

■ Posted July 30, 2015

Rose Reynoldson: Remembering a Poet and Writer

By Hope McPherson



Rose Reynoldson

Professor Emerita of English Rose Reynoldson passed away July 22 in Wenatchee at the age of 87. She taught English, creative writing, and poetry at Seattle Pacific University for more than 15 years before retiring in 1993.

Reynoldson grew up in rural Western Washington during the Great Depression, where she and her family lived in a chicken-shed-turned-house without running water. She married Elmer Reynoldson not long after World War II, and they became parents to five children. Near mid-life, Reynoldson began taking night classes in writing. By 1971, she'd earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Washington; by 1974, she'd added a master's degree in creative writing. In 1977, she became an SPU faculty member.

Known for encouraging her students to excel at writing poetry and fiction, Reynoldson also founded the SPU Christian Writers Conference in the 1980s. Until being absorbed by the Northwest Christian Writers Renewal in 2008, the SPU Christian Writers Conference welcomed writers of all levels to campus to increase their craft, network, and connect with agents and publishers. "She was a beautiful encourager and really knew her stuff," says Clint Kelly, Response senior writer and longtime conference coordinator. "She was always upbeat and optimistic in a business that can be difficult at best."

Adds Linda Wagner MED '92, PhD '12, former co-director of the SPU Writers Conference, "Her vision benefited hundreds of writers from all over the country who came back year after year for growth and encouragement."

The author of *I Know There's Something More*, a collection of her poems and stories, Reynoldson returned to campus many times after her retirement to meet with faculty, students, and alumni. "I've known her since 1972, when we met in graduate school at the University of Washington," says Professor Emeritus of English and longtime friend Tom Trzyna. "A more encouraging and inspiring person you could not find."

Reynoldson is survived by Elmer, her husband of 68 years, three sons, two daughters, 14 grandchildren, and 18 great-grandchildren, including Melody Millette '07.

A memorial service was held Saturday, August 1, in Wenatchee, Washington.

Daphne Enslow Davies

Wednesday, August 24, 2016, at 10:38 a.m.

I have just been remembering Rose from our friendship in Nelson Bentley's poetry workshop from the mid-1960s. What a sweet and encouraging presence she was for me. Then, she was a T.A. with Martha Banta when I returned to U.W. for graduate school. So sorry to hear she's gone.

Dave Bara

Thursday, August 18, 2016, at 3:01 p.m.

I am sorry I didn't hear about this earlier. Rose and Tom Trzyna are the reasons I am a professional novelist today. They were the first to believe in me, and their advice has always been on my mind when I write. I was blessed to have known Rose.

Shirley Mehelich

Thursday, December 3, 2015, at 7:05 p.m.

I was 12 years old when Rose came into my heart and into my life. My family attended Tabernacle Baptist Church on Capital Hill back in the late '60s and it was there on the second floor of the Sunday School wing that my new teacher, Mrs. Rose Reynoldson, would spend the next three years teaching me about Jesus and His love for me.

To this day I have my Bible lessons that we diligently worked on every Sunday morning. In the wintertime our classroom could be cold, and it was during one of those classes that Rose came up with a grand idea. Money was not plentiful for many families, but Rose found a carpet store that

would sell sample carpet squares for about \$1.50 each. Though there were only four of us in her class, we saved every penny we could earn during the week by doing chores and odd jobs. We would combine our offering, thank God for His provision, and then count the 26 cents that we had collected. At last we had earned enough money to buy a carpet square for each of us to sit on for Bible lessons. We were so proud. She taught us the value of working hard to earn what you needed, and that God's promise of always supplying our needs was true because He loves us.

Thank you, Rose, for wanting to be in my life and drawing Jesus into my heart. I think of you often and love you forever! Welcome me at Heaven's gate when it is my time.

Margaret Smith Kellermann '80

Thursday, September 24, 2015, at 8:45 p.m.

"Oh, shoot!" as Rose would say; we miss her. I was one of dozens or hundreds who came as students to SPU in the late 1970s and somehow ended up teaching writing workshops in the 1980s through a series of her suggestions and strong will. Rose's writing encouragement was one of the top 10 things that changed my life: I went from enjoying writing ... to actually becoming a writer.

Good memories: While I was a senior, we came up with an independent study class, where I wrote a poem a week to share with her (and receive her green-ink praise) in her top-floor attic/office. We published a book of poems together. She and Elmer came to visit us when we lived in Alaska. And year after year at the writers' conference, she saw deep connections between people and introduced us; these people — 20 or more — have been some of my closest friends. Thanks, Rose — we love you, but again — "shoot!"

Shannon Reynoldson Ripley

Tuesday, August 4, 2015, at 3:13 p.m.

Thank you for sharing your memories of Rose! She indeed was an amazing woman and I am so blessed to have called her Grandma.

Jeffrey Overstreet '94

Thursday, July 30, 2015, at 11 a.m.

Rose Reynoldson was a mischievous muse and an inspired mentor for me. I'm forever grateful for how she confirmed that writing was my calling — and even more for how she match-made me with a poet, to whom I've been married now for almost 20 years.

Hope McPherson '92

Thursday, July 30, 2015, at 10:45 a.m.

Rose was wonderful to learn from, and I still use her editing note “nec?” as a gentle reminder not to gum up the works by adding more words than necessary when I write and edit. She would stand at the front of the classroom, reading aloud from our papers, smiling, and genuinely pleased with our (often feeble) attempts at fiction or poetry. She will always be one of the editors I have “standing over my shoulder” as I write.

Linda Wagner MED '92, PhD '12

Sunday, July 26, 2015, at 1:49 p.m.

Excellence that honors God and encouragement were hallmarks of Rose’s vision for the SPU Christian Writers Conference which she founded. That vision benefited hundreds of writers from all over the country whether they got their start in publishing at the SPU Writers Conference or were published and came back year after year for growth and encouragement. ‘How Great Thou Art’ (requested by Rose to be sung at the start of each conference) and “*Smashing!*” (one of Rose’s signature encouraging expressions) echo in the hearts of each of us who will carry some of that spirit with us always. Thank you, Rose.

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