

Tropicalia: Angel of the Arts takes students under his wings

He did love that stint as a Gray Line tour guide, but all in all, Jesse Millner is doing exactly what he wants to do: teaching and writing.

For excellence in both, Millner, 57, won an Angel of the Arts award earlier this month at the Alliance for the Arts in Fort Myers.

The Virginia-born writing instructor at Florida Gulf Coast University lives in Fort Myers with his wife, Lyn (who teaches journalism at FGCU) and dog, Sam. He's published poems in many literary magazines and his first full-length poetry book, "The Neighborhoods of My Past Sorrow," was published last year and won a bronze medal in the Florida Book Awards.

In his letter nominating Millner for the honor, FGCU colleague Jim Brock wrote, "In addition to being a staggeringly gifted and prolific poet, Jesse is a popular and influential teacher ... who has had a profound effect on countless students."

Q&A with Jessie Millner

What do you consider your greatest achievement? Running the Chicago Marathon.

Five of your favorite poets? Walt Whitman, James Wright, B.H. Fairchild, Jack Gilbert, Issa.

Best thing about living here? The birds.

With whom would you trade lives? An osprey.

What (or who) makes you laugh? Peanuts (comic strip). I read it every morning.

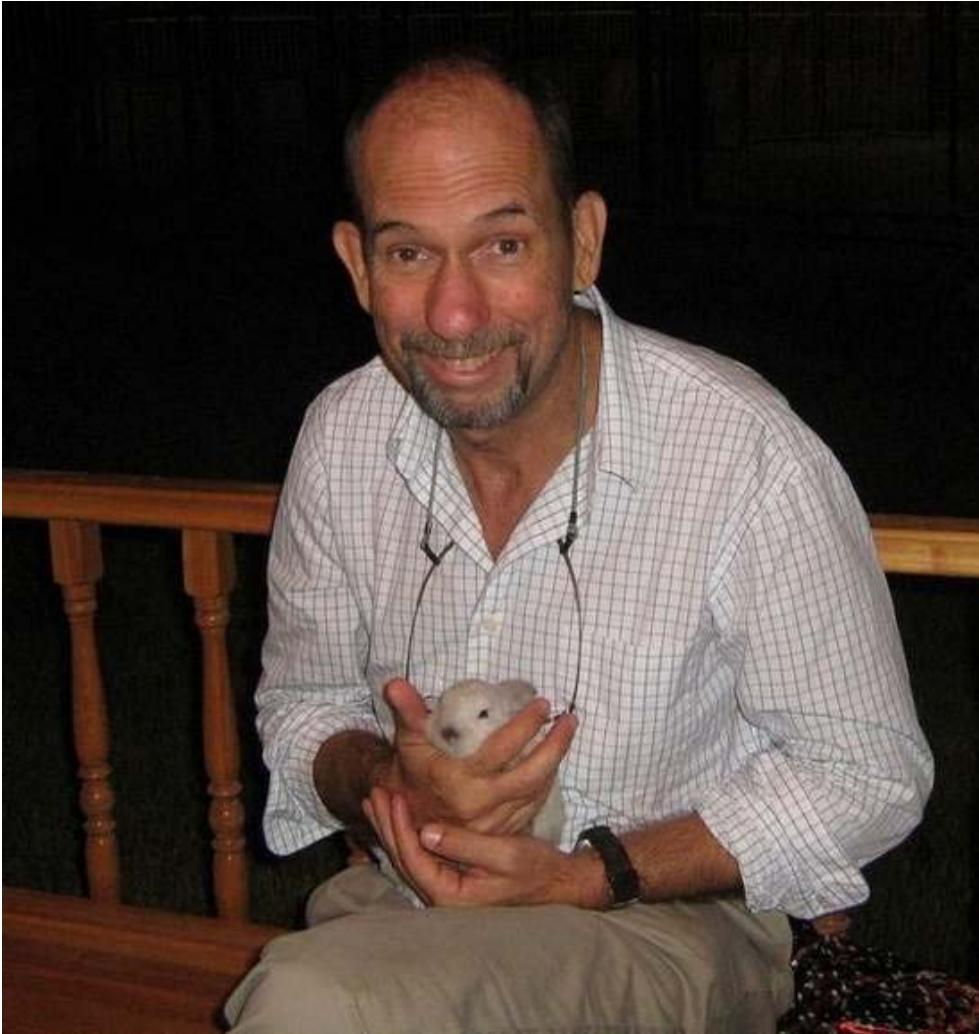
What are your favorite and least favorite words? Favorite: "dream." Least favorite: "awesome."

What's your single favorite possession? A pocket copy of "Leaves of Grass."

What do you think about before you fall asleep? Sometimes poems, sometimes death, sometimes eternity. (This is probably why I have trouble sleeping.)

What is your favorite food? Peanut butter pie.

What's on your screen saver? A picture of me holding a bunny rabbit that a little girl handed to me while I was visiting Turkey in 2006.



What's under your bed? The entire planet.

What's next? Another breath, I hope. Another morning where I get to have coffee on the porch with my wife and dog. More poems - reading them, writing them and speaking them.

- Compiled by Amy Bennett Williams, [awilliams@ news-press.com](mailto:awilliams@news-press.com)