

# Professor Profile:

George Anderson talks with English prof,  
Dr. Richard Lemm

**T**hree years ago I first encountered Richard Lemm. To me, at the impressionable age of nineteen, this man seemed to give me an appreciation of English that I did not acquire in high school. So, in light of this, I decided to undertake this assignment to somehow give thanks to Dr. Lemm

Born in 1946 in Seattle, Washington, Dr. Lemm was the product of a working class family. He grew up in Seattle, becoming acclimated to its cultural diversity and cosmopolitan atmosphere. His university life began with a short interval at the University of Washington in 1964. Initially, he was insecure concerning his ability to intellectualize; so, he postponed his academic pursuits in 1965 to pursue a Jack Kerouac lifestyle. That is, his Karmen Ghia took him to many locations across Canada and the United States. In this brief interruption of university Dr. Lemm conjured up dreams of becoming a writer and poet.

In 1967 Dr. Lemm returned to begin studies at San Francisco State. Here, Dr. Lemm found his niche, so to speak. He thoroughly loved San Francisco State because of its place as an enterprising school committed to issues that had some relevancy in the late 1960's, these being civil rights, the question of the United States involvement in Vietnam, and the radical change in the entire social fabric of these times. At San Francisco, Dr. Lemm did extremely well in all his English courses, and became immersed in university life. 1968 saw Dr. Lemm transfer to Simon Fraser University to accomplish his honours in English while at the same time working in a book store. As soon as he completed his studies at Simon Fraser, he accepted a position at Vancouver General Hospital as a remedial therapist. This job enabled him to understand disturbed children and help these unfortunate people to lead a better life. Due to cutbacks in the government, Dr. Lemm's position was terminated abruptly.

By 1974, Dr. Lemm was living in Hope, British Columbia teaching creative writing and composition. His poem *Second Acceptance* in 1975 won him laurels in the national poetry contest. This stage in Dr. Lemm's life was the realization of his capacity to write beautiful literary works. From 1978 to 1986 he was

teaching at Banff college, with a brief hiatus at Queens' to finish his MA in English, eventually moving to Prince Edward Island to teach English here at the university. In 1992/93 he received the position of chairman of the English Department.

What are some of Dr. Lemm's interests, you might ask? Well, for starters, Dr. Lemm is a sports enthusiast, most notably basketball and football. Musically, Dr. Lemm is capable of playing the sax and the recorder, and his musical roots tend to be focused on jazz, blues, folk, and reggae, to name a few. His literary influences

include Dylan Thomas, T.S.Eliot, Joseph Conrad, Charles Dickens, Herman Melville, and Robert Frost, and Canadian poets like Browen Wallace, Alistair MacLeod, Alice Munro, Dale Zieroth, and Derrick Wolcott.

To capsulate, Dr. Lemm is a fine individual who believes in the continuation of the English language and the literary tradition. The students at UPEI are, in Dr. Lemm's eyes, really terrific in their friendliness and enthusiasm for English literature. "Literature", Lemm says, "is the best way to understand life, lover, and friend."



*Richard Lemm, looking very spontaneous*