

The Gazette

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A Weekly Newspaper for the Library Staff

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LC Educators Institute Opens

Library staffers have been working since October 1990 to prepare for the third Summer Educators Institute, which began at the Library Monday and continues through Aug. 2.

Cosponsored by the Library and The Catholic University of America's Department of Education, the institute for librarians and teachers of primary and secondary school students will examine "The Bill of Rights and Beyond: Dialogue between Vision and Reality." The topic chosen for this year's three-week institute coincides

with the 200th anniversary of the adoption of the Bill of Rights.

The 30 participants chosen from throughout the United States will examine the development of citizens' rights beginning with the Bill of Rights, scheduled for study the first week; proceeding the second week to the "Civil War Amendments" (the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments); and finishing with the Civil Rights Acts from 1954 to the present.

Women's rights will be considered throughout.

"There will be a strong focus on the use of primary documents in the Library's collections—not just manuscripts, but recordings, photographs, maps, news documentaries, and other resources," said Carolyn Brown, director of education services for the Library and director of the institute. "We want to stimulate teachers and librarians to use the resources of their state and local libraries and local historical societies, as well as to use legal

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Galbraith Remembers: Howard Nemerov and His Young Listeners

By GAIL FINEBERG

Howard Nemerov's life, poetry, and recent death touched Library staffers, particularly those privileged to work with him in the Poetry Office during his tenure from 1988 to 1990 as U.S. poet laureate and consultant in poetry to the Library.

"He suffered no fools," said Nancy Galbraith, head of the Poetry Office. She knew him for nearly 30 years, admired his clear vision, enjoyed his intelligence, and relished his lack of pretension and his accessibility as a person as well as a poet.

Nemerov enjoyed young people. He taught at Washington University in St. Louis from 1969 to 1990. During the time he was the nation's laureate and consultant in poetry, he emceed poetry readings at the Library in a public series that Galbraith and her assistant, Jennifer Rutland, helped him arrange. And he often met with high school students. "They

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Pauls To Head New Dispute Center

Lloyd A. Pauls, assistant chief of the Library's Equal Employment Opportunity Complaints Office (EEOCO) since 1981, has been named the director of the Library's new Dispute Resolution Center.

The position was approved in May and the appointment—announced this week—was effective May 19. However, the Dispute Resolution Center will not open for business until Library management has signed dispute-resolution agreements with all three labor unions at the Library. Agreements were reached March 4 with AFSCME Local 2477 and March 19 with CREA (Congressional Research Employees Association). An agreement with AFSCME Local 2910 is "imminent," according to Pauls.

The purpose of the Dispute Resolution Center is to provide Library employees with a forum and process for resolving problems in the work place. Pauls, plus a soon-to-be-hired staff of four "conveners" skilled in mediation, and four-member panels—half labor and half management—will not only hear problems and propose resolutions but will train supervisors and employees to use common sense



Lloyd A. Pauls

and creativity in the work place to settle disagreements before they escalate into full-blown complaints. "We want to work

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MILESTONES

Donald Wisdom, Serials Chief, Retires After 40 Years

By BRAD COOKE

Donald F. Wisdom, chief of the Serial and Government Publications Division, retired at the end of June, marking the completion of nearly 40 years of government service. All of Wisdom's civilian service has been with the Library.

When asked about his retirement, Wisdom replied, "it feels great!" He plans to devote his time to traveling and will continue to work on the Memoria project, which is responsible for micro-filming Latin-American documents, as a part-time volunteer. He also has plans to write an article on James Bennett Childs, a former Library employee and honorary consultant in government document bibliography.

Wisdom began work at the Library of Congress in 1951 as a GS-2 deck attendant. He remembers that his salary then was \$1,800 a year. He subsequently served with the U.S. Army in the Korean War, earning a Bronze Star for his service.

He returned to the Library in 1954 to the Serial Record Division and transferred to the Science and Technology Division in 1956. Two years later he joined the Serial (now Serial and Government Publications) Division where he served in various capacities, including assistant head, Government Publications Section, and head of the Reference Section.

In 1966 Wisdom became the assistant director and editor of the *Handbook of Latin American Studies* for the Hispanic Foundation. He became assistant chief of the Serial Division in 1970 and chief in 1976.

Wisdom earned a B.S. degree in 1952 from the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service and has undertaken graduate work at Georgetown in international relations and Latin American politics.

He is the author and editor of numerous papers, studies, and articles, as well as many bibliographies. He was co-compiler of *Popular Names of U.S. Government Reports* (1970).

He has served as chair of the editorial board and as president of the Seminar on the Acquisition of Latin American Library Materials (SALALM) and as a member of the editorial board of the *Index to Current Urban Documents*. He has also been active in the



While his wife, Margaret, looks on, Donald F. Wisdom (middle) receives his retirement certificate from Associate Librarian for Constituent Services Donald C. Curran.

American Library Association.

Wisdom's friends and colleagues gave a retirement party for him on Thursday, June 26. Speakers at the event talked about Wisdom's "midwestern common sense" and his "flair for writing." His son Allen described his admiration for his father, the trips they had taken to Latin America, and weekend research projects at the Library.

Wisdom and his wife, Margaret, live in Bethesda, Md.

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were an audience he loved," Galbraith said.

Nemerov had this to say about young poets and their poetry: "They tend to keep it to themselves a lot, which is a good prescription for writing poetry."

One fall day in 1989, a senior English class from Wooten High School in Montgomery County came to the Library to meet him. Waiting for the class to arrive, Nemerov paced nervously in the atrium of the Madison Building. "High school students were very scary at first, but I came to like them," Nemerov said. "Liking is pri-

mary," he added. "You do not go behind primary."

Finally, the students filed into the atrium, took their places on metal chairs, squirmed and whispered for a few minutes, unpacked their notebooks and pencils, and then waited quietly for the poet to address them. Wearing a blue denim jacket, his fashion statement, he looked at them squarely from beneath his square-cut white hair.

"What are you thinking this morning?" he asked. Several pairs of eyes focused downward on laps and notebooks.

"I had a thought," Nemerov said, trying again. He told them he noticed that morn-

ing to the right of the main Madison entrance this quotation of James Madison: "What spectacle can be more edifying than that of liberty and learning, each leaning on the other for their mutual and surest support?" The poet said he pictured two old cronies, Liberty and Learning, staggering down the street together, laughing and talking and leaning on each other. The students laughed and Nemerov looked relieved.

The ice broken, this exchange took place between poet laureate and poets-in-

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learning:

"Your poetry is different from a lot of other poetry we've been reading," one student ventured.

"I hope so," Nemerov responded.

"Why do you make so many allusions to the Bible?"

"Because I was scared of the Bible—all that slaying," Nemerov responded. "Being scared of something is the best way to remember it."

A student asked him if he used a tape recorder during the creation of a poem. "A tape recorder is a way of wasting the same time twice," Nemerov said.

"Where do you get your ideas?" someone asked.

"I don't think a poem comes from an idea," Nemerov said. "Walking is good for poetic inspiration. Something drops on your head. You get the first line, see something, and it gives you the last line:

On young poets and their poetry: "They tend to keep it to themselves a lot, which is a good prescription for writing poetry."

—Howard Nemerov

"Goodbye," said the river. "I'm going downstream."

The questions went on.

"Do you teach your own poetry?"

"No."

"Is there one right interpretation of your poetry?"

"Nope. There's no right way to interpret anything. Everything is written in shorthand, even in the *Congressional Record*. Even a STOP sign is equivocal; imagine a foreign pedestrian who sees a STOP sign and stops walking. You have to supply some context."

"Do you draw from your personal experience?"

"To a certain extent I must. But I try to keep shameful aspects of my life out."

"You've said you write a poem until it



Howard Nemerov

writes itself. What signals the end of the writing process?"

"When it's no good. If at first you don't succeed, give up." The class laughed.

Nemerov elaborated more seriously. He said a poem does not write itself entirely by itself, but it is not entirely the product of thought, either.

"First you have to read poetry," he counseled. "I got to college and observed that all the richest, most arrogant, precious ones said they were poets. I thought about that. Then I read some poems. After a long while I wrote a poem."

Nemerov read some of his poems to the class, advising them not to think too hard about them but to let the words provoke their imaginations.

To prepare for Nemerov's visit, the students had read some of his work. A student asked about the construction of one poem consisting of 15-line stanzas except for one 14-line stanza.

"That shows imperfection in all things," Nemerov said, then confessed: "The truth is, I just miscounted."

"How much do you consciously think about rhyme?"

"Not hard. Every sentence has a half rhyme. If you have the kind of ear I have, you rhyme all the time. My ear is constantly playing with sounds."

"What are you working on now?"

"When people ask me, 'What are you

working on now?' I say, 'I don't work; I wait.' I've been waiting quite awhile now."

One of his last poems was published in *The New Yorker* June 24, 1991. Galbraith fished a copy out from leaning towers of papers in the Jefferson Building attic space she is preparing to vacate for the renovation. "I think this is his goodbye poem," she said.

Sitting in the wheat-colored room furnished with comfortable old couches and chairs and a wobbly looking writing desk, Galbraith began to read "The End of the Opera." Her voice broke on the line: "But

"... If you have the kind of ear I have, you rhyme all the time. My ear is constantly playing with sounds."

—Howard Nemerov

the curtain call could always make him cry—." At the end, she wondered why he used a colon instead of a period before "Ite, Missa est."—"Depart, the Mass is ended."

One last book of poetry will be published this fall. The title poem, "Trying Conclusions," Nemerov wrote while he was at the Library, perhaps in the same wheat-colored room where Galbraith reads and nibbles salad. Or maybe he composed it, or heard it writing itself, as he walked the Library grounds.

Nemerov was the author of 26 volumes of published poetry, criticism, fiction, and short stories. *The Collected Poems of Howard Nemerov*, which included all of his published poetry from 1945 to 1975, won the Pulitzer Prize for poetry and a National Book Award. He received the National Medal of Arts from President Reagan in a ceremony at the White House in 1987.

He served as consultant in poetry to the Library for 1963-64, and in 1988 he became the nation's third poet laureate.

Nemerov died of cancer July 5 at his home in St. Louis. Galbraith told him by phone just before he died that "The End of the Opera" was in print. He was 71. □