

# Word Sender\*

The Neihardt Foundation Newsletter

"Lakotaholy man Black Elk's description of the Poet"



Volume 39, Number 2

Bancroft, Nebraska 68004

December 2009

## Celebrating Laureate Feast "X"

Honoring our Laureate Feast "Word Senders" from the past nine events and promoting the promises of our future in "A Great Story Still Being Told" was the theme of Laureate Feast X, the annual fundraiser dinner and auction held on October 25, at the Ft. Omaha campus of Metro Community College. This year the event raised \$12,900.



Robin Neihardt and Nancy Gillis



CynDee Cooper and Dr. Merlyn Vogt



Michael Murphy, Walt Duda, Randy Lukasiewicz and Michael Nolan

For the nine previous years a sculpted white buffalo "Word Sender" award was presented to an individual honoree, but this year we looked both back and forward with a presentation by long time board member Randy Lukasiewicz about how Neihardt perceived the vital value of education, poetry, literature, civic and humanitarian duty, and family responsibilities in making life worthwhile – things for which we can all use reminders. He accompanied the talk with photos of Neihardt across many years and in many settings – with family, as an educator, and as a public personality. He also acknowledged the named tables and the prior honorees: Hilda Neihardt, Tom Allan, Ron Hull, Gov. Charles and Ruth Thone, Joe Green, Roger Welsch, Marie Vogt and the Founders, Bill Kloefkorn, and Ted Kooser.

The silent auction accompanied the reception with music by well-known Native American flutist, Michael Murphy of Omaha, wine from Nebraska's own Cuthills Vineyard, and savory appetizers. Seventy guests visited at the reception among the many varied items graced by an ice sculpture of the Roman Numeral X and appetizers of shrimp, duck, and crab. Dinner had been once again exquisitely prepared and served by the Culinary Arts School of Metro; Kabocha squash soup, lamb chops and fresh sausage,



Laureate Feast X Ice Sculpture

cannelloni and beans with a slice of caramelized fennel, followed by chocolate caramel mousse cake.

The 70-plus items on silent auction were tremendously varied from modest value to hard to find collectors' items. Some of the most popular were several signed Neihardt books and those by local authors such as Terry Petit and Jeff Barnes; Nebraska Volleyball package, dinners and bed and breakfast stays; golf outings; Opera Omaha, Omaha Playhouse, Omaha Symphony, and Rose Theater tickets; original artwork as well as numbered edition prints, and unusual gift baskets. As dinner began, Chairman Walt Duda and emcee Paul Hammel greeted everyone and introduced Robin Neihardt and Gail Toedebusch, two of John Neihardt's grandchildren.

After dinner, Dr. Myrv Christopherson, former President of Dana College, took over as auctioneer for the live auction. Dr. Christopherson's fine wit and obvious dedication to furthering the Neihardt Foundation's projects gave impetus to energetic bidding for prized items: bottles of rare Single



Michael Murphy

Malt Scotch including one from Roger Welsch's personal 2000 label batch; a case of Cuthills wines; a week's condo stay in Colorado and one in Arizona; handcrafted Adirondack chairs; a gourmet dinner for 10 guests prepared by the Sage Bistro; and a concert by Michael Murphy. The most unusual pieces were a first edition copy of Neihardt's *Stranger at the Gate* inscribed by both John and his wife Mona, and a tandem parachute jump.

This annual event is vital in helping cover operating expenses for the Neihardt State Historic Site beyond revenue received from the State Historical Society, memberships, and book sales. The Foundation Board and museum staff, thank everyone for their participation, whether donating items for auction, working on preparation, donating time and money, or purchasing items.

All the guests were special to us but we want to acknowledge the presence of S.U.N.Y. Press, publisher of Neihardt's works and Mike Smith, Director of the NE State Historical Society. We also want to acknowledge major donors: The Duda Company, Dr. Michael Mann, the Neihardt Trust, Gail and Dr. Bill Toedebusch, Tim Spoeneman, and Michael Nolan.



Lori Utecht and Tim Anderson

## Collaboration on Black Elk Speaks Production

For several weeks in June and July, students from Dana College in Blair, NE, and St. Charles College in St. Louis, MO, as well as local talent of all ages and backgrounds, met at Dana to rehearse, take classes, design and build sets, and produce the play *Black Elk Speaks*, Chris Sergel's 1976 adaptation. Dr. Hal Berry, professor of history at St. Charles College, a Dana alum; Walt Duda, Neihardt Board Member and a Dana alum; and Nancy Gillis, Executive Director of the Neihardt State Historic Site and a professor of History and Native Studies, conducted a variety of presentations and short courses on Neihardt and *Black Elk*, the History of Nebraska Tribes, Stereotyping of Native Americans in Popular Culture, and Hollywood and the Native American.

The six performances played to near full houses. There was an opening night reception with a local drum group, a barbecue at Black Elk/Neihardt Park, open discussions prior to each performance with Dr. Berry, a Native crafts show, and a Veteran's honoring.



Cast Members

## New Members

**Nebraska:** M. Gardner, K. Gale, D. Bauer, J. Briskey, and K. Blue all of Omaha; Dr. J. Vaughn-Broken Bow; D. Hinds, and C. Cooper-Fremont; L. Conrad-Sidney; R. Labenz and M. Fox-Albion; K. Butler-Wayne; D. Frost-Boys Town; C. Peters-West Point; P. Wegner-Bancroft; Dr. M. Vogt-Lincoln; Fr. Pavela-Humphrey. Also welcome to R. Swain-Sioux City; A. Nelson-Albuquerque NM; A. Meierdirks-Escondido CA; and D. Falvey-Memphis TN.

Annual Memberships of \$25 single or \$30 family entitle the subscriber to the *Word Sender* newsletter, a copy of the Neihardt Journal, advance notice of the Spring Conference and other programs, and a 10 percent discount on books and selected gifts. A Fellows Membership is a life-time membership achieved by payment of \$100 per year over five years.

## Upcoming SAM Programs

January 10 An exhibit of original artwork by the Northeast Nebraska Art Association

February 21 D. R. Haskin, book signing for "The Hills of Mars" based on the Haskin family's homesteading in northeast Nebraska.

March 14 Dr. Susanne Bloomfield and Carrie Crockett presentation on Nebraska feminist, activist, and author Elia Peattie.

These programs are free and open to the public and begin at 2:00 p.m. with a reception following.

An unusually pleasant August day around the Sacred Hoop Prayer Garden as 100 people assembled to hear the poetry of Bill Kloefkorn and see the original pastels of Carlos Frey, the works of both the focus of the book "Still Life Moving." The theme for this 44th annual State legislated celebration of Nebraska's Poet Laureate was how historic and cultural richness give expression to art and poetry, and vice versa. Frey and Kloefkorn talked about the process of collaboration. Frey displayed the pastel painting and spoke about its creation, then Kloefkorn read the poem based on his interpretation or feelings about the work.

Board Member and former President, Walt Duda, read several of Neihardt's more descriptive poetry, particularly "Let Down Your Hair." As a special surprise, unexpected visitor, entertainer and author Bobby Bridger sang some of his creations which blended with the theme perfectly.

## 44th Neihardt Day "Still Life Moving"



Frey and Kloefkorn at Neihardt Day

A full day of activities was offered, with a Neihardt Foundation Board of Directors meeting in the morning, followed by an open General Membership meeting. Lunch was available courtesy of Roger and Nancy Anderson proprietors of Roger's Market. Ron Hull, of NETC,

our emcee now for 42 of the 44 years, introduced each speaker with a personal memory of Dr. Neihardt and Father Paul Ortmeier of Bancroft and Lyons gave the invocation. As is tradition, Neihardt had the last words reciting Black Elk's Prayer taped in the early 1960s.

### Beer Fest

Besides being a renowned writer and Nebraska's "Poet Laureate in Perpetuity," John G. Neihardt loved a good beer. On August 1, that love came full circle with the first "Neihardt Beer Festival."

The specialty beer tasting fundraiser was sponsored by the Neihardt Foundation, and spearheaded by board member, Paul Hammel. The fest was held at the Country Pub, with

over 20 brews provided by area distributors and brew pubs available for sampling. There were also appetizers, a demonstration on home brewing, and a silent auction, that raised \$3,800.



Dick and Jane Moodie

### Neihardt Focus of Learning in Retirement

Dr. William Urbrock and his wife Barbara are busy introducing Neihardt in Wisconsin. Recently he wrote: "Barbara and I have presented two very warmly received dramatic readings of Neihardt poetry to our Oshkosh Learning in Retirement group this past year; *Song of Three Friends* last spring and *Song of Hugh Glass* just last week. We have also showed Nebraska History film *Poet's Sanctuary*. We plan to do selections from the *Song of the Indian Wars* in 2010. So we are building up the Neihardt fan club here in Oshkosh!"

Dr. Urbrock is retired Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Wisconsin and presented a paper at the 1995 Spring Conference.

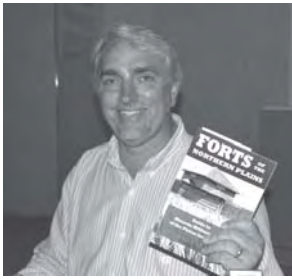


Matt and Judy Connealy



Dr. Jon Cerny serves Patty Wegner

## Sunday Afternoon at the Museum Programs for September through December Well Received



Jeff Barnes

In September, author Jeff Barnes discussed his book "Forts of the Northern Plains," a detailed account of the history, location, purpose, and current conditions of forts such as Fort Niobrara, Fort Omaha, Fort Robinson, and Fort Seward.

In October, Dr. Michael Tate of UN-O, related the high levels of cooperation and causes for growing conflict in his book "Indians and Emigrants: Encounters on the Overland Trails."

November hosted an exhibit of black and white photography by Susan Lawler accompanied by a poetry reading by Jean Miller in presentation of their collaborative book "Right Here on the Ground" based on a wide range of images, from everyday sunlight through blinds, fog enshrouded farmsteads, leaf mottled creeks, fence lines, cemeteries, broken plaster molds, and a child's wooden wagon evoking sonnet styled poetry of "spontaneous praise."



Jean Miller and Susan Lawler

In December, Joseph Starita, UN-L professor of journalism and author of "The Dull Knives of Pine Ridge" and "I Am a Man" read from and discussed the process of creating these non-fiction works.

### New Board Member



Elected to the board of directors at the August meeting was Patty Wegner. Patty is a special education teacher at Bancroft-Rosalie School. Her education degree is from UNL and she has taught at several area schools. She is an active volunteer in the community and serves on several boards. An avid gardener and reader, Patty finds being on the Neihardt Board a perfect match to her interests. Patty and her husband, Stan, reside in Bancroft where he is an insurance agent.

### Farewell

We sadly say goodbye to two long time supporters of all things Neihardt who passed away recently.

**Glendeen "Corky" Wiig** of Bancroft, attended nearly every spring conference, Neihardt Day celebration, and Sunday at the Museum program over the past 40+ years. Her ready smile and infectious laugh will be greatly missed.

**Richard "Dick" Collins** of Coleridge, nephew of "the Kid" Chester Marshall who accompanied Neihardt on the Missouri River trip in 1907, was also an avid promoter of Neihardt's works and frequent attendee of events. He always had some Indian wars era military history to share and his enthusiasm was contagious.

## Library Notes

New acquisitions since December:

*Spirit and Resistance: Political Theology and American Indian Liberation and Missionary Conquest: The Gospel and Native American Cultural Genocide*  
by George E. Tinker

*Battlefields and Burial Grounds: The Indian Struggle to Protect Ancestral Graves in the United States*  
by Roger C. Echo-Hawk and Walter R. Echo-Hawk

*Right Here on the Ground: The Poetry of Jean Miller, The Photography of Susan Lawler*  
by Miller and Lawler

*South Dakota History*, Vol. 39, No. 1, Spring 2009

*Still Life Moving*, Paintings by Carlos Frey, Poetry by William Kloefkorn

*Forts of the Northern Plains: Guide to Historic Military Posts of the Plains Indian Wars*  
by Jeff Barnes

*The Plains Indian Photographs of Edward S. Curtis*  
by Edward S. Curtis

*Beautiful Dannebrog: 1856-1939*  
by P.M. Hannibal

*Far From Normal--100 Years of Educational Excellence: Wayne State College*  
by Kent Blaser

*The Death of Meriwether Lewis, A Historic Crime Scene Investigation*  
by James E. Starrs & Kira Gale

## 2010 Spring Conference

On Saturday, April 24, the 28<sup>th</sup> Annual Neihardt Spring Conference will examine “Neihardt and the Short Story.” Although Neihardt is Nebraska’s Poet Laureate in Perpetuity, some of his earliest published works consisted of over 35 short stories based on tales and accounts of incidents he heard of from Omaha Indian men, traders, railroad workers, farmers, and others living in the Great Plains. Some ring of tall tales, some of tragedies, some of heroism, and some of the metaphysical. This year’s program combines an academic approach to how a short story is written, combined with a close and personal look at the work of three writers from different racial-ethnic groups to examine the inspirations, development, and strength of the short story as a medium to convey complex scenarios in masterfully crafted writing.

Our guest speakers will include: **Dr. James Work**, Professor Emeritus of English at Colorado State University to address the accepted formula for writing short story and examine whether Neihardt’s short stories, all written between 1907 and 1911, followed that prescription or not and why. This will lay the groundwork for hearing from three well-known short story authors. **Dr. Karen Shoemaker**, Creative Writing professor at UNO, on “creating the types of stories I loved to read.” **Ricardo Garcia** is a poet, fiction writer, and accomplished storyteller on universal truths told from a particular ethnic perspective, with humor and clarity. Author **Linda Hogan** is Chickasaw whose father was born in Nebraska. She has written scripts for PBS, books of poetry, novels, and non-fiction essays and short stories. Environmental issues are prominent in her work and she will focus on placing historical and contemporary issues into the short story format. Moderator for the day’s presentations will be **Dr. Neil Harrison**, Dean of Language Arts at Northeast Community College.

The conference is by registration. Fliers will be mailed in early March. Cost is \$20, \$15 for students. Mark your calendars for what should prove to be a stimulating conference.

### Memorial Bench



*The Memorial Bench honoring William & Alice Hille, Vernon Willis Hille, and Helen Hille Steven was recently place in the Neihardt garden.*

## Sincere Thanks to Former Board Members

Due to extremely heavy schedules, two of our board members stepped down at this past meeting: Maxine Moul and Alexis Petri.

We thank them for their service and hope if circumstances change they will consider serving again.

## Poetry Contest Deadline Approaching

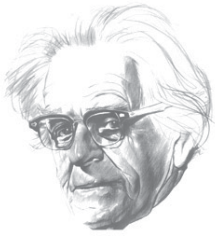
This annual contest honors the memory of John G. Neihardt as Poet Laureate by encouraging and highlighting the work of young poets. Winners in both categories will receive a cash prize and publication in the June issue of the Neihardt Foundation newsletter *Word Sender*. The contest is open to 7-12<sup>th</sup> graders. Deadline for entries is January 15, 2010. For contest guidelines and application information, contact Nancy Gillis at [neihardt@gpcom.net](mailto:neihardt@gpcom.net).

## Electronic Newsletter

As postage rates continue to rise and our mailing list, happily, gets bigger, we encourage those who wish to receive our *Word Sender* newsletter and notices of Sunday at the Museum and other programs to be placed on our electronic mailing list. Just send your request to us at [neihardt@gpcom.net](mailto:neihardt@gpcom.net).

## Tree Fund

We still need to replace trees removed during the paving of Grove Street along our south side. Also the big cottonwood near the museum entrance died and is to be removed. A “tree fund” has been opened for donations.



**The John G. Neihardt Foundation, Inc.**

P.O.Box 344

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*Thank You*

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