At 9:30 on a cloudy spring morning at the St. James Cottage Hospice in Vancouver, 7 May 2009, poet Robin Blaser passed away after a fierce struggle with cancer.

Born 18 May 1925 in Denver, Colorado to Ina Mae McCready Blaser and Robert Augustus Blaser, Robin grew up in small railway depots in the Idaho desert where his maternal grandmother, his beloved Sophia Nichols, worked as a telegrapher. He was recognized as an exceptional talent early in life and sent to the University of California at Berkeley through the agency of his mother and grandmother. There in the late 1940's he met emerging poets Robert Duncan and Jack Spicer, attended classes by legendary scholar Ernst Kantorowicz, and began to participate in a cultural scene that has since been called the Berkeley Renaissance. With Spicer, Duncan and others such as Black Mountain poets Charles Olson and Robert Creeley, Blaser contributed to a new postmodern poetry then in the making.

Graduating from Berkeley in 1955 with degrees in literature and library science, he worked for a time as a librarian at the Widener Library, Harvard and San Francisco State College. In 1966 he accepted the offer of a faculty position at Simon Fraser University where he taught in the Departments of English and Fine Arts until his early retirement in 1986. In 1974, he became a Canadian citizen and that same year met his beloved life partner, David Farwell. The two have since resided in Kitsilano in a gracious up-down duplex they have shared with close friends Ellen Tallman and Sarah Kennedy.

Robin Blaser's major works are *The Holy Forest*, his life-long serial poem and *The Fire*, a collection of his essays, both released by the University of California Press in 2006. In recent years, Blaser has been recognized with many prizes and honours: the Order of Canada in 2005 for his contribution to the arts, the Griffin Poetry prize for lifetime achievement in 2006 and the prestigious Griffin Prize for poetry in 2008. He was awarded an honorary doctorate by Simon Fraser University in March 2009.

Robin touched the hearts and minds of generations of students, fellow writers, scholars, artists, friends and neighbours in the many communities he called home. In gay, literary, academic, musical and visual arts communities in Vancouver and across the continent he will be sorely missed. As he once wrote, “I'm so in love with art that / It will get me into the next / world, which, as you know, is 'white mush'”. He had humour, charm, intellect, beauty and a great capacity for love and wonder. Life was an astonishment and he lived it large. Those of us who
knew him were blessed with his generous sharing of these capacities. Robin is survived by his loving partner David Farwell, his sister Hope Samac of Blackfoot, Idaho and his brother Augustus Blaser of Boise, Idaho. In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to the Robin Blaser Endowment Fund, c/o Department of English, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, B.C., V5A 1S6.