ORAL HISTORY 01-74-24

PT. 1

Oliver Everette

Poet laureate, Professor of English at the University of Alaska Fairbanks

Recorded by the University Broadcasting Service at KUAC Radio Station

Dave Geesin, interviewer

Program #1

1969

Dave Geesin asked Oliver Everette if he expects readers to get the same thing from a poem that he put into it. Professor Everette said not always. Oftentimes the individual writing the poem doesn't realize certain levels of his own work. Later he may discover that he has said more than he thought he did. A reader may get different interpretations. People do not get the same thing from the same lines. The Dave Geesin asked if he has ever had someone bring up an interpretation that surprised him. Professor Everette said it has happened to him many times. He talked about his Green Peter volume and the image he fused with it and an interpretation by someone else. He was asked about his most influential factor. Professor Everette said in some of his forebears there was an artistic trait never developed. He was introspective as a child because of a tragic situation. The Dave Geesin asked about his religious life affecting his poetry. Professor said oftentimes poems grew out of his sermons. In some ways the ministry was more of a handicap than a help. It kept him busy with other things. There was always a certain amount of writing. He is still busy as a professor. The Dave Geesin asked him how many collections of his poetry he has published. Professor Everette said he has eight starting in 1933. That put him through school one year. The next ones were in 1934 and 1936. The first one of any consequence was published in 1951 – Under the juniper tree. He does have other manuscripts. The Dave Geesin asked if it was a characteristic of a poet to need to publish. Professor Everette said he believes a poet needs an audience. He has stuck away many of his poems. Years later he may polish it up. The Dave Geesin asked him to tell him about a specific poem and talk about it. Professor Everette said he would read Denali. It was the centennial poem in 1967. It came to him one Sunday morning but its roots are much longer. The image that is central is God standing on Denali.

Professor Everette reads his poem Denali.

Program #2

1969

Professor Everette reads from his Green Peter series of poems. *Green Peter and other poems* was published this year [1969].