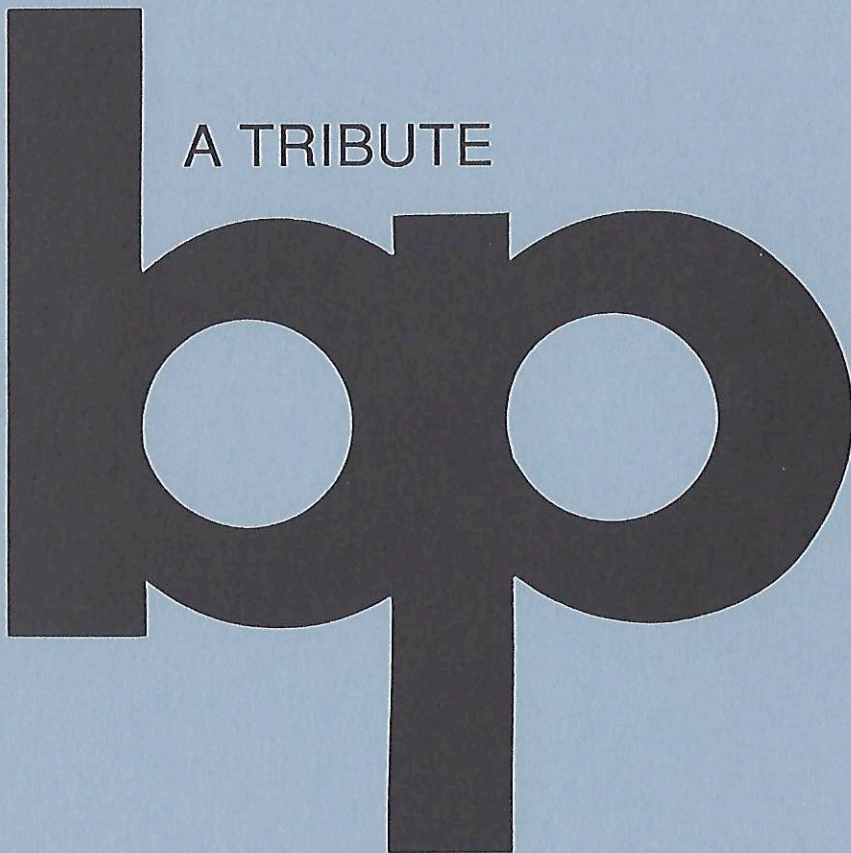
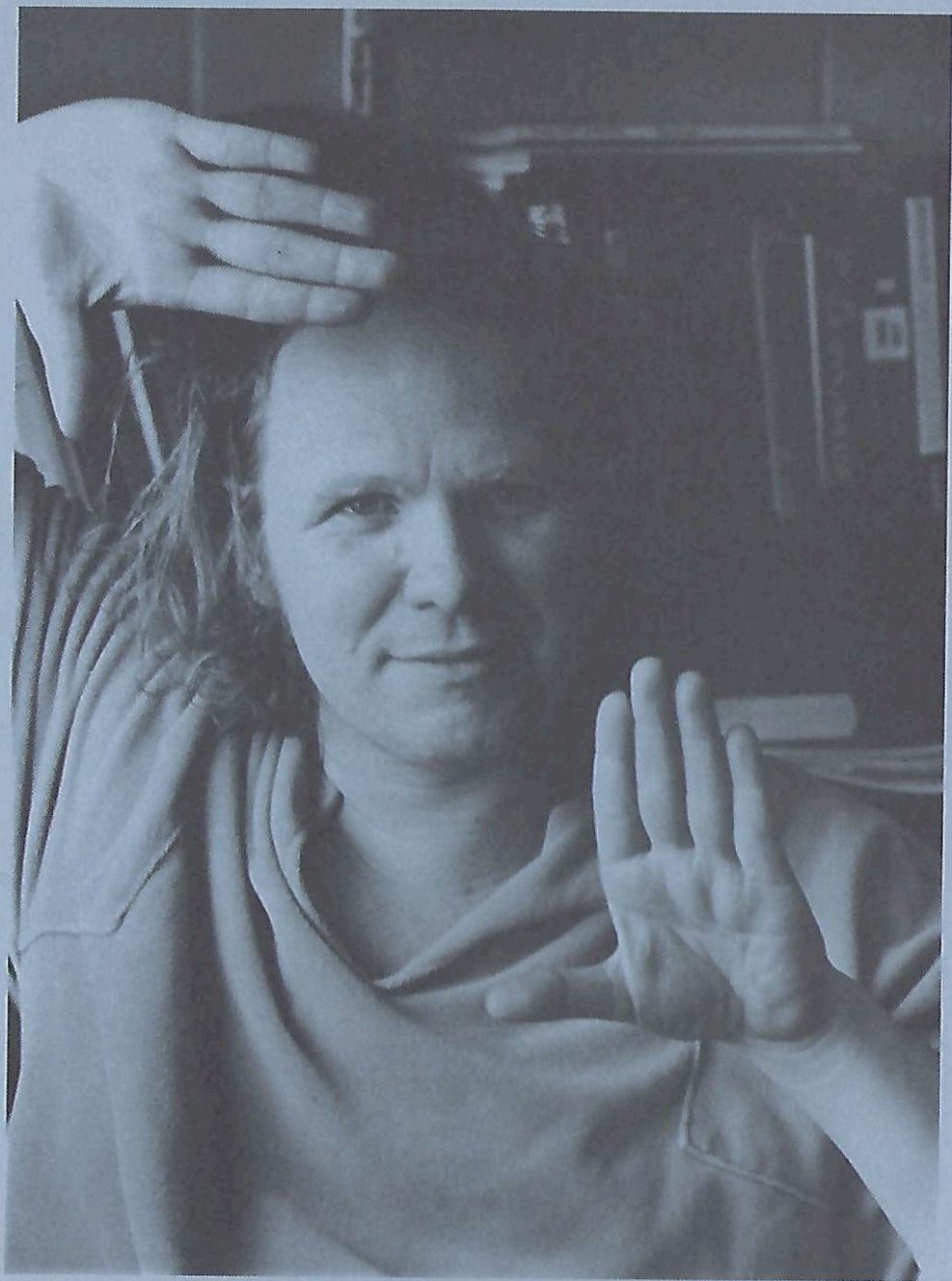


A TRIBUTE



Harbourfront Friday December 2 1988



*photo by Linda Charyk Rosenfeld*

## bpNichol 1944-1988

*'...full with love of speech as feeling'* – The Martyrology, Book 3. I

He had, as few do, a favourite letter of the alphabet – H (and, equally, h). He always saw letters as having distinctive characteristics: in much of his writing, letters carry the metric and prosodic weight usually borne by full words. Letters are a part of language and he found language, in all its dimensions, perpetually fascinating. He spoke of himself often as an apprentice and, as the good apprentice will do, devoted himself to exploring every aspect of his craft. He not only wrote his poetry, but drew it and sounded it, bringing to bear on his visual and sonic creations the broad range of his cultural enthusiasms – from the comic book art of Stan Lee to the op art of Vasarely, from Top-Forty rock to Cage and Stockhausen, from L. Frank Baum to Gertrude Stein. He pursued his areas of interest with boundless zeal, equally aware of what had gone before and what was happening now. He collected Winsor McKay's classic Sunday strips and followed Lynda Barry's contemporary cartoons, cherished alike the poetry of Archibald Lampman and bill bissett, knew the lyrics of countless '40s pop tunes and credited Ornette Coleman's 'Free Jazz' with revealing to him the principles of improvisation that thereafter informed his writing. He plumbed the sensory depths of language and worked to integrate in his art the senses, the emotions, and the intellect.

As with art, so with people. He counted among his friends and enthusiasts – and gave his generous support and praise to – musicians, composers, visual artists, actors, and writers, of all stripes and at varying stages of development. He crossed cliques and camps. He conciliated, counselled, suggested, guided, never imposing his opinions or tastes, always drawing out the other, letting the decisions be theirs. He financed, or otherwise saw into print, as much, at least, of others work as was ever published of his own.

He made people (not just artists, but everyone he met) feel special, and did so because he saw them that way. He drew out their strengths and downplayed (without ignoring) their weaknesses. He gave and received with the easy, natural expectation that that was how things were.

He was a collaborator, working not just with his fellow members in The Four Horsemen, but with other poets, other writers; with musicians and composers; with visual artists and filmmakers.

Nor was his sphere of influence limited to Canada. An international reputation, stemming from the 1960s, carried throughout his career, which was distinguished by sojourns in the U.S. and Europe.

bp's last work was a radio piece for three voices and sound effects. It was completed the night before he entered hospital, four days before his unexpected death. The work was taped for airing in a Toronto CBC studio assessed as having the facilities best suited to the work's requirements. It just happened to be named Studio H.

Beep used to like telling about being in a bar in Ottawa where a stranger asked him what he did. When he said he was a poet, the man remarked 'Ah, so you sing with the angels then.' And so he did, and so he does.

Paul Dutton

## Part One

Lola Lemire Tostevin

Dennis Lee

Christopher Dewdney

Phyllis Webb

Re: Sounding [Douglas Barbour & Stephen Scobie]

Michael Redhill

Diana Hartog

The Toronto Research Group: 'Prisoner'

(a collaborative unit formed by Steve McCaffery and bpNichol in 1972)

Brian Dedora

2 songs from 'Group' (by bpNichol and Nelles Van Loon  
performed by David Sereda, John Pepper

&/or Maggie Shaw, vocals;

Whitney Smith, guitar; & Alan Pulsiver, piano

*Produced with the generous assistance of  
Special thanks to Greg Gatenby and Anne K...  
and to Carolyn Mo...*

*Due to the Brigantine...  
those seated in the...  
will see part two of...*

## Part Two

Daphne Marlatt

David Phillips

Fred Wah

Victor Coleman [slides & tape]

The Toronto Research Group: 'Le Poem, c'est moi'

David McFadden

2 songs from 'Group'

Gerry Shikatani

Michael Ondaatje

The Horsemen

(Rafael Barreto-Rivera, Paul Dutton & Steve McCaffery)

'Our minute of silence, which is his voice.'

David Young: your Master of Ceremonies

assistance of The Ontario Arts Council.

me Frost of the Harbourfront literary program,

a Moon and D. J. Stover.

ine Room's limited seating,

in the Studio Theatre

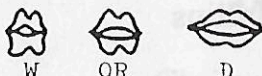
o of the programme first.

probable systems 17

the circumference of the spoken word

any word is made up of a sequence of lip movements during which the word is sounded.

example:



thus (if we are to take the title of this particular system literally) the circumference of "word" as it is spoken would be the total of the circumferences of each lip opening during its speaking.

the circumference of "w" + the circumference of "or" + the circumference of "d" = the circumference of "word"

we can propose then a formula which would give us the circumference of any spoken word.

$$W = C1 + C2 + C3 \text{ etc}$$

where W is the circumference of any word, C the circumference of the mouth opening at the apex of its particular phonemic movement & where 1,2,3 etc indicates the particular phoneme in terms of its place in the relevant speech sequence.

commentary:

immediately upon completing the first draft of this system, which i had tentatively titled THE CIRCUMFERENCE OF THE WORD, i realized the necessity for the more accurate titling which now accompanies it because of two elements: 1)ventriloquism & 2) printed language. these two elements gave rise to two subsequent systems: PROBABLE SYSTEMS 21, the weight of speech (for Rube Goldberg) & PROBABLE SYSTEMS 24, physical contexts of human speech. it is worth pointing out tho that this system is hopelessly inadequate because of the variables present in any group of human speakers. the best one could hope for is a broad enough sampling to enable<sup>us</sup> to arrive at a statistical approximation of what the circumference of a particular word would be.

PRAYER

teach me song. i  
would sing. teach me  
love. i would  
i were open  
to it. teach me  
to pray  
privately, praise  
quietly  
those things  
i should. show me  
the grace  
of movement  
& touch – that much  
i would offer  
to her. teach me  
more – a way  
for me  
to reach her  
who beckons  
hesitantly. teach me  
to be sure

*from 'ART FACTS – a book of contexts'*  
*(forthcoming from Chax Press)*

Contributions can be made payable to  
*The bpNichol Memorial Trust Fund*  
107 Ashburnham Road  
Toronto, Ontario M6H 2K6

