

# Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial Newsletter

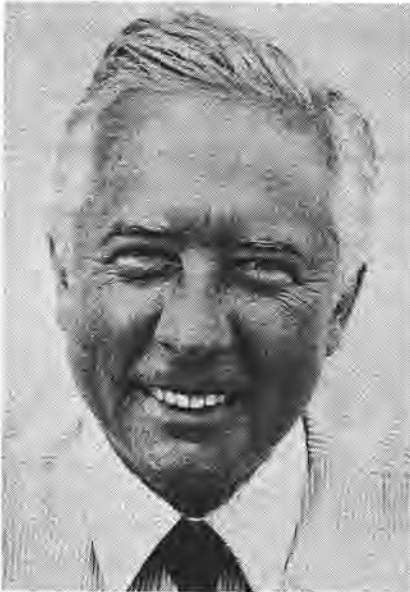
VOLUME XXX, No. 1

Editor, Mildred R. Bennett

RED CLOUD, NEBRASKA

## Smithsonian World's David McCullough Our Guest Speaker for the 1986 Spring Conference

Our guest speaker for Spring Conference will be David McCullough, a popular lecturer, teacher,



television host, and author of four widely-acclaimed books: *The Johnstown Flood*, *The Great Bridge*, *The Path Between the Seas*, and *Mornings on Horseback*. He is twice winner of the National Book Award (now called the American Book Award) — in history, for *The Path Between the Seas*, his epic chronicle of the creation of the Panama Canal, and in biography, for *Mornings on Horseback*, the life of young Theodore Roosevelt. He is winner of the Parkman Prize, the Samuel Eliot Morison Award, and the Cornelius Ryan Award. "We have no better social historian," wrote John Leonard in a *New York Times* review of *Mornings on Horseback*. *The Great Bridge* is a book so compelling and complete as to be a literary monu-

ment," said Robert Kirsch in the *Los Angeles Times*.

*The Path Between the Seas*, a national bestseller and main selection of the Book-of-the-Month Club, also became one of those rare works of history that influence the course of history. It played an important part in determining national policy on the future of the Panama Canal.

Born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Mr. McCullough was educated there and at Yale. His articles, essays, and reviews have appeared in *Audubon*, *The New Republic*, *The New York Times Magazine*, *Psychology Today*, *Smithsonian*, and *American Heritage*, for which he is the Senior Contributing Editor. He is a member of the Society of American Historians and serves on the advisory board for the Wesleyan Writers Conference and the Yale Council on Writing. He lectures widely, holds honorary doctoral degrees in both the humanities and engineering, and is known to millions as host of the public television series, "Smithsonian World." For his interview with Anne Morrow Lindbergh on "Smithsonian World," he received an Emmy.

David McCullough married the former Rosalee Barnes. They have five children and make their home in Washington, D.C. He is currently working on a biography of Harry S. Truman.

David McCullough has long admired Willa Cather's work. He will make his first visit to Catherland in May.

## 31st ANNUAL CATHER CONFERENCE

The annual Willa Cather Spring Conference will be held May 3 in Red Cloud, Nebraska.

Featured guest speaker will be David McCullough of PBS "Smithsonian World." Mr. McCullough, an avid Cather fan, has long wanted to visit Catherland. Other exciting features will be a country tour (weather permitting); lunch; a lively panel discussion of *My Mortal Enemy*, Bruce Baker, moderator, Mildred Bennett and John Murphy, panelists; and a European trip following Cather's 1902 tour presented in slides by John Campbell and Beverly Parisot.

Watch the *Omaha World-Herald* and the *Lincoln Star-Journal* for further announcements. Or write the Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial, 326 North Webster Street, Red Cloud, Nebraska 68970.

## CATHER SEMINAR POPULAR AT B.Y.U.

Marilyn Arnold and John Murphy, Brigham Young University, are team-teaching a graduate course in Cather this spring. A few seniors with advanced preparation are also allowed to take the class. Originally offered as a seminar, the class has grown to 30 students, excluding those who audit. This may be the largest Cather class ever taught!

Dr. Arnold reports a great deal of interest in Cather not only at the University but in the community as well. The co-teachers do a lot of speaking on Cather to area book clubs and other groups.

## WALTER SCHOLARSHIP AVAILABLE TO GIRL GRADUATES OF NEBRASKA

Norma Ross Walter, whose bequest in her will gives selected Nebraska high school girl graduates a scholarship to major in English, was called to active duty with the Waves in January 1943, report-



ing to Naval Training School, Cedar Falls, Iowa. She had duty at Lakehurst, New Jersey, and at the Naval Air Station, Willow Grove, Pennsylvania. Graduated from Kingston Township High School, she was a staff member for the Wilkes-Barre Record before entering the Navy. She had the honor of having five nephews also in the Navy.

One exciting facet — the students of Professors Arnold and Murphy witness diverging view points between the two regarding different ideas or approaches to the novels and short stories. This good-natured argument adds depth to the class and the kids like it. Among the students is Sally Murphy, the wife of John Murphy.

The students at B.Y.U. rejoice that Professor Murphy has accepted a full-time position on the faculty. He has been a visiting professor from Merrimack College in North Andover, Massachusetts, for the past two years.

Due to the interest and popularity of this class, B.Y.U. expects

She graduated with a B.A. from the University of California and a Master's in literature from Mills College. In 1953 she accepted a job as assistant editor of the *Grapevine*, Mare Island's Naval Shipyard's official newspaper. She became editor-in-chief in 1957 and retained that position until she retired in 1973.

During Miss Walter's editorship, the *Grapevine* won five merit awards from the Navy, an award of excellence from the Armed Forces Writers League, numerous citations from the United Crusade and commendations from the Bay Area Society of Industrial Communicators. The paper has also been commended by the Treasury Department for its bond promotion. In 1971 the *Grapevine* was awarded a plaque for its contributions in assisting the Equal Opportunity program. Miss Walters felt her greatest story was the keel laying, launching and commissioning of the Polaris submarine, The USS Mariane Guadalupe Vallejo.

Miss Walter visited the Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial and Catherland several times, and evidently liked the work here. She died in California in 1982.

that the Cather Seminar will be a continued offering in alternate years. Several students are currently doing Masters' Theses on Cather.

## WILLOW SHADE PURCHASED

In July 1985 David and Susan Parry of Washington, D.C. became the new owners of Willow Shade, Gore, Virginia.

Mr. and Mrs. Parry have opened a fine communication with our Cather Foundation in Red Cloud. They have expressed a keen interest in the historical and literary

integrity of Willow Shade. As Mrs. Parry wrote after the purchase, "I cannot tell you how excited we are about the challenge ahead of us in restoring this beautiful Greek Revival house that was once home to one of America's great writers."

The idea of retracing Willa Cather's European trip of 1902 originated with John Campbell who works in the educational department of the Veteran's Hospital in Omaha. Among those on the trip was Beverly Parisot, photographer and writer for the Omaha *World-Herald*. Mr. Campbell's expertise in finding the pertinent passages from Miss Cather's book, *In Europe*, and Miss Parisot's genius with the camera will bring you a sample of our 1985 following in Willa Cather's steps. You will not want to miss their slide program.

## THE BOOK COLUMN from the *New York Sun* October 22, 1926

Within the last 10 years Miss Cather has reduced her style to its essentials — distilled is the word.

This we feel even more strongly in the new novel (or novelette), "My Mortal Enemy" (Knopf: \$2.50). It is shorter even than "A Lost Lady" because it's more highly concentrated. There is as much substance in it, and substance of a similar nature. Myra Henshawe, technically a "good woman," is not less complex of nature than Mrs. Forrester. Mrs. Forrester the faithless, the "light woman" — or at least the polyandrous woman — dies, you remember, in the lap of luxury, "well cared for to the end," and if she ever paid the wages of sin we do not know it. She seemed simply to have fulfilled her nature. With Myra Henshawe, on the other hand, virtue brings no reward of enduring happiness. She has given up the world, has given up certain wealth and position, to marry the youth of her love. Their passionate mating has merged into a long and,

in the main, successful marriage. Henshawe has been always devoted to Myra, full of little romantic attentions. But she is compact of common sense and high emotion, while he is a sentimentalist, and she comes to hate the soft bonds with which he holds her. Toward the end, when, a nearly helpless invalid, she must depend on him as never before, her resentment finds momentary issue in speech to Nellie, who tells the tale.

Nellie wonders how the older woman can be so hard on her devotee.

"... She sighed, and looked at me wistfully.

"It's a pity, isn't it, Nellie, to reach out a grudging hand and try to spoil the past for any one? Yes, it's a great cruelty. But I can't help it. He's a sentimentalist, always was; he can look back on the best of those days when we were young and loved each other and make himself believe it was all like that. It wasn't. I was always a grasping, worldly woman; I was never satisfied. All the same, in age, when the flowers are so few, it's a great unkindness to destroy any that are left in a man's heart. . . . But I'm made so. People can be lovers and enemies at the same time, you know. We were . . . . A man and a woman draw apart from that long embrace, and see what they have done to each other." In the end she contrives not to die "alone with her mortal enemy." But Henshawe's sentimentalism protects him: he never knows.

A tale of deep emotion and understanding, Myra Henshawe takes her place at once in the cherished gallery beside Antonia, and Thea Kronborg (Tillie too) and Mrs. Forrester. A true and fine "Cather."

## AN INTERESTING COMPARISON

From the book jacket of the 1926 edition of *My Mortal Enemy*:

*My Mortal Enemy* is a work of tragic passion — an astounding

## 31st ANNUAL CATHER SPRING CONFERENCE May 3, 1986

8:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon  
Registration, coffee and kolache, Cather Foundation Art Gallery and Book Shop, 326 North Webster

8:30 a.m.

Mass — Grace Episcopal Church, 6th and Cedar  
Father Theron R. Hughes, Jr., officiating

9:45 a.m.

Mass — St. Juliana Catholic Church, 3rd Avenue and South Walnut  
Father Frank Leiblinger, officiating

10:40 a.m.

A VISIT TO CATHER COUNTRY — Tour departs from Cather Foundation Building, 326 North Webster

12:30 p.m.

LUNCH

2:00 - 3:30 p.m.

"THE PASSING SHOW" — Vet's Hall, 3rd and Cedar  
Panel: *My Mortal Enemy*

3:45 - 4:15 p.m.

SLIDE SHOW — Vet's Hall, 3rd and Cedar  
European trip following Cather's 1902 tour, John Campbell and Beverly Parisot

7:00 p.m.

BANQUET, Guest Speaker, David McCullough  
High School Gymnasium, 7th and Webster

8:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. and 3:30 - 6:00 p.m.

CATHER FOUNDATION ART GALLERY AND BOOK SHOP — OPEN  
326 North Webster

8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

CATHER HISTORICAL CENTER — OPEN  
338 North Webster

10:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. and 4:00 - 6:00 p.m.

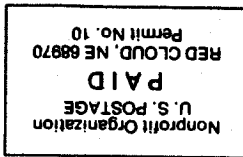
OPEN HOUSE — Cather Childhood Home, 3rd Avenue and Cedar Street; Grace Episcopal Church, 6th Avenue and Cedar; St. Juliana Falconeri Catholic Church, 3rd Avenue and South Walnut; Restored Burlington Depot, Railway and South Seward. Exhibit at Burlington Depot, Refreshments at Depot from 4:00-6:00 p.m.

Cather Center Buildings are opened courtesy of Cather Center, Nebraska State Historical Society, Ann E. Billesbach, Curator.

and profound study of a woman's heart. While directly presenting the end of a great love story, it sketches unforgettably the entire life of a woman, and the nineteenth

century surroundings that produced her greatness of character. As the story proceeds to the disclosure of the mortal enemy's identity, the reader feels the grow-

**Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial**  
326 North Webster Red Cloud, Nebraska 68970



**YOU CAN PARTICIPATE IN THE LIFE AND GROWTH  
OF THE ORGANIZATION**

- By being a Cather Memorial Member and financial contributor:  
BENEFACTOR ..... \$1,000.00 and over

**ANNUAL MEMBERSHIPS**

Patron .....	\$100.00
Sustaining .....	25.00
Family .....	15.00
Individual .....	10.00

WCPM members receive:  
Newsletter subscription  
Free guided tour to restored buildings

- By contributing your Willa Cather artifacts, letters, papers, and publications to the Museum.
- By contributing your ideas and suggestions to the Board of Governors.

**ALL MEMBERSHIPS, CONTRIBUTIONS AND  
REQUESTS ARE TAX DEDUCTIBLE**

Under Section 170 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1965

Special group memberships (such as clubs or businesses) are available. Write to the Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial for details.

**AIMS OF THE WCPM**

- To promote and assist in the development and preservation of the art, literary, and historical collection relating to the life, time, and work of Willa Cather, in association with the Nebraska State Historical Society.
- To cooperate with the Nebraska State Historical Society in continuing to identify, restore to their original condition, and preserve places made famous by the writing of Willa Cather.
- To provide for Willa Cather a living memorial, through the Foundation, by encouraging and assisting scholarship in the field of the humanities.
- To perpetuate an interest throughout the world in the work of Willa Cather.

For Newsletter Donation Only ..... \$5.00  
Foreign Mailing ..... 6.00

**BOARD OF GOVERNORS**

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ing intensity of relations between the characters which provides the climax not of an episode, but of a life.

From the back cover of the current edition:

*My Mortal Enemy* is one of the most powerful, as well as one of the sparest, of Willa Cather's novels. It is, as her biographer E. K. Brown wrote, "the novel stripped of its superfluous furnishings." The story of Myra Henshawe, a worldly woman who gives up a fortune to marry as she chooses, and then finds that her romantic gesture has not brought

her happiness, is told with an economy as extraordinary as its insight. And Myra's ultimate revelation of who her "mortal enemy" is still has the power to shock. First published in 1926, the book has been a favorite with readers and critics ever since.

**NEBRASKA STATE  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
PHOTO ROOM WILL  
TEMPORARILY CLOSE**

From May 19 to August 3 the Society's photographic collec-

tions, including those of the Willa Cather Historical Center, will be closed to the public. The closing is to allow the staff time to prepare some 50,000 images for copying on high quality microfiche. This project, supported by a major grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, will enable the Society to interlibrary loan microfiche copies of many important photographic collections. Persons anticipating a need for photographs should have their orders in before May 19. They regret any inconvenience caused by the closing.