



# 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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April 2012

### President's Message



Dear NFSPS Poets:

Time passes so quickly. This is my last message to you as president. I suppose every president of NFSPS has felt the same way at this time in their presidency. When you first become president, there seems to be no limit to what you might accomplish; but then you realize that change comes slowly and that each presidency is part of a continuum. Here are a few final

thoughts:

We must continue to offer new benefits to member states. There are so many other things that we might be doing to promote creative poetry. It is still not too late to let me know about some of the changes you would like to see occur.

We must seek outside funding for our NFSPS. Our state societies cannot afford to pay additional NFSPS dues in the foreseeable future. We must find more creative ways to fund our activities.

We need to revise our constitution to provide for officers who due to illness, etc. cannot fulfill their duties. Many of our board members have been diligent in their duties, and I greatly appreciate all of them, both elected and appointed; but we truly need to have people on our elective board who are willing to make a commitment for the entire two year term.

We need to explore new topics and forms for our NFSPS contests. We see so many contests over and over again. Again, this is totally at the discretion of the donor and we appreciate all our donors, but some of us might want to contemplate some new forms and topics in the future.

We need to encourage more people to attend our national conventions. Think about going to Merrillville this year and to Albuquerque next year.

Many people would like to see revisions in *Strophes*. We invite all of you to share your expertise and become columnists for *Strophes*. Poets want to know more about how to write better poetry.

We need to be proactive in encouraging non-affiliated societies to join NFSPS. I firmly believe that most of our NFSPS contests should be offered to members only as a benefit for being affiliated. There is no reason for any poet in this country not to affiliate with one of our societies if he wants membership benefits. If he lives in a state where there is no affiliated society, another society is always willing to accept his membership.

I know I have written about many of these things before, but I hope you will continue to think about them. Thank you for the great privilege of being your president for the past two years. There are so many individuals that I would like to thank, but I would not want to accidentally leave one off the list. You have all been truly special I will continue to work hard for our organization just as I have in the past. After all:

POETS ARE SPECIAL PEOPLE.

Yours with most sincere affection,  
Russell H. Strauss ~ 29th NFSPS President

### The Crossroads of America Poetry Extravaganza June 14 – 18, 2012 Merrillville, Indiana

#### Program

#### Wednesday, June 13

Early Bards Arrival - ISFPC Welcome  
Early Registration 3-5 PM in Book Rm  
Dinner on your own. Possible Jim  
Dandy gathering

#### Thursday, June 14

9:00 AM - 6:00 PM Registration  
9:00 AM - 4:00 PM Book Room  
9:00 AM Tour to Fair Oaks Dairy Farm  
(see page 4 for more details)  
1:30 - 3:00 PM Board Meeting  
5:30 - 8:30 PM Performance Poetry:  
Ethel Fields, Jeff Manes, Cornelius  
House

#### Friday, June 15

7:00 - 8:00 AM Open Reading  
8:00 AM State President's Meeting  
9:00 AM - 5:00 PM Book Room Open  
9:30 AM First Plenary Session  
10:45 AM Belinda Potoma "Lost in  
Translation"  
12:30 PM **Lunch** Invocation Poem,  
Manningham Awards, Door Prizes,  
Contest Awards  
2:30 PM Amy Kindred "Art & Poetry"  
3:45 PM Country Music: Jim Kirk,  
Peggy Hendricks  
5:30 - 9:45 PM **Dinner** Invocation  
Poem, Scholarship Winners, Door  
Prizes, Contest Awards  
10:00 PM Open Reading at Starbucks

#### Saturday, June 16

7:00 - 8:00 AM Open Reading  
9:00 - 10:00 AM Registration  
9:00 AM - 5:00 PM Book Room Open  
9:00 - 10:45 AM "Poetry Today" Panel,  
David Stocking, Moderator; with  
Marcie Rae Johnson and Ed Byrns of  
Valparaiso University  
12:30 PM **Lunch** Invocation Poem,  
Youth Awards, Door Prizes, Contest  
Awards  
2:45 - 4:30 PM Emily Dickinson  
Presentation by Paddy Lynn  
4:30 PM Country Singers: Jim Kirk,  
Peggy Hendricks  
5:30 PM **Dinner** Invocation Poem,  
Stevens Manuscript Winner, Door  
Prizes, Contest Awards  
10:00 PM Open Reading at Starbucks

#### Sunday, June 17

7:00 - 8:00 AM Open Reading  
8:00 AM - 2:30 PM Book Room Open  
8:00 - 9:00 AM Business Meeting  
9:30 AM Second Plenary Session  
11:00 AM String Quartet  
12:30 PM **Lunch** Invocation Poem,  
Special Awards presented by Amy  
Zook, Poetry Day Awards, Door  
Prizes, Contest Awards  
2:30 PM Andy Jaske "Poetry in Song  
Lyrics"  
4:00 PM Farewell Social  
5:00 PM Reception  
6:30 PM **Dinner** Invocation Poem,  
Keynote Speaker, Mark Turcotte,  
Door Prizes, Final Contest Awards  
10:00 PM Open Reading at Starbucks

#### MONDAY, June 18

Tour to Albanese Candy Factory

#### WE ARE WAITING FOR YOU!

Once again the INDIANA STATE FEDERATION OF POETRY CLUBS would like to cordially invite all of you to attend our POETRY SPECTACULAR, June 14-18, 2012 at the Star Plaza Radisson Hotel, intersection of I-65 and US 30 in Merrillville, IN (northern Indiana, near Chicago). We will welcome you with wonderful "goody bags" and entertain you to the best of our ability.

Due to the fact that we claim Hoagy Carmichael and Cole Porter as our native sons, there will be some music for your enjoyment. We have some great workshops scheduled and you will find our table decorations and door prizes pleasing.

Our hotel offers sleep number beds, outside and inside pools, free wireless high speed internet service, an Irish Pub, Starbucks, a Comedy Club, and free parking. We think you will be quite comfortable.

The scrapbook from our 1994 Convention in Indianapolis will be on display in the bookroom. Bring your contest brochures for the "free" table. COME JOIN US!

See [www.isfpc.org](http://www.isfpc.org) for convention schedule and registration form.



**Keynote speaker, Mark Turcotte**, Ojibwe poet, was born April 5, 1958 and spent his earliest years on North Dakota's Turtle Mountain Chippewa Reservation and in the migrant camps of the western United States. Later, he grew up in and around Lansing, MI. After leaving school he traveled the country, working and living on the road for nearly fifteen years.



Arriving in Chicago in the spring of 1993, Turcotte rediscovered his love of words and writing, quickly establishing himself as a unique voice in the city's thriving poetry scene. That summer he was winner of the First Gwendolyn Brooks Open-mic Poetry Award. Soon thereafter he was selected by Ms. Brooks as a Significant Illinois Poet and was named to the Illinois Authors Poster. During the remainder of his time in Chicago he was the recipient of a Writer's Community Residency from National Writer's Voice and was awarded the 1997 Josephine Gates Kelly Memorial Fellowship from the Wordcraft Circle of Native Writers and Storytellers. He left Chicago in early 1998 to live and work in Door County, Wisconsin.

Turcotte is author of *The Feathered Heart*; *Songs of Our Ancestors*; a chapbook, *Road Noise*, and *Le Chant de la Route*, a bilingual selection of his work published in Paris. His latest collection, *Exploding Chippewas*, is in its third printing. His poetry and fiction have recently appeared in *LUNA*, *TriQuarterly*, *POETRY*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Ploughshares*, *The Missouri Review*, *The Seattle Review*, *Rosebud*, *Hunger Mountain*, *North Dakota Quarterly*, and *The Laurel Review*. His poem, *The Flower On*, was chosen by the Poetry Society of America for inclusion in their Poetry In Motion project, which places poetry placards on public transportation in cities across the United States.

Over the past years Mark has been awarded Literary Fellowships in 1999 and in 2003 by the Wisconsin Arts Board, and was honored with a 2001-2002 Lannan Foundation Literary Completion Grant. He has completed a National Book Foundation American Voices assignment at the Wind River Indian Reservation of Wyoming, and a Lannan Writer's Residency in Marfa, Texas. His work is included in the national high school poetry recitation project, *Poetry OutLoud*.

After serving as the 2008-09 Visiting Native Writer at the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe, New Mexico, he has returned to Chicago where he is Visiting Assistant Professor of Creative Writing at DePaul University.

**Amy Kindred** of Indianapolis, IN, is a painter with paintings in private and public collections across the United States and in Mexico, and a 2005 Creative Renewal Arts Fellowship winner. Her art work was published in *UU World Magazine*. She is also a writer, theologian, and a former art teacher and arts administrator.



Her essays are included in *Indiana Authors 2007: Twelve Writers from the Heartland* and *Indiana Authors 2007: Inspiration from the Heartland*, both titles published by New Century Publishing Company. Amy has a Master of Divinity degree, a Master of Theological Studies degree with research in art and religion, was ordained, and is currently serving the First Unitarian Universalist Congregation in Terre Haute, Indiana.

Her book, *Twin Muses: Art and Poetry*, was published in 2010 and includes the poetry of several Indiana poets written about the pictures in the book. This combination of the arts is very fascinating.

**Paddy Lynn:** I was six years old. My first grade class was doing a holiday program at the local high school. I walked out on stage dressed in a white tutu, carrying an enormous lollipop bigger than my head, when the lights suddenly flashed and the sound rolled, and *Voila!* - It was Showtime! From that moment on, the acting bug bit me and there was no stopping me. To this day, I continue to dream and live my passion as actress and storyteller. Not a day goes by that I don't thank God and my lucky stars for the opportunity.



All through my elementary and high school days, I was active in plays, and fascinated with theatre in general. It was no wonder I majored in theatre in college at Illinois State University, where I received my BA.

After finishing college, I joined a theatre group in Evanston, IL, and helped form a children's theatre company that went into schools in the Chicago metropolitan area. I had such a wonderful time sharing a variety of programs with the students that I decided to return to the schools after taking a hiatus to have my second daughter. When I returned, I worked as a substitute teacher and a teacher's aide in the elementary schools. I was actually honing my skills as a storyteller at the time, without being fully aware that I would soon launch into a career as a storyteller.

**David Warner Stocking** was born June 28, 1944 in North Adams, Massachusetts, the son of two English teachers, Dave didn't fall far from the tree. Recently stepping into semi-retirement, his own forty-six year career as an English teacher passed



through secondary schools and colleges in Pennsylvania, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Florida, and Indiana. He is a graduate of Bowdoin College (B.S.), Lehigh University (M.A.), and Boston University (D.Ed.). His involvement with reading and writing poetry has been a lifelong indulgence, and he currently cultivates these interests with kindred spirits in Anderson and Noblesville, Indiana. He now does tutoring and resides in Noblesville.

**Marci Rae Johnson** holds an MFA in Poetry Writing from Spalding University. She currently teaches at Valparaiso University where she serves as Poetry Editor



for *The Cresset* and on the English department reading series committee (Wordfest). She is also the Poetry Editor for WordFarm press. Her poems appear or are forthcoming in

*The Valparaiso Poetry Review*, *Perihelion*, *The Louisville Review*, *Phoebe*, *The Christian Century*, *Minnetonka Review*, *Strange Horizons*, and *32 Poems*, among others. Her first collection of poetry won the 2010 Powder Horn Prize and will be published by Sage Hill Press later this year.

#### BOOK ROOM INFORMATION POETS BRINGING BOOKS TO SELL

Please use Post-it stickers on each book for sale, listing title, author, and price of book. Also number the books that are for sale on this post-it. Place on outside, upper right-hand corner of books. Prepare a sheet listing all titles, number and price of each book, with name, address, and phone number at top. If mailing ahead, mail to:

Tom Spencer  
1651 East Commercial Ave.  
Lowell, IN 46356



**NFSPS NATIONAL CONVENTION POEMS:** Subject is Indiana, any aspect. May be any form, except prose poem, limited to 40 lines. Entry fee is \$10 for up to three poems. First prize is \$100 and second to tenth is \$10 each.

**NFSPS NATIONAL CONVENTION INVOCATION POEMS:** Subject is a poem of thanks, appreciation, or inspirational, non-denominational; limited to 20 lines. Entry fee is \$5 per poem, no limit. Six winners will receive \$25 each.

Rules common to both contests:

- 1) No poet may win more than one prize in each contest and must attend convention to win.
- 2) Deadline for receipt is May 1, 2012.
- 3) Checks for entry fees should be made out to: 2012 NFSPS Convention Registrar
- 4) Send 2 copies of each poem, one with no identification, second with name, address, phone and email in upper right hand corner to:

Tom Spencer  
1651 East Commercial Ave.  
Lowell, IN 46356

#### AIRPORT TRANSPORTATION FOR CONVENTION

The best method is by rental car. From O'Hare, directions are: East on Illinois 294 (toll road) to Indiana; to Interstate 80/94 East, in Indiana, approximately 16 miles to I-65 South toward Indianapolis. Take the Merrillville Exit 253, turn right, then right again (this is a hairpin turn), and you are at the Star Plaza Radisson Hotel. From Midway, head south on Cicero Avenue to I-294. From there directions are identical with those from O'Hare.

Coach USA is a curbside bus service to Highland, IN. From O'Hare, buses leave every hour from 5:15 a.m. to 9:15 p.m. with one final bus at 11:15 p.m. From Midway, buses leave hourly from 6:15 a.m. to 9:15 p.m. with one final bus at 11:15 p.m. Before leaving the terminal, give the driver the following information: Radisson Hotel number (219-769-6311), your request to call giving your name, arrival time; and that you are with the Poetry Convention. The hotel will forward this information so we can meet you at the bus terminal. If you have a cell phone with you, you may call with this information yourself.

Please call Tom Spencer at **219-696-3338 before June 10th** when you know the time you are arriving at either Chicago Airport. If no answer, leave a call back number. Also call this number if you are arriving by train, with information needed for us to meet you. We want to make your trip as comfortable as possible. For any questions at all, call Tom Spencer.

#### CONVENTION TOUR JUNE 14

Fair Oaks Farms is a large commercial dairy practicing sustainable farming. They incorporate modern innovations along with educational programs such as the Birthing Barn. There is also a cheese factory tour and home-made food at their café. For more background on Fair Oaks Farms: [fofarms.com/en/visit\\_us](http://fofarms.com/en/visit_us).

#### NFSPS STEVENS POETRY MANUSCRIPT COMPETITION

This year's winner of the NFSPS Stevens Poetry Manuscript Competition is *Good Reason*, by Jennifer Habel of Cincinnati, Ohio. She has been awarded \$1000, and her manuscript will be published this spring by NFSPS Press. This will be Habel's first full-length book of poetry. Her earlier work has appeared in numerous journals, and her chapbook, *In the Little House*, was the winner of the 2008 Copperdome Prize. A graduate of the Writing Program at UNC Greensboro, she has taught at American University, Colorado College, Radford University, and the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. She now makes her home in Cincinnati, where she is serving as Coordinator of Fiction Writing at the University of Cincinnati.



*Good Reason* centers on the life of a young mother through a series of tightly wrought, emotionally restless lyrics. There is a compelling arc to the whole collection, but each lyric also stands on its own for its poignancy and freshness.

The judge for the 2011 Stevens Competition was Jessica Garratt, the award-winning author of *Fire Pond* (University of Utah Press, 2009), winner of the Agha Shahid Ali Prize in Poetry. Garratt's work has also appeared in many of the best known poetry journals, including *Shenandoah*, *The Missouri Review*, and *The Western Humanities Review*. Garratt selected Habel's *Good Reason* as the winner from almost 200 manuscripts from throughout the United States, and selected as well a handful of excellent finalists:

- Erica Dawson (Florida) for *The Small Blades Hurt*
- Ezra Feldman (New York) for *The Body As One*
- Alison Powell (New York) for *On the Desire to Levitate*
- Sarah Sousa (Massachusetts) for *Church of Needles*
- Philip White (Kentucky) for *Among Other Things*

Garratt spoke of the keen difficulties in deciding among the finalists, but in the end, as she said, there was only one choice:

"Once I began this collection, there was no putting it down; I read *Good Reason* greedily, and not just once. Jennifer Habel has created a compelling portrait of a life that bears the gestural quality of a sketch artist's work, coupled with the psychological pressure and expansiveness of a novelist's. The collection pursues its subject matter with refreshing urgency, exploring the conflicting internal and external realities of being human, woman, wife and mother, all at once."

Garratt goes on to discuss the strengths of the prize-winning manuscript in detail, especially its pure distillation of what she calls the "unwavering mind . . . trying to steady a palpable heart." Jennifer Habel's new book, *Good Reason*, will be available for purchase at the 2012 NFSPS Convention in Merrillville, Indiana. She is planning to be there herself, to read from the book, so you will definitely want to attend.

#### NFSPS MEMBER SOCIETY NEWS

**ALABAMA STATE POETRY SOCIETY** met Feb. 25 in Odenville, AL, for a program of performance poets. Attending ASPS members participated in round-robin readings after lunch. The April 25 meeting will be in Fairhope, AL. For more information about this upcoming meeting, email [whitten93@windstream.net](mailto:whitten93@windstream.net) for program and registration form. ~Joe Whitten, President

**POETS ROUNDTABLE OF ARKANSAS** announces its Spring Event: The Dr. Lily Peter Luncheon and Workshop. This event will be held Saturday, May 5th in the Cox Building, Little Rock River Market (next to the downtown Main Library) from 9 am - noon. Workshop will focus on forms. Speakers: Cathy Moran on sonnets, Pat Laster on haiku/senryu, and Laura Loughridge on free verse. Lunch is on your own at the River Market. Afterwards will be our annual youth contest winners. ~Laura Loughridge, Reporter

**CONNECTICUT POETRY SOCIETY'S** Annual Meeting and Poetry Reading will occur on April 15, 2-4 pm, at Butterworth Hall, 1265 Asylum Ave., Hartford. Al Laster, a beloved award-winning CPS poet and friend, recently passed away at the age of ninety. Our condolences to his family. The Middletown Chapter of CPS continues under new leadership with monthly meetings at the Russell Library: 860-563-6761. Grayson Books announces the publication of *Where Flowers Bloom*, a collection of poems about Elizabeth Park, Hartford, edited by CPS member and contest chair, Ginny Lowe Connors; order at [www.graysonbooks.com](http://www.graysonbooks.com). Save the date for the 2012 Riverwood Poetry Festival: Thursday June 21- Sunday June 24. For additional info, see our CPS website: [Ct-Poetry-Society.org](http://Ct-Poetry-Society.org). ~ *JoAnne Bauer, Publicity*

**FLORIDA STATE POETRY ASSOCIATION** held their October meeting in Lake Mary, FL. The keynote speaker was Gianna Russo, a poet, writer, editor, and teacher. You can find details about FSPA contest guidelines by sending a self addressed envelope to Gail Teachworth at PO Box 3035, Crystal River, FL 34423. ~ *Debbie Keller, Reporter*

**KENTUCKY STATE POETRY SOCIETY** honored Miriam Woolfolk at the annual meeting on October 15, 2011, for her many years of service to the society as editor of its poetry journal, *Pegasus*. The Society presented Miriam with a framed letter from Kentucky Governor Steven Beshear, and a lovely neck scarf holding a pendant of a horse, representing Pegasus. The governor's letter honored her for her long years of service to KSPS and for her efforts in promoting poetry in the Commonwealth. In 1991 when the *Pegasus* editor became too ill to produce the journal in a timely manner, Miriam was asked to become assistant editor so that she could produce the journal alone if necessary. She accepted, and when Paul Salyers served as KSPS president in 1992, Miriam became the full-time editor at his request. Twenty years later Miriam is still holding the reins and steering *Pegasus* through planning, production, and mailing, three times a year. It is Miriam who has made *Pegasus* fly. KSPS owes the quality of *Pegasus* to Miriam's standards in choosing the poetry, her attention to detail, and her insistence that the journal "look good". In a world that is rapidly embracing virtual publishing, she still values the printed word committed to paper; and bound into a journal that can be held in one's hand. ~ *Becky Lindsay, President*

**GEORGIA POETRY SOCIETY** was hosted by Kennesaw State University on January 21, 2012. Robert W. Kimsey was the featured member reader. His poems have been published in poetry and web columns including *Kudzu*, *Pegasus*, *The Southern Ocean Review*, *New Southerner*, and various anthologies. He is the winner of the 2005 Lee Pennington Award, R.J. Lutzke Memorial Award, and placed second in the President's Prize from the Kentucky State Poetry Society. GPS interim president, Steven Shields presented the first edition of the *Under a Hundred* chapbook featuring authors Mildred Greear of Helen, GA, Ron Self of Columbus, GA, and Francis Alix of Boston, MA. After the annual award banquet, contest winners read their prize-winning poems and new officers for 2012 were installed. The afternoon workshop featured M. Ayodele Heath's presentation on the performance of poetry. Heath's honors include a 2009 Dorothy Rosenberg Prize and a McEver Visiting Chair in Writing at Georgia Tech. He has been awarded fellowships from Cave Canem, Summer Poetry at Idyllwild, and Caversham Centre for Writers and Artists in South Africa. His work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Crab Orchard Review*, *diode*, *Mississippi Review*, *Cullaloo*, *The New York Quarterly*, *The Chattahoochee Review*, and *Mythium* as well as various anthologies. GPS road shows are forthcoming around the state to feature Georgia poets and to encourage growth of the society. ~ *DuAnne Royall Kaiser, Reporter*

**MAINE POETS SOCIETY** gathered in February at the Dyer Library in Saco for their all-day meeting. The subject: poems on "A Sense of Weather", were judged by guest judge, Dave Morrison. Ghazals were judged by member Carol Bachofner. The next meeting will be Saturday, May 19, 2012 at the University of Maine at Augusta. Registration begins at 9:30 am. There is a \$12 registration fee which includes lunch. Non-members are welcome and may stay to participate in a reading-in-the-round at about 3 pm. Contests, open to members only, will be on the subject of "Travel", to be judged by member Ellen Taylor, and in the form of triolets, which will be judged by Kathleen Ellis. For more information, contact co-President Marta Finch at [moimarta@comcast.net](mailto:moimarta@comcast.net). For membership information, contact Membership Chair Cynthia Brackett-Vincent. Visit the MPS info page on her website, [www.encirclepub.com/poetry/mps](http://www.encirclepub.com/poetry/mps) or e-mail [Brackett-Vincent@encirclepub.com](mailto:Brackett-Vincent@encirclepub.com), or call 207-778-0467. ~ *Sally Joy, Publicity Chair*

**MASSACHUSETTS STATE POETRY** met at the Beverley Public Library on Saturday, December 3, 2011. A full day included a workshop, a Silent Book Auction, holiday buffet, and a traditional Yankee Swap with an added twist: all wrapped around poetic themes. MSPS President Jeanette C. Maes opened the meeting with information regarding new poetry contests and announced recent prize winners. Her workshop that followed, challenged members to explore a memory or an experience wherein fantasy ultimately gave way to reality. A Silent Poetry Book Auction held every poet's dream of finding little-known or long-searched-for titles at small cost, while enriching the MSPS treasury. To be part of the Yankee Swap, each donor was asked to attach an original verse that suggested the contents of the wrapped gift. A judge was appointed to select that piece that best described what was enclosed. Finally, the festive buffet was acclaimed to be everything a hungry poet could want to eat or drink. Holiday and New Year wishes rang out. Next meeting of MSPS will be held on March 3, 2012, at the West Branch of the Peabody Public Library. President Maes will conduct a workshop, on "The use of Anecdotes and Maxims in Poetry". The Wordcrafters, an MSPS Chapter, will present a memorial program, "Remembering Amy," which honors our late member, Amy Dengler. ~ *Patricia Bruen Tacelli, Reporter*

**POETRY SOCIETY OF MICHIGAN** Knowing firsthand the blood, sweat and tears that go into hosting the NFSPS National Convention, I want to encourage you to attend the convention in Merrillville, Indiana in June. I hope to see you there. The PSM Annual Poetry Contest deadline remains August 1. The number of categories has been expanded from 10 to 12. For rules and regulations you can download the brochure from the Michigan link on the NFSPS website. If you don't use a computer, contact me at the address on page two of this Strophes. As is our practice, PSM is celebrating poetry month by having our spring meeting on Saturday April 21, at the Saginaw Country Club. Marion Tincknell has put together a presentation on Theodore Roethke, a Pulitzer Prize winning poet who grew up in Saginaw, Michigan. PSM members will also be given a guided tour of Roethke's family home. ~ *James F. Ahearn, President*

**MISSISSIPPI POETRY SOCIETY'S** Spring Festival, sponsored by the North Branch, will be held at Lake Tiak-O'Khata April 21-22. *The Tender Gift* by Pat Jordan, Mississippi Poetry Society's 2012 Poet of the

Year, is now available. Pat is donating all profits from book sales to MPS. For further details about ordering the book, as well as MPS contests, please visit our website [www.misspoetry.net](http://www.misspoetry.net). ~ Wynne H. Alexander, *MPS Secretary*

**NEW JERSEY POETRY SOCIETY** will honor April as National Poetry Month, with a reading on Saturday, April 14 from 2-4 pm by Scott McVay from his new book, *Whales Sing and Other Exuberances*. This reading will be preceded by a Contests Award Ceremony and open reading by attendees. On Saturday, April 28, NJPS will host a poetry workshop by Therese Halscheid on "Personae Poems". Both events will be held at the Lawrence Library Headquarters, a branch of the Mercer County Library in Lawrenceville, NJ. Plans for October National Poetry Day to be announced. ~ Edith R. Kaltovich, *President*

**NEW MEXICO STATE POETRY SOCIETY** will hold its first state convention on April 28 in Albuquerque. The day will feature five workshops, generating quite a buzz locally. These workshops are: Poetic Alchemy; Exploring Ekphrasis; Fixed and Free: Ghazals, Rhyme Royal, and Free Verse; Writing Nature: A Haiku Workshop; and Performing Creative Non-Fiction: The Art of the Historical and Research Poem. They will be led by poets/teachers from Albuquerque and Santa Fe. Simultaneously, there will be a Poets' Cafe open for coffee, conversation, and drop-in "mini-lectures" on the nuts and bolts of poetic endeavor, such as e-publishing, setting up websites, distribution, book signings, or whatever folks want to discuss with fellow poets. The Poets' Cafe hopes to welcome both the new Albuquerque Poet Laureate (to be announced in mid-April) and New Mexico's Centennial Poet. We are also hoping to have the winners of the Youth Slam Competition, being sponsored by our Bosque Poets Chapter, drop in and perform for us. The Poets' Cafe will provide a venue for NMSPS members to connect and brainstorm in preparation for the 2013 NFSPS Convention. A Book Room and separate Book Exchange will enable members to buy and sell books, or refresh their bookshelves for free. Three Bards and a Fiddler, an acoustic ensemble of members, will perform Celtic, Folk, Blues, and Bluegrass music before our awards dinner and annual meeting. The evening will conclude with readings by our guest poets, followed by an open microphone for attendees. This will be the first meeting at which our three new chapters (Santa Fe, Taos, and Corrales/Rio Rancho) will convene with the four chapters we had at this time last

year. Our statewide membership has grown by almost 50 percent since our last annual meeting. ~ Shirley Blackwell, *President*

**OREGON POETRY ASSOCIATION** Spring Conference and General Membership Annual Meeting are scheduled for April 20-22, on the grounds of Clackamas Community College, in Oregon City. The theme is "Collaboration." The keynote speech, for Friday night, will be given by Ingrid Wendt, followed by readings of their poetry by our workshop presenters, David Abel and Carl Adamshick. The workshops will be given on Saturday. The General Membership Meeting must vote on candidates for three seats on the Board of Directors. Colette Tennant, Contest Chair, will announce the winners of the Spring Contests and present the prizes. Representatives of small local presses will meet in a panel discussion on the publication of books and chapbooks. The site of our Fall Conference, tentatively scheduled for October 19-21, has not yet been chosen, but the contests will be in our usual five categories: Poet's Choice, 80 lines limit; Free Verse, 40 lines; Traditional Forms, 40 lines; Members Only, 6-12 lines; and New Poets, 30 lines. Following on with the theme for our Spring Conference, a sixth category, Collaboration, 40 lines limit, will offer double prizes to be shared among the winning collaborators. Planning is already under way for the William Stafford Centennial, in 2014. More on that later. Our website, which has suffered from numerous glitches, is now on a new server and is winning praises from members. Our newsletter has resumed going out on its regular schedule. OPA is ready for a vigorous, successful year. ~ Dave Harvey, *OPA Secretary*

**PENNSYLVANIA POETRY SOCIETY'S** Spring Conference, hosted by the Carlisle Poets Chapter, will be held at the Allenberry Playhouse and Resort Inn, Boiling Springs, PA on Saturday, April 21, 2012. Our celebration of poetry will begin at 10 am. The highlights of the Spring Conference are two workshops and the presentation of awards and reading of prize poems from our 60th Annual Contest. ~ Richard "Dick" Lake, *President*

**POETRY SOCIETY OF TEXAS** meetings are presently held September through May on the 2nd Saturday of the month at 2:30 pm at the Preston Royal Library in Dallas (exception: the Annual Awards Banquet, held at a Dallas hotel, takes the place of a November meeting). In June, attendance at the NFSPS Convention is encouraged. In July, the 3-day PST Summer Conference is

held at different sites around the state. The 2011-12 Executive Board is comprised of President - Catherine L'Herisson, Vice President - Jimmye Inez Sessions, Corresponding Secretary - Jessica Gonsoulin, Recording Secretary - Barbara Blanks, Treasurer - Amy Sandberg, and Directors - Pat Randolph, David Knape and Lynn Lewis. This same Executive Board was in place for the 2010-11 term. ~ Nancy Baass

**UTAH STATE POETRY SOCIETY** will hold its annual Awards Festival at the Hilton Salt Lake City Airport Hotel on April 20-21, 2012. We are pleased and honored to have Ted Kooser as our headliner this year. He will give a reading on Friday evening and a workshop on Saturday. Saturday evening we will honor our Junior Creative Contest winners. From 2000+ entries submitted by elementary, middle school, junior high and high school students throughout Utah, the winners will be announced and have their poems published in an anthology. This is an exciting time for all of us. Our 3rd Annual Poetry in the Park will be hosted March 30th in Zion National Park with Bud Powell Mahan as our presenter. Following a reading of his poetry, Mr. Mahan will present a challenging workshop in one of the most beautiful poetic settings in the world. Poetry in the Park, a partnership of Utah State Poetry Society and Zion Natural History Association, is supported in part by the Utah Division of Arts & Museums, with funding from the State of Utah and the National Endowment for the Arts. For further information, contact LaVerna Johnson at [poetaken@gmail.com](mailto:poetaken@gmail.com). ~ Eric Read, *President*

**WYOPOETS** Wyoming's State Poet Laureate, Patricia Frolander of Sundance, WY and her publisher, High Plains Press in Glendo, WY, were awarded the National Cowboy & Western Museum "Wrangler Award" for poetry. Both plan to attend the ceremonies in Oklahoma City, OK on April 21, 2012. Nancy Curtis of High Plains Press and a WyoPoets charter member, has also won the 2012 "Lariat Award" from the Western Writers of America. Rose Hill, Sheridan, WY, took third place in the South Dakota Poetry Society's contest for her poem "Antelope Wind" and was awarded a book, *Shortcuts to Success*, from the Amy Kitchener Foundation. Gene Gagliano will tour schools in western Nebraska with Zachary Pullen, the illustrator of his popular children's publication, *Dee and the Mammoth*, published by The Tate Geological Museum, Casper, WY. WyoPoets will celebrate National Poetry Month with a workshop on Saturday, April 28, 2012.

Featured workshop presenter will be George Vlastos with sessions set to begin at ten o'clock in the Magnolia Room of the Hilton Garden Inn in Casper, WY. Chairman for the event is Linda Coatney. For detailed information contact Christine Valentine, Box 547, Birney, MT 59012 or log onto [www.wyopoets.com](http://www.wyopoets.com). The organization's annual general membership meeting and elections will be held during the June conference of Wyoming Writers, Inc. in Casper, WY. Contest results congratulations go to the following poets for their winning poems in the WyoPoets' Eugene V. Shea National Poetry Contest: Barb McMakin of Crestwood, KY, 1st place for her poem, "Uneven Hitch"; Rose Ann Spaith of Columbus, Ohio, 2nd place for "A Letter to Theresa from Oscar"; Susan Norris of Andover, NH, 3rd place for "Finding You"; and David Byrn, of Prescott, AZ, 4th place for "Wind Stories". Five honorable mentions were awarded to the following poets: Beverly Stanislawski of Crown Point, IN for "copper penny moon"; Kolette Montague of Centerville, UT for "To Stand With Trees"; Susan Norris of Andover, NH for "Fireflies"; Lee Ann Siebken of Douglas, WY for "Tumbleweed Winter"; and Dr. Emory D. Jones of Luka, MS for "Delta General". ~ *Lee Ann Siebken, Reporter*

## CONTESTS

**ALABAMA STATE POETRY SOCIETY** is accepting submissions for the Annual John and Miriam Morris Memorial Chapbook Competition. Deadline is May 31, 2012. Winner receives \$100 and 50 copies of his/her winning chapbook. Poems may be previously published if poet retains all rights. Send 20-24 total pages of poetry, (poems may be longer than one page, but total page count must be 20-24) with two (2) title pages: one with author identification, and one with NO author identification. Please send manuscript with a \$15 reading fee payable to: New Dawn Unlimited, Inc., ASPS 2012 Morris Memorial Chapbook Competition, 1830 Marvel Road, Brierfield, AL 35035.

**POETS ROUNDTABLE ARKANSAS** sponsors three contests annually. See [www.poetsroundtable.com](http://www.poetsroundtable.com) for deadlines and rules.

**ARIZONA STATE POETRY SOCIETY'S** Annual Fall Poetry Contest will offer cash prizes for poems in varied categories, with several awarding \$100 in prize money. Winning poems will be read at our Fall Conference and may be published in *Sandcutters*, our quarterly journal. Contest rules will be available by April, with an entry

deadline of early September. For details on entering, go to [www.azpoetry.webs.com](http://www.azpoetry.webs.com) or visit our Facebook page, [www.facebook.com/ArizonaStatePoetrySociety](http://www.facebook.com/ArizonaStatePoetrySociety). You may also contact contest chairperson, Carol Hogan, by mail at 10401 N. Cave Creek Rd. #116, Phoenix, AZ 85020.

**CONNECTICUT POETRY SOCIETY** sponsors the following four contests annually: Al Savard Memorial for CT poets only, deadline Jan. 30; Lynn DeCaro for CT HS students only, deadline March 15; The Connecticut Poetry Award, deadline May 31; and Connecticut River Review, deadline Sept. 30. CPS invites poets from around the country to submit work to be considered for The Connecticut Poetry Award. Submit up to three unpublished poems, any form, of up to 80 lines each by May 31. Include two copies of each poem: One with complete contact information and one with NO contact information. Include SASE for results, and a reading fee of \$15. Please make out the check to Connecticut Poetry Society or CPS. Send submissions to: Connecticut Poetry Award, CPS, PO Box 270554, West Hartford, CT 06127. Prizes of \$400, \$100, and \$50 will be awarded. Winning poems will be published in Connecticut River Review. See [www.ct-poetry-society.org](http://www.ct-poetry-society.org).

**KENTUCKY STATE POETRY SOCIETY'S** 2012 Annual Contest deadline: postmarked by June 30, 2012. A variety of categories with cash prizes are offered. All poems must be the original, unpublished work of the entrant and cannot have won a cash prize. 32 line limit (unless otherwise stated) with 56-character line length. First place poems will be published in *Pegasus*, the KSPS journal. For complete guidelines, visit KSPS' web site [www.kystatepoetrysociety.org/Contests.html](http://www.kystatepoetrysociety.org/Contests.html) or send a SASE to Georgia Wallace, Contest Chair, 11706 Frank Avenue, Louisville, KY 40243.

**MISSISSIPPI POETRY SOCIETY** holds two contests each year, Spring and Fall, in conjunction with our festivals. For rules and information write to Jeanne S. Kelly, 315 Church St., Madison, MS 39110. Email: [jskelly04@gmail.com](mailto:jskelly04@gmail.com) (put "contest information" in the subject line), or consult the MPS website [www.misspoetry.net](http://www.misspoetry.net).

**MISSOURI STATE POETRY SOCIETY** Summer contest. Deadline: Postmark September 1, 2012. Two copies of each entry, category number and name in upper left corner of both copies, poet's name and address in upper right corner of one copy. If member, put "Missouri State Poetry Society" below your address, otherwise put "non-

member". 40 or fewer lines. May be previously published if poet retains the rights to the poem; may enter each category as many times as poet wishes. Categories: 1) rhymed verse or blank verse, 2) free verse, 3) humorous verse, 4) any form, summer subject, 5) poet's choice, MSPS members only (any form, any subject). Members pay \$1 per entry. Non-members pay \$2 per entry. Payable to MSPS. Mail poems and fees to Anna Roberts Wells, 10632 St. Andrews Court, Festus, MO 63028.

**NEW JERSEY POETRY SOCIETY'S** October National Poetry Day 2012 state-wide contest has an open topic or theme. Deadline, September 1, 2012.

**NEW MEXICO STATE POETRY SOCIETY** will have quarterly contests in 2012 to feed our "get-ready kitty" for the 2013 Convention. Only \$1 per poem up to 15 poems; half of the entry fees pot (up to \$100 per contest) to be divided by 3 winners. Publication in early 2013. Last three deadlines are: 1st of July, October, and January 2013. For themes and contest rules, visit us at [www.nmpoetry.org](http://www.nmpoetry.org) and click on Contests. While you're there, check out the rest of our new website.

**POETRY SOCIETY OF TEXAS' 2012** Annual Contest deadline: August 15, 2012 (postmarked). Of the contests offered, 52 are open to PST Associate Members and Non-Members. First Place poems win monetary awards and publication in PST's *A Book of the Year*. The brochure listing all contests, procedures, and rules can be obtained by visiting: [www.poetrysocietyoftexas.org](http://www.poetrysocietyoftexas.org), or by mailing a SASE to: PST Annual Contests Chairman Nancy Baass, 2306 N. De Leon St., Victoria, TX 77901-4812.

**2012 SENIOR POETS LAUREATE CONTEST** State winners vie for national awards: \$500/\$100. Must be 50 or older. Deadline 6/30/12. Rules at [www.amykitchenerfdn.org](http://www.amykitchenerfdn.org).

**DANCING POETRY CONTEST 2012** Artists Embassy International sponsors this contest as part of the 19th Annual Dancing Poetry Festival. Three Grand Prize poems will be "transformed into a unified art form of poetry working together with dance". Entries and fees must be postmarked by May 15, 2012. For submission rules, find the link "DPF Poetry Contest Rules" on their website: [www.dancingpoetry.com](http://www.dancingpoetry.com).

## POETRY ARTICLE

“Write What You Know?”

“No,” says poet Mark Doty

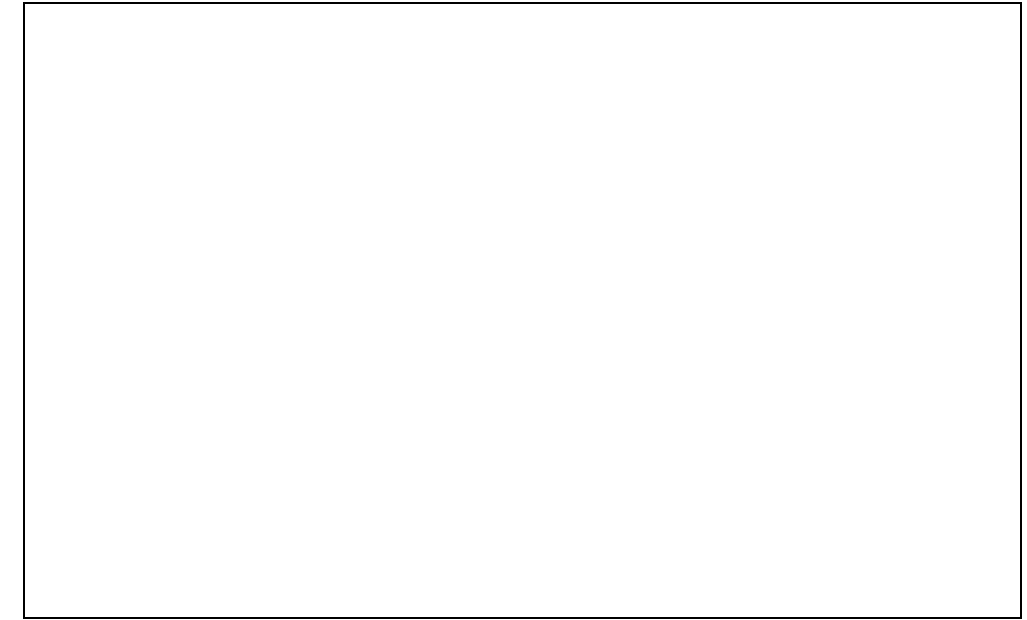
Although I have a charming close-up photograph of me and the poet, Mark Doty, from the NFSPS Convention in 2009, when he was the keynote speaker; I’m sure Doty would not recognize me. I know I’ve thought about him a great deal more than he has thought about me. I have listened intently to Doty lecture about poetry on three separate occasions and read many of his poems. He is a smart, urban poet whose work has range and depth. He’s self-deprecatingly funny, but has also been affected by loss, particularly the death of his long-time lover to AIDS. The most startling advice I heard from him was to embrace mystery and ignore the advice to “write what you know.” For Doty, this is a prescription for predictability. He advises poets to write about what you don’t know.

There are lots of things I don’t know much about. I don’t know about geology, apart from a lecture I heard when touring the Grand Canyon. Car engines? Not a clue. Bird migrations? Not interested. If I took Doty’s advice literally, I could see myself engulfed in Google learning about any of these topics and then writing truly terrible poetry.

What I take Doty to mean when he advises writing about what I don’t know, is to ask myself what calls to me, what interests me, and even what I am afraid of. He advises to take a draft of a poem and write as many questions about what is going on in the poem as I can think of. Then, decide which of those questions really have juice in them, and try to explore that question in my poem. “Questions are like trap doors or transitional devices to lead to another layer of meaning.” He doesn’t promise that I will find the answer to the question, but that my poem will improve by addressing it. He cited Walt Whitman’s famous question posed in “Song of Myself”, “And a child said to me, ‘what is the grass?’” This question led to beautiful poetry, including the line “And now I think it is the beautiful uncut hair of graves.”

Have you thought of the perfect last line for your poem? Doty says: don’t use it. If you already know where your poem is going to end, you have shut down its possibilities. At the 2009 meeting of the NFSPS, Doty advised poets to “train like an athlete to stay under water longer.” Resist closing down your poem. Write the longest poem you can write before contracting it.

Doty spoke at the Dodge Festival in 2008 about his poem, “*Apparition*,” which was inspired by seeing a peacock named Hommer at a garden center. Doty was



reminded by the peacock’s name, of the poet Homer, and wrote a poem that ranged from the garden center to Greek mythology to the architecture of metal work. The poem begins “*Oracular pear / this peacock / perched in a plywood roost / at the garden center...* ”.

Says Doty, “whenever you think you know what you’re doing, you are traveling a familiar path.” The trick is to find the unfamiliar. His goal is to import into his poetry that which resists language. Doty was speaking about poets who have learned how to write good poetry, but who have become dissatisfied repeating things they have already done.

Doty also discussed his poem, “A Crippled King,” not yet published. It is based on a three-legged stag that Doty saw frequently on Fire Island. The deer would approach close enough to get a treat. Then it suddenly disappeared. Doty later heard about a deer’s head found in the water and rumors it might have been a sacrificial killing. Was this “his deer,” he wondered? He began a narrative poem about the deer. Then he asked, “So what? Why should a reader care about a story that meant much to me, but might mean nothing to the reader?” He let the poem sit for a year.

Then Doty began to think about Stanley Kunitz, who said that the poet should follow the impulse to reach the mythic level in his work. Doty asked the poem “where do you want to go?” He asked the narrative to guide him out of the story and into uncharted territory. Ultimately, Doty wrote about giving his body to the deer’s head, becoming like a mythological creature that is half-man, half-beast.

I admire Doty’s decision to put the poem in the drawer until he could see where it

needed to go. Obviously, the mystery of the deer was important to him, but he was not sure why. It took time for the kernel of curiosity to bubble up and link the narrative to myth, and then to explore some part of himself that is both man and beast.

There are a number of current poets whose work has become predictable. Doty is not one of them. I admire his commitment to stretch and push his work into new territory and to guard against repeating himself. One method he has used is to find the words he uses most often in his poetry and banish them from new work. He discovered that the word “entirely” appears frequently in his poems. It’s gone. He also found many synonyms for light. Those are going, too.

So, write what you know? Not if you follow the advice of poet Mark Doty.

You can read some of his poems and hear a poetry lecture by Mark Doty at the website [www.poetryfoundation.org](http://www.poetryfoundation.org).

By Christine Beck, Connecticut Poetry Society

### FROM STROPHES COEDITORS

To all who responded in a timely manner, with news and contest items, we very much appreciate you. This makes our job easier and *Strophes* more interesting.

Thank you very much, Paul and Beth.