.

An evaluation of Mari as a teacher at the University of Wisconsin during the 1950's.

5. Rice, Minnie C. "Mari Sandoz, Biographer of the Old West," **Midwest Review**, (Spring 1960), 44-49. A survey of her writing.

6. _____ "Mari Sandoz as a Writer." Unpublished paper read at the Humanities and Social Sciences Development Program Research Conference, Lincoln, Nebraska, December 12, 1969.

An inquiry into the gap in narrative in **Old Jules**, and an analysis of Mari Sandoz as a storyteller.

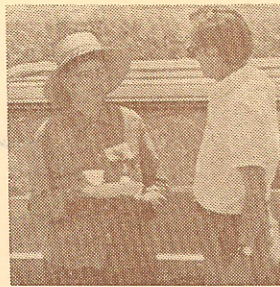
7. Stauffer, Helen. "Mari Sandoz as a Literary Artist." Ph.D. dissertation in progress, University Nebraska-Lincoln.

A critical examination of the three biographies: **Cheyenne Autumn**, **Crazy Horse**, and **Old Jules**.

8. Walton, Kathleen O'Donnell. "Mari Sandoz: An Initial Critical Appraisal." Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Delaware, 1970.

An appraisal of twenty Sandoz books as works of literature.

SANDOZ COUNTRY TOUR



Flora & Everett



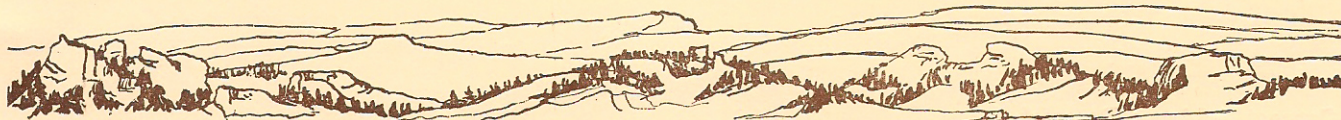
Jules & Evelyn

Over 200 persons from Colorado, Iowa, Kansas, Nebraska, South Dakota, Washington and Wyoming participated in the Sandoz Country Tour sponsored by the Mari Sandoz Heritage Fund and the Hay Springs Heritage Center on June 24 and 25, 1972. Caroline Sandoz Pifer, Mari's youngest sister, served as the tour guide for the car caravan, and as the principal narrator for all stops during the first day. Mari's brothers—Jules, James and Fritz—and her other sister—Flora—contributed comments and anecdotes along the way that were enthusiastically received by a very receptive audience.

Tour participants assembled on June 24 at the Gordon Methodist Church for breakfast and registration. Pre-tour arrivals were treated to free visitations at the Mari Sandoz Room, Cowboy Museum, Store of Yesteryear, and the Andrew Standing Soldier Art Collection in Gordon on June 23. The first stop of the tour was at the Mari Sandoz Historical Marker, approximately thirty miles south of Gordon. From the marker, erected by the Nebraska State Historical Society, the caravan proceeded to the Sandoz Fruit Farm, now owned and operated by Flora Sandoz. As the crowd stood at the base of the hill overlooking Mari's grave, Everett Larson, Associate Professor of English at Chadron State College, read a eulogy written by Mrs. Joseph P. Heitz of Schuyler. Moving slowly past a portion of the still productive Old Jules orchard, the caravan arrived at the home of Flora Sandoz. Inside Flora's home tour participants had an opportunity to see what was formerly a community library started by Mari, and Sandoz family pictures and mementoes, including many belonging to or given to Mari.

After a lunch break at Smith Lake, where pottery, books and art work were on sale, the caravan reached the Swiss Beguin Cemetery. Several people on the tour had relatives buried in the cemetery, and they were able to relate some of the history connected with the graveyard. Mrs. Constance Sandoz Cornelius of Denver, daughter of little Paul Sandoz, found the stop especially poignant, as her mother was buried at Swiss Beguin. Emile, murdered brother of Old Jules, was also buried in a nearby plot.

The next stop of the tour was at the former Sandoz River Place on the Running Water, now owned by Mr. and Mrs. Charles Letcher. Indian Hill, the old Charlie Sears house, the orchard, and anecdotes by Jules and Fritz Sandoz made Mari's **Old Jules** seem very real



for tour members. From the river valley the caravan moved to Mirage Flats, scene of Old Jules first homestead. Evelyn Mills, daughter of Elmer Sturgeon, a neighbor of Old Jules, recalled the incident involving Old Jules' well accident, as she remembered her father telling about it.

The final stop of Mrs. Pifer's portion of the tour was at the Sacred Heart Catholic Church on Mirage Flats. The Sacred Heart Altar Society served refreshments to tour participants on the same land originally donated to the church by Old Jules. Optional tours to the Hay Springs Heritage Center, Camp Sheridan on the Elmer Cilek farm, and the Museum of the Fur Trade at Chadron were then available for those not too weary to continue. Mr. and Mrs. B. Wallace Mills served as the tour guides to those sites. The first day of the Sandoz Country Tour concluded with a dinner at Fort Robinson which included musical entertainment by Sharon Schaub of Denver.

Vance E. Nelson, Curator of the Nebraska State Historical Society's branch museum at Fort Robinson and President of the Mari Sandoz Heritage Fund, served as the guide on the second day, as the tour shifted its emphasis from the scenes connected with Mari's life to those sites which she wrote about. The day began with a walking tour to the historic Fort Robinson flagpole, and then advanced through the 1887 adobe Officer's Quarters now being restored. Moving back to cars once again, the group stopped for a brief visit at the old Wheelwright Shop, and proceeded on to the former Red Cloud Indian Agency. At the height of activity at Fort Robinson in the 1870's, as many as 10,000 Indians were often camped at the site.

From the Agency the caravan moved back to the older section of the Fort, where many of its activities had been described by Mari Sandoz in **Cheyenne Autumn** and **Crazy Horse**. The reconstructed Guard House and Adjutant's Office reminded tour participants of the stabbing and subsequent death of Crazy Horse. Mr. Nelson pointed out the location of the Cheyenne Cavalry Barracks, and retold the story of the Northern Cheyennes heroic flight back to their homeland from Oklahoma Territory, and how Dull Knife and his people were captured on Chadron Creek and brought to Fort

Robinson. As the crowd stood on the Old Parade Ground, Mr. Nelson described the events leading up to their outbreak on the cold winter night of January 9, 1879. They fled across that same parade ground, crossed the White River, and retreated into the buttes overlooking Robinson.

Following a lunch break and visitation to the Historical Society Museum, the car caravan retraced the Cheyenne Outbreak Trail. At the historical marker commemorating Dull Knife and his people, the crowd was introduced to Paul Zerbst, one of three local residents who was instrumental in rediscovering the actual burial pit of the Cheyennes. The setting for the tour's conclusion came at Toadstool Park, north of Crawford.

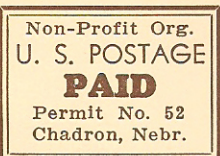
In addition to the members of the Sandoz family, there were many people on the tour who had either known Mari, or who are closely associated with her today through their present positions or interests. Charles Dukat of Wood Lake, for example, was a former student of Mari's. Mr. Dukat and his party from Wood Lake had the largest representation present from one town. Mr. Arthur G. Vetter of Denver, who had previously donated his correspondence from Mari to the Heritage Fund, was also present for the tour. Joseph Svoboda, Archivist at the University of Nebraska Libraries-Lincoln; Helen Stauffer of Kearney State College; Linda M. H. Lusk of Lame Johnny Press, Hermosa, S. D.; and Judy McDonald of Chadron State College, all involved with current research on Mari Sandoz, were also along on the tour. State Senator Leslie Stull of Alliance, who introduced the resolution to the Nebraska Unicameral designating May 11 as an annual Mari Sandoz Day in Nebraska, accompanied the group on the first day of the tour.

Extra copies of the tour guide designed by Ellen Larson of Chadron are still available by writing the Heritage Fund. There are also a few remaining pieces of pottery done especially for the Sandoz Country Tour by the Sioux Pottery. The photographs used in this issue were taken by Zee Uridil of Chadron.

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Edited by Judy McDonald

CHADRON STATE COLLEGE

Chadron, Nebraska 69337



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