

Espresso Plus Poetry



Prof. Shapiro Holds a Piece from A Church ... about which he Is Writing a Poem

Shapiro Internationally Recognized As Writer

By Herb Probasco
Mention poetry and espresso, and one immediately thinks of beatniks. But the same two words, in a different light, fit Karl Shapiro, professor of English, and faculty winner of the Outstanding Nebraskan award.

Only his taste for espresso, however, reminds one of beatniks. It would be a mistake to identify his poetry with such a society. The same is true of his personality which is warm and understanding.

World Recognition
Internationally recognized for his poetry, the Pulitzer Prize winner has been a member of the faculty since the summer of 1956.

He had delivered the Montgomery Lectures at the University that previous year and liked the campus and the town. "I don't like big cities," he explained, adding that he had lived in a small town in California before coming to Lincoln.

Schooner Editor
Another factor influencing his decision to come to Nebraska was the caliber of the English faculty. "The department is terrific," he remarked. "It has a reputation around the country. Many of the members are very prominent, and the atmosphere is good."

His primary function at the University is editing "The Prairie Schooner," a literary quarterly publication that has a circulation around the world.

"Editing the Schooner is a never ending business," he commented. "You get behind a day or two and you're sunk."

However, he still finds time to teach two courses, "Contemporary Poetry" and "Creative Writing," plus writing poetry reviews and editing books.

He has four books which are soon to be released. One of these is titled "In Defense of Ignorance," a book of his essays on modern poetry, based on a series of lectures which he delivered last spring at the University of Cincinnati as the Elliston poet.

The book presents his theory on the teaching of modern poetry, which he feels is being taught too intellectually.

"The best kind of poetry," Shapiro said, "should be presented like drama, on the stage."

"The idea is to get people to read it and find out for themselves whether they like it or whether it's good."

"Terrible Mistake"
Rather than say what is good or what is bad, he tries to let his students make up their own minds, "although my prejudice comes through," he explained.

"It's a terrible mistake to hold up something as a model," Shapiro continued.

His ideas on this subject were expressed in recent article which he wrote for the New York Times on modern poetry. The article was written as a result of the reaction to his review of a book of poetry by Marianne Moore in which he criticized her writing.

He declared that critics tend to "go overboard" on Miss Moore's poetry and that they're afraid to say anything that's not nice, "which is rather hypocritical, because not very many can read that kind of poetry and understand it."

"It's not that good. It's thorny and obscure and doesn't say much when you get to the bottom of it," Shapiro said.

Long Article
Letters of protest and praise flowed into the Times' office and to Shapiro following the review. The Times then asked him



Another Aspect ... Relaxation At Home with Daughter Liz

to write a long article on his views on contemporary poetry which he did. This article prompted an even greater response from readers. Two pages of letters on it alone were published in the Times.

Shapiro has received hundreds of letters, nearly a 11 praising him for his stand. It was necessary for him to dictate a form letter, he said, in order to thank all the people for writing.

The best letters came from college students, he said. The Times also received many letters, more of which criticized his article.

He also received phone calls from people in New England and New York, whom he didn't even know.

Yale To Publish
Yale University Press is going to publish the article as a book, both in hardback and paperback form.

"I think everyone thinks this way," he said, but nobody's written about it.

Other books which he is authoring include "An Anthology of American Poetry" and "Start With a Sun," which he is co-authoring along with Professor James Miller and Bernice Slot of the English department.

The book is a defense of romantic poetry and a study of poets with a cosmic conscience.

He is also writing a text-book of essays.

The Shapiro family consists of his wife Evelyn, three children, Kathy, a sophomore in high school and John Jacob and Elizabeth, both in elementary school, two Siamese cats and a collie named Sam.



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The Alpha Phi Omega book exchange will be open to receive books from students Jan. 22, 23, 25 and 26 in the Student Union.

The purpose of the exchange is to help the student buy and sell books at reasonable prices.

Students wishing to sell their books will be requested to fill out cards listing their name and address, information about the book and the price they want for it.

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