

Friends of Lorine Niedecker



2010 Activities Report – Narrative

It has been a busy and ambitious year. It began with the honor of an unsolicited grant from the Poetry Foundation. We took full advantage of the opportunities it created.

In March, we secured the services, pro bono, of the Assistant Director of the Wisconsin Arts Board to facilitate a strategic planning session for the Friends board. Karen Goeschko administers WAB grants programs and is a terrific resource for non-profit organizations. The board set aside a planning day. At the conclusion we had identified four priorities for 2010. Each of the priorities was addressed this year.

* Our **Web site** is the communication center of the organization. The majority of the collection is now digitized through the University of Wisconsin Library. This allows scholars to study the Wisconsin resources anywhere in the world. The “Solitary Plover” newsletter submissions exploded this year and we identified an editorial process. We were in need of a Web re-design for navigation, content updates and the addition of a database. Because of the grant from the Poetry Foundation we were able to contract the University of Wisconsin – Extension, Instructional Communications Systems Digital Media & Web Development. We chose them for their experience and track record, the price was affordable and once a client we will be able to enlist their counsel as needed. Working with the University of Wisconsin-Extension has proven worthwhile for several projects. The close association is valuable.

* Getting into the **schools** has been our greatest challenge. Board member Ellen Last, retired from the Department of Public Instruction, began to work her contacts. We attended the state conference for high school English teachers. Our goal was to get three teachers to include Niedecker in 2011. The goal is to identify three teachers each subsequent year. Additional activities are in the planning stages. This priority will continue in 2011.

* The 5x5 chap book project was the **Public Art** piece this year underwritten by local businesses. 1,500 were printed and distributed to increase Lorine recognition. We are also working on a rock bench along the River Walk in Fort Atkinson. Board member, Nancy Rafal, is working on a Niedecker mural in Door County near Wintergreen Ridge. Plans are underway for Lorine’s poetry to be featured on a poetry trail in a state park in Door County in 2013, 110 years after her birth.

* The second **Lorine Niedecker Wisconsin Poetry Festival** was successful. The integrity of the Festival last year brought us a partnership with the Wisconsin Humanities Council’s Wisconsin Book Festival. We helped the Council support more activities for poets and poetry in the weekend before the 2010 Wisconsin Book Festival. This partnership supports the goal of more opportunities for poets and poetry. They supported

us by including the Poetry Festival in print ads and on their Web site. The Friends of Lorine Niedecker operate with limited dollars, spend what we have carefully and often are able to match our funds. Our local volunteer base is growing.

The Lorine Niedecker property on Blackhawk Island is still privately owned. Ken and Cathy are generous with permission for visitors and the use of the property for class trips. Beloit College and UW Milwaukee brought classes this year. We still work with the county to be sure they are aware of our care on behalf of the flood prone acre. Plans are underway to raise the foundation of the cottage four-five feet to accommodate higher flood levels.

The biggest news is that the expansion and renovation of the Dwight Foster Public Library will be completed in early winter of 2011. The Lorine Niedecker Study Room was underwritten by the Knox family. Jane Shaw Knox was the author of the first Niedecker biography. During renovation the builders discovered a high dome-like area in the ceiling that had been covered by a previous remodeling. Using contingency funds the plans were changed to center the space under this vaulted area. This will make the room truly special. Lorine's collection will be in an archival and secure case yet visible to the public. Additional space is available for the rest of the collection and supporting files. The room is adjacent to an open gallery space of the original 1920s architecture.

Plans for 2011 include settling the collection in its new space, a spring fundraising campaign, regular poetry reading and discussion events, the launch of Margot Peters' Niedecker biography, and a two day poetry festival.

*I was the solitary plover
a pencil
for a wing-bone
From the secret notes
I must tilt*

*upon the pressure
execute and adjust
In us sea-air rhythm
"We live by the urgent wave
of the verse"*

Dedicated to preserving and expanding the legacy of Lorine Niedecker
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