

Blue-collar poet returns to writing

ELISABETH MEYER
Staff Writer

Poet Joseph Millar got a warm reception from students and faculty at his reading Tuesday, April 23. The latest guest in the series of visiting poets from the Mountain Writer's Center brought an informal atmosphere to the Forum while he shared poems about blue-collar work and of raising children as a single father and told whimsical in-jokes for English majors about modern-day situations.

Millar lives in Eugene and teaches poetry at Mount Hood Community College two days a week. It's quite a departure from his former jobs, which include commercial fishing in Alaska and working with phone line installation in the San Francisco Bay area. Although Millar got his Master of Arts in creative writing from Johns Hopkins in 1970, he worked in unrelated fields until 1997.

"I got my degree and decided I needed to, you know, do some adventurous stuff," he said. "What happened was I kind of got trapped in the blue collar world. I was making pretty good money. I had some kids. (To just write poetry) I would've had to take too big a cut. I got stuck."

Besides taking up his time, working put unorthodox restrictions in Millar's poetry writing. "The guys worked with had no idea what I was doing. I used to be in the truck writing and if they came over, I'd hide it. I would cover it with the sports page. It was okay to be reading that," he said. "I was foreman by the time I quit, so I'd put my crew to work. I'd say, 'You guys do this, that, the other thing, and I'll be back. And then I'd go sit in the truck and write.'"

Many of his poems talk about the daily survival mode we function in: his poems are studded with lines like "If I don't get this electric bill paid/ something bad will happen" from "Hansel and Gretel's Father" and "What would we do if I got fired, I wonder/ listening to the wind outside and the evening's lead story about more layoffs in the South Bay" ("Sole Custody").

Although drinking, heart attacks and single fatherhood comprise much of the subject matter, Millar's enthusiasm and energy makes the switch from the depressing specifics of everyday life to more imaginative themes seamless.



J.J. PEARSON / Clackamas Print

Joseph Millar greets Emily Orlando, English department chair, and instructor David Mount while Amanda Coffey, instructor, buys Millar's book, "Overtime."

"Me and Herrick are down at the end/ of the Turf Club bar drinking gin and limes," he reads to us from "At Bay Meadows with Robert Herrick." He wrote the poem trying to know what a day at the races with the 16th century author would be like. "I haven't had a winner all

day," he read, "playing a combinations of speed-ratings and chalk,/ while Herrick can't miss,/ betting fillies whose names end in a."

Millar began writing poetry because "I loved writing but I couldn't develop a plot to save my life. I was pretty good at describing things,

though."

"I always feel good when I write a poem," he said. "You know, it's okay that I'm a little behind in my bills and my kid's pissed off at me; I wrote a poem."

To reach Elisabeth Meyer e-mail her at saladlass@hotmail.com or drop by B-104.

Horoscopes

by Maggie Jirasek

Aries (March 21-April 19): Let go of your anger. It's time to move on. You can't change the past, take charge of your future. Your lucky food: Roasted chicken.

Taurus (April 20-May 20): Open your eyes and look around you. It's time to get out and enjoy life. Your lucky food: Tofu.

Gemini (May 21-June 20): There are people you just shouldn't get involved with. Stick with people you really

trust. Your lucky food: Potato soup.

Cancer (June 21-July 22): Remember that some things you see on TV are not to be repeated at home. You might get upset about people on Thursday. Your lucky food: Spaghetti.

Leo (July 23-Aug. 22): You might experience a strange appetite this week. Try to eat more fruit. Your lucky food: Tuna.

Virgo (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): Let go of your anger. Enjoy the sun-

shine outside and think happy thoughts. Your lucky food: Pizza.

Libra (Sept. 23-Oct. 22): People might be rude to you. It's not your fault. You just happen to run into the wrong people. Your lucky food: Organic Soy products.

Scorpio (Oct. 23-Nov. 21): Don't ignore people around you. Maybe it's time to attend a little party and have some fun. Your lucky food: Apple flavored sausage.

Sagittarius (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): Take a deeper look. Problems will get resolved with a little bit of patience. Your lucky food: Apple.

Capricorn (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): You should spend more time doing homework. Your lucky food: Candy.

Aquarius (Jan. 20-Feb 18): You

are ready for vacation. This would be a good time to just leave everything behind and go on a little trip. Your lucky food: Tofu.

Pisces (Feb. 19-March 20): It is important to let others know if something is bothering you. Try to get more sleep. Your lucky food: Salad.

Charlie's TEAM SPORTING GOODS

"The Competitive Advantage"

Lake Oswego - 6286 SW Meadows Rd 97035 • Molalla - 530 N Molalla Ave 97038

1-800-757-4766

Uniforms For All Sports • Equipment • Numbering
Letterman Jackets • Graphic Design

Lake
Oswego
624-0705
Fax: 639-6224

Personal Service



Molalla
829-4799
Fax: 829-4777

H.I. SCREEN GRAPHICS SCREENPRINTING

Get your Foodhandler Card ON-LINE

www.foodhandler.org

Contact Chemeketa Community College's
Hospitality Systems Management Program
Start anytime. Tuition: \$15
503-399-5146

CHEMEKETA
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

www.chemeketa.edu

Chemeketa Community College is an equal opportunity, affirmative action institution