

**BIG SELECTION
USED COLOR TV'S**
\$49.00 and Up
DEKA Electronics
390 W. 12th • 342-2488

**THE
PIZZA ANSWER**
"THE DELIVERY SPECIALISTS"

CALL **687-8600**

FREE
4 QUARTS OF COKE
WITH THE PURCHASE
OF ANY 16" ONE ITEM
PIZZA ONLY
\$7.00

One coupon per pizza • Expires Feb. 28, 1986

**SKI THE PASS
AT TWILIGHT
WITH PEPSI & BURGER KING**

Take the tear-off coupon on the back of your Guest Pass to participating Burger King Restaurants in Eugene, Springfield and Roseburg, Or. and receive one FREE (medium) PEPSI.

At Burger King* you will receive a coupon for Twilight skiing at Willamette Pass good for a \$10.00 Guest Pass — a \$3.00 savings. Coupon will be valid during the following dates:

January 3 - March 29, 1986
Fridays and Saturdays - Twilight skiing only
12:30 p.m. - 10:00 p.m.

(Limit one coupon per person, 13 years of age and older.)

**THE WILLAMETTE
PASS WINTER
EXCHANGE**

PEPSI

BURGER KING

Oregon Daily Emerald ODE Oregon Daily Emerald ODE Oregon Daily Emerald ODE
Oregon Daily Emerald ODE Oregon Daily Emerald ODE Oregon Daily Emerald ODE
Oregon Daily Emerald ODE Oregon Daily Emerald ODE Oregon Daily Emerald ODE
Oregon Daily Emerald ODE Oregon Daily Emerald ODE Oregon Daily Emerald ODE
Oregon Daily Emerald ODE Oregon Daily Emerald ODE Oregon Daily Emerald ODE

Nature guides the poet

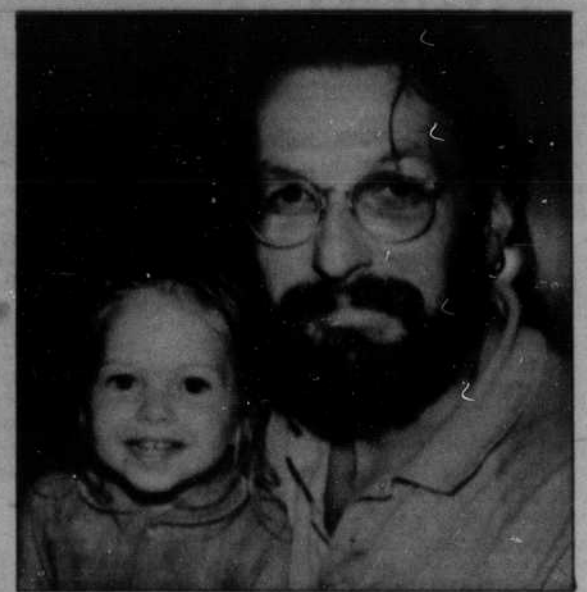


Photo courtesy John Witte
John Witte's daughter Josephine provides him with much poetic inspiration.

Poetry speaks to the heart. Each word resonates with significance that asks the heart to listen; the soul to respond. Enjoying poetry is an adventure and a delightful experience that most people deny themselves.

"That's a great loss," says Eugene poet John Witte.

"I think the biggest misconception that people bring to poetry is that they can't understand it," Witte asserts. "Being an artist, you find yourself longing for people to enter into a relationship with your work in a simple, untutored way. What you see is that (poetry) is completely assessable — there's nothing being concealed."

Witte, a University instructor and editor of the Northwest Review, recently received an Oregon Arts Commission grant for \$2,000. That money will buy him time this summer to work on a project for which the grant was received — a series of father-daughter poems. Witte became a father two and one-half years ago.

"I entered into this adventure with a lot of trepidation," Witte says. "I was concerned, as any person who guards his or her time jealously would be, that it might be an interference and too much confusion." In fact, he found just the opposite: His daughter, Josephine, provided a wealth of material and a very welcome focus. That focus has provided the inspiration for a long suite of poems on the experience of being a father.

Witte began writing poetry at age 21, after a shy and introverted childhood. Witte says he had a lot of things on his mind as a child, but had a very difficult time expressing them.

"One of my more personal reasons that I write is to finally try to expose some of these things that I've had difficulty expressing ever since I was a little kid," he says. "Now writing comes easily, but it comes slowly. It's a complicated labor that involves equal parts of love and toil," he adds.

Witte was born in Albany, N.Y. He attended college in Maine before coming to Oregon to enter the University's graduate program in fine arts. After a seven-month fellowship in Massachusetts, he came back to Oregon in 1979 and assumed editorship of the University-based Northwest Review (published three times each year). His poems have appeared in many magazines, including The New Yorker, the Paris Review and the American Poetry Review. His first book, "Loving the Days," published in 1978, is an eclectic mix of nature, history, pain, acceptance, love and death. Witte often uses nature and, specifically, birds to reveal something about human existence.

"I've found some of the best images, and some of the best poetic metaphors, from nature," Witte says. "Nature provides a kind of mirror for ourselves, and birds are very important. Birds and people are the only creatures that walk on two legs, and birds have the added advantage of being able to fly, something for which people have a powerful longing."

"Flying is the most perfect form of expression of the release from bondage to the earth, our kind of mortal shackles. It is that longing for pure spirituality or redemption that runs throughout my poems."

Acceptance of the inevitability of death is also a theme that resounds in Witte's poems.

"There is a lot of grieving in all my writing," Witte admits. "I guess I would have to suggest that the natural condition for people who feel deeply about life is one of grief. There

is a lot of abstract grief in my work, a lot of collective grief, but there's a lot of joy as well."

Sometimes, Witte works through the grief through an elegy.

"An elegy is designed to come to terms with that sense of grief. It's something that helps the reader deal with grief."

Witte is currently working on a poem, entitled "Dachshund," which reiterates the theme of human non-acceptance of death. He explains that dachshunds (German for badger-hound) were once considered a very heroic and extraordinarily courageous animal, able to go down holes in total darkness and scare the monster-like, ferocious badger out of its burrow for the hunt.

It seems almost heart-wrenching when I see a dachshund now because it's become so dwarfed, miniaturized and made ridiculous," Witte says. "Dachshund" depicts a man who is stopped in a car with his family in a traffic jam caused by an accident, probably a very bad accident in which someone has been killed. While the man reflects on this, he sees a woman walking her dachshund.

"So the poem is a reflection of how we have somehow lost this capacity to confront death — to confront the monster — we've become dwarfed and ludicrous like the dachshund," Witte says.

On the theme of flight, perhaps as an escape, is "Dream of Return to Earth," from "Loving the Days." It depicts the speaker as an astronaut — isolated and weightless, who dreams of going home to Earth. In a recent manuscript, "Return to Earth," the speaker does go home, but finds it hard to adjust to the realities of earth.

Witte feels that being a parent has grounded him in a sense, given him new priorities, and a new direction for his writing.

"That experience really does ground you in a way," he says of parenthood. "So many things that I find I used to dwell on, and that used to be very troubling, seem insignificant now. It makes your outlook a whole lot more realistic."

Witte once wrote several poems that referred to his nephew, whom he felt close to in a paternal way. Now he is writing about his own child, and another child is expected in May who will provide even more inspiration.

"They grow so quickly, you realize right from the start that you have set something in motion, which you guide and nurture as much as you can, but has a future of its own," he explains. "There is somehow something wonderful that's being gained and lost at the same time." Witte hopes to convey these feelings in his father-daughter poems.

"I think when you're able to express something that's very simple and perhaps universal, and express it in a very clear way, it becomes very profound," Witte says. "People are sometimes confused by that, but I think it has to do with a need for a greater simplicity in our lives. Almost everything is available to us for the right price, but the one thing that is not available to us, and is becoming a rarity is clarity."

"I write about things that are important to me and I try to express them in as clear a way as I can. My hope is that they are things that are important to other people as well. If the kind of befuddlement, confusion and grief that I feel in my life is typical, then perhaps the clarity in expressing my point will help other people, or at least relieve for a moment their befuddlement and confusion."

Story by Amy Moss