

October 29,2008

Gentlemen,

I very much enjoyed Alan Bartles' article "On the Trail of Old Jules" in you latest Issue.

My grandfather, Patrick Heaton, arrived in Lone Tree (Central City) from Canada when he was three years old. He later became an attorney and spent most of his life in Nebraska and died in Central City in 1953 at the age of 85. I have enclosed copies of correspondence that he had with Mari Sandoz regarding her choice of characters in her novels and her reply.

As a lifelong resident of the State who has lived in Western, Central and Eastern Nebraska, I always find something in your magazine that brings back fond memories. Keep up the good work.

Sincerely,

Michael P Heaton

February 16, 1940

Miss Mari Sandoz
Lincoln, Nebraska

Dear Miss Sandoz:

I was very much interested in the account of your address before the Stockyards 400 club. It moved me to do what I have long threatened to do, write you frankly as to my personal opinion of your works.

In answer to the criticism of your portrayal of a certain type of frontier character and the claims that your characters are not typical of the frontier, but were entirely unknown, I have frequently stated that did I not know that you had never met the individuals I have in mind, for the reason that Luther H. Mitchell had been lynched long before you were born and you could, not have even known of Mrs. Mitchell or her daughters, the Snow girls, step-daughters of Mitchell, nor Cena M. Thompson, another neighbor of our family in the 1870s, I would be moved to believe that you had used these characters to portray Ruedy and Culla Slogum and other member of the family.

Luther Mitchell, a former close neighbor of ours, was one of the principals in the famous Olive lynching case, always referred to in this locality as the Mitchell and Ketchum case. He was of the Ruedy Slogum type. Many accounts if this case can be found in the records of the State historical Society.

Cena M Thompson, who was somewhat notorious in this locality, later moved to Kansas. Years later, after an extensive search, when a bachelor son had died in Kansas, leaving a substantial estate, she was located living in a city dump near Los Angeles, California.

Each one of these people certainly fits in with characters of "Slogum House."

I fully understand that the receipt of many crank and presumptive letters is a common experience with you. But I do wish to say to you that it has been my hope that some day you would favor us with a work portraying the other side of the pioneer and frontier life, truly portraying so many of the noble characters, the pleasures and the joys of pioneer and frontier life,

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My family, when I was a small boy, arrived in Merrick County on the 1st day of June, 1871. For the first few years the Pawnee Indians were about our only neighbors. I have now reached the age when I can appreciate the past and revel in the memories of those days and a type of people gone forever. Consequently, I enjoy your writing, admire your skill and ability, and hope that it may be my privilege to read much more of the products of your pen; and close with an expression of the sincere hope that I may be granted the pleasure of some day enjoying the type of work that I have suggested, and which I know you can so wonderfully portray.

Sincerely,

P. S. Heaton

PSH:LC

**MARI SANDOZ
LINCOLN, NEBRASKA**

June 26, 1940

Mr. P. S. Heaton
Central City, Nebraska

Dear Mr. Heaton:

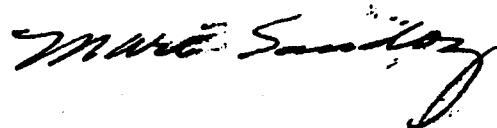
Your fine letter of last February is still unanswered, and I am ashamed. Pressure of work that couldn't be delayed, story dead-lines, a junket to Washington before the heat got intolerable -- these are my excuses, but I'm still sorry.

You write of the Snow girls and of Luther Mitchell, and the Olive lynching. Yes, I know something of those people, and of the Benders of Kansas, etc. Such families were found, in varying dye, along the early trails and the fringe of the frontier, trying to dominate the region. The will-to-power has always interested me very much, whether in a John Jacob Astor, who had his face stepped on twice in Europe and once more by ultra-snobbish New York and lived to look down upon them all, or a Hitler, who hasn't been forgiving either. Because my talent is limited, I kept to a limited canvas, and because the will-to-power individual can only rise high in a new country, or an old one in flux, I placed Gulla Slogum in the free land region and era. My conclusion, I believe, would hold universally. She prostituted such beauty as fell into her hands, and destroyed the most promising individuals of the opposition. That's good dictator practice.

About a pretty pioneer story: If the background is made less stark than it was, and the experience less harrowing than the fact, won't those who survived the pioneer period seem less heroic than they truly were?

Anyway, I was pleased to hear from you, and sorry this answer took so long to materialize.

Sincerely,



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