

"Desert is the Memory of Water"

A Celebration of the Life, Love, Words,
and Spiritual Yearning of

Jack Myers



November 29, 1941 - November 23, 2009

Desert is the Memory of Water

After I am gone and the ache begins
to cease and the slow erosion I felt,
being older than you, invades you too,
you'll come to see that an image of the desert
is the memory of water, like remembering

when we were walking in beautiful Barcelona
and you said you thought trees were gods
because they were rooted in earth
and flew in the air and magically made food
out of light and made the air we breathe.

I was stunned how you could open up a God-space
just like that. Like when my 2-year-old dug holes
in the yard and fit his face into each of them to see,
as he explained, if he could find where the darkness
came from. Then you asked me why I never prayed.

I believe whatever disappears or survives
or comes into being is a prayer that's already
been answered, and that we feel alone
because we won't let go of what is gone
or changed or hasn't happened yet.

waking this morning with my arms around you,
the dogs snoring, and a mourning dove cooing,
I felt I awoke in a peaceable kingdom
where the fear of death turned inside-out
into a love for life. If I prayed, I'd pray for that for you.

--Jack Myers, from his final collection,
The Memory of Water

Note: Thanks to the writer Jim Cornfield ("Living History,"
Continental, 8/08) for this poem's title

Prelude

Hsiu-Hui Wang on Piano

Greeting

Willard Spiegelman

Selected Poems of Jack Myers

Paul Christensen "In Bagdabastan This is a Fruit" (from *OneonOne*)

Gillian Conoley "Inducement" (from *Coming to the Surface*)

Tony Hoagland "Falling" (from *As Long As You're Happy*)

Rick Jackson "As Long As You're Happy" (from *As Long As You're Happy*)

Eulogy

Ralph Angel & Mark Cox

A Celebration of Jack's Life

Video Tribute by Ellen Myers Fontana

Remembrances

Marshall Myers, in Words & Music, "Round Midnight"

David Akiba

Bonnie Wheeler

Marshall Terry

Tim Seibles

Brian Clements

Joe Ahearn

Elegy

Composed and Performed by Benjamin Ch'ien Myers on Cello

Hsiu-Hui Wang on Piano

Invitation to Speak

Moment of Silent Reflection

Parting Words

Willard Spiegelman

Postlude

Hsiu-Hui Wang on Piano

Reception & Retrospective of Jack's Life

Grand Ballroom West & Central, across lobby from Theater

Jack Elliott Myers, born to Alvin G. and Ruth L. Myers in Lynn, MA, Nov. 29, 1941, passed away peacefully at home in Mesquite, TX, Monday evening, Nov. 23, 2009, at 11:39 PM. Jack grew up in a hardworking Jewish family along Winthrop Beach outside of Boston, where, through introspection, animated discourse, and youthful experience, he came to value the power of language and the vast spirit of the ocean. These two loves informed nearly every personal and professional pursuit throughout his life. Fed by a genius for yearning, Jack's talent and artistic drive led to 18 books of and about poetry, a full professorship at Southern Methodist University, and the honor of "Poet Laureate of Texas" in 2003.

Jack is survived by his wife of more than 16 years, Thea Temple, with whom he happily lived in Mesquite, TX; his son Ben and daughter-in-law Hsiu-Hui of Columbia, MD; his son Seth and wife, Theresa, and Jack's granddaughter, Eva, of Plano, TX; Jack's only daughter, Jessie, also of Plano, TX; an older brother, Marshall Myers and his wife Harriett, of Sarasota, FL; and two sisters, Sandi Myers Bender and her husband Murray of Delray Beach, FL, and Ellen Myers Fontana and her husband Enzo of Marina Del Rey, CA.

Jack will be greatly missed, but we are all grateful that Jack's writing lives on, seeking to discover the extraordinary within the ordinary, showing us a way back to the creative stir of the ocean from our own personal deserts.

In lieu of flowers, you may place a gift "For Jack" in the donation box at the reception, call (214) 828-1715, send a check to The Writer's Garret / P.O. Box 140530 / Dallas, TX 75214-0530, or go on-line to www.writersgarret.org.

Ralph Angel, Paul Christensen, Gillian Conoley, Mark Cox, Tony Hoagland, Rick Jackson, and Tim Seibles are renowned poets who have, collectively published over 50 books and thousands of poems and essays; whether they began as students or colleagues, Jack considered each and every one to be a good friend and "mensch."

Willard Spiegelman, Marshall Terry, and Bonnie Wheeler have been Jack's dear friends and colleagues at Southern Methodist University for decades, each contributing in their own way to Jack's recurring comment that SMU "saved [his] life."

Brian Clements and Joe Ahearn are two award-winning poets with whom Jack worked here in Dallas, sometimes as a mentor, sometimes as a colleague, but always as a friend, not only to each other, but to The Writer's Garret and full Dallas literary community.

Special THANKS to the following for their generosity: Beatriz Terrazas, John Doty, Dave Long, Enzo Fontana, Zoe-Ruth Erwin, Jonathan Calabrese, Renee Rossi, & Rod Pannek. We also wish to acknowledge the generosity of Messrs. Waybright and Harrington for their loan of the fine cello and bow used during this afternoon's memorial. Editor Kristy Martinez and *Espejo* staff invite everyone to read their latest issue featuring tributes to Jack: <http://www.smu.edu/english/creativewriting/espejo/> ALSO watch for the upcoming *Café Review*, dedicated to Jack's life through the words of colleagues, friends, and students.