



Rick Houchin/Blue Hill Leader

Faith Colburn, Blue Hill native and author, is pictured at her book signing at the Blue Hill Public Library last Saturday.

BLUE HILL NATIVE FAITH COLBURN

Author returns for book signing at library

By Rick Houchin
Blue Hill Leader

BLUE HILL – Faith Colburn grew up as a shy girl in Blue Hill. Now she speaks to thousands of people through her books and stories.

The latest, entitled "Threshold," is a collection of her memoirs she has been working on for nearly 18 years.

She returned to Blue Hill's Public Library Saturday for a book signing session with the public.

"As a girl, I was unable to talk to people because I was so shy," Colburn said. "But I felt like I belonged here and I felt safe."

So safe, in fact, that her mother used to lecture her about her late-night walks around the family's section of farmland after dark.

"The sense of safety and security I had growing up here is underneath

everything I write, now," she said.

"I was immersed in the prairie lifestyle, growing up on the farm."

Colburn has always been interested in writing prose, but actually started her writing career in junior high when she penned a poem about a farming accident that was well-received.

"I let my imagination go wild after that," she said.

Since then, she has published a number of short stories ranging in length from about 500 words to nearly 6,000 words.

And her subject matter comes from her heart.

"Grandma would tell me sto-

ries about her life and history in this area, and so I started writing the stories down," Colburn said.

"I used to interview her on tape every Wednesday, and much of that became part of my memoirs."

Colburn draws upon her childhood, her heritage and life in rural Nebraska, but her writing is largely

centered upon her family and the associated values and community spirit.

"Up until recently my story subjects bounced all over, but now I am deeply into the theme of family and community values, and how we can carry these forward to adapt to today's lifestyle," she said.

Our families and communities serve as the threshold we cross into

our lives, she said. Whether it's a metaphorical threshold or the actual physical threshold that marks our front door, the crossing informs who we choose to become.

"Threshold began with two images," said Colburn. "The first is an image of my great-great-great-grandmother, Sicily Hendricks, in the golden glow of candlelight and a fire in the hearth, surrounded by neighbors and friends, helping a young woman give birth."

"The second is an image of my nephew, along with strangers, under the cold green light of fluorescent lights in a modern operating theater having his leg amputated, labeled 'hazardous waste,' and sent off to be incinerated in an undisclosed location. After David's amputation, I began to wonder how it's different to be attended by friends and neigh-

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Flu season on downturn, but deaths abound

By Rick Houchin
Blue Hill Leader

WEBSTER COUNTY – Although the flu season seems to be winding down a bit, this has still been one of the worst seasons in recent history.

There have been 12 confirmed deaths due to influenza in the state this season, including one infant.

Adults with influenza are not required to be reported so that mortality rate could actually be higher.

But things are worse to the south.

Kansas has reported a whopping 700 deaths to date this season, involving either flu or pneumonia.

An estimated five percent of the Kansas population is being treated for some type of influenza. Health officials in both states expect that the recent spread of influenza, which started about a month earlier this year than usual, will continue for a time yet.

Influenza cases normally peak in February, but January was actually higher this year.

Elderly cases and those involving additional illnesses have been hospitalized in many cases, while others are given the usual care and are treated with Tamiflu medication to shorten the symptoms while the flu runs its course.

The state of Nebraska health service said earlier this week that they continue to receive sporadic reports of influenza-associated fatalities along with outbreaks in schools and long term care facilities.

If historical trends continue to prevail this season, the public can expect the virus to circulate for the next several weeks but at gradually reduced levels.

Fifty-six percent of the reported cases in the state are influenza Type A, while the remainder are Type B.

Of the state hospitalized population, just over nine percent were for influenza last week.

Nebraska's statistics are compiled from laboratory testing, physician visits, emergency department visits, and influenza hospitalizations.

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WEATHER

Thu – High 42 low 20. Partly cloudy/wind.
Fri – High 29; low 14. Partly cloudy.
Sat – High 36; low 22. Sunny.
Sun – High 43; low 25. Mostly sunny.
Mon – High 39 low 22. Snow showers.
Tue – High 44; low 23. Mostly sunny.
Wed – High 47; low 25. Cloudy.



SPORTS

Warcats qualify three for state wrestling tourney.
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COMMUNITY



Courtesy photo

The Silver Lake High quiz bowl team consists of Keenan Danehey, Chloe Hartman, Tori Kissell, Seyler Monroe, Josie Parr, Kaitlin Schneider, Mackenzie Skupa and Sydney Skupa.

SL High quiz bowl is fourth out of 30 teams

HASTINGS – The Silver Lake Academic Quiz Bowl team attended the ESU 9 Quiz Bowl Feb. 6 at Central Community College in Hastings.

They finished fourth out of the 30 teams participating.

The team consists of Keenan Danehey, Chloe Hartman, Tori Kissell, Seyler Monroe, Josie Parr, Kaitlin Schneider, Mackenzie Skupa and Sydney Skupa.

The Mustangs defeated St Cecilia 60 to 0 in their first match of the day. Senior Mackenzie Skupa answered the first toss up followed by Keenan Danehey answering five toss ups and the team getting three bonuses correct.

The second match pitted the Mustangs against Hastings High 4 with Danehey answering five toss up questions and the team getting four bonuses correct to win 60 – 25.

Against Hastings High 5 team the Mustangs won with Schneider answering the first two toss up questions while Danehey answered three and the team answered three bonuses for a final score of 55 to 30.

The first defeat of the day was handed to the Mustangs by the Adams Central Patriots in a close well-fought match, 15 to 35. Mackenzie Skupa answered the first

toss up question putting the team up 15-0. In round four AC was able to tie the score 15-15. AC then scored in the fifth and eighth round to win 35 to 15.

Silver Lake then played Hastings High 3 and won in a close battle 45 to 35. Danehey and Schneider answered four and three toss up questions respectively with the team getting two bonuses correct.

Against Blue Hill in the final match for Silver Lake down 45 to 0 Schneider answered three in a row with some team bonuses to bring the score to 35 to 45. The Bobcats finished 60 to 35 defeating the Mustangs.

COLBURN

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bers or by strangers."

Strong images, strong feelings, and strong words come from those experiences.

Threshold is a series of 18 stories, with an introduction and a conclusion, about one ordinary American family's struggle to thrive across race and through time and space. From five-year-old Joseph Swope kidnapped and adopted by a war chief, to my father blasting up U.S. Highway 41 with a turtle for a co-pilot trying to save a marriage, this memoir reveals what happens when communities fail and how they thrive. These are the stories of people who worked together and shared resources. There's the smell of wheat dust and sweat and the ozone that precedes a storm and there's the clang of green beans into a metal pot while friends and family sit on chairs dragged out into the yard where it's hard to discern the border between fireflies and stars.

"I can remember how safe and comfortable it was when everybody knew my name and they may not have always been glad I came, but I knew they wouldn't let me 'go under,'" Colburn said. "Perhaps we can find a pattern in these stories that we can adapt to help us retrieve that feeling in this new century."

A sixth-generation Nebraskan, I'm thoroughly immersed in midgrass and shortgrass prairies. I grew up with two quirky parents and a younger sister who was as much a tomboy as I was. Mom was a retired "canary" who sang with the big bands in around the Great Lakes and up and down the Eastern Seaboard and my fa-

ther was a farmer. With my grandmother, I've walked the grasslands, smelling tiny onion blossoms so sweet they'll make your ears ring and watching pronuba moths fall like petals from the waxy, white blossoms of yucca. As a public information officer for the state Game and Parks Commission, I've canoeed the Dismal, ridden the Sandhills horseback, cross country skied the Missouri bluffs, seined carp, fixed nets, picked trout eggs, and camped out along Bone Creek. I've had the opportunity to photograph wildlife, from Sandhill cranes to elk and buffalo and, having lived my entire life here, I gained intimate knowledge of the landscape that often appears as a character-catalyst in my work. I earned a master's degree in creative writing from the University of Nebraska at Kearney as well as a bachelor's degree in journalism and political science and a master's degree in journalism from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. I received UNK's Outstanding Work in Fiction Award during its 2009 student conference and several awards from the Nebraska Federation of Press Women. My fiction has appeared in KINESIS and PLATTE VALLEY REVIEW, and my poetry has been published in THE REYNOLDS REVIEW. While at the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, I wrote numerous articles for NEBRASKALAND magazine, including copy for photo essays and historical articles.

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I spent several years gathering oral family histories and biographies, including a 100-year memoir of the Lincoln newspaper publishing family, with an emphasis on their use of production technology. During a stint with the University of Nebraska's Research and Extension Center as a communication specialist, I focused some of my research efforts on the history of a farm family in western Nebraska that amassed 10,000 acres of land over several generations in drought-prone high plains region. As a communications specialist for a Lutheran social ministry organization, I spent five years telling the stories of people with developmental disabilities. Those efforts helped me learn about the glue that holds families and communities together and the wedges that drive them apart. I have drafted a fiction collection that mirrors the true experiences of people I've known.

Colburn is already working on her next project, which will be about her mother's life touring with the big bands of the Thirties, starting at age 15.

It will be her first novel.

Junior high quiz bowl team wins at annual ESU 9 event

HASTINGS – The Junior High Quiz Bowl team entered the annual ESU 9 Quiz Bowl competition with a bye in the first round.

The 26 team competition saw the young Lakers defeat the St. Cecilia Girls team (50-0), the Hastings Middle School White team (70-5), the Superior team (65-20), and the St. Cecilia Boys team (70-5) to get to the championship competition.

The top round faced the Mustangs with the very savvy St. Cecilia boys team again after they returned from the losers' bracket. After being tied 5-5 through six rounds, St. Cecilia took the lead at 20-5.

Abbey Borgman played strong as she answered the next two toss up questions, giving the team the opportunity to earn the 10 points from the bonus questions from each. Silver Lake defeated the St. Cecilia Boys



Courtesy photo

Team members include Abbey Borgman, Corey Conway, Nicole Hammer, Leanna Wardenburg, Skyler Ericsson, Wyatt Griess, Trent Colby, and Mark Thurston.

(35-20) in a strategically played match.

Throughout the competition, the Silver Lake team worked together well when the opportunity was there to win points on the bonus questions.

Borgman answered 20

toss up questions with Wyatt Griess answering seven on the day.

Team members include Corey Abbey, Nicole Hammer, Leanna Wardenburg, Skyler Ericsson, Wyatt Griess, Trent Colby, and Mark Thurston.

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From Your Healthcare Provider

Welcome Thomas Zusag, MD
to Mary Lanning Healthcare

Welcome, Thomas Zusag, MD. A radiation oncologist, Zusag has an extensive background in the technical side of radiation treatments. His focus is on the treatment of difficult cases and on gynecologic, breast, prostate and lung cancers. He is currently accepting appointments and is seeing patients at the Morrison Cancer Center.

Mary Lanning HEALTHCARE
Morrison Cancer Center

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