



Books & Writers



Famous Georgia poet Thomas Lux dies

Ga. Tech poet called "most original voice of his generation"



Poet Thomas Lux, who authored more than 19 books and was considered many to be one of the nation's great contemporary poets, directed the Georgia Tech poetry program died Feb. 5.

**By David R. Altman
Books & Writers Editor**

The world of poetry lost a great one on Super Bowl Sunday.

Thomas Lux, who directed the Poetry@TECH program at Georgia Tech and authored 19 books, died in Atlanta on February 5 after an extended illness.

Lux, who was 70, was not only a big part of the Georgia poetry scene, but taught in several major universities and won many national honors, including the prestigious Kingsley Tuft Award in 1995 for his book *Split Horizon*.

His friend and colleague, former Georgia Poet Laureate David Bottoms, who teaches at Georgia State University, called Lux "...not only a wonderful poet, but (more importantly) a wonderful

man."

"Tom Lux was without a doubt the most original voice in his generation," Bottoms told the *Progress*. "He was a true master of language, but he was much more than this."

Bottoms, a Canton native, said most poets "...more than any other group of people, have enormously swollen egos." But, he added, "Tom Lux did not. He was likely the most generous man I've ever met. He helped innumerable young writers and he took genuine pleasure in that."

Bottoms, himself one of the most celebrated of contemporary American poets, said he had known Lux for 15 years.

"Over the last few years of his life, we discovered we both had a penchant for handguns and we met almost weekly at the Georgia Firing Line for target practice, then a Mexican lunch."

In an interview with the *Atlanta Constitution* eleven years ago, Lux said "we're trying to diminish the stereotype of the poet as some dreamy bozo who wanders around and then all of a sudden gets struck by inspiration. Poems are made things. They have everything to do with intense emotion...but poems are made things. They don't just happen."

Lux appeared at Berry College in 2015, where he read many of his more well-known poems. His books included *New and Selected Poems of Thomas Lux: 1975-1995*; *God Particles*; *Child Made of Sand* and

From the Southland.

According to the Poetry Foundation, Lux told the *Los Angeles Times* that "I like to make the reader laugh—and then steal that laugh, right out of the throat. Because I think life is like that, tragedy right alongside humor."

Before coming to Atlanta about 15 years ago, Lux had taught at the University of Iowa, the University of Michigan and the University of California at Irvine, among others. He received three National Endowment for the Arts Grants and a Guggenheim Fellowship. His most recent book, published last year by Houghton, was entitled *To the Left of Time*.

Wayne Clough, president emeritus at Georgia Tech, was quoted in *Georgia Tech News* as saying "Tom Lux was not only a great poet, he was also a great teacher of poetry. He brought poets to campus, engaged engineering and business students in poetry and reached out to the larger community. He will be greatly missed."

[David R. Altman writes about books and writers for the Progress. His first book of poetry "Death in the Foyer" was published in 2014, when he was nominated for Georgia Author of

the Year. He can be reached at davidraltman.com or altmandavidr@gmail.com.]

From "Ode to the Unbroken World, Which is Coming"

By Thomas Lux
It must be coming, mustn't it? Churches and saloons are filled with decent humans. A mother wants to feed her daughter, fathers to buy their children things that break.

People laugh, all over the world, people laugh.

We were born to laugh, and we know how to be sad; we dislike injustice and cancer, and are not unaware of our terrible errors.

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