

POET MARTIN STORMS CAMPUS

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Describe over one hundred people at each reading, sitting on the floor, hanging from the walls, over-flowing out into the corridor. Describe their faces, all turned in one direction, like flowers to the sun. And try to describe the full, expectant silence with which they listened and heard Herbert Woodward Martin.

How does one describe art in the process of living?

On February 28, Herbert Woodward Martin, Poet-in-Residence at the University of Dayton, Ohio, described living art to the students here at NCACC. Even in the crowded room, the focus of attention was complete: Martin's voice, his hands, his proud stature. Never has this writer seen the students of this school give their attention so undividedly. They were mesmerized, but Martin had them revitalized at the same time. After each of the two readings, students and faculty alike were excited and aglow.

Martin is black, and while he doesn't over-emphasize or deny his history, a sense of it is always there. For example, everyone felt a collective chuckle at his Dialect poem "Lawd Chile." Yet that is a singular -- black -- experience, with no comparison to the white lifestyle:

LAWD CHILE

*Lawd Chile, I done told you a million times
 Them words you is fooling around with don't make no sense.
 Them words is the devil's work.
 You better leave them alone! You hear?
 Here you sit from morning to night
 writing down what you think is right
 Who ever told you,
 you had the right to decide bad and good?
 It ain't worth the time of day,
 Less it's going to bring you some silver,
 and I don't see how it's possible for anybody
 to be paying you for something
 you done scribbled down like chicken scratch.
 And don't go telling me nothing 'bout
 what or how much money white people make.
 You ain't white!
 And I don't want to hear nothing 'bout no fame.
 Attention ain't no good when you're dead.
 Don't make no sense.
 And further more, it don't make no never mind
 how much you scream, or how long and wooly
 you let your hair grow, or how many baths you refuse to take.
 If you ain't got no money, you ain't got nothing to say.
 And I didn't have to go to no fool college to learn that.
 I done been walking through this world and learning
 Since I knowed exactly who I was
 So if I tell you a hen dips snuff
 Search for the box.
 Boy where is you going?
 I'm talking to you!
 You better come back here and listen!
 Lawd, Lawd, these children are going to be the death of us all,
 not that we ain't given them plenty of kindling wood.*

He also read sections of his latest work, a poem which some refer to as a "Black epic." "Log of the Vigilante" deals with the black experience even more directly: the *Vigilante* made its odious journeys carrying cargoes of black slaves. These scenes, along with the sections from Negro spirituals which he sang, were an intense and moving experience. His extraordinary voice alone has a timbre and a quality that interprets words and meter into wordless, rhythmic emotion. He proves something another black poet, Amiri Baraka, said: "Feeling predicts intellect."

The intensity of feeling and life which Martin brings to his poetry is exemplified in his book, *New York the Nine Million and Other Poems* (1969). The "Antigone" poems, from which he read sections, epitomize Martin's ability to render his perceptions of the puzzle of human emotion into concise, clean lines:

Oedipus to Antigone

*Daughter!... Daughter!
 I beg you, take my hands!
 Teach them newly how to feel.
 Encourage these sightless feet
 To avoid the brick, escape the stone.
 I plead you daughter, guide me to some blind exile
 Where I might reason what structure emotion is when
 Flesh is bare and scarred; the crown has toppled the head;
 When facade falls, and bone begins to flake.*

Martin also explores the ambivalence of love, the imagery and sound of language with the use of "contrapuntal development" in his poems. This is a technique in which the poem can be read down the left side, down the right side, then line by line. And then reversed by reading from the bottom up. An example of this exquisite intricacy is found in "Contrapuntal No. 7":

| | |
|---|--|
| <i>And do you wonder why</i> | <i>in those last two months</i> |
| <i>we came to touch so close</i> | <i>I found an allowance of courage</i> |
| <i>fearing neither kiss nor embrace</i> | <i>to drive my image straight</i> |
| <i>hungering between two worlds?</i> | |

It reminds me very much of those fantastic Persian mosaics one sees, translated into word and sound.

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Nat Love, a black cowboy whose picture Martin found in a history, provided the inspiration for a particularly moving sequence, "The Deadwood Dick Poems." These poems ranged from introspection, to perceptive humor, to every man's need for immortality:

*Deadwood, these are thoughts I put to you, ultimately,
Because I wish I could ride a black horse into history,
And desire to know if what you won by rope
Horse and gun was respect, rather than tussle?*

For most, any conclusion to this over-whelming feast of literary delights would be anti-climactic: not so for Herbert Martin. The audience was transported to another dimension of time during Martin's performance of the "Crown Scene" from Shakespeare's *Richard II*. I can still recall the trembling fullness of his hands as he removed the "crown" from his head. Martin made us all feel that heavy weight being lifted.

It is to be hoped that all who missed the opportunity to hear one of the most richly creative people in contemporary writing--Herbert Woodward Martin--will be afforded that opportunity once again, someday soon. Herbert Martin enriched us all and left no one untouched. We thank the Cultural Affairs Committee, Len Roberts, and everyone who made Mr. Martin's appearance possible. And thank you so much Mr. Martin!

By Francine Ferrante



Ron Bossert: Counselor Intern

by Robin Flemming

What's new in the Counseling Department? A very concerned man named Ron Bossert... His story is an interesting one.

Ron spent his first two years of college at Penn State University with no declared major. He then joined the Army as a Personnel Specialist, an experience which turned out to be a determining factor in Ron's career choice. It was during these two years that Ron decided working with people was for him. One year of Ron's Army duty was spent in Vietnam where he began working with fellow veterans in group sessions. Because of these sessions and other Army experiences, Bossert is especially eager to work with veterans on campus. Ron says he saw a lot of things happening in Vietnam that he didn't like concerning the treatment of both the Vietnamese and the Vietnam vet. He feels that due to this knowledge, he could relate to the vet and therefore, establish a good working relationship with them. However, Ron has a genuine interest in all students and extends an open invitation for any one to stop by and see him, in the Career Development Center.

After the Army, Ron entered Kutztown State College where he attained his B.A. in Sociology. He will be completing his Master's Degree in Counseling this May, also at Kutztown. His duties as a Counselor Intern are required for his graduation.

Ron will be working out of the Career Development Center (ext. 203) assisting Virginia Gonzalez with her Career Development Course. Ron wants to gain more experience in working with groups and all psychological and vocational testing available through our Counseling Department.

Ron is a member of two professional counseling organizations, the American Personnel and Guidance Association and the American College Personnel Association. The greatest advantage of his membership to these groups is the literature provided which keeps Bossert updated in the counseling profession.

Among his leisure hobbies are tennis, music, and skiing, although he hasn't had much time for the slopes this winter.

Ron enjoys working with college-age students. He feels that there are fewer limitations in regard to the "helping" relationship. His future plans are to enter Personnel Services at the college level after his graduation this May. Also, he hopes to begin work towards a Doctorate combining Counseling and Student Personnel Services.