The Great Chicago Poetry Reunion

Carla Kaplan, Michael Keller, and Michael Anania, editors
THE GREAT CHICAGO
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Poems by
John Logan
Marvin Bell
Barbara Harr
William Hunt
Bill Knott
Naomi Lazard
Dennis Schmitz
Charles Simic

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Edited by Carla Kaplan and Michael Keller, with Michael Anania

The Great Chicago Poetry Reunion was held at the University of Illinois at Chicago Circle on May 14 and 15, 1981. The reunion was sponsored by the Circle Center Program Department with the assistance of the Illinois Arts Council.

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Chicago Circle Center, May 14-15, 1981

In the early 1960's, when classes in poetry writing were still rare in universities, John Logan conducted a private poetry workshop in Chicago. Logan was teaching in South Bend at Notre Dame, but he travelled to Chicago regularly and taught an evening class at the University of Chicago Extension in the Loop. The poetry workshop was conceived by a group of Paul Carroll's students at Loyola and students from Logan's Extension classes. It met, first, in Jordan Miller's office in the south Loop and eventually in the homes of some of its members. The original group of participants included some writers working in business and a number of younger poets, mostly students from around the city.

The Chicago workshop is something of a legend in contemporary American poetry, so many of its members have become significant poets, with long lists of published books and public honors. Choice, the magazine the group founded in 1961, has been a major, if somewhat irregular, showcase for new American poetry for twenty years.

THE GREAT CHICAGO POETRY REUNION is a celebration of that unique, independent workshop, of Choice, and of Chicago's place in the vitality of contemporary poetry. Eight poets who were in one way or another involved with the workshop will read from their works at the University of Illinois at Chicago Circle on May 14 and 15. The program will feature readings by John Logan, Marvin Bell, Barbara Harr, William Hunt, Bill Knott, Naomi Lazard, Dennis Schmitz, and Charles Simic.

This program is sponsored by the Committee for Writers of the Chicago Circle Center Program Department with the support of the Illinois Arts Council.

Biographical data on the participants—

Marvin Bell was born in New York City and raised on Long Island. He studied at Alfred University, Syracuse, the University of Chicago, and the University of Iowa. He lives in Iowa City and teaches in the Writers' Workshop at the University of Iowa.

A Probable Volume of Dreams won the Lamont Prize of the American Academy of Poets in 1969. Among Bell’s other honors are poetry prizes from Poetry and the Virginia Quarterly and Guggenheim and NEA fellowships.

Barbara Harr was born in Nigeria and raised in Chicago. She studied at North Park College and the University of Chicago. She lives in New Jersey. She has taught writing at the University of Montana, the University of Missouri, and Montclair State University and has worked as an editor in New York.

Ms. Harr's book, The Mortgaged Wife, was published in 1970 and won the Castogna Award of the Poetry Society of America.

William Hunt was born in Chicago. He is a graduate of the University of Chicago and lives in a Chicago suburb. Mr. Hunt has worked as a labor organizer and community organizer and as an administrator for the Chicago Department of Human Resources and the Illinois Department of Employment Security. He is currently director of a school for exceptional children and writer in residence at Northeastern University.
Bill Knott was born in Montcalm, Michigan and spent much of his early life in Chicago. Knott has been poet-in-residence at New England College, Wright State University, Emerson College, Columbia College, and the Poetry Center in New York. At the moment he lives in New York City.

He has received grants from the National Institute of Arts and Letters, the Illinois Arts Council, and the National Endowment for the Arts. He received the Elliston Prize and a YMHA/YWHA Discovery Award.

Naomi Lazard was born in Chicago and attended the University of Chicago. She teaches writing for part of each year at the University of Montana and lives the rest of the year in New York City. Ms. Lazard is past president of the Poetry Society of America.

John Logan was born in Red Oak, Iowa in 1923. He has degrees in both English and biology. He has taught at Notre Dame University, the University of San Francisco, the University of Hawaii, and the State University of New York at Buffalo. Logan is generally known to be one of the most influential teachers of poetry in America.

John Logan has received numerous prizes for his poetry and has held fellowships from the Rockefeller Foundation and the NEA.

Dennis Schmitz was born in Dubuque, Iowa. He studied at Loras College and the University of Chicago. Schmitz teaches at the University of California at Sacramento. He has received fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Guggenheim Foundation.

Charles Simic was born in Belgrade, Yugoslavia. He came to Chicago as a child and lived here until he went to college in New York. He has translated poetry from Yugoslavian, French and Russian.

Simic has been the recipient of the Edgar Allan Poe Award of the Academy of American Poets and has had grants from the NEA and the Guggenheim Foundation.