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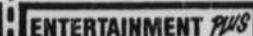
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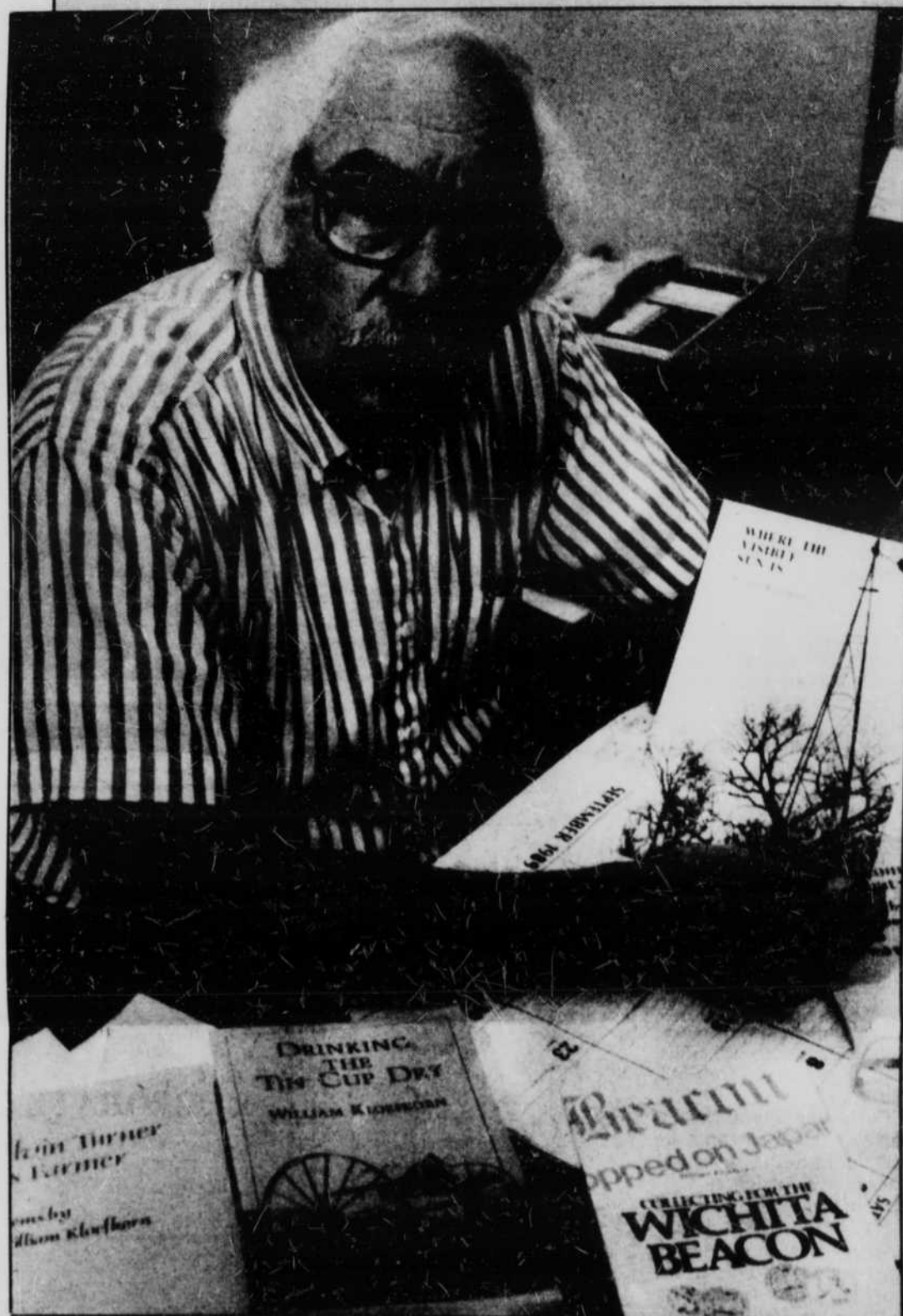
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William Leucz/ Daily Nebraskan

Nebraska State Poet William Kloefkorn and some of his published works in his office at Nebraska Wesleyan University. A Kansas native, Kloefkorn has been teaching at Wesleyan since 1962.

By Joeth Zucco
Senior Editor

The office door stands open revealing a wall full of books, antiques and stuffed pigs. The desk is neatly cluttered with work. And two worn leather chairs beckon sitters and friends. There's a homey, comfortable feeling in William Kloefkorn's office. He is a professor of English at Nebraska Wesleyan University, a homebody -- and the Nebraska State Poet.

Kloefkorn has been writing poetry for about 19 years, he said. He wrote fiction previously but became frustrated with it. He said that he began reading contemporary poets and found it compelling.

"I felt I might be able to draw on my background as a small-town Kansas boy," he said. "I didn't know so much poetry was being written. I didn't know I could draw on my own experiences."

Kloefkorn said that he liked the tighter form of poetry and found it challenging and intriguing.

"I found it exciting at first and still do," he said. Although he was discouraged with his fiction writing, he said he hasn't given up. He said that he carries fiction techniques into his series poems.

"It's (series poems) a compromise between poetry and fiction," Kloefkorn said. "It tells a story and leaves gaps for the reader to fill in."

Kloefkorn said that he had good luck with poetry from the start. He said he only had to send out packets two or three times before getting placed.

"I think that's why I kept writ-

*Doris walks barefooted down to the river,
there to wash the lincolns and the shirts.
She will be gone all day, growing darker in the sun,
speaking her small songs to the curfews and the salmon.*

*I'll meanwhile empty the dishwasher, prepare the ice,
watch television, doze and dream of that initial martini.*

*After which we will catch the first rocket up.
Venus this week, I believe, something routine and casual,
a game of cosmos on the way back, a carafe or two
of unmolested light.*

*She comes up the path, as always, carrying clean clothes
and two tadpoles in a jelly jar.
As always, she wants to take them with us to Venus.
You just never know what might happen while we're gone,
she says, and, as always, unwilling to disagree,
I grunt just three times, slowly.*

-- poem 16 from "Honeymoon" by William Kloefkorn

ing," he said. "I was encouraged by that."

"I had an early poem in the 'Prairie Schooner' and that was a big encouragement for me."

Kloefkorn, who is originally from Attica, Kan., said he focuses his writing on farm subjects because that's where he started writing.

"It wasn't the land, the farm anymore than it was the people on the farm," he said. "My grandfather was an inspiration to me. I borrowed his farm and disguised myself with his name. His values and attitudes influenced mine."

William Faulkner and Mark Twain are two of Kloefkorn's primary writing influences. He said he looks to them for their prose writing. Once he started writing and reading others' works, he said he's had ongoing influences.

In 1982, his influence gained him statewide recognition. He was named the Nebraska State Poet. A committee recommended him to Gov. Charles Thone, the Legislature passed it and it was accepted by a proclamation.

"It's a recognition that calls attention to the arts in general and writing in particular," he said. "The recognition has no strings attached. That's the real plus -- there shouldn't be any strings. That way you can go on doing what you're doing. I think that's a very healthy way of going about it."

Kloefkorn said he felt honored by the recognition.

"It means some of my poems have apparently reached some people and that's what I wanted to do. It means some people

have faith in your work... that you're saying some things in your poems that matter and they can fairly represent the area."

In the 20 years he's been writing, Kloefkorn said he's put out almost a book a year. He has 17 titles to date and released two books this year: "Where the Visible Sun Is" and "Drinking the Tin Cup Dry." He just finished "Going Out, Coming Back" which should be released next year.

Writing is a big part of Kloefkorn's life, but not the only part. He said that he writes something every day and reads a lot. He also participates in readings and workshops. His teaching and family are equally important, he said, adding that he has four children and seven grandchildren.

"They're a lot of fun." In addition to his recognition as a writer, Kloefkorn is known for his championship hog calling. One year when he went to Nebraskaland Days in North Platte, he entered the hog calling contest and won first place and a trophy. A newspaper picked up the story and then national television. A quick peek into his office proves it -- pigs decorate the shelves, desk and floor. He said that he's received almost all of it from students and friends.

Kloefkorn said that if he wasn't doing what he does he'd be "makin' up country western songs, bad ones. And trying to sell them to Randy Travis, T.G. Sheppard, The Judds, Ricky van Shelton..."

"Or it might be fun to travel around, local or otherwise, but not for very long. I'm a homebody."



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