

Sandhills native comes home July 26-August 2 to discuss his heartfelt book “My Nebraska”

Baseball executive-turned-author Bob Wirz is headed to Nebraska for a whirlwind junket to discuss his recently-published book "My Nebraska", which lovingly recalls growing up in the Cornhusker state in the 1940s and 1950s.

Wirz, who only moved out of Nebraska so he could continue his passion of working in major league baseball, will travel through much of the state including book chats and signings at the Thomas County Fair in Thedford from 2 p.m. until 6 p.m. on July 29, 2023 in the Pavilion at the fairgrounds.

What was it like when your hometown, the Sandhills village of Halsey, had fewer than 150 residents? What did young people—actually those of any age—do for work and just as important for fun?

Wirz, who got to live his passion of working at the highest levels of baseball public relations for the Kansas City Royals, the Office of the Commissioner in New York City and through his own

communications business, lovingly empties out his memories of everything from counting millions of tiny trees in the Nebraska National Forest to playing Sunday town team baseball where the age of teammates might range from the early teens to the 50s.

The colorful cover of My Nebraska, which features two paintings from former Dunning, NE rancher/artist Laron McGinn that depict the beautiful landscape of rural Nebraska and the ranching lifestyle, sets the tone for the book that is filled with intimate stories and many memorable pictures.

It is "a wistful and endearing love letter to Nebraska filled with memories shared by generations raised in small towns throughout the Midwest", praises Shari Veil, who heads up the journalism and mass communications department at the University of Nebraska, where Wirz graduated in 1959.

"Bob is a longtime friend of mine through baseball who has a great

passion for our state", adds Jim Abel, who owns the professional Lincoln Saltdogs in the Capital City. Former Los Angeles Dodgers executive Fred Claire wrote the book's foreword in which he said the author's "journey from a tiny town...to working for the top office in major league baseball is a story of dedication, love of family, and realizing dreams can come true".

The author has lived in Connecticut since leaving the Midwest in 1974, but has "persistent lovely thoughts" of Nebraska "and I am sharing them with my fellow Cornhuskers, the honest, hardworking, and down-to-earth people who populated or have previously populated this area".

Wirz's appearances are as follows:

- July 26, 3:00 p.m. in Lincoln at "From Nebraska Gift Shop" in Haymarket Square.
- July 28, 11:00 a.m. at the Hastings Library. (Includes a talk and donation of memorabilia from the 1960 American Legion World Series.

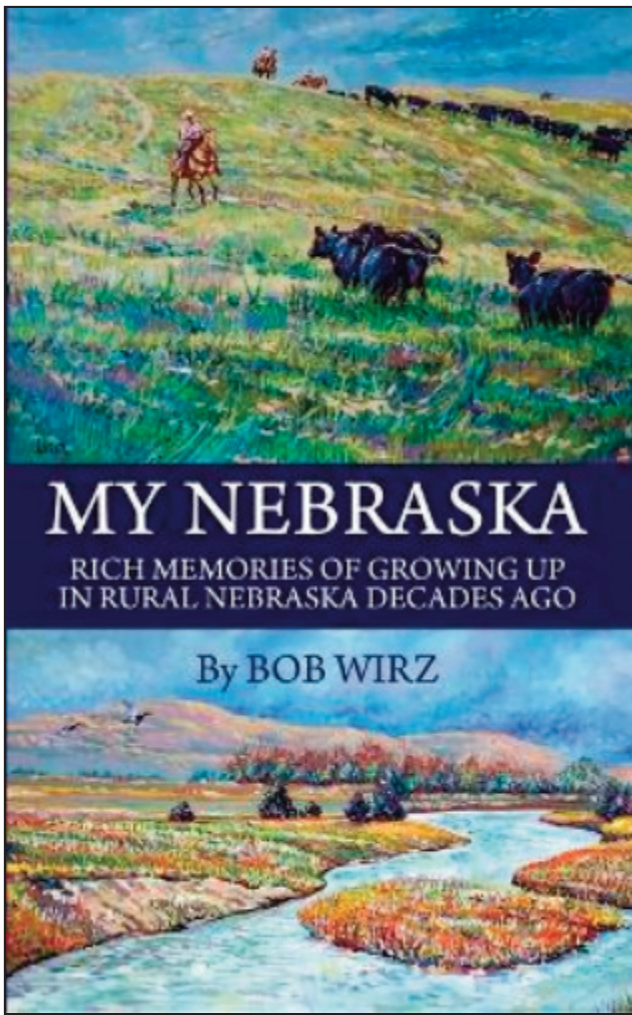
Throws a ceremonial first pitch at a Hastings Sod-busters game at Duncan Field, the evening of July 27.)

- July 28, 4:00-9:00 p.m. Kearney, at the Grow Nebraska booth at the Buffalo County Fair.
- July 29, 2:00-6:00 p.m. Thedford in the pavilion at the Thomas County Fair.

- July 31, afternoon-evening Broken Bow, exhibit hall at the Custer County Fair.
- August 1, 7:00 p.m. Dunning at the Sandhills Heritage Museum.
- August 2, 4:00 p.m. Mullen at the Mullen Arts Center.

In addition to the book-signing stops, "My Nebraska" is available through numerous bookstores plus Amazon.com, BN.com and the publisher, Dorrance Publishing of Pittsburgh, PA (dorrordr@dorrancepublishing.com). For autographed copies:

www.WirzandAssociates.com.
Contact: Bob Wirz, BWirz2@gmail.com or 203 858-4890



COURTESY PHOTO

Thomas County Fair Activities Schedule Inside This Issue

Second Annual Steers For Students Program

The Sandhills Cattle Association developed the 'Steers for Students' program as a new educational program geared toward the youth of the Sandhills. The way it works is the donated calves will be penned with the other calves during our Educational, Performance, and Carcass Contest, and the ranchers will still receive the donated calf's data during and after the contest. However, the 'Steers for Students' program calves will be sent to Husker Meats LLC of Ainsworth, Nebraska, instead of being shipped to larger plants like the other calves. Jim Pinney of Husker Meats and other industry professionals will offer local students and producers a chance to learn about carcass evaluation while experiencing how a packing plant operates. Schools the calf donor chooses will receive the donated beef for their school lunch programs at little to no cost.

This year we have six schools included in the portion of the program where they will receive ground beef for their school lunches, thanks to the generous donation of calves from ranchers, including Herb & Lori Hall - Halls & Sons, Wes Kil-murry - Atkinson Livestock Market, Craig & Katie O'Kief - Walking X Cattle, Logan & Jennifer Hill - HI/ Cattle Co., and Richard Lackaff - Lackaff Cattle Corp. The beef from these six steers is going to Thedford, Dunning (Hall), Atkinson (Kilmurry), Valentine (O'Kief), Stapleton (Hill), Bassett (Lackaff), and the steaks going to both the ranchers that donated and the Sandhills Cattle Association.

Our Steers for Students Program has luckily grown this year and has been very rewarding for



us & students alike. We invited several schools that were not included in the program so they would have the opportunity to observe the locker and learn as well. Over 90 students and adults visited Husker Meats this year during our two programs on April 17 and June 30. This is a huge success for us because so many of the students and adults had never been inside a locker before.

At our program on June 30, we had students attend from Valentine, Ainsworth, Bassett, and Bartlett, as well as ranchers Craig O'Kief and Richard Lackaff. Husker Meats had the actual donated calves hanging for carcass evaluation that was performed by Nicolas Herrera from UNL. Nicolas thoroughly explained carcass evaluation to the group and how Ribeye area, Kidney Pelvis, and Heart Fat, and Marbling all matter in the end results of our beef. The students loved judging the animals and the ranchers got to see firsthand how their animals look before they are processed.

We visited with owner Jim Pinney and learned about how the locker functions on a day-to-day basis. While the butcher was processing the carcass, Jim gave us lots of insight into the different cuts that can come from a bovine and even how to

cook certain kinds of beef differently. Jim said that brisket was never used back in the day because people just didn't know how to cook it.

Husker Meats also packages, tenderizes, smokes, and grinds all the meat as requested by the owners. It was fascinating seeing all the various machines they use and the different ways you can process a side of beef.

After our morning tour we had a BBQ rib lunch and sent everyone on their way.

Husker Meats is working on finishing processing the calves and soon we will have ground beef shipped to the participating schools.

We have received donations for the processing fees of the animals from the Rock County Community Fund (\$1,000) to cover processing for Bassett and Jack & Linda Wolf (\$250) for Atkinson. We still need donations for Dunning, Stapleton, Valentine, & Atkinson to make sure these schools will get Sandhills raised ground beef for their upcoming school year.

If you want to help ensure that a school receives its beef absolutely free, please contact us at the Sandhills Cattle Association about a donation today.

Contact us at 402-376-2310 or info@sandhills cattle.com.

Thedford Volunteer Rescue Squad conducting raffle



COURTESY PHOTO

Members of the Thedford Volunteer Rescue Squad received a check from the Sandhills Area Foundation. Pictured, l-r: Brenda Corbin; Fire Chief, Spencer Burk; Dawn Bryant; Assistant Fire, Chief Dan DeNaeyer; Robert Mills; Pat Neben; Kevin Hood; Jemma DeNaeyer; Gordon Needs; Rescue Capt, Shirley Hanna; and presenting the donation check to TVRS Executive Director, Sandhills Area Foundation is Kimberly Johnson.

The Thedford Volunteer Rescue Squad is an Emergency Medical Service serving approximately 1,700 square miles of the Sandhills surrounding the Thedford area, including the communities of Seneca, Halsey, Brownlee, and the Nebraska National Forest. Connecting these communities, US Highway 83 and Nebraska Highway 2, also means having substantial traffic that passes through the response area. The TVRS operates two ambulances and has a small crew of volunteers. Currently both ambulances owned by the Thedford Rural Fire District have served this department well, however are aging and neither meet the Nebraska EMS regulations following the CAS Standards. Of the two ambulances, only one is four-wheel drive and is the oldest of the two at 24 years old.

In October 2022, the Nebraska Department of

Health and Human Services (DHHS) announced the opening of applications to the Rural Ambulance Replacement grant. This grant is funded by the American Rescue Plan Act, appropriated by LB1014, in the total amount of \$20 million dollars. These funds were appropriated to the ambulance replacement grant, intended to assist EMS across Nebraska in replacing aging ambulance fleets.

The Thedford Volunteer Rescue Squad applied for the maximum that could be received for ambulance replacement (\$150,000). The grant opportunity is timely for TVRS, as we have been anticipating the need to replace our four-wheel drive ambulance. TVRS has been awarded \$75,000 towards the purchase of a new ambulance.

Currently with material shortages, inflation, and other major economic

challenges around the country it has become a lot of work to replace an ambulance for any department. Current cost to purchase a new ambulance is approximately \$275,000. The volunteers with the TVRS are working to secure other grant funds and maintain responsible spending to save funds generated through billing. They also plan to conduct fundraisers to achieve this goal.

As of June 2023, TVRS has received funding from three additional grants. Grants received include Mid Nebraska Community Foundation: \$25,000, BNSF Railway Foundation: \$10,000, KBR Public Power District Operation Round Up fund: \$1,500. In addition, TVRS has also received a very generous, anonymous donation of \$50,000.

Even with this great