

Author to visit Lincoln store

Julie Kaewert, the creator of the Plumtree Press series, will discuss her latest novel at Lee Booksellers.

DANELL MCCOY
Staff writer

Not all mysteries involve gruesome killers and bloody plots. Some contain a simple mystery mixed in with a little history.

This is how Julie Kaewert would describe her latest book, "Untitled," the fourth in her Plumtree Press series.

"Untitled" is the story of Alex Plumtree, a publisher and antiquarian book collector. Plumtree finds a book in his library that is linked to the Roxburghe Club.

The Roxburghe Club was founded after the Duke of Roxburghe sold a precious copy of the 1471 Valdarfer edition of Boccaccio's "Decameron" to a group of men, who then started the club.

"Untitled" centers its mystery around Boccaccio's book and the club.

"It's a book within a book," Kaewert said. "I love to take a famous classical and imbed it into the book that I am writing. All of my books have two focuses - one in the past and one in the present. It brings a sense of history into the story."

The other three Plumtree mysteries, "Unsolicited," "Unbound" and "Unprintable," carry this formula.

The series also contains a little bit of Kaewert's history as well.

Kaewert, a native of Omaha, worked for a publisher in Bedford Square in England for five years before returning to the States and moving to Colorado. Many of the locations in her stories center on places she has lived or worked near.

The story in "Unsolicited" takes place in Bedford Square, where an anonymous manuscript shows up on Plumtree's doorstep.

The Plumtree Press, as well as many of the characters who work there, is based on the press where Kaewert worked while living in London.

In every book, Plumtree also works to improve literacy, not

unlike Kaewert, who tutors inner city children in reading.

None of this is coincidence. Kaewert said she planned it this way.

"It was a way for me to go back to London after moving back to the States," she said. "It is a way for me to continue to carry on that part of my life."

"I base some of my characters on the people I met while I lived there

and use some of the same places I used to go to in my stories."

Kaewert also said including a little bit of history in

each story is important to her.

"It makes for an interesting read, and the readers learn something at the same time," she said. "True life has some far stranger stories than anyone can make up."

As for the titles, Kaewert said the idea to start every book in the series with a word that begins with "un-" came from a friend of hers who said all the books in the series should have a similar title.

Although the books are in a series, Kaewert said they are also "stand alone books." Readers will be able to follow the story in one book even if they haven't read the others. But reading the series provides a reader with more detail.

"(The books) are a progression," she said. "People who like to follow mysteries would probably prefer to go from beginning to end. That way the stories give more insight into the characters' lives, and the romance aspect of the stories are more visible."

Kaewert's latest goal is to write a book separate from the Plumtree Press series.

Her new project will involve a professor who teaches about Willa Cather in a small college.

Kaewert, who went to Dartmouth College, wrote her honors thesis on the works of Willa Cather.

Besides writing, Kaewert, who lives in Niwot, Colo., also tutors, works on the school board and raises her family.

On Dec. 9, Kaewert will make her first Lincoln appearance at Lee Booksellers' Edgewood Center store, 56th Street and Highway 2, at 7:30 p.m. for a book signing and talk. The talk will include a discussion on the exclusive collectors' society on which she based some of her story.

"Untitled" is available in paperback for \$5.99 and is published by Bantam books.



SHAWN DRAPAL/DN

Story circles bring a focus to home

BY JASON HARDY
Senior staff writer

During Thanksgiving, home was undoubtedly on the minds of many Americans.

But in recent months some Nebraskans have been rediscovering their home through one of the simplest forms of communication - storytelling.

Through the Wagon Train Project's Story Circle Project, many Lincoln residents have visited a home they didn't know existed.

The story circles are an effort to connect the community through the telling of stories about the concept of home, which is also the focus of the Wagon Train's 1999-2000 season. Many of the stories told in the story circles will be featured this May in the Wagon Train's Home/Land performance. This site-specific event combines football players, American Indian dancers and other community members. It will take place at Seacrest Field.

On Nov. 20, Cathy Wilken participated in a story circle at the Roger's House Bed and Breakfast Inn, 2145 B St., and said the experience was one she would always remember.

"It was kind of a revelation to me," Wilken said. "The concept of home made us think so hard, and it was something we took for granted, so it was a wonderful experience to meet new people and hear their stories."

The circle Wilken participated in was one of many held in Lincoln this fall. The circles, made of local groups such as PTAs and neighborhood asso-

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CATHY WILKEN
story circle participant

ciations, generally consist of a facilitator who directs the storytelling and 12 or so people.

Nancy Marshall, the facilitator for Wilken's circle, has facilitated eight circles and said at times, they can be quite moving.

"When the expectations of the participants are the same as the expectations of the facilitator, they go really well," Marshall said. "It's reminded me that each and every one of us is an expert on our home setting. Everybody has a unique story."

For Wilken, the result was a similar one. "You couldn't go through the experience without being changed," she said. "I knew I loved the city. I knew I loved my home, but I guess I didn't know all the reasons until I sat down and put it on paper."

"It also made me realize that my community isn't home to everyone, so it makes you view your community in a new way, not necessarily a negative way, but a new way, and I think that's good."

She said at first, the idea of sharing personal stories with strangers was fairly intimidating.

"Initially, you're kind of sizing everyone up and thinking if you fit in," Wilken said. "Once

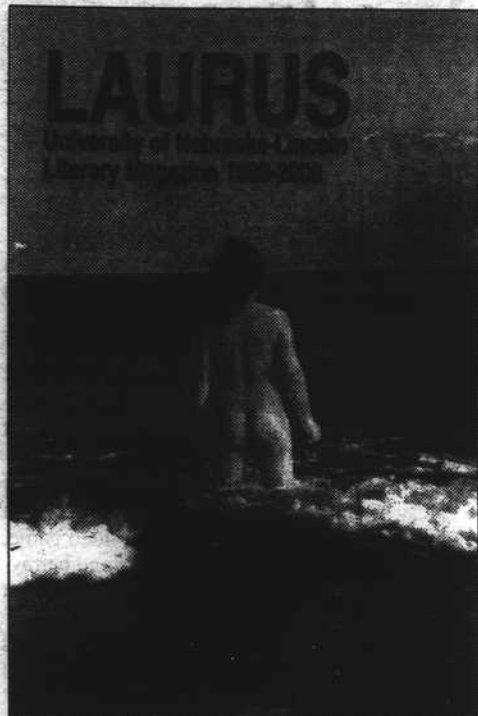
you're comfortable, it doesn't take long to break down those barriers and have an open and honest discussion."

Marshall said the format for the story circles was simple. The group members introduce themselves and talk about the concept of home. Then, they're each asked to make notes about what home is to them. They share these notes with the group.

"With each group it was interesting because the group ran how it went. Everybody didn't want to write a story about home, and because it wasn't an English class, they didn't have to," Marshall said. "In another group, it was women who have substance abuse problems, and they talked about what they hoped home would be when they finished their treatment."

While the possible inclusion of the stories in the Home/Land performance is exciting, a greater importance lies in something much simpler.

"I really think it's as simple as people listening to each other," Marshall said. "You get into that really childlike mode of being open, you know, you're not afraid. It gives you permission to tell your story."



JOANNA FINDLAY, a graduate student in English, designed this year's Laurus cover.

Laurus diversifies as it ages

BY DANE STICKNEY
Staff writer

Laurus has given fulfillment to a new throng of undergraduates hankering to be published.

This year's edition of the literary magazine, a 350-page compilation, features a variety of creative works, including short stories, poetry, artwork and a play.

Greg Kuzma, a University of Nebraska-Lincoln English professor and adviser for the Laurus, said it has been a literary magazine for the English department for nearly 25 years, but the magazine used to consist solely of graduate students' works.

When Kuzma took control of the magazine five years ago, he decided to feature only undergraduate work.

"Graduate students should be published in national magazines," Kuzma said. "It's the undergrads that really don't have much of an opportunity to get published."

Even though the magazine is made exclusively of undergraduate work, Kuzma said, Laurus is a high quality magazine.

"The quality of the undergraduate writers on this campus is great, and people sometimes don't realize that," he said. "The Laurus is just another step toward greatness for the young writers."

The Laurus is still growing, and its goals are constantly evolving, Kuzma said.

"In the past, it's been a magazine for English and journalism students, and it taught us a painful lesson and showed that this is a fractured campus," he said. "We're constantly trying to get students from other colleges to write for the Laurus. We'd like it to be the voice of the campus, not just a few colleges."

Despite Kuzma's changes, the magazine retains its original name, but no one knows exactly what it means.

"It's mysterious," he said. "I don't know the history. Every year, the editors want to know where the name came from, but we can never find out."

Kuzma said he thought the Laurus was named after laurel leaves awarded to Greek athletes as an honor for achievement.

Mandy Snyder, an editor of the Laurus, said she had no clue where the name came from, but she had heard a variety of ideas.

"The only thing we know for sure is that it is a plant or leaf or something," she said. "A lot of people have come up with ideas, but nothing is for sure."

"We just worry about what goes in (Laurus), not what it's called."

And what is in the magazine this year is unique and exciting, Snyder said.

Please see LAURUS on 14