



Wyoming Library *Roundup*

Fall 2004

War of the Roses

author Warren Adler

Writing
Wyoming
Authors tell all!

David Romtvedt
Wyoming's Poet Laureate



The art of the open West

Gracing the Wyoming Library Roundup cover is the art of Linda Lillegraven. This painting, *Past, Present, Future*, shows Highway 30 stretching into the distance alongside the traces of its old, abandoned right of way. It is one of the Laramie artist's favorite pieces, and the image she chose to provide for the *Deep West* anthology cover. (story p. 13)

"Here where rainfall is sparse and the plough doesn't venture, embankments and cuts may remain visible for centuries," Lillegraven says. "Those faint marks on the land may be our legacy to a future when our civilization will be a distant mystery."

Lillegraven skillfully paints the open spaces of the West. It's not a universal taste in art, she admits. Some find her landscapes uninteresting, or even intimidating, as if they have "an atavistic feeling that there's no tree to climb and the lions are going to get me."

As a child, her artistic bent was fed by the library. Every two weeks her family went, and she was drawn to the many wonderful art books. Before she had access to a museum, the books showed her what was out there, what could be done with art. Books opened a wide world of possibilities for her.

Nevertheless, she didn't initially think of art as a serious pursuit until 1974 when she was doing fieldwork as a graduate student in biology. Working in the northeastern corner of Utah in an area along the Green

River, those around her thought constantly of the science they studied. But she fell in love instead with the big, open spaces and thought constantly of how she could paint them.

That summer, her path shifted from science to art, which she discovered could be a more serious pursuit than she expected.

It took several years, a few detours, marriage to a now-retired University of Wyoming professor and a move to Laramie before she finally found herself painting the open landscapes she loved. She's now lived in Wyoming for 21 years, and has painted landscapes since 1987.

Lillegraven does little plein-air. "Many artists feel that the only way to 'capture the moment' with freshness and spontaneity is to work outdoors from start to finish," she says. "But we all have different goals and priorities in what we're trying to accomplish. The search for harmony and balance is important to me, and that requires time for reflection."

"I like to think of my paintings as a kind of poetry," she continues. "A good poet can use familiar words and standard grammar to help us see beauty where we had never noticed it, or to deepen our understanding of our place in the universe. Such poems aren't written 'on

the spot.' They are revised and refined, set aside and taken up again, and turned over in the mind until they are as spare and perfect as the poet can make them."

"Who would want to paint
the prairie?
... What is there to see here?
The sheltering wall of the
mountains is so very far
away. There are no trees to
frame the view. There are
not even any men on
horseback to tell a fragment
of a story and provide scale
to the composition. There's
not a cloud in the sky. There
is only the land, which is only
itself, and the short grasses,
and the lengthening shadows
whose color no one can
define."

Wyoming Library Roundup

Fall 2004

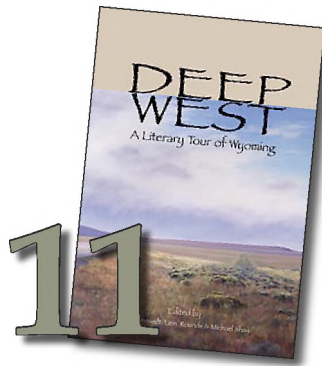
Wyoming Center for the Book Coordinator,
Susan Vittitow 3

Wyoming Library Association
President, **Debbie Schlinger** 4

A Wyoming connection to Hollywood
War of the Roses author,
Warren Adler 5



TABLE OF CONTENTS



Center for the Book and the
National Book Festival 8

John Cole, National CFB Director 10

A Literary Tour of Wyoming
Deep West 11

Award winning novelist,
Mark Spragg 12

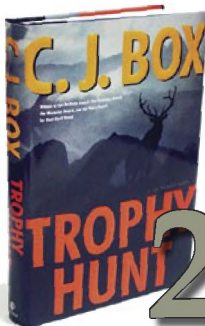
New Wyoming Authors
Steven Grace, Jeffe Kennedy and
Janet Meury 15

Library Book Clubs 18

Wyoming
12^ Books of Christmas 20

Crystal Stratton's
Maple Date Scone recipe 25

David Romtvedt, Wyoming's
Poet Laureate 26



take a look...

You'll notice the name-plate on the cover of the fall Wyoming Library Roundup has a slightly different appearance. It was recently redesigned for two reasons. First, we wanted to avoid any confusion with the Western Writers of America's fine publication, the Roundup Magazine. Second, we wanted to better reflect the fact that our magazine tells the story of libraries and how they make our lives and communities better. We hope you like the new look.

Wyoming Library Roundup

Official publication of the
Wyoming State Library,
the Wyoming Library Association,
and the Wyoming Center for the Book
Volume 46, Number 2, Fall 2004

Tina Lackey
Editor and Designer

Susan Vittitow
Assistant Editor and Writer

Wyoming State Library
Publications and Marketing Office
2301 Capitol Avenue, Cheyenne, WY 82002
307/777-6338

Wyoming Center for the Book Advisory Board

Sue Cannon
M. Greg Carlson
Sandra Donovan
Norleen Healy
Melanie Francis
Judy Lissman
Eric Nye
Carl Schreier
Mike Shay
Sen. Mike Enzi, honorary member
Lesley Boughton, ex officio
Norma Cloyd, secretary

Wyoming Library Roundup is published quarterly by the Wyoming Library Association and the Wyoming State Library. All rights reserved. Contents of this magazine may not be reproduced without the express permission of the publishers.

E-mail us at roundup@state.wy.us



The Wyoming Library Roundup is produced in part with Library Services and Technology Act federal funds awarded to the Wyoming State Library program from the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

Center for the Book Coordinator



After the *Wyoming Library Roundup* hit the mailboxes this summer, our office received appreciative emails, notes and calls from retired and active librarians, board members and even our state legislators. “Loved the new *Wyoming Library Roundup*. Congratulations and thanks for bringing it back,” one person wrote. “What a classy publication,” read one note; another person said she “enjoyed it from cover to cover.”

Perhaps the one that touched me the most was in response to the “Story time” article: “I am thrilled to know that what I have loved doing all these years has an official-sounding name: emergent literacy. When we see our story time ‘graduates’ coming to use the library during their school years and into adult years, bringing their preschoolers to the story time now, winning prizes in school, or excited about a book, we are so proud to have given them a positive feeling about libraries.”

That “positive feeling” is why we plan to tell the story of libraries in every issue. Each quarterly issue will have a specific theme. The summer kick-off issue explored children and libraries. Now, we focus on authors and on the Wyoming Center for the Book at the Wyoming State Library. Look for issues on genealogy, business, health and other relevant topics in the future.

The Wyoming Center for the Book celebrates and promotes writers, readers and the state’s literary heritage. Wyoming is or has been home to a tremendous number of talented contemporary writers – Mark Spragg, Warren Adler, Annie Proulx, David Romtvedt. The list continues at length, and the literary quality of their writing is a genuine source of pride for the state. Many are featured in the Center for the Book anthology, *Deep West: A Literary Tour of Wyoming*.

If librarians are the keepers of stories, the people we feature here are their creators. Both groups have a natural connection. More than one writer will tell you they started writing by reading voraciously as children, and they read what they found at their library.

The Wyoming Center for the Book advisory board recognized this connection when it met in September and chose to focus on those projects that will promote authors and strengthen their ties with libraries. Devoting the fall issue of the *Library Roundup* is one way we hope to do that.

On a personal note, I’ve long had a love of books and always felt most at home among librarians and writers, so the re-launch of the *Wyoming Library Roundup* has been exciting. Twelve years ago when I was in my wandering phase of life – waiting tables, working as a ski bum and driving a forklift in Alaska– I could not imagine a job writing about how wonderful libraries and books are. My thanks go to the Wyoming State Library and the Wyoming Library Association for bringing the *Library Roundup* back and to all of you for giving me so many good things to write about.

Susan Vittitow,
Coordinator, Wyoming Center for the Book
at the Wyoming State Library

WLA President



Freshly back from another great Wyoming Library Association (WLA) conference, how can we keep inspired and focused as the months continue and the days drive on?

I believe the task easy because I know first hand Wyoming librarians have incredible character, convictions and camaraderie. We believe we're in this together. While we may each represent varying aspects of librarianship, our passion and values unite us.

As the newly elected president of the Wyoming Library Association, I am excited to help further the goals we set at our fall convention: to energize our members, to empower them for learning and leading

and to enrich their personal lives and the lives of those they serve. It was wonderful to see these goals take root at our convention, but even more satisfying to know the attitudes and actions to accomplish them will continue throughout this year.

Certainly the publication of this *Wyoming Library Roundup* and its focus is one proof of our beliefs and passions. Yes, books and literacy bring us together. We build on that foundation with the teamwork of WLA sections and committees and the networking, friendships and sharing that takes place around the state. Finally, the day to day efforts of each talented, committed librarian must be given credit.

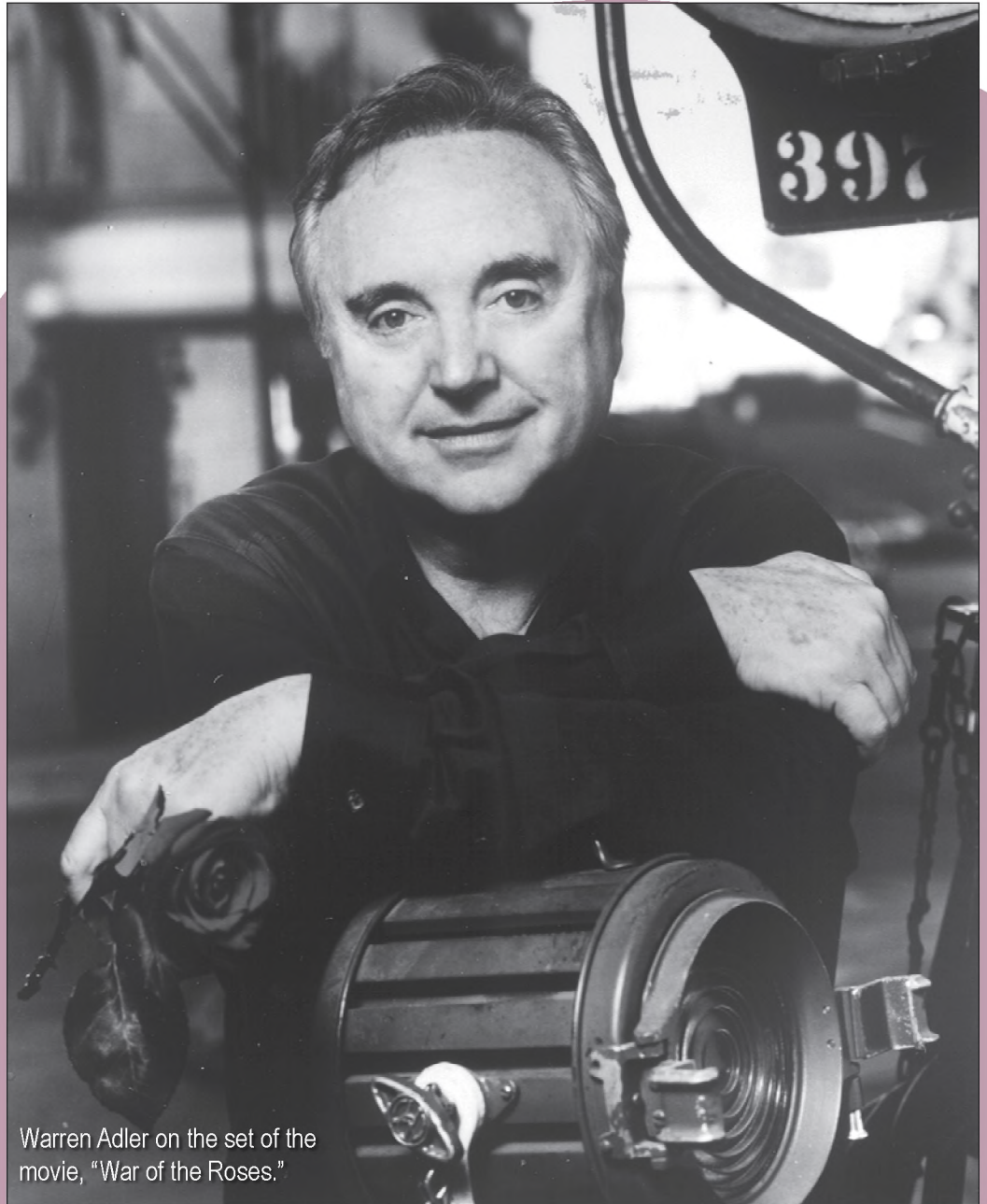
It is a joy to represent what you stand for and do. I plan to work hard to keep the issues and ideas you value in the forefront of WLA. I hope your spirits stay high, your skills stay sharp and your services remain strong. My wish is that you all keep that energy going and continue to believe in yourselves and your profession.

You are bright, caring and competent individuals who make me proud to be your leader. There is no doubt that library excellence is alive and well in Wyoming; together we will keep it that way.

Debbie Schlinger
Youth Services Supervisor
Teton County Library

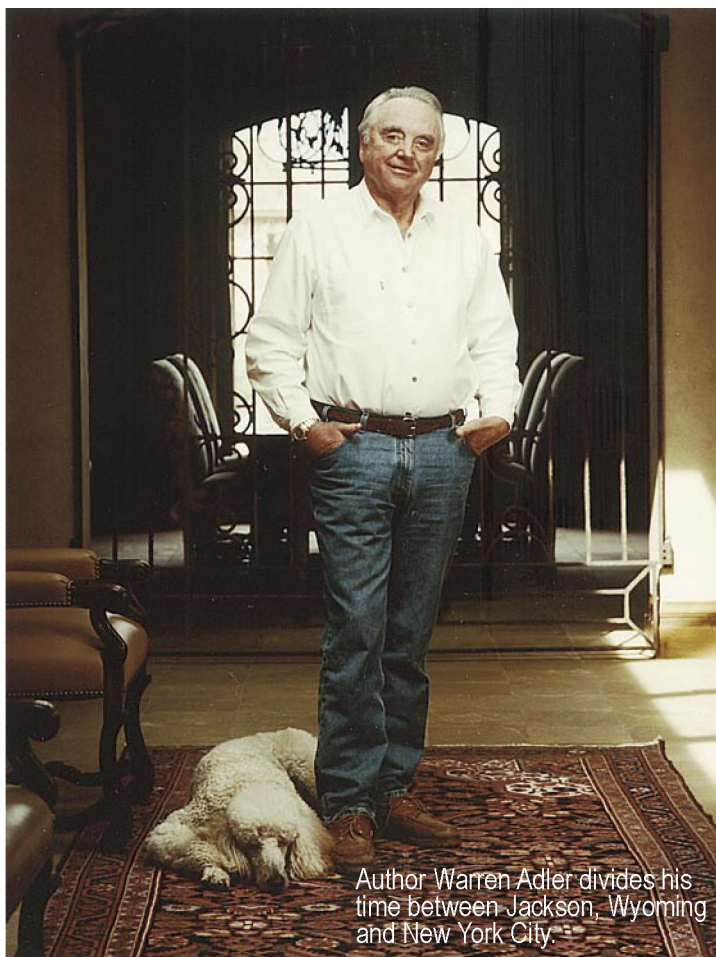
WARREN ADLER

When moviegoers watched Oliver and Barbara Rose's marriage descend into a maelstrom of malice, spite, divorce papers and dog paté in the 1989 film, *The War of the Roses*, they were seeing the twisted but funny work of Wyoming author Warren Adler.



Warren Adler on the set of the movie, "War of the Roses."

“It is strictly a crap shoot and a minor miracle to see one’s book made into a major film.”



Author Warren Adler divides his time between Jackson, Wyoming and New York City.

Adler's body of work goes far beyond the dark humor of *Roses*, spanning multiple genres and topics. From a six-volume mystery series dealing with murder in high places to *Cult*, a book on brainwashing (and a cautionary tale in an age of terrorism), Adler writes, as his website says, "tales of human conflict and desire." He has no favorite book from his works, just as he has no favorite child. He loved writing each one but has never reread any of them.

"It's true that I write about human relationships," Adler said, "but what writer doesn't? If I have a commercial failing it is that I do not write the same book over and over again as many of my colleagues do who are consistently best sellers. My books are different. They follow no set formulae. My characters are explorers, trying to understand the meaning of their destiny"

Writing is not a choice for Adler – it is a calling. "I never had any other ambition than to be a writer, to tell

stories and write works of the imagination," he said. "The work itself has always been the rapture, the process, the ecstasy." Publication, which once felt like validation to Adler, is now but a pleasant byproduct of the true reward – writing.

Adler has sold or optioned 10 books to the movies. Hollywood buys film rights to thousands of books each year, but only a handful, perhaps 35, are adapted and released as movies.

"It is strictly a crap shoot and a minor miracle to see one's book made into a major film," Adler explained. "The process itself is bizarre as the book gets moved from hand to hand from agent, to actor, to director, to studio, to screenwriter, a never ending dance of the egos. Everyone wants to put their creative fingerprints on the project. In most cases, the adage that too many cooks spoil the broth becomes a truism."

Two of his books have gone to the big screen as major motion pictures: *The War of the Roses*, starring Michael Douglas and Kathleen Turner, and *Random Hearts*, starring Harrison Ford and Kristin Scott Thomas. Three of his short stories from *The Sunset Gang* were televised by PBS, an adaptation he described as "extraordinarily brilliant."

"I was particularly lucky with *The War of the Roses*, which somehow hit a universal gong," Adler said. "The title and subject matter has entered the language to describe a nasty divorce. Since it kept close to the characters and story, I con-

sider it a successful adaptation.

"Most important, however, was that the movie makers retained the title," he continued. "Without a retained title, the book's author will obtain very little benefit from the many millions expended in the movie promotion."

Adler was less pleased with the adaptation of *Random Hearts*. "The moviemakers fiddled with the story and made too many bad judgments," he said. It's an opinion he also expressed in the pages of the *New York Times*. In general, "There are so many pieces that have to be put together to get a book to the screen that it is rare that the essence of the book is fully achieved in an adaptation. There are no norms, no well trodden paths and no magic formulas. In the end, as they say in Hollywood, it is up to the Movie Gods."

All of Adler's books have been published in e-book format, as well as hardback and paperback. He now owns the rights to 23 of his backlist titles; they are available through Stonehouse Press, named after his home in Jackson, Wyoming. Adler set up this company five years ago so he could continue publication of all his back listed books in all formats. "I am arguably one of the few, if not the only, author who has gotten the rights back and republished my books with emphasis on marketing them through cyberspace."

Adler's first novel, *Options*, was published in 1974. He made his living with his words for years before that, so he has seen many changes in the industry. "In nearly forty years of being a cog in the publishing machine, the major change has been the total destruction of the individual or so-called gentlemen publisher," Adler said. "Today, publishing and distribution is controlled by major corporations whose only criteria is a good bottom line showing every three months. It has become, like the movie business, a hit driven model.

"Nevertheless, I am still optimistic that the emerging small publishers and the visionaries – or crackpots like myself – who believe that one day cyber-

space will be the principal way books will be sold and read, will prevail. I am convinced that, while I might be years ahead of the curve, that the future of book publishing lies in cyberspace. But it will only emerge when user friendly technology comes up with the magic formulae to challenge the paper book.”

Like many writers, Adler is “addicted to reading,” a love he inherited from his mother. “I have never throughout my life ever been without a book to read,” he said. His tastes run to novels and American history (he is a dedicated hero worshipper of George Washington). He dips into the classics often, particularly the Victorians and Russians. Ever since his college days as a literature major, he has made time to read and reread the great canon of English literature and the great European classics.

“I could fill this space with authors I reread and love – Twain, Simenon, Hemingway, Fitzgerald, Faulkner, Thomas Wolfe, etc. etc.” Current reading includes Philip Roth’s *The Plot Against America*, Ron Chernow’s *Alexander Hamilton* and Khaled Hosseini’s *The Kite Runner*. Not surprisingly, he “haunted” the library as a child.

“There was a children’s library on Stone Avenue in Brooklyn that was literally – no pun intended – my hang-out,” Adler said. Unable to afford books as a child, he took full advantage of this great library. Later, when he lived in Washington D.C., he again haunted the shelves of another great library, the Library of Congress, to research his novels.

“I am a passionately addicted, celebrator of libraries,” Adler said. “They are the most important public service ever devised, for which we must thank Ben Franklin. They are the life’s blood of any community. A community without a library is an intellectual desert.”

Adler came to Wyoming by accident. On a safari in Africa, he and his wife met and befriended the late Mary Meade. In the late 1980s, she invited them to see Jackson Hole, and the Adlers promptly fell in love with it: the

beauty, the openness of the people and the opportunity for the physical outdoor life. They chose to make it their home.

Newly transplanted, both Adlers “joined in the community with a

“A library is an unparalleled storehouse of knowledge and the public library is an absolutely fundamental ingredient in community life.”

vengeance.” Adler served as Chairman of the Teton County Library Board “during the crucial days of its transition from a small log house library to a major facility.” He said it is now, “a jewel of library. I am proud to have been associated with it.”

Adler was also instrumental in creating the Jackson Hole Writers Conference, and in recent years established the Warren Adler Fiction Award. Unfortunately, neither has lived up to Adler’s hopes for them, and he believes both need “serious retooling.”

Adler still enjoys the beauty of northwest Wyoming, but is disturbed by the increasing air of separation by class and money he sees. These changes were the subject of his book of short stories, *Jackson Hole, Uneasy Eden*. “Sad to say, Jackson Hole is getting increasingly uneasy,” Warren added.

Recently, the National Endowment for the Arts did a study showing a decline in literary reading in the United States. Although its title warned *Reading at Risk*, Adler is not so sure reading is imperiled. “It is a one-on-one communication system that, in my opinion, has far more impact than any system yet devised, including the moving image.

“Libraries are an essential tool to foster and continue to develop the habit of reading, particularly for our young people,” he continued, “far more

important than they are perceived by politicians who are forever cutting down library funds. A library is an unparalleled storehouse of knowledge and the public library is an absolutely fundamental ingredient in community life.”

Adler is a proponent of the idea that publishing will increasingly switch to electronic formats, and that libraries will play a significant role. “Libraries will always have a future, but it will change with technology advances,” he said. “The paper book still has a long way to go, but there will be a creative transformation as more and more books go online and the academy continues to attract potential librarians dedicated to spreading the word, and offering insight and knowledge to the reading public. Reading is the key to the enrichment of life and libraries will never abdicate their role and will continue to be useful and enhance the life of the mind.”

Never without a novel to read, Adler is also never without a novel to write. With *Children of the Roses* on bookstore shelves, he continues to keep his daily schedule of writing, already at work on the next project.

“I know no other way of life and can attest that the creative process is the most fulfilling and satisfying way to spend one’s time on earth.”

Warren Adler’s website at www.warrenadler.com describes his books, life and career. He also publishes a monthly newsletter on various subjects through the site.

CENTER FOR THE BOOK



Fourth Annual National Book Festival on the mall in Washington, D.C.

“The day has been filled with a wonderful spirit of appreciation for books, reading and writing.”

It was a book lovers' paradise: the Fourth Annual National Book Festival on October 9 in Washington D.C., organized and sponsored by the Library of Congress and hosted by First Lady Laura Bush.

The festival's big, white tents on the National Mall housed author readings, book signings and the Pavilion of the States, where representatives from all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and American trusts and territories shared

materials about their reading and literacy promotion programs. Wyoming's representatives were State Librarian Lesley Boughton, Powell Branch Librarian Janet Meury and Wyoming Center for the Book Coordinator Susan Vittitow.

Business was brisk in the Pavilion of the States. Out of the estimated 85,000 people attending the festival, 30,000 visited the many exhibits in the pavilion.

Many were young ones looking for stickers and stamps. Children were given

a map of the United States that they filled in with stickers and stamps by visiting each state's booth. Wyoming's sticker featured the state symbol, the bucking horse and rider.

Along with the map was a list of suggested books for their reading – one from each state. Wyoming's featured book was Gretel Ehrlich's *A Blizzard Year*.

Wyoming's booth offered a display of some of the best new books by the

state's authors. Boughton, Meury and Vittitow, with the help of festival volunteers, handed out handfuls of Wyoming pins, stacks of Deep West bookmarks, suggested reading lists, 15 boxes of Wyoming vacation guides and sticker upon sticker upon sticker for one small child after another.

"It was just amazing," said Vittitow. "It was organized chaos. How exciting to be part of an event like this where so many people are just thrilled about books and authors and reading. And what a great opportunity to show off what Wyoming has to offer."

In other tents, the festival featured more than 70 award-winning authors, illustrators and poets reading from their work and signing books. Among them was newly appointed National Poet Laureate Ted Kooser, Joyce Carol Oates, Marc Brown, R.L. Stine, Sandra Brown, Robert B. Parker, Clive Cussler, Edward P. Jones, E.L. Konigsburg, Ron Chernow, Connie Willis, Neil Gaiman, Katherine Paterson, Juan Williams, Azar Nafisi, Anna Quindlen, David Rice, Richard Peck, Douglas Brinkley, Kate DiCamillo, Nathaniel Philbrick, Cokie Roberts, and poet Dana Gioia, Chair-



Bob Martin, Institute of Museum and Library Services Director, Lesley Boughton, Wyoming State Librarian and Susan Vittitow, Wyoming Center for the Book Coordinator at the Wyoming booth.

man of the National Endowment for the Arts.

The festival also featured guests from popular PBS television shows "Find!" and "This Old House," a live broadcast with Heloise of "Hints from Heloise" fame, basketball legend Kareem Abdul-Jabbar at the children's pavilion with other NBA and WNBA stars in support of the "Read to Achieve" program and

story collections for two oral history projects: Voices of Civil Rights and the Veterans History Project.

Camera shutters were snapping (or digital cameras... digitizing?) as more than 9,000 children had their pictures taken with favorite PBS and storybook characters, including Clifford the Big Red Dog, Grover and Arthur. Visitors flocked to the Science Fiction and Fantasy Pavilion, new at the festival this year. And volunteers handed out more than 30,000 bottles of water. All in all, a good day for books on the Mall.

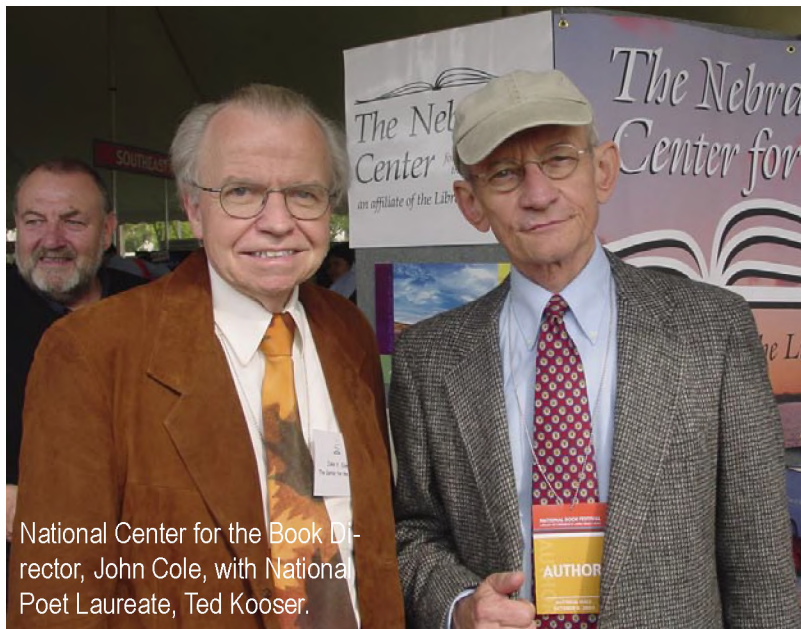
"We are delighted that so many readers of all ages came to this annual celebration," said James H. Billington, Librarian of Congress. "The day has been filled with a wonderful spirit of appreciation for books, reading and writing."



State Librarian Lesley Boughton handing out bags at the Wyoming booth.

JOHN COLE

National Center for the Book Director



National Center for the Book Director, John Cole, with National Poet Laureate, Ted Kooser.

The Center for the Book in the Library of Congress is a catalyst for the promotion of books, reading, literacy and libraries. Its creation as a public private enterprise and the appointment of John Y. Cole as its director took place in 1977 at the instigation of the 12th Librarian of Congress.

"The Center for the Book was the creation of one man: booklover and historian Daniel J. Boorstin, who became Librarian of Congress in 1975," said Cole, who remains director of the Center today. "In 1977 he proposed legislation to create a center at the Library of Congress which would stimulate public interest in books and reading." With the enactment of Public Law 95-129, approved on Oct. 13, 1977, President Jimmy Carter approved the legislation.

"To my amazement, Dr. Boorstin said he wanted me to be the 'founding director' and to shape the center's future direction," said Cole. "In fact, he insisted—and that was that."

Cole first came to the Library of Congress in 1966, just a few years out of library school at the University of Washington. His future wife, Nancy E. Gwinn, came to work at the Library in 1969, and they married in 1973. A University of Wyoming alumna, as well as a Fulbright scholar in England and a graduate of the University of Michigan

largest and most comprehensive library and research institution in the world. It relies on its partnerships: formal relationships with more than 80 national civic and educational organizations and informal partnerships with many more research and professional organizations. It has even stimulated the creation of centers for the book in Australia, Russia, Scotland and South Africa.

"Using the Library of Congress's prestige and resources, the Center for the Book can forge partnerships and create special opportunities for stimulating public interest in books, reading, literacy and libraries at every level—local, state, national, and international," Cole said. "The Center is both the Library of Congress's focal point for celebrating the legacy of books and the written word and a national umbrella for sharing good and practical reading promotion ideas."

Promoting libraries and raising the visibility of libraries are among the Center for the Book's goals. It has worked closely with the American Library Association on library promotion projects, and the ALA is one of the Center's 80-plus reading promotion partners. Roughly 40 of the 50 state affiliate Centers are located in libraries.

The Center for the Book coordinates the National Book Festival's author and reading promotion programs.

Library School, Nancy has been director of the Smithsonian Institution Libraries since 1997.

The Center for the Book is a unique office in an institution that happens to be the

It suggests many programs for state affiliates, but especially promotes the "Letters About Literature" and "River of Words" writing contests for children and teens. State affiliates choose and develop their own mix of projects — among them: literary maps, "One Book, One Community" discussions, authors databases and book festivals.

All 50 states and the District of Columbia now have affiliates, a goal the Center reached in 2002 (New Hampshire was 50th). "Ironically, affiliated state centers were not part of the original Center for the Book plan," said Cole. "Interest was there from the beginning, however, and I soon became convinced that we could not do our job nationally without grassroots support for our mission in the states."

Despite popular concerns that reading is on the decline, "Books, reading, and writing—thank goodness—will always be part of our lives and our culture," said Cole. "However their roles are changing and it's important that organizations such as the Center for the Book continue to point out that books, reading and writing are a key part of the multimedia age. In fact, they are the 'content' part that provides the historical substance and imaginative approaches that the media age needs for its stories in the first place.

"Because conflict—or perceived conflict—makes a good story, the press tends to promote the 'either-or' myth, practically assuming that computers and electronics will 'replace' books, libraries, and book culture itself," he added. "The Center for the Book's existence—and 27-year success—argues to the contrary."

For more information, visit the website for the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress at <http://www.loc.gov/loc/cfbook/> or the Wyoming Center for the Book website at <http://www-wsl.state.wy.us/sfpub/cenbook/>

A Literary Tour of Wyoming

DEEP WEST

Gather some of the best contemporary writing from Wyoming. Ask the authors about themselves. Ask them to write how this place influences their work. Put it in one book.

This book is *Deep West: A Literary Tour of Wyoming*, an anthology of excerpts and essays from 19 of Wyoming's best contemporary authors.

"We finally have an anthology to call our own," said Mike Shay, one of the editors of *Deep West*. "It was written, edited and published in Wyoming."

The anthology was a project of the Wyoming Center for the Book (WCB) at the Wyoming State Library. The WCB was established in 1995, and it is one of 50 state affiliates of the Center for the Book at the Library of Congress. Recognizing the power of the written word to enrich lives, the Wyoming Center for the Book celebrates writers, readers and Wyoming's rich literary heritage.

Deep West originated several years ago when the organization's advisory board decided they wanted to do more than a "literary map" (a state map showing where significant writers lived and worked.)

Instead, they looked to Montana's state anthology, *The Last Best Place*, as an example of what could be done to feature the state's writers. They reviewed other anthologies for ideas as well, including regional collections such as *Leaning into the Wind* and a poetry anthology of Florida creative writing fellowship winners.

Starting the project was one thing — bringing it to completion was a Herculean task that would take five years. A WCB subcommittee requested writing



Contributors to *Deep West* at the Governor's Residence with Governor Dave and First Lady Nancy Freudenthal.

samples, essays about living and writing in Wyoming, a short biography and a short piece naming at least two influences on their work from 38 authors. From that, 23 were selected for inclusion, but four dropped out due to pressing commitments and other difficulties.

After that came the hard work of collecting manuscripts, formatting them, editing them; sending the work to one publisher who rejected it; sending it then to a New York editor for review; making some of the changes he suggested; and finally, striking a deal with Pronghorn Press to print *Deep West*, and massaging the manuscript into shape yet again for publication.

The final product is well worth it, showing a wide swath of the Wyoming literary landscape, and revealing how the landscape of Wyoming informs and influences the work of those who write here.

Authors included are impressive: Warren Adler, of *War of the Roses* fame; Pulitzer-prize winner Annie Proulx; David Romtvedt, state poet laureate, and two past poets laureate — Robert Roripaugh and Charles Levendosky (now deceased); Iowa poetry prize winner Dainis Hazners; Linda Hasselstrom, author of *Feels Like Far* and one of

the three co-editors of the *Leaning into the Wind* anthology; Page Lambert (*In Search of Kinship*); Jon Billman (*When We Were Wolves*); Geoff O'Gara (*What You See in Clear Water*); B.J. Buckley; Alyson Hagy; Mark Jenkins; Vicki Lindner; John Nesbitt; C. L. Rawlins; Tom Rea; Tim Sandlin; and Barbara Smith. Romtvedt, Linn Rounds and Shay served as editors.

"It was a five-year project that involved a lot of people and yielded a great result," said Shay. "It's daunting to realize that there are enough fine writers in Wyoming that we could do another anthology and feature 19 different people."

He added, "We could be starting a tradition."

"Deep West: A Literary Tour of Wyoming" is published by Pronghorn Press. It is available at local bookstores or at <http://pronghornpress.org/> for \$22.95.

For more information on the Wyoming Center for the Book, contact Susan Vittitow, WCB Coordinator, Wyoming State Library, 2301 Capitol Ave, Cheyenne WY 82002, 307/777-5915 svittit@state.wy.us, or visit the website at <http://www-wsl.state.wy.us/slpub/cenbook/>

MARK SPRAGG



Photo courtesy of Virginia Spragg.

Mark Spragg – celebrated novelist, essayist, screenwriter – grew up working on Wyoming’s oldest dude ranch just outside the east gate of Yellowstone National Park. In the 1960s, it was one of the most isolated places in the lower 48 – no television, no radio, 25 miles to the nearest one-room schoolhouse and 50 miles to the nearest small town. Despite the isolation, or perhaps because of it, Spragg fed his literary imagination with his father’s 3,000 books and with monthly trips to the public library where he’d grab as big a stack of books as he could carry. He read voraciously.

“I literally thought as a little boy that the souls and minds and hearts of all those men and women were enclosed between the covers of those books and shelved in libraries,” Spragg said. Libraries, in other words, were evidence of heaven. As he grew out of boyhood, libraries became mere buildings with books. In recent years, however, he realized he had it right the first time – they really are evidence of heaven.

Today, Spragg’s mind and heart have found their place in the books on those library shelves with his memoir, *Where Rivers Change Direction*, and two novels, *The Fruit of Stone* and *An Unfinished Life*. A major motion picture based on *An Unfinished Life* and starring Robert Redford, Jennifer Lopez and Morgan Freeman is slated for release by Miramax in 2005. His work has been compared with that of Cormac McCarthy and Kent Haruf and praised repeatedly by reviewers.

“I think most writers write from an area where they are utterly familiar.”

Spragg will readily admit that, economically speaking, he's failed at making a living as a writer for most of this life. He always knew, however, that it was what he wanted to do.

"Which I think gives a person great solace, because you always know what you're striving toward," he said.

In fact, he has solid evidence showing exactly how far back his drive to write existed. After his mother died, Spragg found his baby book in her belongings. When he was eight, she asked him what he wanted to be when he grew up. The answer she recorded was, "novelist." *Where Rivers Change Direction*, his breakout book, actually began as a gift to his mother toward the end of her life when she was dying of emphysema, and Spragg and his wife were caring for her.

Spragg's formal education was at Wapiti School, Cody High School and the University of Wyoming. Afterward, he tried teaching, but found it drained him too much for writing; it used too many of the same intellectual and emotional muscles.

Instead, he turned to the hard, physical work he'd learned while young. Until he could make a living as a writer, he shod horses, built fence, worked on oil

rigs and guided in the mountains. It was physically demanding, but he came home at night with his head full of stories. He'd shower, eat, drink a lot of coffee and write.

"At 52, I'm glad I don't have to do that anymore," he said.

After years of working day jobs, writing essays, editing and enduring a less-than-satisfactory stint as a Hollywood screenwriter (commuting from his home near Cody), Spragg achieved national recognition in 1999 with the pub-

lication of *Where Rivers Change Direction*. A stunning collection of autobiographical essays, *Rivers* won the Mountains & Plains Book Award for nonfiction in 2000, the same year Haruf's *Plainsong* took fiction honors.

the book nor the movie is an adaptation of the other. Both tell the same story, but both the screenplay and the book evolved at the same time.

An Unfinished Life started with one image Spragg couldn't shake: a man, about 70 years old, sitting on a porch, surrounded by cats and clearly, deeply embittered. Not content to occupy Spragg's conscious thoughts, this man started appearing in his dreams at night.

"It came to me," Spragg said. "I didn't come to it."

"I literally thought as a little boy that the souls and minds and hearts of all those men and women were enclosed between the covers of those books and shelved in libraries"

Non-fiction, however, was not his first love. Fiction was. Spragg followed the initial success of *Rivers* with his first published novel, *The Fruit of Stone*, in 2002. This book, set in Wyoming, was well received: *Booklist* picked it for its Editors Choice list of the best fiction of 2002 and also featured it in a top 10 list of best first novels.

His latest book, *An Unfinished Life*, was published in August of this year, and the movie is expected to be released in 2005 – an unusually short time between the two events. This happened, in part, because neither

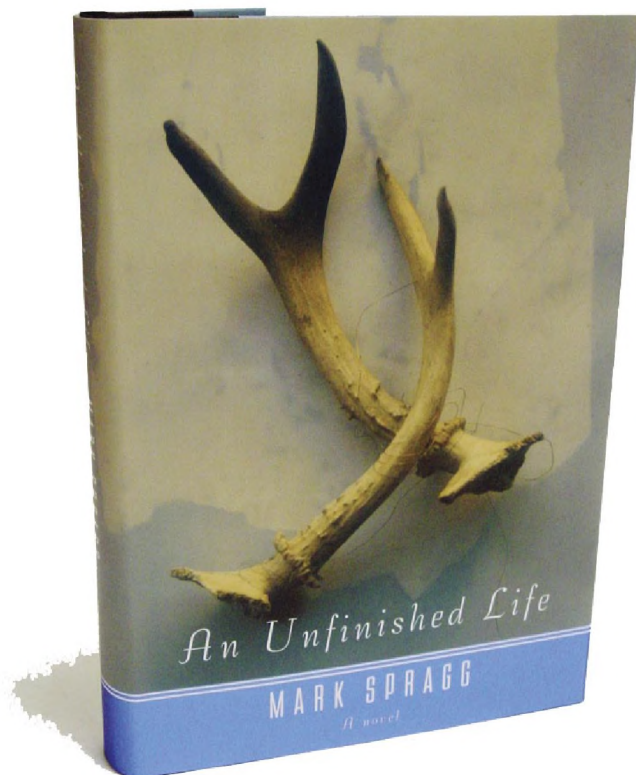
With his other books, he usually had an overriding notion of what they were about before he started. This one instead sprang from that one image.

Spragg and his wife Virginia often found themselves on hours-long drives to see friends. Because the man on the porch had become so prevalent in Mark's imagination, the two began talking about him while driving. How had he come to be this way? Was there a chance for redemption?

"It became clear early on that this was to be a novel about forgiveness," Spragg said.

Over a year of driving and talking, the character of Einar and the story of *An Unfinished Life* began to take shape. When Spragg began the novel, Virginia decided to write a screenplay of the same story. They would each write, then talk and compare what they had written. The book and the screenplay grew up intertwined, different tellings of the same tale. Spragg's novel was sold to Knopf, and their co-written screenplay was sold to Miramax.

"It became a puzzle," Spragg said, "something that enchanted us in terms of how to move the story through in two different media."



Spragg's books are all set in Wyoming and draw on a deep knowledge of the people and the land.

"As a boy growing up on the national forest, I saw nature as something living," said Spragg. "It's an advantage to set a story in an area that you know from top to bottom.

"I know where the constellations set on the horizon at different times, which plants flower when. I don't have to research a place because I'm so grounded in this place."

He continued, "Having said that, I'm sure if I grew up in South Chicago, I would see the same beauty, poignancy, complexity there."

Despite his ties to place, do not refer to him as a "regional writer."

"No writer wants to be labeled," Spragg said. "It's a disservice to any man or woman to be tied to a region." He pointed out that you often hear of southern writers or western writers or "westerns." It's rare, however, to hear of an "eastern" writer or an "eastern" novel, even though there are fine writers in that region who set their stories in the communities they know.

"I think most writers write from an area where they are utterly familiar," said Spragg. "Unfortunately, writers are classified as 'regional' as a way to dismiss them, to reduce their impact on the canon of the whole country. I think Faulkner is our most classic example of a fine regionalist whose thought patterns were so universal that he rose beyond that."

Spragg read voraciously as a child and certainly has not stopped as an adult. He budgets time to read studiously every day as faithfully as he budgets time to write, and time to walk. He works between 6 and 10 hours a day, and typically, he reads about 100 to 150 books a year.

"It's what I would expect of my doctor," Spragg said, "to become an absolute expert at what they do." Before he dies, he would like to become the best novelist he can be, and that doesn't happen by accident.

With that kind of reading schedule, the list of authors he has read and who

have influenced his work is tremendous. Hemingway and Faulkner were strong influences. Andre Gide and Nikos Kazantzakis were pivotal. Discovering the work of Lawrence Durrell in his late teens, "was an epiphany. The broadness with which he could examine the world was extraordinary." Henry Miller amazed Spragg: the first great modernist, he wrote with honesty and cloaked nothing in literary tradition.

If one school most influenced his work, he believes it was the Latin writers: Pablo Neruda, Garcia Marquez. Right now, his interests run to Charles Baxter, Charles Frazier, Larry Brown, Kent Haruf and Mac McCarthy, and he's also been deeply influenced by James Welsh and Scott Momaday.

Spragg sees literature as a way to grasp the world, both emotionally and intellectually. The issues raised by the recent National Endowment for the Arts study, *Reading at Risk*, are to him a legitimate worry. That report showed a decline in literary reading in the United States.

Television, he believes, has proliferated so much that it has become the arbiter of culture. Unfortunately, he adds, American television and films reduce the complexity of the human character and story to caricature and, in some cases, cartoon.

"I think that's a great sin, and I use that word expressly, against our accumulative ability to imagine ourselves, what it means to be human, how limitless that is," Spragg said. "We now have two and a half generations of people who have studiously watched TV and not read. We've gotten out of the habit of reading.

"I think we've become a society that wants to be entertained and placated and not challenged. I always find reading challenges. Reading broadens the essential notion that we have about ourselves and puts us in a constant state of re-definition."

Having said all that, Spragg sees young people on his book tours hungry for the richer cultural meal of literature. It also says something to him that our country values libraries. He hopes that

society will swing back to the emotional and intellectual habit of searching for the truth in ourselves that reading represents.

So what if everybody in a community turned off the television and read the same book? What kind of discussion would that generate? This year, Natrona County Library is finding out, using Spragg's work. The library chose *Where Rivers Change Direction* for its "Everybody Reads Mark Spragg" reading and discussion program. The goal was to get as many people as possible in the community reading and talking about just one book.

Spragg was asked to speak at the final festivities and was honored to do so. He said it's flattering, but daunting, to have a community key in on your work like that — particularly in your home state.

Spragg's readers will be glad to know that the next book is already in the works, but he is saying little until the first draft is done.

"It robs you of the essential passion if you always talk about it."

Wyoming Arts Council Literary Fellowships, 1989 and 2000

Neltje Blanchan Memorial Award, Wyoming Arts Council 1999

Where Rivers Change Directions (memoir, 1999) Mountains & Plains Book Award for nonfiction, 2000

The Fruit of Stone (2002, novel) Booklist Editors Choice, 2002

An Unfinished Life (2004) Booklist, Library Journal starred reviews, soon to be released as a major motion picture.

Getting a Start

Writers know there is no feeling like that first byline, that first sale and, most of all, that first published book. Wyoming is not only home to a rich literary tradition, but is also home to a crop of new writers, who are just now seeing that first book on the shelves of the local shop. The *Wyoming Library Roundup* talked to three recently published Wyoming authors – Jeffe Kennedy, Janet Meury and Stephen Grace – to learn how they arrived at this point.

Trucks and True Love

JEFFE KENNEDY

For Laramie writer Jeffe Kennedy, the road to publication was paved with ... dead bats.

Two steps back: it's a little more complex than that. Nevertheless, bats were part of the story behind Kennedy's first book of essays, *Wyoming Trucks, True Love and the Weather Channel*, published in February by the University of New Mexico Press. This is a collection of 15 mostly autobiographical essays about living life and learning what it is to be in the world.

"We can't ever really understand how someone else experiences the world," Kennedy said, "but this is a way to try to communicate that."

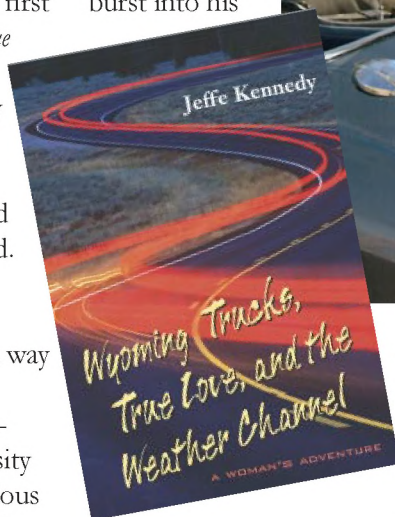
Kennedy entered college as a pre-med student at Washington University in St. Louis, adding a major in religious studies because she found she wasn't satisfied just as a "science-head."

"A lot of us become scientists because we love the natural world so much," she said. "It's the logical pathway, but it's a brutal and limited way of knowing the natural world."

Religious studies also brought her in touch with the professor who would be her college advisor and her mentor in life and in writing, Professor Hadas.

Hadas opened her eyes to so many things that at one point in her college career Kennedy had a revelation: she no longer wanted to be a doctor. She would switch her major to religious studies and

write, teach and philosophize the rest of her life, just like Professor Hadas. She burst into his



office to tell him the good news.

He told her it was a terrible idea.

Instead, Hadas told her to stick with biology so she would always have a paycheck and something to write about. She followed his advice, and enrolled in the University of Wyoming after graduation, pursuing a doctorate in neurophysiology.

Here's where the bats come in. She wanted to know how we perceive the world, so at UW she studied the audio-neurophysiology of bats – how bats process sounds in their brains to build a picture of their surroundings. She came to a crisis point when she realized she couldn't be in a laboratory all day with a



sedated animal. She loved the information, but hated having to kill them.

"OK, so what's the perfect life?" she asked herself. The answer was obvious – she wanted to be a writer.

She completed a master's degree in neurophysiology, then worked as a writer for UW and attended visiting writers programs the university offered. Later, she worked for an environmental consulting firm, — again, as a writer.

Because it was a meditation on death, Kennedy shared her essay, "Of Swallows, Snakes and Science," with her college advisor and religious studies instructor, Professor Hadas. The essay was about finding dead swallows all over the ground while doing fieldwork and about how badly she always feels when seeing animals dead.

Kennedy continued on page 25.

JANET MEURY

Poet Librarian

Janet Meury can't remember a time since she learned to read that she didn't want to be a writer.

Asked why she writes, she said, "Because I don't know how to stop? Because, if I don't write, my life doesn't feel real. Because, more than anything else I do, writing makes me feel whole and balanced and truly alive. Because, if I don't write, my skin doesn't fit. Because I have found some of my greatest and most important friendships in the world of books and reading, and I want to reach back out through that medium, to give something back, to make those impossible friendships across time and space that are enabled by the written word."

Now, some of the best poetry from the Powell branch librarian is seen in her first book, *Listening to Stones*, along with that of fellow poet Sheila Ruble. The book, from northern Wyoming's Pronghorn Press, combines the work of the two women – a pairing Meury describes as a serendipitous "stroke of genius" by Pronghorn's publisher, Annette Chaudet.

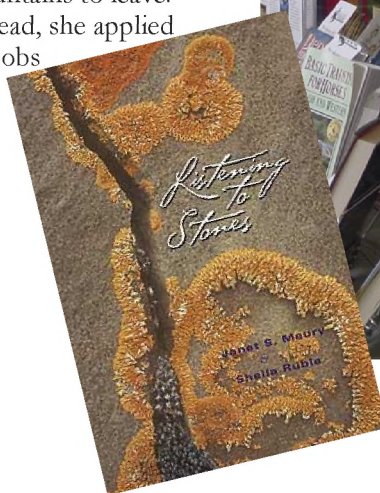
"I had admired [Ruble's] work as published in other Pronghorn Press anthologies, and evidently she had admired mine," said Meury. "Our lives, our experiences, and our looks are all very different and often opposite, but I think our poems complement each other very well."

Meury was born in Fort Collins, Colo., and delved into poetry in grade school not long after she learned how to read and write. Her seventh grade teacher, Donna Dolven, was a strong influence: under her tutelage, Meury kept writing poetry, but also started her first novel and a book of theology and wrote essays (though she wasn't sure what essays were.) "I intended to beat Louisa May Alcott's record of publishing my first book before the age of 16, and I promised to dedicate it to Miss Dolven," Meury said. Although I missed that goal by 40 years, I did remember the dedication."

Meury later earned a bachelor's degree in English literature with honors in creative writing from Colorado College in Colorado Springs. After a brief stint as an Army wife during the Vietnam

era, she found herself divorced with a small child to support. She went back to college at Emporia State University for her Master's in Library Science.

Her son had been born in Germany, and she had intended to return to Europe after earning the MLS. But by graduation, she was too homesick for the Rocky Mountains to leave. Instead, she applied for jobs in



Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico and Arizona, finally landing at Powell, where she has been ever since.

Through the years of her marriage and while earning her master's degree, she kept journals and wrote occasional poems, but didn't learn how to get published until after she moved to Wyoming.

"I took a creative writing course at Northwest College, and Rob Koelling encouraged me and helped me figure out how to submit," Meury said.

She "sort of fell into" the publication of her first book. "Mutual friends told Annette Chaudet she should get in touch with me when she was looking for material for her *Hard Ground: Writing the West* anthologies," Meury said. "I actually got an email from her, inviting me to submit. I did, and she loved my poetry. She published everything I sent her over a couple of years in her anthologies, and she approached me to suggest the book."

She added, "Emotionally, it has been a dream come true in so many ways, so exciting and satisfying and thrilling."

Reader response to *Listening to Stones*



has been gratifying "So far, most of my reactions have been from close friends and family, and of course they all say it's wonderful," said Meury. "A couple of more objective readers have been very generous in their praise, too. One of our library regular users and supporters bought one for her daughter, saying she liked the way my poems could be enjoyed even by people who didn't read a lot of poetry. That pleased me very much, because that is one of my goals as a poet, to be accessible to everyone, not just other poets."

Meury participates in poetry readings often at Northwest College, and hopes to do readings and signings elsewhere. She writes in her journal daily and, of course, writes poems. "I think of my poems as individual pieces, and I almost never write them in any kind of series, so it wouldn't be true to say I'm working in any real way on my next book or on a project," said Meury. "Maybe someday I'll go back to my seventh grade goals of writing fiction or essays – probably not theology."

"For now, I am just delighted when the next poem comes along, demanding to be written down and polished up and shared."

Fly-fishing novelist

STEPHEN GRACE

Why does Stephen Grace write?
“Because I’m not very good at it and I love a challenge.”

His readers might disagree. Grace’s first book, *Under Cottonwoods*, was quickly picked up as a BookSense fiction pick shortly after its publication in January, 2004 and has received some good reviews, including one in the Los Angeles Times.

Under Cottonwoods is a novel about two young Wyoming men: Walter, who had a brain injury as a boy that left him with mental and physical disabilities; and Mike, orphaned as a teen and now adrift as an adult. These two, drawn together by their mutual love of the outdoors and flyfishing, are gradually able to free themselves from their pasts. The book has been well-received particularly in the flyfishing world and the disability community, but has a universal appeal.

“I’ve gotten letters from people ranging from a man in Japan who read it on the Tokyo subway to a retired Yale philosophy professor who read it in a Montana cabin,” said Grace. “I’ve never been poorer in my life than I am right now, but when I get those letters, I couldn’t be happier.”

Grace was always a voracious reader, but only started writing seriously about five years ago. He grew up in Missouri, graduating from Washington University in St. Louis. In college, he studied clinical neuropsychology – but changed his major when a friend of his died from massive head trauma in a rock climbing accident.

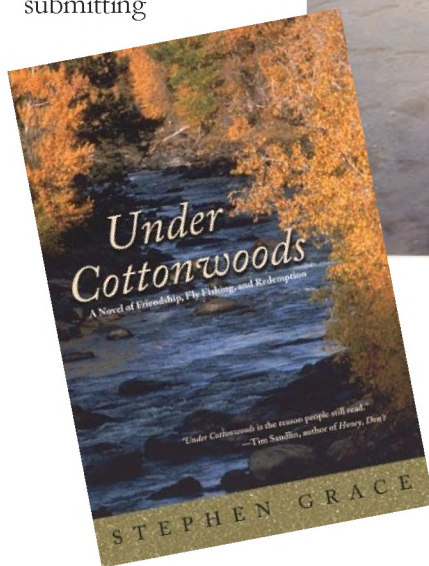
He’s worked at everything from research assistant to whitewater rafting guide, but most of his adult life has been spent teaching kids at-risk and people with disabilities.

“My favorite part of the job was getting the people I worked with involved in outdoor activities,” Grace said.

“When we were in the wilds of Wyoming fishing, camping, rafting and skiing, I realized we had a lot in common and the differences between us didn’t

matter much at all.” That was when he began writing *Under Cottonwoods*.

Grace tried working with an agent for his book, but became frustrated and started submitting



the book directly to publishers.

“I was working in Jackson Hole making seven bucks an hour,” said Grace. “I had to choose between mailing sample chapters or going to bars. One day I stood in line at the post office trying to decide whether to submit or to drink. I chose to submit. Sort of. I only sent chapters to two publishers and I threw the rest of the sample chapters and envelopes in the trash at the post office and then went to a bar.”

One of those chapters landed on the desk of Lyons Press editor George Donahue, who emailed right away asking for the rest of the manuscript. Grace sold a pair of skis at a pawn shop to pay for overnight shipping, then went into a FedEx office for the first time in his life, only to discover they didn’t ship to post office boxes.

“So I went to the post office and stood in line and tried not to think about how many beers overnight postage would buy,” Grace said. A couple of months later, he got an email from



Donahue that Lyons wanted to publish *Under Cottonwoods*.

“It didn’t seem real,” said Grace. “Still doesn’t. I was convinced for a long time that one of my friends was playing an elaborate practical joke on me.”

Grace has been around people like the character of Walter his entire life. “When I was a little boy my grandmother took me with her when she went to visit organizations where she volunteered with people with disabilities,” he said. He grew up with two cousins with Down syndrome and another relative survived a traumatic brain injury when he was a teen. After college, he worked six years in Jackson Hole with “a terrific organization” called Community Entry Services, which provides assistance to people with developmental disabilities.

Under Cottonwoods was also influenced by the poetry of T. S. Eliot, particularly *The Waste Land*. In fact, Grace rewrote *Under Cottonwoods* while caretaking a house where T. S. Eliot lived on Harvard Square in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Grace’s next project is a novel about a murder in a Wyoming town. But for now, when he’s not writing, you can find him in the outdoors running with his two dogs, snowboarding, mountain biking and flyfishing.

LIBRARY BOOK CLUBS

By Troy Rumpf



Lander's teen book club getting together to discuss their book and enjoy some pizza.

“I find that I enjoy the book much more when I can hear the opinions of others and also bounce my own ideas off them.”

In college with a group of friends, I vividly recall all-night chats exploring every facet of certain books (my strongest recollection is of *The Jungle*) that we all seemed to have read. We shared insights, argued over the author's purpose, and couldn't wait to get back together to talk some more.

And, as you could guess, I'm not alone in this. Book discussions are popping up all over the place. Many communities offer discussion groups through private clubs, museums, social organizations and other venues. However, people looking for information about such events often look to the library.

One great resource for the state's

library book groups has been the Wyoming Council for the Humanities (WCH). The WCH provides financial and material support for discussions; 36 of their 46 programs are offered in Wyoming libraries, reaching hundreds of people through this service alone. The Humanities Council loans, at no cost, 20 books of six different titles, all under a unifying theme (American memoirs, violence, Wyoming). A scholar is appointed by the host to lead each session through the discussion.

While highly popular, these are far from the only discussion groups at Wyoming libraries.

“Three years ago we went solo,” Director Karen Hopkins said of Con-

verse County Public Library's decision to design their own offerings. “We tied it in to Wyoming authors, our attendance grew, and the books became very popular.”

People look to the programs for various needs, but as Hopkins sees it, participants just want an interesting and enjoyable read, especially since most of these readers are already highly occupied with work, family and life.

Many other discussion groups have found their own ways to make the selection process more personal and to tailor the groups to the community's needs.

Take a look at the Albany County Public Library. In addition to WCH book discussion programs, they re-

ceived a grant from the Mathew Shepard Foundation (with assistance from the University of Wyoming's Department of English) for a gay/lesbian book discussion series in Laramie and Lander. They still have copies of the books and welcome other libraries to host the series.

Susan Worthen, branch manager of the Uinta County Library, has gone through quite a process with the two discussion groups in Lyman. Members would nominate books based on reviews, past readings and suggestions from members. Eventually this method became too cumbersome, so she took on the selection responsibility herself.

"My year as a despot," she joked. "But like Oprah, I soon found the pressure was just too much to take." Now both groups read the same book, determined on a more equitable basis by participants.

Laramie County Library System currently offers five different series. Like other libraries, it offers two Humanities Council programs, but it also has an emphasis on youth with Cover to Cover, a book club for teens hosted by author S.L. Rottman, and the Mother-Daughter Book Club, which has a waiting list nearly as big as the discussion group itself.

Another success came through a community partnership with the local Starbucks to provide a monthly discussion series. The library purchases five to seven copies of the book and handles all the publicity. Starbucks provides an enticing location, the discussion coordination and some great coffee.

Including younger readers is on the minds of the library staff in Mountain View, where they offer a club for moms and daughters in addition to two separate groups just for adults. In Casper, Natrona County Public Library offers the Teen Book Club and the Saturday Afternoon Book Club, reaching youth in grades 6-12.

"It's so important for students to see that there are many other kids out there who like to read for fun," said Pam Crabb, adult services librarian at Natrona County. "Teens often spread the word to friends and encourage them to come."

But why do people want to join book

clubs? Some people enjoy the social aspect, others the reading, some the chance to explore intellectually in a safe environment:

- It gives me permission to take the time to read, something I enjoy tremendously, but as a busy Mom too often place on the back burner — Sharon

- I find that I enjoy the book much more when I can hear the opinions of others and also bounce my own ideas off them. I've read books for book club that I never would have even picked up much less finished on my own. I've also gotten to know people in the book club at a deeper level and have been amazed at how insightful people of all ages and educational levels can be when discussing a book. — Elaine

- I participate in an online book club with my friends from college who now live in various parts of the country. We get online and instant message our discussion. It helps me stay in touch with them, find out what they're reading and discuss more than the daily events of our lives. — Matt

Book discussions have come a long way, and of the latest ideas is the idea of a "One Book, One Community" program. These encourage an entire town, city, county or area to read the same book at a specific time, encouraging more community-based discussions, projects and programs based on the book.

Wyoming has had success with this in Laramie (Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*), Casper (Mark Spragg's *Where Rivers Change Directions*) and elsewhere. Many other communities are planning their first such program.

Some suggest that "One Book" programs are too limiting and don't allow people the freedom to explore new literature, but the success and participation levels seem to indicate differently.

With so many libraries holding book discussions, here are a few tips for successful programs:

- **The book buffet:** There are many choices. Find out what participants—or potential participants—want. Book discussion groups have trends. For example, several are discussing *The Secret Life of Bees* or *Reading Lolita in Tehran*. Your group may want to join the bandwagon or stray as far from it as possible.

- **Page count matters:** A 400-page book is enough to make them reconsider participation. Keep the readings a bit more manageable for all readers.

- **And time matters:** Some discussion groups meet six times a year, some chat monthly, others even more frequently. Find out what works best and realize that December discussion is probably more about "festivization" (my word, I take credit for it) than it is about literary discussions.

- **Chat with other libraries:** Nearly all public libraries in Wyoming host book discussions of one kind or another. To be blunt, use each other! Ask what books to choose, which selections are dogs, what formats work. Ask if they have copies left over you may use.

- **Mmmm...food...:** Food is good. It encourages people to come to the sessions, it sets a relaxed and comfortable environment, and you can probably find a clever way to tie in the topic to the cuisine. Just imagine all the possibilities with *The Life of Pi*.

- **Find partners:** Does a local restaurant want to house the discussion? Can you get a local radio station (or Wyoming Public Radio) to help spread the word? Does a local bookstore want to team with you on a discussion?

- **Non-Luddites read too:** If your website allows, set up a book discussion message board and e-mail list. Two Wyoming libraries use the free Online Book Club, which gives all subscribers the first few chapters of a new book, enticing them to check out the item from their library.

- **Smiles, everyone:** This may sound obvious, but if the discussion becomes a cursed obligation, rather than a worthwhile event, something is definitely amiss. Are the discussions not meeting the group's needs? Are some members dominating the talk? Are the books not worth discussing? This is supposed to be fun — make sure it is.

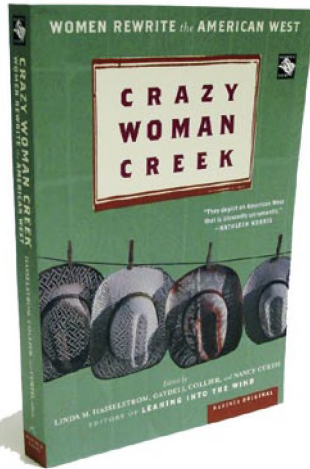
So maybe now would be a perfect time for me to encourage a discussion of *The Jungle*. Or *Bee Season*. Or anything by Augusten Burroughs or David Seidaris. Or works by some of Wyoming's amazing authors.

I'll bring the food.

Troy Rumpf is the Public Relations Specialist at Laramie County Library System.

Wyoming The 12 Books of Christmas

Drain the swan pond and give the nine maids their severance pay. Your true love – or anyone else on your Christmas shopping list – will prefer a new book by one of these Wyoming authors. From poetry to mystery to gardening, you'll find something for every reader on your list.



Crazy Woman Creek

edited by Nancy Curtis, Gaydell Collier and Linda Hasselstrom
\$14.00, paperback, Mariner Books

The collection of prose and poetry in *Crazy Woman Creek* engages the reader from beginning to end. The authors are contemporary women who share the experience of living in the western United States and Canada and write about events both current and those from long ago. The theme of the collection is community — what it is and what it means in daily life. The reader learns how the authors shaped their communities: religious organizations, book clubs, sewing circles, parenting groups, women who get together to play games and engage in sports and those who gather together for work. The authors share memories of what communities mean to them and how bonds of friendship can be forged over food, laughter, sorrow and hard work. The reader learns how women who have nothing in common build communities out of the simple need of human companionship.

Crazy Woman Creek has fewer poems than essays and these are nicely woven between the prose, offering brief accounts of the author's lives. The essays sometimes leave the reader wanting to know more, but for the most part one is satisfied with the story told. The editors have compiled a unique collection of history and sociology of western women. *Crazy Woman Creek* provides an entertaining although sometimes sad mix of writing for all who open its pages.

Stella Terrazas, Reference Librarian
Teton County Library, Jackson

When Washington Crossed the Delaware

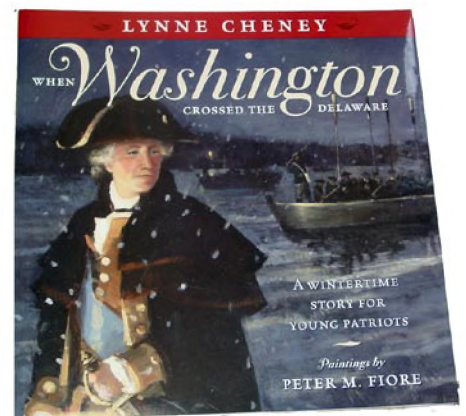
by Lynne Cheney, illustrated by Peter M. Fiore.
\$16.95, hardcover, Simon & Schuster

A story of bravery and generosity is expressed in Lynne Cheney's third children's book, *When Washington Crossed the Delaware*. Mrs. Cheney hopes that it will inspire all Americans to begin sharing historical events.

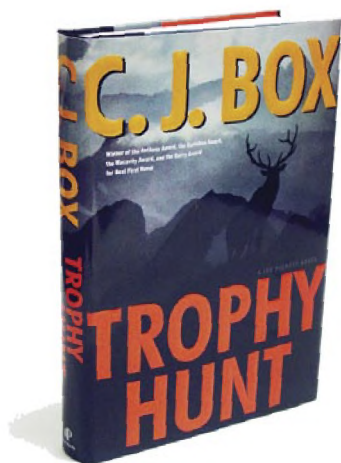
We may think of Christmas by the fire and children snug in their beds, but on the 25th of December, 1776, General George Washington and his troops were far from the comforts of home. Our country was fighting for independence from the British, and it was not looking good. The well-trained British troops were defeating our poorly-equipped troops.

Hessians, German soldiers that the British had hired to help with the war, were stationed at Trenton, N.J. General Washington initiated a surprise attack that began on Christmas night. He and 2,400 men crossed the frozen Delaware River and arrived in Trenton, surprising the Hessians, who soon withdrew. This was a great victory, but General Washington knew continued fights were needed for this country to be free. A brilliant strategist, he began an attack on Princeton. Within a few hours on Jan. 3, Washington and his troops again defeated the British.

The artwork by Peter M. Fiore beautifully illustrates the emotions and struggles of the men. He gives us a window back in time. While the book is limited in focus, it does illustrate the struggles the men and the country had to endure. Courage and patriotic spirit were with each of these men, to whom we owe our independence and our gratitude.



Kay Farmer, Youth Services Department
Teton County Library, Jackson



Trophy Hunt

by C.J. Box

\$24.95, hardcover, Putnam

Lewd, ludicrous things are occurring in the Big Horn Mountains as Joe Pickett, the lone game warden in Ten Sleep County, Wyo., is attempting to unravel the mystery behind the surgical precision of a mutilated moose, the castrated cowboys and the cattle that are showing up in his jurisdiction.

C.J. Box masters the art of weaving a web of seemingly unrelated incidents as he strings the reader along, crafting and delivering a complex plot with his fourth Joe Pickett mystery, *Trophy Hunt*.

Box's multi-faceted story line converts the complicated issues of coal bed methane into terms the layperson can understand. His authentic voice conveys the characters' human condition in layers. Even the good guys have their flaws, just like the rest of us, and perhaps this is what makes them so appealing. Pickett dreads picking up a gun because he knows he has lousy aim, yet he will go to any length to protect his family. Mary Beth, his wife, has started her own consulting business in an attempt to help

ends meet. With most of the Pickett family dinners delivered out of a box, even their two girls are feeling neglected.

Dysfunctional families, greed and subtle and not so subtle sexual suggestions are brewing beneath the surface right along with underground water and mineral rights. You won't be able to put down this engrossing Wyoming mystery.

Juli Smith, Volunteer Coordinator
Teton County Library, Jackson

An Unfinished Life

by Mark Spragg

\$23.00, hardcover, Knopf

An Unfinished Life by Mark Spragg tells the story of Einer, an old Wyoming rancher who has lost his wife and his only child, a son. It is the story of Mitch, Einer's long time friend, who was mauled by a grizzly and is nearly bedfast as a result. It is the story of Jean, Einer's estranged daughter-in-law, who Einer believes killed his son. It is the story of an eleven year old girl named Grif, Einer's granddaughter and Jean's daughter.

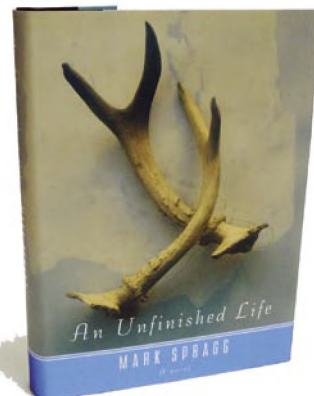
Though Mitch's wounds are the most evident, each character is wounded: Einer through loss of family, Jean through loss of husband, followed by a series of bad relationships, and Grif through the actions of her mother.

The story is carried by Grif, who has been moved from place to place and man to man with her mother, and, while she's a strong kid in many ways, she's also very vulnerable. Vulnerability becomes the driving force of the story.

She keeps a list of things she hates about her mother. Grif is angry, not crying mad, just mad, "Like a tornado came and ruined everything and nothing's left." So when her mother tells her they are leaving the ranch, Grif takes the only course she feels she can: she runs away.

The book made me laugh. It made me cry. It made me think about relationships. It made me think about the ways people hurt themselves and each other. Any book that can do that is well worth the read.

Cheryl Wright, Administrative/Circulation Assistant
Park County Library, Cody



People of the Raven

by Kathleen O'Neal Gear and W. Michael Gear

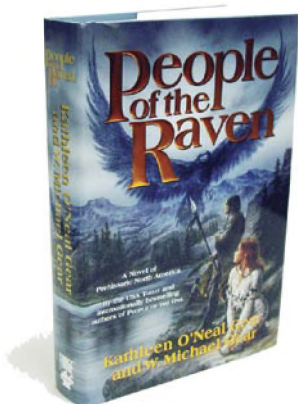
\$25.95, hardcover, Forge Books

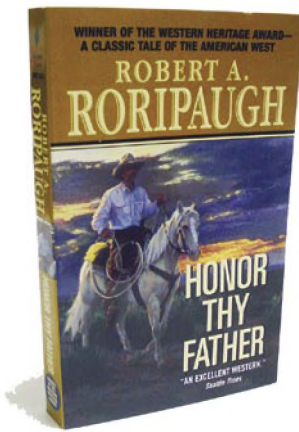
People of the Raven is a richly detailed tapestry of settings, characters and plot. Equal portions of intrigue and espionage, mystery and mysticism support completely realistic characters. Evening Star, Chief Rain Bear, healers, soul keepers, star watchers, warriors and slaves live and share the interpersonal as well as environmental challenge of climate change.

Melting glaciers cover shorelines and alter food sources. Some tribal groups had matriarchal leadership and others were governed by warrior societies. Detailed blood and societal relationships, an advanced counting system and a complex time keeping strategy help portray a highly developed culture. Based on the premise that Caucasians may have peopled North America before or parallel with the traditional theory of a Mongoloid race from Asia settling the Northwest, the Gears' training and experience provide a solid foundation to support the premise this fictionalized tale spins.

I went from being a skeptic (confirmed nonfiction reader) to "I can't wait to start reading more."

Diane W. Martin, Assistant Librarian
Northwest College John Taggart Hinckley Library, Powell





Honor Thy Father

by Robert Roripaugh

\$5.99, paperback, HarperTorch

The New York Times called former Wyoming Poet Laureate (1995-2002) Robert A. Roripaugh's Western Heritage Award-winning novel, *Honor Thy Father*, "an unconventional western enriched with interesting shadings of character and morality." Unlike more traditional novels in this genre, nothing in Roripaugh's work is black and white. It is nearly impossible to place his characters into such restrictive categories as "good" or "evil," and the reader is left with the impression that the men and women about which Roripaugh writes are as real as anyone alive today. The novel examines the Wyoming range wars of the late 19th century, but manages to rise above mere historical fiction.

At its heart, *Honor Thy Father* is a coming of age story as relevant and gripping today as it was upon first publication. Told by Mart Tyrell, youngest son of a powerful and respected rancher on the Sweetwater River, the novel explores the age old theme of children's rebellion against the principles and beliefs of their parents. Through Mart's eyes we see a family ripped apart as their way of life is forever changed by the growth of the West. Struggling to be a good son to his demanding father, Mart is torn between the way of life his father is trying to preserve and the opposing views held by his brother Ira, an outsider who sees the inevitability of homesteaders settling the land his father believes belongs to the Tyrells. Each man and a host of other characters are richly and subtly drawn. Through Mart's heartfelt and genuine narration, readers will come to understand what Ira and Mr. Tyrell both stand for, and will grow in appreciation for both men, as Mart himself does. Roripaugh beautifully and sympathetically draws his characters, and though this is a novel with "interesting shades of morality," the author refrains from moralizing. Roripaugh's respect for his characters, and masterful descriptions of the rugged Wyoming landscape, makes *Honor Thy Father* a rich, complex and beautiful novel that explores the ancient theme of generational conflict through the lens of a traditional western. Suitable for public and high school libraries.

Julie Edwards, Serials Librarian
Riverton Branch Library

High Country Tomato Handbook

by Cheryl Anderson Wright

\$16.95, paperback, Pronghorn Press

Wyoming is the despair of both true gardeners and armchair fans – we look at snow falling on June 21 and wonder how growing vegetables here is even thinkable.

In her new book *High Country Tomato Handbook*, Park County Library circulation assistant and gardener Cheryl Anderson Wright tackles head-on the Rocky Mountain gardening trifecta of harsh and unpredictable weather, alkaline soil and resilient insects, offering personally tested advice aimed at both first-time and experienced gardeners.

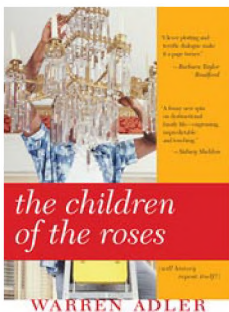
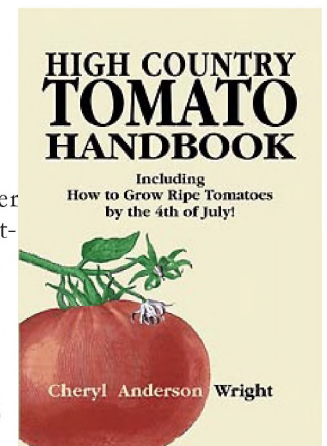
Using lively, engaging prose, the book takes you step-by-step through the process of having home-grown tomatoes on hand by July 4: Wright discusses how to prepare your soil (she is a strong advocate of organic fertilizers and pesticides, and includes a useful discussion on composting), considerations in choosing your seeds or seedlings, the necessity of "hardening" tender sprouts, what to use for mulch to keep down weeds, how to keep plants warm and how to replenish the soil for next year's planting.

She also includes a section of delicious-sounding tomato recipes and contact information for gardening suppliers.

The book was almost always intelligible even to a rank amateur like me, only occasionally slipping into gardener's jargon (I couldn't picture what "Walls of Water" were; see <http://www.colostate.edu/Depts/CoopExt/4DMG/VegFruit/walls.htm> for an explanation). Hopefully the book's one drawback – just enough typographical errors to be irritating – can be fixed in a second printing.

I expect that this book would be greeted enthusiastically by green-thumbed patrons who have a hard time finding material that addresses the unique problems of the Rocky Mountain-area gardener.

Susan Stanton, Technical Services Coordinator
Natrona County Public Library, Casper



The Children of the Roses

by Warren Adler

\$22.00, hardcover, Landmark

When you take Victoria, a lawyer who now stays home, mix in two children, an obese sister-in-law who thinks food cures everything, a man-hating mother who isn't afraid to speak her mind, and a cheating, guilty husband what do you get?

The excitement starts with a phone call from the boarding school where son Michael is in trouble. He breaks a rule, and, to keep him in the prestigious school, Victoria commits a sexual act with the principal.

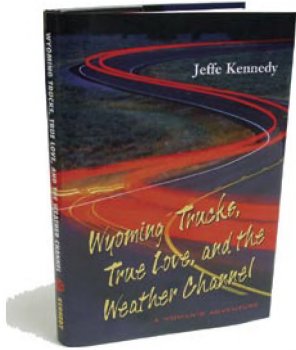
Her husband Josh has been having an affair and when he tries to get out of it, Victoria finds out. She decides they will divorce and take turns living with the children in their home. They each secretly recruit help from their families whom their

spouse doesn't like. Josh asks his sister Eve and Victoria asks her mother for help with the children and house.

After Josh finds out about Victoria and the principal there is a confrontation. It takes a series of personal tragedies to bring them to their senses.

I had not read anything by Warren Adler before, so I did not know what to expect. I found it so interesting that I took the book to work with me to read during my lunch hours and I read at home every time I had a spare moment. I can hardly wait to read the prequel to *The Children of the Roses*!

Deb Kelly, Serials/Government Documents/Interlibrary Loan
Northwest College John Taggart Hinckley Library, Powell



Wyoming Trucks, True Love and The Weather Channel

by Jeffe Kennedy

\$23.95, hardcover, University of New Mexico Press

I have come to think a lot like a Wyomingite. I relish the difficulties of living here; I savor the beauty that strives my heart and weakens my legs.

Jeffe Kennedy's book of essays, *Wyoming Trucks, True Love and the Weather Channel*, describes her odyssey through life formed by both beauty and harshness of family and of environment. The stories include the adolescent girl who disdains learning to cook and sew, female skills she sees as diminishing to her sex, but in reflection those same skills allow her to find "refuge and—strength" as a woman; and a mother and daughter adventure reconnecting lost family and resolving the death of husband and father. "Thanksgiving" describes a family not defined by blood and legal status but by love. In "Appliances," the story is told through calendars listing family events, the destruction of a marriage and the deterioration of the mind by dementia.

The environment connects the same pathos: landscape deplete of its ore and a company "working to restore some of the desolate landscape," the delicate balance of nature and science, "the sound of alpine wind in the tropical ocean."

Jeffe Kennedy's journey is her growth as a daughter, stepdaughter, niece, friend, lover and biologist -- a "transformation from writer of helpless fawn stories to the woman who cuts up the elk hanging in her garage." Her essays are beautifully crafted to show the contradictions of life and death, humor and sorrow, cumulating in wisdom and understanding.

The chaos and concord of this union appears in all aspects of our lives, our arts and our intellectual pursuits. From the moment of birth we each struggle with our natures, attempting to know ourselves.

Marci Mock, Circulation Services Manager
Sheridan County Fulmer Public Library, Sheridan

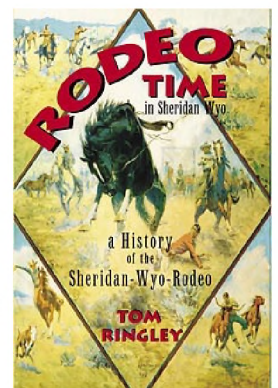
Rodeo Time in Sheridan Wyo.: A History of the Sheridan-Wyo-Rodeo

By Tom Ringley

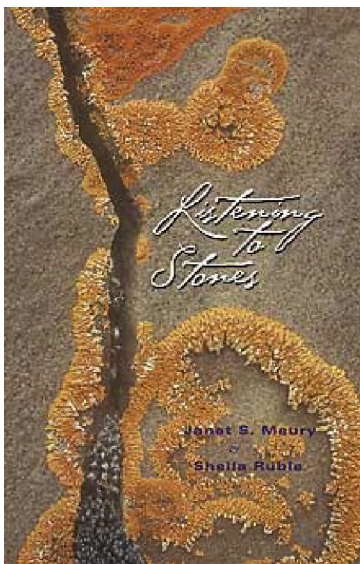
\$23.95, paperback, Pronghorn Press

This book is a lively history of rodeo in the Sheridan area written by Tom Ringley, a current director of the Sheridan-Wyo-Rodeo. With excerpts from period newspaper accounts and many fine historical photographs, Ringley details the development of the rodeo from its modest beginnings as a venue for local cowboys to the current highly ranked Sheridan-Wyo-Rodeo. Overall the book is well organized; the table of contents and appendices are clear and helpful to the reader, although it does not contain an index. Ringley divides the book into many short and interesting chapters with descriptive names such as "The War Years," "The Queens," "The Parades" and "The Events" and relates many touching or humorous anecdotes concerning the history of the rodeo.

My favorite story is of the selection by popular applause of Lucy Yellow Mule as the Sheridan-Wyo-Rodeo Queen in 1951. Lucy was the first Native American girl in history to be selected as a rodeo queen in any rodeo anywhere at a time when, according to the author, signs could still be seen in Sheridan shop windows stating, "No Indians or Dogs Allowed." *Rodeo Time* is a recommended acquisition for Wyoming libraries because of its readability and because it is the only book currently available on the subject of the Sheridan-Wyo-Rodeo. With the publication of this book Wyoming historians and rodeo fans alike will benefit greatly from Ringley's comprehensive research.



Elaine Hayes, Information Services Librarian
Laramie County Library System, Cheyenne



Listening to Stones

by Janet Meury and Sheila Ruble
\$19.95, paperback, Pronghorn Press

At last — painless poetry. That's not to say all of the poems elicit painless emotions. Rather, this collection by poets Janet Meury of Powell, Wyo., and Sheila Ruble of Billings, Mont., can be appreciated by readers who aren't typically poetry fans.

The writers share some common ground. Both are from Colorado and attended Colorado College. Their professions differ: Meury manages the Powell Branch Library while Ruble works with horses and dogs and teaches poetry and photography workshops. But their lifelong love of poetry and its special language is evident as they skillfully capture the images of their lives in verse that can be appreciated by anyone. The book is another publication of Annette Chaudet's Pronghorn Press in Greybull, Wyo. She continues to help burgeoning regional authors by giving them the chance they deserve to gain more recognition.

Listening to Stones is artfully and subtly arranged by unannounced topics. The poets take turns with their expressions of the seasons, nature, family, friendships, grief and miscellaneous observations.

"Family Ties" tenderly describes a doe with fawns in the same meadow where Ruble's daughter was married. "Basslines" is a tribute to Meury's son who pawned his bass guitar to pay for rent. It ends, "I hear again the undersong that shaped my life, a bassline subtle and essential as grain in wood that time intensifies and polishes."

There are fun poems too, such as Ruble's "Montana Geography Lesson," which consists only of place names, and Meury's "Ecstasy Recollected in Tranquility," for all fans of Yellowstone Drug in Shoshoni, Wyo.

Containing more than a hundred poems, this is a collection that the authors refined over time, like fine wine, suitable for many relaxing evenings of enjoyable reading and re-reading.

Edie Phillips, Technical Services
Park County Library, Cody

(some of) The adventures of Carlyle, my imaginary friend

by Dainis Hazners
\$14.00, paperback, University of Iowa Press

Winner of the 2003 Iowa Poetry Prize, this book-length poem relates the adventures in fantasyland of an imaginary hero, Carlyle. Carlyle continually changes shapes in his magical morphing tour, "Carlyle as Nimbus puffs columnar" and "Carlyle mercurial spilled in a white bowl..."

Carlyle is not the gentle Pooh Bear accompanying a Christopher Robinson. Carlyle is kinetic, and source of wonderment and tour guide for a boy. Carlyle challenges ghouls, flies to stars and, starting at the bottom of a river,

...spinning like a top, he bores
toward core, eternal
heart-
which is pulsing (jumper-jolt)...

Magician/musician, Carlyle writes motets and fugues, and "when he blows across emptiness, it will sing back like a sackbut."

The joy and play of language provide energy to the images. (Dust Bunny makes a brief appearance!)

While continuing to operate in a surreal landscape, the poem takes a more melancholy tone near the end, as Carlyle sings of heaven and

...bores a hole
in his skull
it's a way to let the Gods in
(out)

Finally, Carlyle provides a good model for residents of windy Wyoming:

He creates himself
daily out of gust & breeze
or, conversely, out of stillness:
sumptuously.



M. Ann Miller, Librarian, Reference/Bibliographic Instruction
Laramie County Community College, Cheyenne

Kennedy

Continued from page 15.

Hadas, in turn, sent it to his sister, Beth, an acquisitions editor at the University of New Mexico Press. Soon, Kennedy got an email from Beth Hadas asking simply – is it too late for me to be the one to publish your first book?

She had no book manuscript prepared, but Kennedy quickly pulled together the essays she had published, finished or reasonably close to finished over the previous six years. To her surprise, there were 30. Enlisting the help of her writing friends she winnowed them down to 15, tying them together thematically.

The publishing process was easier than expected. The only time she kicked up a fuss was when the book designer added “weird symbols” at the beginning of each essay that really didn’t mean anything, and “everything I write about is how small things have great meaning.”

As a first-time author, it’s been slow getting the word out. She’s relied a lot on independent bookstores, and she tries to work in appearances when she travels for her consulting job. She’s also on the Wyoming Arts Council roster and teaches writing workshops.

Her next project is a book about her sorority in college. A recent book, *Pledged*, by Alexandra Robbins, claimed that the negative stereotypes about sororities were true – exactly the opposite of Kennedy’s experience. Her sorority sisters were an incredibly smart group of women, and some are still her closest friends, and Kennedy wants to explore women’s relationships and the sorority system through her next book.

It’s a long way from sharing a laboratory with sedated bats, but Kennedy is still hard at work finding out how we see the world.

Wyoming Library Association Featured Recipe Maple Date Scones

**Crystal
Stratton,
Technical
Services
Librarian –
Laramie
County
Community
College**



Crystal Stratton with daughter Macey enjoying some scones and tea while reading *Little Women*.

1/3 cup butter or margarine, melted
1/3 cup milk
1 egg, beaten
2 1/2 tsp maple flavoring or extract
1 tablespoons maple syrup
1 1/2 cup flour
1/4 cup sugar
1 tablespoon baking powder
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon cream of tartar
1 1/4 cup oatmeal
1/3 cup dates, chopped

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Combine butter or margarine with milk, syrup and extract with egg in a large bowl. Set aside. Sift together flour, sugar, baking powder, salt and cream of tartar. Add gradually to milk mixture, stirring well. Add oats and dates to mixture, and mix till blended. With flour coated hands, form dough into an 8 in circle on a lightly floured cookie sheet. Cut into 8 wedges. Sprinkle lightly with sugar. Separate wedges slightly. Bake for 12-15 minutes or until lightly browned.
Makes 8.

Wyoming's Poet Laureate

David Romtvedt remembers no early intention of becoming a poet. In high school, he told adults he wanted to pursue “applied literature,” not able to say he wanted to write. He couldn’t really admit he was a writer until the age of 38, after his father died.

Yet in August, Governor Dave Freudenthal was “proud and delighted” to name Romtvedt as Wyoming’s newest poet laureate.

Romtvedt is a writing instructor for the University of Wyoming, a National Endowment for the Arts fellowship recipient, co-editor of *Deep West* and author of nine books of prose and poetry. His book, *A Flower Whose Name I Do Not Know*, was a selection of the National Poetry Series.

“Poetry is the research laboratory of language and thought,” Romtvedt said. “The poet’s job is to use that language as well as possible and to show others how it can be used.” Poetry has a physical level, rooted in love of the language. The deeper meaning comes when poetry helps us understand others by understanding ourselves.

“Part of your job as a poet is to be an observer,” he said. “It’s like being a landscape painter. You look both at the surface and beneath the surface.”

Poetry has political impact in a world where not everyone feels they can speak freely. “Poets have a certain degree of privilege,” Romtvedt said. “They’re already suspect. A writer’s job is to take the masks off, while society tries to tie the

masks on tighter.”

Reading is inextricably connected to Romtvedt’s writing. He grew up in a home with few books, but read voraciously and “used the library like mad.” A self-described “partisan” for the idea that libraries are the highest form of public education, he strongly supports library programming. He hopes his post as poet laureate will allow him to develop more programs that give poetry an honored place in society and a meaningful role in our lives.

In Romtvedt’s writing classes, he sees students who are incredibly incisive and thoughtful, able to let down their guard and produce meaningful work. The young have more than enough life experience to write, Romtvedt believes, but some of us have been trained not to be in touch with our own knowledge.

He also sees students who, like himself, find that their life ambitions conflict with what their parents want for them. As a child, reading was part of what made life bearable for Romtvedt. It gave him opportunity to imagine other lives, other worlds. It gave him opportunity to shape his own life, including his hidden ambition to write, despite his

father’s disapproval. This is perhaps the most powerful and, some would say most dangerous, part of the written word – it allows us to envision another life.

“If you have a vision of another life,” Romtvedt said, “you can imagine that you can make another life.”



David Romtvedt plays button accordion with The Fireants, a northern-Wyoming based band that performs traditional and original dance music of the Americas – everything from Cajun/Zydeco to Calypso to polka.

<http://will.state.wy.us/roundup>

The Wyoming Library Roundup is a quarterly publication of the Wyoming State Library, the Wyoming Library Association and the Wyoming Center for the Book. If you would like to continue to be on our mailing list, if your address has an error that needs correction or you know of someone who would like their name added or you would like your name removed from our mailing list, please send your request to: Wyoming State Library, Publications and Marketing Office, 2301 Capitol Avenue, Cheyenne, WY 82002.

Wyoming
Library
Roundup
Wyoming State Library
2301 Capitol Avenue
Cheyenne, WY 82002

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

Presorted
Standard
U.S. Postage
PAID
Cheyenne, WY
Permit. No. 7