
THE CARAVAN

NEWSLETTER OF THE FRIENDS OF LOREN EISELEY

Vol. 10, No. 1

Winter 1996



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

It's that time of year when nothing is pressing -- my seedlings have yet to sprout and the weather is still unpredictable. There are no meetings on my calendar. February is a glorious month for those of us who value "nothing."

It's what I most like about Loren Eiseley. I grew up in the city, and wildlife to me will always be pigeons at the bus stop. Eiseley noticed pigeons. He connected the whole world together, from our most distant past to our science-driven future, but he never forgot to simply notice the little things.

Morrie Tuttle tells the story of how the used book owner in Philadelphia remarked Eiseley always browsed the literature section rather than the sciences. He's right, it's an important key to understanding Eiseley. But nonetheless, Eiseley was a scientist. He used science as a basis for literature. It's for this reason I am most pleased we are establishing a strong presence with science teachers. Eiseley is a genuine "writer." He cannot be characterized as a scientist with a gift for popularizing science. He is a philosopher, with a gift for using science metaphors. I think he is a writer who will be most appreciated in the next century. It is our job, as members of the Friends of Loren Eiseley, to make sure we preserve the material in our collective care, and promote his writings.

Thank you for building our membership, and for sending in donations. Like other non-profits, we mail to interested readers who are not members. Because we are anticipating a period of significant growth, we need financial support. Memberships are encouraged. An endowment fund would be a practical method of paying for our annual program. We would appreciate gifts earmarked for this purpose. Compared to other Nebraska Authors organizations, we are in our financial infancy.

We have again added to our board of directors. Ruth Thone, co-founder and first president of Friends of Loren Eiseley, has rejoined us. New members are Beverly Grenier and Christine Pappas of Lincoln. Beverly is a lawyer, and Christine is a law student at University of Nebraska. Rev. Darrel Berg and Dr. Jane Stilwell Smith, both of whom contributed so much, have retired. Our committees are hard at work -- or soon to be, after the February grace period. We are honored to become an affiliate organization of the Nebraska Academy of Sciences, and look forward to working with them.

Kira Gale, President

FRIENDS OF LOREN EISELEY ANNUAL PROGRAM AND DINNER

By Barbara Sommer

The Annual Program and Dinner of the Friends of Loren Eiseley was held on Sunday, October 22, in Morrill Hall on the UNL campus. Seventy-five people, including twelve special guests of the Friends, enjoyed a dinner in Elephant Hall and heard an excellent lecture from Dr. Gale Christianson, author of the Eiseley biography, *Fox at the Wood's Edge*.

Activities began the previous evening in Omaha with a party at the home of Bing and Georgianne Chen. The Chens, helped by our new board member Beverly Grenier and her daughter, prepared a wonderful array of foods and desserts for everyone. Guests also enjoyed tasting several wines made by the Chens. A special feature of the evening was a presentation by Ron Cisar of his new song inspired by Dr. Eiseley's essay "The Flow of the River."

On Sunday afternoon the Friends gathered in the Heritage Room of the Bennett Martin Library before heading out for their tour of Eiseley sites in Lincoln. Rev. Darrel Berg and Bing Chen provided initial background and an introduction to what we would be seeing and then led the group around to the various places of interest. This activity was filmed courtesy of the Nebraska State Historical Society and it is currently being edited by Rev. Berg for use on the Nebraska History Channel.

The evening began in Morrill Hall with a visit to the museum's newest exhibit, "Mesozoic Monsters, Mammals, and Magnolias." Mike Voorhies, the museum's Curator of Paleontology, provided a detailed explanation of the materials on display.

After the social hour and dinner served in Elephant Hall we moved to the lower level auditorium for our program. In her opening remarks, President Kira Gale reviewed 1995 events and activities of the Friends and discussed the direction of the organization for 1996. Kira then presented the Loren Eiseley Medal to Dr. Dale Christianson in

A view taken during our tour in front of one of Eiseley's boyhood homes. Darrel Berg (center) asks David McShane to tell of days when he also lived in the this neighborhood and who remembers the Eiseley family. Bing Chen is on the right.



Mike Voorhies, museum curator of Paleontology speaks to the Friends during our tour of the Mesozoic Gallery. Mike provided a detailed description of the exhibits in the museum's newest gallery.

honor of his work as the Eiseley biographer. Dr. Christianson is a noted historian of science, has written several books, including biographies of Isaac Newton, Loren Eiseley and Edwin Hubble. He is a professor of History at Indiana State University.

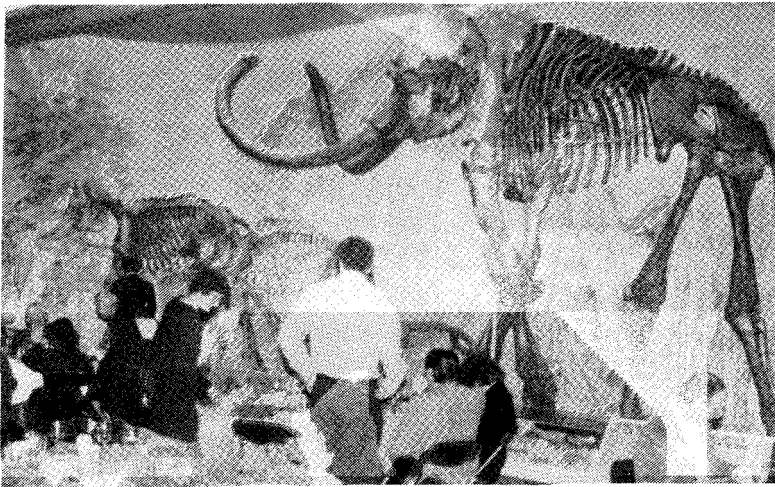
Dr. Christianson spoke on "Loren Eiseley's Lincoln," focusing much of his talk on the influence which the Lincoln years at had on Loren Eiseley. Questions from the audience produced much additional information on the work of a biographer in interpreting his subject, and the impact this had on his own interpretation of Eiseley.

This program was video taped courtesy of the Nebraska State Historical Society and recorded by Nebraska Public Radio. Several weeks later the audio tape was broadcast on Nebraska Public Radio. The video film is currently being edited for presentation on the Nebraska History Channel. Morrie Tuttle is also developing a written transcript of Gale's talk for future use by the Friends.

The following evening The Friends of the UN-O Library hosted a program which featured Dr. Christianson speaking on his latest book, *Edwin Hubble: Mariner of the Universe*, a biography of the great astronomer. This event was held at the University of Nebraska-Omaha Library.

The Friends of Loren Eiseley thank the following for their generosity in helping support the 1995 Annual Program and Dinner: the Nebraska Humanities Council, FirstTier Bank of Lincoln, the Nebraska State Historical Society, Nebraska Public Radio, the Friends of the UN-O Library, the curators of the Heritage Room and the University of Nebraska State Museum.

These activities were organized by the Program and Publicity Committee and the members of this committee are: Barb Sommer, Chairperson, Rev. Darrel Berg, James Bert, Christian Lesiak, Pat Nefzger, Bob Runyon, and Mike Voorhies.



The Friends sit down to dinner in Elephant Hall. This table is at the feet of the great Imperial Mastodon, the largest of the ice age elephants. Thanks to Mike Antrim for this photo.

Friends President Kira Gale has just presented the Loren Eiseley Medal to Eiseley's biographer, Dr. Gale Christianson who was also our featured speaker for the evening.



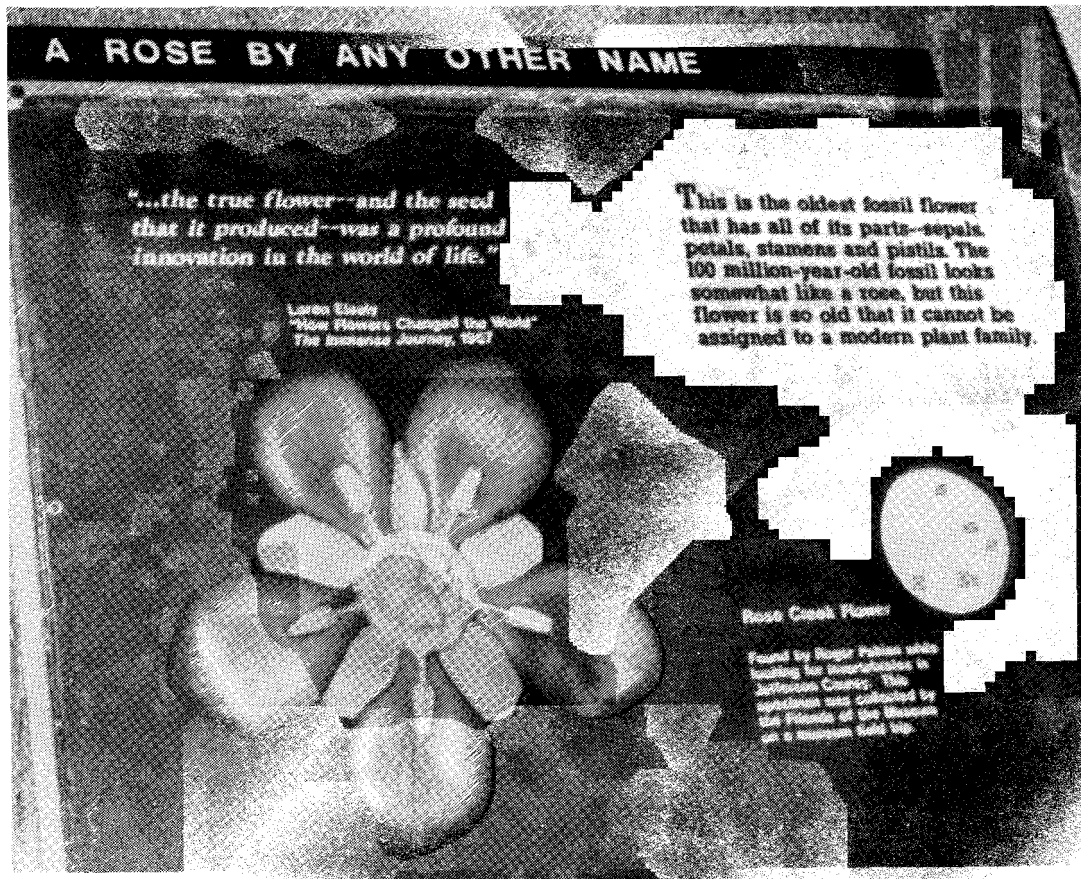


Big Things Come from Work of the Education Committee

By Mary Liz Jameson

This photo shows members of the Loren Eiseley Education Committee at the Nebraska Association of Science Teachers convention this past October. Through their efforts the Eiseley Friends participated in the event and presented this display. Committee members from left to right are: Mike Antrim (Burke High School science curriculum director), Bing Chen (University of Nebraska at Omaha engineering professor), Ken Finch (Director of the Fontanelle Forest Association), Mary Liz Jameson (University of Nebraska Entomology graduate student), and Steve Shively (University of Nebraska English graduate student). We thank Mike Antrim for this photo.

The synergism and creativity of the members of this committee have produced several innovative ways to bring the power and beauty of Eiseley's writing to the public. The committee is investigating the feasibility of an Eiseley world wide web site, dreaming of an Eiseley nature center, and has commissioned a song by noted musician Ron Cisar entitled, "Platte River." In addition, the committee has produced a cross-curriculum teacher's guide, "Loren Eiseley: Nebraska's Greatest Naturalist," which made its debut at the Nebraska Association of Science Teachers convention in October. The guide focuses on Eiseley's essay "How Flowers Changed the World," and is designed to integrate science and writing in the classroom. Steve Shively and Mike Antrim are to be congratulated on their contribution to this work! This guide will be the foundation of an educational packet available to teachers throughout Nebraska. If you or someone you know is interested in the teacher's guide, write us at the box showing on this newsletter and Education Committee Chairperson Bing Chen will send it.



The Oldest Flower

In the last issue we gave you a photo of the hundred million year old Rose Creek flower, the world's oldest complete flower fossil which was found in Nebraska close by Fairbury near the Kansas line. This is now exhibited in the new Mesozoic Gallery of the museum. We can now show you a photo of that display which includes a quotation from Loren Eiseley's "How Flowers Changed the World." An additional exciting new feature has only just been added to this display, an enlarged model representing how the flower might have appeared so very long ago. The new model was constructed by well known Lincoln artist Michele Angle Farrar in consultation with Margaret Bolick, the museum's Curator of Botany. Of course, no one can know what the color this blossom might have worn, but this model imagines it as having rose colored petals much like our wild rose. One views the ancient fossil through the hole you see in the lower right which allows the flower fossil to be seen under a magnifying lens in a specially illuminated chamber.

Eiseley Friends Affiliates with The Nebraska Academy of Science

The Friends of Loren Eiseley are very pleased to have been invited to become an "Affiliated Society" with the Nebraska Academy of Science. This is a very special matter for us not only because this membership relates so well to the purposes of our organization, but also because of the special relationship that the late C. Bertrand Schultz has had with both the Eiseley Friends and the Academy of Science. While he was devoted to our organization, he also served for many years as Executive Director of the Academy. Notable too was his long time of service as the Director of the State Museum and his career in geological, paleontological and environmental studies at the University of Nebraska which produced scholarly research which continues to be recognized. The Schultz home and its grounds, where the Eiseley Friends have so often gathered, has been given to the Academy.

The Academy, a professional society providing services to its members and the citizens of Nebraska, has the following objectives:

To further the work of scientists and to facilitate cooperation among them.

To improve the effectiveness of science in the promotion of human welfare and environmental quality.

To provide the opportunity for scientific research related to the problems of the ever-changing environment of the Great Plains.

To increase public understanding and appreciation of the importance and promise of science in human progress.

To stimulate science education and to encourage young people to become involved in science.

To foster the interaction of business, industry, government, education, and the academic scientific community.

To disseminate scientific knowledge, and to recognize high achievements in attaining the Academy's objectives.

The Academy was first organized in Omaha in 1880, with 75 charter members. The Union Pacific Railroad which supported programs to make Nebraska the educational and cultural center of the West, was instrumental in the establishment of the Academy and did a great deal to encourage and facilitate the work of the Academy in its early days. Samuel Aughey, first professor of science at the University of Nebraska and first Director of the University Museum, was the Academy's first president.

The Academy was reorganized in Lincoln in 1890-91. Some of the illustrious scholars who were Academy leaders during and following this reorganization were Erwin H. Barbour, Charles E. Bessey, J. S. Kingsley, Roscoe Pound and G. D. Swezey. In 1895, ecological and environmental studies were begun at the University of Nebraska and various Academy members were pioneers in these studies, which were especially important during and after the droughts of the 1890's and 1930's. Ecology and environment continue to be emphasized in the Academy's programs.

One Division of the Academy is the Institute for Tertiary and Quaternary Studies (TER-QUA). This was first organized in 1968 and became a division of the Academy in 1974. Composed of multi-state, interdisciplinary working groups, it is interested in research directed to the changing environments of the Great Plains and Gulf coast with particular emphasis on water resources and climate. Dr. Schultz gave initial and continuing leadership to this group.

Another Academy Division is the Nebraska Association of Teachers of Science (NATS) which is a state-wide organization concerned with science teaching. You have just read in the previous article about the Eiseley Friends participation in their conference this past October.

The Annual Meeting of the Academy is held in April when papers on scientific and science education are presented and awards and special recognition for scientific endeavors are bestowed. Participants include students in secondary schools, undergraduate and graduate students in colleges and universities professional scientists and educators, and other persons interested in science and science education. Recognition is given to students in secondary schools who have demonstrated a special interest in, and talent for, science. A highlight of the Annual Meeting is the Maiben Memorial Lecture presented by an eminent scientist.

The Eiseley Friends have had a long relationship with the Academy with respect to the Loren Eiseley Memorial Scholarship which is presented at the Annual Meeting. Any Nebraska high school senior is eligible to compete for this award, a \$500 scholarship. The student must write an 800 to 1000 word essay which should discuss Eiseley's message concerning humanity's place in the universe. The applicant should have read at least two of Loren Eiseley's essays or works. Teacher recommendations, transcripts, scholastic achievements, and a list of at least two Eiseley essays read by the applicant must accompany the application. In addition, the applicant must show evidence of having been accepted in an accredited college or university. The award is announced at the banquet of the Academy's April Annual Meeting and the student is again honored at the annual "Friends of Loren Eiseley Celebration" in October. The next deadline for essays to be received by the Academy is May 15, 1996.

Mark Stone of Wakefield, Nebraska was the Sixteenth Loren Eiseley Memorial Scholarship Essay winner selected by the Academy. We are pleased now to present this essay which is here reprinted from the *Proceedings of the Nebraska Academy of Science* covering their 115th Anniversary Year Meeting held in April 1995 in the Olin Hall of Science on the Nebraska Wesleyan University campus. Mark and his parents were special guests of the Friends of Loren Eiseley at our October dinner in 1994.

Man's Relation to the Environment

By Mark C. Stone

It was perfect when untouched by man. The hills were covered with grasses and filled with animals that had no names but survived by pure instinct. Each ecological niche existed without interference of human hand. Pure mountain streams flowed without being seen by man's eye. Birds flowed over the great land through the clean fresh air.

As I drive my tractor through the field, tearing up the land behind it, it is hard to picture a land once untouched. As far as the eye can see the earth has been torn up to provide for an increasing number of humans.

A coyote approaches the machinery with little fear. He has seen these tools all his life, as have many generations before him, and he has accepted them as normal. The coyote does not know of the life that his great ancestors lived. They moved freely without interference. There are not many of his species left alive now. Their habitat has been destroyed, their prey wiped out, their water contaminated, and their predator, the human being, often will kill them for sport.

Their habitat must be destroyed so that the American farmer can cover enough land to make a living. Not only does this kill the coyote and others like it, but it kills its prey, the rabbit, squirrel and ground hog. Large amounts of herbicide must be spread on the land. This in time spreads to the lakes, streams, and even ground water. Humans have made it a game to kill animals such as coyotes, raccoons, deer and pheasants and quail.

Humans are the only species that speaks personally, works, prays and laughs. Animals follow their nose and instinct rather than memory. They have only a small power of choice. Humans, on the other hand, have that power of choice. They may live their lives in a special field that they select.

I notice a grove of beautiful pine trees, planted by my grandfather. The trees have grown strong and

tall, but now have a damaging trait. The tops of the pines have begun to turn brown from the increasing acidity of rain water. The trees have no defense for such an unnatural problem. Huge factories to the west constantly pour out giant amounts of toxins that continue to raise the acidity of rain water. As the storms move west they bring along with them these damaging side effects.

I went to the mighty Missouri River. This river has taken more human lives than it is miles long. At one time this river ran wild and free. It changed channels constantly and flowed beyond its banks. Now man has attempted to control it. The Lewis and Clark Lake is a magnificent construction. With the power of machine the river is held back for miles to provide recreation, produce electricity, and prevent flooding. Every once in a while the great Missouri and Mississippi Rivers strike back at man reminding him that they will not be tamed. They take back the land they have had taken from them. Even Loren Eiseley himself spoke of the beautiful powers of rivers such as the Platte.

Man has done his damage to the great rain forests of South America. Once untouched miles of dense vegetation are now being slashed and burned to make wood and paper, and to make room for more farm ground. Without these wonderful rain forests the plants of the world will not be able to produce enough oxygen to support the animals.

The global temperature of the earth is slowly rising. The amount of carbon dioxide and pollution in the atmosphere is steadily rising. The heat from the sun is trapped in causing the temperature to rise and may lead to disaster.

There is now a hole in the ozone layer leading to many problems. Man-made CFCs are eating away at the Earth's ozone layer letting damaging ultraviolet rays through. These rays can have damaging effects on humans and all other living organisms.

Man has made many great strides for improving health and technology, but along with it has come the production of terrible weapons and waste. During the second world war the amazing power

of destruction was demonstrated by the explosions of the first atomic bombs. Today there are enough nuclear weapons on earth to end all life as we know it. There is also waste to deal with from weapons and nuclear power plants.

Man treats the earth and its environment as if we own it. Loren Eiseley once said, "Earth was not created for man. Man has forgotten or has gotten wrong his role on Earth. Bereft of instinct man must search continually for meanings. There is nothing worse for man than wondering." I couldn't agree more with this statement. Man must take a hard look at the situation and realize the destruction being done or something higher than man may remind us.

Editorial Excavations

By Morrie Tuttle

We enjoyed a full page feature article appearing in the Omaha World Herald in mid January which presented information on the origins of the universe and the origins of life. Various theories concerning the beginnings of it all were presented along with some of the latest thinking on this subject. They gave a list for further reading citing only three books. The first two, being recent publications concerning the birth of the universe, were familiar because we had seen them favorably reviewed when they first were issued. The third book was the *Immense Journey*. Now with all that has been published, it would seem that the inclusion of this nearly forty year old book along with the two recent volumes having the latest thinking on a subject where knowledge is expanding at an almost explosive pace, was a very eloquent form of testimony for the lasting value of Loren Eiseley's work. And it also seemed a very good choice considering the portions of the text concerning the origins of life.

The Fall 1995 issue of the *Harvard College Gazette*, an alumni newspaper, featured an article about Harvard faculty member Anne Harrington who, the article tells us, is translating meaning and metaphor into the language of science and she is here being recognized for the special qualities of her teaching. We learn that coming to Harvard in

'78 she had expected to find a career in English and was thinking of writing a novel for her senior thesis. But these plans dramatically changed by her sophomore year when she began to pursue a combined honors course in history and science. The article describes the turmoil she experienced in finding her new direction and explained how her attitude shifted in favor of the sciences:

As an idealistic politically engaged 18-year old, from New York City she had seen science as a cold impersonal force that nullified mystery and wonder. Science and technology also stood accountable, as she saw it, for the threat of nuclear war, destruction of the environment, and other horrors.

Freshman year changed these attitudes. As a result of her courses in history and science as well as her reading of interpreters of science like anthropologist Loren Eiseley, Harrington gave up her antipathy to the scientific enterprise and came to realize that although science "had not owned its shadow side" as fully as she thought it should, it still possessed a beauty and mystery of its own. Rather than an enemy of science she became instead its passionate and engaged critic.

It was wonderful to have Gale Christianson back with us in Lincoln last October. We were all glad to be again with an old friend and his lecture was very well received. His extensive responses during the active question period was like having a second bonus lecture in the same evening. He covered much more new material than we could have counted on. We are hoping to be able to make this material available at a later date.

Gale spoke on the Lincoln days of Loren Eiseley. Included was a great deal about Eiseley's relationship with university English faculty member Lowry Wimberly and the influence which this mentor and friend had on the young Eiseley. So we thought this might be a good time to share with you an early Eiseley essay which we have only accidentally discovered. This does come out of this period and probably reflects the Wimberly

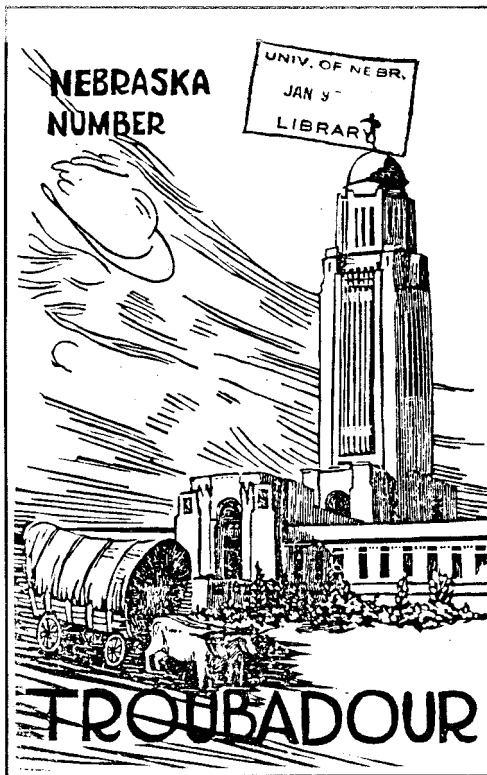
influence. A friend, now serving on our English faculty also had classes under Wimberly and told us that he too had heard similar sentiments expressed by Wimberly.

The young Loren Eiseley was included with other Nebraskans in a special Nebraska Number of *Troubadour*, a little poetry magazine edited by Whitley Grey and printed in San Diego. This publication was apparently somehow related to the San Diego Poetry Society and it had been published for about three years. During this time they had devoted entire issues to the poetry of one state or another and now it was Nebraska's turn. Looking at the previous issues, we were interested to discover that from the beginning they had used John G. Neihardt as a poetry judge.

This December 1930 issue was produced with Claire Austin Dixon of North Platte serving as a guest editor and with a host of well known Nebraska names listed as advisory editors including Louise Pound, John Neihardt and Bess Aldrich Streeter, the latter being a confusion of our novelist's name. Wimberly is credited as handling publicity for the issue.

The issue included a poem by Loren Eiseley, "To the Furred and Feathered," which has been reprinted in *All the Night Wings*. Here it was cited as having won the Sarah Joslyn prize of \$20 for the best sonnet. Mrs. Joslyn is very well known in Nebraska in connection with the gift of the beautiful building for the Joslyn Art Museum in Omaha. They had obviously gone to a great deal of effort to line up the awards to recognize the contributors to this issue and this preparation seemed a little more elaborate than we could see as being the case for some of the other state issues. These inducements were listed months ahead to attract submission of manuscripts for this issue.

It was because of this poem that we had looked into this magazine because we wanted to see its original appearance so it was a very great surprise indeed to find that this magazine also contained an Eiseley essay. It has not been recognized by any of the bibliographical resources we have seen. We knew the poem was here because it was cited in



PRIZES AND DONORS

For the Best Historical Poem on Nebraska, \$15.00 by Governor and Mrs. Arthur Weaver, Lincoln.
 For the Best Sonnet, \$20.00 by Mrs. Sarah Joslyn, Omaha.
 Humorous Poem, \$10.00 by Mr. and Mrs. C. N. Dietz, Omaha.
 Poem of Best Thought, Content, and Technical Excellence, \$10.00 by Mrs. Henry Dooley, Omaha.
 Poem of French Ballad Pattern, \$5.00 by Miss Jessie Millard, Omaha.
 Best Pictorial Poem, \$10.00 by Mr. and Mrs. W. F. Baxter, Omaha.
 For the Best Poem Published Receiving a Prize, \$25.00 by Dr. and Mrs. Frank Conklin, Omaha; Mr. and Mrs. Charles Dixon, North Platte; Mr. and Mrs. Harry Dixon, North Platte. *This means a Double Prize for some one.*
 Poem of Indian Lore, "Songs of the Indian Dances," Autographed by Author, Cora Phoebe Mullin, Omaha.
 Dramatic Poem, "History of Careths in Nebraska" ("Bohemian Life in Nebraska"), Autographed by Author, Rose Kosicky, Omaha.

PRIZE-AWARDS FOR NEBRASKA POETS

Addison E. Sheldon, Governor and Mrs. Arthur Weaver prize
 Loren C. Eiseley, Mrs. Sarah Joslyn prize
 Nellie Arnold, Mr. and Mrs. C. N. Dietz prize
 Lee Andrew Weber, Mrs. Henry Dooley prize (*Dance for etc.*)
 May Christine Turpe, Miss Jessie Millard prize
 Enid Beaty Rankin, Mr. and Mrs. W. F. Baxter prize
 Enid Beaty Rankin, for the best poems published, prize of \$25. by Dr. and Mrs. Frank Conklin; Mr. and Mrs. Charles Dixon; & Mr. and Mrs. Harry Dixon.
 No award was made for either the Poem of Indian Lore prize or the Dramatic Poem prize.
 Owing to the impossibility of co-ordinating the appraisals of three judges, in time to publish results in this issue, Mr. Martin Peterson acted as sole judge.

1931 STUDENT TOURS TO EUROPE

Third Cabin
 FIVE COUNTRIES, FRANCE, BELGIUM, HOLLAND
 GERMANY and SWITZERLAND
 BLACK FOREST by motor

SWISS ALPS by motor
 Only \$395 all inclusive rate -- more than one hundred longer trips with proportionate value can be arranged for Address Miss Mabel Gray, group organizer, 4543 Westminster Place, St. Louis, Missouri or Miss Norma Sante, Travel Agent, Washington University, St. Louis, Missouri.

Nebraska Number

--of--

Troubadour



THE STAFF:

GUEST EDITOR

Claire Austin Dixon, North Platte

ADVISORY EDITOR

Dr. Louise Pound, State University, Lincoln

ASSOCIATE EDITORS

John G. Neihardt, Poet Laureate of Nebraska.

Dr. Loe P. Jacks, Creighton University.

Bess Aldrich Streeter; Avery Abbott;

Theodore Diers; Martin Peterson;

Cora Phoebe Mullin.

PUBLICITY

George Grimes, Literary Editor, World-Herald, Omaha.

Dr. Lowery C. Wimberly, Editor Prairie Schooner, Lincoln

RADIO

Eugene Konecky, W.O.W., Poet Laureate

ART EDITOR--Mark Levings.

Cover and initial pages of December 1930 issue of *Troubadour*

the bibliographies as from this source, but the essay has never been referenced.

We think this was probably Eiseley's second published appearance with a prose piece. His essay "Autumn--a Memory" had been printed in the October 1927 *Prairie Schooner* (and it is also to be found in the *Lost Notebooks*). His other published work up to this point had all been the poetry appearing regularly in the "Schooner" and in other poetry magazines. In the months that follow, there would be much more poetry and he would write some book reviews, but no other prose is believed to have appeared until his short story "Riding the Peddlers" came in the Winter 1933 issue of the "Schooner."

The Nebraska issue was introduced with an essay, "Some Nebraska Poets," by Theodore Diers, secretary of the Writer's Guild. He tells of poets now writing and says, "at Lincoln, many of the verse writers are gathered around the State University and its literary magazine, the *Prairie Schooner*," Diers gives a list of these which includes "Mable Langdon, of the Fine Arts School" and continues, "One of the most promising writers

is Loren C. Eiseley, a student, already a contributor to national magazines. He is one of the editors of the *Schooner*, along with Fred L. Christensen." Eiseley's essay immediately follows this article and then the poetry begins. An unsigned article concludes the issue and tells how tough it is to write poetry in Nebraska. We can't resist giving you a flavor of this before presenting Eiseley's statement. This writer begins by telling that he doesn't know of a single Nebraskan who is making a living writing poetry and continues:

. . . The young Nebraska poet may as well know from the start that he or she is trudging an uphill road. It will be good to know this because it will free the young poet from the delusion of writing to conform to a non-existent market . . . Another fact the young Nebraskan poet must face, for his own good, is that the present era in poetry throughout the country, is one of decadence. . . because great, creative poetry cannot subsist in conformity to the literary standard of the day. . . Wasn't it Whitman who said that "Great poets must have great audiences." That's

perfectly true, and today there are no great . . . audiences for poets. You will find . . . the great . . . audiences in the stadium, thrilling to the forward pass and the line-plunge. . .

He concludes by saying that the poet must write "for beauty's sake, for truth's sake, and for self-culture." The poet is told to find a job if he needs cash and to keep his poetry separate from his commerce.

So now with that said, let us look at Eiseley's essay. Notice that he introduces his essay with lines from Robinson Jeffers, a poet who meant a great deal to him. Following the publication of this magazine, Eiseley would write two fine reviews considering Robinson Jeffers for the poetry magazine, *Voices*.

To the Midland Poet

By Loren C. Eiseley, Lincoln

"Permanent things are what is needful in
a poem, things temporally
Of great dimension, things continually
renewed or always present-- . . .
Fashionable and momentary things we
need not see or speak of."

Jeffers

Here in the black soil of the prairie country lies something still silent which should be spoken. The East has Frost, the West, Jeffers, but the prairie only murmurs in her sleep. Sometimes in the cry of a minor singer one catches the note of her voice, but only for a moment.

Born in the Midwest, I have wandered widely over its fields and wild meadows. I have helped to dig in sandbars and gully walls for the remnants of its lost peoples. Everywhere, in the bitter changing of seasons, in the monotony of her wide horizons, I have felt the heart grope for something unuttered, the word that would lift this bitterness and monotony, these autumns and sunsets to such level of high song that men would not scorn

to read it in any city and town upon earth.

But after a while one learns patience. An eager reading of great numbers of manuscripts coming in to the *Prairie Schooner* convinces me that the work of our local poets is too largely derivative from eastern sources. Too often we write with one eye on the eastern markets, in a day when the city is in ascendancy, and one of the most influential poetry magazines is concerned at the lack of interest displayed by poets in science and the machine.

That problem may be argued -- and at length. For us of the Midland villages it seems to me to be overemphasized. For all our new mechanics we still move with the seasons. Our interests lie in the earth. And our voice is just as authentic as that of the city dweller -- if, indeed, not more so. Cities have a way of crumbling after a time, but the soil remains as the permanent background of the great human drama. Its themes of love and struggle and despair and death may be old. But they are old only in the sense of permanence. They are one with human life.

Because it is only recently that we of the Midland have found time for singing we are still self-conscious. We are diffident about our land, accept too readily the easy scorn of the undiscerning. Or we think that romance passed from it with the Indian. We are wrong.

The quaint lives and hidden tragedies of our river and plains folk have yet to be spoken in narrative verse. Our sandhills and corn land have still to find expression in songs as stubbornly authentic as those of Jeffers for his native coast.

It is not from Greenwich Village that the great voice will sometime come. It will flower here out of the native soil. And the youth who will be that man will find room for his stature far more readily in a land of free singers. In meagre soil he is apt to grow stunted, or to go unnoticed when he comes.

DUES REMINDER

Dues are now being received and appreciated. Remember, if you paid after September 1, 1995 you are considered paid up for all of 1996.

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**

**Friends of Loren Eiseley
P.O. Box 80934
Lincoln, NE 68501-0934**

**NONPROFIT ORG.
U.S. Postage Paid
Lincoln, NE
Permit #440**