

A poet's last stand: Though critically ill, Morton Marcus insis...

Full story: [Santa Cruz Sentinel](#)

If you're planning to go see Morton Marcus speak at what's being billed as his "last poetry reading," you'd better bring a sense of humor.

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Jeremy <i>Santa Cruz, CA</i>	<i>Aug 30, 2009</i>	#1 Judge it! Report Abuse Reply >
My heart sank reading this. I hope he pulls through with this & I wish him the very best, since he's such a smart, funny & insightful guy to listen to. I hope to be there at the Capitola Book Cafe to hear what he has to say. People like this are cornerstones of our community & immensely important as they help to enlighten us and give us some sense of guidance and direction with additional doses of humor, particularly in such troubling times.		
SCman <i>San Jose, CA</i>	<i>Aug 30, 2009</i>	#2 Judge it! Report Abuse Reply >
you go morton!my thoughts are with ya		
Good Example <i>Santa Cruz, CA</i>	<i>Aug 30, 2009</i>	#5 Judge it! Report Abuse Reply >
Those who choose to post those hateful comments on this website should ask themselves, " If these were our last days, what would we spend our days talking about? ".		
Rocket J Squirrel <i>Santa Cruz, CA</i>	<i>Aug 30, 2009</i>	#6 Judge it! Report Abuse Reply >
I rode over the hill for dinner with Morton and friends. I can remember that as if it were yesterday. Another great soul that makes Santa Cruz what it is...		
Roger Grigsby <i>Berkeley, CA</i>	<i>Aug 30, 2009</i>	#8 Judge it! Report Abuse Reply >
Also ... if Mort is reading this, and if I know him he is ... don't think I'm goin' soft and squishy on ya! You know I "won" all those arguments, and don't you ever forget it! Wherever we both end up, the discourse WILL continue, and I know you won't let me down. ;-)		
Rocket J Squirrel <i>Santa Cruz, CA</i>	<i>Aug 30, 2009</i>	#9 Judge it! Report Abuse Reply >
Roger you bas_tard, a curse on you for closing your spanish cuisine restaurant! That was the best you'd done since the Swan daze. and another thing, wash that WW kraut bike, ur embara_ssing the rest of us beemer owners.		
Roger Grigsby <i>Berkeley, CA</i>	<i>Aug 30, 2009</i>	#10 Judge it! Report Abuse Reply >
Hey Squirrel ... that olive drab sidecar rig is a "Ruski" bike, a Ural. Does that make it a "borscht mobile"? Well, since I don't want to get off topic here ... let it be known that Mort himself has ridden in that rig, and there are pics to prove it. I had to twist his arm to get him to do it ... and he rewarded me with sushi for the experience, even though his bones got shook a little. How many Russian Jewish Poets do YOU know who would be seen riding a bike that looks like that, hmmm? Yup, he's a real sport.		
As for the Tapas place ... sigh. Mort liked it too. But such a place had no future serving a public which "sees" only pizza-burger-burrito cuisine. Thanks for enjoying it while it		

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Weather

(updated 20 min ago)

48°F Hi: 66°F Feels like: 51°F
Lo: 43°F Visibility: 5 mi

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Rocket J Squirrel
Santa Cruz, CA

Aug 30, 2009

#11 |  [Judge it!](#) | [Report Abuse](#) | [Reply »](#)

“ **Roger Grigsby wrote:**

Hey Squirrel ... that olive drab sidecar rig is a "Ruski" bike, a Ural. Does that make it a "borscht mobile"? Well, since I don't want to get off topic here ... let it be known that Mort himself has ridden in that rig, and there are pics to prove it. I had to twist his arm to get him to do it ... and he rewarded me with sushi for the experience, even though his bones got shook a little. How many Russian Jewish Poets do YOU know who would be seen riding a bike that looks like that, hmmm? Yup, he's a real sport. As for the Tapas place ... sigh. Mort liked it too. But such a place had no future serving a public which "sees" only pizza-burger-burrito cuisine. Thanks for enjoying it while it lasted.

I hope that russian side car is better than at least say, a Lada.

What? did Mort loose a game of strip poker to ride in the eastern front boxer hybrid?

I've met enough ex pats abroad to more than make up for the lack of poet' s in side cars named dessert. Morton however is a rare one.

We should probably have a cup of tea on your back porch and repair a slightly tinged friendship.

Rich
Salinas, CA

Aug 30, 2009

#12 |  [Judge it!](#) | [Report Abuse](#) | [Reply »](#)

Morton was an instructor of mine at Cabrillo College nearly 20 years ago. Barely remember the time as life goes on. But I do remember a fair and honest man. Best wishes on recovery Morton. You have and will continue to influence many peoples lives. You influenced mine for the better in an unknown way I am sure. I don't think I got an A+ though. I do remember reading Macbeth and analyzing the story. In fact, I may still have a paper I wrote on the subject reviewed by you. I will check. Take care, God bless.

C McLain
Red Bluff, CA

Aug 30, 2009

#13 |  [Judge it!](#) | [Report Abuse](#) | [Reply »](#)

My days at Cabrillo in Mort's composition, literature and film classes were among the happiest and richest of my education. Mort Marcus is an educator of rare talent. I treasure those afternoons of insight, inspiration and rousing class discussion. I treasure the fact that the names he used to address me went from Ms. McLain, to Catherine, to Cathy. I don't even like being called Cathy (it's Catherine, please) but I accepted it gratefully from Mort as a sign of his acceptance of, and fondness for, me. Classmates and I counted ourselves lucky to have a teacher who made the principles of writing so clear and made literature so accessible. Mort taught us more than English and poetry. Mort taught us about life, always with a twinkle in his eye and a touch of brilliant humor. I loved him then, I love him now. All my best wishes to Mort and Donna and their children (and to Wilma). And to all of his former students too, who do not want to say farewell to this favorite and beloved teacher. Goddess bless him.

Former Santa Cruz Native
Kiev, Ukraine

Aug 30, 2009

#14 |  [Judge it!](#) | [Report Abuse](#) | [Reply »](#)

As a former student of Mort's, I can say he has always been full of life and vitality, always enthusiastic. His greatest strength is his admiration and support for other writers, poets and friends. I've never seen professional jealousy in him. Always truly giving, always ready to promote and praise others, always celebrating and elevating other careers, other books and other poetry. He touched my life when he introduced me to literature. My experience in life has been richer and fuller because of him. Through him I found great thought, feeling and understanding in literature. There is no greater gift. He and I have come full circle. Today, I am an American professor teaching American and British writers in English to Ukrainian University students. In my Shakespeare classes, I am sharing his knowledge and through me he is still touching people's lives. He inspired me long ago to read. In my small way, I am a small part of his legacy, teaching the same writers, stories and poems that I studied with him. I have not forgotten what I learned 35 years ago from Morton Marcus.

Roger Grigsby
Berkeley, CA

Aug 30, 2009

#15 |  [Judge it!](#) | [Report Abuse](#) | [Reply »](#)

“ **Rocket J Squirrel wrote:**

<quoted text>

What? did Mort loose a game of strip poker to ride in the eastern front boxer hybrid?

Squirrel: Mort and me playing strip poker is a, shall we say, "unpoetic" image, and I think Mort would agree!

As for our "slightly tinged friendship" HmMMMM? Usually I finish the job off completely. Am I losing my touch? :)

If you know about the "back porch" and are willing to sit in the "Fighting Chair" I've named in honor of Mort, you probably know how to reach me outside this space. Intelligent and Taboo-Smashing discourse is always welcome!

time will tell
Santa Cruz, CA

Aug 30, 2009

#16 |  [Judge it!](#) | [Report Abuse](#) | [Reply »](#)

I don't know this wonderful gentleman personally, but from the posts, he sounds like a great guy. I am only glad that he will be able to spend whatever time he has left being happy and enjoying every day. The current health plan under consideration in congress may not give folks such he that opportunity.

teaching over the hill <i>Santa Cruz, CA</i>	<p>Aug 30, 2009 #17 Judge it! Report Abuse Reply »</p> <p>All the best to Morton as I remember the time we worked together with students, writing poetry and reading them over the radio. Stay well, my prayers are with you.</p>
Reality bites <i>San Francisco, CA</i>	<p>Aug 30, 2009 #18 Judge it! Report Abuse Reply »</p> <p>You have touched many and will not be forgotten soon. You poem, included in this article, touches on what we all fear. Being forgotten as the world goes on. You were a co-professor for my history of China class. It was amazing experience watching you and Sandy Lydon work so seamlessly.</p> <p>As I read this article, and some of the comments, it reminds that we should appreciate every moment we have left. Continue to live to the fullest. You embody those ideas, even as death may be knocking on our doors we too should let him knock and continue to live; ignore him as long as possible, not pause or turn away from our activities. When he truly wants us, death will come. None of us know when our time is up, in some ways knowing is a gift for we may have the time to say what we need to.</p> <p>Until then Mort, may you enjoy every moment. May your booming voice carry, may you continue to inspire and may you remain surrounded by friends and family for it seems you are loved by many.</p>
Loretta Santa Cruz <i>Santa Rosa, CA</i>	<p>Aug 30, 2009 #19 Judge it! Report Abuse Reply »</p> <p>Being present at Morton's readings has always been a gift to my ears and spirit. He makes poetry an event everyone can understand and enjoy immensely. I laugh, I sigh, and countless times nod my head in agreement at his insights towards human behavior. I never feel left out when I hear his words. The way his voice and body dramatize a poem is an awesome sight to be captivated by. Thank you Morton!</p>
Jeusu H <i>Tommerup, Denmark</i>	<p>Aug 31, 2009 #20 Judge it! Report Abuse Reply »</p> <p>We all are 'terminal' in this life body stream . Some handel this truth better then others . Cancer isn't what really kills the human spirit. Its the fact most people live in fear of not having lived life to its fullist potential and of greed ,which later makes most people regret sickness when they have to leave this materialistic exsistance . Its a lesson for us all when a human being stands up and declares 'thank you' at the time of serious illness.</p>
Marlene Rosen Fine <i>Bronx, NY</i>	<p>Nov 3, 2009 #21 Judge it! Report Abuse Reply »</p> <p>In 1959, Michael & I came to Iowa's MFA Writers Workshop to join the poet husbands & their wives--2 onto the Ark of poetry & met Morty & Wilma (first wife); Don Gropman & Gaby; Jim Koller & Jane (first wife); Mark Strand & Antonia (first wife)& many others. I was one female poet in their class. Mike & I opened The Paper Place Bookstore on S. Clinton St. & became fulltime retailers & parttime writers. In 1962, in NY I met Rae Marcus, Morty's mom. Morty & Wilma had Jana; Don & Gaby--Sonia; we had Antony. Morty wrote poems & moved to California, but sent us his books. I missed him but saw him only once, years later with his new wife at our house. I regret not seeing him more. In his recent email to me, he, vividly, sent hugs & "a big kiss for Michael." His spirit goes out to me.</p>
Knew Mort knew Grigsby <i>Oakland, CA</i>	<p>Nov 16, 2009 #22 Judge it! Report Abuse Reply »</p> <p>I had a class at Cabrillo College with Morton Marcus in the 70's. The class, while intimidating... yet interesting to me at the time proved totally fruitless in long term real life terms. Not Mortons doing nor my own, just another failing of the methods education is doled out in the US. Yet I'm still happy for his efforts and wish him well.</p> <p>Roger Grigsby, if he is the same man of my past was a trusted mentor whos ultimate influence on my life was more destructive than all other comers. Take his words with many grains of salt, as does Rocket J Squirrel.</p>



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