



Mark Davis/Daily Nebraskan

Judith Sornberger

Poet gives arts Free Rein

By Jackie Fox

Judith Sornberger is one of many talented poets working in the Lincoln area. Her work has been widely published in literary magazines, including *Calyx*, *Pebble* and the *Kansas Quarterly*.

She is in her second year of teaching English at UNL. Prior to that she taught creative writing at the Southeast Community College Corrections Division. She has recently started her own publishing company, Free Rein Press, and has just completed editing an anthol-

ogy of Nebraska women poets called *All my Grandmothers Could Sing*, to be available this summer.

Nebraska Poets

Sornberger has been writing poetry since she was in second grade. She said she received her first recognition as a poet in third grade when she won a *Highlights* magazine contest "for a horrible poem based on Hickory Dickory Dock."

Sornberger said there are many ways to approach writing. "My poems are often different from each other because of the way each one started. Some of my poems come all at once... in a linear process, but other poems

seem to come almost in splashes. I'll know that there's something, and then often I'll let it sit because I don't have the metaphor yet. Sometimes the metaphor is in the writing, but sometimes it comes later," Sornberger said. "I don't let myself have writer's block. I think writer's blocks are luxuries that we allow ourselves. I know there are times I don't write, and I know that it's because I'm busy or I'm lazy. Sometimes there are things I'm not ready to write about, but the trick for me is to write other things," Sornberger said.

The most important quality for poets to have is faith, she said. "Poetry demands a great deal of faith, in so many different ways; faith that you will find a metaphor, faith that you will find the words, faith that it's possible that you will be able to not only satisfy yourself but mean something to other people, too."

She finds similarities between writing and teaching because both are creative acts. But there are differences as well.

"You have a finished product that you can always share in one (poetry), and with the other (teaching) you never know what the product of your efforts is. You don't know that your class is the thing that will make students decide to become writers themselves. You only get immediate results," Sornberger said.

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Wish By Judith Sornberger

Feeling dark and exotic after the day of sun, I sit with you on the bank of a man-made lake in Kansas, wishing it were the Nile, wishing we were eating something other than potato chips - figs, perhaps, or olives.

I wish the stars would come out with it: To which do I owe my skin and skeleton, the cloaks I wrap around my longings. And to which do I owe my silver hair?

When we speak of my children, I wish they were here and that they'd never been born. I wish I were sitting beside you with all things still before me, that my children were grains of light we could awaken in the tunnels of this night's sleep.

I wish that you could come to me tonight with any other yardstick but the past, and that the past had not been the only way here. I wish I would become worthy of stars. I wish you could forget the darkening sky and admit that just for now there is no other moon than the one bobbing on my hair.

Look, you say, pointing to the drop of light newly fallen from the moon's wan face, *the first star. Make a wish. Reprinted by special permission.*

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