

My father Hank and me

by Marina Bukowski

Marina is the only child of Henry Charles Bukowski jr and we are proud, that in 2016 she came to Germany to attend our symposium, celebrating with us the 20th anniversary of the Bukowski-Society, being our very special guest and talking about the most private side of Bukowski one can imagine: What was it like to have him as a father? Marina had her friend Julie with her and they presented the talk in form of a loose question-and-answer-dialogue. Here's the transcript.

MARINA - Hi everybody, as you know I am Marina. This is my friend Julie.

JULIE - Hello. So it's nice actually that we know so many of you already, this isn't as scary as we thought it might be. But we came prepared.

M - Speak for yourself!

J - So, what we thought we would do, is have this like an interview or more like a conversation, where I will ask Marina various questions and she will just ... talk. We hope we will have time at the end for people to ask questions.

So let's start at the beginning. How did your parents meet?

M - In 1963 my mom wrote to my dad, and I actually have her own words because my sisters interviewed her:

I had written to Bukowski, from Ann Arbor, I got hold of some of his books. My friend Stanley Kurnick in LA had sent me some of his poems, and I went and bought his books, and I wrote to him. And he wrote back and said "buy my books, my publishers are starving." So I wrote to him again, and said I wanted to meet him, gave him my address and my phone number. So one day there at Mom's house, he gave me a call. And said, "you have to come here, right now." Well I wasn't familiar with drunks at that time. So it wasn't clear to me exactly what was going on. But I said "Well I can't come right now, the next bus doesn't leave until

around midnight from Anaheim and I'm in Garden Grove so it's about a two hour walk to the Anaheim bus station. And so I won't get in until early morning." Then he said take a cab from the bus station, I'll pay the cab, I'll pay the bus driver. So I walked to Anaheim and took the bus in the middle of the night, to LA, took a cab to his place, and I'm thinking, "Oh, Jesus, what if he doesn't pay the cab driver?" Of course, he did.

When my mom told me this story, she would always end by saying "Your father always kept his promises." That was the point of her story.

J - And so? There was a romance?

M - And so there was a romance. And there they were. Then one day my mom said: "I'm pregnant!" Then my dad, maybe you're surprised, he wanted to do the traditional thing and said "Well, OK, let's get married then."

But my mother was still recovering from an ugly divorce and custody battle where she lost custody of her four daughters. So she didn't believe in marriage anymore. She said no way. However, they lived together for a couple years and she used Frances Bukowski as her name for a little while after I was born.

J - So your name is Bukowski but your parents weren't married, yet you have the Bukowski name. Isn't that unusual?

M - Yes, I guess it is a little unusual. I was born in a Catholic hospital in Los Angeles. The nuns in the hospital told my mom that I couldn't have my father's name. My mother wanted me to have Hank's name and to strengthen that connection. The nuns told my mom: "No, you can't name your daughter Bukowski because you two aren't married she will have to have your name." Well, my mother knew her legal rights, she argued with the nuns, and after some back and forth, she won the argument. I left the hospital as Marina Louise Bukowski.

J - So it was a catholic hospital. Was your father at the hospital when you were born?

M - He was there, pacing in the waiting room, waiting for the new. He got his first look at me through the window of the hospital nursery, there in a line with all the other babies. They both told me I was *really* red, and screaming. (He wrote about it in Post Office.)

J - It seems to me that there was something about a gift that he found?

M - My dad wanted to bring something to my mom at the hospital when I was born. We didn't have any money really, so he was looking for something really special that he could afford. He brought her a cut glass bowl of roses floating in water. The roses were nice and he thought she would like the pretty bowl. She loved it and he liked the idea of her having the cut glass bowl after the roses were gone. When it was time to throw out the flowers, the pattern in the glass washed out along with the old water. It turned out to be a plastic doily in a plain glass bowl.

So that's the story, but what I want to say about this is that it meant more to us than a little anecdote about a disappointment. When my mom told the story it was really a heartbreaking story the way she told it. I'm not sure if she told it differently, maybe she really told the story so well that she could convey the heartbreak from that moment.

Or maybe it was just that we both knew my dad and understood, how sensitive and easily wounded by the world my tough-guy-dad really was. My mom and I had more positive expectations of the world, I think. So we both hated it when life gave him more evidence, that the world was not a place where he should expect or hope for anything good to happen.

J - So you came home from the hospital with your parents and then how long were your parents together?

M - My mother lived with my father for about one year after I was born. By the end of 1965, she and I moved to an apartment that was close by. Just 8 blocks away, walking distance.

J - What are your earliest recollections about your father?

M - I don't know what year, but my earliest memory is of a Christmas tree in Hank's apartment on De Longpre. I remember the tree lights

Marina Bukowski: My father Hank and me

and I remember being happy to have my mom, dad, and grandmother (my mother's mother) all there. I'm sure my grandmother, the conservative Nixon supporter, and my dad had very little in common, but he seemed to respect her and called her "a tough old broad". Maybe because she had a broken arm at the time – I remember her arm being in a cast. Someone had snatched her purse and she wouldn't let go. She held on so hard that her arm broke when the thief finally wrenched it away from her. My dad probably respected her for that.

I don't remember anything else about that Christmas day, but it is a very happy snapshot.



Marina Bukowski and her friend Julie talking at the symposium 2016

J – Any other early recollections?

M – I liked to play Batman & Robin with my Dad. He always liked to lie down for a bit after dinner. I can picture him lying on the bed, smiling up at me. He said: "OK, you be Batman and I'll lie here and be Robin – he never does anything anyway."

I remember Hank reading to me. There was one book I asked for over and over about a bunch of different animals living together and taking turns making dinner each night. It didn't work very well because the

bunny wanted carrots and the puppy wanted bones, so in the end they gave up communal life and went back to happily living separately and eating whatever they wanted. I remember my dad liked that slant to the story.

J - You lived on a commune for a while, didn't you?

M - Yes, in the summer of 1968, I was four. My mom moved us to a commune outside a small town in New Mexico. Hank missed me. He was always worried about me, but of course even more so when I was far away. My mom finally grew worried too, because access to a doctor in the winter time would be very difficult. She decided to move us back to Los Angeles that autumn.

J - Why was he so worried about you?

M - Well mainly because we didn't live with him. Probably a lot of divorced dads can relate. Also, we were really very poor then, which exposes you to all kinds of problems. And he missed me a lot, but he wasn't going to argue with my mom over what was best for us. So that might have turned into worry.

Then my mom was sort of a bohemian. She wore black to protest the Vietnam war, and took me to peace marches and protests. Finally, we moved us around a lot. She was trying to figure out what to do with her life. We stayed with friends. We lived in a bookstore for a few months, where I recall taking my baths in the utility sink in the back of the store. We lived in a trailer in the backyard of a friend, where once my dress caught on fire. Of course, there was the commune on summer, and later we stayed in San Francisco for a few months as well.

We never had much money. Whenever my mom ran out of money for food, she would call my Dad and he would invite us over for dinner.

J - Your mom was a poet too. What was it like to grow up with poet parents?

M - My whole world was full of writers and books. There were not many other kids around, but I loved to read so I was happy.

I grew up in bookstores and poetry workshops and poetry readings. I also grew up around people who admired and respected my dad.

Of course the poetry readings and workshops were always with my mom. My dad didn't want to be around that. He always claimed that he didn't like people in general, but he especially disliked groups of writers. He said, that they are full of shit, and not very good either.

J - Your father wasn't friends with other writers?

M - Well, he was. There are exceptions to every rule. He was friends with a young poet known then as Neeli Cherry. (His real name is Neeli Cherkovski). I remember Neeli from when I was quite young. He was always very sweet and kind to me. He lives in San Francisco and I see him every few years.

The one thing I remember about Neeli is the time when he told me about 'The Tooth Fairy'. At a birthday party for my dad, I was about 5 and showing everyone who would pay attention, that I had lost my first tooth. When I showed Neeli, he took an interest and explained about the Tooth Fairy to me. I ran to Hank to ask him if this Tooth Fairy thing was real. He must have gone along with the story because I remember finding a coin under my pillow the next morning and I thought: "Thanks, Neeli!".

J - It is nice that he went along with the tooth fairy story that day. What kind of father was he in general?

M - Well as you probably know, he had a horrible childhood, and his own father was violent and abusive. Hank was the complete opposite. He was patient and very gentle.

Even though his life was stressful, he gave me stability and safety. He often told me that "he would always be there if I needed him, anytime, anywhere, no matter what".

He never implied, that life itself would somehow be OK, but he frequently reassured me, that he would do anything to keep me safe. I adored him and he made me feel safe and loved.



Charles Bukowski with his daughter Marina ca 1966 (courtesy of the Montfort estate)

J - You've mentioned a couple of times that he always kept his promises.

M - Yes, he did. For example, once Hank came to visit and the plan was for him to take me to buy a new pair of shoes. But when the day arrived, I overheard him telling my Mom that he was short of cash, so

he needed to postpone taking me to buy the shoes. Then he glanced over at me. Seeing my face, crumpled up, nearly in tears, he took my hand and said: "Never mind, we're getting shoes today."

J - At the risk of embarrassing you, I want to read a short poem he wrote about you:

Marina

majestic, majic
infinite
my little girl is
sun
on the carpet-
out the door
picking a flower, ha!
an old man,
battle-wrecked,
emerges from his
chair
and she looks at me
but only sees
love,
ha!, and I become
quick with the world
and love right back
just like I was meant
to do.

M - Yes, that poem explains perfectly how we felt.

J - Did your father actually call your mother "Old Snaggleteeth"?

M - No, no, he called her Frances. Actually, in his writing, he never referred to anyone by their real name. My mother was Fay instead of Frances. I was the exception to that rule. And when I was tiny I would call him Poppa, but most of my life I called him Hank.

J - Did your parents argue very much?

M - No, not as far as I can remember. They were respectful of each other. Hank never told my mother what to do. Sometimes Hank would tell me to "Take it easy on Mom." Or: "Go easy on her, kiddo!" Occasionally he would ask "Does she still go to those poetry workshops?" They didn't always see eye to eye but in the years, I can remember, they were always polite to each other and spoke about each other with respect.

My mom regarded Hank as a truly great writer and as a good person. Let me read the poem 'One for Old Snaggletooth' and then tell you what her reaction was:

One for Old Snaggletooth

I know a woman
who keeps buying puzzles
chinese
puzzles
blocks
wires
pieces that finally fit
into some order.
she works it out
mathematically
she solves all her
puzzles
lives down by the sea
puts sugar out for the ants
and believes
ultimately
in a better world.
her hair is white
she seldom combs it
her teeth are snagged
and she wears loose shapeless
coveralls over a body most
women would wish they had.
for many years she irritated me
with what I considered her
eccentricities-

Marina Bukowski: My father Hank and me

like soaking eggshells in water
(to feed the plants so that
they'd get calcium).

but finally when I think of her
life
and compare it to other lives
more dazzling, original
and beautiful
I realize that she has hurt fewer
people than anybody I know
(and by hurt I simply mean hurt).
and she has had some terrible times,
times when maybe I should have
helped her more
for she is the mother of my only
child
and we were once great lovers,
but she has come through
like I said
she has hurt fewer people than
anybody I know,
and if you look at it like that,
well,
she has created a better world.
she has won.

Surprisingly, this poem made her mad. Not because he called her "Old Snaggleteeth". What she didn't like was being misunderstood. She valued truth and accuracy more highly than anyone I know! So, of course, it made her angry, when he wrote, that she put sugar out for the ants. The truth was, that she kept a pot of honey in a dish of water to keep the ants from getting to it. She was insulted by the idea, that she would do something ridiculous like feed sugar to ants. How could he think, that she would do that? However, she did soak eggshells in water for her plants – that was true.

J – So you lived with your mother full time?

M - Yes, I lived with mom and Hank would visit a lot. He would pick me up after school. We'd get something to eat and then just talk - at the beach, in the car, at McDonald's.

Sometimes we would go to his apartment and I loved having him cook for me. He usually would make steak and lima beans, so those became my favorite foods. Most kids I knew hated lima beans, but I loved them, because that was, what he made for me. He would make fried eggs for breakfast or lunch. I would always eat the whites and give him the yolks. He would say: "How can you do that? The yolk is the best part!", but I wasn't convinced.

J - Did you ever cook for him?

M - When I learned how to make scrambled eggs, I was very excited to show my new skill and cook some for him. I carefully measured out 1 cup of water for each egg. "Are you sure it's a cup for each egg?" he asked. Yes, I was sure. "OK, kiddo." He replied. I cooked and cooked those liquid eggs before finally realizing that it wasn't a cup per egg, it was a tablespoon per egg. But he was happy to have me figure it out for myself.



Marina Bukowski and her friend Julie talking at the symposium 2016

J – It seems, that he treated you more as an adult than a child.

M – Hank didn't treat me like a tiny adult, but he never talked down to me either. He would ask me questions and we would swap stories. He was curious about my reaction to the world, and told me all kinds of stories of his own.

If something hard or bad had happened to either of us – even something quite minor – we'd laugh about it. A trivial example is the time that my grandmother and mother took me to a big concert hall in LA to hear choirs singing Christmas carols. I like Christmas music, but I was 7 years old, too young to sit and listen to non-stop carols from 11 in the morning until 5 in the afternoon. When I recounted my experience to Hank, he would commiserate with me: "Oh NO! Horrible! All day long???" and then we just laughed and laughed.

After he died, what I missed first, was listening to his stories, and what I missed most was bringing my own stories. Trouble of any kind was always smaller and funnier after I shared it with him. I still sort of mentally tell him my stories and hear him say: "OK, kid. Just hang in there."

J – Your dad wrote a novel titled "Women". Were you aware of a succession of women parading through his life?

M – Not really, I guess because he chose, which parts of his life to share with me. So I only met the women that were really important to him. Linda King, and later Linda Lee Beighle.

I do remember my Mom commenting when she learned he had a new girlfriend: "Well, he better treat her right." When I asked what she meant, she replied: "It's just important to treat the person you like well." I was kind of shocked at the time by the idea, that he might not be nice.

When he was with Linda King, who had two kids, we did things together as a family. On one occasion, we went to the county fair. We kids were allowed to wander around the fair while Linda King and my dad watched the horse races. Later when we returned to the race enclosure, the attendants refused to let us in. So dad and

Linda King were waiting for us inside, while we were stuck outside.

I don't really remember much else about Linda King, but I must have felt close to her, because I remember her with affection.

J - Wasn't there an incident with a car?

M - Once, Hank told me, that she tried to run him over with the car. He recounted the incident as a funny story, which we laughed about in the same way we laughed at the hours of Christmas carols in LA. It didn't seem like a terrible thing the way it would sound to me as an adult.

J - That was Linda King. What about Linda Bukowski?

M - When I was 12 years old, Hank started dating Linda Lee Beighle. She had a health food restaurant, and is a wonderful cook. Linda encouraged my dad to eat healthier. So, no more McDonald's! No more red meat. And she got him to drink red wine instead of hard liquor and take vitamins and generally took care of his health.

She really loved him. I credit her with helping him to live longer than he would have otherwise and I appreciate that, although we're very different, we both loved my dad like crazy and she probably gave me some years with him that I wouldn't have had, if she didn't appear and stick with him.

J - Did your Dad ever get mad at you?

M - As a father, he was kind and unusually patient. He never yelled at me, never even raised his voice. His worst rebuke was a quiet "Marina?"

For example, in his apartment, the typewriter sat on a table by the corner window. There was a lamp on the table with a cord that stretched over to the electric outlet. He warned me not to go to the window on the side where the lamp was. "Be careful or you'll trip on that cord and pull down the lamp." Of course, one day I ran to the window to see something and I tripped on the cord and broke the lamp. His reaction was to just say: "Marina?" in a serious tone of voice. I burst into tears.

J - What about his temper when he was drinking?

M - I was lucky because, as I said before, Hank chose what parts of his life to share with me. It would have been much harder, if we had lived together. When I was little he wasn't drunk around me very often.

I knew from his writing, that he lost his temper with other people, especially when he was drinking. As a teen and later as an adult, I occasionally witnessed his temper first hand. But he never said anything unkind or harsh to me, drunk or sober.

One unpleasant episode occurred when he was dating Linda Beighle, before they lived together. Linda invited us both to her house for Thanksgiving.

J - Let me add a word about Thanksgiving [for the German audience]: Thanksgiving is the most important family holiday on the American calendar. It's all about family and food!

M - Linda cooked all day, while Hank drank all day. Linda was younger than my dad. When her male friends came by to wish her Happy Thanksgiving!, Hank became jealous.

Linda had wanted to create this lovely traditional family holiday for the three of us. And the damn turkey was taking forever to cook. An argument started. With more drink, it got worse and worse until Hank said he had to leave. But in the middle of that ugly scene he looked at me and apologized. He asked me, if I wanted to come with him, or would I prefer to spend the night at Linda's as planned. I decided to stay, not sure if I should leave her all alone. I knew he would be OK!

So off he went. Linda continued to cry while finishing dinner preparations. And dinner was delicious. She was a really good cook. But she felt horrible for me, and I felt horrible for her. I couldn't explain to her that she shouldn't feel bad.

I knew, that I would always be Hank's daughter and nothing could threaten our relationship. But I wasn't used to seeing couples argue, having been brought up by a single mother. I figured a big argument like that on Thanksgiving meant their relationship was over. I tried to

comfort her, she tried to comfort me, even though I didn't think I needed comfort. And of course it all worked out – they made up the next day and we had turkey sandwiches for lunch.

J - Let's go back in time for a bit. Do you remember the turning point in your father's life, when he was liberated from the post office to write full time?

M - Not exactly. I do recall, how I regarded the post office building, where he worked, as big and threatening and sinister. There was a bus stop near the post office, so my mother and I passed the building fairly often when traveling by bus. Based on my dad's stories, I regarded it as a prison, a torture complex.

My father always credited John Martin as the one who gave him the opportunity to escape the post office and just write. He remained loyal to John for the rest of his life. Hank told the story of figuring out his expenses on an envelope. John Martin agreed to pay him \$100 a month for the rest of his life, if he would quit the post office and just write. I remember reading somewhere, that the story seemed made up, but it was true – I don't remember it, because I was too young. But he told me the story many times over the years.

J - After a while, he began to make money from his writing, didn't he?

M - I do remember, much later, when he started getting enough royalty income from Europe, that he had a little extra money. The first thing he bought was new pillows and sheets. Later he said, that replacing the worn out lumpy old pillow and scratchy sheets with nice new bedding was the best purchase, better than the BMW or the house, that came later.

J - How old were you when your father died?

M - I was 30 when he died. He had been sick for a year with leukemia. He was diagnosed, the day I moved from Detroit to Seattle, which was still way too far away from him in L.A. It was an awful year.

Marina Bukowski: My father Hank and me

Hank did chemotherapy for a while, trying to beat the damn cancer. I went down to Los Angeles and stayed with Hank and Linda for a while, but eventually had to return to Seattle. Sometime later, Linda phoned me, to say that he was really bad and to come immediately. Hank was in a coma and clearly close to the end. But I did get to say goodbye. Linda and I sat with him all day, until he finally seemed to stop breathing. It was so hard to tell, as he was barely breathing at all, but we waited for one more breath to come and it didn't, so that was the end. It was an awful way to die, but I was lucky to be there with him at the end. So that is what happened.

J - Now you are a parent of two lovely children, Nikhil and Clara. How has your relationship with your father influenced your approach to parenting?



Marina Bukowski talking at the symposium 2016

(photo: Soenke Manns)

M - It's really hard to be a parent. Now that I am parent, I am amazed that he was able to be patient, stay calm, not raise his voice or lose his temper. I love my children, I am really glad that I am mom, but it's so hard. Children make you really crazy, so it is not easy to be a good parent, and my life is much easier than his life.

I aspire to be the kind of parent he was. Usually I miss, but at least, I'm aiming in the right direction.

J - A few years ago, I recall your son Nikhil writing a paper about his grandfather. Tell us about that.

M - When Nikhil was 14 years old, for his first major research project, he decided to write about his grandfather, Hank. He asked his teacher if it was OK for his project to be about a relative, explaining that he was Charles Bukowski's grandson. The teacher was known to be a Bukowski fan, and was certain, this was a prank, set up by his fellow teachers, who knew, that he was a Bukowski fan. He insisted that Nikhil bring in proof of his relationship to Charles Bukowski.

After producing a captioned picture of himself in a Bukowski biography, Nikhil went ahead with the project. For the first time, my 14 year old son learned about the Charles Bukowski you all know about. Before then, he only knew the stories I had told him. I admit, I was a little worried about how he would react. It wasn't just the graphic detail about everything in my dad's writing, that I was concerned about. It was the shock factor of ALL of it, the pain, the chaos, everything.

Of course, it was fine. He did raise his eyebrows at things that were more sexually explicit than what he had read before, and he enjoyed some of the poems and novels he read in their own right. However, the biggest shock turned out to be reading "Dinosauria, We". It was, because he recognized the poem as one he had been given to read by another English teacher. He knew "Dinosauria, We" as a poem by Langston Hughes! The English teacher had given them a copy of the poem while attributing it to the wrong author!

J - At this point we can take questions from the audience.

M - Some of you know, I'm really afraid of public speaking, so thank you all for being such a very kind audience.

J - But you were very relaxed actually. I thought, I'm the one who was getting nervous up here asking the questions.

M - Well, you made it possible, so all the pressure was on you. Questions from the audience?

Marina Bukowski: My father Hank and me

Q [Friedrich Bahmer] – From a psychological point of view, fathers are the first and most influential men in their daughter's lives. So I'm very interested to know, how Bukowski, how your father influenced your picture of or feelings about men.

M – That's a, yeah, that is a good question. I think maybe combined with the kind of person my dad was and the parts of his life he shared with me, and then add to that my mom who raised me to think of my dad as a genius, a good writer, and as a really fundamentally decent good human being, so I think it lead me to have very high standards, maybe even a little too high.



Marina Bukowski talking at the symposium 2016

Q – So it was a positive, not negative?

M – Yes, right. Of course, I read everything that my dad wrote. And he told a lot of stories, many of them the same ones that he wrote about. So it's not like I didn't know about the other parts of his life,

that I didn't see myself. But ... I view him as someone, that I should live up to. So that was my ... what I took away.

More importantly to me, it's not how I think about men, but for me in my life as a *human being*, I have this feeling of safety and being OK. My dad gave that to me.

Both, my mom and my dad, made me feel very loved. But my dad somehow managed to make me feel safe as well. He didn't tell me, that "life will be OK", but he did say, that he would always be there for me, and he was. So I still have carry feeling of safety inside me even now. I still have that now, even though he is gone.

Q [Gerald Locklin] - I wanted to say, that in the later years of your mother's life, she adopted the name Franceye, and I knew her pretty well though the southern california poetry scene, at Beyond Baroque, local poetry readings, and the Church in Ocean Park. She and I and three other people used to give an annual poetry reading, and ... everything he says in that poem ... [sigh] ...

M - That's her, right?

Q - Absolutely.

M - That was her, everything. The funny parts, and ... yeah.

Q [Falko Hennig] - Wondering to hear from your mother, who was such a nice person: Did she never have another boyfriend?

M - Well, when I was younger, very young, that she did. I do remember a boyfriend, and I remember this really strong feeling of HATRED actually. I don't remember much more than that. But I do remember enough to know that he didn't really do anything to deserve that hatred other than to take my mom's attention from me. I don't know if my love for my dad influenced that, if I was feeling loyal to him in my mind or whatever, but yeah. After I was about 5 years old, she kind of gave up on the whole thing. Never mind. Life is simpler without.

Q [Falko Hennig] - I was wondering about this commune you lived with your mother in New Mexico. What was it?

Marina Bukowski: My father Hank and me

M - It was in a small town called Placita, just outside of Albuquerque, New Mexico. I guess Albuquerque is bigger now, so Placitas is a very nice suburb. But then it was a tiny town in the new Mexico desert. And then outside the tiny town was this commune.

There were multiple communes there. People would come to visit and hear about it. It was 1968, people were seeking some different way of living. We lived in the commune called "Lower Farm". I just recently did some research about it, and found out that, well, maybe my dad was right to be worried and maybe it's good that we left when we did.



The guy, who thought he was the incarnation of Ulysses S. Grant, and some other people too, he founded the commune, and he had a lot of skills that were really useful, as you know, they were growing their own food and so forth. But eventually, long after we left, he borrowed someone's gun and murdered two people, and was never caught. But he was found eventually, dead with his wife, in a burned down building full of bullets. So something bad happened at the end, but it wasn't the law that got him. And it was good, that we didn't stick around.

Q - How was life like there? Did it mean, that you would cook all together in a group ...

M - Yes, we grew our own food and cooked together, tried to be self sufficient. The other thing I remember is, that there was a man named Shorty who lived alone in the desert, nearby in a trailer, he was what we call "a desert rat", an old man who lived alone, and is usually a hermit or recluse. But we would go and visit him, so I guess that my mom needed some variety in company. So we visited him and he would shoot rattlesnakes when he saw them, and cook them. So I tasted rattlesnake once.

There were some goats, as I remember having a favorite baby goat that I would play with. We would play "king of the mountain" and we would push each other off the hill.

Less pleasant, I remember that my mom and I got pretty sick, and they were afraid, that it was contagious. So it was already pretty primitive there, but because we were sick we couldn't even use the out-house. There was some far away hole in the ground, we had to use as a toilet instead. I remember looking at my mom, incredulous, and saying "Really?" I don't remember if I told Hank about that part.

Q - How do you feel about the poems that he wrote about you?

M - Ah, well, Abel emailed me some poems, that are included in the recently published collection, 'On Love'. It really makes me feel warm and loved to read them, but these were poems, that I hadn't read before. So there was this huge emotional ... you know, I cried, because it was such a huge emotional ... even though it was such a good feeling, it was intense.

I feel loved, but I also feel the loss, you know? But, generally, when I read his poems about me, I feel safe and loved, just the way he made me feel when he was around.

J - Well, that's a great segue, did you know she has a poem she wanted to read?

M - I have this poem on my wall at home. I was talking to Abel about this poem during the break. It was published as a broadside, but it was never included in any of the Black Sparrow press books, I don't know why. But parts of this poem just feel part of my life:

Love Poem to Marina

my girl is 8
and that's old enough to know
better or worse or
anything
so I relax around her and
hear various astounding things
about sex
life in general and life in particular;

Marina Bukowski: My father Hank and me

mostly it's very
easy
except I became a father when most men
become grandfathers, I am a very late starter
in everything,
and I stretch on the grass and sand
and she rips dandelions up
and places them in my hair
while I doze in the sea breeze.
I awaken
shake
say, "what the hell?"
and flowers fall over my eyes and my nose
and over my
lips.
I brush them away
and she sits above
giggling.
daughter, right or wrong,
I do love you,
it's only that sometimes I act as if
you weren't there, but there have been fights with women
notes left on dressers
factory jobs flat tires in Compton at 3 a.m.,
all those things that keep p-people from
knowing each other
and
worse than that.
thanks for the
flowers.

I want to say one last thing, before I sit down:
Just thank you so much to the Bukowski Society for bringing me
here and for also bringing Julie to help me. And Falko, thank you
SO much for your hospitality. You know, I think, if it weren't for
Falko two years ago, welcoming us so warmly, I probably still
would have had some kind of hesitation, that might have stopped
me from being here, but he made us feel at home here. So ... Thank
You!

