

Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial Newsletter

VOLUME XXXII, No. 2

Editor, Mildred R. Bennett

RED CLOUD, NEBRASKA

Cather Day '88: windblown but worthy

excerpted from article in *Lincoln Journal-Star*

by Herb Hyde

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The day began with coffee and kolaches at Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial headquarters and a warm greeting from Mildred Bennett (who makes things go), followed by Mass at Grace Episcopal Church with the Rev. Theron R. Hughes, Jr. officiating, followed by Mass at St. Juliana Catholic with Father Frank Leibinger officiating, followed by the traditional Leibinger story, without which no St. Juliana Mass on Cather Day is officially over (even though he tells the story after he intones, in his own inimitable way, "The Mass has ended, depart in peace").

The Cather work and source of this year's conference theme was *My Antonia*, and our midmorning bus tour had been arranged to show us some of the story's significant places.

The day had warmed by the time we left the Red Cloud cemetery, nearby St. Juliana Church and the old Burlington and Missouri depot behind, crossed the tracks and headed west on a dirt road, "the winding line of the [Republican] river bluffs" on our left and the Harling (Miner) ranch yet to come. We crossed U.S. 136 and headed north on yet another dirt road, passing Jim Burden's "broken grassy clay cliffs which indicated the windings of the stream [Squaw Creek], and the glittering tops of the cottonwoods and ash trees that grew down in the ravine" on our way to the Dane Church. In *My Antonia*, Willa Cather calls it the Norwegian Church, which "had held a meeting and decided that the Nor-

wegian graveyard could not extend its hospitality to Mr. Shimerda [who had killed himself]."

We passed the suicide grave, Catherton Cemetery and the prairie dog town (plenty of dogs on May 7, just as there were in Cather's day) and at last arrived at Antonia's (Annie Pavelka's), where a man on my bus said he enjoyed many a good time, having gone to school with eight of Annie Pavelka's children. The cellar, now home to a non-poisonous snake or two (or three), is the one where Antonia and Jim Burden "were standing outside talking, when they [Antonia's children] all came running up the steps together, big and little, tow heads and gold heads and brown, and flashing little naked legs: a veritable explosion of life out of the dark cave into the sunlight." I am sure that no matter how many times I may visit that cellar, I'll always expect to see children burst out of it; the vision comes with the territory.

The last country stop was Cloverton Cemetery, where Annie Pavelka is buried, she having died April 24, 1955, precisely eight years to the day after Willa Cather's death.

After lunch we broke into seven or eight groups to discuss *My Antonia*. . . . About 3:30 University of South Dakota pianist, Karen Gullickson [played] difficult compositions by Blind Tom and Blind Boone, both of whom Cather heard in Red Cloud performances and

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Kristin Guild, 1988 Norma Ross Walter Scholarship Winner

Kristin Guild, 1988 winner of the Norma Ross Walter Scholarship, graduated in June from Lincoln East High School and this fall plans to attend Carleton College in Northfield, Minnesota.



Kristin Guild

In high school she participated in speech and debate, helped found the school's creative writing club, wrote for the school newspaper and played the violin. She also won the State writing contest sponsored by the Nebraska Council of Teachers of English and won honorable mention at the national level, received an achievement award for writing from the National Council of Teachers of English. Not only was she a member of the National Honor Society, she also remained on the honor roll all four years of high school. She received and accepted an invitation to the Nebraska Scholar's Institute. She also received a full scholarship to

(Continued on Next Page)

Cather Day '88 (Continued)

who together make up the character of Blind d'Arnault in *My Antonia*.

This year the depot was given over to the Nebraska State Quilt Guild Exhibition, a collection of some of the finest handwork I have ever seen.

Each item on the 7 o'clock banquet menu was accompanied by a passage from *My Antonia*, and what a delicious meal we had, from Early Garden Salad to Charlie Harling's Hickory Nut Cake, with iced tea, coffee and stimulating conversation between. The appetizer was musical: "Le Donna é mobile" from Giuseppe Verdi's *Rigoletto*, sung by tenor Daniel McKinney; "The Last Rose of Summer" from Martha by Friedrich von Flotow, sung by baritone Marshall Christensen; and "O Promise Me" from *Robin Hood* by Reginald de Koven, also sung by Christensen.

Our after dinner entertainment consisted of selections from Verdi's *La Traviata* sung by coloratura soprano June Schock (Violetta), McKinney (Alfredo) and Christensen (Pere Germont). [Dr. James Johnson directed the string ensemble from the Hastings Symphony Orchestra. Harrold Shiffler] narrated the program, which, of course, was drawn from Cather's description of the opera's performance in *My Antonia*. The musician's performance was superb and engendered a standing ovation at its conclusion. What better way than this, I thought, to end such a deeply satisfying day? Willa Cather would have loved it. So did I.

Kristin Guild (Continued)

the Biology Career Workshop at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

The first runner-up in competition was Darcie L. Schanou of Aurora. The second alternate was Rebecca R. Berens of Seward. Our congratulations and best wishes to all who participated.

On Reading Willa Cather's O Pioneers!

Thoughts and feelings
Rise out of these pages
Like grains of wheat from the prairie:

Friendship —
people with people
people with the land

Trust broken —
young with old
old with young

Trust fulfilled —
through suffering
through love

Love shared —
without freedom
without response

Love shared —
patiently
silently

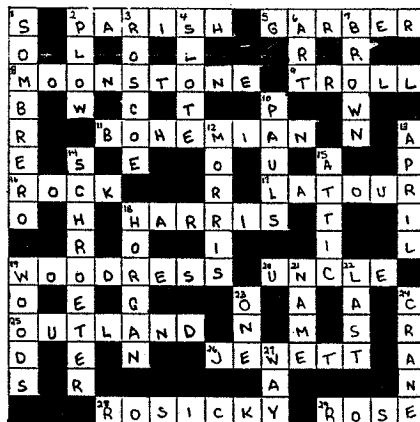
Death —
a letting go for the old
a new life for the young

Life —
new grains for the land
new roads for the people

Land —
taking
giving
stretching
calling back its people
from new roads
with a promise of

Friendship
Trust
Love
Death
Life — Sr. Adele Edwards, '86

**Answers to Cather Puzzle, #1
by Robert H. Kurth**



1988 Prairie Workshop

Prairie Workshop, 6-10 June, convened in Red Cloud with Dr. James Work of the University of Colorado, Fort Collins on literature and writing and Dr. Ty Harrison of Westminster College, Salt Lake City on botany and ecology. Twenty teachers, writers and other interested persons participated.

Literary discussion encompassed Loren Easley's *The Immense Journey*, Willa Cather's *My Antonia* and Mari Sandoz's *Slogum House*, with excerpts from John Neihardt's *Cycle of the West*. Stan Smith, student and friend of John Neihardt, discussed teaching Neihardt in the schools of Nebraska.

Ecology studies included two trips to the Cather Memorial Prairie and one tour of Antonia country. Kay Young of Fontenelle Forest and Ty Harrison with help from Ann Billesbach, Curator of the Cather Historical Center, and Pat Phillips of the Cather Foundation, gathered prairie plants and cooked a prairie breakfast which delighted and informed the group.

We are now forming plans for the 1989 Workshop.

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Excerpts from comments by participants

"I felt a sense of renewal when I spent one week in June, 1988 at the Prairie Workshop in Red Cloud, Nebraska. This ambience provided the perfect setting for Dr. Harrison's plea that we preserve additional sanctuaries of virgin prairie.

"I sat beneath the shade of a mulberry tree transplanted from China and transcended this realm for Cather's space. I heard the Prairie Symphony broadcast on the wave length of the meadowlark's lilt."

Donna Kortje
Norfolk, Nebraska

☆ ☆ ☆

"An exciting, fast-paced experience that shows one — through direct contact — the relationship

(Continued on Next Page)

Cather Puzzle, #2

By Robert H. Kurth

After the Cather Seminar of 1987, Dr. Robert H. Kurth of Prairie Village, Kansas, sent two crossword puzzles, the following is the second one. Answers will be printed in a following issue.

ACROSS

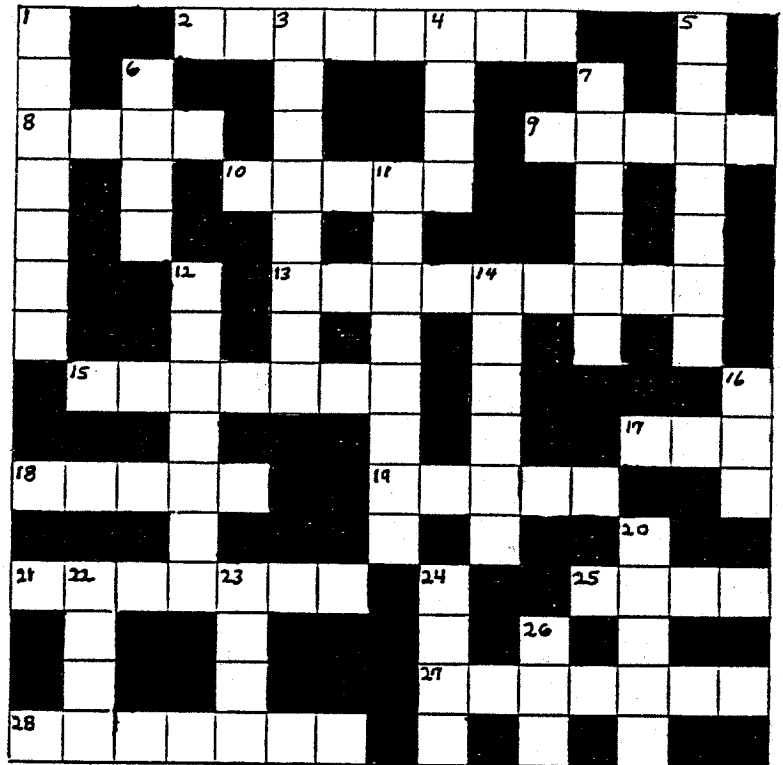
- 2 Confidant and biographer (8)
 8 Willa's grandmother: model for "Old Mrs. Harris" (4)
 9 "Autobiography" of S. S. McClure written by _____ (5)
 10 Nebraska folklorist-friend of Cather (5)
 13 The Love of Lucy (9)
 15 Willa's sister (7)
 17 Willa's world broken in _____ in nineteen twenty-_____ (3)
 18 "Red" but not "Big Red" (5)
 19 Cather's publisher (5)
 21 Prototype of Antonia (7)
 25 Pertains to 6 Down (4)
 27 Biographer of Cather and restorer of Catherland (7)
 28 Cather wrote treatise on this English author (7)

DOWN

- 1 Cather county (7)
 3 Scholarly author on Cather's Romanticism (8)
 4 Climate of Panther Canyon (4)
 5 Credited author of book on Mary Baker Eddy (7)
 6 Bird in the title of Cather's "autobiographical novel" (4)

- 7 Childhood name (6)
 11 *O Pioneers!*, a _____ pastoral (8)
 12 Destinies (7)
 14 What the cruciform tree was for Latour (6)
 16 _____ Over Forty (3)
 20 Dr. McKeeby, _____ for Dr. Archie (5)
 22 Sung by Thea (4)

- 23 Heroine of one of the Nebraska novels (4)
 24 Great _____ all Cather devotees owe to 27 Across (4)
 26 _____ of Ours (3)



1988 Prairie Workshop (Continued)

between science and literature. Diversification offered in the workshop is probably its strong point. Even meal times often turn into discussion sessions on various authors, with professionals from several different backgrounds sharing their perspectives. One also becomes aware of the immense dedication of many persons toward preservation of the Cather heritage and an appreciation and love for two of Nebraska's greatest resources: its land and its people."

Rose Mary Datus
 McCook, Nebraska

☆ ☆ ☆

"I have always wanted to come to Red Cloud and this visit far exceeded my expectations."

Lisa Kae Anderson
 Norfolk, Nebraska

Poetry and Fiction Writing Festival

The University of Nebraska-Omaha's Creative Writing Program in cooperation with four other state college campuses will host the Third Annual Poetry and Fiction

Writing Festival October 6, 7 and 8 on the UNO campus.

The conference, supported by a grant from the Nebraska Committee for the Humanities, will focus on the theme "Regionalism: Putting Literature in Its Place and Time." A series of panels and readings are scheduled, with featured guest novelist Ellen Gilchrist.

For a complete schedule of events contact:

Richard Duggin
 UNO Writers' Workshop
 ASH 212
 University of Nebraska-Omaha
 Omaha, Nebraska 68182
 (402) 554-4801

84119
Patty Pethy?

Dec 14
Mrs. Eugene Bush
710 West 1st
McCook, NE 69001

326 North Webster Red Cloud, Nebraska 68970
Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial



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YOU CAN PARTICIPATE IN THE LIFE AND GROWTH OF THE ORGANIZATION

- By being a Cather Memorial Member and financial contributor:
BENEFACTOR \$1,000.00 and over

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIPS

Patron	\$100.00
Sustaining	25.00
Family	15.00
Individual	10.00

WCPM members receive:

- Newsletter subscription
- Free guided tour to restored buildings

- By contributing your Willa Cather artifacts, letters, papers, and publications to the Museum.
- By contributing your ideas and suggestions to the Board of Governors.

ALL MEMBERSHIPS, CONTRIBUTIONS AND BEQUESTS ARE TAX DEDUCTIBLE

Under Section 170 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1965

Special group memberships (such as clubs or businesses) are available. Write to the Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial for details.

AIMS OF THE WCPM

- To promote and assist in the development and preservation of the art, literary, and historical collection relating to the life, time, and work of Willa Cather, in association with the Nebraska State Historical Society.
- To cooperate with the Nebraska State Historical Society in continuing to identify, restore to their original condition, and preserve places made famous by the writing of Willa Cather.
- To provide for Willa Cather a living memorial, through the Foundation, by encouraging and assisting scholarship in the field of the humanities.
- To perpetuate an interest throughout the world in the work of Willa Cather.

BOARD OF GOVERNORS

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The Board of Governors of the Cather Foundation dedicated this conference, May 7, 1988, to the memory of Jennie Miner Reiher, August 26, 1897-March 17, 1988, charter member of the Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial, second cousin to Willa Cather, and faithful participant in all Foundation endeavors.

