

2020

Tributes to Mary Oliver, 1935–2019: Introduction

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Recommended Citation

Woodside, Christine (2020) "Tributes to Mary Oliver, 1935–2019: Introduction," *Appalachia*: Vol. 71 : No. 1 , Article 4.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.dartmouth.edu/appalachia/vol71/iss1/4>

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Tributes to Mary Oliver, 1935–2019

Sandy Stott

Lucille Stott

Parkman Howe

Sandra Sylvia Nelson

Sarah Audsley

Todd Davis

John Smelcer

Mary Oliver (September 10, 1935–January 17, 2019) was a poet known for her interpretations of the natural world. She grew up in Maple Heights, Ohio, and attended but did not graduate from Ohio State University and Vassar College. As a teenager, she lived briefly in the home of Edna St. Vincent Millay in Austerlitz, New York, where she helped Millay’s family sort through the papers the poet left behind. Oliver’s first collection of poems, *No Voyage, and Other Poems* (J. M. Dent & Sons), was published in 1963. She went on to publish many more collections of poetry. Oliver won the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry in 1984 for her collection *American Primitive* (Back Bay Books).

She contributed to *Appalachia* for three decades. Poems that she sent first to this journal appear in her books, many of which Beacon Press published. In the next five essays, we hear from two former editors-in-chief—Sandy Stott, who first invited Oliver to send us her work, and Lucille Stott, who worked with her here for six years—and Parkman Howe, poetry editor, who worked and corresponded with the poet for a baker’s dozen of years. The next two essays come from a writer who found herself entertaining Oliver one afternoon and a young writer who never met Mary Oliver but, in the poet’s death, felt a great loss. Last are two new poems dedicated to Oliver’s memory, by Todd Davis and John Smelcer.

A red fox in the White Mountain National Forest, New Hampshire. Mary Oliver imagined a fox’s inner thoughts in many of her poems. JONATHAN DANA