

# John Esam

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Ceremony

**Tuesday, August 16, 2011**

### **Minister Robert George's Introduction**

We are gathered here to honor the life of our friend John Esam, to mark a lifetime dedicated to conscious effort, and to express our gratitude for having shared our time with him.

Let us stand and honor John with silent presence.

(Silence)

Thank-you.

At his death, we see John's life as a whole; his history, his friends and loved ones, the things his hands touched. Yet this is the shadow of external things, and there is another measure of his life; at death, the quiet, invisible and internal efforts of a life –the accumulated moments of presence– become manifest.

John returns to the divine source. Death is not the end of life. At death, life begins another phase, the phase of the soul.

### **Reading: Clifford Hook**

John Esam, *Orpheus : Eurydice*:

This world is being sung

Into Being:

And in this world

Our song is sung,

Running through

Time's grey head

like a wave,

Until it falls on

Birth's other ear

And we wake

To find ourselves

Among the Singers.

### **Music: Sharon Shelton**

I hear music in the air.

### **Eulogy: Michael Meeks**

John Esam, 1934-2011

One day in 1959, while walking in Wellington, New Zealand, John had a vision: a book of poetry suspended in the light. He said, "I nearly walked into a lamppost". He was 25 and he spent the next fifty years actualizing that vision.

Four years later he boarded a cruise ship for London, where he remained for almost two decades. His timing was perfect. "London was amazing," he recalled. "That's where my being was. People were just there and if you were there, you met them."

He was quickly immersed in the rich ferment of London's emerging counter-culture of the Beat Age. Over the next decade he rode the turbulent wave of the 1960's underground movements, acting in avant-garde films, editing magazines, organizing

readings and concerts. In 1965 John was a main organizer of the International Poetry Incarnation at the Royal Albert Hall, an epochal event attended by 7,000 people, with performances by the most prominent beat poets; Allen Ginsberg, Lawrence Ferlinghetti and many others. It was later dubbed Britain's first full-scale "happening."

John transitioned effortlessly from the culture of the Beat Generation to the age of the Hippies. He was an avid jazz dancer. One evening whilst dancing in a Paris nightclub, John was arrested. He spent the night in prison, and found, in his cell a copy of the *Fourth Way!* C Influence had fired a first shot across the bow of this slim 'New Age' racing yacht.

As the 1970s wore on, and the frenetic momentum of the 60's wore out, John entered a more internal period, writing in that decade the majority of the poems later gathered into his collected works.

By 1981, John was living in Sydney, Australia. He worked through the 'eighties managing retreats and programs of alternative development. John organized events featuring this or that topic, inviting popular B-Influence speakers to participate. The seminars drew huge audiences, with John playing the role of a latter-day P.T. Barnum. He was a true showman, and endeared himself to an extensive network of clients-seeking-answers. In 1987 he became the editor-in-chief of a monthly national newspaper called *New Age News*.

His searches finally lead him to the School. Marcus Lasken gave John his first prospective student meeting, and said:

"In 1989 I opened the door for John when he arrived at our humble cottage in Sydney for his first prospective student meeting. John and I just looked at each other without words, so I escorted him into our tiny living room. John stood silently in front of the fireplace for a very long time. Then with the sweetest, gentle voice, looked at me and said: 'I am home'."

The school *was* John's home, and he knew it from the first moment. He immediately let go of his New Age baggage. He dropped it all in a moment and never looked back. Unlike so many of that generation, John knew that the real spirit of the sixties had burned out. The *Fourth Way* that C Influence had placed in John's prison cell flowered into a living teaching, offering John an escape - based not on dreams but on aim and effort.

John became a vital part of the London center. Hugh James said of him:

"We remember vividly John's dynamic presence; how quickly he came to know all the students, how consistently he appeared at all the events, and how soon he entered into the international theater of school life. He had a testing, critical mind combined with an ability to respond - immediately and enthusiastically - to the prompts and prods of Influence C."

John was a catalyst for students joining the school. When talking about the school, he would say; "This is it, what else is there?"

Speaking of John, James Kowalick said:

“John was openly and naturally hospitable to others; a piquant conversationalist, a lovable ‘maverick’ of sorts - he probed, probed, and probed. He was a ‘kidder’ ready to react with an intentional smile whenever his joking style intruded a bit too much into another’s life, sometimes in the form of a gentle-but-telling photograph.”

Norma Hook said that for those who knew him, John was caring, sensitive and deeply understanding of other people’s problems. He had a generous and sharing nature.

In 2001 C Infection gave him his greatest trial; terminal illness in the form of Parkinson’s disease. Considerably before his end, John accepted what he was given. In the years of his illness he showed the same creativity and dynamism, and the constant willingness to look at things in a new way. He labored on to complete the book he had envisaged in 1959, now filled with understandings that his contemporary poets of the Beat Age never had. In his maturity he became both more self-contained and more compassionate. In 2009 his book *Orpheus: Eurydice: Songs Late & Early, Poems 1954-2002* was published.

Then the final turning point came. At 6am, on the 26<sup>th</sup> of June, 2011, John’s soul was taken by the circle of Gods who attended his death. This was his real and final ‘going home’! He was one of the few of his so-promising generation to put the pieces really together and go the distance. And the way that he did it shows each of us the same opportunity - to go the distance and to fulfill the promise of our role.

### Reading: Geraldine Reid

Rainer Maria Rilke, *Letters to a Young Poet*:

Turning inward,  
out of the absorption into your own world  
verses come.

It will not occur to you to ask anyone  
whether they are good verses.

You will see in them a fragment  
and a voice of your life.

A work of art is good  
if it has sprung from necessity.

In this nature of its origin  
lies the judgment of it: there is no other.

Go into yourself  
and test the deeps in which your life takes rise.  
Never ask what recompense comes from outside.  
For the creator must be a world for himself  
and find everything in himself.

Urn-bearer takes up the urn.

### Minister’s Invitation

Let us follow John’s ashes to the interment at the cemetery.

The urn-bearer leads, followed by the eulogist, then the minister and reader. The rest then follow.

**At the cemetery**

The urn-bearer, eulogist, minister and reader take position around the gravesite.

**Reading: Geraldine Reid**

**John wanted this poem to be read out for his funeral.**

John Esam, Six Senses:

Six senses hand-in-hand go by  
On their ancient forest's floor -  
Eyes hear, ear sees,  
Body leans on mind's sleeve,  
Nose whispers into mouth;  
And from the lovely world  
Go the lonely images,  
Light-driven sails gone out  
Across the solar Ocean  
To resound among  
The stars.

**Minister**

Let us release John to his home, and return his ashes to the earth.

The eulogist places the urn into the ground. Then the minister, urn-bearer, eulogist and reader place rose petals in the grave.

**Minister's Conclusion**

The earth returns to the earth and a divine spark returns to its divine source. "Love comes from eternity, and returns into eternity". The circle of life is complete. Please join us in saying farewell to our friend John.

Rose petals are then handed to guests. Anyone who wishes puts rose petals in the grave. The leaving begins.