

Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial Newsletter

VOLUME XXVI, No. 2

Editor, Mildred R. Bennett

RED CLOUD, NEBRASKA

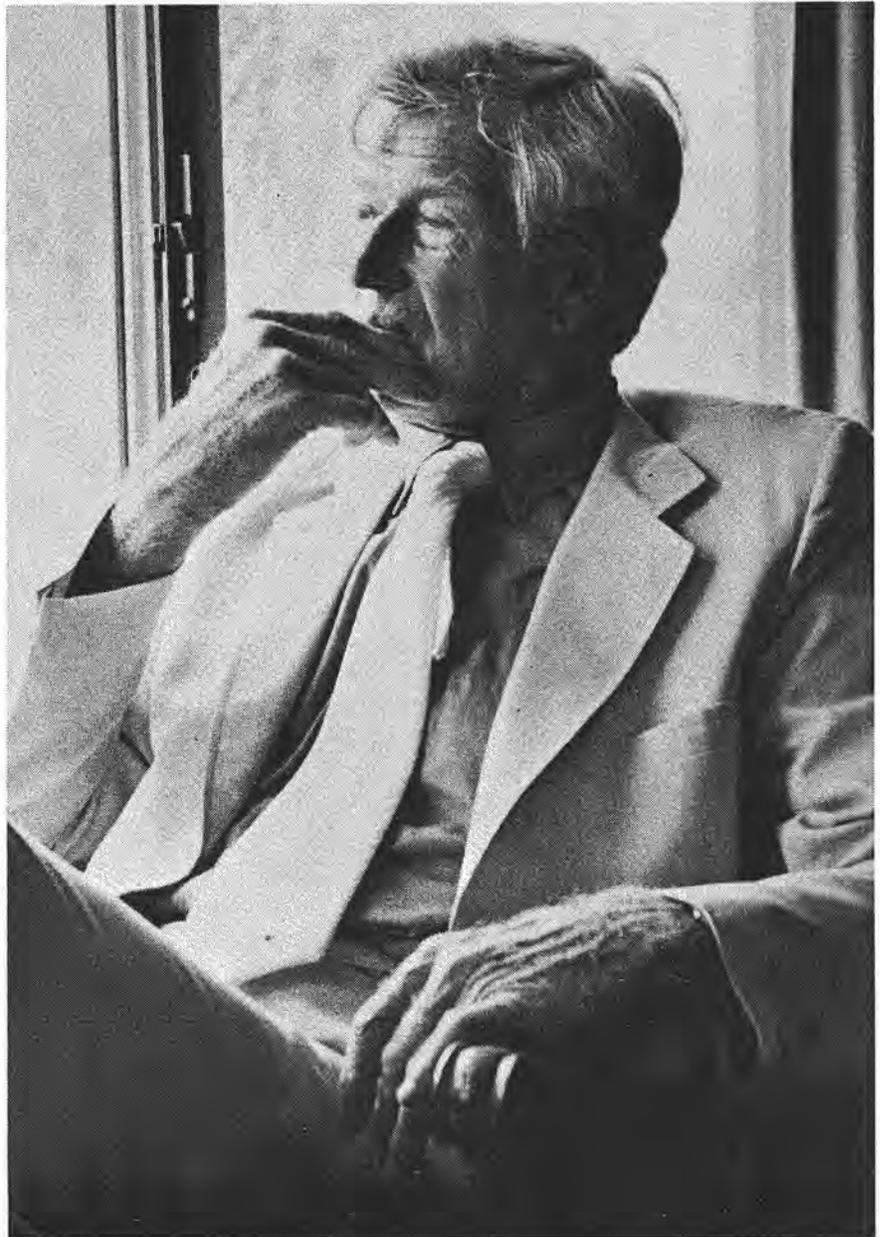
FREDERICK MANFRED RETURNS TO CATHERLAND

Frederick Manfred, the novelist whose heart lives in the midwest, his Siouland, has written twenty-five novels, poetry and essays. One of his most acclaimed, **Conquering Horse**, published in 1959, has much of its setting in Webster County.

At home in Luverne, Minnesota, he lives in a two-room stone house, and works in a cabin not far away where he has no telephone, but all his books and reference material so that the outside world does not exist. He is also Writer-In-Residence at the University of South Dakota, in Vermillion.

Manfred, seventy on January 6, exudes energy, interest and charisma from all his six feet, nine inches. Born Feika Feikema, he began writing under that name, but so many people did not pronounce it correctly, including me when he first came into our living room. I knew him at once, from his work, but I pronounced his name wrong (a tragic insult to an author). That day, in the early '50's he told me about his change of name — just because people didn't pronounce it correctly and wondered if he were a full-blooded, earthy American. He is, however, proud of his Frisian ancestry, of Northern Holland.

Born a farm boy with five younger brothers, he first worked on the farm. Very early he read all he could find and began to write, practically educating himself. Entering high school at twelve, he graduated at sixteen. His mother died when he was seventeen, but her memory has remained a vivid and



Frederick Manfred, author of SONS OF ADAM.

— Photo Credit: © 1980, Larry Risser

influential part of his life and work. In **Green Earth**, he has given us his growing up until the loss of his mother.

Helga Sandburg in the **New York Times** review of **Green Earth** says: "One might compare Manfred's work with the books of Thomas Wolfe. . . . Perhaps,

since the subject is the same, one could more easily compare him with O. E. Rolvaag. . . . Let comparisons go — Frederick Manfred's **Green Earth** is a worthy tale, something of a masterpiece."

Frederick grew up a child of the depression and knows all the struggles, sorrows, hungers that

young people of that day endured. Somehow he earned the money to go through college and graduated from Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan. However, a degree in depression days did not insure a lucrative position and he wandered across America via freight trains and friendly motorists. While working as a newspaper reporter, he stayed with a family who treated him as one of their own. Restless again, he quit the job and wandered for a while. When he returned, he looked up the family and found they had all died of tuberculosis. Not realizing he, himself, was desperately ill, he worked until he collapsed and was taken to the hospital. The attendants put him on a cot in the hall, where both his head and his feet hung over the ends. (Remember his height), and thinking him unconscious they discussed his case, concluding that there was no use trying to find an extra long bed for him because he would not live until morning.

Manfred determined he would live to see another sun rise. He gasped his way through the long, dark hours of the night and the next dawn staggered to a window in the hall to greet the sun. After a long recovery at the sanitarium, he devoted his life to writing, a calling to which he has been faithful. Manfred, a realist, writes life as he sees it — nothing of Pollyanna about him, but his work always contains that upbeat of hope.

In **Scarlet Plume**, 1964, he looks straight at racism — this time the Whites against the Indians. He comes up with questions that should cause any thinking person to do some self-examination.

Frederick Manfred, whom I would call the Compassionate Giant, loves the people of his world, but he does not hesitate to say what he believes about life, love, and one's ethical responsibilities. Particularly poignant to us of the Middle West is the fact that he had lived here, observed here, written here about people just like us. One may not always like his

own image in the Manfred Mirror, but he paints as he sees it. A tremendous welcome awaits him — he is One of Ours.

— Mildred R. Bennett

READ A LOST LADY

We have chosen the book **A Lost Lady** for this year's discussion panel. Over ten years ago we discussed this book in view of its sources and the Garber family. This year we will emphasize the critical aspects of the book, its merits, its weakness, its universality. Read **A Lost Lady** before you come for May 1. You will have the opportunity to ask questions of the experts. And you will be welcomed to give your own critical evaluation.

As some of you know, the Cather Board begins planning future spring conferences anywhere from eighteen months to two years ahead. This year, starting last May 1, we invited Madame L. C. Chang from China to be our 1982 guest. She has not, however, been able to obtain proper papers from her government to travel to the United States. Months yet may be required. Therefore, we have switched our 1983 plans and vice versa. You will not be disappointed in either of our programs.

— M. Bennett

John March keeps our card file index on the Newsletter up to date with cards mailed every quarter immediately after he receives the Newsletter.

On her recent trip to California, Mildred R. Bennett spoke to the high school literature and writing students of the classes in Downey High School, California, which Don E. Connors teaches. As usual on such visits Mrs. Bennett and Mr. Connors visited the section of Downey High School which specializes in teaching the Deaf, and Mrs. Bennett talked to the students about Willa Cather. Formerly, one of Mrs. Bennett's students from Omaha School for the Deaf had

CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

SATURDAY, MAY 1

8:00 a.m.-12:00

REGISTRATION, coffee and kolache, Cather Center Museum, 336 North Webster.

8:30 a.m.

MASS — Grace Episcopal Church, 6th and Cedar.

9:45 a.m.

MASS — St. Julianna Catholic, 3rd Avenue and South Chestnut.

10:30 a.m.

"CATHER'S WILD FLOWERS" — Dr. Harold Nagel — Vet's Hall, 3rd and Cedar.

12:30 p.m.

BOX LUNCH — Vet's Hall, 3rd and Cedar.

2:00-3:30 p.m.

"THE PASSING SHOW" — Vet's Hall, 3rd and Cedar; panel discussion of **A Lost Lady**.

3:45-4:45 p.m.

FREDERICK MANFRED AUTOGRAPH SESSION — Foundation Building, 326 North Webster.

8:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m. and
3:30-5:00 p.m.

GIFT SHOP-GALLERY, OPEN — Foundation Building.

7:00 p.m.

BANQUET, GUEST SPEAKER, FREDERICK MANFRED — Elementary School, multi-purpose room, 3rd and Cherry Streets.

10:30 a.m.-2:00 p.m. and
3:30-5:00 p.m.

OPEN HOUSE — all Cather Center Buildings, Nagel Photographic Exhibit at Burlington Depot, 1st Avenue and South Seward; refreshments at Depot from 3:30-5:00 p.m.

charge of this division of the Downey School system. Now, however, he has his own T.V. Comedy talk show for the Deaf.

WILLA CATHER'S PRAIRIE: THROUGH THE CAMERA'S EYE

Harold G. "Hal" Nagel grew up on a farm in central Kansas and his experiences there became the foundation for his love and respect for the prairie. Since his youth, he has studied and photographed prairie plants and insects. Today, he combines scientific and photographic studies. The result of his photographic studies may be seen in a photo show in April and May at the Red Cloud Depot.

The show, entitled "Willa Cather's Prairie: Through the Camera's Eye," will feature twenty-eight color photographs, all taken of plants and insects described by Willa Cather in her stories of the plains. The photographs will be accompanied by Cather quotes done in calligraphy. Art Pierce, who has studied with the calligrapher for the Queen of England, did the calligraphy.

Dr. Nagel, professor biology at Kearney State College, has managed Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial Prairie since it was acquired by The Nature Conservancy in 1974. He also has several on-going research projects there. In recent years, he has directed several workshops combining Cather's writings with scientific aspects of the prairie. Educators from as far away as California have attended these workshops.

Dr. Nagel has B.S. and M.S. degrees in botany from Fort Hays Kansas State University and a Ph.D. in entomology from Kansas State University. He has several scientific publications and his photographs have appeared in *Nebraskaland* magazine.

Recently on a trip to Los Angeles, I found sitting beside me with her little eight year old girl, Yukiko Yukawa of one of Tokyo's Publishing Houses. Of course, we immediately began to talk of Willa Cather whom she had read. Mrs. Yukawa came when she was seven-

teen to Lincoln to the Landis family as an exchange student. Now, for the 1981 holidays they had brought her and her little Momoko to Nebraska again. She had enjoyed a delightful visit with her Nebraska family. I remarked that so many girls' name in Japanese ended in "ko" and she told me it was an affectionate diminutive. I mentioned that Maya Angelou had been our speaker last spring, 1981, and she immediately knew of whom I spoke and said that a rival publisher was translating Ms. Angelou's work into Japanese.

— M. Bennett

HAM RADIO OPERATORS COMING FOR SPRING CONFERENCE

The Hastings (Nebraska) Amateur Radio Club will sponsor a special events station at the Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial Spring Conference on Saturday, May 1. The Station W0WWV will operate on Red Cloud's Main Street from 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. A special Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial QSL card will be sent to all stations contacted.

Frederick Manfred's most recent book is **Sons of Adam**, "the story of two young men, both raised on a farm, whose lives become intertwined in the big city. Ultimately one, a reporter, tries to track down the other, a pigsticker in a stockyard and part-time boxer, who disappears when he is accused of murder."

Sons of Adam will be available for your purchase and for autographing.

A special 500 copy edition of **Frederick Manfred: A Bibliography and Publication History** by John Timmerman and Rodney J. Mulder will also be available.

Takashi Kodaira of Yokohama has sent her renewal membership and remembers with pleasure her visit here in 1972. She is now in Yokohama City University.

The OMAHA WORLD HERALD is sponsoring a photographic art contest wherein the contestants fit their photos to the words of Nebraska authors such as Willa Cather, Mari Sandoz, and John Neihardt. For further details write **Omaha World Herald**, World Herald Square, Omaha, Nebraska 68102.

The contest does not close until December of 1982, so that you have plenty of time to choose your subjects and your seasons.

Greetings from Mieko Hamaya Kawagoe who tells us that her husband, Shunsuke Kawagoe, is nominated to be a delegate to Rotary International in Dallas in June of 1982. If possible Mieko and her husband will visit Red Cloud too. Some of you will remember that Mieko visited Red Cloud in 1963 and was guest speaker at our Spring Conference.

The April issue of **Western American Literature** honors Willa Cather on every page. Some of the authors of those essays will be present at the conference, and we will have copies for you to purchase and have autographed. We think this issue is a must for your library.

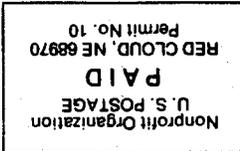
The February **Nebraskaland** featured colored photos of John Blake Bergers' Cather paintings with their appropriate quotations from Willa Cather. If possible we intend to have those also for sale during Spring Conference.

The July **National Geographic** will have an article and photos of Catherland. William Howarth, a teacher at Princeton, writes the story. Farrel Grehan has photographed our country. Watch for it.

Mildred Bennett visited writing classes and a group of teachers of the Humanities on the La Sierra Campus of Loma Linda University at Riverside, California, and spoke a few words on Willa Cather.

Please Remember to Renew Your Membership.

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



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 REQUESTS 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.

Newsletter Contribution Only \$5.00
(not a membership)

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REMEMBER . . . MAY 1, 1982

We know this newsletter is a little late, but make your reservations and plans immediately to attend the 27th Annual Cather Spring Conference. Fifteen years ago, 1967, Frederick Manfred was our featured speaker. Old friends will want to see him again. New friends must meet him!

Harue Tawarada has sent a copy of the English text, **Ardessa and Uncle Valentine**, with Japanese notes that she prepared for teaching English to Japanese college students. We have placed it in the archives of the Cather Historical Center.

If you have a friend abroad who might be interested in Nebraska

and Willa Cather, a gift of our newsletter would be welcome, or a subscription to **Nebraskaland**, or a Nebraskaland Calendar.

Thank you for all the clippings and magazines that you send to our organization concerning Willa Cather or the WCPM. We especially appreciate the recent articles on Maya Angelou, our 1981 Conference guest speaker.

Conference Schedule on page 10 ... Register Today!