

Lincoln novelist writes 'feminist romance'

By Joan Korinek

A book which originated at UNL was at the top of a best-seller list for six weeks, said the book's author, a UNL alumna.

Catherine Kidwell's *Dear Stranger* is the expanded version of her master's thesis entitled *The Woman I Am*.

Dear Stranger was at the top of the *Los Angeles Times* best-seller list for six weeks. The novel came out in hardcover in February 1983 and in paperback in January, Kidwell said.

The book has been published in 12 forms, and most recently was translated into Swedish, Kidwell said. Publication of the thesis project both in the United States and England has made Kidwell the first person from UNL to achieve such simultaneous publication.

Kidwell's writing career began in 1969 when she entered college as a freshman at the same time as her daughter, Jane. Ten years later she had earned a bachelor of fine arts degree in art, a master of arts degree in English and a publishable thesis. This experience "opened up a whole new world," she said.

The thesis *The Woman I Am* was published, and Kidwell wrote a sequel to it with which she had little luck, she said. She put the two novels together and thus, *Dear Stranger* was born. It took about six years to write the entire book, she said.

Kidwell said she got the idea for the story from her

own life. Although some of the character's stages occur at an age Kidwell can identify with, she said, the story is fiction.

The story takes place in a town called Lancaster which portrays Lincoln during World War II, Kidwell said. There is even a chapter about ROTC on the UNL campus during the Vietnam era, she said.

The story centers on a young couple who meet during World War II, and marry. The husband is sent to England, and after two years of corresponding, they divorce. Thirty years later, they meet again.

The first part of the book is nostalgic since it starts in the 1940's, Kidwell said. But all ages seem to enjoy the book, she said.

Describing her book as a "feminist romance," Kidwell said *Dear Stranger* involves feminism, romance and older women. The book gave her "a chance to say that these three things could go together," she said.

Kidwell has an agent in New York, N.Y., who promotes the book. A year ago, she toured 14 major cities to promote the book herself, she said.

What does it feel like to write a best seller? Kidwell said it is thrilling to know that hundreds of thousands of people have read her book.

"I feel my fantasies have come true," Kidwell said.

Kidwell said her writing style is economical because it is not wordy, preachy or redundant. She tries to get inside her characters and project what they are feeling, she said.

She has always liked to write, she said.

"I was writing stories in the second grade," she said.

Currently, Kidwell teaches an adult fiction writing course at Southeast Community College. She also is trying to adapt *Dear Stranger* as a screenplay.

Other books are in the works, Kidwell said. One is a "how-to" book about writing quality fiction, she said.

Police Report

The following incidents were reported to the UNL Police Department between 6 p.m. Saturday and 8 p.m. Sunday.

Saturday

6:18 a.m. — Domestic disturbance reported on Y Street between 16th and 17th streets. Officer contacted those responsible.

4:35 p.m. — Person reportedly exited a fire door at the College of Business Administration causing an alarm near the door to sound.

Sunday

1:02 a.m. — Person arrested for driving while intoxicated and possession of controlled substance at 20th and Holdrege streets.

6:45 a.m. — Officer reported damage to grass and bushes near the service drive between Former Law and Behlen Lab. Damage apparently was caused by a vehicle.

5:35 p.m. — Two-car non-injury accident reported at the entrance to Parking Area 1 near Cather Hall on North 17th Street.

6:35 p.m. — Window reported broken at Seaton Hall.

Shorts

The Center for Rural Affairs in Hartington is accepting applications for internship positions. The internships are offered in conjunction with the organization's Small Farm Resources Project.

Internship areas include: conjunctive water management and agriculture structure in western Nebraska; policies addressing drawdown of wet meadows in the sandhills; low water-use legumes for crop row interseeding; and intensive grazing systems for cow/calf, sheep and dairy farmers.

For more information, contact the project office at P.O. Box 736, Hartington, Neb. 68739 or call (402) 254-6893. Notification will be made by the end of May.

Super Skate '84 will roll out Saturday, March 31, from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. to help raise money for the Association for Retarded Citizens-Capital. The Lincoln event is part of a nationwide effort to reach a million miles in combined local ARC events.

Funds will come from pledges brought in by each participant. Instead of awarding a grand prize for the highest amount of pledges brought in, the association will have achievement awards based on amount of pledges submitted.

The event will be at the Starlite Roller Rink, 2310 N. First St. Pledge sheets are available there or at Russ' IGA or the association office. For more information, contact the association at 410 Lincoln Center Building, 215 Centennial Mall South, Lincoln.

The American Lung Association of Nebraska and Health Central will sponsor a program designed to teach chronic lung disease sufferers and their families more about the disease. The "Better Breathers Program" starts April 5.

To register, contact Sheri Larson McAuliffe at 474-5858.



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