



NATIONAL FEDERATION OF STATE POETRY SOCIETIES, INC.

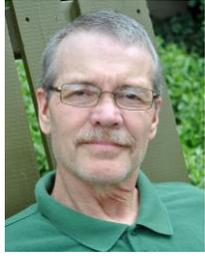
An educational and literary organization dedicated to the writing and appreciation of poetry in America.

Strophes

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www.nfspd.com

October 2017



Dear NFSPS Poets: **Honorary Chancellor**

One of the best things about being President of NFSPS is the naming of a new Honorary Chancellor for the organization. It is also one of the worst things about being President. I must say farewell to a great poet who has filled the position most recently. For the past two years, the outstanding Florida poet Peter Meinke, has held that position. He has served with grace and dignity, and has brought honor to both the Chancellorship and to NFSPS. I know that you

join me in thanking Peter for his term, and we will be looking for more great things from him in the future. Be sure to keep up with his work and read his poetry whenever possible. Thank you, Peter.

As the first NFSPS President from my state, I wanted to choose someone to serve as the new Honorary Chancellor who had strong ties to Arkansas, and whose body of work was impeccable. I found both in Jo McDougall. I first met Jo at the Arkansas Literary Festival some years back, at a Miller Williams reading. When I saw her in the front row, I just had to go up and speak with her. I had been a fan of her poetry for years, and I had brought copies of two of her books with me, in hopes of getting them autographed. I nervously introduced myself, and she asked me to sit down. She was delightful, and she signed my books as we chatted.

When I first contacted Jo to ask her if she would consider being Honorary Chancellor, I was afraid she would politely turn me down. Poets of her stature are usually very busy and knee-deep in activities. I explained that it was basically an honorary post, and that she really didn't have to do a thing other than lend her name to the advancement of poetry in our nation and around the world. I was speechless when she replied that she would love to accept. By way of introduction, following is the brief version of her bio which she sent me:



Jo McDougall's most recent publications are the poetry collections *The Undiscovered Room* (Tavern Books) and *In the Home of the Famous Dead: Collected Poems* (The University of Arkansas Press) and also a memoir, *Daddy's Money* (University of Arkansas Press). Her poems have appeared in *American Life in Poetry*, *Georgia Review*, *Hudson Review*, *Kenyon Review*, *New Letters*, *Toadsuck Review*, and others. She has received awards from The Porter Prize Literary Fund, The Academy of American Poets, and The DeWitt Wallace/Readers Digest fund

as well as fellowships to the MacDowell Colony. She has been inducted into the Arkansas Writers Hall of Fame and has been named Honorary Chancellor for the National Federation of State Poetry Societies.

Of course, there is so much more to say about her. Jo is a native Arkansan, but she has lived, taught, worked and performed throughout the Midwest. Her poetry is known for its brevity, clarity, and its uncanny ability to strike the heart and soul of readers everywhere. Her other books include:

- *Under an Arkansas Sky*, Tavern Press. Portland, OR and Salt Lake City, UT. 2010. (Chapbook)
- *Satisfied with Havoc*, Autumn House Press. Pittsburgh, PA. 2004.
- *Dirt*, Autumn House Press. Pittsburgh, PA. 2001. 3rd printing, 2006.
- *From Darkening Porches*, University of Arkansas Press. Fayetteville, AR. 1996.
- *Towns Facing Railroads*, University of Arkansas Press. Fayetteville, AR. 1991.
- *The Woman in the Next Booth*, BkMk Press, University of Missouri-Kansas City, MO. 1987. Reprinted 2000.
- *Women Who Marry Houses*, Coyote Love Press. Portland, ME. 1983. (Chapbook)

Check amazon.com for availability. [continued on page 8]

2017 NFSPS YOUTH REPORT

By Steven Concert, NFSPS Chancellor

At the 2017 convention in Fort Worth, Texas, it was my pleasure to honor three member state societies for their activities that engage younger poets. Youth Awards were presented to the Iowa Poetry Association, Oregon Poetry Association, and the Poetry Society of Tennessee. To receive an award, state presidents were asked to nominate their state society and provide details of their activities.

Additionally, five individual NFSPS members were named recipients of an Above & Beyond Award for their willingness to help, lead and inspire younger poets. Individuals recognized were Lee Bennett Hopkins (FL), Janet Watson (FL), Jennifer Dotson (IL), Carol Clark Williams (PA), and Frances B. Cowden (TN). To receive an award, individuals were nominated by their state presidents and the NFSPS Youth Chair.

As NFSPS Youth Chair, I am pleased to announce the creation of the Beck Donovan Award. This award will honor individual members for their service to the poetry community through ongoing work with younger poets. Annually, a plaque-mounted certificate will be awarded to an individual NFSPS member whose volunteer work helps, leads, and inspires younger poets.

Recognizing that state presidents may be unaware of the individual efforts of its members, self-nomination for this award is permitted as well as nomination by NFSPS members. Eligibility requirements include: (1) must be a current member of an NFSPS member-state society, (2) made unpaid contributions to the poetry community (not their poetry) with the purpose of helping, leading, and inspiring our younger poets, (3) completed a nomination form, and (4) submitted a complete nomination form by the stated deadline.

Nomination forms are available by sending a request by email or postal mail (with an SASE) to Steven Concert, NFSPS Chancellor / Youth Chair (see page 2 of *Strophes* for contact info). The nomination deadline for the 2018 Beck Donovan Award is February 2, 2018 (postmark / e-mail time stamp). The award recipient will receive notice prior to the 2018 NFSPS convention where the plaque will be presented. If the award recipient is not present, the plaque will be mailed to the individual following the convention.

This award is named for the two individuals who are the inspiration for its creation: Christine Beck, Connecticut Poetry Society, and Charmaine Donovan, League of Minnesota Poets.

NFSPS 2018 CONVENTION IN DENVER, CO

Come join the Columbine Poets of Colorado for the 2018 NFSPS convention in the Mile High City, May 31st to June 3rd, 2018.

Greater Denver (nearly 3 million people) stretches along the eastern side of the Rocky Mountains. Though the region is front row to a mecca for [continued on page 8]

**NATIONAL FEDERATION OF
STATE POETRY SOCIETIES, INC.**

Organized October 17, 1959 ~ Mary B. Wall, Founder
Honorary Chancellor: Jo McDougall

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Elected, NFSPS Convention ~ Chaska, MN, June, 2016

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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 email, which is preferred, by authorized members of NFSPS member state societies to:

Paul Ford, *Strophes* Editor

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* 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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* Deceased

STATE TREASURERS & MEMBERSHIP CHAIRS

We've only just rejoiced (or moaned) over the results of 2017 NFSPS contests and with the bright red brochure in hand, we're thinking a few months ahead to the 2018 competition. In order for your members to make the most of your state's affiliation with NFSPS, your updated membership list needs to be in my hands by January 15, 2018. (See #9 of the Contest Rules.)

We are aware of variation in times of year dues to your state society are collected and encourage you to send new or renewing memberships between January 15 and March 15 in a second list so all members have the advantage of reduced entry fees.

The alphabetical roster of members may be sent to me either through the mail as hard copy (with your dues check, \$3.00 per member) or lucille_e_wilson@hotmail.com. Lists are used to verify membership for the Stevens Manuscript Competition as well as the general contests. It is preferred that postal and email addresses be included in whatever format your records are kept. We do not sell or make this information available for commercial or any purposes other than our own.

Thank you for the fine cooperation and friendly notes I've received during my years as your Treasurer. This is the spirit I believe enhances each of us as individuals and gives collective strength to our Federation. ~ *Lucille Morgan Wilson, NFSPS Treasurer*

NFSPS MEMBER SOCIETY NEWS

ALABAMA STATE POETRY SOCIETY: Alabama State Poet Laureate Jennifer Horne will join Adam Vines, editor of the *Birmingham Poetry Reviews*, for key presentations at ASPS' fall meeting at the Pell City Library on Oct. 28. Winners of the poetry society's contests will also be announced at the meeting. Before the meeting, ASPS poets will gather for a round robin reading on a paddle boat cruising Lake Logan Martin on Oct. 27. In addition, plans are already in the works for a spring meeting on April 27-28 at the Orange Beach Public Library. ~ *Kimberly L. Wright, Secretary*

POETS' ROUNDTABLE OF ARKANSAS Poetry Day 2017 is being hosted by PRA's River Branch on October 21st at the Butler Center for Arkansas Studies in Little Rock. The featured speaker will be Bryan Borland, poet, author, editor, Pushcart nominee and winner of numerous honors. Poetry Day Chairman is Cathy Moran and Poetry Day Contest Chairman is Liz Faulkner. This annual event honors past Arkansas Poet Laureate Rosa Zagnoni Marinoni who established the first Arkansas Poetry Day on October 15, 1948. PRA is

again partnering with the Arkansas State Fair to sponsor the "Best-of-Show" poetry winners in four age groups. The winners will be announced in October on the Fair's and PRA's websites. Poets' Roundtable is now featuring member's books for sale: on poetsroundtableofarkansas.org under the RESOURCES tab, select PRA MEMBERS' POETRY BOOKS FOR SALE. ~ *Laura Loughridge, Secretary*

FLORIDA STATE POETS ASSOCIATION is reaching out to "closet poets" with ads in the *Florida Writer*, the magazine for our sister organization, Florida Writers Association. Several of our members belong to both groups and it's a way to find new people. FSPA is also reaching out to younger poets through arts classes in high schools and college creative writing programs. Our society newsletter is now electronic. Those members without computers will get a mailed copy. Emailing has cut printing and mailing costs enormously ~ *Alice R. Friedman, Secretary*

GEORGIA POETRY SOCIETY met at Georgia State University's Perimeter College Newton Campus in July. *The 2017 Reach of Song Anthology* was presented. Candy Green of Cleveland, GA, was the editor. The anthology may be purchased at georgiapoetrysociety.org or on amazon.com. Danielle Hanson spoke on "Creating a New Reality Through Poetry: Using Poetry to Recreate the World." She used examples from magical realist and surrealist poetry from around the world. She pointed out that by mixing elements of the world we live in, we can make poetry new and startling, while retaining its truth. There were readings by Danielle Hanson and by Ron Self, winner of the GPS 2015 Dickson Chapbook Contest with his chapbook, *Requiem for the Unconvinced*. Details on the fall 2017 adult contests, open to all adults, may be found at georgiapoetrysociety.org. The October meeting in Blairsville, GA, will be a joint meeting with North Carolina poets. ~ *Ann Kuykendall Gillespie, Reporter*

ILLINOIS STATE POETRY SOCIETY in July began the new two-year term of the ISPS board. Two new members joined returning officers and chapter facilitators. Plans are underway for a presentation by a lawyer representing Lawyers for the Creative Arts. Legal issues involved with publishing, copyright laws, and borrowed lines among other related topics will be discussed at the Indian Prairie Public Library. Our Brewed Awakening poetry gatherings continue to celebrate poets and their work. The Southern Chapter plans a year-long free distribution of poetry books

and journals at workshop events and area public libraries. The collection was donated by poet and teacher Alan Britt, and the estate of Phillip T. Egleston. ISPS has also been offered three boxes of poetry anthologies once owned by Glenna Holloway who is deceased. Distribution methods are pending. The Haiku Chapter continues to grow and has become a study group for the haiku form. Members share their recent publication successes and then discuss haiku that mystify and those that delight based on what participants have read in haiku journals. There is often a haiku exercise or presentation on a topic of interest and then a group critique of members' haiku. For information visit our website: illinoispoets.org. ~ *Susan T. Moss, President*

MAINE POETS SOCIETY gathered in September at the Belfast Free Library. The contest poems (any form, 24-line limit, open to members only) were judged by Jeri Theriault. A Fulbright recipient and three-time Pushcart Prize nominee, Jeri holds an MFA from Vermont College of Fine Arts. Her teaching career includes six years as English department chair at the International School of Prague. For the results of the contest and to learn more about the society, please visit mainepoetsociety.com or contact MPS President Jenny Doughty at MPSPresident@maine.rr.com. Instead of a general meeting in February, the society will once again offer three regional winter meetings, probably one each in Waterville, Auburn, and Westbrook. These are still in the development stage. Information will be available in the December issue of the society's newsletter, *Stanza*, and will also be posted on the website. ~ *Sally Joy, Reporter*

MISSISSIPPI POETRY SOCIETY'S Annual Contest, as announced by Contest Chairman Judy Davies, is now up on the MPS website, misspoetry.net. Please see the information under "CONTESTS." Janice Canerdy is the newly elected president of the North Branch. She is gearing up to begin a new round robin among the members of North Branch. North Branch meets 3-4 times a year at the Casey Jones Railroad Museum in Water Valley where they read and critique poems of the members attending. The *Starkville Daily News* is putting a new emphasis on poetry and has asked our state president for members of MPS to submit poetry to them. South Branch of MPS has compiled an anthology of members' holiday poetry and it is now available. Preliminary planning is being made for the 2018 MPS Poetry Festival to be held on April 7-8, 2018, at the Gulf Hills Resort and Conference center in Ocean Springs, MS. Dr. Sue Walker, Professor of

Creative Writing at the University of South Alabama, will be the keynote speaker. There will be interactive workshops; winners of the poetry contest will be announced. Come celebrate with us during Poetry Month on the beautiful Mississippi Gulf Coast! ~ *Michael Shelton, President*

NEW MEXICO STATE POETRY SOCIETY held our Annual Meeting and State Convention on April 29th. Aside from workshops led by Elizabeth Raby, Kelly and Pamela Yenser, and by Manuel Gonzales, for the first time we had a “publishers panel” with a variety of local presses. We bid adieu to Andi Penner, who served as President these last two years, and welcomed the newly elected board. Our first Poets Picnic was hosted by the Open Space Visitor Center and featured the Albuquerque calligraphy society, Escribiente, and local poets. The celebration honored art, nature and poetry. In June, NMSPS was excited to support Santa Fe Poetry Trails’ “Worlds Through Words: A Multicultural Poetry Celebration.” Poets Haleh Liza, Uche Nduka, Brynn Saito, and James Thomas Stevens came together to offer an expansion of our boundaries. The event included radio interviews and a filmmaker who documented the three-day celebration. NMSPS poets Dante Berry, Ginny Gaskill, and Mark Fleisher organized “Voices of the Cottonwoods.” We hope to plan a poetry contest geared to children of all ages to further involve children and their families and friends. Our Poetry-in-the-Classroom now takes place at three elementary schools. Many NMSPS members and other residents of New Mexico participate to share in these special experiences. ~ *Bernadette Perez, President*

POETRY SOCIETY OF OKLAHOMA is celebrating National Poetry Day on Oct. 7th at the Twin Hills Country Club in Oklahoma City. The theme for 2017 is “Freedom.” We will celebrate with our annual Poetry Day Contest results and awards. At the luncheon members will share favorite poems they have written or poems about freedom. October is also our annual business meeting with election of PSO Officers for the next two-year term. November 30, 2017, is the deadline for PSO’s Annual Spring Contest. For details see: angelfire.com/poetry/psa. We are working diligently to get the word out about poetry and our own organization. We have articles in several area newspapers regarding workshops and other events. We share our newsletter, *The Oklahoma Rose*, with several college libraries and the Metropolitan Libraries. PSO also sends our newsletter online to other writers’ organizations. And we always encourage our

members to invite guests to various PSO events. Finally, our members are looking forward to celebrating the holidays and the end of another year with a Christmas banquet and get-together December 9th at Twin Hills Country Club. ~ *Patti Koch, President*

PENNSYLVANIA POETRY SOCIETY held its annual Spring Luncheon on April 22, 2017, at the Cornwall Manor in Cornwall, PA. In addition to a general business meeting and a writing workshop, winners of the PPS 2017 poetry contest were announced, and those present read their winning poems. PPS accepts entries for its annual contests from October 15th through January 15th (postmarked). The contest brochure, when it becomes available, will be posted for download at nfsp.com/pa under the Contests link. Questions regarding the annual contests can be submitted to Vicky Fake-Weldon, contest chair, at dvweldon51@gmail.com. ~ *Steven Concert, reporting*

WYOPOETS during the June meeting, at the Wyoming Writers Conference, elected new board members: Myra Peak as Past President, Susan Mark as President, Lyndi O’Laughlin as Vice President, Sue Wilcox as Treasurer, and Pat Frolander as Secretary. WyoPoets wants to thank the following outgoing board members for all their hard work: Treasurer Art Elser, Secretary Echo Klaproth, and President Karen Heath. (Susan Mark works as a publications specialist at the Wyoming Library, co-blogs at Writing Wyoming with Lynn G. Carlson, and serves as WyoPoets webmaster. Myra Peak is a former Wyoming Arts Council Poetry fellowship recipient. Pat Frolander is Wyoming’s fifth Poet Laureate and is currently working on her third collection of poems.) We are holding our 2018 workshop in Cheyenne, Wyoming. Art Elser will be the guest presenter. The workshop will be held sometime in April. Cheyenne was chosen for its history and location. Chere Hagopian, Susan Mark, Diane Egge, Christina Kamnikar, Amy Shaw, and Lynn Carlson volunteered to be on the committee. Be on the lookout for more details at wyopoets.org. Member Carol Deering has had poems published in *Gyroscope Review*, *Oakwood Literary Magazine*, *Sky Island Journal*, *The Ocotillo Review*, *NatureWriting*, and *Howl of the Wild*. ~ *Angel Mizner, Reporter*

NFSPS POETRY CONTESTS

Details for the following contests, including submission rules, can be found on nfsp.com by first selecting the Poetry Contests link, then on the Contests page select the appropriate contest link.

2018 ANNUAL CONTESTS

There are 49 contests for adults and one for students grades 9-12. Contest start date is January 1, 2018, and the deadline (postmark date for mailed entries) is March 15, 2018. Contest #1 (NFSPS Founders Award: 1st Prize \$1,000, 2nd Prize \$500, and 3rd Prize \$250) and Contest #50 (Student Award) allow for, but do not require, electronic submission via submittable.com. (Note that setting up an account on submittable.com is free.) There is a fee to enter Contest #1 but not for students entering Contest #50. Of the 49 contests for adult poets, 29 of them are open to members and non-members alike. (Note: “Membership” is automatic to all whose dues to a state society are paid up and names appear on the list the state society sends to the NFSPS Treasurer. Such membership includes the privilege of entering the remaining 20 contests, all for a reduced entry fee.)

2018 BlackBerryPeach Prizes for Poetry: Spoken and Heard

Awards: 1st Prize \$1,000, 2nd Prize \$500, and 3rd Prize \$250. This innovative contest, new in 2017, has a starting date of January 1, 2018, and deadline of March 15, 2018. Submissions may only be made via submittable.com. This contest requires submission of four poems, each with a separate audio file, and a transcript of the four poems in a single electronic document in either Word or .pdf format.

2017 COLLEGE UNDERGRADUATE POETRY COMPETITION

Two winners will be chosen for the College Undergraduate Poetry (CUP) Competition, one receiving the Edna Meudt Memorial Award (\$500), the other receiving the Florence Kahn Memorial Award (\$500). Undergraduates working toward a degree in an accredited U.S. college or university during the contest submission period are eligible to enter. The manuscript submission consists of 10 poems in a single Word or .pdf file. Submission via submittable.com is from December 1, 2017, to January 31, 2018. No fee is required to submit.

MANNINGHAM TRUST STUDENT POETRY CONTEST

Rules: 2018 annual competition

1. There are two divisions: Grades 6-8 (Junior Division) and Grades 9-12 (Senior Division). Each state may submit ten (10) poems in each division. Poems may have

been printed and/or have won previous awards. Contests at state level may have occurred anytime in 2017 or 2018.

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 35 lines including space lines with no line having more than 60 characters including spaces and punctuation. Every poem entered should appear on a single sheet. 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. Larger fonts also make it impossible to confine the poem to one page, which is required.

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, 2018.

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, 2018. 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, 2018.

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 at the addresses/numbers below.

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

2017 STEVENS POETRY MANUSCRIPT COMPETITION

The deadline for the Stevens Poetry Manuscript Competition has been extended to **November 15, 2017**. Submissions must be made either online via submittable.com or postmarked by this date. That will give you plenty of time to complete your manuscript for submission this year! Please encourage your poet friends to consider submitting their best manuscript for a chance to earn \$1,000, publication, and 50 copies that they can sell or use as gifts.

Poets should submit 48-70 pages of poetry. The manuscript must not be previously published, though some of the poems may have appeared in print or on the Internet. Simultaneous submissions are permitted so long as you notify the contest chair if your manuscript is accepted elsewhere. If you are a member of a state poetry society, association or league that is affiliated with the NFSPS, your submission fee is \$20; non-members pay \$25. Guidelines at nfsp.com/stevens1.htm. ~ Wilda Morris, Stevens Manuscript Competition Chair

2015 STEVENS WINNER RECEIVES AN ADDITIONAL RECOGNITION

Midnight River by Laura Hansen, winner of the 2015 Stevens Poetry Manuscript Competition and published by the NFSPS, was a finalist in the 27th Annual Midwest Book Awards competition for books

published during the 2016 calendar year. The judge of the Stevens Competition, Bruce Dethlefsen, former Poet Laureate of Wisconsin, says that Hansen's poems illustrate "what great poetry does right." Evidently, judges of the Midwest Book Awards agree with his assessment. The Midwest Independent Publishing Association has sponsored the book awards for authors from a 12-state area since 1990.

POETRY ARTICLES

Increasing Membership

By Steven Concert, NFSPS Chancellor
and Youth Chair

As an elected NFSPS board member, I have been actively involved in helping to move this organization along for quite some time. One of the most frustrating aspects is the expectation that board members have some special method to increase the organization's membership. At NFSPS conventions, recurring topics include "How do we increase our membership?" and "How do we get younger poets to join?" Unfortunately, this must happen on the state level. In order for NFSPS to grow, our individual state societies must grow.

In the past, I have tried to answer these questions and have provided details via articles in *Strophes*. While elected leaders of NFSPS can brainstorm on methods to best achieve this goal, it is the state societies that must be willing to go out and do the leg work. Some of the responsibility for growing membership then falls upon the shoulders of your elected state leaders. They must be willing to put the organization's needs first. By accepting an elected term, they are offering to lead and to do what's best for the organization. That most certainly includes developing methods to increase your state's membership and motivating your own members to actively recruit new members.

To that end, I feel a need to shift my focus of Youth Chair to be more of an advisor to state societies. If you want guidance on methods to increase your membership, especially with younger poets, contact me at paperlesspoets@gmail.com. I cannot come to your state and do all of the work, but I can try to guide you past the hurdles you face.

Alliteration

By New Mexico State Poetry Society
President Bernadette Perez and New Mexico
State Poetry Society VP Iris Gersh

Alliteration, one of the first forms poets learn in school, is the repetition of the same initial letter, sound, or group of sounds in a series of words, as in the Gerard Manley Hopkins line "[king-]dom of daylight's dauphin, dapple-dawn-drawn Falcon..."

“The Windhover” by Gerard Manley Hopkins

To Christ our Lord

I caught this morning morning’s minion, king-
dom of daylight’s dauphin, dapple-dawn-
drawn Falcon, in his riding

Of the rolling level underneath him steady
air, and striding

High there, how he rung upon the rein of a
wimpling wing

In his ecstasy! then off, off forth on swing,

As a skate’s heel sweeps smooth on a bow-
bend: the hurl and gliding

Rebuffed the big wind. My heart in hiding
Stirred for a bird, — the achieve of, the
mastery of the thing!

Brute beauty and valour and act, oh, air, pride,
plume, here

Buckle! AND the fire that breaks from thee
then, a billion

Times told lovelier, more dangerous, O my
chevalier!

No wonder of it: shéer plóid makes plough
down sillion

Shine, and blue-bleak embers, ah my dear,

Fall, gall themselves, and gash gold-
vermilion.

Challenge

Write a poem about a moment when you felt lifted up and transformed by watching an animal in nature. For an extra challenge, experiment with some of the poetic devices that Hopkins uses so beautifully in “The Windhover”.

Apply a Judge’s Rating System to Your Poem

By Kathy Cotton, Illinois State Poetry Society and *Encore* Editor

Russell H. Strauss of Memphis, TN, is not only a frequent poetry contest judge, he is also a frequent poetry contest winner. That combination makes this former NFSPS president’s judging methodology a useful tool for all of us as we prepare submissions for poetry contests. Especially for contests like NFSPS, where the judge must choose between a large number of good poems, Strauss finds that his rating system makes judging “a little less subjective.” He assigns a numerical rating from 1 to 10 for each of eight categories and totals the number, “like I might if I were judging a skating competition or gymnastic competition,” Strauss explains. Before you submit your next contest or publication poems, test their strength in his eight categories. Perhaps it will help you win, too.

1. Originality
2. Cohesiveness
3. Figurative language.
4. Appropriateness to form or topic.
5. Clarity

6. Meaning and purpose.
(The purpose does not have to be a serious one. Humor can be a purpose.)
7. Correctness: grammar, punctuation, spelling, accurate word usage, accurate background information, etc.
8. Beginnings and endings: title, first line, last line.

[The above was adapted from an article published in Illinois State Poetry Society’s September/October 2017 newsletter, *Illinois Poets*.]

Submitting a Poetry Manuscript to a Contest

By Wilda Morris, Illinois State Poetry Society and Stevens Manuscript Competition Chair

Having screened submissions to the Stevens Poetry Manuscript Competition for two years, I want to share some suggestions that apply to most poetry manuscript competitions.

The first rule is obvious but not always obeyed: Follow the posted guidelines carefully. If, for instance, guidelines specify a Word or text file, and you submit a .pdf file, it can be summarily rejected. Your submission fee is non-refundable.

Page limits must be taken seriously. If you don’t have enough poems to meet the minimum requirement, write more. If your manuscript is too long, don’t use miniscule type. Cull out weaker poems. You will have a stronger manuscript, anyway.

I received manuscripts with poems in bold italics, a variety of fonts and type-sizes, unusual styles of page-numbering, and titles and headings in colored print. “Clever” formatting distracts from the poetry, and makes a manuscript very unlikely to win.

A poetry manuscript should be more than a collection of poems thrown together; it should have a connecting theme of some kind. One manuscript began with a blurb like those you find on the back cover of a book. It told the reader how good the book was, and described the arc of the collection. This was inappropriate; a manuscript has to speak for itself. A table of contents and division into well-named sections are the “pre-reading tools” that should provide hints to the arc or theme.

An enticing manuscript title draws the reader in, but if it is misleading, it creates a negative response. If the title is “Herbert Hoover in Memphis,” I don’t expect the first ten poems to be about clamming in Maine or horse racing in the Sahara. And if the last poem is “Odysseus comes home” or “David and Bathsheba Whisper Secrets,” I suspect that I’ve been tricked by the title, and doubt if any glue holds the collection together.

If I find a title poem, I read it first. You do

not have to have a title poem, but if you do, it should be a clue to the coherence of the manuscript.

A few other guidelines for manuscript preparation:

- * Carefully consider how you title individual poems. I have read many poems that would be stunning if the titles did not give away the ending. Don’t let your title spoil the surprise.
- * Look for and eliminate inconsistencies in capitalization and punctuation.
- * Number your pages.
- * Too many exclamation marks generally detract from a manuscript. Let the words express the emotion.
- * Make sure you are not submitting a copy that has editorial changes or critiques embedded in it.
- * Use the manuscript title as the file name. Never use your name as the name of the file you submit. If the judging is blind, as it is in most legitimate contests, your name is not to appear within or on the manuscript. If you use it as the title of the submission, you tell the screener or judge who you are.
- * Have your manuscript read and edited by a couple of poet friends. It is easier to catch errors of spelling, grammar, and punctuation in someone else’s work than in your own.

Each contest has its own rules. The larger a manuscript competition, the more likely submissions will be eliminated for small violations. Read and follow guidelines with care.

You can find the rules for the Stevens Poetry Manuscript Competition at nfsp.com/stevens1.htm or send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to Wilda Morris, Stevens Poetry Manuscript Competition, 499 Falcon Ridge Way, Bolingbrook, IL 60440.

Nonconformity or Clarity: the Poet’s Dilemma

By Ron Weber, Poetry Society of Michigan

The Academy of American Poets has announced the recipients of the 2017 American Poets Prizes with Jorie Graham awarded the \$100,000 Wallace Stevens Award. This got me thinking once again about the decisions artists in general and poets in particular have to make relative to nonconformity and clarity in their respective art genres.

Perhaps the most famous nonconformist poet that most of us are aware of is E. E. Cummings. A seismic controversy erupted in the winter of 1950 when the Academy of American Poets awarded him the \$5,000 (\$50,000 in today’s \$) annual fellowship. The detractors were vehement and even

included hate mail to the Academy and Maria Bullock, its founder. Cummings was accused of having no respect for language and was destroying it. He was a pretender and a nonconformist who had no respect for the traditions and forms of the art of poetry.

Bullock countered by writing "Life would be dull indeed without experimenters and courageous breakers-with-tradition." And way before that, Emerson forewarned that in a groupthink society, conformity is the most prized virtue, but whoever strives to be a true person must be a nonconformist.

Back to Jorie Graham, and I would also include John Ashbery and a significant number of others getting published today within the realm of the revered poetry establishment; i.e., academia and all of its literary offshoots that emanate from the university conclaves—to wit, MFA programs. To my mind, Graham and Ashbery represent the contemporary nonconformity, which has actually been around for a while now, and is in the form of confusing and uncertain meaning in their poetry at best, and overly abstract, obscure and undecipherable meaning at worst.

This isn't necessarily the case in all of their writing, but it seems to predominate. And when is the last time you heard one of the poetry elites criticize or claim to not understand a poem from another of the poetry elites? They seem to only praise it as, perhaps, insurance that their next poetry collection will also be praised with glowing, over-the-top language on the dust jacket that borders on unintelligible to even Masters Degree and above graduates.

When I struggle to understand an obscure, difficult poem, I do so because I want to know what it is trying to tell me. I truly do want to connect with the soul of the message, but too many times the frustration of failure leads, quite naturally, to resentment. I am insulted by anyone who has no respect for my time and claims to want to communicate with me through poetry but chooses to be obscure about the message conveyed, but I should still hold him/her in high regard as a poet.

I'm left feeling that the last term any of the poetry elites want to have used in describing their poetry is accessible. The ability to understand their poetry within two or three readings, which strikes me as acceptable, is apparently seen as the kiss of death to an upper tier "accomplished" poet. Billy Collins, Mary Oliver and others are regularly interpreted as accessible. Apparently, they've never, as a result, written a quality poem in their lives, right?

The question faced by poets, then, is nonconformity or clarity. I do believe that nonconformity is essential in the arts and is

the only path to growth and innovation, and it should be honored to a degree, but it need not be pervasive to the detriment of the full enjoyment of the art of poetry to the largest possible audience. That would be myopic and self-defeating. As a poet, do you want to be heard and understood, or do you want to be among the revered, well known elites?

No matter where in the country you are, if you go to enough open mic readings at libraries, pubs, bistros, galleries, and slams, you eventually have an epiphany. It's that some of the best poets and prose writers that are writing and reciting are ones you would never have heard of otherwise. You find yourself saying, "Holy cow! Why haven't I heard about this poet or that writer before?" I read a ton and I am convinced that some of the best writers in the country are unpretentiously walking among us and they are every bit as good as the "big names."

Judging Poetry Forms

By Steven Concert, NFSPS Chancellor

As a judge of poetry contests, I have had to disqualify entries because I did not feel that they met the basic requirement of the type of poem that contestants were being asked to submit. Consider for example lyric poems, these should not be narrative or descriptive, but should express emotion or ideas and use poetic devices to help convey the emotion or idea. Generally forms such as sonnets, odes, elegies and hymns are used for lyric poems, but there is no requirement for anything specific. Imagine the frustration of a contest judge to receive the packet of entries only to find a substantial number are narrative or descriptive. What should one do, judge them anyway? That does not honor the intent of the contest sponsor who asked that entries be for a specific form.

I think state societies are in a strong position to try to help members, as well as non-members, who enter contests to better understand the different forms. Perhaps when a contest category requires the use of a particular form, the specifics can be listed on the society's website as a tutorial, maybe even a .pdf or .doc file to download. And maybe even a well-known example of the form could be cited as reference. This might help to reduce, if not eliminate, the number of entries that do not fit the category requirements. Additionally, when contest sponsors name a specific form to use, they could be asked to provide the specifics of the form to the contest chair. It does not feel fair that a judge should be left to second guess what the contest sponsor intended.

Future Convention Locations Needed

By Polly Opsahl, NFSPS Convention Coordinator and President of the Poetry Society of Michigan
pollyopsahl@gmail.com

Have you ever thought your state would be a great place for a poetry convention? What better way to showcase the talent in your organization than to host a future NFSPS convention. It's a great way to foster interest in your state society and gain new members.

I have had the pleasure of seeing many states by attending NFSPS National Conventions. My first convention was in Mississippi. I have been to conventions in Minnesota three times, Utah three times, Florida twice, Georgia, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, South Dakota, and Tennessee. My own state of Michigan hosted a convention several years ago.

NFSPS needs your help! We need interested state societies to invite our members to see what's great about your state and your members, and show us what's happening in poetry in your communities.

If you're interested, please contact me and I can share information on what's needed to host a convention.

STATE REPORTS

By Jim Lambert, *Strophes* Assoc. Editor

State Reports are a wonderful resource for NFSPS chapters. Why? It is a marketplace of ideas for all kinds of things that can be done to increase membership, spread the word about poetry, get young people involved—the list goes on and on.

What we like to see in the reports are new ideas, things that were tried that worked, and more importantly, things that didn't work. I am reminded of a Saturday that a group of us at a writing conference decided to do random acts of poetry. We entered a bar and started reading our poetry and every single patron got up and walked out. We concluded from that experience that the random acts could be too random, and should undergo a modicum of planning.

This is the kind of thing that should be passed along in the state reports. It is wonderful that a facility was perfect for a meeting, but a detailed accounting of its advantages is not going to help a state that is 2,000 miles away. That would be local info and should be in the state's newsletter.

We have a limited amount of space in the newsletter so we try to hold state reports to a maximum of 200 words. Cutting out information that is not beneficial to other states is an easy way to fit your state report into the word limit.

President's Message from page 1

Jo has graciously given me permission to reprint her following two poems:

Taxidermy

Let us mourn the giraffe and zebra,
dead during heavy bombardment
in a Gaza Strip zoo--
one of terror,
one of tear gas.
There is no money to replace them,
so they will be stuffed
and put back in their cages
for children to see
how it was when these were animals--
although someone who can remember
will have to explain
how the brusque tails sent flies reeling;
how, like barley in an evening wind,
they bent their necks to water;
how the eyes were not glass then,
and darker.

In the Home of the Famous Dead, The University of Arkansas Press (2015)

Threads

She had lost her memory at 35.
"So what?" her husband always says, and smiles
when someone remarks. Tonight they've come
to hear B.B. King in concert, live, in Memphis.
They saw B.B. last year, but she can't recall.
Her husband reminds her of that evening now,
quickly moving them through the smoky crowd
so she can get a closer look. In perfect
patience and love, he seats her where she
commands

a clear view of the stage, closing his hand
and opening it on the smooth back of her chair.
At the small table, their elbows touch.
On the stage, B.B. is resplendent in black
and baby blue. The husband asks his wife
if she remembers the color of the jacket
when they saw him last. "Pink," she says.
It was orange. But he likes the way she touches
his arm
when memory skims the surface of her mind
like, he imagines, the shadow of a gull
over sleeping water. His face burns
with the thought, the hope, that tonight in bed--
perhaps early, perhaps late--she will turn
to him and speak against his back, recalling
the jacket perfectly.

In the Home of the Famous Dead, The University of Arkansas Press (2015)

Please extend both a heartfelt "Thank you"
to Peter Meinke and a warm welcome to our
newest Honorary Chancellor, Jo McDougall.

Live. Love. Write (and read) Poetry.

James (Jim) Barton ~ 32nd NFSPS President

HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT NATIONAL FEDERATION BOOK PUBLICATIONS

If you have purchased any NFSPS prize-winning books since 2016 and like what you read, please support the author(s) and NFSPS by writing a brief review for the book on amazon.com, barnesandnoble.com or other websites/publications accepting such reviews.

NFSPS 2018 CONVENTION IN DENVER, CO (from page 1)

adventure sports enthusiasts, Denver itself boasts metropolitan variety and Western charm—2 things in short supply elsewhere in Colorado. City parks and botanical gardens, art museums and the hipster-filled downtown district barely scratch the surface for those itching to further explore the city's cultural attractions. See columbinepoetsofcolorado.com for the "2018 NFSPS Convention" link, or email nfspd2018@columbinepoetsofcolorado.com.

NFSPS SPEAKER DATABASE

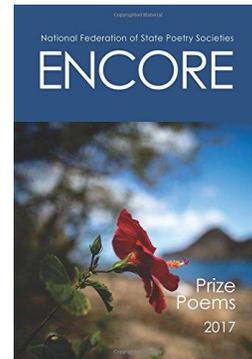
During the strategic planning meeting which followed the 2016 NFSPS Convention in Minnesota, it was concluded that NFSPS can and should find ways to add value to services offered to state societies and members. One such service will be a Speakers Database that can be utilized by states, chapters, or even individual members when developing programming to fit their needs.

The database will list individuals who are willing to give workshops and/or presentations and include details of their offerings. The database will be made available through the NFSPS website, and email when requested.

Members who have presentations and want to be listed in the database may contact Steven Concert, NFSPS Chancellor, via email or snail mail (see page 2 of *Strophes* for contact details). He will provide an information form to be completed and returned.

ENCORE COVER ART SUBMISSIONS OPEN

Editor Kathy Cotton announces a cover photo submission deadline of January 15, 2018, for the next *Encore Prize Poems*. Photos must be a minimum of 8"x10" at 300 dpi with background suitable for text layout (see 2016 and 2017 covers, nfspd.com). Email .jpg files to kalcotton@gmail.com.



ENCORE 2017

The 2017 edition of *Encore Prize Poems*, including 18 poems by NFSPS board members and past president Clarence Socwell, is now available on amazon.com.

~ Kathy Cotton,
Encore Editor

TO THE EXECUTIVE BOARD AND MEMBERS OF NFSPS

I want to express my deep appreciation for the great honor you gave to me at the national convention, for your most kind recognition of my work as Editor of the *Encore* for 12 years. I was touched by your generosity in both words and gifts for doing something I never thought of as "work" or "service", for to me, it was a pleasure. I truly enjoyed every minute of producing the *Encore*, and it was with great regret that physical limitations forced me to give up what I loved so much.

Thank you for allowing me to enjoy the *Encore* for 12 years. I am impressed with our new Editor, Kathy Cotton. Her first edition was beautifully done. I hope she will get as much pleasure from it as I have.

Love and thanks to you all, Valerie Bailey,
Editor Emeritus, *Encore*