

# EDWIN FRANK OCHESTER



Ed Ochester, 83, of Girty, Pennsylvania, died peacefully with his children by his side on August 22, 2023.

A celebrated poet, editor, teacher, and mentor, Ed was born on September 15, 1939, in Brooklyn, New York, and raised in the Richmond Hill neighborhood of Queens. In 1961, he graduated from Cornell University, where he rowed on the crew team and was the editor of the campus humor magazine, *The Cornell*

Widow. He went on to receive an MA from Harvard University and an MFA from the University of Wisconsin - Madison.

Ed joined the faculty at the University of Florida in 1967, and in 1970 began his long, distinguished career at the University of Pittsburgh. At Pitt, he chaired the creative writing program for more than two decades. He also served as the editor of the Pitt Poetry Series at the University of Pittsburgh Press from 1978 to 2021. During his tenure there, he published hundreds of collections, launched numerous careers, and broadened the scope of American poetry to include more diverse voices. Under his leadership, books in the series have won or been finalists for such prizes as the National Book Award, the National Books Critic Circle Award, the William Carlos Williams Award, and the Lenore Marshall Poetry Prize. At the University of Pittsburgh Press, Ed established the Agnes Starrett Poetry Prize in 1981 and was the editor of the Drue Heinz Literature Prize, and upon his retirement, the Press called him "a driving force of American poetry." Poet Toi Derricotte said of Ed's work in poetry, "certainly the most important editor of the 20th century."

Ed is the author of more than a dozen collections of poetry, including *Sugar Run Road*, *Unreconstructed: Poems Selected and New*, *The Land of Cockaigne*, *Cooking in Key West*, and *Changing the Name to Ochester*. His work has won awards from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Pennsylvania Council for the Arts. For his contributions to the arts, he received the George Garrett Award for Outstanding Community Service in Literature in 2006, and the Pittsburgh Cultural Trust's Creative Achievement Award in 2001. He twice served as the president of the Association of Writers and Writing Programs and was on the faculty of the Bennington College MFA Writing Seminars for more than a decade following his retirement from Pitt. He was also a cofounder of the poetry journal *5AM*.

Ed tremendously enjoyed giving poetry readings and traveled the country doing so over his lifetime. He also loved spending time with his wife, Britt Horner, on their farmstead in the country - gardening, playing with their cats, and listening to music and Pittsburgh Pirates ballgames. He attended hundreds of Pirates games in his life. A history buff, he read extensively on ancient Rome. Ed is preceded in death by his parents, Edwin Otto Ochester & Viola (Bachtle) Ochester and his wife. He is survived by his two children, Ned Ochester of Pittsburgh and Betsy Ochester (Mike Sauter) of Pittsburgh, and a granddaughter, Quincy Sauter.

Arrangements have been entrusted to the **CURRAN-SHAFFER FUNERAL HOME AND CREMATORY, INC.**, Apollo.

In lieu of flowers, please consider a donation to Ed's favorite public radio station, WYEP.org, or Four-Footed Friends, a local animal shelter he supported. A celebration of Ed's life and poetry will be announced at a later date.

To send an online condolence to the family, please visit:

[www.curranfuneralhome.com](http://www.curranfuneralhome.com)

Send condolences [post-gazette.com/gb](http://post-gazette.com/gb)