

Poet enjoys life with moments of cheerfulness

By JACK ZUCKER

Deborah Richardson is one of this area's finest poets, distinctly in the confessional tradition.

Confessionalism has been identified with direct, intense autobiography and also with the self-destructive poets who espoused it — Anne Sexton, Sylvia Plath, John Berryman and Robert Lowell.

Three of those four were suicides and Lowell spent much of his 60 years in mental institutions.

Ms. Richardson's poems are autobio-

graphical also, full of music and rhetorical effects. Her poems are cheerful though not necessarily optimistic or in praise of current American society. But cheerfulness keeps breaking in, and it is the cheerfulness of a writer who knows the score, but wants to enjoy life anyway.

"Six," one of Ms. Richardson's most celebrated poems, was named the finest poem in the last 10 years of New York Quarterly. It tells of a girl of 6 asked to pick a dress for her dead, 5-year-old sister:

"I picked it to blend in the hue of the casket lining arranged hues of blue sister five, a small scaled fish, scolded and white caked baked in the wrong shade of mortician's make-up

I had to lean over to say goodbye, the long blue box filled with toys I wanted, I couldn't understand why the panda we had shared, mine too, had to be buried with her.

I dig every dream and dig dig dig while awake I am determined to finish this thing because I want my Panda back."

My favorite in the Richardson canon is "Letter," a letter to John Berryman exploring the confessional poet's impulse to suicide and self-destruction. The confessionals, and Dylan Thomas, too, Ms. Richardson writes, "choked on golden chryses." They left the rest of us, without as much talent, "to drink off and then many, our mouths shut and clapped, walking in some strange wind." Wishing the bucket/would stop The small cat would die/The child stop crying in the night/The endurance test would end."

This is one of Ms. Richardson's pessimistic poems, but the imagery glows with life, a strange contradiction. Ms. Plath's imagery glowed, too, but with a cold light.

The poems may be sometimes negative in content, but rarely in tone. Her lines are buoyant and smack more of life-loving Dylan Thomas than his sickly contemporaries.

"I didn't take the stuffed memory box" contains a memorable autobiography recalling Ms. Richardson's college days in East Lansing:

"I was Prom Queen for a night but the float sank right into the bottom of the East Lansing River and with muddy toes and black white slippers, padding to shore I knew it was done the game was up, I was up to go to my waist."

A recent poem showing a profound change in consciousness is "Another Season," which tells how a teacher, recently a student, feels sitting on the other side of the desk:

"Now it changes. I am writing them for other students, those endless letters of recommendation, extolling the heights, telling of great messages they will bring to the world. Once it was me, the silver tongued fox."

Now my forty three year old face, tired from books and schedules, exhausted

from the sounds of dryers in the night, and trips not taken, sees that I have not quite made it.

What? What? The answer evades me. I pool my sources into a common stream, watching spring break on the face of the earth, loving a little again

and letting the tulips grow where they may."

This small gem, tells us that Ms. Richardson had always wanted the tulips to grow, but that growing tulips isn't an easy task.

Ms. Richardson presently is teaching creative writing at Oakland Community College, Orchard Ridge campus. Her book "Love Poem to a Dead Man" was published in the 1970s.

Winter term art classes begin

The 10-week winter term at Pontiac Art Center begins Jan. 12 and ends March 21. Classes for beginning as well as advanced students are being offered.

Ted Hadfield, new to the Art Center faculty, will be teaching pottery. Edythe Newbourn's popular Chinese Brush Painting will be offered along with Drawing and Painting on Thursday evenings by Victoria Schaden. Eve Salaygi stresses fundamentals and analysis of form and space in her classes in portrait and figure drawing and painting classes.

New classes are Dance Fitness, a class for nondancers; Photo Silkscreen, with new equipment; and Advertising

Design. Kay Isola, an interior designer, will conduct a workshop dealing with space planning, functional furniture, pattern mixing and lighting.

Youth classes include ballet, creative movement, drama, pottery, sculpture, Suzuki violin, cartooning and mixed media.

The class line-up includes many favorites from past terms — jewelry, metalworking and casting, stained glass, beginning and advanced photography, weaving, calligraphy and sculpture.

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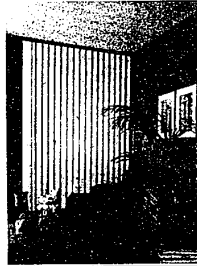
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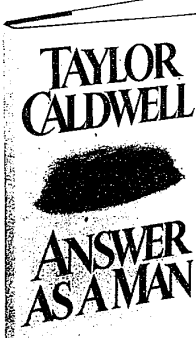
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BID NOTICE

Bids will be accepted until 10:00 a.m. January 15, 1981 at the office of the City Clerk, 23600 Liberty Street, Farmington, Michigan, for the following City of Farmington Vehicles:

- 1 1974 HIC Pickup
- 1 1982 GMC Stake (Army 6x6)
- 1 1983 GMC Van (Army 6x6)
- 1 1978 Matador 2-Door
- 1 1985 Jeep 2-Door

NOTE: ALL VEHICLES WILL BE SOLD "AS IS". Vehicles may be inspected at the Department of Public Services Building, 33720 West Nine Mile Road, Farmington, Michigan, between the hours of 7:30 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. The City of Farmington reserves the right to reject any or all bids. Bid forms are available at the Department of Public Services Building.

NEDRA VIANE, City Clerk

CITY OF FARMINGTON HILLS SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS CITY COUNCIL MEETING January 5, 1981

The City Council of the City of Farmington Hills held a special meeting January 5, 1981. Mayor Soronen opened the meeting at 7:30 o'clock P.M. Members present were Soronen, Burwell, Lange, Oppenheimer, Wolf, Alkateeb and Dolan. Others present were City Manager Savage, Acting City Clerk Thomas and City Attorney Donohue. Council approved the purchase of 1,250 gallon per minute Fire Pumper from Daugherty Associates in the amount of \$100,715 payable over a two year period. Recognition and Appreciation Awards were presented to employees who have served five, ten and fifteen years. Recognition and Appreciation Awards were presented to former Board and Commission members for their services to this City. Don Wolf and Joe Alkateeb were unanimously elected to serve as Mayor and Mayor pro-tem for the ensuing year. Upon motion the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
GLADYS THOMAS
Acting City Clerk

Approved by Mayor Wolf