

Haines UA Poet-in-Residence in Anchorage Explains Poetry

"Poetry is the medium by which the ultimate value of a language is judged," said poet John Haines.

"In literature, the beginning of personal expression -- joy, hope, sorrow -- fell into lyrical phrases. If you search back in any language, these phrases or fragments appear first. All other types of writing comes from this," he said.

Haines is the first poet-in-residence at the University of Alaska, Anchorage. In addition to conducting a creative writers workshop, the poet will be available for conferences with students throughout the school year beginning Monday, Sept. 18.

Returning to Alaska, a temperament and environment which first produced "some creative reaction," is for Haines

"one of those happy things."

"I've had two or three births," he said, "... the most important one here in Alaska. I feel more at home here."

Haines had studied to be a painter before taking up residence in Alaska in 1958 at mile 68 on the Richardson Highway.

But he put aside the brush and took up the pen to record his emotional response to the land.

"There was a country in me which found a counterpart in Alaska," he said.

Haines feels that living in Alaska has a "somewhat liberating effect on people... living

in a country so open, with many opportunities. Below people begin to feel the limits of this American experience...

"Alaska calls for something... some response, more than living in Los Angeles," said Haines.

He has been living for the past few years in Pacific Grove,

Calif. "My real home is still mile 68 on the Richardson Highway, even though it's not legally mine any more," he said.

Haines comes to the university by way of a National Endowment for the Arts grant to the Community College through

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the Alaska State Council on the Arts for a writer-in-residence program.

Tom Sexton, assistant professor of English at the Senior College who was instrumental in obtaining the grant, is co-

ordinating the writer-in-residence program.

Haines will conduct a combined creative writers workshop giving both lower and upper division credit. The class will meet from 9 a.m. till noon on Saturday through the fall semester.

He will also travel to Fairbanks for a writers workshop on the university campus on Mondays.

Haines said the students "are not going to learn to write by taking the class...they may learn something about writing." What he expects to do "among other things is to explore as much as possible that area in the person--it may or may not be in any one of us -- which might produce good writing."

Haines said that the mechanical and technical aspects of writing are "just a way of discovering,...the discussion of ideas in class, hopefully, is going to liberate something."

Haines said although he is a poet, the creative response of his students might well follow some other avenue of expression.

Haines said he doesn't have a favorite poet, although among

his contemporaries he considers Jeffers, Stevens, Stafford. Wright and Williams as good. And he said that W.C. Williams had the most stylistic effect on him "so far".

Of his own published work, Haines said he really doesn't have a particular favorite, although he most enjoys reading "Deserted Cabin", from the book, "Winter News," which is one of the few of his poems which directly relates to a person.

"Some Spanish poet said that every poet articulates one long poem in his life and only fragments come to the surface," said Haines.



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