January 2016

James E. Lewisohn Correspondence

James E. Lewisohn
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Recommended Citation
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NOTES FROM PRISON August 1974 - August 1977
JAMES E. LEWISHON, Maine State Prison

Part I August 1974 - August 1976

I. Educational activities

1. Taught pre-GED class 5 days a week August 1974 to May 1976
2. Continually tested inmates (GATE, TABE, Literacy Volunteers READ Test)
3. Typed stencils and kept records in Education Office
4. Taught first college-credit course (English I, under UM Augusta) at the prison, spring semester 1976
5. Worked with individual inmate writers, of whom four who had never written before, R. David Colby, Patrick Donovan, Richard Freeman, and Richard Leete, were published for the first time, from prison
6. Coordinator for Poetry Workshop (English II Imaginative Writing - UM Augusta as a project of the Maine Arts and Humanities Commission, plus a fine anthology of inmate and staff poetry being published by the Prison Print Shop) plus college credit for 9 of the 16 students
7. Maintained my rank of Associate Professor at UM Augusta, thanks to the help of people here at the prison
8. Will teach SURVIVAL, a college-credit course in English (Modern Literature) for UM Augusta at the prison during fall semester 1976

II. Publications

Books:
1. ROSLYN, a book of my poems, dedicated to my wife 1975 Casco Press

Articles:
1. "The only faith is the faith of confrontation." The Church World July 22, 1976

Poems:
3. UM Portland-Gorham Presumpscot "Going Home," "Roslyn," "There is no weather here" fall 1975
4. The New Yorker "December Day" December 8, 1975
10. Corrections Magazine (for all people in Corrections in the U.S.) "Prison Motto" March 1976
12. The Church World (Maine Catholic Weekly) frequently featured poems 1975 and 1976

"Testimony" "Poem for John Logan" "For David Hasson"
"Two Lights" "A dark night" "As Abraham before the Angels"
"Sad Hyacinth" "In One Small Hour" "After Cries and Whispers"
"Roslyn" "Jacob and the Angel" "For committees meetings"
"The Sea" "Lock-Up 4 PM" "Communion in a prison cell"
"The Mass" "On Reading Rilke" "The Passion from a prison cell"
"Our Parents" "Poem for Peter" "Morning"
"Martin Luther King and All the Sages"

III. Ready for publication
1. Selected Poems by James Lewisohn (book)
2. A Volume of Correspondence with Dr. Wittenberg (a full-length book)
3. One short article on punishment

IV. Editorial work
1. Light at the End of the Tunnel, James Lewisohn, editor, an anthology of inmate and staff poetry, Maine State Prison August 1976

V. Miscellaneous writing
1. Two detailed notebooks
2. Steady correspondence with many people in various fields

VI. Written by others about James Lewisohn and his published writing
1. Coda: Poets and Writers Newsletter
   article about Lewisohn May 1975
   "Poets Stand Up for Impressive Fellow-Poet, James Lewisohn" Feb/Mar 1976
   article about Lewisohn by Israel Shenker, feature writer for New York Times early fall 1976
2. The Church World
   a two-instalment review of ROSLYN 1975
   two fan letters from readers 1975 and March 1976
4. UMPG Presumpscot Review of ROSLYN 1976
7. Times Record, Brunswick, Maine "Poetry from a prison's microcosm," an interview article on the Poetry Workshop and GOLGOTHA July 8, 1976
10. New York Times article on interview by Israel Shenker, feature writer assigned by Tom Wicker, Associate Editor early fall 1976

VII. Special Award
1. One of 10 Awards for Prison Poetry in the Nation, given by P.E.N., for Lewisohn's poem "Lifers" 1975
VIII. Miscellaneous

1. **Coda** sponsorship of Petition for James Lewisohn, signed by poets and writers:

   - Henry Braun
   - Joseph Bruchac
   - Hayden Carruth
   - John Ciardi
   - Leo Connellan
   - J. V. Cunningham
   - Allen Ginsberg
   - Daniel Hoffman
   - Galway Kinnell
   - Maxine Kumin
   - Stanley Kunitz
   - Denise Levertov
   - John Logan
   - William Meredith
   - Howard Moss
   - Howard Nemerov
   - Joel Oppenheimer
   - Bill Packard
   - May Sarton
   - Gary Snyder
   - William Styron
   - Richard Wilbur

   Signed also by entire staff of *The American Poetry Review*:

   - Stephen Berg
   - Rhoda Schwartz
   - David Binanno
   - Arthur Vogelsang
   - Eleanor Wilner
   - William Arrowsmith
   - David Ignatow
   - A. Poulin, Jr.
   - Jeff Moran
   - C.C. Mansfield & Assoc.
   - John Brubaker
   - Vernon White
   - Maxwell Gordon
   - Cynthia Evans
   - Dick Allen
   - Richard Balkin
   - Michael Benedikt
   - Robert Coles
   - Robert Dana
   - Richard Hugo
   - June Jordan
   - Gail Lynch
   - S. J. Marks
   - Jerome Mazzaro
   - J. D. McClatchy
   - Frances McCullough
   - Ralph J. Mills, Jr.
   - Nicano Parra
   - Steven Polgar
   - Alvin Rosenfeld
   - Eric Sackheim
   - Armand Schwerner
   - Ava Seave
   - C. K. Williams
   - Paul Zweig

2. Fan mail about publications from Maine and many other states
I. Educational activities

1. Completed clerical work, testing, and teaching pre-GED classes for the Prison Education Department Office in mid-December 1976.

2. Became Assistant to Fr. Benedict Reilly, S.J., Prison Chaplain, in his office in mid-December 1976 and have continued as such.

3. Taught three 3-credit courses for University of Maine at Augusta (UMA):
   - Modern Literature I, first semester
   - Modern Literature II, second semester
   - English II: Freshman Writing, second semester

4. Was Coordinator for Poetry Workshops offering 3 credit hours for UMA:
   - Poetry Workshop during academic year 1976-77 with Donald Junkins and Fr. Daniel Berrigan as Poet-Lecturers for one session each with funds saved from Maine Arts and Humanities grant.
   - Poetry Workshop (16 inmate student-poets) under $3,000 grant from CULTURE, a special project of American Correctional Association for 15 weeks starting July 1977 and taught by visiting writers Joseph Bruchac, Jim Bishop, Gary Lawless, Henry Braun, Denise Levertov, and others, with 3 sessions taught by James Lewisohn. Grant also provides for publication of a Workshop Anthology in the fall.

5. Prepared for teaching two 3-credit courses for UM Augusta at the prison during fall semester starting in September. This will be the fourth semester of teaching college courses within the walls.

II. Publications

Books:

1. Light at the End of the Tunnel (Workshop Anthology) edited by James Lewisohn 1,000 copies distributed widely


3. Lead Us Forth from Prison (poems) by James Lewisohn Greenfield Press, Greenfield Center, N.Y., August 1977

Poems:

1. The Church World (Maine Catholic Weekly)
   - "Morning"
   - "Operation"
   - "The Messiah"
   - "The Wireless"
   - "September"
   - "Marigolds"
   - "Names"
   - "The Old"
   - "Names: After Black and White Rabbi by Chagall"
   - "Martin Luther King and All the Sages"

2. The Pushcart Prize, II: Best of the Small Presses "Theodore Roethke (a little memory)"
Column:


III. To be published within the next year
1. A third Workshop Anthology edited by James Lewisohn
2. Selected Poems by James Lewisohn, edited by Donald Junkins for publication by the University of Massachusetts Press

IV. Editorial work (in addition to published anthologies)
2. Edited 4 poems by 4 poets in the MSP Poetry Workshops and published in Zahir 2, national magazine published by Diane Kruchkow
4. Edited 2 more books of poetry by individual inmate poets in MSP Poetry Workshops, awaiting publishers

V. Miscellaneous writing
1. Steady correspondence with many people in various fields
2. Several religious meditations and Corrections articles

VI. Written by others about James Lewisohn and his published writing
1. COSMEP Prison Project Newsletter c/o The Greenfield Review, Greenfield Center, N.Y., fall 1976 Review of Light at the End of the Tunnel by Joseph Bruchac
5. Bangor Daily News Review of Light at the End of the Tunnel by Marion Flood French Oct. 16-17, 1976
7. Reviews of Light at the End of the Tunnel across the country
8. Commutation letters written by 15 9th graders at the Minuteman Regional Vocational High School, Lexington, Massachusetts fall 1976
11. Portland Press Herald articles on Lewisohn's appearance before Legislature's Health and Institutional Services Committee April 13 and 22, 1977
VII. Special awards and honors


2. Chosen by MSP inmates to represent them at the Hearing on the criminal code in Augusta, April 13 and 22, 1977

VIII. Miscellaneous

1. Television on-the-spot news story of Modern Literature course given by James Lewisohn at Maine State Prison, for release by NEWSWEEK Broadcasting Service across the U.S. and shown in many places including Massachusetts and Washington, D.C. October 1976

2. Interview with Stephen Gittinger, Editor of Corrections, a national magazine. Subject: The New Criminal Code. Fall 1976


IX. Personal information

1. On June 24, 1977, married in the Roman Catholic Church to Glennis Merriman, a college graduate, nurse, and "a miracle of goodness"