

# Speaking of Kansas

## Washburn Center for Kansas Studies



## Fellows News

Dec. 2006

**AR399 Documentary Photography: the Essence of Community** will be taught by Mary-Dorsey Wanless on Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9:30 to 12:15, in the spring semester. Prerequisite for the course is Photo I AR220 or permission of the instructor.

This class will explore documentary photography through hands-on projects and lectures on history of the genre, photographic and documentary techniques, and artistic concepts. Students may use black/white or color film or digital capture.

### Fall 2006 Faculty Colloquium

- ◆ An archeological dig at Nicodemus.
- ◆ Cultural diversity as expressed on one Labor Day in Northeast Kansas.
- ◆ Oral interviews with Kansans about World War II.
- ◆ Paper making with indigenous plants from the Kansas Prairie.
- ◆ German dialects as expressed in and around Ellis.
- ◆ Wireless technology as economic development in Rural Kansas.
- ◆ And grain elevators, political campaigns, hospital art, food in the Little House, illiterature of the West, the relationship of art to mental and physical health.

These are the topics Washburn faculty have researched and presented in "The Matter of Kansas," a Washburn University Faculty Colloquium dedicated to Kansas Studies. Fifteen participants read together, presented research, and discussed the past and present of Kansas through rich and varied lenses. The Washburn University Center for Kansas Studies

provided research and travel money, as well as refreshments for the group.

### Hind Book Published

The Washburn University Center for Kansas Studies announced the publication of a new collection of poetry by poet Steven Hind. ***The Loose Change of Wonder*** reflects on home, place, and the folks that inhabit the Flint Hills where Hind grew up. Meditative, narrative, evocative and inventive, the poems challenge us to see beyond what we think are the Kansas people and the landscape, to what is really here. ***The Loose Change of Wonder*** is available from the Center for Kansas Studies, c/o Tom Averill, for \$9.00.

### Mapping Kansas Literature

Fellows Tom Averill and Carol Yoho team-taught "Mapping Kansas Literature" fall semester. With Tom, students read books published by the Center for Kansas Studies, then researched Kansas writers and books. With Carol, everyone learned Dreamweaver software to develop the skills to place the writers on a map of Kansas Literature. After the course, the map will become a permanent part of the Center for Kansas website.

### Archaeological Review

Margaret C. Wood announced that four Anthropology majors, Jackie Blaesi-Freed, Deborah Rumans, Rick Anderson and Dan Morrow presented papers on their archaeological research at Nicodemus, Kansas, at the Plains Anthropological Society confer-

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Deborah Altus, Human Services  
Tom Averill, English  
Robert Beatty, Political Science  
Roy Bird, KCFB  
Marcia Cebulska, Playwright  
Jennie Chinn, KSHS  
Virgil Dean, KSHS  
Paul Fecteau, English  
Jessie Fillerup, Music  
Amy Fleury, English  
William Gilliland, Geology  
Rachel Goossen, History  
Amanda Hamon, Mulvane Art Museum  
Robert Hull, Finance  
Reinhild Janzen, Art  
Jim Kelly, KTWU  
Dave Kendall, KTWU  
Robert Lawson, English  
Gabrielle Lunte, Modern Languages  
Bruce Mactavish, History  
Ed Marchant, CIS  
Judith McConnell, Education  
Mary McCoy, Biology  
Marguerite Perret, Art  
Mark Peterson, Political Science  
J. Karen Ray, English  
William Roach, Business  
Betsy Knabe Roe, Art  
Tom Schmiedeler, Geography  
Bradley Siebert, English  
Loran Smith, Political Science  
Margaret Stewart, English  
Sara Tucker, History  
William Wagnon, History  
Mary-Dorsey Wanless, Art  
Ron Wasserstein, Academic Affairs  
Tom Wolf, Biology  
Margaret Wood, Soc./Anthropology

Center for Kansas Studies  
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# Fellows News, cont.

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ence. They were excellent and represented Washburn well.

Also at the conference, Anthropology major Jason Hale was honored with the Plains Anthropological Society Native American Student Scholarship.



## Governor Anderson Visits Campus

Governor John Anderson visited Dr. Bob Beatty's PO 106 class (American Government) on Monday evening, November 20. He talked to the students about his four years in office (1961-1965) and also his years as Kansas Attorney General.

Governor Anderson, 89, took questions from Washburn students for over an hour. He told them that the only reason to go into politics is to "try and solve the continual challenges that arise in a changing society." He said that one reason not to get into public service was to "Benefit yourself or a small group. You should be in it to help the most possible people."

Dr. Beatty, a fellow at the Center for Kansas Studies, said that the visit by Anderson was a rare chance for his students to meet and talk to an integral figure in Kansas history, since it was during Anderson's terms of office that significant changes were made to the Kansas education system, including the inclusion of

Washburn into the state system.

Anderson also talked about current campaigns and their high expenses, noting that in 1960 when he ran for Governor he spent a total of \$60,000 on his campaign. Anderson's visit is part of a continuing lecture series by the political science department that has brought former governors William Avery, Mike Hayden, and John Anderson, and current governor Kathleen Sebelius to campus.



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left:  
**Governor  
John  
Anderson,**  
now and then.

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An article on Anderson's visit, "Former Governor Laments Activists," by Tim Carpenter was in the Tuesday, November 21, 2006, *Topeka Capital-Journal*.

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## Backyard Digs: A Kansas Music History Course

Fellow Jessie Fillerup, Music, has planned a general education course, Kansas Music History, developed in conjunction with the Center for Kansas Studies. It will be first taught in the spring semester, 2007. The course may involve the following experiences:

- ◆ Traveling to local sites, including archives, museums, and historical societies.
- ◆ Examining portable primary sources in the classroom
- ◆ Contributing to Kansas cultural histories by interviewing family and/or friends
- ◆ Creating a database of interviews conducted by students

- ◆ Searching database entries for common themes and narratives about musical experiences in Kansas
- ◆ Exploring the Brown v. Board case from a musical perspective:
  - Touring the museum
  - Reading oral history accounts of participants
  - Conducting follow-up interviews with participants when possible or appropriate

Taken together, these experiences will accomplish two goals: 1) helping students view music as a vital contributor to the cultures of local families and communities, and 2) inspiring students to understand the relevance of historical study in relationship to their own life experiences.

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## Favorite Kansas Books

The Kansas Center for the Book (KCFB) at the State Library of Kansas is compiling a list of favorite books by Kansans or about Kansas. This list may be used in other ways in the future.

To assist in this compilation, KCFB solicits contributions from librarians, educators, writers, booksellers, publishers and others in the Kansas book community. To contribute your favorite Kansas books, send from one to five of your most liked titles, in order of preference, to [kcfb@kslib.info](mailto:kcfb@kslib.info) by Friday, December 8, 2006. Your list will be compiled with all the others received. Those titles mentioned most often will be counted as the "favorite" Kansas books, and the list will continue in descending order.

This is not a list of classics, or literature, or best books—it is a list of favorites. The only criteria are that the author can be identified as a Kansan or the book is about our state.

# Uncle Ed's Farm Revisited

**A**s we distance ourselves as a nation from the Good War, historians have increasingly realized that the collective memory of ordinary Americans who participated in that paramount event of the twentieth century is soon to be lost. This awareness has driven historians, in the spirit of Studs Terkel, to learn as much as possible about the “central and formative experiences” of the War's relatively few remaining veterans. A trip to visit my uncle, Edwin Pahls, at his farmstead was only partially to tap his wartime memories. I primarily came to this aging agricultural veteran to learn how farming had changed from the animal-powered machinery of the pre-Depression era of his youth to the “survival of the biggest” agribusiness economy of the early twenty-first century.

I greeted Ed on a warm, windy, May day on the concrete porch of his modern ranch house constructed in the early 1970s. With flies swarming about (“If you got cattle you're gonna have flies”) I shook his swollen, calloused hand that had been molded by decades of repairing heavy machinery, toting hay bales, mending fences and applying herbicides. A bum knee has left him walking with the aid of a cane, further evidence of a life of hard physical labor. Born on September 23, 1922, Ed grew up in a two-story bungalow along with his nine siblings on the farm of his parents Mathias (Matt) and Florence Pahls about six miles south of Cawker City in Mitchell County, north-central Kansas. As the eldest son, Ed has forged and maintained the strongest and deepest ties with the land of any family member.

**T**he old homestead displayed the usual assortment of buildings found on Kansas farms in the 1920s: a Dutch barn with lean-tos, a chicken coop surrounded by mesh



above:  
Pahls' family tractors ready for work.

by **Tom Schmiedeler**,  
Geography

fencing, and a well house with attached subsurface storm shelter used for cool storage and for protection from the occasional violent storm. Today, the day-to-day activities that occur around farmsteads are still very labor intensive but not in the same way as in the 1920s because farm families then did so

**Of course, the milk had to be kept cool and the coolest place was in an icebox.**

much of their required work without the aid of self-propelled machinery, appliances and sundry gadgets now a part of rural life. Milk cows on the Pahls' farm were an example. Ed and his siblings milked 15-20 cows twice daily under the lean-tos on the north and west sides of the barn. They hand fed some of the whole milk to baby calves and separated the cream from the rest. Most of the cream was sold and the remainder of the milk was either fed to the hogs or used for home consumption. Of course, the milk had to be kept cool and the coolest place was in an icebox, a name still applied by many of Ed's

generation to the refrigerators that began to supplant them in the 1930s. The family harvested ice for their box from a large farm pond near a rural icehouse some miles south of their farmstead. Ed and his father would drill holes in the ice and hew three hundred-pound blocks that were slid onto a wagon and taken to the icehouse where straw was packed around the ice. Ice blocks on the bottom, deep in the ground, would last through the summer. Much smaller blocks were brought back to the farm house and placed in the kitchen icebox to preserve the milk and other perishables. Although ice was available from a new refrigerated icehouse in Beloit, the county seat, traveling for twenty miles for ice either by car or by wagon was impractical.

**L**ike most Kansas farmers in the 1920s, Ed's father used horses in combination with mules to pull farm implements, though the transition to internal combustion engines as a source of mechanical energy was in progress. As William Manchester noted in *The Glory and the Dream: a Narrative History of America 1932-1972* (p. 1091), “After the morning milking a farmer had two hours work with the horses before he could set about whatever he had planned for the day.” Of course, that frequently

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involved tilling the land and Ed, as a young boy, rode with his father on the plow behind the draft mules. He learned not only the art of plowing a proper furrow but also about the intelligence and sensitivity of mules. While cultivating a quarter section of corn in 1928, Ed recalled:

*We would go back and forth, north and south, in half-mile rows. And going south that ol' mule he was just barely dragging towards five o'clock. You'd turn him around and head north and he would just whip right up because he thought he was gonna go home that time. He was getting tired and every time we'd stop, Dad would have a hell of a time trying to turn him around. He didn't want to go back [down the field]. Dad felt sorry for him come around 5:30. We unhooked it and went for home. Then you had to hang on real good because he wanted to go home.*

**O**bviously, farm animals had to be fed and efforts were made to minimize this labor. Ed remembered how his father in the early evening would bring a wagon load of ear corn to the hog lot and Ed and his brothers would scoop it out to the hogs. Although the site where the boys fed the hogs was moved frequently throughout the lot, they would eventually have to gather and burn the spent cobs, usually as part of their Saturday chores. Corn in the 1920s was still handpicked and although Matt handpicked corn, he would sometimes hire professional, itinerant, pickers out of Nebraska. These men wore what was called a "peg" on their hand with which they could open the shucks, pull the ear out and throw it against the "bang board" of the wagon. The competition among corn pickers was intense.

According to Ed "there were probably three ears in the air all of the time. You ought to have seen those guys pick corn." And working quietly among the frenzy of the corn pickers



above:  
Dairy barn on Edwin Pahls farm.

were another set of professionals—the horses—which, while “hearing how close [the pickers] were getting by the bang of that corn,” pulled the unattended wagon forward with a steady gait while perfectly maintaining row. Machines indeed!

Farm labor for women was as grueling as for men. In describing the toil of a typical farm wife, Manchester (p. 1091) remarked that “Her butter

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“Farmers joined together  
and went to help each  
other out...”  
—Ed Pahls

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churn was operated by hand. She did her laundry in a zinc tub and preserved meat in a brine barrel.” In addition to cooking, cleaning and laundry, farm women like Florence and her six daughters usually maintained the vegetable garden and did

the requisite canning of the fruits of their labor. Their animal husbandry usually involved, though was not limited to, raising chickens. The cycle began in the spring with the purchase of a mixed batch of approximately three hundred white leghorn, roosters and pullets. For seven or eight weeks chicks were given a concentrated feed ration and a pill to avert potential diseases. Later, a mixed-grain feed quickly fattened the roosters while the pullets grew into

prodigious egg layers. As Ed remarked, the white leghorns were “the best for laying eggs and they were good eating, too. They were pretty much an all around good chicken.”

**A**lthough mechanization in the form of tractors and pull-type combines had initially appeared on Kansas farmsteads in the late 1920s, the Great Depression slowed the widespread adoption of these machines. The result was a prolonged transition with mixed energy resources, and a high degree of cooperation among farmers who could only afford to purchase in piecemeal what was to become the required principal components—tractor, combine, truck and implements—of a modern, mechanized, farm operation. As Ed recollected, “The farmers all joined together and went and helped each other out as they went from one place to another. We probably had ten or twelve groups of farmers that we would work with.” Within these groups farmers would share tractors, steam-powered threshers and pull-type combines.

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Gradually farmers began to acquire their own sets of machinery. Matt bought a new Baldwin pull-type combine in 1929, but it was not until "somewhere in the mid 1930s" when profits from a good wheat crop—twenty-five bushels to the acre—enabled him to purchase his first tractor to pull the combine. The Depression, at least on the Pahls farm, had ended by 1937 and, going into the early 1940s, Ed could afford to entertain thoughts of having his own fully mechanized farm operation. Shortly after his high school graduation, however, he went to work at an aircraft manufacturing plant in Wichita. His work experience there, though brief, was ideal for the Air Force and he left home in 1943 for service in World War II.

**E**d spent World War II in the Southwest Pacific Theatre. He traveled to Guam as a member of the 55th Weather Reconnaissance Squadron, and arrived while fighting continued on the far side of the island. He flew on B24L aircraft, which had been modified to carry radio and radar equipment for evaluating weather conditions on the way to and over target areas of Japan in advance of B29 bombers. The reconnaissance aircraft crew would radio the important wind speed variable (which determined the amount of fuel needed and ultimately the size of the bomb load) back to the bomber airfields on the islands. The B29s were then immediately sent airborne on their bombing missions.

Guam, one of the Mariana Islands, soon became an island fortress with hundreds of B29s based there and defended by "Black Widows," Northrops P61 fighters that flew day and night in a three hundred mile radius around the island. As Ed described, "they were looking for those damn kamikazes." Though

later ground-based as a maintenance mechanic, Ed occasionally got on board bombing runs, "which were real interesting." Perhaps the most exciting event for him in the war, though, was the arrival in early August of a large metal box housing components for "Little

Boy," the atomic bomb that was eventually loaded aboard the Enola Gay at Tinian, another member of the Mariana chain about eighty miles north of Guam. A large freighter had docked in Guam's harbor and unloaded the metal box. Before it was loaded onto one of the Guam-based aircraft that was to fly it to Tinian, a convoy of jeeps with fifty caliber machine guns approached the gate to the base. As Ed stated, "We didn't have anything like them around us so we didn't know what was going on." After locating cutting torches, an officer ordered Ed and a couple of his mates to cut the spot welds off the back door of the steel box. After complying ("Our instructor told me, 'You guys do what they want done. Don't ask nuthin' and don't say nuthin.'") and a brief inspection of the contents, the door was slammed shut and the crate hauled off and loaded onto the waiting plane. The plane took off, circled the island once and headed straight north to Tinian. "Two days later, they dropped the bomb" and Ed and his buddies then knew what was going on.

Of course, the war ended shortly thereafter and, based on the point system, Ed was allowed to begin his long trip home in December. He had his Christmas noon meal on Saipan and then embarked on a troop carrier to San Pedro, California. After a short stint at a camp in the southern Cali-

fornia desert, he boarded a troop train for Ft. Logan, Denver, which was then a War Department Processing Center before it closed in May of 1946. A friend who grew up in Denver and who was discharged with Ed



above:  
Consolidated B24L-20-FO Liberator.  
Visit the Royal Air Force Museum:  
[www.rafmuseum.org.uk](http://www.rafmuseum.org.uk)

on January 10, 1946, encouraged him and several other air force buddies to stay over a couple of days so that he could show them his town. His offer was accepted by all and the next evening the gang of ex-service-men went to a ballroom dance. There Ed met his future wife, Bernadine Baker, who, along with her father and brothers, had driven from their

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**"She was strictly farm and that's what I wanted."  
—Ed Pahls**

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home at Marienthal in west-central Kansas to attend a livestock show in the big city. Unlike Rose in the Kansas-based novel *Dust*, who, "never pictured herself on a farm" and proved to be a poor match for her farmer-husband Martin, Bernadine, according to Ed, was ideal for him because "She was strictly farm and that's what I wanted. That's the only way I think it would work is that you

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have someone who is interested in farming with you." And indeed the two were quite a good match! They were only four months shy of celebrating their sixtieth wedding anniversary when Bernadine passed away on April 7, 2006.

**A**fter their wedding in August of 1946 Ed and Bernadine lived for a few years just south of Cawker City on the old Curtis place, now part of the Glen Elder Reservoir Wildlife Area. Although the Glen Elder dam and the waters of Lake Waconda were over a decade away, Ed and other area farmers had heard rumors that eventually a dam and reservoir, ostensibly for flood control, would be built just downstream from the confluence of the north and south forks of the Solomon River only a few miles to the south. So in the early 1950s Ed and Bernadine moved to a former dairy farm on the west edge of Cawker City that had been purchased earlier by Ed's father. It was destined to become the home place for them and their five children who grew up in the expanded "I" house fronting highway 24. A dairy barn, chicken brooder house and a couple of small machine sheds completed the farmstead. Ed and Bernadine eventually bought the farmstead and the accompanying acreage from the Pahls family estate sale following Matt's death from a farm accident in 1958 and, as Ed noted, "We have been buying land ever since."

In the beginning milk cows were part of the farm operation as they had been in the past, but only for the first few years because Ed was more interested in raising cattle than milking cows. That, of course, required grassland and acreage for growing fodder crops. In the early 1950s Ed purchased a quarter section of grassland in Smith County. He also rented

over four hundred acres along the Solomon River to the southeast of the farmstead but lost access to that land when work began on the Glen Elder Dam. A plan to compensate for the lost acreage emerged in Ed's mind after "laying awake half the night." A contractor, who had rights to over four hundred acres of fertile river bottom land, was excavating soil to construct a dyke designed to prevent Lake Waconda from encroaching on Cawker City during periods of high water. Much of the acreage was overgrown with weeds the first year, a situation which violated the agreement with the Bureau of Land Management. Ed

approached the contractor with a plan by which he would be allowed to farm most of the ground in exchange for removing the weed crop. To this the contractor readily agreed.

**E**d and his sons disked the land several times, chopping weeds and then planted about three hundred acres of sumac cane, which formed a solid cover that helped smother the residual weed seed as it germinated. The cane grew six feet tall and when harvested produced 27,000 small, square bales. Several area farmers told Ed that "you're going to have to burn it; you'll never be able to sell it," but those farmers could not envision a heavy, wet snowfall, that covered the ground that winter with such a thick blanket that when Ed and the boys stood atop the new dike and gazed over the field no bales could be seen. Ed had

no shortage of customers, particularly those who had had their cattle grazing on milo stubble, but gathering the bales from the field took some ingenuity. Pulled behind his 4020 John Deere was a "three-point blade" rigged to clear the snow and drop the bails onto bare ground simultaneously. A "pop-up" loader conveniently plunked the bales onto a flat-bed truck for stacking.



*above:*  
**Edwin Pahls** with combines and wheat trucks in his machine shed.

The efficiency of this system was such that Ed and his boys loaded and shipped ten thousand bales the first day. It was a matter of survival for the large cattle herds of several ranchers and so all of the 27,000 bales were quickly sold at an estimated profit of \$48,000, a tidy sum in the mid-1960s. Ed and Bernadine used these profits and other money acquired from her family estate sale to modernize equipment and purchase more acreage as it became available at various locations in Jewell and Mitchell counties. Additionally, two of Ed's sons, Galen and Dennis, began buying land independently while continuing to work with their father on a variety of farm

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operations. Of course, few farmers make such land or equipment purchases without at least some assistance from local bankers. According to Ed, those bankers involved with his land transactions "had a lot of faith in me." Their confidence has undoubtedly been nurtured by the rich humus of accumulated equity over the years. As Ed stated

*I used a lot of my equity to buy land because it's going to turn into money. What is the use of leaving equity lay around if you can't do anything with it...It don't do you any good in the bank to look at it. You got to take chances. Most of them work, though. We have had not so good years; weather has a lot to do with it. You are fighting the elements every time you put anything out there. But we enjoy it. It's got its ups and downs like everything does.*

**O**f course, farming large parcels of land has required huge capital investment in the gargantuan, sophisticated machinery of the day. As Ed and I talked, Galen drove by in a tractor that cost him nearly \$80,000 when he bought it used some years ago. Today new combines can cost over \$300,000 and some of the larger 500-horsepower tractors are nearly as expensive. With the bigger machinery the newest farmstead buildings on the Pahls' farm are a couple of machine sheds erected in the late 1970s. On the day of my visit, one of them was chock full of Ed's three combines, 1998, 2002 and 2003 models, and a couple of aging wheat trucks with a capacity of around five hundred bushel. As Ed explained, "Combines are one piece of machinery that you don't want to have outside. They have a lot of bearings that are supposed to be sealed

tight but moisture, combined with hot and cold temperature changes, can cause condensation within them. You get out there running after a couple of days and one of them will go out." The solution is to keep the combines in the machine shed when not in use. One combine is not enough, especially if it is older. A farmer needs multiple units to har-

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The big old dairy barn, though no longer functioning as such, is still used for hay storage and for sheltering calves that might have to be isolated over the winter months.

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vest large acreage speedily but, as Ed related, "If it breaks down during harvest season, it is difficult to find people who will work on them." Like those in the shed, the typical farm wheat trucks of the 1970s and 1980s are now more or less obsolete as they have been largely replaced by semi-trailer trucks. The hopped bottoms and the nearly one thousand bushel capacity of many of these trailers have improved transportation efficiency to the point where farmers can afford to haul grain greater distances to facilities, such as the newer sub-terminal elevators, that offer higher commodity prices per bushel. These longer hauls by farmers, along with the decline in grain movement by rail associated with the demise of some short line railroads and their elevators, has increased the movement of grain by semi-tractor trailers. If you think there are more grain trucks on the roads today than ever before, it is not your imagination.

As far as the other traditional farmstead buildings, most are now either underused or no longer serve a purpose. The old brooder house was abandoned and left to the elements after Bernadine stopped raising

chickens. As Ed related, "Arthritis started bothering her hands so bad from cutting up chickens in cold water....So I said I'll just buy chickens as we need them because she couldn't stand it any longer." The big old dairy barn, though no longer functioning as such, is still used for hay storage and for sheltering calves that might have to be isolated over

the winter months. As twilight settles over these farm buildings, I am reminded of childhood play among them with my cousins. Their youthful faces appear momentarily.

**T**he future of farm operations like Ed's and those of his sons are in some ways as unpredictable as ever. Weather, water availability, and the cost of land and energy have always been important variables, but their interaction today is much more powerfully driven by a global economy than it was in the days when tractors had umbrellas. For example, consider energy prices. As rising demand drove energy costs higher, farmers adopted no till conservation methods in part to reduce soil erosion but also to lower energy costs. The success of no till conservation, however, also meant a reduction in runoff thereby lowering discharge into the region's principal rivers and reservoirs. This situation has intensified the competition between municipal and agricultural users over dwindling water supplies. The higher costs of energy, too, has initiated the construction of a number of ethanol plants throughout

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much of the state that have further driven up the demand for water as they have the price of corn, which, in turn, has increased land values. According to Ed, "Soybeans and wheat will be dragged along with corn as [global food] stocks on hand are further depleted." At least from the perspective of farm commodity prices, the future looks brighter than it has since the Russian wheat deal of the mid 1970s.

**A**s for Ed's future, he wants to continue farming as long as he can. It is his life's energy. In

reflecting on what I have learned from him, I see Ed's long and productive life as representative of a pivotal scene in the Big Picture of the American cultural experience. Perhaps the notion that World War II was the "central and formative experience" in the lives of veterans like Ed has become too catholic in its relevance; does it not depend on what their experiences actually were before, during and after the war? I like better the application of this aphorism to the scale of American national culture as it pertains to our great transformation from an agrar-

ian society with its profound attachment to and greater harmony with space and place, to a manufacturing and service oriented, urban society whose central formative experience congeals around nodes of efficiency, regimentation, and consumption. Ed and the relatively few aging agricultural veterans like him are our last living links with that former world. His farm stories enlighten our memory and instill within us the spirit of our experientially distant past.



## Chief Burnett's Potawatomi Heritage

by Carol Yoho, Art Department

**I**n 2002 I published a web page about visiting the West Topeka gravesite of Potawatomi Chief Abram B. Burnett. It is included on my Washburn University web site. The page drew the attention of Gary Sulser Wis-Ki-Ge-Amatyuk, a Prairie and Citizen Band Potawatomi and great great great grandson of Chief Burnett, and Gary's extended family.

[www.washburn.edu/cas/art/cyoho/archive/AroundTopeka/Burnett/](http://www.washburn.edu/cas/art/cyoho/archive/AroundTopeka/Burnett/)



above: Abram B. Burnett  
Kansas State Historical Society  
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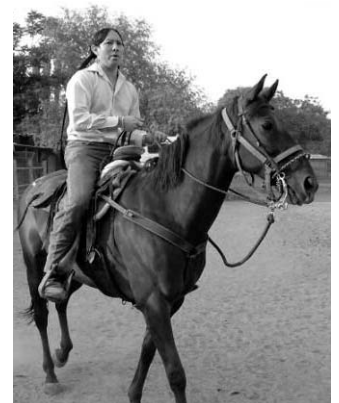
William Henry during the French and Indian Wars—through current descendants of the chief.

Born around 1811 in Michigan, Abram B. Burnett came to Kansas when his people were forced to move

Sulser Wis-Ki-Ge-Amatyuk, of Cypress, California, has been corresponding by telephone and e-mail since June, 2006. Together we are updating the on-line story of Chief Burnett to incorporate information about Burnett family genealogy, Potawatomi traditions, and rare family photos. A family tree traces Burnett's family line from Potawatomi chief Aniquiba (1720-179?)—a war tactician who helped French forces capture Fort

from their home in the woodlands of Michigan to the rolling prairies of what is now northeastern Kansas. Burnett played a key role in negotiating treaties with the whites, serving as an interpreter and guide in the West. He once owned a large portion of what is now West Topeka, including the hill known to locals as "Burnett's Mound." He died June 14, 1870, and is buried approximately one-half mile west of the intersection of 29th St. and Wanamaker Rd. in Topeka.

Sulser Wis-Ki-Ge-Amatyuk, who speaks the Potawatomi language, often dresses in traditional native regalia and shares his Potawatomi heritage as a traditional singer, dancer, and educator who gives lectures and perform-



above: Gary Sulser Wis-Ki-Ge-Amatyuk on horseback and with his uncle, Rick Castaneda-Burnett.

—cont., p. 9



ances at museums, libraries, schools, and universities. He has ridden horses from a young age and occasionally works in the movies as a stunt rider. He also attends native pow wows as a northern traditional dancer, and is involved with ceremonies performed only in private among traditionals. Sulser Wis-Ki-Ge-Amatyuk is current keeper of the Burnett sacred bundles. He shares photos and descriptions of some artifacts contained in these bundles on the web site.

Sulser Wis-Ki-Ge-Amatyuk and others of the Burnett band have sent a family bundle to the Yoho family. This bundle includes a handmade dance shawl—royal blue, with traditional Potawatomi woodland floral embroidery and long fringes along its edges—and a pipe. The pipe stem is carved by hand in a traditional Potawatomi "twist" motif. The pipe

bowl is of Catlinitic pipestone, a reddish stone quarried in Pipestone, Minnesota, and favored by tribes when carving

bowls for their pipes. The Yoho pipe features a tanned piece of buffalo hide, and real Golden Eagle feathers tied to the stem with strips of rawhide.

The Burnett web site continues to grow in collaboration between Sulser Wis-Ki-Ge-Amatyuk, his aunts, uncles, and cousins, and myself.



## CKS Meeting Summaries, Fall 2006

### Thursday, August 31

After a round-the-table session of introductions and update of activities of the fellows, Center director Tom Schmiedeler briefly discussed the Center budget for the fiscal year and noted a previous expenditure commitment of \$750 made to the World War II Oral History Project and a forthcoming commitment of \$500 for an honorarium for the Kansas Day speaker. In regard to a potential Kansas Day speaker, Schmiedeler stated that he had made contact with Paul Harris, U.S. correspondent for British newspaper *The Observer*. Mr. Harris has most recently written "Ode to Kansas," an article about his experiences in Kansas and the perception of Kansas held by non Kansans in the U.S. and abroad. Schmiedeler will be requesting other nominations from fellows in the next month or so.

In other budgetary items, Tom Averill asked and was awarded \$500 in support of honoraria for classroom visits by distinguished Kansas writers. He also suggested that the Center help underwrite some of the research costs assumed by participants in the fall faculty colloquium "The Matter of Kansas." After some

discussion, fellows agreed that each participant could claim up to \$100 to cover costs associated with their research, with the total expenditure to colloquium participants not to exceed \$1,000 in Center funding. Tom also mentioned that he has nominated Denise Low as Poet Laureate. Low has written and edited books published by the Woodley Press. Tom also discussed briefly Kansas poet Seven Hind's new book *The Loose Change of Wonder*.

Betsy Knabe Roe requested and received funding of \$100 for the Kansas Native Plant Garden to be installed in front of the Art Building. The Garden will be used in conjunction with her class Papermaking with Native Kansas Plants, the students of which will provide the labor for the garden installation. Reinhild Janzen alerted fellows to two exhibits at the Kauffman Museum in North Newton: the traveling exhibition "K is for Kansas" and the new permanent exhibition on "Mennonite Immigrant Furniture: The Vistula Delta Tradition." "K is for Kansas" uses letters of the alphabet to illustrate significant features of the cultural and natural history of Kansas.

Jesse Fillerup from the Department of Music requested input from

fellows on a new Kansas Studies course examining music history in Kansas.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 1:30.

—Minutes compiled by  
**Tom Schmiedeler, Director**

### Thursday, November 16

After a short discussion of the current budget, Tom Schmiedeler, announced that Paul Harris, journalist for the British newspaper, *The Observer*, will give the Kansas Day presentation on Friday, January 26. Title and time of the presentation will be forthcoming. Some discussion followed as to the activities for Mr. Harris on the day of his presentation and Schmiedeler requested input from the Fellows on them.

Mary-Dorsey Wanless announced that she will be teaching a Documentary Photography course (AR 399). The topic will be "mom and pop" businesses and community gathering places.

Marguerite Perret encouraged Fellows to view the Faculty Art Show at the Mulvane Art Museum. The show will run until December 7. Rachel

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Goossen issued a call for judges for the annual *History Day* competition to be held in February. Those interested in serving as a judge are encouraged to contact Rachel.

Tom Averill reported on the poetry circuit. Lindsborg native A.J. Rathbun read at Washburn on Tuesday, November 21. Rathbun, now living in Seattle, is poet and the kitchen editor of Amazon.com. His reading is sponsored by the English Department and the Center for Kansas Studies. Topeka High graduate, Ben Lerner, was a finalist for the National Book Award in poetry for his most recent collection *Angle of Yaw* (Cop-

per Canyon Press). Poet Denise Low, Professor of English at Haskell Indian Nations University, has just been named Poet Laureate of Kansas, nominated for the position by Tom Averill. She will serve June, 2007, until June, 2009. One of her goals is to write a column featuring a Kansas poem each week.

In regard to funding requests, Tom Averill submitted a request for funding in the amount of \$300 for the purchase of Dream Weaver and Paint Shop Pro software. Fellows approved these purchases. On behalf of Mark Peterson and himself, Bob Beatty requested up to \$700 to fund

expenses involved with the continuation of their project on political ads. Funding would be used for costs associated with travel to the Political Communication Center at the University of Oklahoma and for fees associated with tape compilations of political campaigns. Fellows approved funding the request. The meeting adjourned at approximately 8:45.

—Minutes compiled by  
**Tom Schmiedeler, Director**



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*Speaking of Kansas*  
Center for Kansas Studies

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