

PATHOS · HUMOR · HISTORY · CREATIVE NON-FICTION



## CALLAHAN COUNTY

## STAR SPOTLIGHT

## WRITERS SHOWCASE

(All submitters retain ownership)

## American Life In Poetry

Column 226

BY TED KOOSER, U.S. POET LAUREATE, 2004-2006

Elizabeth Bishop, one of our greatest American poets, once wrote a long poem in which the sudden appearance of a moose on a highway creates a community among a group of strangers on a bus. Here Ronald Wallace, a Wisconsin poet, gives us a sighting with similar results.

## Sustenance

Australia. Phillip Island. The Tasman Sea.

Dusk. The craggy coastline at low tide in fog. Two thousand tourists milling in the stands as one by one, and then in groups, the fairy penguins mass up on the sand like so much sea wrack and debris. And then, as on command, the improbable parade begins: all day they've been out fishing for their chicks, and now, somehow, they find them squawking in their burrows in the dunes, one by one, two by two, such comical solemnity, as wobbling by they catch our eager eyes until we're squawking, too, in English, French, and Japanese, Yiddish and Swahili, like some happy wedding party brought to tears by whatever in the ceremony repairs the rifts between us. The rain stops. The fog lifts. Stars. And we go home, less hungry, satisfied, to friends and family, regurgitating all we've heard and seen.

American Life in Poetry is made possible by The Poetry Foundation ([www.poetryfoundation.org](http://www.poetryfoundation.org)), publisher of Poetry magazine. It is also supported by the Department of English at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. "Sustenance" from "For A Limited Time Only," by Ronald Wallace, (c) 2008. Used by permission of the University of Pittsburgh Press. The poem first appeared in "Poetry Northwest," Vol. 41, no. 4, 2001. Introduction copyright (c)2009 by The Poetry Foundation. The introduction's author, Ted Kooser, served as United States Poet Laureate Consultant in Poetry to the Library of Congress from 2004-2006. We do not accept unsolicited manuscripts.



**Need: Poems, Short Stories, Poetry Related Items**



**The pen is mightier than the sword**

## Writers And Poets!

The Eastland/Callahan County Newspapers announce that the Baird Star will be publishing submitted poetry and short stories. We will also be publishing a literary journal in the near future.

1. We ask for first-time publishing rights. All other rights will remain with the author.
2. There will be no payment, but you will get your works before the general public. We will be sending sample copies to other organizations, the literary world and libraries for their archives and your notoriety.
3. Short stories should be brief. Poetry should be no longer than 24 lines.
4. Each submission should be typewritten, single spaced, with author's name and contact information in the top right hand corner. You must include a SASE for the return of the submission.
5. Please address all submissions to:

**Literary Editor**

**Eastland/Callahan County**

**Newspapers**

**P. O. Box 29**

**Eastland, TX 76448**

**email: [thebairdspotlight@att.net](mailto:thebairdspotlight@att.net)**

Submissions sought to:

**Star**

**P.O. Box 29  
Eastland, TX 76448**

email: [thebairdspotlight@att.net](mailto:thebairdspotlight@att.net)

S.A.S.E. for returns

**--WANTED--**

20 lines,

double spaced or less

Poetry

Fiction or Non

**Each entry with brief biography notes. All must be family oriented; no smut, slander or liable material.**



**Back Row L-R: Zach McGuire, Kinsey Scroggins, Courtney Pearson, Amanda Ashby, Katey Lambertson, Justin Smith, Allyse Ballard, Chase Reneau, Curly Cox, Rob Welker. Middle Row L-R: Jennifer Crawford, Maria Villanueva, Lindsey Lormand, Whitney Hooper, Melanie Cain, Sara Bentley, Rebecca Cadena, Julie Welker. Bottom Row L-R: Kelley Finley, Caly Goates, Trissa Cox, Taylor Ball**

## Learning Beyond The Classroom In London

BROWNWOOD – July 21, 2009 - For 18 students enrolled at HPU, learning beyond the classroom took on a whole new meaning this summer when they travelled to London for a nine day learning journey.

Students were required to enroll in at least one hour of college credit to take the trip, which is designed not only for academic learning credit but also for sightseeing. Eight courses were offered in conjunction with the trip: Topics in British Art, Topics in British Literature, Walking London, Fundamentals of Human Communication, Intercultural Communication, Topics in British Business, Topics in British History, and Topics in British Politics.

Trissa Cox, trip coordinator and assistant professor of computer information systems at HPU, said that the trip is a great opportunity for students. "The HPU London trip offers our students a wonderful academic opportunity for traveling abroad in a comfortable atmosphere," said Cox.

Cox, who was on her fourth academic trip to London, organized the event and planned the schedule along with help from other sponsors Dr. Julie Welker, professor of communication, and Curly Cox, associate professor of exercise and sports science. Dr. Welker's husband and HPU alumnus Rob Welker also travelled with the group and assisted as well.

Cox feels that London is an excellent choice for international travel because it is the converging of many different cultures and has such rich history.

"London's artistic, historical, and multi-cultural setting provides us with a rich backdrop for our adventure," said Cox.

HPU student Whitney Hooper, sophomore communication major from Hubbard, Texas, said that the trip to London

was an experience she'll never forget.

"I got to see firsthand parts of history that I've studied about for years. I loved getting to see all the different attractions London had to offer. The communication was an adventure in itself. It was so interesting seeing so many different cultures, languages, and people in one area," said Hooper.

The group visited most of London's most famous places, including Westminster Abbey, Buckingham Palace, Windsor, Hampton Court Palace, St. Paul's Cathedral, Hyde Park, St. James Park, The British Library, The British Museum, The Imperial War Museum, Greenwich Royal Observatory, The Churchill War Rooms, Speaker's Corner, Kensington Gardens, The National Gallery, The Tower of London, Portobello Road, The London Eye and many others.

Cox added that one of the highlights of the trip was the trip to Windsor.

"One of my favorite events this year was our excursion to the Windsor Castle Royal Tattoo - an outdoor military pageant honoring the British Armed Forces serving in Iraq and Afghanistan. Experiencing local patriotism within a very different context provided us with a very memorable evening!" Cox said.

Hooper said that the trip was good because of the range of experiences.

"It was such a great trip, we got to experience so many different things in one week ranging from educational, to being out of our comfort zone, to learning to communicate with others, and learning to eat the food. I'm so glad I was given the opportunity to join Howard Payne and experience all London had to offer," Hooper added.

## SING FOR THE TAXMAN

The unlikely intersection of poetry and internal revenue.

By Dennis O'Driscoll

Poetry Media Services

It is a truth universally acknowledged that a young man without a fortune must be in want of a job. It was certainly true of my own experience. And another truism—the one about the universality of death and taxes—soon acquired a special, indeed literal, significance for me. Death, after all, was what would earn me my living: death in the form of taxes, actually—death duties and inheritance taxes. In 1970, aged 16 and having just completed my secondary schooling, I was relieved to be offered a job by Ireland's Revenue Commissioners, our internal revenue and customs service: a "permanent, pensionable position" no less, "subject to satisfactory probation." I have toiled in Revenue—as the organization is generally termed—ever since.

"If you ever leave your job, you will stop writing." An office colleague—turned—soothsayer relayed this stark prediction to me last year. Most poets, however, seem convinced that they would never begin writing if they were to spend a lifetime in one of the busiest (not to mention least loved) branches of public administration, one attracting more critics than The Waste Land. Our creative habits are as mysterious to each other as our domestic habits. In the end, all poets face the same task: to "follow the prompts," as the corporate voice mails urge, and satisfactorily shape the amorphous sounds, rhythms, images, or phrases by which the first stirrings of a potential poem are recognized, and which arrive unbidden like internal voice mails or text messages. In rare cases, the finished poem—having survived an initial probation period—may even prove "permanent and pensionable."

When selecting snappy pronouncements for my recent book of contemporary quotations about poetry, Quote Poet Unquote, I was bemused by the number of non-Irish poets who managed to subtly imply that the tax official is a bottom feeder, the second-lowest form of life—and that the lowest ranking would be inevitable if an even worse stigma did not attach to the poet. In the words of Douglas Dunn, "If someone on a train asked me what I did for a living, I'd say I was a tax-inspector, rather than a poet." His fellow Scotsman, Don Paterson, concurs: "I'm still embarrassed to say I'm a poet. I say I'm a writer and sometimes I say I work for the Inland Revenue, which kills the conversation. To say you're a poet is even worse." Charles Simic claims that "parents still prefer their children to be taxidermists and tax collectors rather than poets."

In Ireland, not only are poets accorded appreciable status and respect—enough at least to elevate them safely above rock bottom—but tax collectors have been their unacknowledged allies, especially between 2003 and 2008 when government funding for the Arts Council in the Irish Republic (population: 4.3 million) doubled. The 2008 peak of 85 million (roughly \$110 million at the early 2009 exchange rate) is unlikely to be scaled again until the economic climate improves and tax revenues recover their former buoyancy. Meantime, the council's allocation for 2009 has been reduced to 76 million.

In a cunning linguistic shift, the Arts Council, appealing for increased subvention from government, has learned to couch its case in business idiom, rather than resort to the language of ethics, aesthetics, or pedagogy, let alone transcendence. The director of the council, Mary Cloake, has described the arts as a "high-quality, good-value product" and arts funding as "an investment, a really smart investment, by the Government, of the taxpayers' money," asserting that "the presence of [music and theatre] organizations in our cities is . . . considered a key indicator of a mature and attractive knowledge-based economy. It plays a crucial role in attracting inward investment by global corporations."

Thanks to subsidies from the Arts Council (and occasionally also from the Arts Council of Northern Ireland), the Irish Republic's poetry publishers—a vital, dedicated, idealistic community—have been able to survive without struggling to attract financial donors as well as book buyers. Poets in Ireland may apply for travel grants, and the success rate is high; they are also eligible to compete for the semiannual "bursaries" awarded to writers who intend to set aside time for particular projects. Above all, though, whatever goodwill should flow—or trickle, at least—from artist to tax official ought to emanate most fervently from members of Aosdána, the Irish academy of artists established in 1983.

Formerly composed of writers, visual artists, and composers, Aosdána now admits architects and choreographers to its ranks. A maximum membership of 250 is permitted; approximately 50—from founder-members born in the 1920s (John Montague, Richard Murphy, Leland Bardwell, Anthony Cronin) to newcomers, born in the '60s (Peter Serr, Pat Boran)—are principally known for their poetry. What is unusual about this academy is that, subject to certain eligibility requirements, it provides members with a not-inconsiderable income that widens their options, allowing them the basis for escape from the garret, the conference call, and the seminar room.

I have always regarded myself as a civil servant rather than a "poet" or "artist"—words I would find embarrassing and presumptuous to ascribe to myself. But, unlike Douglas Dunn and Don Paterson, I would not exactly rush to announce myself in polite company as a Revenue official, lest I spoil the cocktail party, depress the value of neighborhood real estate, or clear the room at an art gallery reception. The Welsh poet Sheenagh Pugh displayed unique mettle in naming a collection, however ironic her intention, *Sing for the Taxman*: "Sing because you're the best; because you can, / and sing—why not?—for the taxman."

Dennis O'Driscoll is the author of eight books of poetry, most recently *Reality Check*, and a member of Aosdána, the Irish academy of artists. This article first appeared in *Poetry* magazine. Learn more about Dennis O'Driscoll, and his poetry, at [www.poetryfoundation.org](http://www.poetryfoundation.org).

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