

Marya Zaturenska Gregory, 1902-1982

March, 1982

10964 Newsletter

MARYA ZATURENSKA: LYRIC POET

Marya Zaturenska, 79, a former Palisades resident and American lyric poet who was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 1938, died recently of heart failure in Shelburne Falls, Mass.

She was married to Horace Gregory, a Bollingen Prize poet and recipient of the Russell Lynes Award of the National Institute of Arts and Letters.

The Gregorays moved to Closter Road in Palisades in 1942. On more than one occasion before moving to Shelburne Falls in 1981, Marya read and spoke of her poetry to residents at the Palisades Library.

Marya Gregory was born in Kiev, the Ukraine, on Sept. 12, 1902. When she was eight, in 1910, she traveled to America with her parents, Abram and Johanna Zaturenska. While they lived on Henry Street on the lower east side of Manhattan, she worked in factories during the day and attended high school in the evening.

In 1922, she enrolled at Valparaiso University in Indiana, where she had been awarded a scholarship. She left a year later for the University of Wisconsin.

She graduated in 1925 from the University of Wisconsin Library School. The Gregorays were married the same year.

Marya Gregory's books included "Threshold and Hearth," which was published in 1934; "Cold Morning Sky," which won her the 1938 Pulitzer Prize for Poetry, and her final volume, "The Hidden Waterfall," which was published in 1974.

She was known as an independent thinker, and outspoken person. "I've never followed fashionable trends," she told the Journal-News in 1975. "I've never written for money believing I would ever become rich. I write because I can't help it, that's all."

In 1977, she and her husband, who is retired from the faculty of Sarah Lawrence College, were awarded Doctor of Literature degrees from the University of Wisconsin.

Besides the Pulitzer Prize, Marya Gregory received the Shelley Award of the Poetry Society of New England in 1935.