

Poetry Fest Features Poems, Visuals & Music

by Vigil

"Poetry Fest is a chance for people to share a space and a moment in time and have some sort of energy pass between them whether it's intellectual, emotional, spiritual or physical," says poet and editor Solala Towler. He will perform with saxophonist Linda Kanter and poets Anne Wyatt and Lee Evans in a benefit for *Poetic Space* on Friday, May 31, at 8 pm at the New Zone Gallery, 411 High St.



Solala is the editor of *Connections* and a poetry magazine called *Coyote's Dance*. He is known for his writing about Coyote, "the trickster," particularly in his book *Cocopeli Stories*. He is currently moving into performance poetry influenced by the Beats, the Rappers, and the Dub Poets from Jamaica. Writing spontaneous prose in a confrontive style, he attempts to "actually make a clear straight link between my heart and my mind" and the listener. "All good poetry," he believes, "has to involve transcendence at some level." Linda Kanter performs with the band Helix and was formerly with the J-Walkers.

Anne Wyatt is a native Oregonian who has been a popular reader at many fundraisers, especially for the women's community. She has been published in *Before the Sun* and *Literary Matters* and had her play *Starch* produced at Whitman College in Walla Walla.

Sound is important in Wyatt's poetry, but she says, "I want it felt as well as heard—very visceral, so you can see the dust in the distance and feel the sweat rolling down your arms, feel a sense of being trapped," as in her poem *Fit Still, Oklahoma*, 1973. This poem is about her life in the army which she "instantly regretted, but got to repent . . . leisurely."

She is inspired by outrage or despair, or sometimes a peculiarity, or a great place like McDowell Creek. She feels a real connection with oppression as a woman, but any oppression upsets her.

Currently a law student at the U of O, Wyatt recently won a seat on the Incidental Fee Committee running as part of the Students for a Progressive Agenda. Last year she was director of Women in Transition. Her book *New Shoes* will be available at the reading.

Poetic Space co-editor Lee Evans is a creative writing student at the U of O and this year's winner of the Walter and Nancy Kidd Award and the Julia Burgess Prize, both for poetry. She was editor of *Denali* in 1981-82, helped form *Elegant Stew*, a writers group, and has been published in *Wide Open*, *Glyphs* and the *Napa Valley Review*.



She says she writes about her experiences "in a fairly intuitive way, slightly surreal. I get into fantasy a lot. The biggest problem of my writing is getting so far into fantasy I lose the reader. I had a nervous breakdown in San Francisco. I was in a psychotic delusion for a few days. I was able to tap into an imaginative landscape that I'm trying to turn around to my benefit in my writing. I have to be really careful of that because it's dangerous, a delicate balance." She adds, "My poems emerging from my subconscious had difficulty transitioning into a language others could understand. I have been working at finding language and concrete images to communicate to others."

A \$2 donation will benefit *Poetic Space*, a poetry and fiction newsletter.

CHIPS

by David Koteen

Unsympathetic Help

After a venomous bout with loneliness, two possibilities occur: You can become unlonely; or the loneliness can filter and sift down through your body, mixing with cement and sand, where it begins to set up in your feet. If the loneliness now progresses upward in this solidifying fashion, i.e., ankles, calves, knees, by the time it reaches your belly button, it has become a full-fledged depression. Depressions are no fun. Though they do perform a social function.

I had spent the wee hours of Sunday morning sizzling on the blackened griddle of my consciousness; and was now en route to my Sunday morning men's self-help breakfast meeting. I had skipped the last three and knew I was in for some very unsympathetic self-help. However I was in need. One of the benefits of an out-and-out depression is the knowledge that whatever acrid castigations you receive, you deserve.

So as I trudged along—legs becoming heavier and heavier—a feeling of glum cheerfulness crawled around inside my skin. I passed the Trailways Station and then down the alley behind Old Town Pizza. The sun was well up and I could see it was going to be a hot Spring day in Eugene. This really augmented the depression. I was glad that this passageway was still dark and relatively cold. But let us not dally in the alley; not consider the sullen elements that brought about this state of mind. As we all know, loneliness and depression are merely temporary forms of existence. And thus will soon pass. Right?

Not completely there, I tripped and banged my left knee on a green dumpster. As I pulled myself up to my feet a moist splattering landed on my hand; I barely caught sight of the winged culprit, flying and warbling overhead. Enough. Crossed Oak St. As I turned to enter the Mall I heard a voice singing an old hallelujah hymn that I remembered from my childhood.

A lost gleam entered my eyes as I sauntered by. The hymn abruptly ceased. "Friend, where have you been last night? Ask for forgiveness. Enter these Holy waters." He was pointing at me with one hand and the Mall fountain with his other. Holy water? It was true, I hadn't been completely discreet last night; but it pushed my depressed sense of dignity to go into that fountain with my good clothes on. Who was this guy anyway? I relaxed, assured for the moment that he was pointing to someone behind me. I turned 360 degrees. Not a soul in sight.

The voice bellowed across the concrete, "Brother, there is nowhere to hide. No escape but

through these waters!" And I was just thinking about backtracking.

"No thanks," I shouted, "not today. I'm late for a breakfast meeting."

"Jonah had other plans as well."

I began to fidget, peering around in hopes of discovering a hidden Candid Camera. No one had entered this arena in the last 10 minutes. Trouble, I thought, is the bedfellow of depression. This dude has got my number. I'm going to be here all day if I don't fess up.

His arms were spread and extended towards me maternally; half-smile on his face. I wiped my forehead, a last glance about, and began walking towards him.

"Strip!" he commanded.

Now that was too much. My sense of social propriety took over. "Un-uh," I blurted out with modest vehemence. "OK," he relented, "then down to shorts." A reasonable compromise. And believe it or not, in I went. Like a goldfinch in a birdbath. Not too bad. Actually quite refreshing. It somehow made me feel better about last night; for sure that would never occur again. He helped me out. We embraced. I got dressed, pulling my best Penny's slacks over the saturated underwear, and started off.

"Hold your horses, Brother!" Now what? "You forgot your tithe." He pulled out of his black suitcase a small cylindrical object with the letters TITHES embossed in gold against its blue velvet exterior. (I remembered our old church joke, taken from a Tide detergent ad: Tithes in, dirt's out.) Reaching into my increasingly soaked pocket, I pulled out all my change—87¢, including 1 Canadian dime. He shot me a scornful Sodom and Gomorrah look. Into my left front this time. To my chagrin there was a folded \$2 bill. A trace of a grin sprang to his evangelical lips. His white fluffy eyebrows danced a jig around his forehead. Relieved, I handed it to him, slipping the Canadian dime into the fold. "Careful!" he warned.

Well, religion is where you find it. Started off in the direction of my breakfast meeting, shaking the depression out of the left pant leg, loneliness from the right. They began to puddle up on the warming concrete of the Mall; I was certain that the afternoon sun would evaporate them. From 4 directions the Mall began to people. Would my comrades believe what had befallen me this morning? I turned around in order to fix his countenance in my mind. He was gone.

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Weekly Eye Opener

by Larry Deckman

(Taken from the book, *Felton and Fowler's Best, Worst, and Most Unusual*): "General Richard S. Ewell, who fought gallantly for the Confederacy at Winchester and Gettysburg, sometimes hallucinated that he was a bird. For hours at a time he would sit in his tent softly chirping to himself, and at mealtimes he would accept only sunflower seeds or a few grains of wheat."

[If you have a good anecdote or fact that you'd like to see as a Weekly Eye Opener, send it along with its source and author to: Weekly Eye Opener, 2406 Lawrence St., Eugene, OR 97405. If your submission is used, it will be credited to you.]

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