

THE CARAVAN

NEWSLETTER OF THE FRIENDS OF LOREN EISELEY

Vol. 3, No. 2

AUTUMN 1989

"We have joined the caravan, you might say, at a certain point; we will travel as far as we can, but we cannot in one lifetime see all that we would like to see or learn all that we hunger to know."

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

The September celebration that focused around the Eiseley Dollhouse was an occasion to be shared with all our members. This newsletter is dedicated to it. In her opening remarks, Eloise Herrick said, "I am unique in that I never knew Loren Eiseley as many of you did...I became acquainted with him through his writing. First, I read *The Country Night* and was fascinated by the perception with which he viewed life, his writing of time and the ages through which he saw. I think of our association as one of the mind...when I talk of him I have no image of personality...I have a mind, an intellect, a word."

In keeping with our purpose of furthering knowledge of that perception we will have, as is our custom, two meetings in 1990 plans for which are presently underway. Gale Christianson, author of a new biography, titled *Fox at the Wood's Edge: A Biography of Loren Eiseley* will be coming to us in September to talk about his work. His book is on Henry Holt's spring list.

Presently we are involved in three interesting projects:

Leaves From a Nebraska Notebook developed by Drs. John McKenna and David Raabe of

the English Department of the University of Nebraska at Omaha will "bring specially selected passages of published writings of Nebraska writers to wide cross sections of Nebraskans through their local weekly newspapers."

The *Friends of Nebraska Literature* is a newly formed group designed to create opportunities through classroom study for Nebraska high school teachers to assist them in developing knowledge and teaching skills in presenting the work of Nebraska writers to their students.

The *Nebraska Groundwater Spring Festival* for elementary school children to be held March 9, 1990 will be using Eiseley's essay on floating down the Platte River as a part of their offerings.

These projects as well as the day to day business of maintaining an organization such as the Friends require strong support from the membership both in involvement and in dues paying. 1990 is the crucial year during which we will decide whether we have sufficient vitality to justify continuing and that vitality must come from you.

Let's make 1990 a banner year.

Naomi Brill, President Protem.



FALL CELEBRATION

The Friends' fall celebration was held late on a Sunday afternoon, September 17, at the home of Burtrand and Marian Schultz where Eiseley came often to sit with friends on the boulders of the old Episcopal Seminary and read poetry aloud. The weather, as it always seems on Hilltop Road, was perfect--sunny and warm. Desserts, brought by Friends, were shared on the lawn after viewing the dollhouse commissioned for Loren Eiseley by his Research Assistant, Caroline Werkeley. The Friends purchased the dollhouse and its furniture and presented them to the Heritage Room of the Lincoln City Libraries where it is now on display. It was made available to the Friends on this special occasion.

Papers were read there under the trees by this year's co-winners of the Loren Eiseley Memorial Scholarship presented by the Nebraska Academy of Science. Introduced by Dr. Schultz, Executive Director of the Academy, the winners were Lynn Lu of East High School in Lincoln and Michael Christofferson of Hastings Senior High School. Lynn's paper, "Beauty and Beast" was read by her mother as she was already in residence at Radcliffe College. Michael's paper, "Interpretation of Man's Relation to the Environment" was read by him. These papers will be published in the Proceedings of the Academy.

Afterwards, as is our custom, the Friends shared favorite quotations from Eiseley.

Our thanks go to Caroline Werkeley who gave the dollhouse to Eiseley, to Marian Schultz whose generosity enabled us to purchase it, and to both Burt and Marian for sharing their home with us.

Sherrill Daniels



WHAT'S GOING ON IN MY DOLL HOUSE?

By Caroline E. Werkeley

So far as I know, the Victorian doll house which sits in my living room is not haunted. The turreted, white gingerbread-trimmed, bay-windowed mansion with Gothic details was fashioned by a master craftsman from a photograph of a real domicile romantically called The Pink House that was built in New York state in 1868, and that is still inhabited.

A gentle looking little lady sits in a rocking chair in the study before a fireplace complete with brass andirons, bellows, and logs. A table with a plant blooms in the front bay window and a cat looks out curiously at the world. Up to the present time the small lady has never been troublesome. If she ever rises from her chair when I am asleep and goes up the doll house stairs to lie in the white canopied bed that is a copy of my own, I am not aware of it. I have recently read an unsettling ghost story, however, written by a well-known English author for publication in a miniature book in the library of the Doll House of the late Queen Mary of England, and later reprinted in a volume for people. In this story all sorts of strange and terrible things happen in the doll house. An old gentleman is murdered for his money by his daughter and son-in-law, then his spirit returns and vengefully murders their children.

Sometimes I look uneasily inside my gracious doll house and wonder if dreadful things are going on in it when I am not looking. Once I found that a grandfather clock had fallen to the floor, but I did not think that too strange. Doll house furniture is fragile and easily knocked over. Nevertheless, perhaps there was a sinister meaning to this incident which I will never learn.

At the same time that I bought the little lady I purchased a man doll and two doll children, but I never place them inside the mansion. Does the lady grow restless, I wonder, sitting alone in the parlor, always ready for teatime and nobody with whom to share chit-chat?

(Continued on page five)



Eiseley doll house at home in library

By Patty Beutler
of *The Lincoln Star*

In his poem, "The Doll House," Lincoln native Loren Eiseley wonders who will care for the house after he is gone.

He need not have worried.

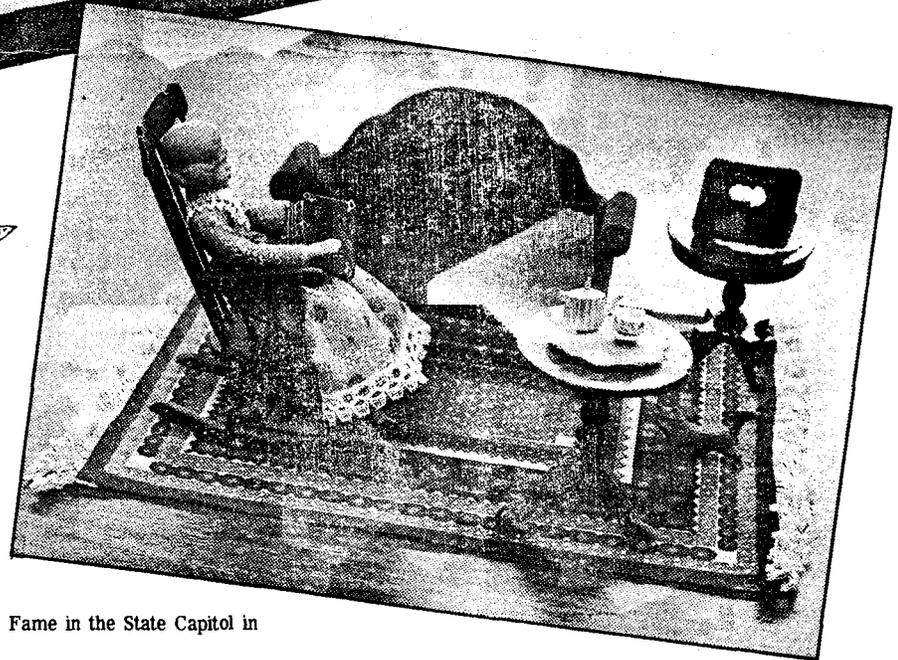
The pink and white Victorian manse about which he writes is at home in the Heritage Room on the third floor of the Bennett Martin Library, 14th and N streets.

A gift to the library from the Friends of Loren Eiseley, the intricately carved house with all its miniature furnishings rests not far from the shelves that hold Eiseley's books in the room reserved for Nebraska authors.

The Friends group purchased the doll house from Caroline Werkley, Eiseley's longtime research assistant at the University of Pennsylvania. It was returned to Werkley by Eiseley's wife, Mabel, after Eiseley's death.

Eiseley died in 1977, the same year "The Dollhouse" was published in his book of poetry, "Another Kind of Autumn."

A man of many callings, among them poet, anthropologist, naturalist, philosopher and eloquent interpreter of science, Eiseley was named to the



Nebraska Hall of Fame in the State Capitol in 1986.

According to Werkley's notes stashed among the boxes of tiny furnishings, the dollhouse is the handiwork of John Beury of Pennsylvania. Beury crafted the Victorian house in 1975 as a gift from Werkley to Eiseley. It cost \$500 at the time. The house features woodstained floors, an ornate staircase, four built-in fireplaces, glass windowpanes and metal hardware.

Werkley wrote in a 1979 article that the "turreted, white gingerbread-trimmed, bay-windowed mansion with Gothic details" was fashioned from a photograph of a real place, The Pink House, which was built in New York state in 1868 and was still inhabited at that time.

According to one writer, a friend asked Eiseley if there should not be a tiny man doll in the house of his poem. No, he is said to have replied, because he planned to enter it himself one day and take tea before the fireplace.

The Friends of Eiseley purchased the dollhouse in the spring of 1988 and unveiled it with all the furnishings in place at a Friends meeting this month.

The house may be seen in the Heritage Room during open hours, Tuesday through Friday, 12:30 p.m. to 3 p.m. The room is closed Saturday through Monday.

THE DOLL HOUSE

by Loren Eiseley

Given to me long ago by a master carpenter now dead
the old Victorian house sits on a table in my study.
There are bookcases in the living room and a lovely small lady
rocks in an equally small chair, before the fireplace.
A cat drowns on the rug, a clock holds tea-time forever.

I have seen out many winters in storms and leaves falling,
seen trees topple, brawled with my kind in the world
but now
the old house seems my only possession, the books my books,
and I peer
through the bay window at the ageless lady and wish to tap
on the glass.

I have waited too long. I cannot enter that serenity,
cannot reduce to the proper size, nor stroke the cat,
The master carpenter
in irony saw what would happen to me in the years coming.

The front doors fit perfectly, they can be opened,
but to what avail?
The lady will not arise; the clock will never pass tea-time
even though moonlight falls on the floor.
I touch with an aging finger
what I will never possess. When I am gone who will
care for the house,
the library, or the clock set for tea-time? Who will protect
the drowsing cat by the fireplace? Who will whisper
brokenly
to the ageless lady: I love you, but I waited too long.
I grew up.

Does a grown man draw inward and become
the little clockwork figure he would wish to be?
Bow to the ageless lady,
pour the tea and say
"We are alone. The front door is closed forever.
I have just come in.
There is no outside.
I have abolished it."

*reprinted from Another Kind of Autumn (Charles Scribners Sons),
1977, with permission.*

I expect I would. If I had put the rest of the family in the house, however, I know full well that there might have been a terrible commotion. The children would romp about boisterously and sometimes cry and howl, and they might break some of the Victorian bric-a-brac; the father would possibly, on occasion, lose his temper or decide to start on a house project in the middle of what is my night. I do not think doll house inhabitants live by people time.

The little lady has, I am sure, long since finished reading the book lying beside her on the table. Also, she has probably drunk so many cups of tea before the fire that she cannot stand the thought of any more Lapsand Suchong or Jasmine or Formosa Oolong or simply supermarket tea.

One thing that might trouble the family if all the members did live in the dollhouse is that the house is not fully furnished. The study where the lady sits has rows of bookshelves, but only half a dozen books. The living room is decorated with a solitary red velvet sofa and nothing else. The master bedroom has, in addition to the above-mentioned canopy bed, a pretty red velvet photograph album, a dainty desk, real candles on the mantel piece, and a journal in which the lady can write her memoirs--("I sit all day in a rocking chair in a study. I'm getting mighty tired of this.") There are no beds for the children. Would they be content to lie on blankets or sleeping bags in the other bedroom? Worse of all, there is no kitchen and no bathroom.

The master craftsman who created the doll house was more interested in the exterior than the interior. The balconies outside of windows and doors are exact copies of those in the famous Pink House. A turret topping the mansion looks very romantic. One could peer from it and see every pretty garden in Moberly. There is real glass in all the windows, but no pails, no cloths so that the little lady could wash them, should dust cloud the view. And anyway there is no plumbing and no cleaning clothes in the little lady's closet. In fact, there are no closets.

Sometimes I think I hear the sound of tiny voices but this could be only mice. I am sure the lady never stirs, that she is happy in her zombie-like state, safe in her chair in the study. (Strangely enough, however, when I once checked the box where the man and children were supposed to be, it was empty.) I hope the little lady never finds out that her house is a replica of a real house that has all the conveniences. I do not want to be confronted some midnight by a small female demanding a kitchen, a bathroom, more beds, clothes, and complete furnishings. Building is more expensive, even for a doll house.

However, to be on the safe side, I suppose I had better complete the furnishing of the doll house so that trouble will never occur. I should at least add a kitchen and a bathroom, get in a supply of cat food for the cat who stares out of the window before he scratches me, have dog food on hand for the pretty collie, plan a housewarming party for the lady--and for her husband and her children, since they must be somewhere in the Pink House--and serve punch and cookies. Then perhaps I will stop being haunted by little figures and will be sure that no frustrated small creature takes over my rocking chair and my books, throws her memoirs in my lap, and angrily dumps my own cup of Formosa Oolong tea over my head.

IS YOUR MEMBERSHIP UP TO DATE?

Our fiscal year begins in January at which time we will be soliciting dues payment. If you would like to jump the gun, \$5.00 will keep you on the mailing list for a year and include a subscription to The Caravan. You can be a contributing member for \$25.00, a supporting member for \$50.00, and a patron for \$100.00.

Dues paid after September 1, 1989 will also cover all of 1990.

Send your checks to Friends of Loren Eiseley, P.O. Box 80934, Lincoln, Nebraska 68501-0934.

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P.O. Box 80934
Lincoln, NE 68501-0934

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