



City of Malibu News

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Malibu Mourns Passing of Poet Laureate Ellen Reich

(Malibu, CA) – The City of Malibu mourns the passing of Poet Laureate Ellen Reich, who passed away on Friday, May 1, 2020 after succumbing to cancer. The City offers condolences to Ellen’s family, friends and students and salutes her contributions to the cultural life of Malibu and surrounding communities.

“I am saddened by the news of Ellen’s passing, but I am deeply grateful for her passion for keeping poetry and literature alive and well in Malibu, and the enthusiasm and joyful energy that she brought with her wherever she went,” said Mayor Karen Farrer. “Our Poet Laureate will be missed but never forgotten, and her spirit lives on in the wonderful work she left behind.”

Ellen was appointed as the Malibu Poet Laureate by the Malibu City Council on March 11, 2019. Her term as the Malibu Poet Laureate began on March 28, 2019 and would have concluded March 27, 2021. Ellen’s spirit and ideative poetry, along with her relentless devotion to the development of poetry in Malibu since 1974, made her the ideal artist to hold the position of Malibu Poet Laureate.

She was a longtime Malibu residents who taught poetry and writing classes at the Malibu Senior Center, and taught creative writing and autobiography in Malibu for Emeritus College, a division of Santa Monica College. She was widely published, with hundreds of her poems and stories appearing in *The Los Angeles Times*, *Slant*, *Mudfish*, *Slipstream*, *ACM*, *Coe Review* and other publications over the years.

Ellen received numerous awards for work from DA Center for the Arts, Blue Unicorn, Cape Cod Times and other organizations. She was nominated for Pushcart Prizes in 2008 and 2009 and was a finalist in the 2006 Spire Poetry Book Award, the 2005 Flume Press Poetry Contest, and the 2004 Pearl Poetry Prize.

Among her many works, Ellen Reich had a collection of her poetry published along with three other authors in 4 Los Angeles Poets. She published four collections of her works of poetry, including *Reverse Kiss* from Main Street Rag, *The Gynecic Papers* from Conflux Press, *Sleeping Guardian* from Finishing Line Press, and *Sacrifices Have To Be Human* from Tebot Bach.

Ellen was also an active fine artist and had her work exhibited in the Weisman Museum of Art and the Ojai Valley Gallery. She was the recipient of two first-place awards from the Malibu Art Association. Her art work has been published in *Red Dancefloor*, *Vernal Calibrations*, and *Isis Rising*. She was profiled in the *Los Angeles Times* as a poet and artist.

According to her obituary in the Malibu Times, Ellen was born April 4, 1934, and grew up in New Jersey before moving to Southern California in the early 1970s. She passed away peacefully at her home in Malibu surrounded by loved ones, and is survived by four children, nine grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren.

The City Council created the Poet Laureate program in 2016 following a recommendation by the Cultural Arts Commission to create the Poet Laureate program in November 2016. The Cultural Arts Commission's goal is for the Poet Laureate to forever keep poetry as an integral piece of the community's artistic landscape. While the importance of poetry in literature needs no explanation, it is often the art form that receives the least support in community arts programming.

The Poet Laureate acts as the official Consultant in Poetry to the City of Malibu and the Malibu Library, and participates in or creates a Poetry Invitational event each year. The Poet Laureate also represents the City at literary and poetry events, and works with the Laureate Committee to promote poetry and literary arts in local schools and the broader community.

Since the program was started, the Poet Laureate and the Poet Laureate Committee have established a variety of programs to promote poetry, including poetry classes in our local schools and the Malibu Senior Center, Strictly Poetry Adult Poetry Workshops, Pizza and Poetry, Call to the Wall and Poetry Summit events, an annual published Poetry Anthology with works by students in the Poet Laureate classes, Caffeinated Verse Open Mic Poetry Readings, two Poetry Stones at Legacy Park engraved with original works by the Poet Laureate, poetry readings at City events, and partnership programs with Pepperdine University.

Learn more about the City's Poet Laureate Program at <https://www.malibucity.org/883/Poet-Laureate>.

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