

THE CARAVAN

NEWSLETTER OF THE FRIENDS OF LOREN EISELEY

Vol. 7, No. 3

Fall 1993



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

Dear Members,

We are approaching a very busy season with the Third Nebraska Literature Festival on September 18th and the Eiseley Dinner Meeting on October 24th. Details on both of these events are given elsewhere in this newsletter.

We hope that as many of you as possible will attend the Eiseley events at the Festival and will plan to come to the Dinner Meeting on October 24th. Then I would like to talk with you about a special project I am undertaking that will need your help.

Be sure to make your dinner reservation by October 21st.

Sincerely,

Jane Stillwell Smith, President

PLATTE RIVER ATLAS

The Platte River: An Atlas of the Big Bend Region has just been published by the University of Nebraska at Kearney. UNK faculty and students in 31 articles tell us of the history, culture and natural environment that has evolved along the portion of the ancient river that flows through south-central Nebraska. Scientific articles on subjects such as the topography, geology and biology of the region are combined with history, literature and poetry. The book is embellished with art, color photographs, maps, charts and species lists. The senior editor, Allan Jenkins, is an associate professor of Economics at UNK.

We are pleased that Loren Eiseley was represented in the book through a beautiful essay written by Julie Flood. We are grateful for the permission of the author and the publishers to present her essay and thereby to give you a preview of this fine new book. Julie recently received her master's degree from UNK and is instructing there in the English Department. She was a student of Susanne George, who is an associate editor of the book, a FOLE member and the one who told us about this in the first place. Susanne also provided the leadership for the highly successful Literature Festival which was held at the University in Kearney a year ago.

Loren Eiseley and the Flow of the River by Julie B. Flood

The separation of science and art has long been touted as the triumph of rational thinking over muddy sentiment. A scientist wrote in clear, objective scientific style and an artist emoted. The two shared only a mutual disdain and a deep distrust of the other's motives. This distinction looked to be lasting until the advent of a peculiar man . . . one who saw the rational world of science with the evocative eyes of a poet. Loren Eiseley was a scientist by trade, who found that rational thinking need not be written in the straight lines of prose; that pure fact would soar when recounted with powerful vision.

Nebraska-born, Eiseley became a world renowned anthropologist who taught at the University of Kansas and was head of the Departments of Anthropology at Oberlin College in Ohio and the University of Pennsylvania. He lectured at many universities, including Harvard, Columbia, and the Univer-

sity of California. He wrote for many periodicals and his range allowed him to be published by such varied publications as Scientific American and Harper's. The search for early postglacial man allowed him to travel and observe throughout the high plains. When Dr. Eiseley died in 1977, he was Benjamin Franklin and University Professor of History and Science at the University of Pennsylvania.

Throughout this distinguished academic career, he never lost that sense of nature-ness which seems to mark the true Nebraska native. To Eiseley, humankind and Nature were entwined from creation, for humans were only a projection of Nature, a part of it, and not as far removed from the primal beginnings of all life as we sometimes smugly believe. We all came from the same water as the protozoa; the channel catfish is a long distant cousin. "The truth is," Eiseley says, "that we are all potential fossils still carrying within our bodies the crudities of former existences, the marks of a world in which living creatures flow with little more consistency than clouds from age to age." (Immense Journey)

Eiseley's element, one could say, was water. He begins his essay on the Platte River by stating, quite simply, "If there is magic on this planet, it is contained in water." To Eiseley, water is the life force of the planet; it is the precursor to blood, to birth . . . all life is nurtured in a womb of water. He says:

Its substance reaches everywhere; it touches the past and prepares the future; it moves under the poles and wanders thinly in the heights of air. It can assume forms of exquisite perfection in a snowflake, or strip the living to a single shining bone cast up by the sea.

Eiseley returned to his element one summer afternoon, when he obeyed a vague yet powerful yearning to float on the Platte, to become, for a moment -- or an eon -- one with the flow of the river.

He lay back on the water and, "For an instant, as I bobbed into the main channel, I had the sensation of sliding down the vast tilted face of the continent." He had become a part of the great Platte, no more and no less than any other creation of this earth.

Moving with me, leaving its taste upon my mouth and spouting under me in dancing springs of sand, was the immense body of the continent itself, flowing like the river was flowing, grain by grain, mountain by mountain, down to the sea. I was streaming over ancient sea beds thrust aloft where giant reptiles had once sported; I was wearing down the face of time and trundling cloud-wreathed ranges into oblivion.

In this journey, he was reborn in the manner of all life, "streaming," he said, "through the hot and working ferment of the sun." He was water, and all the living things which belong to water. He came to define himself with the definition of the turtles and fish and frogs as "watery projections, concentrations -- as man himself is a concentration -- of that indescribable and liquid brew which is composed in varying proportions of salt and sun and time."

As Eiseley experienced rebirth, he also experienced the ultimate rejection as time, in the guise of the river, rejected the finite; Eiseley found himself deposited, along with the driftwood, on a sandbar. He was forced to leave his "mother element" and stand upright.

It is somehow fitting that Eiseley would encounter his water-born other self in and on the waters of the Platte. This river, which rises in the high plains of Colorado, washes the Wildcat Hills and the strange butte castles of Nebraska's west, wanders between the islands of the center and then past the cities to the east, is itself a concentration of time and of history. It has borne bodies of creatures long abandoned by nature and the present body of Eiseley. This river, too, is the work of nature, and the very stuff of life. It is liquid time, and the Platte could say, as Eiseley did, "Forward and backward I have gone, and for me it has been an immense journey."

Loren Eiseley, scientist and mystic; a man of clear and intense vision who, like the river which granted him other sight, weaves the disparate threads of art and science into one sinuous running tapestry. Humankind and river all caught in the streams of time:

Perhaps there is no meaning to it all, the thought went on inside me, save that of

the journey itself, so far as men can see. It has altered with the chances of life, and the chances brought us here; but it was a good journey -- long, perhaps -- but a good journey under a pleasant sun. Do not look for the purpose. Think of the way we came and be a little proud.

The Third Nebraska Literature Festival Comes to Lincoln

Everyone is invited to the Third Annual Nebraska Literature Festival which will be held in the Student Union on the Campus of the University of Nebraska in Lincoln on September 18. We will again have a High School Day on the day preceding the festival, and on the evening of the 17th there will be a Festival Benefit held in the gallery of the Great Plains Art Collection which is located on the second floor of Love Library. The full schedule for the festival is shown on the center pages of this newsletter.

The Friends of Loren Eiseley will have a table in the Book Fair, and we are hosting two sessions. The first of these will be held at 9:00 AM in Morrill Hall, the University of Nebraska State Museum, which you will find just north of the Student Union. This will feature an illustrated lecture by Dr. Mike Voorhies, "Hunting Fossils in the Wildcat Hills; Loren Eiseley's Night Country." Mike is a member of our Board and he is the Curator of Vertebrate Paleontology at the University of Nebraska State Museum. At 3:00 we will host the "Tour of Eiseley's Lincoln," which will be conducted by Kira Gale and Darrell Berg. There is a \$5.00 fee for the tour which will pay for the transportation.

We are proud of the program the committee has developed for the festival this year, and we do invite you to participate in what is going to be an exciting day.

SPECIAL FESTIVAL BENEFIT

"Across the Sandhills"—Poems by Roy Scheele with Music by Randall Snyder: Margaret

SCHEDULE of EVENTS for

9:00-9:50 a.m.	Hunting Fossils in the Wildcat Hills: Loren Eiseley's <i>Night Country</i> Michael Voorhies	New Directions with Wright Morris Joe Wydeven, Fran Kaye, Barbara Allen-Langdon, Jerrine McCaffrey	Literature of the Overland Trail Daniel Ross, Will Locke, Charles Martin
10:00-10:50 a.m.	Bess Streeter Aldrich as Romantic Realist Carol Miles Petersen	The Pleasures of Reading-Circles Barbara Lefler, Elaine Booth, June Levine, Ruth Strassler	Multiple Cultures in Nebraska Literature Paul Olson & others
11:00-11:50 a.m.	The Forces That Shaped John G. Neihardt's Philosophy Hilda Neihardt	Literary Treasures in Special Libraries Anne Billesbach, Lynn Beideck-Porn, Vicki Clark	Take All to Nebraska: The Works of Sophus Keith Winther Connie Schomberg, Keith Knudsen, Alcyone Scott, Pat Trautrimas

12:00 noon **FESTIVAL LUNCHEON** (\$15.00 charge. Pre-registration required) : Speaker—John Janovy, Jr.: "Science for Scientists"

2:00-2:50 p.m.	Sharing the Wisdom: Cherokee Story Telling Eric Jolly	Paul Johnsgard on his Nature Writing Paul Johnsgard	Benjamin Botkin, Folklorist Betty Levitov, Eva Sartori, Steve Robinson
3:00-3:50 p.m.	The Willa Cather/Hartley Burr Alexander Connection Betty Kort	Weldon Kees: A Multimedia Look at his Work Sandra Yannone, Kate Flaherty	CHOOSE ONE: Tour of Eiseley's Lincoln Kira Gale, Darrell Berg Open House at Heritage Room, Bennett Martin Public Library

4:00 p.m. **RECEPTION** at the Nebraska State Capitol—Nebraska Literary Heritage Association

For more information

or to reserve a place at the luncheon
call (402) 472-1808 or (402) 472-3191
or write Nebraska Literature Festival
202 Andrews Hall
University of Nebraska
Lincoln, NE 68588-0333

- *Book Fair in Nebraska Union and Exhibits in Love Library all day Saturday*
- *Registration and most activities will be held in the Nebraska Union on the UNL campus*
- *Festival registration fee is only \$3.00.
Extra charges include Friday Benefit: \$20.00; Saturday Luncheon: \$15.00; and Eiseley tour: \$5.00.*
- *Schedule is subject to change*

for FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 1993

nedey, Soprano; Stephen Krahn, Piano. Great Plains Art Collection, Second Floor East, Love Library.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 1993

<p>Olsen's "Tell Me a Riddle": Story to Film Prothy Dodge Robbins</p>	<p>Poetry Readings Marjorie Saiser, Laura Tohe, Amil Quayle</p>	<p>Open Readings You are invited to read your own writing. Sign up when you arrive.</p>	<p>Workshop Saving Your Family History Cindy Drake 9:00-10:20</p>	<p>Workshop Paperless Books: Electronic Publishing John Gaudreault 9:00-10:20</p>
<p>Film: Olsen's "Tell Me a Riddle" (lasts until 11:50 a.m.)</p>	<p>Fiction Readings Kent Haruf, Kate Flaherty</p>		<p>Workshop Nature Writing Naomi Brill 10:30-11:50</p>	<p>Workshop Writing for Children: Essential Ingredients BethWells 10:30-11:50</p>
<p>Poetry Readings Jennifer Brantley, Frank Chipasula, Don Welch</p>				

Program for Real People

<p>Olsen's Cheyenne Autumn the film by John Ford (discussion and viewing) Hull, Helen Stauffer, Teddy Rising Sun (lasts until 5:15)</p>	<p>Fiction Readings Kurt Klein, Marly Swick</p>	<p>Open Readings You are invited to read your own writing. Sign up when you arrive.</p>	<p>Workshop Screenwriting: The Show and the Business James Devney, Mike Irwin 2:00-3:30</p>	<p>Workshop The Oral Tradition: Bringing Stories to Life Mary Heise 2:00-3:30</p>
<p>Poetry Readings Mary Martha Muck, Eamonn Wall, Greg Kuzma</p>				

The THIRD ANNUAL NEBRASKA LITERATURE FESTIVAL

202 Andrews Hall
University of Nebraska
Lincoln, NE 68588-0333

Editorial Excavations

Friends Gather in October How Fire Makes the Prairie

The Friends of Loren Eiseley will hold its 11th Annual Program in Lincoln on Sunday, October 24th. The featured speaker will be Dr. Thomas Bragg, recipient of the 1993 Loren Eiseley Medal, awarded by Clarkson College. His topic will be "How Fire Makes the Prairie."

Preceding the dinner and evening program, Reverend Darrell Berg will take us on a tour of places associated with Loren Eiseley's childhood memories, family homes and schools in Lincoln. The tour will begin in the Heritage Room of the Bennett Martin Public Library, 136 South 14th Street, at 2:30 P.M.

There will be a social hour and reception at Elephant Hall, University of Nebraska State Museum, 14th and U Streets, from 5:00-6:00. Dinner will take place among the mastodons from 6:00 to 6:45, and will be followed by Dr. Bragg's slide talk in the museum auditorium.

Dinner reservations are \$13.50. Please send checks to Friends of Loren Eiseley, P. O. Box 80934, Lincoln, NE 68501-0934. Deadline for reservations is October 21st. Please call 435-5454 in Lincoln or 558-6737 in Omaha for further information. The public is invited to attend.

Dr. Bragg is a Professor of Biology at the University of Nebraska - Omaha. His specialty is the study of native prairies in the Omaha area, the Sand Hills Niobrara Refuge, and the Loess Bluffs near Sioux City, Iowa, and the effects of fire on them. Loren Eiseley wrote both scientific papers on fire and popular essays including "Man the Firemaker" and "The Fire Apes" which are included in his 1978 book, The Star Thrower.

We are pleased to report that the Nebraska Educational Television Network's projected hourlong feature film devoted to Loren Eiseley is making good progress under the capable guidance of Christine Lesiak. It is still too soon to provide much detail, but we are very pleased with the progress that is being made, and want everyone to know that we really have something to look forward to.

We want to express a special thank you to Allison Peterson, who has given us a fine photograph of the fifth grade class at Aurora, Nebraska from 1917-18. The teacher was her grandmother, Alma Grosshans, and the class included Loren Eiseley. Now all we have to do is figure out which of the youngsters is the young Eiseley. The photo comes from an album that was kept by her grandmother, and Allison had it copied and enlarged for us. Allison has been very active with and is a past president of the Nebraska Literary Heritage Association, which supports the Heritage Room in Lincoln. We are grateful to have this photograph in our collection.

Vicki Clarke and Laura Lacy have fairly well completed their big task of preparing an inventory of the Eiseley material held in the collection of the Heritage Room. In a future newsletter we hope to describe some of the special things in that collection, but for now we want to thank them for their hard work and the special care they have given to conserving and classifying the considerable collection of Eiseley materials they hold.

The last edition of this newsletter featured an essay on translating Eiseley into Russian by Dimitri Brechinsky of Purdue University. Since then we have received a wonderful package from him which included a handsome copy of the Russian literary journal Lepta. This issue features six Eiseley essays he has translated, half of the number which will ultimately appear in the book he told us about in his essay. These appear with an introduction by the translator and an afterword by the Russian writer Iurii Nagibin. We are very grateful to Dimitri for sending this to us, and we will be

placing it with the Eiseley collection in the Heritage Room.

We received the summer 1993 catalog from William Allen, a bookseller of Philadelphia. This shop is only a short walking distance across the river from the University of Pennsylvania campus, and we had the pleasure of talking to Mr. Allen about Eiseley when we were there a couple years ago. The catalog lists several Eiseley items, and with a listing for a copy of Gale Christianson's Fox at the Wood's Edge we find the following sentence: "Eiseley used to love to browse in our store, invariably asking his secretary to phone later for some volume he dimly remembered."

The University of Nebraska Press last year published Nebraska Moments: Glimpses of Nebraska's Past by Donald R. Hickey, and we are just discovering this book. We were pleased to find among the many excellent essays of interest to Nebraskans, a fine biographical sketch of Loren Eiseley, which is printed with a picture presenting a broad view of his University of Pennsylvania office showing him seated at his desk with his treasures spread out on all sides.

We recently spotted a title in the Columbia University Press book sale catalog that caused us to take notice. The title was The Innocent Assassins, and here we thought that one had already been used. So we had to buy the book to see what it was all about, and we found a collection of wonderful essays by Bjorn Kurten who was Professor of Paleontology at the University of Helsinki. The book's title essay does indeed make full reference to Loren Eiseley and his poem, but in doing so there was one other thing that caught our imagination. It names the cat which is the focus of the poem as *Barbourofelis*. We had not realized that the cat in question bore the scientific name of Erwin Barbour, who was the founder of the Nebraska State Museum and who was the friend and mentor of Loren Eiseley. We expect that the more scientific among you have known this all along, but for the rest of us, this is a very nice thing to know. We have learned that the folks at the State Museum had met Kurten at professional meetings and that he had once

visited Lincoln.

We have just received the newsletter from the Joslyn Art Museum in Omaha which tells us that coming in December is a show they are calling "Facing the Past: Nineteenth Century Portraits from the Collection of the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts." It will be nice to remember while we are enjoying this show that Mabel Eiseley was the Assistant Director of the Pennsylvania Academy and that probably many of the pictures we will be seeing could have been added to that collection during her many years of distinguished service.



FOOTNOTE TO AUTUMN

Old boulders in the autumn sun and wind,
Settling a little, leaning toward the light
As if to store its summer -- these remain
The earth's last gesture in the falling night.

This then is age: It is to have been worked
By the forces of frost and the unloosening sun,
It is to bear such markings fine and proud
As speak of weathers that are long since done.

-- The Lost Notebooks of Loren Eiseley, p. 47

DUES REMINDER

1994 dues are now being received and appreciated. Remember, if you paid after September 1, 1993 you are considered paid up for all of 1994.

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

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