

Carl Sandburg, Nebraska Sandburg Scholar, and Former U.S. Poet Laureate Featured on NET Television

LINCOLN, Neb. (Sept. 19, 2012) -- Explore the controversial life and legacy of three-time Pulitzer prize-winner Carl Sandburg through archival footage and interviews with Pete Seeger, the late Studs Terkel and Norman Corwin, family, poets and Nebraska scholars.

“The Day Carl Sandburg Died” premieres Monday, Sept. 24, at 9 p.m. CT on NET1 and NET-HD and includes interviews with Kathryn (Kate) Benzel, Ph.D., Professor of English at the University of Nebraska at Kearney; and Ted Kooser, former two-term U.S. Poet Laureate, Pulitzer Prize winner, and currently an English Professor at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. This year is the 45th anniversary of Sandburg’s death.

For much of the 20th century, Sandburg was synonymous with the American experience, a spokesman on behalf of “the people.” Using his unique life--from impoverished beginnings on the Illinois prairie, to the halls of Congress, to “The Ed Sullivan Show”--as the basis for free-verse poetry, Sandburg became one of the most successful writers in the English language: a three-time Pulitzer Prize-winner, biographer (most notably of Abraham Lincoln), children’s storyteller, novelist, and captivating performer. Yet, after his death in 1967, his literary legacy faded and his poems, once taught in schools across America, were dismissed under the weight of massive critical attack.

This “American Masters” program provides a dynamic examination into the life, work and controversy surrounding Sandburg, exposing his radical politics and anarchist writing during WWI as well as the burgeoning resurgence of interest in him and his contributions. The film features archival footage and photographs, spoken word performances, songbook selections, readings and original interviews with Sandburg’s family.

Preceding “The Day Carl Sandburg Died”, NET will air “Carl Sandburg: Prayers for the People,” on Sunday, Sept. 23, at 10 p.m. CT on NET1 and NET-HD. Taped at the Merryman Performing Arts Center in Kearney, Nebr., this hour-long NET Television production features Chuck Peek, University of Nebraska at Kearney professor emeritus; Ted Kooser, former U.S. poet Laureate; and the musical quartet, Mike Adams & the Sandtones. Peek and Koozer read several of Sandburg’s poems, such as “Haze,” “River Roads,” “Prairie,” “Caboose,” “Shenandoah,” “Sunset from an Omaha Hotel Window,” and “Testament.” Kooser also performs two of his poems, “So This is Nebraska” and “Hobo Jungle.” Interwoven with the readings are images of the prairie, people, and the past. This NET Television production won an Emmy for best arts and entertainment program at the Heartland Regional Emmy Awards in 2010.

A second NET Television production, “Ted Kooser’s Poetic World,” will air Monday, Sept. 24, at 10:30 p.m. CT on NET1 and NET-HD. In addition to reading selections of his work, Kooser takes viewers on a thoughtful and philosophical journey as he talks about his poetry, how he writes it, and his ambitious goal of making poetry an everyday experience for us all. The program also follows Kooser to the office of the Poet Laureate of the United States in the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. In a segment taped at the University of Nebraska at Kearney,

the program also features Kooser and five other Nebraska poets, including Nebraska State Poet Bill Kloefkorn of Lincoln; and local poets Mikah Tacha of Bertrand; Mary Strong Jackson of Scottsbluff; Lyn DeNaeyer-Messersmith of Cherry County; and Dominique Garay of Lincoln.

RELEASE WRITTEN BY: Ann Tillery, 402-470-6305, or atillery@netad.unl.edu.