# Fuller, Ethel Romig (1883-1965)

Ethel Romig Fuller was Oregon's first female poet laureate, from 1957 to 1965, succeeding Ben Hur Lampman as the third poet laureate in Oregon history. Gov. Robert D. Holmes selected her from among twenty-one nominees for her "outstanding work and encouragement and help she has given poets of Oregon."

Fuller was born on February 26, 1883, in Big Rapids, Michigan. She moved to Portland in 1906 after a visit with her family, when she fell in love with the "breathtaking beauty of the country." Once settled, she attended the Portland Extension Center. Her husband, Charles Fuller, was an insurance salesman. Described as an "interpreter of nature," Ethel Fuller lived in the mountains in northern Washington for ten years, and mountains appear often in her poems.

When she learned that the *Oregonian* was going to stop publishing poetry in the early 1930s, Fuller persuaded the paper to create a weekly poetry section. Insisting that poems from all over the world be published, not only those from Oregon, she edited the poetry section from the early 1930s to the late 1950s.

Described as gentle and shy, Fuller was a mentor to younger poets and lectured study groups in person and on the radio. Her poetry was published in many newspapers and anthologies, including Henry Harrison's 1935 anthology *Oregon Poets*, for which she also wrote the foreword.

Fuller published three volumes of poetry: *White Peaks and Green* (1928), *Kitchen Sonnets (and Lyrics of Domesticity)* (1931), and *Skylines* (1952). She was named Theta Sigma Phi Woman of Achievement in 1953, in part for *Skylines*, and began writing a fourth volume, which was never completed.

In 1939, the *New York Times* reported that Fuller's poem "Proof" was the most quoted poem in the "contemporary English language." The poem, first published in 1927 in *Sunset Magazine*, appears as an answer to a reader's question: "Does God Hear Prayer?" It has been anthologized as "God Hears Prayer" and was published anonymously in several newspapers. Fuller was said to collect scrapbooks "filled with clippings, copies and letters about the poem."

Fuller died from leukemia on December 13, 1965, at the University of Oregon Medical Hospital School in Portland. She was eighty-two years old.

Written by Cameron Hill

**Further Reading:**

Luccock, Halford Edward, and Frances Brentano. *The questing spirit: religion in the literature of our time*. New York: Coward-McCann, 1947.

Skinner, Jeremy, Nicole Madden, Paul Merchant, and Vincent Wixon. "Oregon's Poets Laureate: A Retrospective Exhibit and Bibliography to Honor the Appointment of Paulann Petersen as State Poet Laureate." Aubrey R. Watzek Library, Special Collections. Lewis and Clark College, Portland. http://library.lclark.edu/specialcollections/pdfs/OregonLaureatesCatalog.pdf.

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