

Poet Mark Jarman gives students writing advice

MIKE GARCIA
Staff Writer

"You write about the life that's vividest," Mark Jarman said as he began his poetry reading last Thursday afternoon. And from that point the small audience in the Skylight Dining Hall was under his spell as he read what was indeed vivid poetry from his book, *Questions for Ecclesiastes*.

Jarman, a graduate of Vanderbilt University, grew up in Southern California as a minister's son and recently moved to Nashville. He is the winner of a Guggenheimer fellowship as well as several awards from national poetry associations. He has edited a new compilation, *Rebel Angels*. He has done all this despite the fact that he dares to rhyme.

In a nation where free verse is the norm, New Formalist poets use traditional rhyme and meter as their British predecessors did. They don't run the risk of sounding like Mother Goose, though, because most of the rhymes are quite complex and utilize more than a modern poets' typical share of wit.

Jarman first read "Groundswell", which was about his early life in southern California. A groundswell, in surfing terms, is the beginning of a wave.

Jarman thought back to the highlights of an adolescent summer on the beach, and called to memory images which might seem meaningless to anyone else—the sun, the sand, the way someone looked at him, how he was feeling as a teenager.

At the end of the poem, Jarman even asked himself the question: "Why would I want to write about (that summer) again? Because that's my groundswell; I must start where things began to happen... those moments where you find out who you are... when your life... intersects with history in a different way."

Jarman told a story about Andy Rooney at this point. Jarman had just published a few poems in the *New Yorker* when nearly everyone in his fam-

ily mailed him a copy of Rooney's column in that month's issue of *Time* magazine. Rooney spent the column asking, "Why doesn't poetry rhyme anymore?"

It was ironic because Rooney used Jarman's poems in the *New Yorker* as an example, which rhymed, just not directly enough for Rooney to see it. Jarman said he thought he wanted fame as a poet, and added, "so the Muse says: 'You want fame? Here's fame: Andy Rooney!'"

Much of Jarman's work is strongly Bible-based. In his youth he went on visitation to poor and sick families with his father. He saw many bad situations that left him with a somewhat cynical view toward God. Because of this, many of his poems are of suffering and questioning God, like the story of Job. Jarman said he is a "practicing ambivalent Christian."

Jarman said that one of the most interesting ideas he's come across is treating the seeming absence of God in many situations as a presence in itself. From "Unholy Sonnets": "Amazing to believe that nothingness surrounds us and lets us breathe... it fills all blanks with blankness..."

"Two forces rule the universe: light and gravity," Jarman read. "Truth is on the side of death/ and God's grace fills emptiness like breath."

The work that silenced all the chatter in the audience was the title poem: "Questions for Ecclesiastes", which is based on the Biblical book of Ecclesiastes, written by Solomon, third king of Israel. The poem alternates between contemporary English narration and side comments in the language of Solomon.

The poem asked, "What if a preacher were called to the house of a suicide?" It went on to paint a scene where a 14-year-old-girl had just shot herself and her parents were nearly hysterical. The preacher's response, in the words of Solomon: "Nothing is new under the sun."

In the poem the parents are looking

Mark Jarman, author of *Questions for Ecclesiastes*, read from his work last Thursday in the Skylight Dining Room.



TIMOTHY BELL / Clackamas Print

for emotional comfort and the minister keeps putting them off with traditional Biblical wisdom. As they show him out the door, he calls back "Live joyfully all the days of your life."

In this way Jarman questioned the nature of God and the way he really felt about the human race. He picked apart traditional Christianity and its traditions and came to the conclusion that they were mostly cold and without love or meaning in real life.

Because of his tone and the use of traditional form, though, his questioning never seemed heavy-handed, but rather curious, as if he wanted to know the truth, but didn't spitefully demand it from God.

After the audience, still deep in thought, gave him a respectful round of applause after the reading, Jarman answered a few questions about New Formalism, saying that there is room for

“
Truth is on
the side of
death and
God's grace
fills
emptiness
like breath.”
”

Mark Jarman
Poet

both rhyme and free verse in the United States. "We have as [American poetry's] mother and father Emily Dickinson and Walt Whitman," he said. "Who could be more different?"

For beginning writers and poets, Jarman stressed spontaneity and preparation. "Triggers for memories are just innumerable, but we don't always get it," he said. This was his key thought: "You have to be there ready to put it down. Having some way to write it down when it happens, and not to wait."

"Keep pads and pens all over the house," he said.

After a few words of encouragement, Jarman stepped away from the podium, there was another round of applause, and people immediately began lining up to browse through Jarman's books or to have a talk with him. In his conversation Jarman never lost the vividness with which he filled the hour.

Local eatery offers college scholarships to employees

JUSTIN BLACKLEDGE
Staff Writer

Clackamas instructor Frank Harlow is a business owner who offers scholarships to college students. This "no strings attached" opportunity has aided many Clackamas students, and positions are available now to those who are interested in working in the food court environment.

Gyros Gyros and Trapani Pizza Company offer scholarships to their workers. These two businesses have helped more than 200 students with their tuition since 1981. These employers make work more accessible to college students by being exceptionally flexible around their schedules.

Frank Harlow and Bill Shreve own the businesses that fuel this program for assistance. They formed a friendship during their work here at Clackamas. Shreve was a public relations officer at the time, and Harlow continues to teach speech communications. Having already been a business consultant for a number of years, Harlow decided that starting the businesses wouldn't be such a bad idea.

The assistance program is offered to all employees, without discrimination. Employees working 25 hours a week or more qualify for \$350 a quarter to apply towards college expenses. Workers with 20 hours or more receive \$250, and those with 15 or more will get \$150 a quarter. Other fast food chains offering programs provide money for education usually expect the training to be directly related to the employer's business. This program is unique in that the money can be applied for any class in a reasonable discipline.

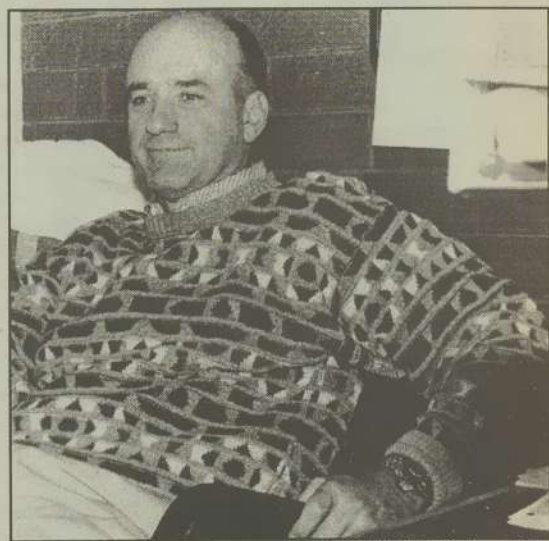
The idea started as a response to Harlow's speech debaters need-

ing a solid job that could be balanced well with their other priorities.

"We aim to be number 5 on the list of our student workers," commented Harlow. By this, he means to recognize the importance of school, family, faith, extracurricular activity, fun, followed by the workplace. He is realistic about the needs of students today. Harlow stated that the time students are between grade 11 and junior level in college, students are in the process of more changes than any other time in their lives. This period of transition involves educational change, romantic involvement, occupational considerations, and alterations in living conditions. In light of this, the importance of being sensitive to these concerns is stressed.

Harlow's education was funded through a scholarship. He entered the working world at Farrell's Ice Cream Parlor. This job was supportive of him, and contributed to the value he holds about "giving something back" to the community. Harlow views this as everyone's social responsibility, and instills this ethic in his students. He is one of the few employers that believes that education should always come first. The standing rule in his businesses dictates that when a person requests time off, they will get it. In the case of one employee, Harlow insisted he leave work for a time so he could pass his classes. Passing is the only requirement of receiving the scholarships.

To offer this opportunity, Harlow has to hire 30% more people than he would have to otherwise. As a result of the treatment his workers receive at his seven businesses, there is a low turnover rate. In fact, many workers feel a certain sense of loyalty to his companies, and even stay after their time at college is over. Often Gyros Gyros and Trapani are the first jobs their workers will have, and Harlow is committed to cre-



TIMOTHY BELL / Clackamas Print

Frank Harlow helps students by offering scholarships through his business.

ating an environment that will teach them what work in the real world is like. Along with being able to provide financial aid to students for their education, this is what makes business most rewarding for him.

The result of Harlow's philosophy is success in both the private and public sector. With the recent upheaval in the news concerning work reform, this model could do well in any number of other situations and capacities. When work is approached in this way everyone wins.