Idaho Humanities Council awards 38 grants at fall meeting

The Idaho Humanities Council, the non-profit, state-based affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities, awarded $92,043 in grants to organizations and individuals at its recent biannual meeting in Boise. Thirty-eight awards include five Research Fellowships, six Teacher Incentive Grants, seven Planning Grants, 14 public humanities programs, including six projects funded through the National Endowment for the Humanities We the People program exploring American history and culture, and six awards to libraries for the NEH Picturing America program exploring American art masterpieces. The following projects were funded:

MAJOR AND MINI GRANTS

Alaska poet and environmental writer Gary Holthaus and musician Lauren Pelon will travel to Idaho in March to present a thoughtful program of music and readings called “The Story of Music, Stories from Home,” in Boise, Lewiston, and Driggs.

Picasseries II (Red Wing, Minnesota) was awarded $6,685 to bring musician Lauren Pelon and poet Gary Holthaus to Idaho to present a unique series of programs of music and spoken word called “The Story of Music, Stories from Home.” They will make presentations in Lewiston, Boise, and Driggs in March of 2010. Pelon is an internationally recognized singer and musician of ancient and modern instruments and Holthaus is a poet, essayist, and scholar. Pelon will play as many as 20 different instruments and Holthaus will read from works of such diverse poets and philosophers as Scott Momaday, Gary Snyder, Scott Russell Sanders, Confucius, and Yupik Eskimo elders. The project director is Lauren Pelon.

Lewis-Clark State College (Lewiston) received $2,000 to help support the 23rd annual Native American Awareness Week scheduled for March 8-12, 2010 in Lewiston. This event features PowWows, panel discussions, storytelling, a banquet, and speaker presentations on topics related to preserving the culture and history of Native Americans. The project director is Bob Sobotta.

The College of Arts and Sciences at Idaho State University (Pocatello) was awarded $2,000 to help support funding of a special retrospective issue of the journal Picaresque II (Red Wing, Minnesota), which recently lost funding due to state budget cuts. This 40th-year anniversary edition will consist of two commemorative volumes featuring a sampling of some of the best essays and articles published over the last four decades. The first volume was launched in early November; the second will be released in the spring of 2010. The project director is Sharon Sieber.

The Salmon Arts Council (Salmon) received $1,500 to host the Improv Shakespeare Company of Seattle, on January 16, 2010, at the Sacagawea Center in Salmon. The evening will feature actors in full Shakespearean costume, offering a performance, workshop, and lecture, followed by audience discussion. The community will have an opportunity to learn more about Elizabethan times through an interactive experience. The project director is Mary Cerise.

Idaho State University’s Reading Project (Pocatello) was awarded $2,000 to help bring Greg Mortenson, Director of the Central Pennsylvania Islamic Center to Pocatello to speak about the CIA and his book Three Cups of Tea. The New York Times bestseller is about the author’s work to build schools in remote areas of Afghanistan and Pakistan over a 15-year period. Mortenson’s book has received numerous awards, and Mortenson was a nominee for the Nobel Peace Prize this year. He has established over 90 schools, providing education to over 34,000 students, the majority of whom are girls. The letter was the product of a former public school teacher and frequent contributor to regional newspapers, and as I recall it went something like this: “John Steinbeck—well known, fellow traveler, wrote propaganda novel, Grapes of Wrath. Why does UI English professor promote such trash? Do our tax dollars promote Communism?” Miss Hughes’s letters were clipped and concise. Some years thereafter I encountered her at one of the town’s small cafes. She was a large woman stuffing manila envelopes into a large brown envelope. I talk about it’: 25 Years About It,” the statewide library reading-discussion program that has brought library patrons and scholars together face to face to discuss books from various themes over the course of a season. The program has been a partnership between the Idaho Commission for Libraries and the Idaho Humanities Council since its inception, with loyal and valuable support for more than a dozen years from US Bancorp. For a quarter century, the program has been administered by ICL librarian Peggy McClendon, who recently has retired, replaced by Betty Hoffman. Peggy annually has solicited applications from libraries all over the state to participate in the five-book program, and she has recruited “Road Scholars” to lead discussions in some of Idaho’s most rural towns, often over snowy roads for modest honoraria. Library patrons are extremely grateful, and despite the distance and inclement weather, scholars enjoy meeting with and leading discussions with patrons about books from many themes. In 1994, the IHC awarded Peggy McClendon its award for “Outstanding Achievement in the Humanities” for all she’s done for the program. On behalf of the Idaho Humanities Council, the many participating “Road Scholars” and many libraries throughout the state, we thank Peggy for her service and wish her well in her future endeavors.

University of Idaho English Professor Ron McFarland has been involved in the LTAP program nearly since the beginning, and in commemoration of the program’s silver anniversary, we asked Ron to write a little about his experiences as a “Road Scholar” for the program.

Unfortunately, I have lost the letter to the editor of the Lewiston Morning Tribune dated sometime in the early 1990s, and protesting my upcoming visit to Elk River (population about 150) to lead discussion of John Steinbeck’s Grapes of Wrath for the “Let’s Talk About It” series. The letter was the product of a former public school teacher and frequent contributor to regional newspapers, and as I recall it went something like this: “John Steinbeck—well known, fellow traveler, wrote propaganda novel, Grapes of Wrath. Why does UI English professor promote such trash? Do our tax dollars promote Communism?” Miss Hughes’s letters were clipped and concise. Some years thereafter I encountered her at one of the town’s small cafes. She was a large woman stuffing manila envelopes into a large brown envelope. I read many of her letters on the opinion pages over the years, and I do not recall one that approved of anything. She died about ten years ago at the age of 88, and I find that I rather miss her clipped notes of disapprobation.
From the Director
Exploring the life and work of Mark Twain in 2010
By Rick Ardinger

One hundred years ago this April 21 will mark the death of American humorist Mark Twain. He came in with Halley’s Comet in 1835 and went out with it in 1910, as the story goes. Although Twain’s work continues to be read and re-read, and new collections and editions of his work continue to appear—even a previously unpublished three-year work in 2009—the new year will bring some new works by and about Twain in commemoration of the centennial. Always interested in educating through conversation, the IHC is planning its own activities for teachers this summer.

Idaho teachers are invited to apply to attend the IHC’s week-long summer institute “Why Mark Twain Still Matters: Exploring the Mississippi River Books,” July 11-16, on the campus of the College of Idaho in Caldwell. Teachers may apply online by March 1 (see related article on page 9). Room, meals, and texts will be provided.

“We’ve lined up five of the finest Twain scholars in the nation to come to Idaho for that week, and we are working on a schedule that includes some evening public events that will be of interest to general audiences. Although the schedule is not as yet complete, check our website this spring for updates—or, better yet, send your email address to (info@idahohumanities.org) and we’ll email you a notice about any free public lectures when we finalise the schedule.

One of our scholars, for example, Laura Skandera-Trombley, president of Pitzer College and author of Mark Twain in the Company of Women (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994) among other works, has a new biographical work forthcoming in March from Alfred Knoof on Twain’s last years. Another of our scholars, Gary Scharnhorst of the University of New Mexico, recently compiled a complete collection of interviews Twain gave over the course of his life.

We don’t need a centennial to explore the works of a literary giant, but the occasion does offer a timely opportunity to reflect on a writer who to this day is often the target of library patrons still seeking to ban his work. Through humor he tackled our worst hypocrisies with an acerbic vengeance. Religion, race, war, gender inequality, American imperialism, “the Gilded Age,” the U.S. Congress—we can only imagine his take on the healthcare debates.

Participating teachers in our institute will focus intensely on four classics, Huckleberry Finn, Tom Sawyer, Life on the Mississippi, and Pudd’nhead Wilson, but the institute will explore the entire gamut of Twain’s work, the time in which it was written, his use of humor to influence or comment upon social issues, and his enduring legacy. If you know a teacher of any grade or discipline who would benefit from this experience, please let him or her know of this great opportunity.

CSI’s Jeff Fox elected IHC Chair

At its fall meeting, the board of directors of the Idaho Humanities Council elected Jeff Fox, Executive Vice President and Chief Academic Officer at the College of Southern Idaho, as IHC’s new chair. Fox has served on the IHC board for six years. He will serve a two-year term as IHC’s chair.

He succeeds Ron Pisaneschi, Director of Content for Idaho Public Television, who served two-year terms as IHC’s chair. Fox has worked for the College of Southern Idaho for 22 years. Prior to becoming Academic Officer at the College of Southern Idaho, he served as chair of the English, Languages and Philosophy Department, and before that a professor teaching composition, modern Humanities, Japanese, and British Literature.

Fox also is an avocational musician who plays guitar, bass, and saxophone. Over the years he has played in big bands and small groups. He also has been involved off and on in jazz radio for over 20 years. Currently, he is a host on JazzWorks, a nationally syndicated jazz radio broadcast on National Public Radio stations across the country.

He began his association with the Idaho Humanities Council in the mid-1990s as a scholar in the “Let’s Talk About It” program (see related article), and for many years traveled to libraries around the Magic Valley in that capacity. In 2003, he joined the Idaho Humanities Council as an academic board member, and he has served for several years on the Executive Committee.

Three new members elected to IHC board

The Idaho Humanities Council (IHC) Board of Directors elected three new members to its 20-member board from Lewiston and Boise to serve three-year terms on the board starting November 1, 2009.

Lisa Brady (Boise) is an Associate Professor of history at Boise State University. She fills a SW Idaho Academic vacancy. Lisa holds M.Ed. and Ph.D. degrees from Montana State University and the University of Kansas respectively, and has been teaching at BSU since 2003. Lisa is a specialist in environmental history and served as a lead scholar under the 2008 summer teacher institute “A Word for Nature: Exploring Environmental Literature.” Lisa also served as IHC’s consulting scholar and lecturer for the tour of the Smithsonian traveling exhibit “Between Fences,” when it toured six Idaho communities in 2008-2009. Her book War upon the Land: Nature and Warfare in the American Civil War is forthcoming from the University of Georgia Press.

Marc Johnson (Boise) rejoins the IHC board as an At-Large member after a three-year hiatus. Johnson is President of Gallatin Public Affairs, a Pacific Northwest public affairs/relations management firm. Marc holds a degree in journalism from South Dakota State University. The former press secretary and Chief of Staff for Idaho Governor Cecil Andrus, Marc served earlier as an IHC board member and as two-term Chair of the Council. He has lectured at IHC institutes for teachers and through IHC’s Speakers Bureau. He also served as Chairman of the board of the national Federation of State Humanities Councils, advocating for the work of the 56 humanities councils in the states and territories. In early 2009, he offered Congressional committee testimony in support of funding for the National Endowment for the Humanities and the state councils.

Christopher Rigs (Lewiston) is an Associate Professor of history at Lewis-Clark State College. He fills a North Idaho Academic vacancy. Chris holds M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in history from the University of Colorado and has been teaching at LCSC since 2001. He is a specialist in Native American history and has published extensively in his field. Over the years, he has participated in and served as a consultant for many IHC-funded humanities projects and programs, dealing with Native American history, the History of the American West, America in the 1960s, and the Vietnam War.

The IHC board is comprised of Academic, Public, and At-Large members representing all regions of the state (N, SW, and SE). Four members are appointed by the governor. Terms are three years, renewable once. Several members rotate off the board each fall as terms expire and new members are elected. The IHC board will fill several vacancies in the fall of 2010.

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The Idaho Humanities Council, a nonprofit organization, receives funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities and from other foundations, private corporations, and individuals. IHC’s mission is to increase the awareness, understanding, and appreciation of the humanities in Idaho. IHC publishes this through educational projects for the general public and various target audiences. The Council plans and conducts projects on its own and in concert with other organizations such as universities, colleges, libraries, civic clubs, professional associations, historical societies and museums, and other cultural, educational, and community entities. IHC also provides grant support for humanities projects throughout Idaho.

Opinions expressed in Idaho Humanities do not necessarily reflect views of the Idaho Humanities Council or the National Endowment for the Humanities.

MISSION STATEMENT
The mission of the Idaho Humanities Council is to deepen understanding of human experience by connecting people with ideas.
25 Years of Talking about Books and Ideas
Peggy McClendon
Let’s Talk About It Coordinator (retired)
Idaho Commission for Libraries

The Idaho “Let’s Talk About It” (LTAI) project is celebrating 25 years of bringing rural Idahoans and program scholars together to read and discuss books in public libraries. The project has been sustained through a partnership between the Idaho Commission for Libraries and the Idaho Humanities Council, with special funding from US Bank for the past dozen years. Thousands of participants, 275 program scholars, and 83 libraries have supported programs with their desire to read, connect, and grow. The project’s 14 humanities-based “themes,” focus on diverse topics, including Idaho literature, American classics, multicultural literature, aging, and the environment. Multiple copies of over 130 titles are part of the LTAI collection.

When I was hired in 1985 to coordinate “Let’s Talk About It,” the Idaho State Library (now the Idaho Commission for Libraries or ICFL) had just received a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities to implement a pilot project in six southwestern Idaho libraries. The project planners wanted to create humanities-based programs for adults that could easily be replicated in rural Idaho communities and hosted by public libraries. Library programs for adults were scarce, and librarians had neither the time nor resources to develop such events. We thought then, as we do now, that once out of school, rural adults have few continuing education opportunities, and cultural offerings were limited. The book club phenomenon was nascent in 1986, and a user-friendly interface for the Internet was still years away.

The success of the pilot project led to the establishment of a statewide project which has subsequently been funded by the Idaho Humanities Council, with the exception of a two-year grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities from 1990-92. Typically, 15 libraries participate each program year (September through May).

How it all began
The American Library Association (ALA) launched the nationwide “Let’s Talk About It” program in 1982 with a $1.5 million grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. The program model developed from a book discussion group that began in the mid-1970s among friends in a small Vermont town. This was the catalyst for “Let’s Talk About It,” a national humanities program that would bring adults to the library to discuss books and to explore contemporary life and culture. LTAI participants read five books related to a single humanities theme and discussed them under the guidance of a humanities scholar. Scholars play a central role in LTAI programs—they are the humanities link between the book and the reader.

The LTAI model lifts informal discussions to a more rewarding level by introducing critical essays on the books and having the scholar help connect text, concepts, critique and scholarship.

In the past 25 years, the model has been adopted—and adapted—by hundreds of libraries across the country. LTAI has reached more than four million people around the United States.

Let’s Talk About It comes to Idaho
In 1984, representatives from the Idaho State Library, the Association for Humanities in Idaho, and the Idaho Library Association attended national training and wrote a grant to fund a six-series pilot project in southwestern Idaho. I was hired to coordinate the pilot and write a grant to continue funding. The theme that was used—“Family”—focused on the contemporary American family since World War II.

In my tenure at the ICFL, I have had the pleasure to work with librarians across the state—from Bonners Ferry to Montpelier—and program scholars in Idaho, eastern Washington, and northern Utah who have dedicated themselves to taking their expertise in the humanities from the college campus to small town gatherings of friends and neighbors looking for an opportunity to expand their reading horizons. Both scholar and reader have been equally enriched by the experience.

A favorite quote that succinctly sums up the LTAI experience comes from a program participant, who said, “Hearing others’ perspectives challenged me to think outside my box.” LTAI has helped many readers “read outside the box.” As I prepare to retire, I look back in appreciation for being a part of bringing over 460 series and 2,280 programs that provided intellectual stimulation and a sense of community to thousands of Idahoans who have participated. It is a legacy of words, ideas and fellowship that I hope continues for 25 more years.

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Meg Lojek, Programs Librarian
McCall Public Library

Idaho Humanities

Saving McCall residents from the throes of cabin fever

After the deep dark of Winter Solstice, after the weather takes on a sharply dry cold, Valley County resi-

dents still anticipate months before they can touch bare earth again. It is at this point in the year that McCall Public Library hosts the “Let’s Talk About It” series. And over the years, I would credit this program for saving countless McCall resi-

dents from the throes of cabin fever.

“Let’s Talk About It” is the only opportunity for our patrons to continue their quest for life-long learning and to connect with fellow citizens under the guidance of a visiting scholar. I have been honored to coordinate McCall’s programs, since for years—decades, to tell the truth—my own mother has been one of the visiting scholars, enjoying her discussions with readers around Idaho. She has passed on her love for reading with others to me, and “Let’s Talk About It” has been the perfect venue for us to continue the tradition.

In the grocery store, at restaurants, walking down the street…for 10 months now, patrons have been asking me when the next program will be, what theme we will use, and will the visiting scholars be. They have not forgotten last year’s program, and they are eager for more.

Meg Lojek, Programs Librarian
McCall Public Library

(Continued from Page 1)

before, perhaps talking two or three weeks to cover it in a college class, so this will be an entirely different sort of experience. We’ll meet for an hour and a half or so, and after I’ve made a few sweeping statements about the Depression era setting, about Steinbeck, and about the novel’s stature (published in 1939, it won a Pulitzer Prize in 1940), I’ll introduce a few discussion questions to get the talk underway. If the group resembles most of those I’ve met with over the years, a couple of them will have finished the novel—perhaps more than that. Maybe two or three will not like the novel, while two or three may think it’s wonderful. If we’re dealing with an unfamiliar book like Robert M. Utley’s *Billy the Kid: A Short and Violent Life*, as we were in Kellogg about five years ago, no one will have encountered it before, but a classic like *The Grapes of Wrath* is likely to have something of a track record with the group, and such is the case in Elk River this wintry night nearly seventeen years ago. Almost at once I hear protests to the effect that ours is a bowdlerized version of *The Grapes of Wrath*, a censored text, edited and cleaned up for squeamish readers. Not so, I insist. At which point the groups would reconvene and in the final fifteen minutes or so the discussion of Joanne Harris’ *Baklava* (Continued from Page 1)
Jeff Fox, Chair
Idaho Humanities Council

LTAI “I learned much more than I taught”

Let’s Talk About It! was one of the most important programs we had ever done, and what excited me was the value and importance of those discussions that are riddled with what might be considered “inappropriate language.” I admit to some trepidation later, when I’d write my report to Peggy McClendon, “Talk About it.” Two days later, when I’d write my report to Peggy McClendon, I’d find myself thinking in the conversational mode: “They paid attention very well. A wonderful time was had by me. Hurray for me.”

Of course there are times when the one-man-show can hardly be avoided, like one evening in Orofino where a great group of people were really eager. When my wife Georgia Tiffany (now also an LTAI presenter) visited there last March, we agreed that it was one of the best groups we’d ever encountered, right up there with the Priest River book club. But that—when I was presenting James Welch’s novel, Fools Crow, and it happens that I knew Welch pretty well, and had written and published commentaries on his work, and had taught this novel on at least a couple occasions with some success. So I was loaded for bear. What did I not know about James Welch and this book?

Well, what did it matter, since only four people showed up that evening, including the host, Chris Ashdon and his wife? Georgia had finished the novel, as had Chris, and one of the other two in attendance had nearly finished it. An elderly lady from the assisted living center where we met joined us just to listen. Chris and I read a word of the novel itself, appearing to be occupying a different mental space. We talked about it. My wife plunked out a few tunes on the piano. Several folks from the center passed by, asked me brief false hopes, inasmuch as they did have books in hand, but I believe they were headed for a Bible study meeting. We began. But no sooner did we begin than a youngish couple walked through the door and joined our group—a 50% increase in participation, just like that! But right away I noticed that their copy of Fools Crow had a different provenance from ours, so I asked to have a look at it. It turned out that these nice folks had read a different Fools Crow. Their book was the nonfiction account of the life of a Sioux medicine man named Fools Crow, who died in 1989. Welch’s novel concerns a Blackfeet leader, who also becomes a medicine man, but during the 1870s; it was published in 1986. Thomas E. Mails’s Fools Crow, but on an interview conducted in the 1970s, was published in 1990. The couple decided to stay, though, and from time to time I would draw them into the discussion by asking such clever questions as, “Now, what do you think your Fools Crow

(See LTAI, Page 5)

LTAI: “I learned much more than I taught”

Susan H. Swetnam
Idaho State University
LTAI “Road Scholar”

How many “Let’s Talk About It” programs have you taught?” my doctoral student, Steven, asked last month as he considered this. Who knows? Twenty-five years’ worth, but haven’t kept track. Maybe a hundred, a hundred and fifty. What I do remember is that I led thirteen discussions, when scholars were in short supply. Why? What’s kept me, and what kept my late husband Ford, coming back for more, putting in all those freeway miles late at night in winter snows and autumn chills and nights plastered with blooming spring stars—nights when the real work of an early class at the university loomed dead ahead the next morning?

Because the people count on those sessions to stretch their minds, as evicted by nights like the one when Ford drove through a horrific blizzard to Challis to find much of the adult population waiting eagerly. As evicted by all the times I’ve been pinned down by the punch and cookies by readers who didn’t want the discussion to end, loving their enthusiasm even as I yearned for the road. Because those readers bring fresh, sometimes shocking, sometimes incredibly moving perspectives to familiar books. “Oh, my python does that,” somebody told Ford in Idaho Falls regarding a work by Flannery O’Connor. In Chubbuck, when Yoshiko Uchida’s Desert Isle was on the agenda, two dignified Japanese couples arrived ready to share their Idaho experiences during World War II. That night, we simply listened. Because, when one of the books I wrote is up, the people want to pick my brain about the writing process, many asking because they have manuscripts under their beds or in their heads. Because I might do just a little toward helping at least a few of those books along. Because of the librarians—those hard-working, dedicated, imaginative people who always remind me, especially when my own energy is flagging around mid-semester, what vocation means. Especially Peggy. We’ll all miss you.

LTAI brings quality education to our rural area

Jean Elsasser, Volunteer Coordinator
West Bonner County Libraries

There are still more series to enjoy, many more books to read, and many more patrons who’ve yet had a chance to participate. This program brings quality education to our rural area and allows people to interact and enjoy the company and diverse opinions of others in the community. LTAI continues to foster support for our libraries. We truly appreciate the efforts of the Idaho Humanities Council, the Idaho Commission for Libraries and our local sponsor, Panhandle State Bank, to bring entertainment and education to the adults in our area.

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The West Bonner Libraries in Priest River and Wendell have enjoyed enthusiastic audiences of “Let’s Talk About It!” programs. Our first program was held in the fall of 2000 when we were working on establishing a library district in the area. Our meetings took place at Panhandle State Bank, our community sponsor. There was a large turnout for the “Tough Paradise: The Lewis and Clark series” and the program was quite a positive effect on our efforts to become a library district. This program is fun. The scholars are the greatest. People enjoy the interaction with the scholars. They bring so much to the discussion and add background and depth to the readings. “Let’s Talk About It!” also has been the impetus for the formation of other “BookTalks” at each branch. The discussion groups of all ages, turn to the Idaho Commission for Libraries for books for our libraries. It’s a great resource for them. The diversity of the series is wonderful. The Lewis and Clark series was fascinating with both Allen Pinkham from the Nez Perce tribe and Jack Nisbet, author of Mountain’s Eye.

(Continued from Page 3)
might have had to say about this?"

Certain features of the “Let’s Talk About It” program have become constants and may (or may not) attract new audiences. Demographics of the participants, as I have seen them, would look something like this: Women are the majority, average age of 50, white, middle class, and dis- tinguishingly, definitively small-town. The largest cities I have visited tend to be small towns, with some small cities like Moscow and Coeur d’Alene; the resort town of Sandpoint’s population now reaches to about 8,000 (it was around 5,500 in 1990); Bonners Ferry, Grangeville, and Orofino boast populations between 2,500 and 3,500; at least a half-dozen of the towns I have visited list populations under a thousand resi- dents, with the Nez Perce River being the smallest at 150 or so (Wiepe follows at around 370). Although I have given presentations in Orofino and Wiepe when nearly half the group has been male, most of the LTAI sessions I’ve been involved with tend to support the demographic stereotype that women are the readers in the family or in the community. Sometimes, teasingly, I’ll ask, “Where’s all the guys?” The usual answer is, “My husband only reads stuff like Tom Clancy or sci-fi.”

So, should we create a sort of “For Men Only” theme? Peggy McClendon and I have talked about this guy-theme idea off and on, but I’m inclined to agree with her that it would be risky. It might be fun to try, though.

A similar question might apply to one other major piece of the demographic puzzle: the age thing. With the almost famous exception of “that time when” an English teacher at Sandpoint High invited (coerced?) his class to attend the LTAI ses- sion on Emily Dickinson, for which my wife Georgia was the presenter, youth has remained essentially ignored. The films are primarily written, hands-on workshops, lectures and local history projects. "Let’s Talk About It” is that end is to arrange book discussion groups at the community level. The local library seems an obvious choice, but sometimes a librarian may feel like a cashier at Safeway on Saturday — slammed. She or he may have little or nothing in the way of formal time or even space like a Ten Commandments class, so make it “a couples thing” …

The public library is the project director. 

The University of Idaho (Moscow) received a $1,750 grant to help fund the eighth annual Native American Film Festival, titled Sapaq'ay Limno Cinema. The festival will be held at Moscow’s Kenworthy Theater on March 26-27, 2010. The festival helps facilitate dialogue on issues of history, race, and contemporary Indian affairs. The films are primarily written, directed, and acted by Native Americans. The open- ing evening will feature a drum song welcome and remarks by Nez Perce Elder Horace Axtell. The project director is Janis Johnson.

The University of Idaho School of Journalism and Media Studies (Moscow) was awarded $5,660 to develop and professionally videotape a Readers Theatre presentation exploring the history of court cases sur- rounding freedom of the press. The project director is Jack Tars. ISU Reading Project encourages students and community members to read the same book, and offers opportunities for discussion among ISU students and the community. Activities will begin in November and continue through February. Bonnie Frantz is the project director.

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The University of Idaho School of Journalism and Media (Moscow) was awarded $5,660 to develop a Readers Theatre presentation exploring the history of court cases surrounding freedom of the press. The project director is Jack Tars. ISU Reading Project encourages students and community members to read the same book, and offers opportunities for discussion among ISU students and the community. Activities will begin in November and continue through February. Bonnie Frantz is the project director.

The Wallace District Mining Museum (Wallace) received $4,500 to help digitize its collection of artifacts and oral histories related to the mining history of the Silver Valley. The museum is entering the second year of a four-year project to digitize electronically cata- log the collection. The museum is under the management of Clancy or sci-fi.” This automation proj- ect is to improve collections management, provide access, and improve interpretation. The project director is Jim McReynolds.

Idaho Public Television (Statewide) received $12,300 to help support statewide broadcast of the 22nd season of the American Experience series. This award-winning series will feature new shows this season, including eight new documentaries on the life of Dolly Madison, the beginnings of the modern environmental movement, the stories of James Earl Ray and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., the “Triangle Fire” (the largest industrial disaster in American history), the life of Wyatt Earp, the conflicts among early American dinosaur paleontologists, the history of the American whaling industry, and the WW II bombing campaign against Germany. Five programs examining the 1950s also will be re-aired. The project director is Penny Taylor.

The Provo Theatre Company (Provo, Utah) was awarded $3,000 to complete a documentary film titled "Moscow Classics." The film focuses on Professor Louis Perraud, a recently retired Classics professor at the University of Idaho. Perraud was the university’s last remaining Classics professor, and after he retired in 2008, the Classics major was discontinued. While the film focuses on Perraud as a teacher, the story also explores the decline of education in the Classics throughout the U.S. The film is expected to be completed in early 2010. Craig Harline is the project director.

The National Oregon/California Trail Center (Montpelier) was awarded $3,500 to help support a Heritage Festival to take place in July of 2010 in conjunction with the Smithsonian Journey Stories exhibit. The Center is one of six locations in Idaho hosting the traveling exhibit. Festival events will include all of the local historical exhibits, a film and photography display, hands-on workshops, lectures and local history projects. Becky Smith is the project director.

The Institute for Pacific Northwest Studies at the University of Idaho (Moscow) was awarded $2,500 to help support publication of a book exploring Idaho history and culture entitled Idaho’s Place: Rethinking the Northwest. The show will tell the story through essays, photographs, and oral histories that offer “scholarly investigation as well as popular understanding” of Idaho history with- in the broader context of the Pacific Northwest. Featuring essays by some of Idaho’s best historians, the book is expected to be released by the University of Washington Press in 2010. Adam Sowards is the editor and project director.

The Basque Museum (Boise) received $6,500 to help develop a major new exhibit entitled “Hiddens in Plain Sight: The Basques” that will be on display at Ellis Island and at the Boise Museum in 2010. The exhibit will showcase Basque culture, origins, language, immigration changes, and the history of the Basque people and their place in America. The exhibit is scheduled to debut at Ellis Island on October 1, 2010 – April 30, 2010, and will be in Boise thereafter for the next couple of years, including during JaiAlai: International Basque Games of North America in July 2010. Patty Miller is the project director.

Kootenai-Shoshone Area Libraries (Hayden) received $1,750 to bring independent film festival "Let’s Talk About It," and Kootenai-Shoshone Area Strobel, to Idaho for a tour of a new one-woman show titled Western Women: Pioneers and Prostitutes. Beginning February 22, 2010, in Coeur d’Alene, the festival will tour to public libraries in Moscow, Post Falls, Pinehurst, Sandpoint, and end in Bonners Ferry on March 1. It will explore the lives of five pioneer women, Dr. Bethenia Owens-Adair, Oregon’s first woman doctor; Mathilde Schroeder, who homestead- ed a ranch near Keuterville, Idaho; Sister Loyola, one of six nuns from Belgium to begin a boarding school in the 1840s; and three women trapper in Oregon, Molly O’Don, a prostitute in Murray, Idaho; and Charley Parkhurst, a woman stagecoach driver in California. Melinda Strobel is the project director.

The IHC board awarded five Research Fellowships to Idaho scholars. The board awards a limited number of Research Fellowships once a year to assist humani- ties scholars in major research for articles, books, and other scholarly efforts.

Keith Petersen, Idaho State’s first Moffit Scholar (Moscow), received $5,000 to complete a biography of U.S. Army Captain John Mullan (1830-1909), who led the crew in the 1860s on the Mullan Road, a 1,400-mile road across northern Idaho, the first engi- neered highway in the west, stretch- ing more than 600 miles from Walla Walla to Fort Benton, Montana. The road became the corridor for the first telegraph line in North Idaho, the Northern Pacific Railroad, Highway 10, and later Interstate 90.

Ron Hatzenbuehler, Idaho State University Professor of History (Pocatello), received $3,500 to complete a book-length compara- tive study of Thomas Jefferson and Abraham Lincoln. Hatzenbuehler states that while there are numerous...
The Garden City Library (Garden City) was awarded $1,000 to support their “Belts for Books” program, a mobile literacy project to bring the library to neighborhoods where residents would not have the opportunity to come to the library, specifically serving Hispanic and non-English-speaking families and at-risk students.

Douglas StanWiens, Timberline High School teacher, received $3,100 for “The Boise Architecture Project,” an on-going award-winning program for advanced placement history courses and history club members. The main program is a website with posted photos and short summaries of Boise’s historic buildings. It has existed for about four years and has documented over 150 buildings. This year they plan to document about 50 more buildings that connect a community. The project goals are for students to learn local history, appreciate different architectural styles, and contribute their research to the community. This year they will also expand the project to include a third-grade collaboration with Collister Elementary School.

Madeline Love, English and History teacher at Skyline High School (Idaho Falls), was awarded $500 to help support the Field Science/English class, incorporating Senior English research and writing with a laboratory science class. The paper is a required senior research paper. Students may write on any subject dealing with Idaho and the environment. The students share their work with parents and also are involved in a Museum of Idaho project.

Sandra Gray, Washington Elementary teacher (Pocatello), received $1,000 to bring Gary Hogg to the school for a one-day workshop on writing. Hogg will present an all-school assembly, conduct grade-level writing workshops to each class, and then present a workshop to teachers. The program will also include an ISU student working in the classroom with students on writing skills, and a workshop on new writing skills presented by ISU professor Janice Kug.

PICTURING AMERICA GRANTS

The National Endowment for the Humanities awarded several Idaho libraries the Picturing America package of 40 large, high-quality reproductions of selected American masterpieces. These pictures allow citizens to learn about history and culture in a fresh way. The program introduces library patrons to their area’s unique cultural and historical heritage, and provide an opportunity for them to gain a deeper appreciation for American history. The Idaho Humanities Council awarded six grants for library programs exploring aspects of these masterpieces.

American Falls District Library (American Falls) received $500 to support a Veteran’s Day commemoration, featuring a scholar lecture and an essay contest. Harriet Newlin is the project director.

Burley Public Library (Burley) was awarded $500 for a presentation by Idaho State University Political Science Professor David Adler on the Bill of Rights. Valerie Bane is the project director.

Jerome Public Library (Jerome) received $650 for both student and adult art classes incorporating American masterpieces. The project is to organize against the notion that the battle front and home fronts during WWII were somehow entirely separate from one another.

John Casida, Idaho Humanities Council grant administrator, said, “The program is designed to provide funds for specific activities related to the Human Rights activities conducted by the school district in collaboration with the Boundary County Task Force. In order for an application to be considered, it must present a unique and compelling project that connects both the classroom and the community. The project is to support planning for an archival project that will include interviews with survivors and support scholar consultants Keith Petersen, Mary Reed, and Tom Blanchard in setting long-range goals to enhance interpretation of the museum’s collections. Valerie Bowen is the project director.

Idaho Humanities 6

The University of Idaho (Moscow) received $1,100 to support research and planning of a U1 History Week for high school teachers. The project director is Ian Chambers.

Idaho State University (Pocatello) received $1,100 to support planning meetings with two “pilot” community presentations in American Falls and Lava Hot Springs for the “Big Read” program which will culminate in a community reading day. The project director is Sherry Diesfety.

Rathdrum/Westwood Historical Society (Rathdrum) was awarded $1,000 to support a planning meeting with several consultants to develop an interpretive plan for renovating the old Kootenai County jail and the annex near it as a museum with historical displays and research space. Ellen Larsen is the project director.

Cassia County Museum (Burley) received $1,000 to support scholar consultants Keith Petersen, Mary Reed, and Tom Blanchard in setting long-range goals to enhance interpretation of the museum’s collections. Valerie Bowen is the project director.

Folk singer Rosalie Sorrels (Boise) was awarded $1,000 to support preparation of a booklet to accompany an album of traditional and regional folk music. The booklet will provide extensive interpretive information about the history and stories behind the music on the recording. Sorrels is the project director.

Trailing of the Sheep Festival (Hailey) was awarded $6,000 to support planning for an archival project that will assemble 13 years of the recorded history of the legendary sheepherders and traditional accounts of sheep life around Idaho and the west. The planning team will include Western writers and center scholars. The project director is Mary Austin.

Anita Schachtell (Boise) received $750 to support creation of a CD based on the books Latinos in Idaho and Jesus Urguedes: Idaho’s Premier Mulatto. Alice Garza, Kathy Hodges, and Maria Carmen Gambielle will serve as consultants. The ultimate goal will be a workshop on corridos (storytelling through music), with the students and local musicians creating a series of corridos about Hispanic historical figures over the past 150 years. The project director is Ana Maria Schachtell.
National Book Award-winner Timothy Egan, author of *The Big Burn: Teddy Roosevelt and the Fire That Saved America*, gave the 6th Annual Northern Idaho Distinguished Humanities Lecture in early October at the Coeur d’Alene Resort to the largest audience in six years in Coeur d’Alene—more than 400.

Earlier in the day, Egan also spoke to 350 students at Coeur d’Alene High School. Prior to speaking at the Resort, Egan greeted more than 150 Benefactors at the beautiful home of Denny Davis and Kathy Canfield-Davis, sponsored by the Hagadone Corporation. Enormous thanks goes to longtime supporters Mark Brinkmeyer and the Idaho Forest Group and to North Idaho Title for generously sponsoring the evening. IHC thanks media sponsors Idaho Public Television and the Coeur d’Alene Press for promoting the event, and Borders Books for facilitating books sales (with a portion of the sales going to support IHC programming).

The IHC is grateful to Benefactors for their added generosity, including the following firms and individuals that purchased Benefactor Tables: North Idaho College, Gallatin Public Affairs, Idaho Forest Group, North Idaho Title, Hagadone Corporation, Witherspoon Kelley, Virginia and Graydon Johnson, Intermax Networks, Joe and Lynn Morris, Coeur d’Alene Press, Idaho Public Television, and Scott and Mary Lou Ross.

Thank you also to Martin Wells and Susan Briel, Gary Williams and Joy Passanante, Emily Duvall, Fran Bahr, David and Jan Moseley, Joe and Sharon Lind, Sid and Kathy Smith and Dean and Cindy Haagenson for the student scholarship donations.

We thank IHC’s northern Idaho board members, Kathy Canfield Davis, Mindy Cameron, and Fran Bahr, and the planning committee: Virginia Johnson, Ginny DelLong, Cindy Haagenson, Nancy Flagan, Fay Sweeney, Judy Meyer, Katie Sayler and JoAnn Nelson, whose dedication to the humanities in their community made this evening possible. Lastly, tremendous thanks to Karen Voyer for her instrumental assistance in helping to arrange, plan, and coordinate this event.


Thank you to some very generous individuals and organizations who helped share the evening with area students through their donations to the student scholarship fund: Jake and Alice Forsythe, William and Judith Collins, Futura Corporation, McDevitt and Miller, Hawley Tronell, Northwest Nazarene University, Idaho Public Television, Jim and Louise McClure and Steve and Carol Trott.

Thank you to all the IHC’s underwriters for helping make a very successful evening. Thank you to the OfficeMax Boise Community Fund for generously sponsoring the evening. In addition, IHC’s media sponsors The Idaho Statesman, Boise State Radio and Idaho Public Television were invaluable partners. Hotel 43 also generously donated a gorgeous suite for Mr. Holzer.

Brent and Carol Lloyd opened their lovely home to 200 Benefactors for a pre-dinner reception. The reception was generously supported by the Boise Co-op and Jim Wiser. An additional thank you goes to Laura Jonas and Barnes & Noble for facilitating book sales, with part of the proceeds going to support IHC programming.

The IHC also is grateful to the following firms and individuals that purchased Benefactor Tables: Holland and Hart, Promontory Road group, the College of Idaho, The Idaho Statesman, Gallatin Public Affairs, Futura Corporation, McDevitt and Miller, Hawley Tronell, Northwest Nazarene University, Idaho Public Television, Jim and Louise McClure and Steve and Carol Trott.

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Finally, tremendous thanks to the event volunteers including Pam Fonshill, Kate Riley, Mark and Julie Baltes, Spence Holley, Phyllis Ward, and Linda Perkins.

Lincoln scholar Harold Holzer spoke to more than 600 in Boise

Abraham Lincoln historian Harold Holzer gave the 13th Annual Distinguished Humanities Lecture in late-October in Boise to more than 600 people. Holzer’s talk “Why Lincoln Still Matters” was very successful evening. Thank you to the Boise Co-op, OfficeMax, Boise Community Fund, Hagadone Corporation, Witherspoon Kelley, Virginia and Graydon Johnson, Intermax Networks, Joe and Lynn Morris, Coeur d’Alene Press, Idaho Public Television, and Scott and Mary Lou Ross.

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Photos courtesy of Donnel Schmidt.

1 – The Big Burn author Timothy Egan speaks at the Coeur d’Alene Resort.
2 – Benefactor Reception hosts Denny Davis (L) and Kathy Canfield-Davis pose with Timothy Egan.
3 – Timothy Egan pens a signed book back to a patron.
4 – Author Timothy Egan signs a book for a student at Coeur d’Alene High School.
The Idaho Humanities Council announces the release of The Idaho Songbag, a CD of more than two dozen historically based songs inspired by Idaho people, places, and events from the mid-19th century to the present. Performed by musicians as diverse as folk music icon Pete Seeger to Salmon River miner “Dugout Dick” Zimmerman, The Idaho Songbag features songs about mining, murder, labor disputes, politics, protests, and cowboy laments, and comes with an illustrated 72-page booklet of lyrics and stories behind the songs.

The CD selections are the work of Nampa resident and “song catcher” Gary Eller, who several years ago began traveling around the state, thanks to an IHC grant, to search archives large and small, scour the internet, meet with musicians in public “song swaps,” and gather recordings of musicians both well known and unknown who have either written original music or passed along old songs they’ve learned from others. The Idaho Songbag is a compilation of polished studio recordings, wax cylinder, reel-to-reel, and cassette recordings, and includes a recent field recording of a gathering of musicians performing in their kitchens and living rooms.

“It’s a work of historical preservation in the tradition of Alan Lomax to gather this sampler of music unique to Idaho,” says Rick Arlingder, Executive Director of the Idaho Humanities Council. “It’s a labor of love for Gary, who came to the IHC with a proposal to travel the state in search of Idaho’s musical heritage—and one song has led to another.

So far, Eller has gathered more than 1,000 Idaho songs. Inspired by Idaho folk singer Rosalie Sorrels’ songbook Way Out in Idaho (1991), published for Idaho’s statehood centennial a generation ago, Eller met with Sorrels, recorded himself singing several songs from her out-of-print book, and found hundreds more obscure and little known songs he has recorded for the first time.

“This is not a CD featuring Idaho’s best-known musicians,” Eller says. “That’s really not its purpose. With a couple of exceptions, most featured on The Idaho Songbag are not professional musicians. The project is about the content of some historically based songs you won’t find elsewhere, not so much about who performs them.”

Two exceptions are recordings by folk icon Pete Seeger, singing a song he wrote in the 1970s protesting further dam development in Hell’s Canyon, and beloved Idaho songwriter Pinto Bennett, who performs a song based on a story told to him by his own grandfather about a revenge-killing, Basque Country fugitive who settled near Mountain Home during the Great Depression.

Idaho City’s Beth Wilson, for example, sings a song that was first published in the Idaho World newspaper in the 1880s. Fellow Idaho City musician John Sorrels, recorded himself singing several songs from his out-of-print book, and found hundreds more obscure and little known songs he has recorded for the first time.

Have dinner with Award-winning historian and teacher Elliott West in Idaho Falls on April 22

Historian Elliott West, author of many award-winning books about the history of the American West, including The Last Indian War: The Nez Perce Story (Oxford University Press, 2009), will be the guest speaker at the IHC’s 3rd Annual Eastern Idaho Distinguished Humanities Lecture and Dinner on Thursday evening, April 22, at University Place in Idaho Falls. Tickets will go on sale soon on IHC’s website at www.idahohumanities.org or by calling (888) 345-5346.

The event so far is supported in part by the Post-Register, and IdahoPublicTelevision, which have supported IHC’s Distinguished Humanities Lecture in Idaho Falls since the beginning.

A professor of history at the University of Arkansas, West is also the author of Growing Up with the Country: Childhood in the Far Western Frontier (1989); The Way to the West: Essays on the Central Plains (1995), which received the Western Heritage Award; and The Contested Plains: Indians, Goldseekers, and the Rush to Colorado (1998). The latter book received five awards including the PEN Center Award.

Recognized for his exemplary teaching as well as his scholarship, West has been recognized by his university and by the Carnegie Foundation for outstanding teaching, and currently is one of three national finalists to be recognized in 2010 as the best college teacher in America. A contender for the Cherry Award, West is in the running to receive a $200,000 prize sponsored by Baylor University for inspiring classroom teaching.

West’s latest book, The Last Indian War is an unforgettable portrait of the Nez Perce War of 1877, the last great Indian conflict in American history. It was, as West shows, a tale of courage and ingenuity, of desperate struggle and shattered hope, of injustices at the hands of the U.S. government combined with the settlers’ invasion to provoke this most accommodating of tribes to war.

Having researched government, military records, and contemporary interviews, West offers a riveting account of the flight of 800 Nez Perce, including many women, children, and elderly, across 1500 miles of mountains and terrains. He gives a full account of the battles—and the unexpected turns, brilliant stratagems, and heroism that occurred along the way. And he brings to life the complex characters from both sides of the conflict. The book sheds light on the war’s legacy, including Chief Joseph, whose speech of surrender, “I will fight no more forever,” became as celebrated as the Gettysburg Address.

West’s presentation will be the third annual Idaho Distinguished Humanities Lecture in Idaho Falls. Past speakers have included presidential historian and biographer Robert Dallek, (2008), and Pulitzer Prize-winning historian Laurel Thatcher Ulrich (2009), author of the Midwife’s Tale and Well-behaved Women Seldom Make History.

The IHC hopes the annual lecture will become a signature cultural event for residents of Idaho Falls and the surrounding area.

For more information about the dinner and lecture, contact the Idaho Humanities Council at (888) 345-5346, or purchase tickets online at www.idahohumanities.org.
IhC summer teacher institute to explore works of Mark Twain

Smithsonian exhibit on Journeys to tour Idaho in 2010-2011

‘With Malice toward None’: Bridging Cultural Divides

Idaho Humanities 9
The poet Walt Whitman once described America as an “athletic democracy.” What he meant was that American politics in the 19th Century was rugged and vigorous and spirited. So, in some ways there is nothing new in what we are witnessing today. Indeed, the 19th Century was riddled with nativism, anti-immigrant, anti-Catholic sentiment and, of course, toleration for human degradation implied in slavery and indenture service.

We have progressed but not as far as we should or can, and, as history has shown, societies can regress as well as advance. Citizen vigilance is thus every generation’s responsibility.

“Rancorous, socially divisive ideological assertions are being made with such frequency that few are thinking through the meaning or consequences of the words being used. Public officials are being labeled ‘fascist’ and ‘communist.’”

One member of Congress has even suggested that colleagues be investigated for “un-American activities.”

I love Whitman’s celebration of the common man and his artist’s sense for our post-Civil War frontier democracy, particularly his use of the athletic analogy.

I come from a state that has a football team, the Iowa Hawkeyes, that at least so far has played remarkably well this year. What is impressive is that the coach and his players, like the best of American heroes, are taught to play hard as a unit and by the rules. Their opponents—Wisconsin, Michigan, Penn State—are rivals rather than enemies. The teams respect each other. The referees throw flags if they see a clip or a player is off-side.

By contrast, in politics there are few rules and no referees. The public has to make judgments influenced by some candidates who have larger megaphones, often paid for by well-heeled interest groups, than others. Nevertheless, the stakeholders in American politics should be to emulate the best in American competition—coaches like Joe Paterno and Kirk Ferentz, Tom Osborne and Bud Wilkinson, players like Nile Kinnick, Bill Russell, Bill Bradley, Shane Battier, Flo Hyman, and Tim Tebow.

In politics we sometimes assume great leaders are presidents. Some like Lincoln and FDR have been. But I have an affinity for those never elected to the White House. Sen.夫 Floyd, Bill Russell, Bill Bradley, Shane Battier, Flo Hyman, and Tim Tebow. In politics we sometimes assume great leaders are presidents. Some like Lincoln and FDR have been. But I have an affinity for those never elected to the White House. Sen. Floyd, Bill Russell, Bill Bradley, Shane Battier, Flo Hyman, and Tim Tebow. In politics we sometimes assume great leaders are presidents. Some like Lincoln and FDR have been. But I have an affinity for those never elected to the White House. Sen. Floyd, Bill Russell, Bill Bradley, Shane Battier, Flo Hyman, and Tim Tebow.
Time for a change? Please let us know by checking the appropriate box below and returning with your label:

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SNNGBAG  
(Continued from Page 8)

South Bannock County Historical Center receives Elsensohn Award

The South Bannock County Historical Center (SOBANCO) in Lava Hot Springs is the 2009 recipient of the “Sister Alfreda Elsensohn Award,” a $10,000 award of pooled resources of the Idaho Humanities Council, the Idaho State Historical Society, and the Idaho Heritage Trust annually recognizing outstanding work of an Idaho museum. Representatives of all three organizations met in Lava Hot Springs on Friday, November 20 to present the award to Museum Director Cathy Sher.

Earlier in the day Governor Butch Otter was in Lava Hot Springs to declare the town Idaho’s “Capital for a Day,” and to issue a proclamation declaring November 20 “South Bannock County Historical Center Recognition Day.”

The surprise award is in recognition of outstanding service by an Idaho museum in the preservation and interpretation of local history.

The award is named after Sister Alfreda Elsensohn, who founded the Historical Museum at St. Gertrude in Cottonwood. Sister Alfreda sought to collect, preserve, and interpret artifacts from Idaho County and the surrounding area to better educate the public. It is her vision of Idaho museums as exciting, interactive, interpretive, and educational institutions that the Award seeks to recognize.

The 2008 award went to the Bonner County Historical Society Trustee Jim Johnson.

What Are You Reading?

In each issue of Idaho Humanities, several readers tell us what they’ve been reading and what they recommend.

Reader: Sue Thilo
Occupation: Community Volunteer, Hayden
Book: Peace Like a River by Leif Enger

Peace Like a River was a stack of books by my bed for nearly three years. After dusting it off and reading the first 18 pages, I fully understood why Leif Enger’s first novel is a recommended favorite among fiction readers.

This deeply affecting story is told by Reuben Land – through his eyes as an 11-year-old boy in 1960’s Minnesota and as an adult looking back. He describes a tragic incident that unravels his humble family, ultimately turning their world upside down. The storyline is simple, but I found myself inspired by its underpinnings of family love, heroism, human kindness, and miracles.

Reader: Larry Hunter
Occupation: Attorney at Moffatt Thomas
Book: Lincoln President-Elect; Abraham Lincoln and the Great Secession Winter 1860-1861 by Harold Holzer

The premise behind Harold Holzer’s book is a description of the “interregnum,” as he refers to the four-month period that existed between the presidential election and Lincoln’s inauguration. In the best of times, such a gap could be difficult; after the election of 1860, it was monumental.

Holzer effectively challenges the widely held thought that the interregnum was a period in which Lincoln did not distinguish himself. He would not commit himself to the burning issues facing his presidency; such as secession, compromise on slavery, and the choice of his cabinet members. However, as Holzer points out, Lincoln “succeeds in maintaining a masterly inactivity and public silence to prevent the spread of slavery, privately fought a bare-knuckle political battle to bar unprincipled compromise, and brilliantly introduced himself to the press and people of the North with a new look, new image, and a new style of informal oratory along a triumphant voyage to the capital.”

Holzer succeeds in educating us to the problems Lincoln faced and how he masterfully confronted them. It is not a quick read, but it is well organized, interesting, and a further testament of Lincoln’s political genius.

Reader: Harald Wyndham
Occupation: Poet and publisher of Blue Scarab Press, Pocatello, Idaho
Book: Grand Canyon and other Selected Poems, by Amil Quayle

Grand Canyon is a strong collection of over 100 poems, many of them river poems written by the experienced boater, Amil Quayle, who lives in St. Anthony, Idaho, but spent many summers running the Colorado River as a professional guide.

Those experiences plus a family rich in troubles and interesting characters put no small amount of ‘true grit’ into these poems, which are true in the way Frost’s poems are true. They are not so much made things as the byproducts of a full life, gathered from the wild ride through the rapids of the day.

Anyone who has gone down big water in kayak, cataraft or pontoon, clingling to paddles, ropes and hand-holds for dear life while running white thunder between rocks will relate to these poems. Anyone who has lost friends to that water will find resonant thoughts here as well. As Amil says about the Grand Canyon: See how puny the words are / Do not believe them / Go there.