

Arts & Entertainment

Poet Offers Cultural Insight

Steve Skinner

A soft-spoken, middle-aged Korean stands pronounced at an intimate gathering of students and faculty. He reads poems in his native tongue, allowing for English translation by an American poet at his side. He speaks of a fond poem; a poem called "Wind Burial."

"Wind Burial," he says, eager to share his feelings with the young crowd, "is about death in a peaceful way. The poem stems from my interest in Buddhism. It is a custom in my country which was very popular as little as ten years ago in the islands of Korea. You begin by building a make-shift housing where the body dries into the wind as it first came from nature. This is the best burial. If you were buried in the ground when you die, you would be covered with dirt. And if you were burned to ashes in a fire for cremation," he quickly nods in disgust and replies with reassurance, "it is the best burial possible."

The middle-aged Korean professor is Hwang Tong Gyu, a foremost, leading poet in Korea, where he sells 10,000 new editions of a book the year it is published. The following years he sells at least 4,000 copies each of the book. He has many books to his credit. "The atmosphere for poetry in Korea is very good," he explains. "In America, poetry is not as popular as books or magazines. In Korea, it is a part of our culture. There is pressure, then, for poets to be model people."

Theater Students Enact Scripts

Jill Stricklin

The Monday Night in the Arts program on February 22 featured a Playwright's Symposium. The plays which were performed were "Magnetic Fields", the short story for which was written by Maggi G. Maxwell and adapted for the stage by Steve Reilly and Maggi Maxwell, and "Check List", a sketch with poems by Kate Blackburn. The plays were performed in the reader's theatre format. Following the performances, the playwrights, players, director, and audience participated in open critiques of the scripts and productions. The plays were enacted by members of the St. Andrews theater group and community. Janice Burgess directed both plays.

"Magnetic Fields" featured the

Professor Hwang, eldest son of a major Korean novelist, Hwang Son-Won was born in Seoul in 1938. He graduated from Seoul National University in 1961 and did graduate work. He later received a diploma from Edinburgh University in 1967 and participated in an International Writing Program during 1970-'71 at the University of Iowa. Today, while currently working on research in New York City, he resides as a teacher of English at Hanson College in Seoul.

Professor Hwang, reading at a recent Fortner Writers' Forum, turns to the students and faculty with vigor, expressing, "... I rub out my eyes, nose, and mouth. I'm terrifying even to myself. Am I changing to muddy snow driven about and trampled again!" The force with which he reads, captures the excited attention of all as he explains, "'Snow Under Martial Law' was written during the experience of martial law in 1972. I might have gone to jail for several days for writing a poem of this nature. It appeared in the local newspaper and the editor changed the title to 'Muddy Snow' before it was printed."

He claims politics can usually be found in poetry. Professor Hwang sees a difference between leftist literature and the ideological rightist form. "One cannot really be free from politics." He says, "Participate as an artist, not as an activist." However, as is the case too often, poetry becomes just another form of revolt or criticism of a particular party or regime.

humorous interaction between a retired couple and their visiting son. Julian Q. Workman, played by Carl Bennett, was a meticulous retired architect who bordered on obsessive-compulsive behavior. "Q's" whole life followed a plan which he unquestioningly obeyed. For instance, his days were mapped out minute-by-minute on calculated lists of "things to do." When Q came in for lunch 6 minutes late he complained to his wife about how horrible he felt, "My body always knows when it's off schedule."

Q's wife, Gladys, played by Brenda Gilbert, was a delightful contrast. A bubbly clutzy housewife, her super-high level of energy gave one the impression of the Tasmanian Devil on the loose. Her bumbling efforts to become involved in "the arts" caused Q to groan and shake his head in frustration. Affectionate and al-

His new book, *Who's Afraid of the Alligators*, is being released currently as he quips, "Of course, somebody will think this as a political title!" Professor Hwang finds that good poetry is easily identifiable. "When insight is deep, and a sense of language is sharp - that is good poetry." He feels in this case most themes within a poetic verse will result as universally acceptable regardless of the reader's race or culture.

His advice for young, aspiring

poets is "Good readers make good poets. In writing poems it is always best to consult a poetic work for guidance."

The soft-spoken, middle-aged Korean poet strikes a final point on teaching. "It is not good for a professor to be too professor-like. A true artist should not teach, but should just make and show. Learning, then, will take place not only from the teaching, but from a knowledge of the professor's art."

Apprentice "Reflects on Human Condition"

Beth Russo

David Westendorpf, a novelist from Grand Rapids, Michigan, was featured in the Fortner Writer's Forum on February 24. Westendorpf is a graduate of Calvin College and an honors graduate of the law school at Al Prezo University.

Westendorpf read from his manuscript *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*. The short novel is set on an American college campus in the 70's, "the era of the Sex Pistols", as Westendorpf described it. The main character, Kent, is a pre-law student, contemplating the bar simply because it "sounds like an interesting profession," and Kent feels that boredom shows weakness of character. Opal, Kent's younger sister by four years, is a partying young mystic, caught up in her insights into the Tarot. The two who were left alone ever since their parents had embarked on their perpetual world tour a

few years back, tend to take care of one another.

Westendorpf introduces the readers to Kent's circle of friends, including Liza the relentless bassoonist, Rizzo the Vietnam vet drug dealer, and Jesse, the redhead who wins Kent's heart. Westendorpf is frank about the liberality of the scene. His characters are frequently stoned, drinking, or reflecting upon their LSD and psilocybin ventures.

The Sorcerer's Apprentice, however, is not a piece of mindless ramblings-on about drugs and parties. W.D. White stated that the novel is a piece of "moral writing," reflecting on the human condition. Westendorpf's work leaves the reader with numerous points and questions to ponder.

Next week, the Fortner Writer's Forum will feature St. Andrews own Clyde Edgerton.

ways the cheerleader, Gladys gave Norman, Q's son from a previous marriage, a warm motherly welcome.

Norman, the ways of whom Q could never understand, was played by Eric E. Faircloth. Norman returned home for a stilted dinner with Q and Gladys to inform them of his change in life. He had left his job as a male technician in a hair-dressing salon, and was planning to go to Nevada to live in a Christian Mission commune. While Gladys is excited for Norman and slips him a check on the sly, Q cannot conceal his opinion that this decision is yet another example of Norman's lack of direction.

The short play ends on a happy note, with Q letting Gladys know that he appreciates the life she adds to his home. The

peck on the cheek is followed, however, by a typically Q remark, "Agh...now I'll have to brush my teeth."

And now for something completely different. Kate Blackburn's "Check List" was a dramatic piece set in Great Britain, where it was written. The play was a quiet piece, the drama unfolding with the story rather than in the action of the production. Blackburn got the idea for the play from an anonymous letter in a magazine from a woman suffering from an extreme lack of self-esteem. The main character, Caroline, was born from this nameless correspondent.

Caroline, a poet who was played by Ellen Walters, sat at the top of a pillar at

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