

American Poetry, and the 1995 Andres Berger Award from Northwest Writers Inc., plus literally a dozen other awards and mentions.

I rise today to honor the publication, not just because of its many awards, but because many Alaskans still do not understand or appreciate the breadth and scope of the publication and how important it has become as a gateway for Alaskan authors to win recognition from a wider literary audience.

I want to thank the University of Alaska Board of Regents and the leadership of the University of Alaska Anchorage for supporting the publication. Alaska's university system continues to face difficult economic times because of falling Alaska State revenues. It has taken a tremendous commitment to academic excellence to continue the funding necessary to permit the review to be a quality publication and artistic success. The University deserves great credit for its efforts at promoting the publication in these difficult financial times. It is because of the need for more revenues for the University to permit it to reach the highest level of greatness that I continue to press for the University to finally gain its full land-grant entitlement that it should have received at its founding. The University of Alaska Land Grant Bill, still pending full Senate consideration, would greatly help the University gain the economic means to support such important endeavors. But more on that at another time.

I also want to thank and again publicly recognize the work of Mr. Spatz. A recent recipient of the 1999 Edith R. Bullock Award for Excellence—the most prestigious award bestowed by the University of Alaska Foundation, Mr. Spatz is a professor and chair of the University of Alaska Anchorage's Department of Creative Writing and Literary Arts and has been involved with the UAA's honors program. A film maker and writer, besides editor, Mr. Spatz wrote a series of illuminating notes in the current volume. He was joined in shaping it by Contributing Editors Jeane Breinig, assistant professor of English at the University of Alaska Anchorage, and by Patricia Partnow, vice president of Education at the Alaska Native Heritage Center. A final thank you must be provided to the National Endowment for the Arts, which provided a Heritage and Preservation Grant that helped pay the costs of publication of the expanded edition.

Mr. President, Alaska, in fact all of America, is far richer artistically because of the review's presence. It truly is a window for Americans to view society in Alaska at the close of the 20th Century, and a worthy stage for the serious works of all writers as we enter the 21st Century. That is particularly the case with this edition. I commend it and its contributors for its many achievements, and I know all members of the U.S. Senate join me in wishing it continued success.●

NATIONAL HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

● Mr. TORRICELLI. Mr. President, I rise today in recognition of National Hispanic Heritage Month. In my own state of New Jersey, we celebrate and recognize the proud history of a people who have a deep affinity to faith, a strong work ethic, and commitment to family values. Hispanic Americans share a diverse ancestry with countries spanning Europe, Africa, and South and Central America, and close cultural ties to Mexico, the Caribbean, Central America, South America, and Spain. This diversity has brought variety and richness to the American mosaic and has strengthened our national character with invaluable perspective, experiences, and values.

For countless years, Hispanic Americans have played an integral role in all walks of life and made our country stronger. Whether it is in the entertainment industry, business, medicine or public service, the contributions of Hispanic Americans cannot be understated. I am proud to represent a state with a large concentration of Puerto Ricans, Cubans, Dominicans and immigrants from countless countries in South and Central America.

In counties such as Hudson, Essex, Passaic, Union, Camden, Atlantic and Cumberland, Hispanic Americans have been contributing to my state's diversity for years. In our state legislature, we are proud to have four members of the General Assembly of Hispanic Heritage with Wilfredo Caraballo, Raul "Rudy" Garcia, Nilsa Cruz-Perez and Nellie Pou. At the county level, we have three distinguished members of the Board of Chosen Freeholders with Nidia Davila-Colon, Silverio Vega, and Neftali Cruz in Hudson County. And at the local level, countless Cuban Americans, Puerto Ricans and Central and Southern Americans have achieved the office of council person and mayor. New Jersey was especially proud to elect its first Hispanic member of the House of Representatives with the election of Representative ROBERT E. MENENDEZ, who also serves in the House leadership.

Through my own Italian heritage, I share a special bond with people of Hispanic descent. When Christopher Columbus set sail to discover this continent, it was done so with the financial support of Spain. Hundreds of years later, the Hispanic heritage continues to be an important and critical aspect of our national accomplishments. Hispanic Americans comprise eleven percent of the nation's population. In just a few years, Hispanic Americans will be the largest ethnic group in the United States. Their commitment to this country has not gone unnoticed. Whether it is serving in our Armed forces or through their growing economic consumer strength, Hispanic Americans are indeed thriving and intertwined in the fabric that is this great country.

Activism is important to creating a sense of personal responsibility for

one's community. The Hispanic American community embodies this concept, and should be commended for successfully instilling it in others. The contributions of Hispanic Americans has spread to other communities in a manner that transcends racial and ethnic differences, and I am confident they will continue to grow as a vital component of life in New Jersey and indeed the United States.●

OIL ROYALTY VALUATION

● Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, I want to state for the record that, had I been able to, I would have voted against the Hutchison amendment to the Interior appropriations bill, which proposed to continue a moratorium on revising Interior regulations governing how much oil companies pay for oil drilled on public lands and resources. I regret that previous commitments prevented my availability to be in the Senate for this critical vote.

This issue seems fairly straightforward. Oil companies are required to pay royalties for on- and off-shore oil drilling. Fees are based on current law which clearly states that "the value of production for purposes of computing royalty on production . . . shall never be less than the fair market value of the production." Revenues generated from these royalties are returned to the federal treasury. However, for many years, oil companies have been allowed to set their own rates.

In the past, I have supported similar amendments which extended a moratorium on rulemaking while affected parties were involved in negotiations to update the regulations. However, this process has been stalled for years, with little possibility of reaching resolution because these legislative riders imposing a moratorium on regulation changes have created a disincentive for oil companies to agree to any fee increases, resulting in taxpayers losing as much as \$66 million a year.

Who loses from this stalemate? The taxpayers—because royalties returned to the federal treasury benefit states, Indian tribes, federal programs such as the Historic Preservation Fund and the Land and Water Conservation Fund, and national parks.

I supported cloture twice to end debate on this amendment because I believe we should vote on the underlying amendment to allow a fair and equitable solution of royalty valuation of oil on federal lands. On the final vote, however, I would have opposed the Hutchison amendment to continue this moratorium because I believe we should halt the process by which oil companies can set their own rules and determine how much they pay the taxpayers for the use of public assets. I do not support a structure which only serves to benefit big oil companies and allows them to continue to be subsidized by the taxpayers.

We should seek fairness for each and every industry doing business on public

lands using public assets, and we should insist that same treatment be applied to oil companies. Fees that are assessed from drilling oil on public lands are directed back to the federal treasury and these fees should reflect the true value of the benefit oil companies receive.

We have a responsibility, both as legislators and as public servants, to ensure responsible management of our public lands and a fair return to taxpayers. That responsibility includes determining a fair fee structure for oil drilling on public lands. Despite passage of this amendment which continues this moratorium for yet another year, I hope that we can reach a reasonable agreement to ensure proper payment by oil companies for utilizing public resources.●

RECOGNIZING THE MAY 13, 1999,
SPEECH OF HANS W. BECHERER,
CHAIRMAN AND CEO OF DEERE
AND COMPANY BEFORE THE DES
MOINES ROTARY CLUB

● Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I would like to recognize and enter into the RECORD a recent speech presented to the Des Moines Rotary Club by Hans Becherer, Chairman and CEO of Deere and Company. His remarks are insightful and provide a long term outlook from one of the leaders in our agricultural community. The speech is entitled, "All Farming is Global".

Today I'd like to discuss some of the major trends that will help shape agriculture as it moves into the new century and millennium. This is of particular importance to Iowa since almost one-fourth of the state's population works in the agricultural complex . . . and 90% of the land area is devoted to farms.

Farming remains critical to John Deere, as well. Although we've diversified a good deal in recent years, both in product breadth and geographic reach, farm machinery remains our flagship business . . . and the domestic farmer our number one customer.

Needless to say, the farm sector is struggling right now due to depressed grain and livestock prices. As a result, North American retail demand for farm equipment is expected to be off 25% or so this year with lesser reductions in Europe. Accordingly, we're making aggressive cutbacks in our production in order to adjust inventories and bring more balance to the market.

One farmer, on an Internet message board devoted to Deere, recently summed it up this way: "The quality of the green tractor is there," he said. "The quality of the green money to pay for it isn't."

Thus far, that seems to be a fair assessment of the situation.

Of course, the farm economy was in good shape heading into this downturn, from the standpoint of debt levels and land values, and will likely prove quite resilient. There's nothing to suggest this will be a rerun of the 1980s.

Moreover—the next year or two aside—the future of farming looks extremely promising for the long run.

That's what I'd like to focus on this afternoon—less the problems of the present, than the promise of the future.

Of the key forces dictating change in agriculture today, the most important ones concern increasingly open markets and freer

trade; the explosive growth in technology, which is transforming the entire economy these days; plus, the continuing importance of environmental issues.

Let's take a closer look at these issues now.

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As a first point, farming is becoming far more market-oriented.

Most of us, I suspect, believe in free trade and open agricultural markets. We feel farmers in Iowa have a lot to gain from such a situation. We have, after all, some of the world's best farmland literally in our backyards, plus an excellent distribution system for getting crops to market, and access to highly productive farm machinery.

Just what does an open market, increasingly free of controls and restrictions, mean to the farm sector?

Mostly, it will accelerate trends already under way—putting a premium on large, efficiently run operations that are able to make the most of today's technology and fast-moving markets.

Less-regulated farming will have a positive impact in terms of overall economic efficiency—and it's likely a plus for the nation's agricultural complex as a whole. It certainly gives U.S. farming a leg-up in a global market, something that works to Iowa's benefit.

As for the decline in smaller farms, this very definitely marks the passing of an era, which many find a source of regret. But it's a process that has been in motion for some time: Even in the robust economic environment of the last few years, Deere was selling less than half as many tractors and combines to the domestic market as in the early 1970s. The number of U.S. farms has contracted by one-third (from 3 to 2 million) over this time, with a similar pattern seen in Iowa.

I should point out that some small operators will do quite well in tomorrow's less-regulated market. These are the ones who devoted themselves to a type of management-intensive, or niche, agriculture, such as growing organic crops. Still, it will take quite an entrepreneurial breed to overcome the economies of scale that are becoming more and more a part of farming.

Along the same lines, a more open agricultural climate means farming will become more internationally focused and geared to exports. Indeed, the farmer of the future will have to be a man of the world.

And that's definitely a plus for Iowa.

Agriculture has always been regarded as the most basic of local enterprises. And rightly so: What could be more a part of our communities than our own soil? Farming, moreover, has constituted the soul of rural life in our country for over 200 years, and been widely associated with the virtues of honesty and hard work that built America.

But in truth, ladies and gentlemen, all farming is global.

Every ear of corn, or pod of soybean produced in Iowa makes an impact on the world market . . . and affects farmers in faraway places such as Australia and Argentina.

Similarly, every drop of rain that falls on Brazil's *creddados* . . . has an effect on Iowa's farms and fields.

Legislation approved in Berlin and Brussels . . . is felt by farmers in Burlington and Belle Plaine.

Soybean prices went into a nosedive awhile back . . . not because of a leap in supply or a lag in demand, but because the Brazilian currency lost one-quarter of its value overnight. Brazil, of course, is a major soybean producer and exporter. That action alone shaved roughly a dollar a bushel off bean prices.

Global trade, manifested by exports, has become a mainstay for our nation's farmers.

Roughly one-fourth of farm receipts today come from overseas sales. And Iowa is right in the thick of things, being the nation's number-two exporter of agricultural commodities (—\$4B year) after California.

Farm exports will drop this year due to the economic travails of the developing world and are down almost 20%—or \$10 billion—from their peak. But this is almost surely a short-lived phenomenon . . . and completely at odds with the long-range picture.

The world's fundamentals—namely, strong population growth, improved diets and more open trade policies—all point to U.S. farming, and Iowa agriculture, being an export-driven, growth-intensive business with solid prospects well into the future.

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Farming will get more competitive, too, as farmers scramble to add value to their crops and gain an edge in productivity, yields and costs.

Technology—my second point—will help them get there. Technology, of course, has been the story in agriculture since the days of Cyrus McCormick's reaper . . . John Deere's plow . . . and the Waterloo Boy tractor. Forerunners of modern-day combines and cotton-pickers weren't far behind.

The cultural effect of ever-more productive machinery goes well beyond the farm. It's what transformed our society into an industrial power since it takes so much less physical labor to feed our population today. The average farmer gets as much done by 9 a.m. now as in a full day in the post-war 1940s. Over this time, crop production has nearly tripled from virtually the same amount of farmland. Especially noteworthy, farm-labor's role in the agricultural process has dropped by more than two-thirds during this time.

What accounts for such improvements? Technology, mostly . . . in the form of better seeds and fertilizer, as well as—indeed—more sophisticated farm machinery.

As important as technology has been to farming's past . . . it's fair to say we haven't seen anything yet. Genetically modified seeds . . . plus precision, or satellite-guided, farming and other, almost unimaginable, advances in information technology . . . put farming on a truly exciting, high-tech plain for the new century.

Going forward, in fact, a farmer's biggest problem will not be having access to technology, but figuring out how to apply it to his best advantage. "What we're trying to do here," one farmer recently said at a precision-farming conference, "is create knowledge out of chaos."

Meeting this need—helping farmers bridge the gap between information and intelligence—may constitute a promising business opportunity in its own right. Deere recently formed a new business unit—John Deere Special Technology Group—to help supply solutions to these challenges.

One of the unit's most exciting new ventures is the VantagePoint network, a kind of silo in cyberspace. More to the point, VantagePoint is an Internet-based data-warehouse subscription service that allows farmers to collect, store, and reference a full array of data about their farming operation—such as yield and seed population. Subscribers can also see aggregated data from neighboring areas. VantagePoint functions as a server to contain this information . . . and, as an interface, to organize and present the data in creative and useful ways.

As for the Internet itself, we believe it adds an important new dimension to the selling process, which should work to the benefit of our John Deere dealers . . . by helping them provide even more responsive service and counsel.