

## Richard Robbins

### Biographical Information

**Richard Robbins** was born in Los Angeles and grew up in Southern California and Montana. He studied as an undergraduate with Glover Davis and Carolyn Forché at San Diego State University, and as a graduate student with Richard Hugo, Madeline DeFrees, and Tess Gallagher at the University of Montana. His first collection, *The Invisible Wedding*, was published by the University of Missouri Press in 1984 as part of its Breakthrough Series. His second book of poems, *Famous Persons We Have Known*, was published in 2000 by Eastern Washington University Press. *The Untested Hand*, his third book, was released in 2008 by The Backwaters Press, and a fourth, *Other Americas*, is due out in 2009 from Blueroad Press. Over the years, he's received various awards and fellowships, including those from The Loft and the McKnight Foundation (1997 and 2000), The Minnesota State Arts Board (1999), The Hawthornden Castle International Retreat for Writers (1998), The National Endowment for the Arts (1992), and The Poetry Society of America (1988). He currently directs the creative writing program and Good Thunder Reading Series at Minnesota State University, Mankato.

### Campaign Statement

AWP has been a part of my life as long as I have been a serious writer. Its first catalogue of programs assisted me in choosing the right graduate school. Its publications and its 1981 Seattle conference helped me as a graduate student get a sense of the larger writing community to which I belonged. As a new instructor, AWP supported me in the search for a better teaching position. As a professor, program director meetings and other annual-conference events led me to understand the professional landscape I faced in the academy and in the publishing marketplace. Every step of the way, AWP connected me to what I needed to know. That it did all this in the context of a much more important mission—celebrating what literature does to enrich our lives—seems nothing short of miraculous.

I would bring to the Board the writer/writing-student focus AWP has always maintained as an organization. My experience directing undergraduate and graduate writing programs for over twenty years has put me in the position of being able to understand what makes for a meaningful fine arts curriculum. It's allowed me see the possibilities for collaboration between academic entities, such as two-year and four-year institutions, and between a writing program and its immediate community. As a faculty member of both a traditional-residency MFA program and a low-residency program, I understand and value how the different models work. My experience in editing and publishing, as well as my experience directing a visiting writers series for many years, helps me to see the place of such activities both within a fine arts program and in the local communities they serve.

In coming years, the organization will no doubt suffer the same stresses facing higher education in particular and the broader economy in general. Writers inside and outside the academy will rely on AWP for services, opportunities, and advocacy. There are hundreds of reasons to be pessimistic, to wonder if AWP can manage the changes to come. But there are also hundreds of examples of how AWP has succeeded spectacularly in its 40 years—and reasons, therefore, to trust it will continue to succeed. Having seen AWP survive at least

one near-death experience back in the 1980s, I know the imagination and dedication of its leadership will come through to keep the organization moving forward. I hope to help.