

The Story Catcher

A publication of the Mari Sandoz Heritage Society

Conference and Pilster Lecture Scheduled

The Pilster Great Plains Lecture is scheduled for Thursday, Oct. 13, 2011, with Ron Hull, close friend of Mari Sandoz and longtime Sandoz Society board member, presenting a program featuring newly digitized footage of interviews of Mari on Nebraska Educational Television in the 1950s and 1960s. In addition to other NET appearances, Mari taped a series entitled, "Mari Sandoz Discusses Creative Writing" with Hull. He has many personal recollections and anecdotes about Mari as well.

The lecture is designed to bring speakers of renown to the Chadron State College campus to speak on issues regarding the High Plains.

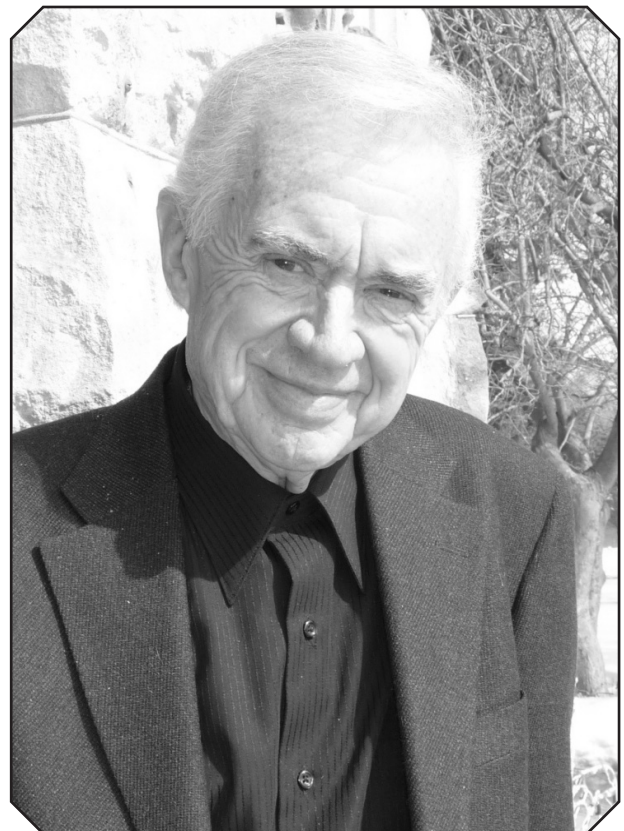
One-Day Conference Format

On Friday, Oct. 14, the Mari Sandoz Heritage Society conference will be held in the Sandoz Center at Chadron State College. The conference will begin with breakfast and end mid-afternoon following a luncheon where the Spirit of Mari Sandoz award will be presented.

The conference is themed "The Joy of Learning," for Mari's passion for lifelong learning and teaching. "Lessons From a One-Room Schoolhouse" follows the theme in a discussion with keynote speaker, Deb Carpenter-Nolting of Bushnell, Neb. She is a noted singer/songwriter, storyteller and teacher and she has attended a rural school north of Rushville and taught in one-room country schools.

"We pumped our own water and had two outhouses out back behind the school I attended," she said.

The conference has been formatted to allow more interaction between the attendees and presenters.



Ron Hull, the 2011 Pilster lecturer, is the president emeritus of the Sandoz Society and a senior adviser to Nebraska Educational Telecommunications and professor emeritus of Broadcasting, University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

To participate in discussions, the conference committee suggests reading or re-reading Mari Sandoz's *Old Jules* and/or Helen Winter Stauffer's *Mari Sandoz: StoryCatcher of the Plains*.

Conference registration materials will be available online at www.marisandoz.org in June and in the August 2011 *StoryCatcher*.

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) nonprofit 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 a conference and presents the Pilster Great Plains Lecture Series.

Additionally, the society provides collections on loan to the Mari Sandoz High Plains Heritage Center at Chadron State College.

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

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

Mari Sandoz

The feats, the passions, and the distinctive speech of the West come alive in the writings of Mari Sandoz (1896-1966).

As the author of 23 books, including *Old Jules*, *Cheyenne Autumn*, and *Crazy Horse, the Strange Man of the Oglalas*, she was a tireless researcher, a true storyteller and an artist passionately dedicated to the land.

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

Run Hull/NET, Half a Century Later

By Don Walton

Lincoln Journal Star, Oct. 11, 2010

He was there almost from the beginning, when the possibilities of Nebraska Educational Television were beyond even his wildest dreams. When it shared space and equipment. When it struggled to find an identity. He's still there, bringing together images and sound, preserving the moments that define us as Nebraskans.

This is a tale of dreamers and doers.

They created an educational and cultural treasure, opened state government to eyes and ears all across the state. Set a standard for quality that attracted national attention and respect from their peers.

Connected Nebraskans, rural and urban, east and west, from Omaha to Scottsbluff.

And now they are guardians of some of the richest moments of half a century of Nebraska's cultural and political history.

Ron Hull is dreamer and doer, one of the founding fathers, the programmer. Still fueled by ideas and enthusiasm, propelled by curiosity, still exploring, still learning, full of energy.

Hull, lean and compact, runs about two miles nearly every day. He just turned 81.

Footage of a treasure trove of Nebraska history, culture and personalities stored in the Nebraska Videotape Heritage Library is being digitized and will be preserved along with more than 800 other Nebraska Educational Telecommunications tapes.

Nebraska's history already is well-documented and preserved in print, but this is the lively and revealing history of images and sound.

This tale began at KUON-TV in Lincoln 56 years ago next month. Hull signed on less than a year later.

At first it was a dependent operation sharing space and equipment with a local TV station. In the 1960s, it grew into a statewide educational television network. In 1971, it moved into its own headquarters north of 33rd and Holdrege.

Hull was on the front line.

Now, NET is statewide public television and public radio.

It is, Hull said, just what Jack McBride (NET founder) used to say it would be: "The electronic cord that truly binds the state together."

Husker football plays the central role in unifying the state, Hull said, but the statewide network has provided "an opportunity to feel we are one Nebraska."

Hull has come and gone a few times during the past 55 years, but he never went away.

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Run Hull/NET, Half a Century Later (cont)

For more than six years in the 1980s, Hull was director of the program fund for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, where he emphasized the need for more programming in “history, history, history” and initiated “The American Experience” series.

In the 1990s, he worked half-time as a special adviser for programming at PBS, flying back and forth between his jobs in Lincoln and Washington for three years.

“I loved that lifestyle,” he said. “I get on an airplane, and once I get strapped in, I’m happy to be flying off somewhere.”

Hull has explored the world.

An overseas trip every year for three decades.

Not just London or Paris.

Nepal, Bhutan, Mongolia, a trip in a Toyota over the Himalayas, the long journey from Beijing to Moscow on the Trans-Siberian Railway.

Hull is senior adviser to NET today and professor emeritus of broadcasting at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, working out of a fourth-floor office. You can find him there at 6:30 a.m.

This is a guy who has contributed a colorful chunk of the state’s history.

In the treasure trove, you will find 35 hours of John Neihardt and 10 hours of Mari Sandoz with his creative stamp upon it.

Johnny Carson, Dick Cavett,

A descriptive Mari Sandoz shown during an interview on KUON or Nebraska Educational Television in the 1960s. Sandoz said she would “rather face a rattlesnake than those cameras.”

During the Pilster Lecture, Ron Hull will show clips where a relaxed and revealing Mari talked about her struggle to become a writer.



Sandy Dennis are there. More governors and politicians than you can name.

“We started with no cameras of our own and no microphones of our own, and stepped into the big time,” Hull said.

“We made a name for ourselves with quality programming and very high production standards.”

“Yesterday in Nebraska” chronicled the state’s history, telling Nebraska stories.

Great teachers were part of the programming fare.

“We always said you could get a better liberal education just working a camera in our studio,” Hull said.

“Through public broadcasting, we have been able to bring Nebraskans the best the world has to offer in science, music, culture, public affairs programming, all of which enhances our lives.” ❀

The Pilster Legacy

The Pilster Great Plains Lecture series is made possible through the Esther and Raleigh Pilster Fund established by Esther Pilster as a tribute to her late husband, Raleigh, who grew up on a ranch in northwestern Nebraska.

One of the purposes of the endowment is to establish a lecture series focusing on the Great Plains. The Pilster fund is also designated for ranching exhibits; Range and Forage Crop Management and Agronomy research; to create exhibits and materials reflecting the settlement of the High Plains region; and rural writing institutes and workshops.

Reflecting on her husband and his parents, Pilster said she wanted to honor the lives of homesteaders who lived on the Great Plains. ❀

Sandoz Board Members Judge History Competition

For the last five years the National History Day district competition has been sponsored by the Mari Sandoz High Plains Heritage Center and organized by center director Sarah Polak.

“I had never heard of the National History Day competition until three years ago when I was asked to judge the district competition at Chadron State College,” said Diana Hoffman, Mari Sandoz Society board member “That’s a shame because that means many people are unfamiliar with this very worthy competition that tests the knowledge of high school and junior high students.”

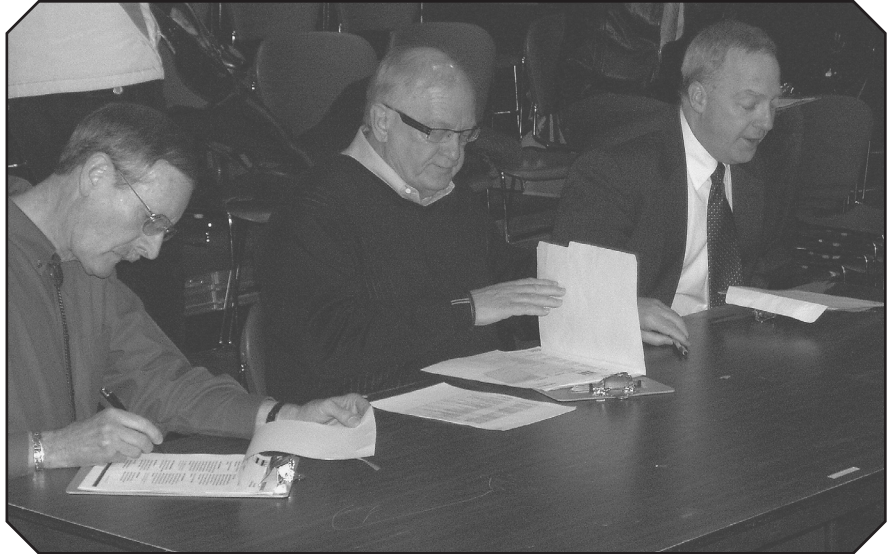
The goal of the competition is to provide an exciting and challenging way for students to showcase their knowledge of history.

Each spring since 1974, students have entered the competition at the district level. District winners go on to compete at the state level and state winners compete in nationals at the University of Maryland. The awards include scholarships and cash prizes.

The theme for 2011 was “Debate or Diplomacy: Successes, Failures, and Consequences.” Students compete as single individuals or in groups of up to five and may present their topic as an exhibit, a performance, a documentary, a paper or a website.

Both Wally Seiler, also a society board member, and Hoffman were invited to judge at this year’s competition in February.

Seiler helped judge performances including a play about Grace Abbott, a well-known American



Wally Seiler (center), treasurer of the Mari Sandoz Heritage Society, scores entries with other judges during International History Day competition.

social reformer, teacher, and writer, from Grand Island.

Hoffman joined a panel reviewing presentations on topics such as the Cuban Missile Crisis, Japanese Internment Camps and Women’s Suffrage.

“In the first-place entry, three knowledgeable and engaged eighth graders discussed the formation of the League of Nations,” Hoffman said.

Students from Chadron, Harrison, Ainsworth and Crawford schools participated in the competition. The entrants that placed first, second and third in their divisions went on to the state competition held at Nebraska Wesleyan University in Lincoln.

By placing in the top two categories at the state History Day contest in Lincoln in April, 11 students from the Western District qualified for the National History Day competition. The national qualifiers, students from Chadron, Crawford and Ainsworth will be traveling to Maryland.

In addition to discovering the past, the competition also helps students develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills, research and reading skills, oral/written communication and presentation skills, self esteem and confidence and a sense of responsibility for and involvement in the democratic process—all critical for future success.

For more about History Day, go to www.nhd.org or www.ne.nhd.org.✿

Create a Legacy

An endowment fund serves as an investment in the future, enabling the Mari Sandoz Heritage Society to encourage young readers and writers and to honor the land and the people about which she wrote.

To make a gift or find out more information about the Sandoz Society’s endowments, please contact Lynn Roper, president, 402-473-1831 or Wally Seiler, treasurer, 308-762-4693.

When Mari Sandoz Discovered Me...

By Dave Sandoz

In the 1950's, I met Mari Sandoz a few times on her trips back to the Gordon area. I specifically remember a family reunion in the Alliance park in the late 1950s where a reporter from the Omaha World-Herald covered the gathering and took a good picture of me with my grandmother Esther Sandoz and Mari.

Mari and my grandmother were cousins. Specifically, my great grandfather, William Sandoz, was a brother of Old Jules. My grandparents, Felix and Esther (She was also a Sandoz) Sandoz, were third cousins. They didn't know each other in Switzerland, but met in Western Nebraska. My parents Allie and Gail (DeWitt) Sandoz were both from Rushville.

At the time, Mari was very warm and seemed interested in me. After that, we corresponded.

In the summer of 1963, four students from my French class at Kearney State College (now University of Nebraska in Kearney) decided we would attend the University of Paris for summer classes.

As we prepared for our trip, I wrote Mari and told her I would be traveling by bus to New York for the flight through Scotland to London and then Paris. She insisted that I visit her and informed me how to work the subway system to get her apartment.

Mari lived in the Village above some retail stores on Hudson Street. We had a wonderful visit and she took me on a walking

trip around the Village.

I was amazed at the number of people who addressed her by name, as we walked, saying "Good evening, Miss Sandoz" or "Hello, Miss Sandoz." I was also amazed as to how she used her space in her apartment.

The living room was normal, but the dining room had been transformed into an office for her and two huge oak desks were sitting back to back in the middle of that room.

Most of the kitchen cupboards had the doors removed and were stacked full of papers and other information. The whole area was quite orderly, but I could tell that it was well used.

She was always very exacting. Later we learned that she had cross-referenced 185,000 index cards to access information. Think of the instant access she would have with the computers today.

I finally got to Paris and even traveled on to Basel, Switzerland, to visit cousin, Irene Sandoz Bauer and her husband, Felix. They were delightful and took me all over the Sandoz area of Neuchatel, Bern, Lausanne and Zurich.

On my way home, I visited Mari briefly, but as she was very busy, I left for home the next day. As I departed, I asked her to come to Kearney and speak to the students. She said she would try to do this.



Mari Sandoz poses with second cousin, Dave Sandoz in 1964. This was the last picture taken of her in Nebraska before her death.

The next year, I received a note from her telling me she would find time soon to visit the campus. About this time, we heard she had cancer and was being treated for it.

When Mari let me know she would visit Nebraska in the fall of 1964, I alerted the president of the College and he began arrangements for the visit. What she didn't tell us was that her visit was dependent on the success of her cancer treatment and she was working hard on her final writings.

She was very tired and required a lot of rest. At that time, the outcome of cancer treatment was usually the same — death.

But she made the trip to Kearney and the convocation was huge. The theater was filled to capacity.

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Mari Sandoz

High Plains Heritage Center

A Day in the Life of the Sandoz Heritage Center

This is a sample of what took place on a Monday at the Mari Sandoz Center:

The Connecting to Collections Statewide planning meeting; Gordon-Rushville Middle School touring; AP Literature Class from North Platte, Neb., discussing Slogum House; and District 6 Music Contest—Show Choir, Jazz Choir, Men’s, Women’s and Mixed Chorus—performing.

The exhibit “Linedrives and Lipstick: The Untold Story of Women in Baseball” opened. The opening receptions at the CSC Softball field and at the center must have inspired the ladies to a win. The team will be wearing T-shirts promoting the exhibit until the end of the exhibit or the end of the season.

Tim Streasick has been the graduate assistant/research assistant in the Sandoz Center for the last two years. He helped organize, catalog and develop the finding aid for the Dr. Rolland Dewing Wounded Knee II collection and worked with the correspondence of Mari Sandoz.

Tim manages the many research requests that come in daily with the aid of four other student staffers in the Center.

When Mari Sandoz Discovered Me (cont)

I will never forget how she was received. Even sick, she briskly walked on to the stage saying she had no idea what to say but that she would just “tell us some stories.” She spoke for one hour and, then reinvigorated, a second hour. It was an amazing afternoon. Everyone was utterly silent and transfixed by her story telling.

The students and staff loved her, savoring each word. And I think she loved the experience of being home in Nebraska. The raptness of the audience reminded me her sitting by the wood box behind the stove; if one just remained quiet you could hear some amazing things.

As the afternoon concluded, she held me close, told me how proud of me she was and thanked me for the wonderful invitation. She said she only came to Kearney because of me.

Later, she sent me a note of congratulations when she read I was to play Henry in KSC’s presentation of Thornton Wilder’s “Skin of Our Teeth.” It was nice to know that she paid attention to family activities while 1,700 miles away.

A few months later our family was informed that the cancer had taken its toll and she was near death. As her pen was stilled, she only wanted to be taken west to her beloved Nebraska, near the running water. ✨

Fashioning the Fashionista

Rachael Downs who designed and built the Mari Sandoz clothing exhibit at the Sandoz Center last summer made a presentation at the student session of the Mountain-Plains Museums Association Annual Conference in Rapid City, So. Dak.

Her presentation titled “Fashioning the Fashionista: A Journey in Exhibit Construction”

looked at her process in designing and building the Mari Sandoz clothing exhibit. Downs, a student at Chadron State College majoring in Museum Studies, was the first CSC student to present at the Mountain-Plains Museums Association Conference.

“She did a great job. She represented herself and Chadron State very well,” said Museum Studies Instructor Sarah Polak. ✨



Rachael Downs makes a presentation on the Mari designing the Sandoz clothing exhibit.

When I Discovered Mari Sandoz . . .

By Dan McGlynn

In the fall of 1964, Sam Corbino, a high school and college classmate of mine, was deer hunting in the Sandhills south of Gordon, Neb. with a friend.

They quickly discovered that Sam's 1955 Chevy was no match for the rugged Sandhills roads. The car soon got stuck in the deep, soft sand.

A local rancher spotted them and got out of his pickup to see if they needed any help. They soon discovered he was Fritz Sandoz, Mari's younger brother.

It was getting late, so when Fritz found out they planned to sleep in sleeping bags, he invited them to stay at his ranch.

They stayed several days and Fritz put them to work, mending fences and doing chores. The nights were filled with him talking about his famous sister, Mari and the books she had written. He also told stories about his father, Jules, and what it was like growing up in the Sandhills. Fritz and his wife Blanche, were gracious hosts, giving Sam and Rick memories the two would not soon forget

Back in Omaha, Sam told me about his Sandhills' adventure and urged me to read "Old Jules."

* * * * *

In 1977 while on a business trip, I spotted a rotating bookrack in the motel lobby. It was filled with books about Custer, American Indians and Nebraska authors like Neihardt and Cather. I bought a copy of "Old Jules" and vowed to read it someday.

That "someday" came a year later when I had the flu. I had just



Dan McGlynn's eyes were opened to his home state after he read the book "Old Jules."

enough energy to lie in bed and read.

Now was the time for "Old Jules."

A few pages into the book, I quickly discovered I couldn't put it down. It was hard to believe that the events had taken place in the state I'd lived in most of my life. There were stories about immigrants, ranchers, cattlemen, real cowboys and the hardships each endured. And of course there was Fritz Sandoz, who had been kind to my friend more than a decade earlier.

"Old Jules" also mentions Verdigre, Neb., where Jules first homesteaded. Verdigre is where my mother was born and raised and where my great-grandparents homesteaded not long after Old Jules left the area and headed west to the Sandhills.

The following year my wife, daughter and I drove from Omaha to Chadron and Ft. Robinson. The Sandhills were covered with a beautiful array of wildflowers.

I couldn't believe this kind of beauty was in Nebraska and that it had taken me so long to experience it.

* * * * *

In May 1984, I saw a newspaper article about an "Old Jules tour". Surprisingly, I talked my 9-year-old daughter, Kelly, into going.

The tour began in Rushville, with Caroline Sandoz Pifer (Mari's youngest sister) leading a caravan of about a dozen cars through the sandy roads that were still greasy from an early morning rain.

Our first stop was Walgren Lake, the inspiration for Sandoz's "Ossie The Sea Monster." Next was the Sacred Heart Catholic Church (donated by Old Jules). Kelly suggested that I ask Caroline if she would like to ride with us and she accepted. Along the way, she told many stories about Mari and the places we were visiting that day.

We made our way to the Well Site and the River Place, climbed Signal Hill and stopped for awhile at Mari's grave site. The tour ended at Flora Sandoz's ranch where we were all treated to lemonade and freshly baked cookies.

Since that summer, I have visited the Sandhills every year, always stopping to see Caroline at her ranch south of Gordon or, now, at the rest home in town.

My interest led me to serve on the board of directors of the Mari Sandoz Heritage Society since the early 1990s.

Dan and his wife live in Omaha between frequent trips to visit their grandchildren. ✨

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