



NATIONAL FEDERATION OF STATE POETRY SOCIETIES, INC.

An educational and literary organization dedicated to the writing
and appreciation of poetry in America.

Strophes

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James (Jim) Barton
32nd NFSPS
President

Dear NFSPS Poets: A Wake-up Call to Poets

A famous small literary press uses as its logo two written Chinese characters that, separately, mean “word” and “temple”. Together, they have a different meaning—“poetry”. This should tell us something about how important poetry is, or at least should be.

The strength of words, whether written or spoken, is in the reaction that they produce in the reader or hearer. The strongest writing should produce not only reaction, but also action. The purpose of a temple is to bring a community of believers together for a common goal, to worship or pray, but its real strength lies in the actions of those people in the outside world.

Poetry has long been listed in critical condition, even described as on its deathbed by some. Low sales, lack of interest, misunderstanding, and too many other distractions have lured readers away from one of the oldest forms of both spoken and written language. It is our duty and responsibility as poets to breathe life back into poetry, to make our words stronger, to bring our art out of the cloistered halls of academia and into the real world. Only we can rise up and carry our words out among the people and make poetry shine like the treasure it really is.

The traditional methods of spreading poetry, though still in vogue, are becoming less successful. Readings, book signings and publication advertising are tough sells unless you happen to be Billy Collins or Mary Oliver to name a couple of big draws. We need new tactics, new strategies, new ways of thinking outside the “word-temple”. We need to treat poetry with the respect it deserves and the excitement it generates in us.

I see examples of a poetry revival all over this great country as I interact with poets both in my home state and in the other states I visit. How do we turn what can sometimes become an inward-focused art form into an outreach that actually reaches the public? Let me share some examples.

Karen Hayes is an Arkansas fireball who not only writes great poetry, but she also realizes the importance of putting her work and herself out there. She memorizes and performs her poetry regularly at different venues, she sets up booths at festivals and produces “poetry on demand” to anyone who asks. She passes out poems on the street corners. She holds seminars and workshops. Karen even recites poetry while hula-hooping. I have witnessed this personally. To Karen, poetry is not a candle in a closed room. It is a full-blown professional fireworks extravaganza to be enjoyed by all.

Peter Stein of Minnesota has taken poetry and music and crafted mesmerizing performances as those of us fortunate attendees of the 2016 Convention will attest. He has also created “Poem by Post,” a monthly subscription service that delivers a beautiful oversized postcard monthly, complete with artwork and a wonderful poem. It makes you look forward to checking the mail. I share mine each month with my local poetry group as a pass-around to grow interest in modern poetry. Hopefully, it will translate into some more subscriptions as well.

Patricia Oplinger of Arkansas has always written inspiring poetry. She has a close friend who is a talented artist. Together, they bounced their work off each other to create art-inspired poetry and poetry-inspired art. The results were magnificent. Reciprocal ekphrastics produce outstanding products and opportunities for combined showings and performances.

A recent newscast featured a young man who writes short, uplifting poems on colored cards and slips them under windshield wipers of cars parked at local malls and supercenters. The reaction of most of those who receive the poetic gifts is one of pure delight and surprise. [continued on page 8]

THE ART AND SOUL OF POETRY

NFSPS Convention ~ June 29 to July 2, 2017

“One ought, every day at least, to hear a little song, read a good poem, see a fine picture, and, if it were possible, to speak a few reasonable words.” — Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*

At the 2017 NFSPS Convention, there will be music, poems, art, words, and more, as we celebrate *The Art and Soul of Poetry*. Our headquarters will be the historic Hilton hotel, located in downtown Fort Worth, Texas. Reserve your room by calling 1-817-870-2100, and be sure to mention that you are with the National Federation of State Poetry Societies. Single and Double rooms are \$119, Triple is \$129, and Quad is \$139. Valet parking at the hotel is \$18 a day (which is a reduced rate for convention attendees). Public parking is also available, which is free on Friday night and all day Saturday and Sunday.

For those arriving on Wednesday, what about going out to Billy Bob's Texas, the world's largest honky-tonk? If you prefer a quieter evening, there will be an open mic and a chance to visit with old and new friends. There are three restaurants in the hotel and others within walking distance.

A trip to the Stockyards on Thursday morning will provide the opportunity to see the longhorn cattle drive, peruse the shops, and enjoy lunch. Thursday afternoon, art lovers may visit one or more of the museums in the Arts District. After dinner Thursday night, winners in the convention contest will read their prize poems (deadline is March 15—see more info elsewhere in this issue of *Strophes*), followed by musical entertainment. Friday, Saturday, and Sunday will be packed with programs, meetings, workshops, meals, readings, contest announcements, and other activities. A poetry/art project will be ongoing, culminating on Sunday morning with a reading at the FW Water Gardens and the creation of a PoetTree. We have a great line-up of speakers: Urania Fung, instructor at Tarrant County College; Anne McCrady, poet and storyteller; Pat Stodghill, Poet Laureate of TX, past president of PST and NFSPS; Dr. Nathan Brown, Poet Laureate of OK—who now lives in Texas; Karla Morton, Poet Laureate of TX; Beth and Mark Ayers, Magic Lantern enthusiasts; Scott Wiggerman, Dos Gatos Press; Diane Glancy, winner of the 2016 Catherine Case Lubbe Manuscript Prize; and Carmen Tafolla, Poet Laureate of TX, our keynote presenter.

The April issue of *Strophes* will have our complete schedule and the convention registration form. The Poetry Society of Texas invites you to Cowtown in 2017. Y'all come!

ENCORE PRIZE POEMS 2016 NOW AVAILABLE ON AMAZON.COM

This year our *Encore* anthology is available before the traditional convention attendee's copy is distributed in June, 2017. Order *Encore Prize Poems 2016* at Amazon for the reduced price of \$13. Plus, Amazon offers free-shipping on multiple-book purchases. Go to amazon.com/books to see sample *Encore* pages and to place your order. ~ Kathy Cotton, *Encore* Editor

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STROPHES

Strophes, the newsletter of the National Federation of State Poetry Societies, Inc., is published four times a year: August (*June 25th) ~ October (*August 25th) ~ January (*November 25th) ~ April (*February 25th). News items and information on contests may be sent via regular mail or e-mail, which is preferred, by authorized members of NFSPS member state societies to:

Paul Ford, *Strophes* Editor

10239 Hickory Pt. Dr., Sandy, UT 84092-3960

pmford3@yahoo.com

* Submission Deadlines

Strophes is available without cost to all paid-up members of NFSPS member state societies when mailed/shipped in bulk to the president or other designated person, who is responsible for ordering the number needed by the submission deadline for each issue. Individual subscriptions are \$4.00 a year to cover handling costs. Special orders are mailed separately. To order a single issue: specify the issue ordered, include a #10 SASE and \$1.00 per copy.

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MANNINGHAM TRUST STUDENT POETRY CONTEST

Rules: 2017 annual competition

1. There are two divisions: Grade 6-8 (Junior Division) and Grades 9-12 (Senior Division). Each state may submit ten (10) top poems in each division. Poems may have been printed and/or have won previous awards. Contests at state level may have occurred anytime in 2016 or 2017.

2. The competition is open to all USA students in grades 6 – 12. Public, private, and homeschools are eligible for entry by individual NFSPS member states.

3. Submit two copies of each poem. Put the division (Junior or Senior) in the upper left corner of both copies. One copy must have the student's ID in upper right corner. The ID information is student name, school name and address, student grade level, and the student's language arts/English teacher's name. The second copy must not have ID information. Do not send a copy with any other marking - there should be no indication of prior award granted by the state.

4. Each poem must be neatly typed or computer-generated, and have no more than 30 lines with no line having more than 50 characters including spaces and punctuation. If a poem continues more than one page, staple the pages together. Do not staple the two copies of the poem together. It is suggested that each state representative keep a copy of poems entered.

5. There should be no large or unusual fonts or illustrations. Times New Roman is the suggested font. No font larger than 12 point should be used. Winning poems are scanned for the award anthology and large and/or unusual fonts impede the process.

6. Each entrant must make a declaration of originality. The statement should appear on the bottom of the ID copy only. The form below is acceptable:

I certify that this poem is my original work, and has not been copied in whole or part from any author's poems in print or posted on the Internet.

Signed:

7. Separate poems into respective divisions. Within each division separate the ID copy from the anonymous copy meant for judges. Include a cover letter identifying the Manningham (Youth) Chairperson to whom the report on the contests will be mailed.

8. Entries must be received by March 1, 2017.

Send entries to: Budd Mahan, 7059 Spring Valley Road, Dallas, TX 75254

Ten prizes will be awarded in each division: First Place - \$75, Second Place - \$50, Third

Place - \$40, Fourth Place - \$35, Fifth Place - \$30, and five Honorable Mentions - \$10 each. All winning poems will be published in the Manningham Trust Poetry Student Award Anthology. Winners will receive complimentary copies. The schools of each winning student will receive a complimentary copy for the school library. Notice of winners report will be sent to each state's Manningham (Youth) Chair no later by May 20, 2017. Awards (certificates, checks, anthologies) will also be mailed to the state chairperson. Each state is responsible for distributing prizes to winners and winning schools. The top winning poems will be read to NFSPS members at the Convention held in June, 2017.

Entries by individual students are allowed. No individual entry will supersede a state's collective entries, but in cases in which a state has no NFSPS affiliation or sends no entries, an individual entry may qualify for judging.

NFSPS looks forward to each state's participation in the Manningham Poetry Trust's annual contests. Questions may be directed to the chairperson:

Budd Powell Mahan
Manningham Trust Student Poetry Awards Chair
7059 Spring Valley Road, Dallas, TX 75254
972-788-4944 ~ buddmahan@att.net



2017 NFSPS CONVENTION CONTEST

Focus like you're playing TEXAS HOLD'EM and enter your **unpublished** beauties in the 2017 NFSPS Convention Poetry Contest.

* Prizes: 1st \$100, 2nd \$75, 3rd \$50, and three (3) HMs \$25 each.

* Open to convention attendees only!

* Winners will be announced at the convention.

* Enter as many times as you want. \$10 entry fee for each group of three (or fewer) poems.

* Make checks payable to Poetry Society of Texas.

* Any subject. Any form. 36-line limit.

* Postmark by March 15, 2017.

* Send two copies: one with Name, Address, Phone Number, Email Address, State Society Membership; one with no identification.

* Snail mail entries only!

* Send to J. Paul Holcomb, Convention Contest Chairman, 235 Shady Hill Lane, Double Oak, TX 75077-8270.

NFSPS MEMBER SOCIETY NEWS

POETS' ROUNDTABLE OF ARKANSAS' thanks the Roundtable of Hot Springs for hosting the 2016 Poetry Day conference. Each year this conference honors Rosa Zagnoni Marinoni who was Arkansas Poet Laureate from 1953-1969 and established the first Arkansas Poetry Day. John Crawford led a Friday night event including a sing-along, read-around and impromptu contest. On Saturday, featured speaker Kai Coggin of Hot Springs shared wonderful readings from her poetry books and led group critiques. Kai is a creative writing teacher, poet, author, workshop leader, and performer. President Patton presented the annual Merit Award to Donna Smith for her work on the newsletter, various contests and PR efforts. She also won the annual Sybil Nash Abrams poetry contest, the largest poetry award in Arkansas. South Arkansas Poets of the Pines will be represented in the 2016 edition of *Between the Lines*, the annual literary publication of South Arkansas Community College. Marilyn Joyner had two poems and a story accepted, Jim Barton had three poems and Janet Ryan two poems. Currently PRA is promoting the Jeannie Dolan Carter Collegiate Poetry Contest and the Sybil Nash Abrams Student Poetry Contests. The winners will be announced in the spring.
~ Laura Loughridge, Secretary

FLORIDA STATE POETS ASSOCIATION held their annual Fall Convention October 21-23 in Daytona Beach. Hosted by Live Poets of Daytona Beach, the theme was "Shaking The Trees." Friday evening started with the Chancellor's Dinner honoring Florida Poet Laureate Peter Meinke and Lola Haskins. Workshops presented were: "How To Approach Poetry Contests" by Janet Watson; "What A Publisher Looks For" presented by Judith A. Lawrence, editor/publisher of Lilly Press/*River Poets Journal*; Mary Rogers-Grantham presented "Writing From The Ears," a workshop of everyday sounds to write poetry to; "Langston Hughes in Florida and Everywhere Else" presented by Dr. Stephen Caldwell Wright, retired professor of English from Seminole State College and Founder/President of Gwendolyn Brooks Writers Association of Florida and editor of *Revelry*; and Lola Haskins presented "Poets of the Middle East." She was also our Keynote speaker presenting "Voices: The Pleasure of the Journey," tales of her experiences, poetry and life. We were entertained by Bob Blenheim performing "Poetry Parody Songs" from his newly released CD. The final official event was the installation of

new officers. We ended with the Spoken Word Competition emceed by Kevin Campbell. ~ *Mary-Ann Westbrook, President*

GEORGIA POETRY SOCIETY held its last quarterly meeting of the year at the University of North Georgia in Dahlonega on October 22. The featured speaker was Ginger Murchison, editor-in-chief of *Courtland Review*. She was the co-founder, along with Thomas Lux, of the Poetry at Tech program at Georgia Tech. Her workshop was about the grammar of poetry; exploring ways grammar works to help with the heavy lifting to build intensity, sharpen images, write crisper and fresher lines, and add energy to poems particularly through the use of strong verbs. She read from her recently published poetry collection, *a scrap of linen, a bone*, published by Press 53. Lyn Hopper, GPS member, read from her new chapbook, *The Hum in Every Blossom*, available at amazon.com. Another member, Henrietta Andrews, spoke about the process of assembling her poetry and art for *My Short Hair Tells It All*, her soon to be published book. Georgia Poetry Society will be publishing the 2016 edition of *The Reach of Song* anthology. Information for ordering can be found at georgiapoetrysociety.org or at amazon.com. ~ *Ann Kuykendall Gillespie, Reporter*

ILLINOIS STATE POETRY SOCIETY Five years after the first successful recipe for creating camaraderie and creativity, ISPS had its second Gala to celebrate twenty-five years as a chartered member of NFSPS. On November 5, 2016, over forty members attended the day-long event which included Lee Gurga's haiku presentation, Mark Dvorak's Carl Sandburg program of music and poetry, and a panel on publishing with Gail Goepfert, Joan Colby and Lee Gurga. The day closed with members reading their poetry from our recently published anthology: *Distilled Lives* Volume 3. Another recent activity was our annual poetry contest which offered some new categories and judges from around the country. ISPS continues to sponsor monthly featured readers and an open mic at Brewed Awakening in Westmont on the fourth Sunday of each month at 12:30 p.m. Check illinoispoets.org for ongoing information and membership forms. ~ *Susan T. Moss, President*

INDIANA STATE FEDERATION OF POETRY CLUBS has been in the spirit of Celebration for the 2016 year. Not only is our organization celebrating its 75th Anniversary—marked by two Society publications—but also playing a part in the

State of Indiana's Bicentennial Legacy Projects. Each month, across the state, our poets have shared the wonders of the written words at festivals, elementary school classrooms, public readings, library events, retirement homes, conferences, various publications, and the Fall Rendezvous. The undercurrent theme of many of our gatherings has been Hoosier History and Hoosier Authors, offering many resources and much inspiration. Fresh off the press is our ISFPC Anthology of the winning poems for our 2016 Contest, *Ink to Paper*, which is available on Amazon.com. A final project to wrap up the year is a quintessential name change. We will soon become the **Poetry Society of Indiana** thereby allowing individuals who are not a member of a local society to join our ranks. ~ *Deborah Petersen, President*

MAINE POETS SOCIETY in September gathered at St. Bernard's Catholic Church in Rockland. The meeting included an open mic, a mini workshop, and one contest. The contest, judged by MPS Vice President Jenny Doughty, was a poem that made use of or had reference to a myth or myths from any culture. There was a 24-line limit. For the results of the contest and to learn more about MPS, visit mainepoetsociety.com or contact MPS President Carol Bachofner at mainepoet@me.com 207-594-8954. Again this year, instead of a general meeting of the society during the winter months, three regional gatherings will take place, one in mid-coast Maine, one in Gorham, and one in Augusta. The first of these, led by Carol Bachofner, will take place in the Rockland area on January 21. Details, as they become available, will be shared in the society's newsletter, the *Stanza*, on the website, and on the society's recently created Facebook page. Please note that an RSVP will be asked for one month prior to each meeting. ~ *Sally Joy, Reporter*

POETRY SOCIETY OF MICHIGAN had about twenty members and guests attend the fall meeting at the Cadillac Wexford Public Library in Cadillac, Michigan under the leadership of President Polly Opsahl. Reports during the business meeting included a summary of the annual contest chaired by James Ahearn. There was a discussion whether to print honorable mention poems in the *Peninsula Poets* contest edition. Copies of the new anthology, *Water Music*, edited by Edward Morin, were also available. Salvatore Delia, Corresponding Secretary, reported he would be unable to continue in his position. Treasurer Susan Anderson reported that dues are now due. During the reading of original poetry, the Traveling Trophy was

awarded to Jennifer Clark. Following lunch, Elizabeth Kerlikowske gave a program on ekphrastic poetry. Members read their original poetry. President Opsahl announced that the spring meeting would be held in the Lansing area. With that, members left the beautiful autumn northland with the expectation of meeting again in April. ~ *Inge Logenburg Kyles, Historian*

MISSISSIPPI POETRY SOCIETY members, with the onset of the holidays, are filled with energy, joy, and a sense of renewal. Dr. Emory Jones of Iuka has taken on not only local and state poetry competitions, but also the annual NFSPS Contest Chair role, the Mississippi competition in April, 2017, and the statewide student contest in December, 2016. One of his first duties was to oversee the Mississippi Poet of the Year competition, won by Elaine McDermott of Gulfport. *Thank you*, Emory Jones, and our judge, NFSPS President Jim Barton. Another tireless worker is Ann Carolyn Cates, who is organizing what is shaping up to be an amazing Spring Festival. Her organizational skills have proved to be the needed ingredients to make this one of the best festivals in recent memory. Behind the scenes, North Branch President Dorothy Wiman and I are encouraging more young people to write poetry and become involved with MPS. Meanwhile, people like Patty Butkovich, Dierdre Payne, Jeanne Kelly, Brenda Finnegan, and Judy Davies are teaching us youngsters in the ways of the MPS. I thank you all for your valuable knowledge and tireless service. ~ *Michael Shelton, President*

OHIO POETRY ASSOCIATION had a highly successful programming year in 2016 culminated this past October with the quarterly workshop presented by our state's first Poet Laureate, Amit Majmudar. Mr. Majmudar's workshop focused on the form known as the ghazal. We had great attendance and interest in the afternoon event, and some wonderful poems were produced. The OPA officers also met twice over the past couple of months for a program planning session and the annual budget meeting to prepare for 2017. The new year promises to be very exciting as OPA will release its newest anthology, *A Rustling and Waking Within*, a collection of ekphrastic poems written about artworks on either permanent or temporary exhibition in Ohio. A celebration of the book release will take place on March 11 at the Wexner Center for the Arts in Columbus. We'll follow up the official book release event with readings throughout Ohio at various museums. Copies of the anthology can be

purchased online and at these events. We encourage you check out ohiopoetryassn.org for complete details along with news and information on all the exciting events we'll be hosting in 2017. We hope to see some of our fellow poets from other states at these events! ~ *Chuck Salmons, President*

POETRY SOCIETY OF OKLAHOMA wants to wish everyone a *very happy New Year!* We had a great year and are looking forward to an even better one in 2017. We are very sad to announce that Clark Elliott passed away in August after a lengthy illness. Clark was a long-time member of PSO, and served as Senior Advisor and PSO Poet Laureate in 2003 and 2013. He will be missed. PSO celebrated National Poetry Day on October 1st with our annual Poetry Day Contest results and awards. During the luncheon, members shared their favorite poems from a favorite poet and why that poem was their favorite. In December we had a Christmas Celebration at Twin Hills Country Club. The guests read their favorite Christmas poems to honor the Christmas season. We enjoyed a Christmas banquet, Christmas music, camaraderie and fellowship to welcome the holiday season! The PSO board met November 12th with a planning session for the coming year. We are focusing on growth in membership (which we have had this year) and implementing new ideas for another successful year. The best is yet to come! God Bless everyone in 2017! ~ *Patti Koch, President*

OREGON POETRY ASSOCIATION, instead of relying on invited presenters for our annual conference, we emailed members with a call for session presenters several months before the event and received a number of fresh proposals, resulting in 16 sessions for the Sept. 30 - Oct. 2 conference in Eugene. Some were individual presentations, such as "Finders, Keepers: Working with Fragments," a generative session by Autumn Stephens; some were co-presentations, such as "More than Words: Metaphor, Sound and Vision," a workshop on producing video poetry by Liz Schillinger and Jeri Otto; and some were panels, such as "Poetry and Community: Bring Your Poetry to Life with a Devised Event" by Jennifer Dorner, Jennifer Foreman and Peter Field. Some participants opted for more generative and craft workshops, while others preferred workshops on appreciating and expanding the influence of poets in Oregon. Two concurrent tracks allowed participants to take in both kinds. Conferees also enjoyed the open mics, with the second evening even surpassing the first in its cumulative power.

At both open mic events, readers ranged from college-aged to retired, a heartening and stimulating crowd. ~ *Lynn Otto, Reporter*

POETRY SOCIETY OF TENNESSEE Members are busy working on their contest entries for the 2017 NFSPS Convention. We're aware that time is racing, and the March 15 deadline (fewer than 80 days away!) will arrive all too soon. Each year Russell Strauss, currently our president, challenges the group with a list of specially chosen contests from the NFSPS brochure. For example, our January challenge is #37, which requires a traditional sonnet. Members will bring their rough drafts to the January meeting for critiquing by the group. Russell's choice of a challenge is always one requiring formal poetry format or attention to specific subject matter. We don't encourage our members to enter contests in which entries may total 300 or more such that winning is pretty chancy. We're still hoping that, through use of Skype, the Memphis members and the NE Tennessee chapter members can both see and hear each other in a planned joint poetry reading in April, celebrating National Poetry Month. We're still looking for a technically savvy individual in the NE branch to assist with that end of the project. We always welcome new members. ~ *Florence Bruce, Corresponding Secretary*

POETRY SOCIETY OF TEXAS' 60th Annual Awards Banquet was held in Dallas in November. The theme was "Falling for Poetry." Beth Turner Ayers was Chairman of the event and welcomed attendees. After the meal, President Budd Powell Mahan made introductions. Greetings from the National Federation of State Poetry Societies, Inc. were brought by Linda Banks, Chairman of the upcoming 2017 NFSPS Convention to be held in Fort Worth. President Mahan, Chairman of the Hilton Ross Greer Outstanding Service Award, announced that the 2016 recipient was Maxine B. Kohanski. In the absence of Nancy Baass, Chairman of the PST Annual Contests who was unable to attend, her Annual Contests Report was given by Vice President Catherine L'Herisson, who along with President Mahan announced the names of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Place winners. 1st Place winners who were present read their winning poems. President Mahan, Chairman of the 2016 Catherine Case Lubbe Manuscript Prize, announced that the winner was Diane Glancy. Other entrants receiving recognition were: Christine H. Boldt, 2nd Place; Catherine L'Herisson, 3rd Place; Kaye Abikhaleh, 4th Place; Laurie

Kolp, 5th Place; and Mo H. Saidi, 6th Place. ~ *Nancy Baass*

UTAH STATE POETRY SOCIETY has had a relatively successful year. A grant of \$2,000 for this year from the Utah Division of Arts and Museums has us on a sound financial footing. We also received \$126.00 from Smith Foods for their Community Rewards Program. This money is given to us as a percent of purchases by UTSPS club member. We also received three donations to be dispersed among the three top winners of the 2017 Shoot for the Loot category. The 2016 Book of the Year by Duane T. Rygh, *My Bright Red Scream*, was presented at the Orem Library on October 8th and had two further readings in Southern Utah. The Youth Contest was successfully completed and the awards presented at the Bountiful Public Library in May. After a brief hiatus, *Panorama* (annual anthology of member poems) for 2014/2015 has been printed and distributed. On the down side, two chapters, Write On in northern Davis county and the Toole chapter, have discontinued meeting. The contests for 2017 are in place and it is time for members to renew membership. We look forward to poetry in this coming year. ~ *O. William Asplund, President*

WYOPOETS are pleased to have David Mason directing our spring workshop on April 29th in Buffalo, WY. His name and reputation are stirring up anticipation and excitement as we look toward to this workshop. David Mason is a former Poet Laureate of Colorado, world traveler, editor and author of two recent poetry books: *Sea Salt* and *Davey McGravy*. While Poet Laureate, he visited each of the 64 Colorado counties bringing poetry to schools and community gatherings. He judged the National Eugene V. Shea contest in 2015. He is presently the Chair of the Department of English at Colorado College. We are remembering our long-time contest chairman, Eugene V. Shea, who died in September. Eugene served during the Korean War. He was a prolific poet and could recite delightful poems on any topic. He was a dedicated member and served two terms as our president. A long-time member of NFSPS, he was a consistent contest winner. A \$20 membership fee sent to Art Elser, 1730 Locust St., Denver, CO 80220 will get you one year's worth of: four full-color, poetry-filled newsletters, publishing opportunities as well as contests and a spring workshop. WyoPoets on the web: WyoPoets.org. ~ *Lee Ann Siebken, Reporter*

POETRY ARTICLES

Eye Appeal Makes the Meal

By Jim Lambert, *Strophes* Associate Editor

One of the many things I learned while serving in the Army that has proven invaluable to me over the years was a phrase I'll never forget and use all the time. As I was serving KP duty one day, the head cook was putting garnish on a tray of meat loaf. I asked him why and he said, "Eye appeal makes the meal." I thought about it then and had an aha! moment. By golly this applies to about anything when an impression is created.

I have served as a judge on several poetry contests and as a contest chair—from high school contests through NFSPS. And here the adage applies again—in poetry contests, eye appeal definitely makes the meal. I have received many entries that look like they were retrieved from a waste basket. One had a note attached to it saying that the poet was having trouble formatting the entry, so it was sent in its messy form.

As any poetry judge will tell you, many times it is really hard to determine the winner. It is fairly easy to separate the entries into a good and a better pile, but when it comes to best, a judge may wind up with several poems. How does one determine which will take the "gold."

Here's a hint: Eye appeal makes the meal. A sloppy poem with a hand written note that it is for category number x, a poorly photo copied poem, or formatting that appears to be random. may move an entry from the best pile to the good pile.

To be fair, I think many of these errors are because the poet doesn't know how to use a word processor and is doing her or his best to deal with an unknown. However, now that computers are a part of most people's lives, someone the poet knows will know how to do it. Please ask a friend for help.

And in a related matter, also consider contests from a contest chair's perspective. When the recipient opens an entrant's envelope and chaos ensues (not separating the anonymous pages from those with contact information, for example, or just shoving everything in the envelope which can cause a check to rest between poem 7 and 8 and one has to search for it, and maybe an SASE is enclosed and hidden among other pages), then it is time to remember once again that first impressions do count.

Is it possible to write an angry poem?

By Dawnell Griffin, Past UTSPS President

Our goal to promote, not just the reading of poetry, but to strive for excellence in our writing, includes regular presentations at our Utah State Poetry Society chapter meetings.

Poetry, like any other kind of writing, has a tone or attitude, and requires that we address our audience as well as our subject. There are many complexities of tone which are revealed through detail, sentence structure, word choice and such, but it is more than an effort to control a response.

Is it possible to write an angry poem? Certainly, and if you don't believe it read Hugh MacDiarmid's poem titled, "Another Epitaph on an Army of Mercenaries." However it is not just anger that he conveys, but contempt. It is also possible to misinterpret what is meant. Since we can't hear the tone of a poem when it is read silently, we use tone to infer sound in such a way that the reader can perceive the narrator's tone and then make a judgment. It is the responsibility of the reader to attempt to understand the speaker's voice. It is through tone that we become involved in a poem, often through an emotional response. By combining different elements, the poet for example can create a feeling of melancholy, happiness, or sadness.

While the 'speaker' of the poem is the one speaking the words, it is the poet who writes the poem, but it is important to remember that not all poems are biographical. When we talk about narrative, the poet determines whether the speaker is the narrator, a character in the poem or is addressing the reader, all forms of first, second and third person perspectives. Poets also have a personal style they reveal through the technical aspects of writing. Everyone has preferences.

It is not my intention here to include a long list of nouns and adjectives, even though such lists can be found online and can be helpful as we write poetry, but it is possible with just three words to create three different responses, such as: abashed, abrasive and abusive. What visual image is created with "blond hair, blue eyes and buck teeth" as in the beginning line of "Wilhelmina Shakespeare" by Rafael Campo?

Billy Collins poem, "Introduction to Poetry," (see poetryfoundation.org for this poem) is not an introduction to writing poetry, but a barrage of images for the reader to digest, such as:

"hold it up to the light"
 "press an ear against its hive."
 "I want them to waterski"
 "torture a confession out of it."
 "beating it with a hose"

The task of the writer is to connect with the reader in such a way that it evokes a variety of emotions while still maintaining the clarity and integrity of the poem.

These are just some of the suggestions

members of UTSPS can expect in lessons provided at our chapter meetings, such as this discussion of tone from the article, "Understanding the Tone of a Poem" by John Timpane and the Poetry Center: dummies.com/education/language-arts/poetry/understanding-the-tone-of-a-poem/

From Where Does Inspiration Come?

By John Michael Shelton, Mississippi Poetry Society President

Although I am a huge fan of poetry that uses rhythm, rhyme, and meter, poetry in its purest form, I do understand the trends today lead in other directions. These include video and audio free-verse, rap, and even prose poetry (something we once called paragraphs, essays, articles) There is even a new phenomenon called a "short short."

When the eminent Walt Whitman rode trains and described his travels using free verse to create simple, short observations of nature and people in their most extreme circumstances, I do not believe he intended to discard genres that have survived historically and poetically for hundreds of years. After I won a creative writing scholarship using those metered and rhymed lines, a respected mentor was once told me: "Yours was the best of a group of bad entries." I added it to the motivational quote from my mother that inspired my submission: "If you're not going to do anything with that stuff, Stop Doing It!"

I made my mentor a promise the day he awarded me the Butler Scholarship. He simply asked me to do something with the money and honor because other winners in the past had dropped out of school, failed, or stopped writing. I have kept that promise for twenty-five years. I've written poetry, promoted it, taught it, and encouraged my students to do the same.

I have written over five thousand poems and refuse to use the same poems I've written for other occasions and competitions for new events. Otherwise, it feels to me like I'm an artist who has put twenty-five coats of paint on the same piece of canvas. I am penalized for this by my own hand because I could be rewriting and/or improving my words and works daily. I realize this tendency goes against every rule of writing, editing, and publishing that exists, but I have never been a person to follow blindly (other than following God).

I tend to not only follow my own road, but also to create a new path where I deem it necessary. There is a certain comfort, inspiration, and creative motivation in my poetic madness, as well as a door-opening expansion that allows for new genres, publishing outlets, and literary contacts to whom I might have had little access if done through normal channels.

I am a member of four writing groups and three poetry societies. (The word “overloaded” was used to describe me last month.) The holidays are at hand, which always inspire the romantic side of me, Christmas especially. At Thanksgiving, I write about family; at Halloween, the literary doors have no locks, no hinges, no chains, no bars. I simply throw caution to the wind, sometimes amid storms. Sometimes motivation is provided by death, marriage, even birthdays and anniversaries. Sometimes, it’s the view from my deck, or the window of my car, or painted on the backs of my closed eyelids while some daydream or nightmare invades my non-waking hours. Other times, I need no inspiration at all, only enough paper and ink to sate my constant need to put everything in black and white, like Mama’s old photos of my childhood.

I need no particular place or time, though some are more inspiring than others ‘to watch these words while I watch the birds/ to soak up the sun and a little bit of fun/ to seek divine inspiration for my next conflagration,’ uh-oh! Now that’s worth a mentor’s and a Mama’s encouragement!

Invest a Few Hours a Week and Receive Huge Rewards

By Jon Sebba, UTSPS Member

Does that sound like the “come-on” you see on street corner signs, “Investor Seeks Apprentice – to make 1000’s/week”?

But what if YOU could invest a few hours a week, and reap rewards greater than monetary wealth?

Retired school teacher Barbara Funke volunteers with two poetry critique round robins (on-line and through snail-mail) and three in-person groups. She writes, “The opportunity to spot wonderful poetry with its fresh imagery and clever wording, and the chance to suggest possible improvements in critiques still gives me purpose and makes me happy. Seeing growth in craft and confidence of others is what it’s all about—what it’s always been about.”

Bob Bader felt he’d like to do more in retirement and volunteered at the Midvale Heritage Senior Center. He started a weekly mutual-help and poetry critique group. The Administration was pleased to offer him a meeting room. A well known cowboy poet and friend of Bob’s, Dusty Boots, led the group of 8 to 12 people united by a love of poetry and writing. Members were encouraged to express themselves freely, and could choose to have their work critiqued if they wished. One woman was a published writer who had scaled Mount Everest at the age of 63 and was now interested in writing poetry. Another joined

UTSPS as an active member. Bob and Dusty both derived satisfaction from the experience and plan to continue the enjoyable meetings.

I’d like to relate two personal instances of time well-spent. I don’t seek to evoke “Gee-whizz” from you, but to show how rewarding a minimal investment of time and effort, can be. Like Bob and Barbara, both Utah State Poetry Society members like myself, I felt the need to do something fulfilling with my “excess” retirement time. After all, you can’t fish in rainy weather, and my five on-line and in-person poetry critique groups fill less than eight hours a month.

So I contacted the teaching staff at a “minimum security” prison three miles from my winter home and volunteered to serve as a free teacher. “Free is good,” they quickly said. I arranged to conduct weekly 2-hour sessions covering basics of better writing and poetry for inmates. We study vocabulary and poetic devices using poems and short stories by well-known writers and poets. I have received very enthusiastic thanks from students and teachers alike. One student was self-publishing children’s poetry books even before I met him, and has improved. One was studying for his MBA and wrote terrific poetry. Regretfully, some inmates are combat veterans with varying degrees of PTSD. We were able to channel those emotions and help them too. My happiness over their accomplishments is boundless.

A second opportunity for me to gain satisfaction and profound fulfillment comes from reading to kindergartners at a local school. My wife and I are assigned pupils whose home language is not English. They are disadvantaged in pre-reading skills, which could negatively affect their entire school career. We each read one-on-one with a few 6-year-olds for just 30 minutes a week. A job for a poet? Of course, I read children’s poetry with them. Towards the end of our first year in this program, I took the teacher aside and said, “I am afraid Luis isn’t learning to read from me.” She scolded me. “Never say that. Before the year began, we tested them. Luis scored zero. He wouldn’t open his mouth to speak or read; he refused to try. Recently, after just 24 meetings with you, he retested and scored 84! He now participates in class, he has adapted socially, and is eager to learn. He is on a much better educational path. This isn’t only about reading.”

It doesn’t get much better than that!

Ask your poetry society members about their participation in workshops, groups, or other volunteering. If you are interested in harvesting some of the fulfillment which abounds in every town and village in our

country, feel free to contact me at yossi.yasser.soldiers@gmail.com for ideas. I will try to help you, like others helped me starting out.

Your feelings of accomplishment will be the best gift you ever gave yourself!

Encouragement of Beginners—Small Investment Yields Large Return

By Jon Sebba, UTSPS Member

Marianne Moore won the National Book Award, the Bollingen Prize, and the Pulitzer Prize. She started studying English literature at Bryn Mawr College, but after a professor wrote a disparaging comment on one of her papers, she switched to biology. Luckily she eventually returned to poetry.

Have you ever been told that your writing was “bad,” or that you were never going to become a poet? I was.

About forty years ago, I wrote poems “because I had to.” As a combat veteran with mild PTSD, I found that writing down my thoughts helped me work out emotions. I proudly showed my first half-dozen “poems” to a prof at the English department of the university in Tucson, and asked for his opinion. What I was told stopped me in my tracks. He began with, “This is rubbish.” His least offensive remark was, “You need to read poetry.” I didn’t pick up a pen and paper for three or four years!

He was probably correct; his choice of words wasn’t. Looking back, I see I have absorbed more about writing, English, and poetry than I imagined there was to learn. Happily I didn’t drop poetry. After my shredded ego healed I began again to write.

I am sure that most of you participate in meetings where you listen to poets read their work and offer helpful comments. You may have witnessed moments like the one I described. I asked UTSPS members for anecdotes regarding encouragement of beginners and developing writers.

Martha Morrise wrote that she worked in Juvenile Detention with the youth who loved writing poetry. She helped them enter occasional youth contests. Several won awards. Part of her reward has been in the form of inspiration for poems which came to her about teaching these incarcerated youth.

Martha has sent her poems to contests since the 1970’s. One judge wrote a scathing, belittling comment on her entry. The sponsor added a note below the judge’s comment, “Your writing has merit. Please don’t be discouraged. Hold up your head, pick up your pen and write bravely on.” That advice has been a jewel Martha has carried with her. She writes: “While few win prizes, a writer who loves poetry, writes and stay affiliated with poetry organizations, will gradually and [continued on page 8]

President's Message from page 1

An inner city program to create art spaces from alleyways and abandoned buildings has resulted in illustrated graffiti poetry that has become a spark to revive what was once downtown blight. Bistros and pubs, coffee shops and bookstores are now lining up to move in.

In San Francisco each year, a poetry contest features dancers performing the poems of the winners.

Around the country, poets are leaving copies of poetry books at diners, lunch counters, coffee shops, and other places of business to be read, taken home and passed on.

Magnetic poetry kits are being placed in businesses and in breakrooms to inspire budding poets to share mini-poems with their co-workers.

Each April, National Poetry Month, I write a daily "tweeku," or Twitter poem that I post for all to read. I have been doing this for four years now, and the response has been wonderful. I have even had response poems tweeted back to me.

Just as poems should not overuse the passive voice, poetry should not be a passive exercise. It is meant to have legs, to be an active pursuit, to be proactive. We should all think of ways to spread the good word and words of poetry to a world that desperately needs to hear the beauty and truth, the joy and thrill, the pure, unadulterated childlike wonder that our word-art can be.

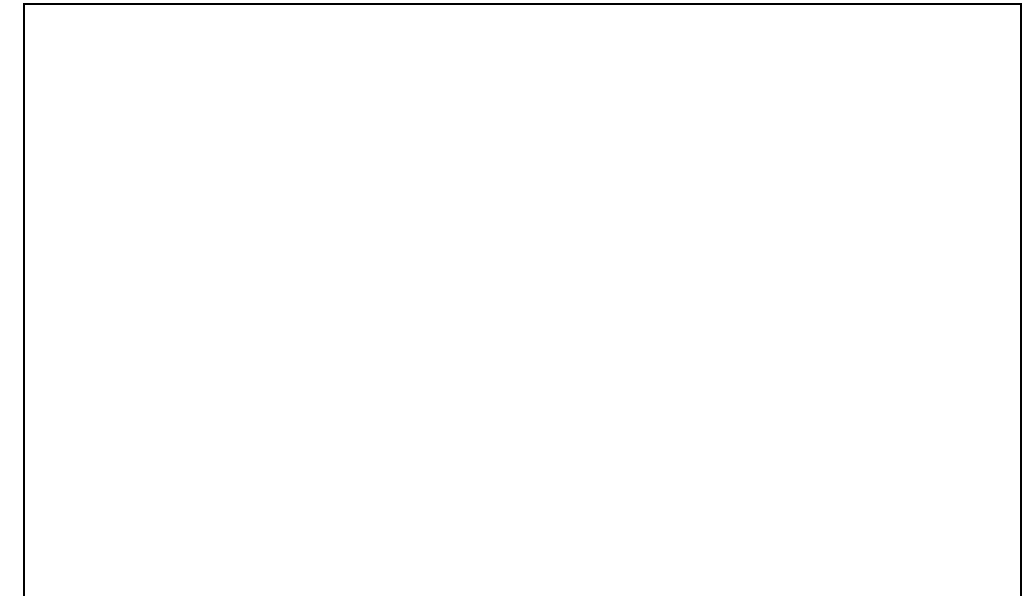
As we begin a new year, I challenge each of you to step outside your comfort zone and to amaze one person or many people with the magic of your poetic gifts. Only by sharing will poetry continue to grow and prosper. Get the word out. Ring the temple bell.

Live. Love. Laugh. Write (and share) poetry!

Peace to you all,
James (Jim) Barton ~ 32nd NFSPS President

SPRING POETRY EVENTS IN SOUTHERN UTAH

Don't miss Utah State Poetry Society's POETRY IN THE PARK workshop on Friday, March 3, 2017 at Zion Park Lodge with Rosemerry Wahtola Trommer, visiting Poet Laureate of the Western Colorado Slope, who will lead participants in "Metaphors Everywhere." Writing exercises will help participants use metaphors to charge their poems and re-see themselves and the world. This will lead into lunch and a nature walk—a chance to actively look for provocative new



metaphors in Zion Park. In the afternoon, Rosemerry will guide participants in how to use this new harvest of metaphors in our writing practice. Fee is \$50 which includes a free park pass. For details see www.poetry-in-the-park.com or contact Lin Floyd lin@sunrivertoday.com.

On Saturday, March 4, in St. George at REDROCK'S CREATIVE WRITING SEMINAR, Rosemerry will speak on "Paradox in Poetry" regarding the volta, a poetic shift or turn that gives a poem its power. She'll be joined by Joel Long, prize winning poet and teacher of prize winning student poets, speaking on "Inspiration in Rhythm and Muse." Rounding out our faculty will be prize winning mystery novelist Tanya Parker Mills sharing "How to find the Poetry in Prose." For location, times, fees and registration form, see redrockwriters.org or contact Barbara Funke bfunke2@gmail.com.

NFSPS SOCIAL MEDIA HASHTAGS

NFSPS has a Facebook page and Twitter is coming soon. Anything you post electronically that has the ability to use #hashtags, please make a habit to add #NFSPS, #nfsps and #nationalfederationofstatepoetrysocieties to your posts. If your state society wants to post directly to the NFSPS Facebook page, contact Julie Cummings, jcumings3@gmail.com NFSPS Publicity Chair, Electronic Media.

Encouragement of Beginners from page 7 surely improve with time and effort. Martha ends, "So to all, my hope is that my fellow writers will do as that sponsor, Dorothy Roberts, suggested: *write bravely on.*"

Barbara Funke taught high school. All middle- and honors-level sophomores were expected to write poems. She required they use figures of speech and sound devices. She didn't care about topic, rhyme or meter. Some of the poems were flush with creative imagery and

emotional power. With their permission she read the 20 best poems out loud. It was a joy to see both their pride and other students' appreciation. Although she was salaried, she says she received payoffs far beyond her paycheck.

Kolette Montague taught poetry to third graders. A surprising thing happened following a lesson on haiku. Each pupil drew a slip of paper with the name of a bug or small animal. They wrote, revised and illustrated their poems in a buzz of creativity. Then serendipity! A student haiku contest caught her attention. She entered a few from her class. Three students won in the top ten awards. The most thrilling and moving moment came when her mentally-challenged student received first place! The whole class celebrated to see her glow with pride. A fantastic moment! Kolette wrote, "I learned so many big lessons from our small poems exercise."

When I retired and taught engineering, I told my incoming classes, "I am probably not going to win a Nobel prize. But if my teaching contributes, however slightly to your winning one, or just to your success, I will be totally satisfied. Inside, I'll claim partial credit."

I still believe that. As poets, we can feel fulfilled if we help other writers improve and succeed. Sometimes all it takes is encouragement.

NFSPS 2017 CONTEST UPDATE

Contest #1 NFSPS FOUNDERS AWARD and Contest #50 STUDENT AWARD are also accepting online submissions January 1 to March 15, 2017 on Submittable: nfsps.submittable.com. To use this option the poet will need a Submittable account, which is free.
~ Emory D. Jones, Contest Chairman