

## Poet Laureate headlines Silverton poetry fest

Writers, Inada  
gain insight from  
round-table  
poetry  
discussion

BY DANIELLE  
KUEHNEL  
Appeal Tribune  
April 26

People from as  
close as South  
Water Street and  
as far as Portland  
gathered  
together at the  
Fischer Building  
Saturday  
afternoon for a  
poetry workshop

led by Poet Laureate Lawson Inada. The workshop was part of the all-weekend Silverton Poetry Festival, sponsored by the Silverton Poetry Association, which included various poetry readings and open-mike events.



Danielle Kuehnel / Appeal Tribune

Poet Laureate Lawson Inada gives the “thumbs-up” to poetry in all forms. He makes no distinction between poetry and prose; beauty in writing, according to Inada, does not discriminate.

Vegetation of all sorts prevailed as the topic for the two-hour workshop.

“I’m thinking agriculture,” the lively Inada proclaimed as he arrived at the intimate workshop, “because everyone has connections to it, and it’s so important to Oregon’s economy.”

The topic came to him, he explained, as he drove to Silverton from Ashland and observed all of the natural beauty of the country and farmlands in the springtime weather.

“It doesn’t matter where you’re from, if you go back far enough, someone in your family worked in agriculture,” he said.

Indeed, Inada himself has ties to the land; his father was a sharecropper as the poet grew up, and his Japanese ancestors cultivated rice paddies.

Another reason for taking advantage of agriculture—which is all around in Oregon—is that “you can establish credibility by who you are,” he said. From corn and broccoli, to tulips and pollen, the attendees touched upon an array of agricultural mainstays

meaningful or memory-provoking in their own lives.

After a period of writing, poets shared their work in a round-table discussion. Inada provided insight and suggestion for each poem.

“It was really wonderful,” said Silverton Poetry Association Treasurer Michael Smith. “Having the small, personal discussions gave us more of a chance to participate.” During the workshop, Smith produced a poem about tulips, one flower he is particularly fond of.

“Inada was just very inspiring,” Smith said. “He was so alive and open. It was a very nice approach – really validating, and he affirmed that poetry is worth doing.”

Virginia Corrie-Cozart of Salem, and originally from Bandon, recently participated in a different workshop that Inada hosted. With her autographed copy of Inada’s *Legends from Camp*, one collection of his poetry, Corrie-Cozart came to improve her own poetic technique.

“I took a workshop from [Inada] just this month,” she said. “He threw out ideas and provided good starting points for writing poetry. I was surprised at how kind and supportive he was.”

Corrie-Cozart chose to write about the process of making cheese curds, as homage to the dairy farm she grew up on and the Bandon Creamery, which closed last October.

“Something emerges in you in writing that just can’t be said at the dinner table,” Inada said of the unusual topics and thick descriptions. “One thing I’ve learned about poetry is that it can be sacred or ceremonial, in all cultures. It’s even in rock music.”

He also shared one technique that he uses: Inada carries a small notebook with him wherever he goes, just in case he becomes inspired. “Poetry is like a dream,” he said, “it can fade away fast.”

After the workshop, Inada went on to read Saturday evening at the Featured Poets Reading at Mount Angel Abbey Library’s auditorium and Sunday morning at Portland’s Wordstock Festival 2006.

Inada has authored several books and collections of poetry, including “*Legends from Camp*,” “*Drawing the Line*” and “*Before the War: Poems as They Happened*.”