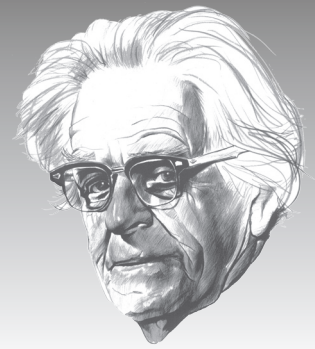


Word Sender*

The Neihardt Foundation Newsletter

“Lakota holy man Black Elk’s description of the Poet”



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June 2011

Biography: Written Lives

The topic of the 30th Annual Neihardt Spring Conference held on April 30th addressed how biography is more important than a bit of trivia about who was born on a specific date, it is a mirror of us all as those about whose lives are documented by authors in biographies are included because of the role they played in a larger portion of our own local, national, or international histories. The five presenters were challenged with how to portray a life both informative and interesting and they did it superbly in a variety of ways.



Humorist and folklorist
Roger Welsch



Paul Hammel receiving the Wall of
Fame plaque from Dr. Jon Cerny

This year’s outside evaluator, Dr. Gretchen Ronnow, stated: “I felt like a student again in all the best sense of that concept...this was one of the most thoughtful conferences I’ve been to, and I appreciated the depth of the presenters’ knowledge and enthusiasm.”

Beginning the morning session, Tim Anderson, Professor of Journalism at UN-L and the current authorized Neihardt biographer, provided little known insights into the passions of Neihardt’s life; his work, his first love, his wife, and thirst for deeper knowledge. Anderson hopes the book will be published in 2012.

Dr. R. David Edmunds, Professor of American Indian Studies at University of Texas-Dallas, noted how Native American biographies have been neglected. He stated those available are usually about the “eagles” or famous people such as Crazy Horse, and few about the “sparrows” or common people, of which there were so many more. To remedy this he has written a series of sketches wherein an event such as the Trail of Tears is told in the perspective of a participant with information gleaned from letters, diaries, and documents to create a composite of several real persons fictionalized as one. Neihardt used this technique in writing *When The Tree Flowered*, using information from Black Elk, Eagle Elk, and others to create a 100 year span as one Lakota man’s life.

The afternoon session began with Nebraska’s own humorist and folklorist, Roger Welsch, who shared an account of his adoption by an Omaha family some forty years ago, recreating him as an Omaha in a spiritual adoption. He talked emotionally about the powerful change from being “an observer to a wannabe to a gottabe.” This was part of a larger work which will be published next year he has called *Confessions of a Wannabe*. Welsch has also been adopted by an Oglala Lakota family, and most recently a Pawnee family after his gift of land to the Pawnee Tribe.

Well known wildlife biologist, rancher, and author Dan O’Brien of southwestern South Dakota, spoke about controversial historical characters



Front Row Dan O’Brien, Nancy Gillis; Back
Row: Dr. Don Hickey, Marla Matkin, Dr. R. David
Edmunds, Tim Anderson

Continued from Page 1



Olivia Nottleman views art work from the Nebraska artists group *Impact!* "Dead or Alive," during the Spring Conference

and the difficulties in writing their lives; particularly Valentine McGillycuddy, the post surgeon at Fort Robinson and later the government agent at the Red Cloud Agency during the Indian wars and after. O'Brien read the first person narrative of McGillycuddy and Crazy Horse's first chance meeting in a cool river on a hot day and the development of a tragic friendship.

The last speaker was a first person encounter with Elizabeth Bacon Custer, known as Libbie, portrayed by Marla Matkin of Kansas in a Chautauqua style presentation. Dressed in a red velvet period riding habit, Libbie shared how she met and married her dashing officer George Armstrong Custer, their early experiences on western postings, and his often glamorized death. The latter portion was about how she spent her widow years writing their story and giving talks to support herself.

Our moderator was Dr. Don Hickey, Professor of History at Wayne State College, himself an accomplished author of historical works, specifically the War of 1812. He introduced the speakers with humor showing a vast knowledge of history, and kept the conference day moving smoothly.

The weather cooperated, and although the crabapple trees did not flower in time, the tulips did. Lunch was served at the Country Pub and many walked the few blocks discussing the morning's presentations. Book sales were brisk as two titles by each of the authors were available. Board member Paul Hammel received the annual Wall of Fame recognition and one of the Poetry Contest winners was on hand to read her winning submission (photos and further information inside). It was certainly another successful conference.

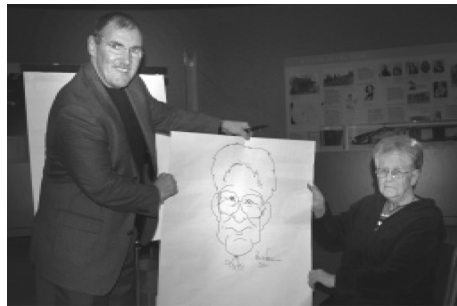
SAM Programs

Continuing the 2010-2011 programming theme "Biography," Paul Hedren's December program was based on his latest book *Sacred Sites of the Great Sioux War: A Geographer's Bazaar.* During his presentation Hedren, a retired National Park Service Superintendent, took his audience on an imaginary tour of locations associated with the conflicts of the 1870s.

January brought caricaturist and editorial cartoonist Paul Fell who gave insight behind his cartoons, and shared illustrations from his book *Husker Nuts*, which focuses on Nebraska football fans. He also drew a caricature of audience member Marjorie Vogt as a surprise birthday present.

Poet and author Allison Hedge-Coke was featured in February. She read excerpts from her published works concentrating on her latest collection of poetry *Blood Run*. Hedge-Coke is an associate professor at the University of Nebraska-Kearney and has published books of fiction, non-fiction and poetry.

The musical trio *Troubadour* had the audience tapping its feet as the group played a variety of songs ranging from the 1400's to the present. Their program "From Celtic to Contemporary" incorporated a variety of musical instruments including a penny whistle, mandolin, banjo, 6 and 12 string guitars, a lute and Hurdy Gurdy. Group members are Jan Cline-Zimmerman, Duane Miller and Jeffrey Bunce.



Paul Fell and Marjorie Vogt

Retiring Board Member

A sincere thank you to Ann Lallman, who is retiring from the board.

She has been part of the Neihardt Foundation since 2001, and we appreciate her service.

Mark Your Calendars

Upcoming Sunday at the
Museum Programs

September 11, 2011

Lisa Sandlin

You Who Make the Sky Bend

October 9, 2011

D.R. Haskin

Beyond the Hills of Mars

November 6, 2011

Dennis Vossburg

Hector's Bliss & Santee Sorrow

December 11, 2011

Patricia Bremmer

Elusive Clue Series

*We say goodbye to friend and avid
Neihardt supporter
Doc Egerman*



Ralph Swain



Myron Heise



Diane Bartels



Steve & Bobbie Olson



Patty Wegner



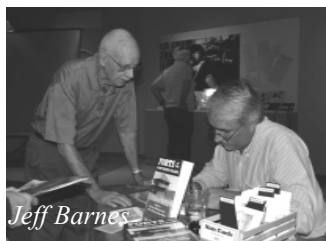
Jeff Toupe



Dean Jacobs



Tom May

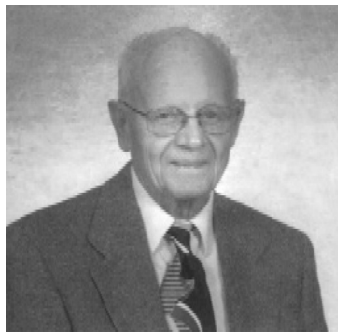


Jeff Barnes



Karen Shoemaker

*In Memory of
Lyle Berkeley Egerman
"Doc"
September 20, 1917 - January 22, 2011*



*Founding board member and
enthusiastic supporter
Doc was on the Board of Directors of the
John G., Neihardt Foundation, and served
as president from 1969-1982*

Beer Fest

Come join us on Saturday, August 6, for our 3rd annual Beer Fest.

The fest will be held at the Country Pub, 409 Main Street in Bancroft from 7 - 9 p.m. More than 20 brews provided by area distributors and brew pubs will be available for sampling.

Proceeds benefit the Neihardt Foundation's programs and projects of the Neihardt State Historical Site.

Welcome New Members

- Jack & Judy Beck, Omaha, NE
- Bob Fritzmeier & Pat Wood, Sioux City, IA
- Pam Gossin, Norman, OK
- Mona Kuhlengel, Syracuse, NE
- Gale Pemberton, Dannebrog, NE

46th Neihardt Day

On Sunday, August 7, we will once again celebrate Neihardt's life and work at the State legislated Neihardt Day.

Continuing the theme from the spring conference "Biography: Written Lives" the program will feature a reading of one of Neihardt's works, and guest speaker Richard E. Jensen, a research anthropologist with the Nebraska State Historical society of Lincoln. Jensen is the author of *Happy as a Big Sunflower*, which traces the life of Rolf Johnson who left Illinois with his family for Phelps County, Nebraska, and tells how his family faced the challenges of pioneering on the Great Plains.

Moderated by Ron Hull of NET for 44 of the 46 years, the days activities begin at noon with lunch available, book sales, and self-guided tours of the museum and grounds.

The program begins at 1:30 p.m. and is free and open to the public.

Young Poet's Contest

The Neihardt Young Poet's Contest targets the talents of junior and senior high school students from across the state.

The 2011 first place winner in the senior high division was Hannah Fortna from Gurley, Nebraska. She is a junior at Fortna Home School. Second place went to Jake E. Nelson of Dalton, Nebraska, a senior at the Nelson Home School, and third place was awarded to Alysha Bader, a junior at Newman Grove High School in Newman Grove, Nebraska.

The winner of the junior high division was Genevieve Broom, an eighth grader at Catholic All Saints Academy in Papillion, Nebraska. Earning second place was Alexandria Heath, a freshman at North High School, Sioux City, Iowa, and third place went to Ethan E. Nelson, an eighth grader at Nelson Home School, Dalton, Nebraska.

Prairie Wind

First Place - Senior High Division
by Hannah Fortna

The wind is a thing,
Of swift foot and wing,
That none can withhold or keep
It blows where it will,
Through valleys, 'round hills,
No treetop too high or grass deep.

The prairies belong,
With their feathered throng,,
And the waves of their wide golden seas,
In all of their beauty,
To the wind completely,
To do with them what it may please.

In summer the wind
Brings warmth from the sun,
Or drives clouds with the promise of rain.
In winter snow flurries
The wind blows with fury,
Cov'ring places where sunshine had lain.

Naught can withstand
The wrath of its hand,
Halt the track of its wayward feet.
Over hill and dale,
Be it breeze or gale,
The wind no resistance will meet.

Save for one place,
'Round which it will pace:
The home where we mortals reside.
Though it claws at the windows
And cries in the eaves,
We are safe from the wind inside.

New Land

Second Place - Senior High Division
by Jake E. Nelson

This new land, a land of grass and dreams
This new land, a sea of endless, rolling
hills

This new land, upon which white men
have yet to tread
This new land she gazed at, through the
dirty train window
The smoke of the engine curled slowly up
towards the cloudless sky

Her husband had sent for her after
building a new homestead
He told her profit and fortune awaited
the train pulled up to a ramshackle
station,
where stood a man, weathered and worn
She stepped down to be greeted by her
beloved and gritted her teeth to prepare
herself
for the hard life that was sure to come

Song for a Pioneer

Third Place - Senior High Division
by Alysha Bader

Heat and cold, wind and blizzards
Snakes and plagues of grasshoppers
No rush of water over rocks and falls
No distant ring of church bells
Or laughter of the neighbors' children

No creak of a mill
No clang of a village anvil
No familiar call of cicada or katydid
No rustle of autumn leaves

Few birds
No cardinals, no robins, no orioles
No owls, no thrushes, no thrashers
No siskins or wood ducks

But there to find in her bag
A small wooden box that made
No sense at all
Except that little canary lying there
In silence after all

The Wait

First Place - Junior High Division
by Genevieve Broom

The wind and coyotes howl.
The grass whispers.
The few who brave the lone expanse
Huddle together under the covers.
The darkness looms.
The moon hides its glow.
The predators hunt,
The door rattles.
Help is far.
Danger is close.
They are alone on the grasslands.
The world is holding its breath,
Waiting, waiting, waiting.
Waiting for the sun with its friendly face.
Waiting for chores to busy their hands.
Waiting for the dawn to break.
Waiting for the light of day.
For the prairie morn and day are fine
But the prairie night is full of fear and dark.

Barn

Third Place - Junior High Division
by Ethan E. Nelson

Cracks in the wood
Little mouse feet pattering along the straw
Birds perched up in the empty window frames
Once used gates and doors falling down and
decaying
Shingles missing
Where the cows and calves used to sleep is now
covered in algae and moss
The barn cats have all moved out, except for the
uncommon few that take shelter in a storm
The corrals are gone; the fences have long since
been reunited with the Earth
And yet it stands a testament that a farm was
once here
Grass has taken over the place where cattle were
sorted
Trees have spread from the windbreak, covering
deserted paths
The old well has been claimed by nature to hold
soil in place of water
But coyotes still howl their cry at midnight
Snakes still slither upon their trails
Sparrows still sing their songs
But this old barn,
It's time has gone



Nancy Gillis and Genevieve Broom



Entrapment

Second Place - Junior High Division
by Alexandria Heath

I sit up on this wooden bridge
and watch the river flow beneath me,
its sound a gentle songs.
Small pebbles and shell rest at its sandy bottom,
like a colorful little painting,
each stone has a place.
Raindrops drip,
like tiny crystals falling,
plopping in the water.
The trees tell me a story,
about the life so long ago,
as they sit in place and pass the test of time.
The rustle of their leaves,
moved by the soft blown breeze,
the voice of this world around me.
Small animals scurry along past me,
as I so perfectly still,
chatter to each other.
They talk as though they know something,
that I shall never figure,
then squeak goodbye and hurry on.
I love this little forest,
a perfect place for me,
it keeps me safe and happy.
It helps my mind to empty,
get rid of my troubled thoughts,
it helps to set my imagination free.
But when I open my eyes,
as the dawn light breaks though my window,
the peaceful dream is gone.
I'm stuck in busy city life,
my vision just a wish,
not a single tree in sight.
The yelling and the screaming,
of those who walk outside,
entrapment all along.

