convicted (for bad prose?) in federal court in Minot, ND, on July 23, 2010. He was sentenced to time served, plus 100 days (for a total of 199 days). Sauder spent most of his prison sentence at the Heart of America Correctional and Treatment Center in Rugby, North Dakota.

Kabat, Boertje-Obed, Walli, and Sauder were outsiders who traveled to North Dakota to beat their swords into . . . well, a dented sword attack on the military industrial complex. But one longtime resident of North Dakota kept up a decade-long silent vigil in opposition to the nuclearization of the Great Plains. His name was Father Robert Branconnier.

On August 14, 1968, Father Branconnier led a group of thirteen young people to a big national test of the Minuteman II missile at a site (H-24) near Michigan, ND, 57 miles west of Grand Forks and the University of North Dakota, where he served as the chaplain of the Newman Center. The silent protesters positioned themselves five miles from the official observation site, where North Dakota's entire congressional delegation and 500 VIPs and Air Force personnel had been assembled from around the country to watch the big test. This was one of those exceedingly rare moments when the Air Force was willing to show the public that we had a potent nuclear ICBM arsenal, that the missiles actually worked (there was widespread cynicism), and that we were not afraid to prove it publicly. It was like the launch of that fateful year's Apollo space rockets (Apollo 6 on April 4, Apollo 7 on October 11, and Apollo 8 on December 21).

The dramatic Minuteman II countdown on the Dakota prairie came and went. Nothing happened. The launch was a complete and humiliating dud. Not even a puff of smoke. When—at least in this public test—the world ended not with a bang but in a whimper, Air Force General Bruce Holloway, the Strategic Air Command commander, declared, to no one's satisfaction, that he had "full confidence in the Minuteman missile and its part in the nation's defense system." North Dakota Representative Thomas Kleppe did

not attempt to put lipstick on the pig. "I think the top echelon of the Department of Defense had better be ready to answer some questions." North Dakota Senator Milton R. Young, who had earned the moniker "Mr. Wheat" but who might as easily have been called "Mr. Missile," said, "obviously somebody goofed badly." Senator Young had spent some political capital to assemble those 500 dignitaries to witness the missile test in North Dakota.

Father Branconnier was better known in 1960s North Dakota for his anti-Vietnam protests than for his opposition to the Air Force's nuclear presence on the Great Plains. At the end of 1967, he challenged the US Justice Department to arrest him for encouraging young men to resist the draft. He said the Justice Department had been negligent in ignoring his work to impede conscription. At the same time, a Grafton, ND, Catholic priest urged UND students to boycott the campus Newman Center to show their opposition to Father Branconnier's anti-draft activities. Branconnier's appeal to be arrested got national attention, partly because North Dakota seemed like an unlikely venue for anti-war protests. The Justice Department did not accept his challenge.

By 1968 the Catholic hierarchy had had enough, however. When Branconnier announced his intention to invite young North Dakotans to burn their draft cards at St. Thomas Chapel in Grand Forks as part of a national Veteran's Day Draft Card Burning Project, he was instructed by Bishop Leo Ferdinand Dworschak of the Fargo Diocese to drop the plan. When Branconnier declined to desist, the bishop accepted his resignation, stressing, of course, that the resignation "in no way represents punitive action."

A year later, when President Richard M. Nixon announced that the nation's sole anti-ballistic missile facility would be located near Nekoma, North Dakota, Branconnier was still in the vicinity to protest, whereas most residents of the region were jubilant that all that economic activity would be coming to North Dakota. Father

Branconnier called the ABM system "a blunder of major proportions," but Grand Forks city attorney Robert McConn said, "With all the warheads in the ground around here now and the H-bombs on the bombers, what difference will some more make?" Swords into stock shares? Spokesmen in Great Falls, Conrad, and Shelby, Montana, were deeply disappointed that the ABM site would not be built in their vicinity. Before the decision, Shelby's mayor Harvey Nelson said, "They [the citizens] are all hoping that we'll get it here because it will build up the town." The $4-billion Stanley R. Mickelsen ABM Safeguard Complex was completed in northeastern North Dakota in 1975, then earmarked for decommissioning by the US House of Representatives one day after becoming fully operational, and deactivated on February 10, 1976, after only eighteen months of operation. Beware, said President Eisenhower, of giving inordinate power to the military industrial complex.

North Dakota was only a warmup act for Branconnier, who had served as chaplain at UND for fifteen years before he was forced to resign. In 1985, he got himself arrested for trespass along with seven others in Boston while protesting Reagan administration support for the Contras of Nicaragua. Branconnier returned to North Dakota on several occasions, including 1973, when he lobbied for a moratorium on new coal development in the state. Branconnier periodically trespassed at nuclear weapons production facilities in New England. Then in his sixties, he reported that he was no longer able to scale the perimeter fences, but still managed to slip through whatever gaps in the fencing he could find. As a serious pacifist he did not vandalize the nuclear facilities, but he occasionally performed the Mass "in a prophetic witness against the preparations for mass destruction."

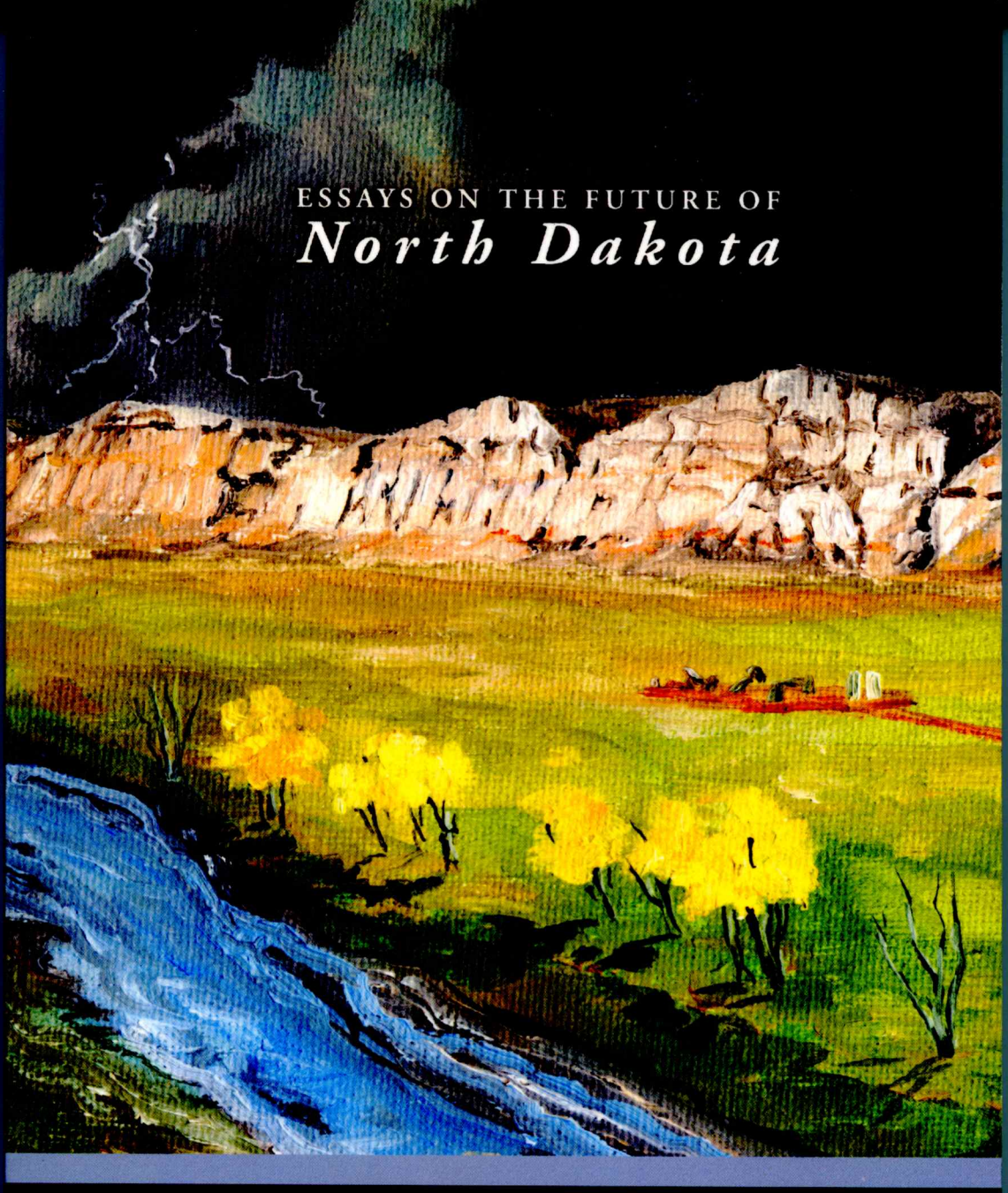
Father Robert Branconnier died in Marlborough, Massachusetts, on December 26, 2016. He was ninety-two years old.

Ann Nicole Nelson was thirty years old at the time of her death on September 11, 2001. She grew up in Stanley, ND, where she was good friends with the grandchildren of the Muslim Americans who came to North Dakota in the 1920s and '30s. Those families were regarded as a little bit unusual, even exotic, in Mountrail County in the 1980s, but they suffered no discrimination, at least none evident to their White Christian fellow citizens. Ann Nelson—ambitious, gregarious, intellectually curious, exuberant, independent, and possessed of wanderlust—spent summers at the Concordia Language Villages in Bemidji, Minnesota, where she learned Norwegian. She was a double major in finance and political science at Carleton College in Northfield, Minnesota. During those years she did stints abroad in China and Cambridge University in England. In the years following her graduation she hiked around Peru alone in spite of her parents' protests. She worked in Chicago, then moved to New York, where she took a job with the Cantor Fitzgerald company as a bond trader. She had worked in the North Tower of the World Trade Center for just a handful of days before the catastrophe.

On September 11, 2001, her parents Jenette and Gary Nelson were just starting their day in a small town in northwestern North Dakota, 1,749 miles from Lower Manhattan. Gary had the television on in the bedroom. Jenette was combing her hair in the bathroom. Suddenly he cried out, "Come in here." When she saw the wounded World Trade Center smoking right in front of her on the television, Jenette first thought she was looking at a scene from a Hollywood movie. Then Gary said, "That's where Ann is working today." They made furious calls and frantically checked their email every few minutes. Everything was sheer confusion. They received an email that seemed to be from Ann announcing that she was alive. But they could not confirm it.

When American Flight 11 slammed into the 93-99th floors of the North Tower at 465 miles per hour, all ninety-two passengers on board were instantly killed. Everyone still alive on those floors and

ESSAYS ON THE FUTURE OF
North Dakota



CLAY JENKINSON

The Language of Cottonwoods