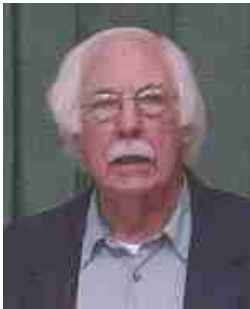


## William C. Kloefkorn (1932 - )



In 1972, Windflower Press published William Kloefkorn's first book *Alvin Turner as Farmer*, which became a regional best seller. The publisher, Ted Kooser, later became U.S. Poet Laureate, and Kloefkorn became lifetime poet laureate for Nebraska in 1982.

Kloefkorn's verse, written in vernacular language, celebrates Great Plains life. He is one of the first writers, along with Kooser and others, to define a Midwestern voice. Born, raised, and educated in Kansas, he often writes about rural life with understated wit.

Kloefkorn is especially a storyteller. In this poem about Kansas character Carry Nation, he tells history from a young person's point of view. Contrasts invigorate the story: the "full-fleshed" photograph breaks the wallpaper pattern. Mrs. Wilma Hunt sermonizes about morality as she destroys life. The devil appears, but then is set aside for Kool-Aid. The poet's dead-pan delivery suggests a third presence: the open-eared listener who observes details, judges a tad, and chuckles at the absurd human condition—like an adult reader.

### LTL

**Carry A. Nation came into our house and filled it  
 With her meagerness. She was hung full-fleshed  
 Against the flowered wallpaper of our living-room,  
 And Mrs. Wilma Hunt, who brought her, gave each  
 Of us a little wooden hatchet. "John Barleycorn  
 Is the Devil," Mrs. Wilma Hunt said. And  
 by dropping worms head-  
 First into alcohol she taught us  
 To hate him. "Now let me tell  
 You," she said, "about the LTL...."**

**She taught us the Loyal  
 Temperance Legion song, all of it, then killed  
 Another worm and served refreshments. Our house  
 Had never been so full. There were all of us, with  
 Carry on the wall-  
 Paper: Kool-Aid, Cookies, Song,  
 Something-New-to-Hate  
 And several dead worms  
 Curled in alcohol.**

**Education:** William Kloefkorn, was born in Attica, Kansas. He received a BA 1954 in English from Emporia State University and then served in the U.S. Marines. In 1956 he taught high school in Ellinwood, then returned to ESU for the MA (1958).

**Career:** Nebraska named Kloefkorn the State Poet, the equivalent of state poet laureate. He taught at Wichita State from 1958-1962 and Nebraska Wesleyan University from 1962 to 1997. He is active as a writer and performer of poetry. His books—over two dozen—include poetry, fiction, memoir, fiction, and children's literature.