

Deborah Austin

Deborah Austin is a retired faculty member from the Penn State English Department who says she loved teaching, writing, and publishing poems. She was born in Boston, Massachusetts, and grew up in Waterville Valley, New Hampshire, where her father was proprietor of the Waterville Inn. She went to boarding school when she was fifteen, graduated from Smith College (B.A.), Radcliffe (M.A.) and Bryn Mawr (Ph.D.), and taught English, specifically British literature, at Penn State for over thirty years.

John Balaban

John Balaban is the author of nine books of poetry and prose, including: *Remembering Heaven's Face* (1992), *Words For My Daughter* (1991), *Vietnam: The Land We Never Knew* (1989), *The Hawk's Tale* (1988), *Ca Dao Vietnam: A Bilingual Anthology of Vietnamese Folk Poetry* (1980), *Letters From Across The Sea* (1978), *After Our War* (1974), and *Vietnam Poems* (1970).

His *After Our War* was the Lamont Selection of the Academy of American Poets and was nominated for the National Book Award. His most recent book of poetry, *Words For My Daughter* (Copper Canyon, 1991), won selection in the National Poetry Series. After having taught for twenty-three years at Penn State, he is currently the director of Creative Writing at the University of Miami in Coral Gables.

Jason Charnesky

Jason Charnesky is a pure product of Penn State, having received both his undergraduate and graduate degrees here at University Park. He is a Ph.D. candidate in English literature.

Of all the poems in this choral symphony, only "The Mountain" and "The Fire Elms" knew from the start that they were going to become a part of *Mountain Laurels*. When Bruce asked me for two poems to frame the centennial symphony I knew that I wanted to praise those things which survive the centuries: the mountains that cradle our town, and the earth itself which is our only home. Instead, all that I wrote of seemed fated, like the Old Willow, to pass away. The elms that line the Mall dwindle each year and the view from Mount Nittany declines as our county "develops." But it is in our power to care for that which we have received and preserve that which we love the most for those who follow us.

Emily Grosholz

Emily Grosholz grew up in Philadelphia. She received her B.A. at the University of Chicago and her Ph.D. in philosophy at Yale University. Since 1978, she has taught at Penn State where she is now professor of philosophy and a Fellow of the Institute for the Arts and Humanistic Studies. Her three books of poetry are *The River Painter* (University of Illinois), *Shores and Headlands* (Princeton

University Press), and *Eden* (Johns Hopkins University Press). She is currently completing a fourth book of poetry, *Accident and Essence*. She has been awarded an Ingram Merrill grant for poetry and a Guggenheim fellowship. An advisory editor of and frequent contributor to *The Hudson Review*, she has published literary essays in a broad spectrum of literary quarterlies. She has taught poetry workshops at the Sewanee Writers' Conference, the Bread Loaf Writers' Conference, the Wesleyan Writers' Conference, and Chautauqua.

During the past year, I have heard Bruce Trinkley's settings of my two poems performed. The experience of hearing the poems set to music was quite moving. It made the poems come alive for me again, and the experience which had originally given rise to them was uncovered. "Dinner in the Courtyard" was written about a courtyard in Paris where I lived briefly, and tried and failed to feel at home. "Eden" was written just a few years ago when my first child and I came up against the conundrum of death. Bruce Trinkley's music revived the poignant human relations woven around that neighborhood in Paris and my own house here in State College.

Joseph L. Grucci

1909 - 1982

Joseph Grucci was the founder and editor of the poetry magazine, *Pivot*, until his death in 1982. Born in Pittsburgh, he received his bachelor's and master's degrees from the University of Pittsburgh. He taught at the American University in Shrivensham, England, and at the University of Pittsburgh before becoming director of the poetry workshop at Penn State in 1950. He taught poetry workshops for twenty-five years. He was author of four volumes of poetry and was co-author of a volume of translations, *Three Spanish American Poets*.

John Haag

Born on Lake Pend Oreille (Sand Point), John Haag served in the Merchant Marines and was recalled for the Korean War before he began his tenure here at Penn State (by which time he had already become a graduate Fulbright Fellow to England and a Woodrow Wilson Fellow). His first collection, *The Mirrored Man*, was published in 1961 by the Reading University Press, U.K., and *The Brine Breather* was published in 1971 by Kayak Press. Some of the more interesting of the sixty-plus venues in which he has appeared are: *American Scholar*, *Chicago Review*, *Encounter*, *Esquire*, *Fiddlehead*, *Kenyon Review*, *MLQ*, *Melville Annual*, *New Statesman*, *New Yorker*, *NY Times*, *NY Herald Tribune*, *The Observer*, *Oxford Opinion*, *Poetry NW*, *Times Literary Supplement*, *Western Humanities Review*, *Yankee*, and *Yale Review*. In 1971 John published "Atlantis on \$5.00 a Day" in the *New American Review* and with this piece created a new genre, the novem.

"I am a long time grower of orchids and past president of the local chapter of the American Orchid Society. As one of two local authorities on wild mushrooms I have conducted field trips for many

years. In 1961 I played the title role in a film on *Bartleby the Scrivener* shot in Seattle by George Bluestone. I married Corene Johnston three years ago and we now live on six acres up Champagne Cork Hollow, a mile from Milesburg."

Bill Hanson

Bill Hanson was born into his native Maine nature which includes considerable independence of mind. He has taught visual art at Penn State since 1958 when he and his wife, Jeannine, came to the area to see if "State College" was really the name of a town.

Like many poems, "Haiku" Trio was a gift. It wrote me. I think of it as a visual (film-like) sequence in words. My "Haiku" Trio is not true Haiku which has a definite historic form of seventeen syllables. I call it Haiku because it has a Japanese feeling and is most like the traditional Haiku spirit in the sense that it reveals nature and Zen.

E. H. Knapp

Ed Knapp calls himself the "handyman of the Penn State English Department from 1962-1991." He taught students such as Melinda Mucha whose work is included in *Mountain Laurels*. He compiled an anthology of work by other poets including: Deborah Austin, John Balaban, John Haag, and Theodore Roethke.

"Poems are weather reports," says Ed Knapp. They are "most likely to present themselves at the turn of the seasons."

Katey Lehman

1921 - 1980

Katey Lehman with her husband, Ross, was well known locally for a column, "Open House," which appeared on the *Centre Daily Times* editorial page for twenty-six years. Katey was a graduate of State College High School and Penn State with a degree in English literature and journalism. She worked in public relations for Fred Waring's Pennsylvanians in New York City from 1943-1944, before working with an advertising agency in Philadelphia. After World War II, she wrote radio scripts. From 1959-1961, she was an assistant professor of journalism at Penn State. Her poems were published in *Ladies Home Journal*, *Atlantic Monthly*, and *Poetry magazine*. The Katey Lehman Awards for Poetry, Prose and Journalism were established in 1981 by Mary Jean and Frank Smeal.

Robert Lima

Robert Lima, professor of Spanish and Comparative Literature at Penn State and a Fellow of the Institute for the Arts and Humanistic Studies, is a poet, critic, playwright, and translator. He has been elected to membership in PEN International, the Poetry Society of America, and Academia Norteamericana de la Lengua Española. His poems have appeared throughout the United States and abroad in periodicals and in books. His most recent books are *Dark Prisms: Occultism in Hispanic Drama* (University Press of Kentucky) and *Valle-Inclan, El teatro de su vida* (editorial Nigra), both published in 1995.

So strong was the need to write "Indian Summer" and another poem while I was driving on Route 45 East that I had to pull off the road several times in order to complete the poems. The bucolic scenes that I viewed on my way to Lewisburg elicited the images this poem conveys. A photograph taken by Margaret Duda inspired "Lute Song." The photograph became part of "Eye of the Beholder," an exhibit of her photographs and my poems held in the East Gallery of Pattee Library in conjunction with the Central Pennsylvania Festival of the Arts in 1993.

Jack McManis

1917 - 1989

Jack McManis taught in the Penn State English Department for twenty-five years until his retirement in 1982. He taught poetry workshops for several years and was an organizer and judge for the Central Pennsylvania Festival of the Arts poetry competitions for more than a decade. With Deborah Austin and Sandra Nestlerode, he edited *Twelve Festival Poets*, and with Sandra Nestlerode *Young Festival Poets*. His poems have been published in numerous literary magazines including *Massachusetts Review* and *Prarie Schooner* as well as other periodicals including *Christian Century* and *Saturday Night*. He was associate editor of *Pivot* magazine under Joseph Gucci and later Martin Mitchell, and also edited the memorial issue to Gucci. Jack and his wife, Jean, and their son moved to State College in the late fifties. His love for the natural settings and wildlife in the area was frequently woven into his poetry, as it is in "Winter Fire."

M e l i n d a M u c h a

Melinda Mucha was born near Yokohama, Japan, and grew up in northeastern Pennsylvania. After graduating from Penn State with a degree in social welfare, she received an M.B.A. from Rutgers University. She is a manager for The Prudential Insurance Company. She is on leave currently following the birth of a son.

"Sun" was written for the sheer sound and rhythm of the words. It was inspired by a chance encounter with a quiet man in the restaurant where I worked at one time. I am fascinated with the transforming effect of heat and light and dance.

D o r o t h y R o b e r t s

1 9 0 7 - 1 9 9 3

Canadian poet Dorothy Roberts was born in Fredericton, New Brunswick, where her father and uncle were both well-known writers. She graduated from the University of New Brunswick and worked for a time as a reporter for a local paper. When she was twenty-three, she married August Leisner, a young American professor. They eventually settled in State College, where Leisner was a member of the Department of English at Penn State until his death in 1973. Roberts published her first chapbook, *Sons for Swift Feet*, in 1927. Her last collection, *In the Flight of Stars*, was published in 1991. Her work appeared in many poetry journals, including *The Hudson Review*, *The Yale Review*, *The Fiddlehead*, *Canadian Review*, and *Pivot*. Roberts' poems are also included in anthologies such as *The New Oxford Book of Canadian Verse in English*. An essay on Dorothy Roberts by Emily Grosholz appeared in *The Cumberland Poetry Review* in 1985.

T h e o d o r e R o e t h k e

1 9 0 8 - 1 9 6 3

Theodore Roethke taught English and coached the varsity tennis team at the Pennsylvania State College from 1936 to 1943 and again for one year in 1948 after a period at Bennington College, Vermont. From 1948 until his death, the poet lived in or near Seattle and occasionally taught at the University of Washington, where he was given the honorary title of Poet in Residence. Beginning with the publication of his first book, *Open House*, in 1941, Roethke had a highly successful career that brought him a Pulitzer Prize (for *The Waking* in 1953) and two National Book Awards (for *Words for the Wind*, which won six other poetry awards in 1958, and *The Far Field*, published posthumously in 1964). His work has world-wide recognition, with translations of poems into many languages.

M a y a S p e n c e

Maya Spence has been a resident of Milesburg for twenty-four years and enjoys the small town atmosphere which reminds her of her hometown in Kentucky. Since her parents were Swiss immigrants, she believes her ear for languages and poetry developed partly of their accents and their love of music and literature. In State College, she has been active in community theatre and sings with the State College Choral Society. Professionally, she is an academic adviser in Environmental Resource Management, holding degrees from University of California at Berkeley and Penn State. Her poems have been published in *Pivot*, *Twelve Festival Poets*, and *Poetry on the Buses*.

I wrote "Introduction" in the 1970s. It was one of the few poems that needed little revision because it seemed to work as it revealed itself to me. It is about how I, as a private person, feel when I encounter a new person and determine how much of myself to reveal. A new encounter elicits excitement and apprehension. That is what I wanted to capture.

B r u c e W e i g l

Bruce Weigl, professor of English at Penn State, is the author of seven collections of poetry, most recently *Sweet Lorain*, and the editor or co-editor of three collections of critical essays as well as an anthology. In 1994, The University of Massachusetts Press published *Poems from Captured Documents*, poems Weigl co-translated from the Vietnamese with Nguyen Thanh.

"Elegy for the Swans at Grace Pond" may seem allegorical but is quite literal. My wife and I lived for a short time in rural New Hampshire where friends adopted a pair of trumpeter swans who somehow returned to their pond every year. They were lovely and seemed to express great affection for each other. One year the male swan drowned after becoming caught in the submerged tangled roots of a willow tree whose branches hung over the pond. It was clear the female mourned him. It is too easy to impose human characteristics on the natural world. It is a gesture I try to resist in my own poetry because it seems to me to diminish the power and beauty of nature itself. But as she circled the pond near the willow where her mate had drowned, what we heard in her calls and observed in the language of her body looked like grief to us.