

Luck, love and laughs prevail at presentation

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Copy Editor

Clackamas' creative writing specialists showed their true colors Friday afternoon, as they presented "Luck and Love."

This poetry and fiction reading was different from those Clackamas usually sees. Rather than outside authors, everyone at "Luck and Love" was there to see teachers. English Instructors Tim Schell, Kate Gray, Sue Mach, Jeff Knorr, Craig Lesley and Diane Averill chose from their own body of work to celebrate Valentine's Day.

Some of this work is as well-known as that of Cortney Davis, Mark Jarman, or any of the poets we've had recently. As Schell opened up the hour-long event to an audience of over 75, he acknowledged this fact.

"It's an honor to work alongside such a distinguished faculty," Schell said, "people who teach what they live to do—to construct literature." By outlining the progress of the *Clackamas Literary Review* and the new creative writing degree program, Schell set an anticipatory tone for the hour.

Schell pointed out the "bizarre juxtaposition" of Friday the 13th and Valentine's Day. One might wonder how a traditional day of ill luck could segue into such a day of happiness.

"Best of luck in reconciling those two dates to your advantage," he said.

To kick off the reading, **Tim Schell** read a story he had written especially for the event—one that fit quite well into the "Luck and Love" theme—entitled "The Heart and the Onion."

The story was about Bob Davis, a student affected by lovesick daydreams in his anatomy class. Bob is dizzy with love over Sally McGregor, and when Professor Babbitt asks him to draw a human heart on the chalkboard, Bob produces a Valentine shape.

When asked to draw a *human* heart, Bob responds, "This is the heart as I know it." Bob says it represents what he was feeling in his heart.

"What does feeling have to do with it?" Babbitt retorts. "I want valves!"

Bob draws a series of circles around the heart, to represent an onion. He said that each poem he writes "helps cut away a layer till we reach the heart."

After hearing Bob's defense of creative writing, Babbitt wipes the chalkboard clean and dismisses classroom early. The students figure that either Babbitt has a hot date, or he has no date at all and that made him leave early. Either way, Bob decides to write a poem that captures the true essence of love, so that he could enlighten Babbitt—but more importantly, so he could "give it to Sally McGregor and sign it with love."

Schell passed the torch on to **Kate Gray**, who read from her manuscript *Hell and High Water*, which is about people of the deserts of central New Mexico—"people with more love than luck," Gray said.

"The Wealth of the Land" is about a New Mexican beggar. Gray's vivid reading of her own poetry affected much of the aura around the poem.

"Beginning with a Bang" was a success with the audience. This poem assumed that the scientific community was attempting to rename the Big Bang theory because "big bang" was too suggestive. The poem compared love and sex to the beginning of the universe, combining phrases like "the union of gametes" and "bodies and minds inter-



(From left) Tim Schell, Sue Mach, Kate Gray, and Jeff Knorr and Craig Lesley look on as Diane Averill shares a piece about luck and love.

twine" with "early gas-altering development."

"Kablooie! We banged into space," said the narrator. Her conclusion: cosmic force is sexy, "no matter what we name it."

Sue Mach was up next. As of this time, she is the best known of the six instructors who read Friday. She has had two plays produced, and another is in the works. Her play *Monograms* was first produced by the now-defunct Portland Repertory Theater, and later in New York and Pennsylvania. It remains Mach's signature work, and she read from it Friday.

Monograms is about Hazel Hall, a real-life Portland-area poet who lived from 1886 to 1924, writing under pseudonyms. She was confined to a wheelchair and had a caretaker named Ruth.

Mach was able, with her reading and hand gestures, to capture the feelings she was trying to evoke in the play.

Soft laughter alternated with contemplative looks as Mach voiced Hall's simple joy in throwing buttons out of her window onto the street far below. Hall's greatest satisfaction comes when she gets Ruth to lose her inhibitions and join in the fun.

Mach introduced **Jeff Knorr**, whose book of poems, *Standing up to the Day*, is out this year. The poems "intertwine luck and love," Knorr said.

"Under a Brick Orange Moon" is about "A cliched moment of drunken love," Knorr said. The poem is based upon him and his future wife spotting Orion in the night sky—while weaving around the street drunkenly on Knorr's bike. He remembered Orion all these years later. To him, it represented "gravitational attraction."

"This river of stars churns across the sky," the poem begins, "leaps forward under clouds like wild horses. / In an instant I feel you, / a ripple rising from deep slow water, and we meet / under the low branches of our cherry tree / shifting against this autumn night."

"A Winter Night a Thousand Miles Long" is about the son Knorr and his wife have adopted in Guatemala, who hasn't arrived yet. It's winter in Portland right now, Knorr said, but it's summer in Guatemala. The seasonal difference was a metaphor in Knorr's mind, as revealed by this poem, for the heartbreaking distance from his son, which he and his wife must face for a little while longer.

Craig Lesley took the stage amid laughter as Knorr disclosed that he nearly shot Lesley on a pheasant-hunting trip. Lesley kept the cheerful mood alive, philosophizing about the occasion being Presidents' Day as well as Valentine's Day.

"I could never figure out why they had all these mattress sales on Presidents' Day," Lesley said. Remembering Valentine's Day, he added, "Now we know."

Lesley read an excerpt from his novel *Riversong*. The novel is about Danny, a man who hates eating fish and spending money, and his blossoming romance with his ex-wife's sister, Pudge. The couple lives in Oregon's Gorge area, and in the excerpt Lesley read, are staying at the Columbia Gorge Hotel.

Danny comes across very much as a tightwad as Pudge and he discuss relationships—Pudge is a gossip who tries some crack psychoanalysis on other couples at the hotel. Pudge steals a pigeon-feather earring from another woman and ends up throwing it away. "It looked better on the pigeon," she says.

Pudge asks the fun-loving, noncommittal Danny to marry her, because it doesn't seem like he'd ever pop the ques-

tion. She warns him that he won't ask again. "You don't have to go and threaten me," Danny responds, and accepts the proposal.

"He knew he could always change his mind," the narrator states.

As Lesley introduced **Diane Averill**, he remembered with amusement that her book, *Branches Doubled Over with Fruit*, was mistakenly placed in the bookstore's horticulture section when it first came out. "Then they found out it was art," he said.

Averill's style of writing is similar to Gray's in that it takes examples of natural processes and draws parallels between them and human relationships.

"Love poetry, but also luck poetry" about old-growth forests translated well to real life. And "Musician" hit close to home—it's about Music Instructor Lonnie Cline. "My love is not a red, red rose," Averill said. "He's a blackberry, sometimes with a few thorns."

Throughout the hour, the audience had been entertained and enlightened on several levels. And as Averill's time drew to a close, it just felt right for her to once again plug the creative writing program. "Luck and Love" opened the eyes of those who didn't already know about the exceptional talent that we have teaching our English classes. With authors like these guiding it, no wonder the program is growing by leaps and bounds.

Upcoming Events

Student directed one-act plays will be presented in **McLoughlin Hall Theatre**. March 3 at 12:30 p.m., March 4 at noon and March 5 at 12:30 p.m. and 8 p.m. for *Rough for Theatre*, written by Samuel Beckett and directed by Michael O'Connor, *Stye of the Eye*, written by Christopher Durang and directed by John Renner, and a special appearance by CCC's Improv Comedy Group, *Shaken Not Stirred*. Admission is free.

Open auditions on **March 9 at 3 p.m. in the McLoughlin Hall Theatre**. Auditions are for the Theatre Department's spring term production of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*. No experience is required and all are invited.

The **Student Art Show** is now running in the **Pauling Gallery Feb. 16 through March 20**. An opening reception will be held from noon to 2 p.m. on Feb. 18. Works of paintings, drawings, sculptures and much more will be on display from CCC's own students.

Stained Glass artist **David Shlicker** will demonstrate and show slides of his work on **Feb. 18 in the McLoughlin Hall Theatre from 6:30-8:30 p.m.** The show is part of the Humanities Experience program.

Poet **Stephen Dobyns** will read from his poems at **noon Feb. 25 in the Fireside Lounge**. Dobyns is the author of eight volumes of poetry and has received acclaim from the *New York Times* for his recent collection of essays, *Best Words, Best Order*.



TIMOTHY BELL / Clackamas Print

Jeff Knorr shares one of his favorite selections.