On March 3rd, the ever loyal Bibliophiles met with author Joe Starita to discuss his unique biography, I AM A MAN, Standing Bear’s Journey for Justice.

Joe began by responding to requested reports from our members about any unusual, unknown aspects of their experience. A riotous discussion ensued with the surfacing of random flotsam and jetsam from our personal lives. This was an avenue chosen by our guest for learning about and relating to the interests of his audience before entering into discussion of the book at hand.

Joe explained how and in what manner he came to write the book, with various asides regarding his methods of teaching his UNL journalism students how to write a story that might become a publishable article or full-length book. The complex story of Standing Bear’s quest for identity, dignity and justice is an epochal one for civil rights in America. Standing Bear’s integrity and personal charisma were such that he somehow challenged all whom he encountered to reach their highest potential. These included Judge Elmer Dundy, General Crook, Thomas Henry Tibbles, and many others.

Joe offered asserted that Standing Bear’s life was a resounding testament to Wendell Berry’s famous dictum, “If you don’t know where you are, you don’t know who you are.”

In closing, Joe shared one of his passionate “bucket list” wishes with us - that there should be a stature of Standing Bear in Omaha’s Old Market, where pedestrian tourists and visitors could discover for the first time the marvelous and little-known story of Standing Bear’s pivotal role in America’s civil rights history. It is a uniquely Nebraskan story, worthy of the attention, funding and programmatic support if Omaha’s leaders and philanthropists.
After some discussion, our book selected for discussion at our June 1 meeting will be *GIANTS: The Parallel Lives of Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln*, by the Harvard historian, John Stauffer. A title selected for a later Fall reading will be *EINSTEIN: His Life and Universe* by Walter Isaacson. Another title strongly recommended for future consideration by Joe is *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* by Rebecca Skloot.

(Report submitted by Bob Runyon, 2/7/10, rrunyon@unomaha.edu)