



Sophomore Benjamin Blevins pauses for a quick photo with Joseph Bathanti after the reading. *Photo by Samuel Edwards*



Joseph Bathanti responds to questions during the scheduled Q & A. *Photo by Amanda Higgins* Below: Bathanti reads his poetry at United Methodist.

Former NC Poet Laureate visits Brevard College

By Amanda Higgins
Staff Writer

Yesterday, author and former NC Poet Laureate Joseph Bathanti joined BC students and faculty for dinner, a question and answer session, as well as a reading at the First United Methodist Church. Bathanti is a kind and engaging gentleman who was a very accommodating guest. He was friendly and outgoing to his audience, making them feel at ease with him.

Bathanti is from Pittsburg, PA and has both BA and MA degrees in English Literature from the University of Pittsburg. He also holds a MFA in Creative Writing from Warren Wilson College.

Bathanti came to NC as a VISTA volunteer to work with prison inmates, and is currently Professor of Creative Writing at Appalachian State University.

Last night's Q and A session took place in MG 214, and was followed by dinner at the Jordan Street Cafe with members of the English Department as well as some students from the English Major. Before the reading began, Bathanti walked the room and talked to people in the crowd allowing them to become comfortable with him.

Bathanti's readings took place at 7:30 last night, and he demonstrated his cross-genre reputation

by reading poems and short stories from his published works including: Half of What I say is Meaningless, whose name was taken from the John Lennon song "Julia," and Concertina, which predominantly consists of tales from his time as a VISTA volunteer working in the NC prison system.

As Bathanti regaled the audience with his works, he also took time to offer insight into the circumstances surrounding each piece.

When speaking about his short story "Irony" he asked the audience if we thought it was pretty messed up that the nuns made him carry the note that held, as Bathanti put it, "his own death warrant." When in school, the speaker was informed that bad boys do not get the privilege of carrying notes for their teachers. The first time he was given this elusive privilege, it was to tell the principal that he needed to be disciplined. He was then paddled in front of a class of 8th graders.

Bathanti also shared about how he met his wife volunteering through VISTA. In the poem, "Sweet Random," he speaks about how he and three other VISTA volunteers lived in their boss's house while trying to find places to live. His future wife, Joan, comes out onto the porch wrapped in a towel,

which he then describes in illustrious detail, communicating how much this woman enamored him. "Sweet Random" invites the audience to watch the beginning of their love story.

A celebrated author, Bathanti holds more than six awards for his work in poetry, fiction, and nonfiction essays. We greatly enjoyed having Joseph Bathanti with us yesterday, and invite you to read any one of his great books, which can be found for sale on Amazon.

