

Meet poet Larry D. Thomas

Interviewed May 29, 2008

By: Catherine Lu, **KUHF-FM**

2008 Texas Poet Laureate Larry D. Thomas is a gentle soul and a wonderful writer, whose poems capture the intimacy of song and the solitude of painting. We met last November when he stopped by for his first KUHF interview, and bonded through our mutual love of poetry, classical music and visual art (both being fans of Edward Hopper, in fact). It was an honor to have him back on "The Front Row" this week, and to have him read from his latest *New and Selected Poems* (TCU Press).

Born and raised in West Texas, with a degree in English from the University of Houston, Mr. Thomas began writing poetry seriously in the early 1970's while serving in the U.S. Navy. One evening during a brilliant sunset, as birds -- by the thousands, it seemed -- flew in to roost, he felt compelled to write a poem and never stopped.

In his words, "poetry is essentially the artistic use of language." His inspiration comes from sources ranging from the light that pervades West Texas and the vegetation and shade of East Texas to Bach and Georgia O'Keeffe. "Music has been a soulmate my entire adult life," he says. And ever since he truly discovered the music of Beethoven in his 20's, listening to Beethoven while writing has been part of his process.

With a love of color and a visual style, Mr. Thomas also jokes that if he had better eye-hand coordination, he'd be a painter. Indeed, with words he paints images as vivid as "the Saint Louis Cathedral / sticking its spires into night sky / like pins in a doll of voodoo" and "the giant python / of the Mississippi, triumphant, tumescent / and shining from its meal of mice and men" (from his new poem, "French Quarter"). Another one of my favorite new poems of his is "The Dragonfly," in which he spins a flowing Petrarchan sonnet from the simple discovery of a dragonfly, expired and suspended in time. He compares its small, iridescent wings to painted eyelids.

Since retiring in 1998 from a 31-year career in social service and criminal justice, Mr. Thomas has been a full-time poet, producing his first book in 2001. Now, seven years later, he has nine published collections!

This Saturday, May 31, 2008 from 1 - 5 pm, Larry D. Thomas autographs copies of his latest and ninth book, *New and Selected Poems*, at Barnes & Noble, 5000 Westheimer at Post Oak, across the street from The Galleria.

I hope you'll stop by to visit, whether to browse his new book, to chat and congratulate him on his position as 2008 Texas Poet Laureate, or to hear him read, as Barnes & Noble plans to broadcast him reading his poems throughout the store. His calm, resonant voice brings each poem to life.

<http://www.larrydthomas.com/>

