

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

This has been a year filled with exciting events. The annual fall meeting certainly qualified as the most exciting with the premiere of Reflections of a Bonehunter. This was a great tribute to Loren Eiseley and his friends and we thank all those associated with it.

Looking ahead we have nominated a strong slate of officers for next year. They are:

President: Kira Gale
Vice President: Barbara Sommer
Secretary/Treasurer: Morrie Tuttle

Committee Chairmen:
Program and Publicity: Barbara Sommer
Social Arrangements: Pat Nefzger
Membership: Jane Smith
Newsletter: Naomi Brill and Morrie Tuttle
External Affairs: Bob Runyon
Ad Hoc: Bing Chen

The nominees will be installed at the January 7th Board Meeting at the Heritage Room of the Bennett Martin Library in Lincoln at 1:00 PM.

Jane Stilwell Smith, President

A SPECIAL CHRISTMAS CARD

We are pleased to include with this issue of the Caravan one of a new edition of postcards produced by the Friends of the University of Nebraska State Museum using the wonderful photographs taken for the special issue of NEBRASKAland Magazine, The Cellars of Time, the story of the paleontology and archeology of the state. The title comes from Eiseley's poem, "The Innocent Assassin" and this card shows the extraordinary fossil which is the subject of that poem, the remains of a 25 million year old cat fight where one animal locked his fang in the leg of another of the same species. Eiseley was with the crew sent out by the museum which found this fossil in the Wildcat Hills of Western Nebraska near Bayard in 1932. Eiseley readers know this poem very well and remember the wonderful drawing of Laszlo Kubinyi showing the dramatic event. However, we believe that except for those who have seen it in the museum exhibit, this is the first time many Eiseley readers have been able to see a picture of the actual fossil. We thank the Friends of the Museum for helping us to make this card available.

EISELEY FRIENDS ENJOY A WORLD PREMIERE

On October 23rd the Friends of Loren Eiseley enjoyed a big day of activities climaxed with a World Premiere showing of the new documentary on the life of Loren Eiseley, Reflections of a Bonehunter.

During the afternoon, Darrel Berg conducted a tour of Eiseley's Lincoln. Gathering in the Heritage Room for some introductory remarks, we went off in caravan to visit the home sites and other places that were a part of young Loren's Eiseley's life.

After a fine dinner in Elephant Hall of the University of Nebraska State Museum, the Friends presented the scholarship award given by the Nebraska Academy of Sciences for the winner of their Eiseley essay contest. The award given to Mark Stone of Laurel, Nebraska, was presented by Mary Liz Jameson the first winner

of this award. The winning essay is entitled "Man's Relation to the Environment."

President Jane Smith then presented the Eiseley Medal to Christine Lesiak, the Producer/Writer of the film we were about to see. Chris is profiled elsewhere in this issue and her article on this project appeared in the Spring 1994 issue of the Caravan.

The main event, the first screening of the television documentary, Reflections of a Bonehunter, was introduced by Ron Hull, Station Manager of the Nebraska Educational Television Network. Doing a television documentary has been discussed for many years and he mentioned many of the people who had been advocates for this project over the years, but perhaps the most moving was the interest expressed by the late actress and Nebraska native Sandy Dennis.

The 60 minute documentary was produced, written and directed by Christine Lesiak. The film is notable for beautiful photography and the Director of Photography was Jim Underwood. Actress Julie Harris provides the narration for the film. The documentary uses archival footage, photographs, artifacts and scenes from Eiseley's life along with interviews with family members, friends and colleagues. But to a large extent the story is told using Eiseley's own words with author Scott Momaday, who himself is an admirer of Loren Eiseley, providing the voice of Eiseley to speak them. Humanities advisors included, Eiseley biographer Gale Christianson, naturalist Naomi Brill and State Museum Paleontologist Michael Voorhies who all appear during the film. Some Nebraskans speaking are Darrel Berg as well as two who were especially close to Eiseley in his formative Nebraska years, Bertrand Schultz and Dorothy Meade. Anthropologists Ward Goodenough, William Davenport and William Tobias tell of Eiseley from the University of Pennsylvania perspective. Others who appear are popular science fiction author Ray Bradbury and Eiseley's nephew Jim Hahn.

After the showing Ron Hull pointed out that such a large project could not have happened without the generous financial support for which he thanked the Nebraska Humanities Council,

The Nebraska Arts Council and Nebraskans for Public Television.

Christine Lesiak answered questions from the audience about the film and it was very clear from the course of the discussion how much the audience had been moved by the showing and how much they appreciated this production.

The first showing on the NETV network was on November 22 and repeated on November 27. Many people have said that they want to be able to purchase a video copy and we are pleased to say that this is possible. Interested persons may contact the address below or phone (800)-228-4630 for more information or to place their order:

Great Plains National
P. O. Box 80669
Lincoln, NE 68501

The prices will be \$25.50 (including tax) for Nebraskans and \$23.95 for persons living in other states and, in addition to these amounts, there will be a postage and handling fee.

MEET CHRISTINE LESIAK

The spotlight was on Christine Lesiak and she was truly the person of the hour. Her magnificent production, Reflections of a Bonehunter is the most important development in the appreciation of Loren Eiseley to occur for many years and is a treasure which will be enjoyed for many more. Because the Eiseley Friends honored her with its Eiseley Medal for her accomplishment, we think you should know a little more about her.

Already familiar with Eiseley's writing she says that her work on this project was a labor of love. She was quoted in an recent interview with the Omaha World Herald as follows:

I think Eiseley was a fascinating and mysterious person, but unlike many documentary subjects he revealed himself in his writings, which were eloquent and a kind of journey of the soul.

Chris grew up in Nebraska graduating from Mercy High School in Omaha and then went on to receive a Master's Degree in Film and Television from the UCLA Department of Theater Arts. She returned to Nebraska after 13 years in California and is currently producer/director for the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Television Cultural Affairs Unit, a producer of documentaries and specials for broadcast on the Nebraska ETV Network. She has been producing and writing television documentaries for 20 years. She wrote, photographed and edited one of NOVA's most popular programs - Edgerton and His Incredible Seeing Machines - about the Nebraska native who invented the strobe light.

White Man's Way her documentary about Nebraska's Genoa Indian School, aired on PBS and continues its success in the European market. Profit the Earth, exploring the connections between economics and the environment, was the second highest rated PBS documentary in April and May of 1990.

She wrote and directed In The White Man's Image, which premiered on the PBS series, The American Experience in February of 1992. It tells the story of government-run boarding schools that attempted to transfer Indian children into "imitation white men" in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Her script was nominated by the Writer's Guild as the outstanding documentary script for 1992.

Her programs have won numerous awards, including the CINE Golden Eagle, Clarion Award, Gold Apple and the Gabriel Award. In the fall of 1993, she was nominated for a National Emmy for In the White Man's Image.

LOREN EISELEY IN RUSSIA

Dimitri Brechinsky was introduced to readers of the Caravan in the Spring '93 issue with his essay: "Loren Eiseley's Russian Debut." Since that time he has given us a copy of the Russian literary magazine, Lepta, in which six of his Eiseley translations were printed. This is now a prized holding in the Heritage Room's collection of translations of Dr. Eiseley's work. Dimitri is a

professor of Russian Literature at Purdue University and we are pleased to hear more of his experiences in bringing Dr. Eiseley to a Russian audience.

How Russian Reforms Changed Loren Eiseley

By Dimitri N. Brechinsky

One of the less remembered and certainly least popular aspects of *perestroika* was Mikhail Gorbchev's antialcohol campaign. Launched in the mid-1980's, it not only created a windfall for bootleggers but also deprived many an honest Russian citizen of the opportunity of toasting his fellows with vodka, champagne or wine on festive occasions. The campaign met with mass opposition and was quietly abandoned several years later, but not before permanent damage had been done: some of the prime vineyards in the verdant valleys of the Caucasus were cut out by zealous aparatchiks.

The antialcohol campaign was pervasive, spilling over even into the literary realm, where I had been taking my first tentative steps as a translator of Loren Eiseley (he had been completely overlooked by the Soviet literary establishment). The following is but a minor example of what can - and did - occur when artistic truth comes into open conflict with political reality.

My first translations, "The Flow of the River" and "The Palmist," appeared in 1988 in the Moscow youth magazine *Smena* (*The Rising Generation*). Except for an unfortunate misprint in the former that completely altered the meaning of a passage (*osmos* 'osmosis' became *kosmos* 'the cosmos'), it remained virtually unchanged. It is to the latter essay that the watchdogs of Soviet political correctness directed their baleful and sober gaze.

It will be recalled that in "The Palmist" (from Eiseley's autobiographical collection *All the Strange Hours: The Excavation of a Life*, 1975) the hero is on the island of Barbados attending a professional conference. He has an encounter with fate that had been predicted by a palmist, is obsessed with dire memories of a troubled past, recalls playing dice with the Universe as a child, and at the very end of the story goes to a bar to have a drink. The final paragraph reads:

In the all-night bar at the corner I asked for a shot glass of bourbon. When the bar-keeper had turned, I made a faint gesture to the face before me in the mirror. "To whatever I won with the dice in childhood," I murmured. "And to the last cast." As I sipped, the old expected tremor in my hands was stilled. The palmist was gone.

The alert reader has surely anticipated what I am about to say.

Bourbon in Russian is a cognate, *burbon*, and a shot glass is *stopka*: my translation was faithful to the original. However, these words do not appear in the published version. The censor had deleted them, replacing the clause "I asked for a shot glass of bourbon" ("*ia zakazal stopku burbona*") with the noncommittal "I placed an order" ("*sdelal ia zakaz*"). As far as the innocent young readers of *Smena* were concerned, the narrator could have been sipping Coca Cola, known in Russian as the American beverage of choice, or perhaps mineral water, but certainly not "Wild Turkey" bourbon whiskey, which Eiseley in fact preferred. Ever since the October Revolution, Soviet censors had toiled tirelessly to ensure that every printed word reflect the current party line, and *perestroika* or no *perestroika*, they were still at it, busy toiling away.

It is thus that Russian reforms changed Loren Eiseley - textually, that is. Fortunately, the change is less permanent than the destruction of the vineyards. Because in the Fall of this year Moscow University Press is bringing out a collection of my Eiseley translations titled, *Vzmakh kryla* (*Wingbeat*) in which the original text has been fully restored - and "osmosis" has again assumed its less than cosmic proportions. So that the youthful readers of *Smena*, who are now some eight years older and presumably somewhat wiser, will be able, if they acquire the collection, to learn the truth.

Purdue University.

TEACHING EISELEY AT UNK

Caravan readers will remember that in our Fall '93 issue we presented Julie Flood's essay, "Loren

Eiseley and the Flow the River," which was reprinted from the The Platte River: An Atlas of the Big Bend Region. Julie was a student of Susanne George at the University of Nebraska at Kearney and Susanne was also an associate editor of that book. Susanne has offered us two more fine essays written by her students, Barbara Weddle and Deb Kershaw, and has made some interesting comments about how she uses the work of Loren Eiseley in her course.

My students read Eiseley's "Flow of the River" in my general studies literature class, English 254: Myths of the American West. The essay is in James C. Work's anthology, Prose and Poetry of the American West, the required text for the course. I usually assign Eiseley near the end of the semester, after the students have honed their skills as readers and many are beginning to see literature as a part of their lives rather than something that they have to endure in order to graduate. As most of them have a special river in their lives, not just the Platte, the setting makes it easy for them to visualize the narrative, to be swept up in the flow of the water and the flow of Eiseley's words. For all of the students, a new awareness of nature and man's place in time surfaces. For some students, the transcendence from the factual to the philosophical, from the physical to the spiritual, becomes a sort of epiphany, as it was for Barbara and Deb. These are the moments that make teaching so rewarding.

The study of Eiseley's works has proved so successful that I intend to teach The Immense Journey next June as one of the four texts in a graduate/undergraduate course in my Plains Institute. Naomi Brill has agreed to be a guest speaker during the week we study Eiseley. Many of the students are, or are preparing to be, public school teachers, and my desire is that this introduction will motivate further teaching of his essays in the public schools.

Our first essay is by Barbara Weddle who is from Upland, Nebraska, and who is a Senior majoring in Psychology. She tells us:

I am planning to use what I am learning about Loren Eiseley in conjunction with the works of the Swiss psychologist Carl G. Jung to parallel various literary and psychological principles common to both. These principles include the collective unconscious, synchronicity, the oneness of all creation with a common spiritual being, and the goal to evolve into an awareness of our unity with all creation.

Lessons From Loren Eiseley

by Barbara A. Weddle

The lessons which Loren Eiseley taught us in "The Flow of the River" are how each of us must individually cross certain barriers if we seek to attain spiritual understanding. Crossing barriers means that we must free ourselves from traditional bondage in order to experience, to know, and to love a personal God. Eiseley said that he experienced osmosis. This scientific term is generally used to describe the movement of water across a semi-permeable membrane. I believe that the author used this term as a metaphor to describe how he himself had to cross a semi-permeable membrane, or spiritual barrier, to attain the spiritual understanding about which he wrote.

Eiseley's beliefs are not for everyone, and it is not important that we agree with them. It is important that we appreciate and withhold judgment on his own spiritual experience. If we can do this, we can learn the valuable lessons which the author taught us about crossing our own spiritual barriers.

We must learn, first, not to compromise for any reason our beliefs with what we feel we are expected to believe. Eiseley referred to a spiritual compromise in "The Flow of the River" when he said:

He had the idea alright, (referring to a poet) and it is obvious that these sensations are not unique, but they are hard to come by; and the sort of extension of the senses that people will accept when they put their ear against a sea shell, they will smile at it in the

confessions of a bookish professor.

Spiritual experience will come when we learn to cross the semi-permeable membrane of what others may or may not think of us. We can then move on to a spiritual experience which is truly individual, personal, and unique. We are one with each other, with nature, the past, future and all creation. Eiseley believed that the secret of life, the bonding element, was water. He began "The Flow of the River" with the statement: "If there is any magic on this planet, it is contained in water". Eiseley listened, heard, and believed the magic of the water. Many times we listen but choose not to hear because of what others may think.

Another lesson which we can learn from "The Flow of the River" in coming to know the Divine is that we must cross the barriers of childhood trauma, our perceived limitations, and our fears. When speaking of these things, Eiseley wrote: "What makes it worse is the fact that because of a traumatic experience in childhood, I am not a swimmer, and am inclined to be timid before any large body of water." He also stated that the struggle that he waged was timidity. He then went on to say: "A near drowning accident in childhood had scarred my reactions; in addition to the fact that I was a non swimmer . . ."

How often do we all play the tapes of our past over and over again in our minds just as Eiseley had done? In overcoming and reaching beyond his own fears and limitations of childhood, Eiseley grew to spiritually experience a Divine Mother in the form of water, the water which he initially feared. He referred to her as "that mother element which still, at this late point in time, shelters and brings into being nine tenths of everything alive." He also alludes to our maternal belonging in the earth when he described man "out of the mother ooze. And as I walk on through the white smother (snow), it is the magic that leaves me a final sign." The child who feared no longer fears but is now spiritually and magically nurtured by a Divine Mother.

Eiseley helps us to understand, too, that we must be careful not to place limits on God. He mentioned that people wrote him harsh letters, castigating him because he had written about his

personal experiences. Regarding these statements, he replied:

They would bring God into the compass of a shopkeeper's understanding and confine Him to those limits lest He proceed to some unimaginable and shocking act -- create perhaps, as a casual afterthought, a being more beautiful than man.

In my past I have done exactly what Eiseley has suggested, by confining God to the limits of my own narrow understanding for fear that I may be condemned. I have looked at my childhood trauma, limitations, fears, and at what other people have thought of me, and wondered why God could love a being like me? By maintaining a limited understanding, do we try to manipulate God? Do we keep Her/Him exactly where we would like so that we can go on feeling comfortably drugged in our false righteousness, never having to exert the energy to cross any semi-permeable membrane? We must never stop looking at our limited understanding, because life is a process, and the journey will continue.

I once heard someone say that a person who is afraid of going to hell looks for God. Maybe we have to get to a point where we are going through hell before we can look for a better way, for someone to free us. We can't go back and make a brand new start, but we can always start from where we are at and make a brand new end. Loren Eiseley closed "The Flow of the River" by mentioning snowflakes. We know that no two snowflakes are alike, and so it is with each one of us in that we are all beautiful and unique. Wouldn't a God that created us beautiful and unique understand if we tried to know Her/Him in our own beautiful and unique way? Loren Eiseley's way was beautiful and unique. "The Flow of the River" taught us that we must find our own way and stop judging the way of another. Only then can divine alchemy help us to evolve into the beings that we were meant to be.

Now we present an essay by Deb Kershaw who tells us:

I am a Junior at the University of Nebraska at Kearney, originally from Sidney, but now making my home in Ravenna, Nebraska. I am working toward a double major in Psychology and Sociology. My goal is a career in Community Counseling.

Loren Eiseley's work has affected my day-to-day life. As a commuter, I always dreaded that drive every day. Now, with my newly awakened sense of the diversity and beauty in nature, the trip is so much more pleasant. I also now have an outlet for the tension that comes with being a student. A walk by the river is a soothing break from the daily pressures that we must all live with.

Loren Eiseley: If There is Magic

By Deb Kershaw

"If there is magic on this planet, it is contained in water." I was very much in need of a little magic in my life this spring when I read this line in Loren Eiseley's "The Flow of the River." I had been lacking inspiration and serenity when Eiseley reminded me that moving water could be an infinite source of both. His profound connection with water and the habitats that it creates encouraged me to seek a connection of some type for myself. I went in search of the magic that I needed in my life in the waters of the area in which I live. Within five miles of my back door, I would discover a taste of the magic that is to be found in water.

Saturday promised early to be a beautiful day. A few high cottony clouds slowly floated across the sky. The sun and the white-blue sky made me sure: this was the day. It was time for my own adventure of sorts. The South Loup River seemed a likely place, so I went for a walk along its banks. On the banks, I saw trees including cottonwoods, oaks, elms, maples and an occasional pine. The undergrowth was already thick in spots with ferns grasses, and wildflowers.

Throughout the winter, I had seen animals many and varied. I had encountered multitudes of deer, both mule and whitetail, in small groups of three or four, and in groups as large as thirty spread across a field. One troop of turkeys numbered at forty or more. A pair of bald eagles spent a month in that same spot earlier this spring. That day, I surprised three whitetail deer in a river bottom meadow, but probably not as much as they surprised me. I saw mallard ducks, turtles, rabbits, frogs and an early menagerie of insects, including flies, butterflies, bees, mosquitos, and the inevitable ticks. I traced the tracks of many animals: numerous deer, raccoons, turkeys and rabbits, as well as the webs of spiders. In the water itself, I saw carp jumping for dinner on the wing and catfish suspended against the current waiting for dinner to happen by. I enjoyed the blended sounds of busy woodpeckers, birdsong, chirping frogs, and that eternally peaceful music of water flowing across the uneven surface of the bank. The smell was of a clean breeze brushing across growing things. The few pine trees, the early wild flower blossoms, and the river itself each have their own unique and refreshing scent.

The smells in the peripheral swamps of the South Loup are altogether different. The breeze doesn't touch these dark areas. The musty smell is strong but somehow pleasant. Black and green bacteria and algae thrive in stagnant pools, a favorite home for frogs and turtles. The existence of these attract the larger animals such as mink and raccoon that prey on them. The call of the loon can be heard from long distances and the frogs never seem to rest in their continual croakings and chirpings. I walked along the banks of the South Loup until it led to the outlet of a small creek. The high banks on either side and the thick vegetation, both alive and dead, encouraged me to follow this tributary. In a slightly round-about way, it led me back to Ravenna.

With one exception, the wildlife that I found on the creek was about what I had expected, though the numbers of each species surprised me. I found several mallard pairs, lots of frogs and turtles, catfish, bullheads, and later, squirrels and pigeons. I was not surprised by the squirrels and pigeons because of the close proximity of the

grain elevator. At this point on the creek, the elevator is only about fifteen yards from one bank, and the Burlington Northern Yards are only about twenty-five yards from the other.

When I climbed down the embankment, I was amazed at what I found. I had noticed from above the remains of old brick and cement pilings and footings for what appeared to have been a railroad bridge. This in itself would usually disgust me more than interest me, but I was suddenly impressed with nature's effort to reclaim that space. Growing up through the refuse, at impossible angles, were trees and flowers, their roots slowly pulverizing the remains to nothing. Nature had a plan. As I sat and wondered at this, a movement caught my eye. To my amazement and joy, an otter swam past within about fifteen feet of where I was sitting. She casually swam up the creek another twenty yards before she dove. I was so surprised, because I had never seen an otter in the wild in the area, and because of the close proximity of all that human activity.

This place, in the midst of human noise and industry, has become very special to me because Loren Eiseley, in his writing, has given me an incredible gift of understanding. I understand that to know the path that any single molecule of water has taken through time is to know the entire history of this planet, of its land and of its life. I imagine the hundreds of generations of animals that have come to drink from this river or this creek. I imagine a time before most of today's species existed, when this land was populated by a much different set of animals. I imagine what these places looked like when the first human beings arrived. I imagine what nature will do with those old bridge pilings in another one hundred years.

I now understand much more about the insignificance of humanity in the greater scheme of things. In the last century, we human beings have made a diligent effort to conquer this land. Even all our destruction of the native habitat has had little effect on the wild animals and plants that belong here. They may be much stronger than we realize. While we are making an attempt to adapt the environment to our human needs, the animals are adapting themselves to the

environment. That otter lives within short yards of human danger on either side. She survives within one hundred yards of a disintegrating pile of human rubble, but she does survive, along with millions of other animals in millions of similar places around the world. I have never liked the feeling of insignificance before, but now I find it thrilling. My worries, by comparison, mean so much less, and it is easy in the company of this water and these animals to let those worries flow away with the river.

I went to the banks of the South Loup River in search of inspiration for a paper, and in the end, I found that inspiration, but the search itself was what was genuinely important to me. Loren Eiseley awoke in me an awe of all that water creates. He reminded me of the endless power of water to not only "assume forms of exquisite perfection in a snowflake, or strip the living to a single shining bone cast up by the sea," but also to sooth the soul. In water I have found an eternally reliable source of beauty, inspiration, and serenity; I have found my own connection. Had I never read "The Flow of the River," I may have never experienced the magic of the existence of an otter only 250 yards from my own back door.

EDITORIAL EXCAVATIONS

When the Friends gathered at the Heritage room for the tour of Eiseley's Lincoln they were able to see a special display of all of the foreign language editions of Loren Eiseley.

The Heritage Room holds almost a complete collection of the translations of his work which are in book form and the only volume known to be missing from the collection is a copy of Darwin's Century which was published in Mexico in 1978 and which we are attempting to find. The next addition to the collection we hope will be a copy of the essays soon to be published in Russia which has been translated by Dimitri Brechinsky who has an essay elsewhere in this issue.

Not only is this an nice exhibit, but somehow it seems satisfying also to notice that the display is housed in a handsome case on the south wall

which was the gift of William and Elizabeth Gaffney, Gaff being Eiseley's close friend, fellow poet and hiking partner from his school days.

Another Nebraska Public Television documentary of great interest to Eiseley Friends was the story of the discovery and excavation of the Ashfall Fossil Bed where ten million years ago a cloud of volcanic dust trapped rhinos, three-toed horses and other animals in a small north central Nebraska lake ten million years ago. We are pleased to notice that this fine program featuring the work of our board member Mike Voorhies has just been shown on the full PBS Network in their NOVA program. Nebraskans saw it in the same time slot the week after Adventures of a Bonehunter. We want to congratulate Nebraska Public Television and Mike Voorhies for the national attention given to this film.

Some of the essays in Dr. Eiseley's collected works started out as book reviews and later were adapted to the essay form we know today. "Paw Marks and Buried Towns" serves as an example for it originally was a lengthy review of several books in the Spring 1958 issue of the American Scholar before reappearing in the reduced form you find in the Night Country. Many reviews which provide the necessary criticism needed for the day then suffer a forgotten eternity on library microfilms much as extinct life slumbers in ancient bone fields. We have been digging up these old reviews and have found that even in the serious prose of criticism we may suddenly come upon a sentence that can be lifted from the original context to give us a hint of the Eiseley we know from his essays.

In the New York Herald Tribune Book World for April 17, 1966, Dr. Eiseley reviewed The Poetry of the Earth: A Collection of English Nature Writings selected by E. D. H. Johnson. Here is Eiseley reviewing an anthology of works by a host of nature writers with whom he, himself, is often compared. In the review entitled "Call Us Ishmael: Lyric Evidence of Man's Solitary Search for the Meaning of it All," Eiseley says that in our western literary tradition "the literature of solitude has been largely identified with the writing of the literary naturalists." In view of the themes of solitude and loneliness expressed in the new TV documentary, we

thought this would be a good time to present this review. He tells us:

One does not have to read far to discover that men have entertained many diverse views on solitude. There is, for example, the contained professional reserve of the physician who must constantly confront human suffering. There is the solitude of the artist, writer or musician who hears or sees, and brings out of the silences of his brain, worlds which transcend our everyday reality. There is the lonely knowledge of the anthropologist deeply aware of the far forest in which we originated, and of the dangerous and uncertain road man has still to travel. There is the weary disillusionment of the archaeologist as he stands amidst the toppled columns that housed the gods of other years.

. . . All human existence is, in a sense, solitary. At conception each of us is genetically unique. Though others are present and assist at our birth, we draw our first agonizing breath in the solitude of an alien world. At the moment of death we depart in the same fashion. Between, in the world of life, we experience either the naive, unrealized loneliness of the extrovert who is totally projected outward upon society, or, by contrast, we grasp intuitively the suffering of the great writer whose participation in the experience of others is such as to make him a man apart -- a psychic lens through which the ordinary run of us are projected and made to grow aware of our interior fantasies and terrors. The creative genius contributes to our self-knowledge, which is merely another name for loneliness. All great literature is, in the last analysis, the literature of solitude.

Eiseley characterizes the collected nature writers as "unworldly and drawn by solitude" and suggests that much of their writing was "direct observation often unintended for publication." The anthologist is "convinced that a number of penetrating first hand impressions of nature are

concealed in the diaries and other writings of 18th and 19th century English writers, some of whom are now obscure or noted . . . for other achievements . . ."

He admiringly discusses authors from Melville who, "saw nature in the shape of one vast monster on the heaving sea," to others such as John Clare, Gilbert White, Francis Kilvert and Richard Jeffries who he suggests were "gentle people who gazed for a few brief summers on the wold, sighed and departed." This made us think of the inscription later placed on his own grave stone, "We loved the world, but could not stay."

After a lengthy appreciation of individual authors, he concludes his review:

I have read this anthology at intervals while engaged in a foot journey along a small river in Vermont. I have struck out with a stone ax, and wandered like my remote forebears, over murmuring shallows, supplying the need of my hands for pebbles, sharp, round or cleavable. I have gone . . . far up into a high meadow where I saw a prancing fox, and overlooked a valley. I have also entered a dark forest in which titanic, unidentifiable entities in the shape of distorted trees and devouring fungi were locked in a struggle of endless duration.

. . . There is no greater loneliness in the universe than that of being confronted by knowledge: knowledge of one's past in a lizard skull, in the sunlit emptiness of a meadow, or the waiting menace of the forest.

. . . The anthologist, as has been ably demonstrated in this volume, similarly records fragments of observation, worn jetsam on the shores of memory . . . In such episodes we grow aware of man's hidden nature and speak, if we speak at all, of a literature of solitude. In degree it is the true literature of each uncorrupted and sensitive soul. . .

Morrie Tuttle

The dues structure is as follows:

Individual member - \$10.00
Contributing member - \$25.00
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