

THE CARAVAN

NEWSLETTER OF THE FRIENDS OF LOREN EISELEY

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Loren Corey Eiseley
September 3, 1907 - July 9, 1977

"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."

-- *The Immense Journey*

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

I teach Interpersonal Communication to baccalaureate students. I ask them to write a "reactionaire" to selected writings, one of which is from Eiseley's Innocent Fox. I am always thrilled at the reactions, as ---

"Into one's life events happen that are not of the norm. Roles are forgotten and true joy, fear or pain come forward. The anthropologist and the fox were given a wonderful treat in that each could shed his skin for a small moment in time and share the joy of being part of the world. The whole incident took on a surreal aspect and the fog helped create the mood. It almost makes one question whether or not the anthropologist dreamed the whole thing..."

Eiseley has the quality of inspiring wonderment. We, the members of the Friends, can help perpetuate that sense of wonder by sponsoring a student (college or high school) of your choosing for a year's membership in the Friends. In that way we can support young people in balancing the heavy technology they experience, at the same time we ensure a legacy for Eiseley. That membership, in addition to your own dues will be a total of twenty dollars. Then it will be up to us to sponsor events that will make being a member important enough to perpetuate on their own --- sort of a "Legacy Unlimited".

Sincerely,

Jane Stillwell Smith, President

LOREN EISELEY'S RUSSIAN DEBUT

Dr. Dimitri N. Breschinsky is a long time member of the Friends of Loren Eiseley and is the professor of Russian Literature at Purdue University. For a number of years he has been transplanting the Eiseley essays into Russian for publication in Russian periodicals. We are very pleased to be able to present the following article on his work and his plans for the future.

LOREN EISELEY'S RUSSIAN DEBUT¹

By Dimitri N. Breschinsky

A great deal of contemporary American literature has been translated into Russian -- much more than the other way around. Thanks to a well-organized and highly professional translating industry that had been operating in the former Soviet Union for years, Russian readers are well acquainted with the works of such diverse writers as John Updike and Arthur Hailey (the latter's *Airport* was also a *Russian* best seller), but until recently Loren Eiseley was not among them.

For some time now I have been translating my favorite Eiseley pieces into Russian (I am a Russian-English bilingual and teach Russian literature at Purdue University). What began as a desire to share the writer with a few Russian friends has grown into an all-out effort, supported by a grant from Purdue, to introduce him to the Russian-speaking world. To date, nine Eiseley works have appeared in Russian periodicals in my translation, most recently in the literary journal *Lepta (Offerings)*. They include "The Flow of the River" (from *The Immense Journey*, 1957), "The Star Thrower" (from *The Unexpected Universe*, 1969), and "The Gold Wheel" (from the autobiographical *Night Country*, 1971). The fact that these translations originated abroad has not been, in the era of *glasnost* and geopolitical disintegration, an impediment to their publication.

My ultimate goal is to publish in Russia a representative collection, annotated and with a critical introduction, of Eiseley's essays and short stories. From the start, I envisioned it -- never mind the language -- as an answer to

Gerber's and McFadden's call to produce a volume "of Eiseley's finest essays," excluding all that is dated, overly sentimental or bombastic and thus "allowing the full measure of his achievement...to be appreciated."² The volume, which is virtually complete and in the process of being negotiated with a publisher, consists of three sections, each containing four essays-cum-short stories, namely:

I. MAN

- 1) The Gold Wheel
- 2) The Places Below
- 3) The Rat That Danced
- 4) The Palmist

II. LIFE

- 5) The Flow of the River
- 6) The Bird and the Machine
- 7) The Judgement of the Birds
- 8) The Brown Wasps

III. EVOLUTION

- 9) [The Comet]³
- 10) The Last Neanderthal
- 11) The Coming of the Giant Wasps
- 12) The Star Thrower

Section I is largely autobiographical; section II, for the most part, concerns the miracle of life; section III -- the most theoretical of all -- contains speculation as to the significance of evolution and man's place in the Universe. There is a clear progression here from the simple to the complex and, within each section, from an optimistic view of life to a pessimistic one. The book, however, does end with the cautiously upbeat "Star Thrower," which has been called Eiseley's "seminal" essay.⁴ I have titled the collection *Wingbeat (Vzmakh kryla)*, a reference to both Eiseley's use of bird imagery and the soaring quality of his prose.⁵ In Russian as in English, Loren Eiseley is a stylist *par excellence*.

Matters of content and organization aside, there is the question of possible interest here, as to how I actually do my translations. Let me say immediately that translating Eiseley is not the same as translating the published results of recent research in lipid oxidation. Nor is it anything like the simultaneous interpreting that I occasionally

do for the U.S. Department of State. In a very real sense, the translator, working in the medium of another language with its own set of associations, of which the author is totally unaware, becomes a co-creator of the translated work, though admittedly a dependent one. That is to say, the process is not at all mechanical, recent advances in computer translating technology notwithstanding. Some translators, who insist on the scholarliness of their work, assert that a translation is a kind of running commentary in another language on the original (and Tolstoy did say that to explain what *War and Peace* is all about he would have to rewrite the entire novel). While there is a degree of truth in that, I prefer to think of artistic translation as a compromise between a genuine knowledge of both cultures involved -- the performer of a musical composition or choreographed ballet does not share that intellectual burden -- and the fortissimos and pirouettes of the performing artist, for a translator is that, too, his score being the written text.

All my translations go through three distinct stages. First, I do a quick literal transposition from one language into the other, indicating along the way as many variants as come to mind. Here there is almost a one-to-one correspondence between text and meaning, and consequently the translation sounds very much like, well, a translation. It is flat and lifeless. Then I surround myself with reference works and begin the laborious and time-consuming task of finding the best variant to fit the given context. At this point, the translation begins to take on body and shape. Dictionaries are a glory; they represent years of attempts to establish correspondences, known and new, between languages, but they are limited in scope and need to be transcended. Finally, then, I put all the reference works back on the shelf, set the original aside, and listen to what I have produced from the standpoint of a critical reader. This is where the fortissimos and the pirouettes come in. The objective in this final stage is to make the work sound as though Eiseley's native language were Russian. Not only meaning is important here, but the lilt and flow of the words, the cadence of the lines, the particular associations that are peculiarly Russian. Slowly, painfully, joyously, Eiseley, who was born in Nebraska of pioneer German stock, becomes

Russian. And in that metamorphosis, it is my firm belief, he loses nothing.

It is too early to speculate how Eiseley will ultimately be received in Russia. It would be nice to think that his works, which so eloquently emphasize man's capacity for compassion, would have a humanizing effect in a country emerging from a seventy-year experiment in utopia. Unfortunately, in a situation where food is scarce and the politics overpowering, people have little interest in niceties of style or ultimate questions; jeans, jazz and junk food⁶ are the order of the day. For this reason, and also because the genre of essay is virtually unknown in Russia, I strongly suspect that my Russian Eiseley will not become a best seller anytime soon. He will just have to wait for his turn -- until great literature is once again a national obsession.

-- Purdue University

¹This is a revised and expanded version of an article published in *The American Nature Writing Newsletter* (Fall 1992).

²Leslie E. Gerber and Margaret McFadden, *Loren Eiseley* (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1983), P. 158.

³The first part of the essay "The Star Dragon" (from *The Invisible Pyramid*, 1970). It is untitled in the original.

⁴Michael Peter Cohen, "The Leap: Loren Eiseley's Uses of Life," *North Dakota Quarterly*, 59, No. 2 (1991), 206.

⁵The term is actually used in the essay "The Bird and the Machine": "In the next second after that long minute [the sparrow hawk] was gone. Like a flicker of light, he vanished with my eyes full on him, but without actually seeing a premonitory wing beat" (Loren Eiseley, *The Immense Journey* [Random House, 1957], p. 191; italics mine). The quotation serves as an epigram of the collection.

⁶It is by now an old joke that the lines in front of Moscow's only McDonald's restaurant are longer than those in front of Lenin's mausoleum.

**THE LOREN EISELEY AWARD
PRESENTED AT
CLARKSON COLLEGE**

Annually Clarkson College in Omaha presents the Loren Eiseley Award to a person whose teaching and writing are characterized by that combination of science and humanism exemplified in this work.

On April 23rd two such awards were made as part of Clarkson's Conference on Education for the Future. The first went to Dr. Thomas Bragg of the Department of Biology of the University of Nebraska-Omaha where he has taught for 19 years. His specialty is prairie maintenance, preservation and restoration with interdependence of biology and society. He is the author of numerous research papers and a frequent consultant on prairie management. In his absence the award was accepted by Dr. David Sutherland of the UNO Department of Biology.

A second award was presented to Naomi Brill, Professor Emeritus of the University of Nebraska. Her teaching and publications in the area of both human service in nature writing are characterized by the combination of science and humanism implicit in Eiseley's work.

These awards were presented by Jean Stillwell Smith, President of the Friends of Loren Eiseley.

**PROPOSED EISELEY PUBLIC
TELEVISION PROGRAM**

Christine Lesiak of Nebraska Public Television reports that research is underway on the proposed documentary on the life and work of Loren Eiseley. A research grant from the station has enabled her to talk with Gale Christianson, Eiseley biographer; Jim Hahn, Eiseley's nephew; and to visit the Memorial Room at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia. She has also consulted local authorities and visited local sites.

Presently grant requests are being written to cover the cost of the program for which a script will be prepared -- it is planned to be an hour long.

This has been a long time project of the Friends and we hope that this means it is near fruition.

**A CELEBRATION OF THE 150TH
ANNIVERSARY OF AUDUBON'S 1843
MISSOURI RIVER EXPEDITION**

The month of May marks a very special anniversary. Just 150 years ago, John James Audubon and his traveling companion, Edward Harris, sailed on the Steamship Omeda some 1600 miles up the Missouri River from St. Louis all the way to the Montana-North Dakota border. At this time, Audubon was 58 and had already spent nearly 40 years wandering through North America observing, sketching and writing. This trip fulfilled a long standing objective to explore the Missouri River Valley to observe its wild life, plants and Indians before the regions succumbed to settlement.

His artistry and his journals preserve for us the natural setting of the river and the great diversity of wild life as he found it in 1843. He would have seen flocks of California parakeet and passenger pigeons and wolves, bears, bison and elk, all of which were so common at that time. While he had with him copies of the journals of Lewis and Clark from their trip of 40 years before, he and Harris both recorded their observations in detailed journals which describe the situation of the region just before that period when the great western trails began to carry so many people into and through the region and which, as we know it, changed it for all time.

To mark the 150th anniversary of Audubon's journey, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Friends of the Libraries will host a weekend-long celebration of his life, work and legacy of Audubon as artist and naturalist. There will be a special Audubon art exhibit in the Center for Great Plains Studies Gallery of Western American Art in the University library. Special guests during this time will include two descendants of Audubon. The program will feature talks by art experts and historians and two tours to Omaha to view Audubon's art in the museum there and the Fontenelle Forest area which we know he visited.

We are pleased that the Eiseley Friends are able to participate as one of the co-sponsors and that our Naomi Brill will be one of the featured speakers. The full program is reprinted on the opposite page and we hope that you will be able to share with us in this exciting activity.

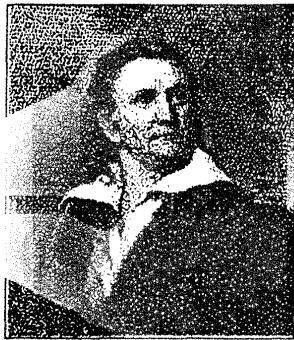
A CELEBRATION OF THE
150TH ANNIVERSARY OF

J. J. Audubon

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*A Celebration of the 150th Anniversary of
John James Audubon's 1843 Missouri River Expedition*

A Schedule of Events:

Mini-symposium begins

Lincoln

Love Library, 2nd Floor
Introduction and welcome by John Wunder, Director,
Center for Great Plains Studies

Gary Moulton, historian: 2:30 p.m.
"Trailing Lewis and Clark up the Missouri River with
Audubon."

Jon Nelson, art historian: 3:00 p.m.
"The materials and techniques of nineteenth century
scientific illustration."

James Rawley, historian: 3:30 p.m.
"Audubon's America, 1804-1851, his opportunities
in painting, writing, and publishing and his
contributions to art, ornithology, and conservation."
15 minute break.

Naomi Brill, naturalist and writer: 4:15 p.m.
"Audubon's mammals: where are they now?"

Mary Tyler Winters, 4:45 p.m.
Scholar and great, great grand-daughter of John James
Audubon: "The provenance and attributions of the
Audubon oil paintings."
Dinner Break.

Paul Johnsgard, ornithologist: 7:30 p.m.
"John James Audubon-his influence on American
ornithology and on bird art."

Lucy Winters Durkin: 8:15 p.m.
"History of the histories of Audubon."

Final acknowledgements 9:00 p.m.
Kent Hendrickson, Dean of Libraries, UN-L

Reception & Auction - Love Library, 2nd Floor
Auctioneer — Jim McKee selling an Original
Audubon Folio, Octavo Prints, Natural History Books,
and Other Art Works.

Sunday, May 16, 1993 5:30 a.m.
Bird and animal field trip, led by members of the
Wachiska Audubon Society of Lincoln and the
Audubon Naturalists Club.

*Audubon Print sale lasts for two more weeks
as a benefit for the Friends of the Libraries.*
Stephen Buhler • Michael Hare • Gretchen Holten • Rob McMaster • Jon Nelson • Jim Rosowski • Eva Sartori

THE LOREN EISELEY MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP

Annually the Nebraska Academy of Science presents the Loren Eiseley Memorial Scholarship to the high school senior writing the best essay on the importance of the writings of Eiseley. The latest was awarded April 10, 1992 to Jonathan Ebmeier, of Laurel, Nebraska. We reprint it here in full.

MAN'S RELATIONSHIP TO THE ENVIRONMENT

How closely is man related to the environment? Is it just physical, or does it extend to emotions also? Loren Eiseley stated that as our knowledge of the environment increases, more doorways open for us to understand nature. We live in a world where both the environment and man are interrelated: we both depend on each other for the continuance of each system, each system has to continually regenerate themselves to stay alive, and both contain emotions of gentle love to fierce destruction.

With the environment constantly changing, man has learned to adapt to the changes, or to manipulate the environment to fit our needs. Although nature does not require the human race any more than it needs the animal kingdom, man has aided that environment when nature has brought certain species to the brink of extinction. The interrelation that has formed has worked for centuries, allowing life to continue in both systems.

Regeneration is a natural part of both systems; birth, life, and death all occur so man and environment can continue. Regeneration occurs not only on the generation level, but also on the smaller scale of the biochemical level and the greater scale of the evolutionary level. Animals, including humans, have to consume food to stay alive; while plants constantly take in carbon dioxide and water to produce glucose and oxygen for themselves and the animal kingdom. The natural function of cells also continues with dying and others completing mitosis to bring new cells into existence, allowing the organism to survive. Although I do not believe in evolution as the creation of the universe, Eiseley never gave the

feeling that evolution was the only possible way that the universe was created. He spoke of plants and animals evolving so they could survive, even to the point of surviving great natural disasters. Since not all species can survive every disaster, the environment continues to evolve to replace that species that were lost or have become extinct. For example, with the destruction of the dinosaurs, mammals have evolved to fill the gap.

With both systems being created in the same method, whether evolution or creation, the same emotions appear in both the human race and the environment. We live in a world where there is an immense amount of love and caring, yet both man and the environment are capable of tremendous destruction. In "The Immense Journey", Eiseley spoke of a time when he had to capture a sparrow hawk for the zoo. When he grabbed the male, it sacrificed itself so his mate could escape. This emotion not only exists in the environment, but in the human race which is demonstrated daily by people all over the world. Even with this caring attribute, both man and his environment have demonstrated that power of destruction. Man continues to destroy the environment slowly by cutting down the rain forests to shooting elephants in Africa, but we also contain the power to destroy it rather quickly with the current arsenal of nuclear weapons. The environment also demonstrates its power daily with storms such as tornadoes or hurricanes. The animal kingdom also possesses the power to kill and destroy, in animals from the lions down to snakes.

With the interrelation between the environment and man continuing, you can ensure the continuation of both. Although the physical relation is rather easy to see with both systems depending on each other to stay alive, the emotional level also exists with both showing the love, care, and sacrifice that is required for the entire world to continue evolving.

(Jonathan is now attending Nebraska Wesleyan University in Lincoln.)

NEW PLAQUE AND PEDESTAL FOR EISELEY BUST

Contributions for the new plaque for the Eiseley Bust in the Nebraska State Capitol are being received and greatly appreciated. The total cost, \$300, needed to produce one comparable to those of the other members in the Hall of Fame, has not been completely realized. If you have not yet contributed and wish to do so, send checks earmarked for this fund to Friends of Loren Eiseley, P.O. Box 80934, Lincoln, NE 68501-0934.

PLEASE NOTE

This is your newsletter and we want it to meet your needs. Comments, criticisms, suggestions, and article submissions are always welcome. Let us hear from you -- Naomi Brill, 4625 South St., Lincoln, NE 68506.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

The Third Annual Nebraska Literature Festival will be held on the campus of the University of Nebraska--Lincoln on September 18. At that time, the Friends will be offering a tour of the sites associated with Eiseley's early life in Lincoln. Further announcement will be forthcoming in the summer.

LOREN EISELEY



and The Nebraska Center
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DUES REMINDER

1993 dues are now being received and appreciated. Remember, if you paid after September 1, 1992 you are considered paid up for all of 1993. Please note that dues for individual members have been raised to \$10.00 per year -- other categories remain the same.

The dues structure is as follows:

Individual member - \$10.00
Contributing member - \$25.00
Supporting member - \$50.00
Patron - \$100.00

Send checks to: Friends of Loren Eiseley
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