



Svensen Pioneer Press

An Independent Oregon Press

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Svensen Pioneer Press presents a unique Oregon publishing project: ***Afraid of Goosequills: The Wit and Wisdom of Neil Hummasti.***

In 2011, Astoria resident Neil Hummasti died from cancer. He left behind over half a million words of unpublished writing, perhaps the greatest trove of its kind in Oregon literary history. Arnie Hummasti, Neil's brother, established Svensen Pioneer Press to publish phase one of Neil's writing, which includes two 90,000-word novels, (***I See London, I See France...*** and ***Forty Ways to Square a Circle***) and a collection of seven short stories. Phase two will feature three works of theology.

"I believe my brother was a gifted writer, worthy of broad exposure," said Arnie Hummasti. "My hope is to complete, in some measure, what he was unable to: to share his literary gifts with a wider audience. Several of his short stories were published in magazines and literary reviews and he came very close to having one of the novels published by a major publishing house."

Neil Hummasti was born in Astoria, Oregon in 1949 and grew up on a family farm in Svensen, near Astoria. He went to a country school where he was a good student and a star baseball player. At Portland State University he developed an interest in literature and writing. He graduated with honors with degrees in history and English. He became a high school language arts teacher working primarily with older students in college prep classes. He taught for 25 years in Oregon public schools and received a number of honors and awards.

"My brother was a Renaissance man," Arnie said. "He was a scholar, a teacher, an athlete, a devotee of the arts, a theologian and a writer. He lost his battle with pancreatic cancer before his aspirations as a writer were fully realized. My hope is that people will take a chance, leaf through his writing, and, if they like it as much as I do, spread the word."

In ***Forty Ways to Square a Circle***, the year is 1996 and the coastal high school where Casey Merriman teaches English is about to go technology-mad and scrap the humanities. On the home front, Merriman is responsible for the care of an elderly aunt who battles a growing dementia. The two competing derangements will plunge Merriman into turbulent descent straight out of Dante and propel him toward a bizarre but redemptive climax.

In the comic novel ***I See London, I See France...***, an eccentric American family, led by a precocious 12-year-old prodigy named Victor Popper, takes a European vacation and the continent will never be the same. Along the way, the family becomes involved in a zany smuggling mystery that Victor must solve to save his father.

The seven short stories offer readers an astonishing range of voice, characters, tone and theme. Hummasti's short fiction is often dark when reporting on the human condition, but he also wrote with hilarity and devastating wit. The Columbia River exudes a powerful, even tragic, presence in three of the stories.

I See London, I See France... and ***Forty Ways to Square a Circle*** are available at area bookstores and at www.neilhummast.com. For more biographical information on Neil Hummasti, a literary assessment of his work, and to read his short stories for free, visit the web site.