THE BIBLIOPHILES
MEETING #30

The Bibliophiles met again on May 6 for the launch of our new book selection process. Chris Behr summarized our options and after some discussion Theme 2 – Contemporary Affairs/American Indians was chosen. Within that category sentiment leaned towards two books for our September 2nd meeting. They are **BLACK ELK SPEAKS** by John Neihardt and **THE DEATH OF RAYMOND YELLOW THUNDER** by Stew Magnusson. Both titles have been put on order at the Bookworm. Ask for the 20% discount for our book club.

**Meeting Alert: Stew Magnuson, a native of Omaha,** will be giving a book talk at the Bookworm on Sunday, May 17th at 1 p.m. It will be on his most recent book, **THE LAST AMERICAN HIGHWAY: A Journey Through Time Down U.S. Route 83: Nebraska Kansas Oklahoma.**

Sue Mattson gave a brief introduction to Doris Kearns Goodwin’s **THE BULLY Pulpit,** focusing on the life and background of Ms. Goodwin. She came under critical fire several years ago, along with two other notable American historians, Stephen Ambrose and Joseph Ellis. All three were charged with plagiarism. Ms. Goodwin’s reputation was briefly sullied, but her response of contrition showed mitigating circumstances, rectifying the matter in the scholarly community.

A majority of our readers were impressed with Goodwin’s brilliant character portrayals of Theodore Roosevelt and William Taft. TR’s compulsive energy, vision and purpose were applauded, while his military adventurism and love of imperial war initiatives were less admirable sides of his complex personality. Donna Turner, a former teacher, said he would have been diagnosed early on with ADHD. Another commentator said that today his excesses would have been curbed through drug treatment with Ritalin. Some
people were impressed with the character and description of the little known William Taft, while others felt it offered more detail than they needed.

Goodwin’s many-layered construct of her highly detailed narrative story line was of interest to several members. Goodwin was adept in not over-politicizing the obvious parallels between excesses of the late 19th and early 20th century Gilded Age and our own era, with its notable inequality between social/economic classes. She let the events speak for themselves.

Many readers were surprised to learn about the power and public appeal of McClure’s Magazine, and its investigative reporters who pointed out so vividly the ills of Gilded Age society.

The friendship, break and final reconciliation between TR and Taft were considered a dramatic highpoint of the long and well-documented story. Many facts were objectively presented, with an abundance of artfully chosen quotations from letters, diaries, interviews and other original source materials.

May 12, 2015
Bob Runyon, reporter
rrunyon@unomaha.edu
402-393-3320