

Celebrating our own Poet

by Ben Polk

Forrest Ingram, Ph.D., is regarded as the poets' poet, not only in Edgewater Village Chicago, but also in colleges, universities and poets' circles. Asked why he became interested in poetry, he said that, as the sixth of seventh children, he learned many poems and poetic songs as a child. Many poems, especially in songs, contain rhythmic rhymes.

Growing up, he learned to play the piano. In high school, he played the trombone in the marching band and in the orchestras. Often the song lyrics were in poetic form. In high school, he studied poetry learning more about the different types and the history of poetry. High school plays were sometimes Shakespearean, containing outstanding and well-known poetry. Learning the lines and reciting them during the play helped him appreciate the style and form.

As a teacher, he often held poetry discussions with students sitting in a circle. Rather than talking about the poetry, he asked questions to make them think about the readings and actively engage them in expressing their opinions. Forrest used the same teaching style with participants in his "Getting Deeper into Poetry" series for Edgewater Village Chicago. It was one of the most popular and well-attended program series at Edgewater Senior Satellite Center inside the Broadway Armory.

Asked about preferences in poetry, he said he didn't have any. Rather, it's the interrelated images in the poem, the rhythms and rhymes of each line and stanza, and the experience revealed in the poem that matter. As a serious student and scholar of poetry, he also studied French, German, Dutch, Greek and Latin. In his course of studies he learned to read poems in their original languages.

He has taught poetry at Loyola University in New Orleans and was chairman of the English Department in Roosevelt University in Chicago. While at Loyola in New Orleans, he was also the editor of *The New Orleans Review*, a Loyola literary magazine. Later he worked for a publishing company in Illinois, with its focus on poetry.

Over the 25 years of his marriage, he wrote poems to and for his beloved wife, Ann. The poems focused on special occasions, e.g., her birthday and the anniversary of their wedding. After many years of writing such poetry, he and his wife agreed to put the poems together in a book. He created [*Love's Liturgy*](#), a book of love poems arranged in sections, each of which celebrates one event. His wife worked together with him to publish it. Not long after it was published, his wife died of colon cancer. He has since republished the book including a special section at the end remembering her life and love.

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