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Writings reflect life's issues

# Poet recalls childhood influences

By John A. Skretta  
Staff Reporter

Poet Stanley Plumly has said that he has become his own parent by being able to arrange time. He displayed the art of rearranging time and reordering experience through a selection of his poetry, read to a crowd Monday night in the Nebraska Union's Regency Suite.

Plumly, the author of several volumes of verse spanning twenty years, read "mostly new poems."

He began with "The Art of Poetry," which proposes that the poet offers "no apologies/no explanations," but merely has the desire and will-power to get it down right the first time.

Much of Plumly's poetry is influenced by his youth experiences in the Ohio farming region. Most of his earlier poetry evokes the father-son relationship as a consistent metaphor in the poet's struggle to interpret life and death.

Plumly also read about his mother. Or, more specifically, about his mother's feet.

"She (my mother) grew up in the Depression, and the standing meta-

“ Attempts to make something whole of disparate and difficult parts of my experience. Stanley Plumly, on why he writes poetry

phor... was her shoes, and the fact that she could never find a pair to fit her," he said. "Her feet looked like part of the animal kingdom."

Plumly's childhood fascination with his mother's cramped feet gave rise to "My Mother's Feet," a poem that relates the pain of the mother to the child's need to find security and warmth in the mother.

Plumly said that as he's aged, he's become more interested in the animation of inanimate objects. His poem, "One-Legged Wooden Red-Wing," explored that. The poem was inspired by a woodcarving of a blackbird given to him and develops a metaphorical relationship between the "always alone, always... male display" of the whittled blackbird to the whittling hobby of Ulysses Grant and Grant's ability to compose written orders in the heat of battle and shower of death.

Similarly, "Reading With The Poets," was inspired by a visit to a memorial Civil War cemetery and the history of the cemetery. The poem moves quickly beyond a dry historical account, however, into a proposal of the poet as a healer, or rather, would-be healer.

Plumly's poetry is infused with a humanistic spirituality and a brooding philosophy that refuses to turn away from the finality of death. "Lazarus at Dawn" is inspired by Plumly's Quaker upbringing and spiritual probing.

"As one gets older," he said, "one doesn't exactly 'get religion,' but one begins to realize that the body is a vessel. What for, however, is an open question, and whether that vessel is going in any direction or is merely moving on a treadmill is a complicated philosophical issue."

"Lazarus at Dawn" speaks of the longing for death and the tension and unity between father and son, and suggests that "the sickness of the heart is invisible, incurable, endless."

"I made an assignment to myself," Plumly said, "that the day I turned fifty, I was going to do virtually the most clichéd thing possible, write a poem marking the occasion... sort of a narcissistic self-valentine, if you will, with the understanding that it probably wouldn't amount to anything."

Plumly said he was satisfied with the results of the poetic exploration of his birthday, which again calls the father-son relationship into play. Plumly's final acknowledgment was that "I am the animal touched on the forehead/charmed."

Plumly has stated that he views his poems as "attempts to make something whole of the disparate and difficult parts of my experience." Plumly's poetry does indeed forge a beautiful unity between the seemingly remote aspects of life and death, father and son, earth and water.

Plumly currently directs the creative writing program at the University of Maryland.

## Art

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The call from CBS was a surprise to Marxhausen, who had sent the network a demo tape five years ago. But Marxhausen said he has always been a person who "pushes buttons" and makes things happen.

During World War II, Marxhausen, who was stationed in the Philippines, sold pieces of Japanese airplane wings made into jewelry to fellow soldiers.

"While everyone else was getting drunk, I was making money," he said.

Marxhausen said his creative abilities can be traced back to his boyhood days in Minnesota.

At the age of 69, Marxhausen still spends his days creating. He produces, packages and mails his art without the help of any apprentices.

Incoming mail also sparks the artist's attention. Since Marxhausen does not advertise, his only promotion is by word-of-mouth.

Marxhausen said he receives many letters from admirers of his art, including relatives of AIDS patients, elderly people in rest homes and others with serious illnesses.

Marxhausen hopes now that his art can help people suffering from another kind of illness — chemical addiction.

He currently is experimenting with detoxification centers to find out what effect his sound sculptures have on drug addicts.

Marxhausen said he first wanted to duplicate the high that drug users experience, but now his objective is to give people energy and make them feel good without drugs.

Marxhausen said other forms of sound art cannot be experienced in the same way his can.

Other forms include electronics and "hanging junk from the ceiling," he said.

Three pieces of Marxhausen's art can be found in the Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery Art Shop. Star Dust sells for \$95, Cosmic Cubes for \$500 and Parachimes for \$325.

## Sheldon assemblage exhibit composed of humble objects

From Staff Reports

An art exhibit composed of frames, wire, door knobs and nails is now on display at the Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery.

"Findings: Assemblages By Fumiyo Kaneko" is the fourth exhibit in Sheldon's ongoing Solo series. Kaneko's art invites viewers to see the everyday world with a new appreciation for humble objects, said Daphne Deeds, Sheldon curator and assistant director.

Traditionally, assemblages were used to make political and philosophi-

cal statements. Deeds said that historically, this art form is associated with other forms such as Dada, Surrealism and funk sculpture. Assemblage now is more familiar and more easily understood. In the 80 years since assemblages first emerged, it has evolved into a means of expressing life, Deeds said.

Kaneko, an American raised in Japan, has a studio located in downtown Omaha where she finds most of her materials.

The exhibit began February 26 and continues through May 12 at the gallery, located at 12th and R streets.

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