



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.nfsps.com

January 2013

President's Message



growing family into the new Mazda and make the drive. Wiebke and our one year old played in the surf while I attended session after session, listened to poets and to prize-winning readings. At mealtimes we would gather as a family, caught up in the larger family of all these older poets who had known each other for many years.

Years passed, and the children grew, and we traveled farther, linking our family travels to poetry conventions (and sometimes family reunions) in Ogdenville, Atlanta, Melbourne, Coos Bay, Sioux Falls, Harrisburg, Oklahoma City, Memphis, Dearborn, Merrillville. Years passed, and the children grew, and so did the family of poets I had come to know and admire from all parts of the country as they gathered from their daily lives into the enchanted kingdom of an annual poetry convention.

Some of my proudest moments come out of these conventions: hearing my mother read one of her own prize-winners, or hearing my father, who will not write his own poems, read the prize-winning poems of others in his deep, clear voice. Or hearing my oldest boy read his poem and that of his small brother in Oklahoma City, facing an audience of over a hundred for his very first time, and hearing the applause.

Years pass, and children grow, but even in magical kingdoms by the sea, *the wind blows out of the cloud by night*. We gather as a family, we mourn the passing of voices we have known, voices we will continue to miss, the poems that will haunt us. I drove through Biloxi a few years after Katrina; the proud boulevard of live oaks by the sea had vanished, the faded elegance of the hotel we stayed in—*many and many a year ago*—obliterated. Too many of the poets I met in those early years of poetry conventions have passed away, or travel no longer. My boys reach the age where traveling with family is more chore than delight. The world's weather changes us all.

Edgar Allan Poe suggested that poetry is no more than "the rhythmical creation of beauty." And yet poetry is also that thing which, as Housman said, best allows us "to harmonize the sadness of the universe." I don't see these as contradictory. And so despite years passing, voices lost, this larger family of poets and of poetry, with its new voices among the deep old tones, with its changing locations and colors and its vibrancy, keeps going on, keeps on creating, year upon year, its own beauty and harmony, its own enchanted kingdom. I hope you'll join us, this year and every year, in that land of enchantment.

Jeremy M. Downes ~ 30th NFSPS President

Dear NFSPS Poets:
Poetry Conventions

It was many and many a year ago, in a kingdom by the sea . . .
In the 1990's, I attended my first NFSPS convention, in Biloxi, Mississippi. For me, it was in part a family trip. My parents were deeply involved in the League of Minnesota Poets and in the national organization, and so when NFSPS came to Biloxi, I was quick to load my

La Conferencia del Encanto

June 13 – 18, 2013 Albuquerque (ABQ), New Mexico

Program

Wednesday, June 12 Early Bards Arrival
1-6 PM Early Registration
6PM Short walking tour of Old Town Plaza (wheelchair accessible)
6:30PM Self-pay dinner on Plaza or in Hotel

Thursday, June 13
8AM-6PM Registration
9AM Tours to Acoma or Pueblo Feast Day
2:30PM Bus returns to hotel from Acoma
3:30-5:30PM NFSPS Board Meeting
6PM Group dinner at Church Street Cafe. Self-pay.
7-10PM Acoustic music jam, Pavilion, cash bar

Friday, June 14 (Flag Day)
7:30-8:45AM State Presidents' breakfast meeting
9-10:30AM First Plenary
10:45AM-Noon D. McQuaid "The Alchemical Heart"
12:30PM **Lunch** Welcome by ABQ mayor, Manningham Awards, Filming of Contest Awards (FCA)
3-5PM H. Bellamy "Fountain Pen of Youth"
5-6:15PM Music (Dog Star) in Pavilion. Cash bar.
6:30PM **Dinner** Student & University Awards, FCA
8:30PM Winners and Honorable Mentions (WHM), open readings follow

Saturday, June 15
7:30-8:45AM Breakfast seminar "Building SPS websites"
9-10:30AM A. Watson & M. Garner "The Learning Curve"
10:30-11:30AM Panel "Alternatives in Publishing"
11:30-Noon Q&A on Publishing Choices
12:30PM **Lunch** Convention Contest prizes, FCA
3-4:30PM V. Golos and B. Marcus "Poets of Witness"
6:30PM **Dinner** Stevens MS Winner, FCA
8:30PM WHM, open readings follow

Sunday, June 16 (Fathers' Day)
8:45-11AM "Haiku in the Garden" at ABQ BioPark
11:30AM-12:45PM 2nd Plenary, Special Awards
12:30PM Deadline to retrieve books from Bookstore

Sunday, June 16 (continued)
1PM **Lunch** (Plan B time, no FCA)
2:30-4:30PM New Mexican Voices "Writing from Place"
4:30-6PM "Presenters-Only" book signings and sales
5:30-6:45PM Reception, cash bar, music
7PM **Banquet** Keynote speaker, D. Levin, expanded FCA for Contests 1-3
9PM Book sales/signings by Dana Levin, open readings

MONDAY, June 17
8AM Taos (overnight)
8AM Allan Houser/Golondrinas
5PM Aerial Tram to dinner on Sandia Peak

TUESDAY, June 18
9AM Santa Fe by RailRunner (train)
12PM Meet-up in Santa Fe with Taos group

NFSPS CONVENTION POEMS

Subject is the Land of Enchantment. Any form but prose poem, up to 40 lines. Entry fee is \$10 for up to three poems. First Prize is \$100, 2nd is \$50, 3rd is \$25.

NFSPS INVOCATION POEMS

Subject is a poem of thanks, appreciation, or inspiration. No expression of denominational religious belief, please. Entry fee is \$5 per poem, no limit. Six winners will receive \$25 each.

Up to 10 lines, compiled from the following forms: couplet; haiku or tercet; quatrain; cinquain, limerick, or tanka; sestet or 6-line Fibonacci; septet or rime royal. You may mix and match, but please identify the form used in each verse.

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) Make checks for entry fees payable to **New Mexico SPS - Contest**.
- 4) Send 2 copies of each poem, one with name, address, phone, and email in upper right-hand corner, and the other with no identification of author to:

Jeanne Shannon
Convention Contest Chair
1217 Espejo St. NE
Albuquerque, NM 87112-5215

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

Organized October 17, 1959 ~ Mary B. Wall, Founder

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(Appointment made July, 2012)

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STROPHES

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

Paul Ford, *Strophes* Editor
10239 Hickory Pt. Dr., Sandy, UT 84092
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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 \$5.00 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.

* Submission Deadlines

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* Deceased

Keynote speaker, Dana Levin, will present “Writing the Interior Landscape.” Levin has published three books of poetry, all of which have garnered critical acclaim. The first, *In the Surgical Theatre* (1999), received nearly every award



available to first books and emerging poets, including the John C. Zacharis First Book Award from *Ploughshares*, the Witter Bynner Prize from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and the PEN/Osterweil Award. In selecting Levin’s manuscript for the American Poetry Review/Honickman First Book Prize, Louise Glück praised the work as “sensuous, compassionate, violent, extravagant.”

Wedding Day (2005, Copper Canyon Press) drew praise from *Ploughshares*, the *Boston Review*, and the *Washington Post*. Levin has won awards and fellowships from the NEA, Library of Congress, Bread Loaf Writers’ Conference, and from the Rona Jaffe, Witter Bynner, Lannan, Guggenheim, and Whiting Foundations. Her widely anthologized work has won several Pushcart Prizes.

The *New Yorker* writes of her latest book, the stunning *Sky Burial*, “[It] brings a wealth of ritual and lore from various strains of Buddhism, as well as Mesoamerican and other spiritual traditions . . . the intensity and seriousness and openness of her investigations make Levin’s use of this material utterly her own, and utterly riveting.” *Sky Burial* was listed as one of the Best Books of Poetry 2011 by the *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Library Journal*, and *Coldfront Magazine*.

Levin grew up in California’s Mojave Desert and earned a bachelor’s from Pitzer College and a master’s from New York University. She chairs the Creative Writing and Literature Department at Santa Fe University of Art and Design.

Dora E. McQuaid will present “The Alchemical Heart: Writing Into The Sacred.”



In a world demanding our attention and energy, how do we deepen and sustain connection to the Divine in our daily lives? This workshop will help you understand how to explore the questions deep within your heart, and, more important, how to hear the answers. Through contemplative readings, experiential meditations, and deep

writing exercises, we will learn ways to develop and sustain a relationship with Spirit as a practice of self-care and support. Passion, mystery, silence, doubt, grief, and wonder—our writings will make space for truths leading us forward to the life that wants to live through us.

Dora McQuaid is an award-winning poet, activist, speaker, and teacher dedicated to addressing the issues of sexual and domestic violence. Her efforts were recently honored when the artist who painted the Inspirations Mural in State College, PA, obliterated the image in the mural of former Penn State coach and convicted sex offender Jerry Sandusky and put an image of McQuaid in its place.

McQuaid performs, speaks, and teaches internationally. Her work has been published in anthologies, plays, films, and required course readings, and is used in judicial and law enforcement trainings in Pennsylvania.

Hakim Bellamy (and crew) will present

“The Fountain Pen of Youth: Walk a Mile in Their Sneakers.” In this workshop, our host city’s Inaugural Poet Laureate will



reacquaint us with our inner teen or toddler. He will guide us inside contemporary American youth poetry on screen, stage, and page, pinpointing common themes and composition techniques. We will then begin putting the emotion, energy, and flavor of “youth” poetry on the page by writing through *personas* familiar to our younger selves (homage, not caricature). Workshop participants will be encouraged to write the performance-caliber poetry of today, analyzing current issues and generating ideas for future poems. Hakim’s “crew” will include some of the area’s outstanding young performance poets.

Hakim Bellamy was named Albuquerque’s first Poet Laureate in April 2012. He is both a performance poet and page poet. He is a two-time (2005, 2006) poetry slam national champion. He was City Grand Slam Champion for Albuquerque (2005) and Silver City, NM (2008) and won three consecutive University of New Mexico LOBOSLAM titles.

Bellamy’s poetry has been published in ABQ inner-city buses as a winner of the RouteWords Competition (2005). Between 2006 and 2011, his work appeared in the *Harwood Anthology*, *Earthships Anthology*, *Sin Fronteras Journal*, *A Bigger Boat* (UNM Press), and other publications.

Bellamy has acted for both stage and screen, and combines music with his poetry

as a songwriter, emcee, and vocalist. He works with youth poets at schools, nonprofits, and community organizations statewide. He served as Strategic Communications Director at the Media Literacy Project before recently launching his own business, Beyond Poetry, LLC.

Andrea L. Watson and **Madelyn Garner** will present “5 x 5: The Learning Curve—What You Must Know To Publish In Today’s Market.” This powerhouse panel offers crucial insights into how to navigate the world of writing and publishing in the 21st Century, including: writing for publication—manuscript organization, submission, publicity, and marketing; and entering writing contests for magazine and book publishers.

A former New York book and magazine editor, Andrea L. Watson is founding publisher and editor of 3: A Taos Press, a multicultural and ethically voiced publishing house. She has designed and curated sixteen ekphrasis events of poetry and art across the United States. Her own poetry has appeared in more than a dozen U.S. and international publications. She is one of the founding editors of the poetry journal, *Heartlodge: Honoring the House of the Poet*, a representative for the International Women’s Writing Guild, and a member of the Board of the Taos Arts Council.



Madelyn Garner is the sole educator to



have received The Governor’s Award for Excellence in the Arts and Humanities for her contributions to the arts in Colorado. *Scholastic Magazine* and the National Endowment for the Humanities

have recognized her as one of the nation’s outstanding teachers of writing. Her poetry has appeared in numerous literary journals. Among the many awards she has garnered for her writing is the D.H. Lawrence Award from the University of New Mexico.

Veronica Golos and **Bonnie Rose Marcus** will present “Face to Face: Two Poets of Witness (and Provocation) Explore Death and Dying.” The leaders of this reading/discussion will help us reflect on primal questions of death and mortality: What if we looked at life and death as one continuous whole? What if we realized that

taking another's life was taking one's own? What if witnessing to war—even from afar—brought us face-to-face not with the enemy, but with ourselves? How do we, as artists, bear witness to vast suffering in the world? What is it to be human?

Veronica Golos is the author of *Vocabulary of Silence* (Red Hen Press, 2011), an exploration of war and its witnessing-from-afar that won the 2011 New Mexico Book Award for Poetry. She is also the author of *A Bell Buried Deep* (Story Line Press), co-recipient of the Nicholas Roerich Poetry Prize.

Golos has served as Poet in Residence at schools in Greenwich, CT, and Taos, NM, as well as at the Nassau Museum of Art. She has lectured on Teaching Poetry to Children at Columbia University and Colorado State College. Her work has been published in the US and abroad, including London and Paris. Golos has performed in NYC at Lincoln Center's Nuyorican Café and at Cornelia Street Café and in many venues in the Southwest. She lives with her husband, writer David Pérez, in Taos, where she is co-editor of the Taos Journal of Poetry & Art.

Bonnie Rose Marcus is a poet, theater artist, hospice volunteer, and Buddhist practitioner who has been writing since adolescence. Her poetry has been published in *Salon*, *Brooklyn*, and *Miss Fit's Free Press*, a 1990s 'zine she created. She has performed onstage (theater and her poetry) in NYC and Washington, DC, and in the states of Michigan, Wisconsin, and New Mexico. She directs the Readings & Workshops Program (East) and Writers' Exchange at Poets & Writers, Inc.

Marcus leads workshops in contemplative end-of-life care. She lives in Brooklyn, NY, with her partner, Vincent Salas, a visual artist, and their cat, Graffiti.

Georgia Santa-Maria and **Merimee Moffitt** will present "Haiku In The Garden." This excursion has a mini-workshop opportunity. After days indoors, let's go for a romp in ABQ's gorgeous Botanical Gardens and BioPark. From its fabulous Japanese Gardens, we'll ride the mini-train or stroll beneath cottonwoods past roaring Papa Lion, splashing seals, elephants, and more. While the workshop title is "Haiku," feel free to write, snap, or sketch whatever strikes your fancy. Later, we can share what we've

written. We will have transport to and from the park, which is handicap accessible throughout.

Georgia Santa-Maria is a fifth-generation New Mexican from the rural north part of the State, where she often stays at her ancestors' 1830s *casa-corrал* homestead. She has spent her adult life as an working artist, photographer, counselor, storekeeper, poet, and mom. Her work has been widely anthologized and appears on the web's Duke City Fix, Sunday Poem, and Duke City Dime Stories' Favorites. She has been a guest editor for *LummoX Magazine*. Her chapbooks include *Lichen Kisses*, *Ten Penny Tales*, and *The Miami Hippie Mommy Cookbook*.

Merimee Moffitt is an Albuquerque writer and teacher. Her poetry has appeared in many anthologies. She served for several years as coeditor of *The Rag, a Poetry Broadside*, which has become an ABQ institution. Her short stories have appeared on the web at Duke City Dime Stories' Favorites, which she helped found. Moffitt is working on a memoir about the counter-culture of the 1960s and 1970s in northern New Mexico. She has taught at all grade levels in ABQ public schools and colleges.

WHAT'S AHEAD - 2013 CONVENTION?

NMSPS is excited to welcome you to La Conferencia del Encanto. Note these **firsts** and some traditions with a **twist** for the 2013 Annual Convention of the NFSPS:

You can now register online at www.NMpoetry.com (where we have more details listed about the options) and charge the purchase using PayPal **first**. Or register and pay by mail with a check using the insert in this Strophes.

In addition to cash and checks, you will be able to use credit cards and Visa or Master Card debit cards in the Bookstore **first**.

We have a stellar array of workshop presenters, and we rejoice that Dana Levin will be our Keynote.

We will film the Keynote speech, as well as prizewinners reading their poems, for a souvenir DVD you can have by Labor Day **first**. So, be sure to enter the contests and claim your 3 minutes of fame!

Printed lists of the runners-up (1st-7thHM) in each of the 50 contests will be "on-screen" during the awards and handed out after dinner **twist**, so you don't have to keep handwritten tallies. Bring your State's signature noisemakers (bells, loons, etc.) for the winners' ceremony each evening **twist**.

If you play a musical instrument (unplugged), bring it and join the acoustic open jam in the outdoor pavilion **twist**. Or just come to listen and/or dance, if you wish.

St. Anthony's Feast Day (complete with dances) at nearby Sandia Pueblo falls on

Thursday, June 13. Those who cannot manage Acoma that day will find this a worthy alternative.

ABQ's Old Town is over 300 years old and brims with unique shops, galleries, and activities. With nearby parks, museums, Pueblo and Hispanic Cultural Centers, and rail "excursions," there is plenty to keep non-poets (including children) busy during the day. Links to their websites are on ours.

The "Insider Tours" we have planned are experiences of a lifetime, and they can be found only here. Some of these tours require that you be able to walk unaided on unpaved ground and be on your feet throughout the tour. At least Taos (June 17-18) requires that you climb stairs. Please check www.NMpoetry.com for more details. Bring walking shoes and sunhats for any outdoor activity, and remember you will be at mile-high elevations (higher in Taos).

Sky City at Acoma (June 13) is breathtaking, and has been inhabited since at least 1150 A.D. Art lovers will forever remember the events our Walking Rain chapter has set up for you in the famous art colony of Taos. Our Turquoise Trail tour (June 17) takes you to the fabulous Sculpture Gardens and art gallery of Allan Houser, a premier Native American artist; we then journey on to El Rancho de las Golondrinas, a Spanish-Colonial living history museum at a 1710 ranch. We'll return to ABQ by late afternoon.

The Sandia Twilight tour (June 17) features a ride on the world's longest (2.7 miles) aerial tram to the top of 10,000+ ft. Sandia Peak. Stroll around, sip a drink, and watch one of our spectacular sunsets as the lights come on in the city a mile below. Dinner in the restaurant runs about \$25-\$50, including wine.

On Tuesday, June 18th, travel by train from ABQ to the heart of Santa Fe, where we will join those returning from Taos for some serious tourist activities and shopping; here, the "display counters" may be blankets spread on a Plaza sidewalk. We are setting up another poetry event in Santa Fe.

CONVENTION TRANSPORTATION

Major carriers and regional airlines serve Albuquerque (ABQ) International Sunport, which is about 8 miles from Hotel ABQ (HAbq). Free shuttles go to nearby car rental services. Alvarado Transportation Center downtown (about 2 miles from HAbq) is a major stop for Greyhound, Amtrak, and the NM Rail Runner Express. Ground transport includes taxis, limos, and ABQ Ride city buses.

Sunport Shuttle is your best choice, especially if you travel with others. Call them toll-free at 1-866-505-4966 or go online at

www.sunportshuttle.com to take advantage of shared-ride discounts. Example: taxi fare one-way from airport to HABq is about \$24; shuttle fare round-trip is \$28 for single rider, plus \$5 each way for each additional passenger in the same party. Planned pickup is best, but they also have a counter at the Sunport that can handle walk-ups.

Two Interstates make ABQ easy to get to and drive around in. Take I-40's Exit 157A and go south on Rio Grande Blvd. two blocks to the conference site. If you drive an RV and stay as a guest at HABq, you can park your RV in their security lot for free. Parking is free in all of HABq's 600 spaces.

BOOK ROOM INFORMATION

We have a flood of poets selling books this year. Good news: we will sell to the public, as well as to attendees; buyers can use credit cards, so sales should be brisk. Bad news: finite space and staff require limiting who can sell and how much we can handle in the Bookstore at one time. For details, go to www.NMpoetry.com and click on the "Convention" link. Here is a summary:

- * Only registered **attendees**, NFSPS, and State societies can sell their items.
- * Except for NFSPS, sellers are limited to 5 items (books and/or CDs), 10 copies per item.
- * **By May 15** send a cover sheet listing all titles; no items will be accepted after then.
- * The cover sheet must give full contact info for the author, including the **payee name for the check** we will issue the seller; the full title, number of copies per title, and final price per copy (include any tax and round to a whole-dollar amount).
- * Authors and sale data will be printed in a catalog for attendees and displayed in the Bookstore.

A Bookstore Registration Form is on our website. You can fill it out and submit it online or print and mail it as hard copy to: Convention Registrar - Bookstore, PO Box 2669, Los Lunas, NM 87031. Provide SASE with mailed cover sheet, or give it to Bookstore Staff when you deliver the books/CDs.

NO Pre-mailing of items unless you arrange to pick them up in NM. Hotel Albuquerque will not accept delivery, nor will the Registrar. Any books mailed to the Registrar or NMSPS **will incur a \$50 handling fee**. Best to bring them with you. Also best to register online.

NFSPS MEMBER SOCIETY NEWS

ALABAMA STATE POETRY SOCIETY met on October 26 and 27 at the University of Montevallo. Those arriving on Friday participated in round robin readings in the

evening after dinner. On Saturday, there were workshops conducted by Ron Self and Keith Badowski of the Georgia Poetry Society. Our participants had only praise for these two. We are pleased to announce that on Saturday, April 20, 2013, there will be a joint meeting of the Alabama State Poetry Society and the Georgia Poetry Society on the campus of West Georgia College, Carrollton, GA. Our poet speaker will be Pulitzer Prize winner and Poet Laureate of the United States, Natasha Trethewey. For more information about this meeting you may email Joe Whitten (whitten93@windstream.net), Robert Lynn (robertlynn@comcast.net), or Barry Marks (bmarks@markswainberg.com). New officers are Barry Marks, President; Jerry Hardesty, 1st VP; Emily Grimes Henderson, 2nd VP; Jodi Adamson, Treasurer; Shelia Mau, Secretary; Donna Jean Tennis, Membership; Joe Whitten, Newsletter Editor; and Evelyn Hurley, Parliamentarian. ~ *Joe Whitten, Past President ASPS*

ARIZONA STATE POETRY SOCIETY celebrated its 42nd Annual Fall Conference on Nov 17th, hosted in Tempe by the East Valley Poets. The daylong conference was filled with informative programs and a wealth of good poetry. The morning session was presented by Rosemarie Dombrowski, Ph.D., English Lecturer of Language and Culture, Arizona State University. Her presentation, "Poetic Mentoring: The Evolution of Young Poets," outlined the goals of her work with young writers. The presentation included readings and discussions by three of her students: Alexandra Comeaux, Bryan Hall, and Alo Medina. After open readings and lunch, Rebecca Blume Rothman, Project Manager with the City of Phoenix Office of Arts and Culture, presented information about the city's goal of incorporating written as well as visual art in public projects, including transportation, such as the sky train at the airport, and art installations at public buildings, museums and parks. She announced a haiku contest, to call attention to the issue of waste, giving poets a chance to help make an environmental impact. Carol Hogan, 2012 Contest Chair, led the reading of winning poems from across the country. There were 739 entries and \$900 paid in prizes. Winners and Honorable Mentions will be published in a special *Sandcutters* edition, "2012 Contest Winner's Anthology", perfect bound, 108 pages; available for sale on the ASPS website: azpoetry.webs.com. ~ *Molly Saty, Reporter*

POETS' ROUNDTABLE OF ARKANSAS annual Poetry Day celebration was hosted by

the Saline County Poets on October 20th. Roger Armbrust, noted author, professor, and editor, was the speaker. He talked about cutting unnecessary words, especially prepositions to make poems more effective. Nina Tillery of Hot Springs was the winner of the Sybil Nash Abrams Award. Diane Stefan was the winner of the 2011-2012 Merit Award. ~ *Laura Loughridge, Reporter*

CONNECTICUT POETRY SOCIETY had some of their members' poems performed by the East Haddam Stage Company in their "Plays and Poetry" production, which ran from November 1st through the 4th. The Artspace Gallery in Hartford recently offered a multi-media event which included visual art, original music, poetry, and even an animated electronic rendition of a poem. Several CPS members were involved, and Lorna Cyr had a big hand in organizing the event. Bessy Reyna curated an event at the Charter Oak Cultural Center on Nov. 13th, honoring the memory of Adrienne Rich. The program, "Embraced by Her Common Words: A Tribute to Adrienne Rich," included readings from Rich's works and reflections on this influential poet. A number of CPS members participated, and Rich's son attended. ~ *Ginny Connors, Reporter*

FLORIDA STATE POETS ASSOCIATION held its annual Fall Convention October 12-14 at the LaPlaya Hotel on the beach in Daytona Beach. Friday night's program was a memorial tribute to recently deceased Florida State Poet Laureate Dr. Edmund Skellings. It included a premier showing of Diane Newman's film "Edmund Skellings In His Own Words". Presentations were made to Mrs Skellings from the Governor's Office, State Representatives, and the Division of Cultural Affairs. Poetry readings, memories and music were performed by colleagues. Saturday was filled with workshops that included Sunrise poetry on the beach, the Joys of Haiku, Give your poems wings—how and why to get published in magazines and ezines, Poetry in mixed media, open mics, FSPA contest readings and awards. Keynote speaker was Dr. Peter Meinke, Poet Laureate of St. Petersburg, FL who also gave a writing workshop in the afternoon. New officers for the next two years were elected: Joe Cavanaugh, President; Dr. David Axelrod, Vice President; Mary-Ann Westbrook, Secretary; and Judith Krum, Treasurer. The convention ended Sunday with Sunrise Poetry on the Beach and a wrap-up discussion of the convention's website and suggestions for future activities. See the FSPA website: www.floridastatepoetsassociation.org. ~ *Mary-Ann Westbrook, Secretary*

GEORGIA POETRY SOCIETY was hosted October 20, 2012, by Mercer University in Macon, GA. Judson Mitcham, Georgia Poet Laureate, was the guest speaker. Mitcham was not formally trained as a writer, but studied psychology at the University of Georgia, then taught psychology at Fort Valley State University until his retirement in 2004 with the rank of associate professor. In 2002, Mitcham began teaching workshops in poetry and fiction at Mercer University in Macon. He has also served as adjunct professor of creative writing at the University of Georgia and at Emory University, where he has directed the Summer Writers' Institute. Mitcham's poetry has appeared in such journals as *Chattahoochee Review*, *Harper's*, *Georgia Review*, *Gettysburg Review*, *Hudson Review*, *Poetry*, *Southern Poetry Review*, and *Southern Review*. His first poetry collection, *Somewhere in Ecclesiastes*, earned him both the Devins Award and recognition as Georgia Author of the Year from the Georgia Writers Association. Dr. Sue B. Walker, Alabama Poet Laureate, led the afternoon workshop: writing prose poetry. Named Alabama Poet Laureate in 2003, Walker is the Stokes Distinguished Professor of Creative Writing at the University of South Alabama in Mobile, AL. She has published eleven books, poetry and non-fiction, in addition to numerous articles on James Dickey, Flannery O'Connor, Carson McCullers, and other Southern authors. She has also written and performed her one-woman one-act play on the life of Madam Octavia LeVert. She is on the Board of the Alabama Writer's Forum, the Alabama Writer's Conclave, and other state foundations. She is the publisher of Negative Capability Press. Her critical book, *The Chemical Ecology of James Dickey*, is forthcoming from Mellen Press. GPS member, Steven Shields, moderated a panel discussion between Mitcham and Walker addressing the role of poetry in our present-day culture. ~ *DuAnne Royall Kaiser, Reporter*

KENTUCKY STATE POETRY SOCIETY held its Annual Meeting and Awards Weekend on October 12-14, 2012, at General Butler State Resort Park in Carrollton, KY. Theme for the weekend was "Show us the Colors of Your Rainbow." Members and guests were encouraged to shine with their best poetry during the weekend. Besides the annual meeting, activities included an awards ceremony honoring the winners of the Annual Adult Poetry Contest, two excellent workshops, a "Pot of Gold" poetry contest and a round robin reading. On Saturday, October 13, two excellent workshops were led by George

Eklund. The first workshop, "Released into Language", focused on techniques for generating and identifying creative ideas for poems. The second, "Sculpting and Assembling Poems", gave the workshop participants practice in developing their realized ideas into poems. Mr. Eklund has taught creative writing at Morehead State University for 23 years. His poems have appeared in numerous publications. He has had two books of poems published in the past two years: *Each Breath I Cannot Hold* in 2011 by Wind Publications and *Island Blade*, in 2012 by ABZ Press. He has been awarded the Al Smith Fellowship in Poetry from the Kentucky Arts Council. The Annual Meeting afforded members and guests the opportunity to share poetry and to make and renew friendships with poets from all over the state. It was an enjoyable weekend for all. ~ *Becky Lindsay, President*

MAINE POETS SOCIETY in September gathered at Rockland Public Library. Contests were on the subject of "From Away," judged by member Jenny Doughty, and in the form of blank verse, judged by Jacob Fricke, poet laureate of Belfast. The next meeting will be on February 9, 2013 at the Dyer Library in Saco, 371 Main St. Contests, open to members only, will be a poem not to exceed 24 lines, on the subject of "Running Away" and a short couplet poem, which is to be a series of rhymed couplets in either iambic or trochaic tetrameter, also not to exceed 24 lines. Judge for the subject poems will be Anne Britting Oleson, who has been published widely in the US, UK, and Canada. She earned her MFA at the Stonecoast program of USM. She has published two chapbooks, *The Church of St. Materiana* (2007) and *The Beauty of It* (2010). Judge for the short couplets will be Bruce Spang, poet laureate of Portland. Bruce is the author of one previous book of poems, *The Knot* (2006), as well as two chapbooks, *The End of Time* (2005) and *Once The First Berries Dissolve* (2003). He is Reviews Editor for the *Cafe Review* in Portland, ME, and an associate editor for *Hunger Mountain*. Registration on February 9 will begin at 9:30 a.m. A \$12 registration fee includes lunch. Non-members are welcome and may stay to participate in a reading-in-the-round at about 3:00 p.m. For more information visit our website: www.mainepoetssociety.com or call our Membership Chair Cynthia Brackett-Vincent at 207-778-0467. ~ *Sally Joy, Publicity Chair*

MASSACHUSETTS STATE POETRY SOCIETY held a well-attended August meeting at bucolic, historic Saugus Iron Works. President Jeanette Maes opened the

session with greetings and introductions to new members and guests followed by congratulations to many recent contest winners. Jeanette's workshops are always provocative and fun and this was no exception as attendees were to write personal reflections using terms including "I should have, I could have, if only." Members creative juices opened like floodgates and the results went the gamut from sad, sweet, poignant to hilarious. Following a bountiful summer buffet, members were invited to read two each of their recent poems. MSPS' October meeting held at the Winthrop Public Library began with the reading of a Proclamation from Governor Deval Patrick declaring National Poetry Day. President Jeanette congratulated winners and announced several new contests. Waterfront CREW Poets, a chapter of MSPS, presented a unique program of original Dialog Poems, a subset of Dramatic Poetry. Eight CREW members participated in the construction and readings. Each poem consisted of two or more voices, woven by Louis Picuoulo into a tapestry that became a One Act Play. The production was flawless, the assembled audience showed their appreciation with thunderous applause and requests the CREW take it 'on the road.' The local Cultural Council requested it be performed for the town. MSPS will hold the next meeting on December 1 at the Beverley Public Library. The agenda includes a Poetry Books Silent Auction, a gala Holiday Buffet, and a Yankee Swap with a poet's twist, i.e., each wrapped gift is accompanied by an original clever verse that suggests the content. A prize goes to the poet whose verse writes it best. ~ *Patricia Bruen Tacelli, Reporter*

POETRY SOCIETY OF MICHIGAN under the direction of James Ahearn, President, held their fall meeting at the Muskegon Community College on October 20th. Members from various areas, including Marquette in the Upper Peninsula, were present. Discussion included the possibility of appointing or electing a liaison and/or vice president from the Upper Peninsula. After reports, original poems were read, followed by dinner. Everyone enjoyed a presentation by Jack Ridl, nationally recognized poet and poetry instructor. The Traveling Trophy for the best poem of the day was awarded to Patricia Barnes for her poem "On the Tip of My Tongue." PSM currently has a membership of 132. ~ *Inge Logenburg Kyler, Historian*

MISSISSIPPI POETRY SOCIETY's Fall Mini-festival, hosted by Central Branch, was held on Oct. 20, 2012 (near Poetry Day) at Belhaven University. MPS' 80th anniversary

anthology, *Mississippi Milestones*, was released. Contest winners were announced by Central Branch President Jeanne Kelly, and winners who were present read their poems. Steve Deaton, musician, poet, and Humanities Teacher of the Year at Holmes Community College, gave an informative workshop on ballads. He also sang and played some ballads on his guitar. After a buffet lunch in the cafeteria, Jeanne Kelly presented Lifetime Awards to Ruth Richmond and Patricia Butkovich. MPS President Brenda Finnegan conducted the business meeting. She thanked Youth Chairmen Tommy and Debbie Little for their report to national, and announced that MPS received three NFSPS certificates: 2011 Youth Participation Award, National Poetry Day & Poetry Month Participation, and the 2012 Youth Participation Award. Patricia Butkovich was selected as the 2013 Poet of the Year. Her chapbook will be published by MPS and available at the MPS Spring Festival on April 12-13, 2013, at Gulf Hills Resort Hotel in Ocean Springs, MS. ~ Wynne H. Alexander, MPS Secretary

OREGON POETRY ASSOCIATION put on our Fall Conference in Medford over the first weekend in October. Based at the Red Lion, we also held gatherings in the Public Library and in the Rogue Gallery and Art Center. OPA tried a new idea: on Friday afternoon, four local poets, Gary Lark, Amy Miller, and Vince and Patty Wixon, each made themselves available to attendees who had signed up in advance for mentoring on poems that they wanted help on. Our Saturday kicked off with members of the host Rogue Valley Unit enacting a dysfunctional critique group, displaying many of the unhelpful, silly behaviors everyone has encountered in real critique groups. The group was supposed to help a young poet, Robert Frost, "improve" a poem he had brought in. Had he listened to the group's recommendations, "The Road Not Taken" might have emerged as a much shorter, unrhymed poem in anapestic hexameter, with chorus in dactylic dimeter. At lunch we presented a laurel tree to honor our recently-retired State Poetry Laureate, Lawson Inada. Our presenters were Maxine Scates and Henry Hughes, both winners of the Oregon Book Award. On Saturday evening, the four mentoring poets gave a panel presentation on sustaining the writing life. On Sunday morning, attendees could choose to schmooze at Koffee Klatches in the Red Lion, or take a historic walk around Old Medford with local expert, Ben Truwe. We are bringing our website up to full working order, under webmistress Cathy McGuire. Our newsletter, under editor Kathryn Ridall,

is primarily read online, with paper editions mailed to members who are not. We will soon begin our annual Students' Poetry Contest, with four age divisions between Grades K through 12, with awards to be given in May. Our Spring Conference and annual Members' Meeting is being planned in collaboration with the Silverton Poetry Association, to be presented in the town of Silverton, April 19-21. ~ Dave Harvey, OPA Secretary

POETRY SOCIETY OF TEXAS' 56th Annual Awards Banquet was held in the Skyline Room of the Doubletree Hotel at Campbell Centre - Dallas on November 10th. The theme was "From Seven Stars." Sharon Martin Turner was Chairman of the event and welcomed attendees. After the meal was served, President Jimmye Inez Sessions made introductions. Greetings from the National Federation of State Poetry Societies, Inc., were brought by 26th NFSPS president, Budd Powell Mahan, in the absence of scheduled 28th NFSPS president, Nancy Baass, whose mother, Mildred Vorpahl Baass*, had passed away on November 4th. Budd Powell Mahan, Chairman of the Hilton Ross Greer Outstanding Service Award, announced that of three worthy nominees voted on by the PST membership, the 2012 recipient was Irene Field Carmichael; the other nominees, in alphabetical order, were Marilyn Stacy and Jeannette L. Strother. In the absence of Nancy Baass, Chairman of the 2012 PST Annual Contests, her report was given by Vice President Catherine L'Herisson, who then, with President Jimmye Inez Sessions, announced the names of the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Place winners. 1st Place winners who were present read their winning poems. Budd Powell Mahan, Chairman of the 2012 Edwin M. Eakin Memorial Book Publication Award, announced that the winner was Lynn Lewis. 2nd Place went to Loretta Diane Walker and 3rd Place went to Elzy Cogswell.

*Mildred Vorpahl Baass, Poet Laureate of Texas, 1993-94 & 1994-95, passed away on November 4, 2012. A proud member of the Poetry Society of Texas and the National Federation of State Poetry Societies, Inc., her involvement with both organizations is an important part of her life story, which is filled with even more accomplishments, poetic and otherwise, than could be fit into her obituary, which can be found by visiting: www.rosewoodfuneralchapel.com. Her "poetic great adventure" completed on earth, her poetry lives on here, as does the memory of a truly beautiful woman, inside and out.

~ Nancy Baass

WYOPOETS Workshop Chairman, Linda Coatney, has announced the panelist for the spring workshop in Casper, WY. Katharine Coles will be the featured poetry panelist at the Hilton Garden Inn on April 19-20, 2013, in celebration of National Poetry Month. The weekend will kick off with a public poetry reading at The Metro Coffee Company at 7 PM, April 19th, and be followed by a full day of workshop sessions conducted by Ms. Coles. Katharine Coles' poems, stories, and essays have appeared in such journals as *The Paris Review*, *The Gettysburg Review*, *Poetry*, *Image*, *The Seneca Review*, *North American Review*, *Southwest Review*, *Ascent* and *DIAGRAM*. Forthcoming from Red Hen Press are her fifth and sixth poetry collections, *Flight* and *The Earth Is Not Flat*. Katharine Coles served as the 2009-2010 inaugural director of the Harriet Monroe Poetry Institute and is now a professor at the University of Utah. She founded and co-directs the Utah Symposium in Science and Literature. She is a 2012 Guggenheim Foundation Fellow. Registration for the workshop is \$45 and includes lunch on Saturday, April 20. Fees and inquiries can be sent to Art Elser, WyoPoets Treasurer, 1730 Locust Street, Denver, CO, 80220. For information about poetry events in Wyoming go to www.wyopoets.com. ~ Lee Ann Siebken, Reporter

CONTESTS

POETS ROUNDTABLE OF ARKANSAS has a monthly poetry contest for members with the exception of May and October. May is the annual Lily Peters luncheon with three special prizes. The month of October holds the annual Poetry Day event with an estimated 24-36 contests. For deadlines and rules see: www.poetsroundtable.com.

FLORIDA STATE POETS ASSOCIATION'S 2013 ANNUAL POETRY CONTEST: Poets are invited to submit their original, unpublished poetry for a chance to win cash prizes of \$100, \$75, \$50, and below. Submitted poems must not have won more than \$10 in any contest. First, second, and third place winners will be awarded cash and Honorable Mentions given a Certificate of Merit Award. Entries accepted until the "postmarked by" deadline of July 15, 2013. Contest rules and additional information available by sending a SASE to: Ms. B.J. Allgood, 688 Branch Drive, Port Orange, FL 32127. See the Contests page at: www.floridastatepoetsassociation.org.

CONTESTS (continued)**KENTUCKY STATE POETRY SOCIETY**

2013 Student Poetry Contest: Students are invited to submit their original poetry for a chance to win cash prizes! There are five categories: Grades 3-4, Grades 5-6, Grades 7-8, Grades 9-10, and Grades 11-12. Each category has a cash prize for first, second, and third place winners. Honorable Mention, the judges' recognition of some special poems, may be awarded as well. This contest is open to public, private, and home-schooled students from any state. There are no entry fees. All poems must be the original, unpublished work of the student and not be currently submitted elsewhere in any other contest. Contest deadline is March 1, 2013. For more information and specific guidelines, email Carol Ann Mauriello camauriello@moreheadstate.edu or consult the youth contest flyer on the KSPS web site: www.kystatepoetrysociety.org/Contests.html

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 (put "Contest Information" in the subject line), or consult the MPS website www.misspoetry.net.

MISSOURI STATE POETRY SOCIETY

Winter contest deadline: Postmark February 15, 2013. 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, winter 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. Send to Bill Lower, 21010 S. Hwy 245, Fair Play, MO 65649. SASE or email address on a 3x5 index card for list of winners.

PENNSYLVANIA POETRY SOCIETY

invites all poets to enter their 2013 Annual Contest. Entries may be sent up until the deadline of January 15, 2013. Rules and instructions are on the Contests page at: www.nfspd.com/pa/.

OREGON POETRY ASSOCIATION

Spring Contests: Deadline for entries is March 1, 2013. There will be six categories: 1) Poet's Choice, 80-line max, any form, any subject; 2) Free Verse, 40-line max, any free form, any subject; 3) Traditional Verse Form, limit 40 lines, any subject, form—sestina; 4) New Poets, 30-line max, any form, any subject; 5) Members Only, 6-12 lines, any form, any subject; 6) Theme: music or visual arts, in memory of Virginia Corrie-Cozart, 40-line max, any form.

POETRY EVENT

Set aside March 22-23, 2013 for an awe-inspiring weekend in southern Utah. POETRY in THE PARK in its 4th year, will hold a day-long workshop featuring Utah Poet Laureate Lance Larsen in beautiful Zion National Park on Friday March 22. Details for this event at: www.poetry-in-the-park.com. Partially funded by Utah Division of Arts and Museums, and National Endowment of the Arts, in partnership with Utah State Poetry Society, Zion Natural Park Foundation and Zion Canyon Field Institute. Make plans to explore the park's majestic red rock cliffs and impressive natural beauty. Stay nearby in St. George, UT (45 minutes away) with its regional airport or fly into Las Vegas. Redrock Writers' Seminar will be held the same weekend in the historic St. George Opera House. For details see: www.redrockwriters.org.

**ENCORE COVER SUBMISSIONS
NOW OPEN**

NFSPS members are encouraged to share original art or photos that would be appropriate for the cover of *Encore*. Be sure to send material in a vertical format unless the photo or art can be used as a "wrap around" cover. In horizontal wrap formats, care must be taken that the focal point is on the right side so it will be on the front cover and not the back. You may submit digitally, using a high resolution jpeg. If the photo is grainy or fuzzy, I cannot use it. Send digital submissions to vbailey@satx.rr.com. If you send hard copy, it must fit on my scanner—no larger than 8.5 x 14. Those who want to send original art should take a photograph of the art and send the photograph digitally or as hard copy. I do not want to be responsible for someone's only copy of original art.

I like to keep all the submissions to consider again each year. If you do not want me to keep your photo, please send a self-addressed stamped envelope so I can return it to you. If you do not send an envelope, I will assume I can keep it on file. Some years, submissions are sparse; and other years I am inundated. Please send your submissions to: Valerie Martin Bailey, *Encore* Editor, 2207 Parhaven Drive, San Antonio, TX 78232. The deadline for submissions is May 1, 2013.

I received a photograph last year that I am interested in, but I have misplaced the name of the person who submitted it. If you submitted a photograph of a white flower with pink-tinged petals leaning over the top of a dusty-rose brick wall, I would like to hear from you.

STROPHES WEB EDITION – ADDITIONAL CONTENT**2013 NFSPS CONFERENCE
ADDITIONAL WORKSHOPS****Saturday (June 15th) at 10:30 am:
Methods & Alternatives of Publishing**

The aim of this session will be to provide a panel of veterans to help you find the best choice for getting your work between covers. Do you aim to print a child's book of poems for family and friends only? Sell your memoir on Amazon? Top the bestseller list? If you are doing it yourself, what do you need to know about: book distribution, editing and design resources, copyright and ISBN registration, website and software support? What are the advantages and/or pitfalls of 'zines, iBooks, or print-on-demand?

NMSPS members who are small, niche publishers will serve on this panel, which may also include reps from Amazon and Apple. Expect lively interaction between panel and audience as you explore a range of nontraditional options. This panel discussion will follow the workshop by Andrea Watson and Madelyn Garner. We hope to bring those presenters back at the conclusion of this session for a combined Q&A.

**Sunday (June 16th) at 2:30 pm: New
Mexican Voices on Writing From Place**

A panel of accomplished New Mexican poets discuss how place—be it defined as geography, gender, ethnicity, faith, class, poverty, privilege, art, occupation, or sexual orientation—influences and is reflected in their writing. The 6-8 panelists epitomize the incredible diversity of this region's native and immigrant populations and its unsurpassed cultural harmony.

POETRY ARTICLES**Increasing Our Membership:
Growth of Our State Societies**

Steven Concert, NFSPS Membership Chair,
Pennsylvania Poetry Society

The biggest challenge faced by our state societies is how to grow our membership. There seems to be no easy “one-size-fits-all” answer. Focus appears to be how we attract younger poets so that our organizations don't fade away. Instead of asking ourselves how to attract younger poets, I think we need to find a way to attract ALL poets to our organizations. By only looking at how to bring in youth, we are basically limiting ourselves. Effectively, we are limiting our potential new members by half or more.

The first step in growing our numbers is to let potential members know that we exist. Our state organizations cannot grow if nobody knows we are here. Make contact with your state's tourism agency. Their job is

to promote what the state has to offer its citizens. We can get ourselves listed through their website and in printed materials. If there are local tourism agencies, make contact with them as well. Approach universities, colleges, and high schools to find potential members. Make contact with teachers and professors so that they are aware we exist.

We are in the digital age and should be utilizing technology to its fullest potential. That said, all state societies should have a website. Yet, there are five NFSPS state societies that are still not “online.” If you are a member of one of these five state societies, you should be aware that NFSPS can provide your society with web space through the NFSPS website. No experience is needed as there are NFSPS members willing to help develop your web pages. At the very least, each state society should have a basic web page that tells “who” we are and “how” to contact our organization.

Social media is a very popular way to keep in touch: Facebook, MySpace, Yahoo Groups, and chat groups. The list goes on. If a state society does not have a presence here, think of all the potential members we are failing to reach (thousands, possibly millions). These websites can help us to announce who we are. By design, social media allows us to connect with our friends, and those friends connect with their friends, and friend's friends connect with their friends, creating an intertwined network of potential members.

We've put our information out there. It's time to sit back and relax. Any day now the poets will be kicking down our doors to join. While we can hope that with our information “out there” others will come in search of us, such a statement couldn't be further from the reality of the situation each of our state societies faces every day.

The second step in growing our numbers is to actively seek out potential members. This will increase our chances of success. We need to identify where these potential members can be found. Chances are if your town has a popular coffee shop/cafe that routinely hosts “open mic” nights, you will find poets there. Do the cafes routinely bring in poets to conduct a reading? Chances are that the audience will be mostly comprised of poets. Who from our state societies are sitting in the audience? Add to your list local colleges and universities as well as local high schools. A few years back, a local university brought Billy Collins to the campus to do a reading. It was standing room only in an auditorium that easily holds 1,000 people. And several hundred attended the “meet the

poet” reception held following the reading. Among the crowd were many local and regional poets who did not belong to the state society. Think: potential members. Another place where poets are sure to gather are local, regional, and state poetry festivals. Local and college libraries as well as book stores could be additional sources for potential members. Check the internet to see if there is a local chat group for poets. Leave no stone unturned when identifying where potential members can be found.

We've put our information out there, and identified where poets are most likely to be found. So, now what do we do?

To be continued Look for **Increasing Our Membership: Growth of Our State Societies – Part II** in an upcoming edition of *Strophes*.

**Why The National Convention
Is Important**

Jim Barton, NFSPS National Convention
Coordinator, Poets' Roundtable of Arkansas

Writing is a lonely business. Writing poetry is even lonelier. We, as poets, spend inordinate amounts of time alone, thinking, composing, toying with phrase and line. Of course we have our social and work lives, and we have poetry groups on the local level. We meet with other poets once or twice a year at the state level. I believe we need more than that. I believe the national gathering is one of the most important events we can attend as poets. Attendance has been slipping of late, interest has declined some, and it has become more and more difficult to recruit hosts for the convention.

Some of this is due to the economy. During hard times, we cut back. Travel and hotel stays are expensive. Meals have become overpriced for many of us. Some of the decline has come simply because we, as a group, are aging, and travel is more difficult, if not outright impractical. These are valid reasons, and I truly understand them.

However, if we are to continue as a vital, living voice for good quality poetry in this country, we must not only support our local and state groups, but we must give of ourselves to the national organization. The national convention is important for several reasons.

First, it gives us a chance to interact and share with poets from across the country, to participate in the give and take that only poets can fully appreciate. Impromptu readings, roundtable discussions, lunch talks, and poetry walks all help weave our poetry states into a cohesive poetry nation.

Secondly, we grow as poets when we hear poetry from other places. We help other poets

grow when they hear our poetry. It is this poetic conversation, this ambassadorship of poets which gives us strength as an organization. As a southerner, I love hearing the voices of talented poets from Minnesota, from Pennsylvania, Ohio, New Mexico, and other far-flung places which otherwise would be just points on a map. By hearing their voices, I can visit these places and taste just a bit of their flavor.

Thirdly, poets learn more about their craft from experts in seminars, lectures, workshops, Q&A sessions, and demonstrations. By moving the convention yearly to different parts of our great country, we reap the benefits of countless teachers we might never have known about. We gather priceless tips and bits of advice that help us to be better poets.

Finally, what better audience could a poet have than other poets? What better friends could a poet make than other poets? It is at the national convention that we can come out of our shells and create lasting friendships with talented poets from all over the country. As a side benefit, we also get to see and experience parts of the country that can inspire new poetry, spark new ideas, and give us a broader view of our world.

In closing, I ask you to support our NFSPS conventions, starting with the 2013 gathering in Albuquerque, which is shaping up to be truly enchanting. I also ask, beg, plead for a host state for 2014. We have so much to gain by continuing to back these conventions, and so much to lose if they die from lack of interest. Writing is a lonely business, but we don't have to be alone. Attend, support, advertise, host the national convention. Be an active voice for good poetry.

A Few Thoughts on Open Mic and the Microphone

Mark Hersman, President,
Ohio Poetry Association

Test the mic (loudness and quality) before people arrive. And if you, the poet, are allowed do the same—do it. Instead of asking people, “Can you hear me?”, watch them as you read, hear yourself as you read.

If you emcee/host a reading event, lay out specific, CLEAR guidelines for the poets and stick to them. For example, try to avoid epic poems at the mic (consider most audiences' attention span). Consider one or two short poems with line limits. Seriously address rant, vulgarity, profanity, etc. Again, most importantly, who is your audience? Address this before the event begins, and again if need be, as numbers sign up during the event and at break.

At the mic, remember that most often, less is more—fewer poems are generally better received than volumes. Explain less and get

right into your work, for both poets and emcees—artfully use the mic.

For all readings, if there is a mic, please use it. NEVER at the microphone ask if you have to use it. Remember, in EVERY group there are individuals with various hearing disabilities. Perhaps the exception to this guideline would be a mic or sound system not functioning properly. In this scenario, politely acknowledge the situation, then step away from the mic (closer to the audience), and speak loud, clear, and slow! Smile often.

This may be difficult to believe, but the audience actually WANTS to hear the poems.

Every reading at the mic is a performance, no confusion here: EVERY reading a performance. Engage the audience; look at each one, smile often, look up and around (try memorizing your work). Without the audience, there is no reading. Help the audience feel special. THEY ARE SPECIAL. I have watched far too many good poets lose their future readers because of their poor delivery.

Don't forget the power of first impression at the mic. This applies to all people as well as the individual poem. Dress appropriately. TYPE OUT your poems/notes, using large bold dark print to avoid stumbling. See yourself from the audience's perspective. Plan for bad lighting as this is often the case. Carry your glasses to the mic and don't apologize for using them. Avoid apologizing for anything at the mic. Be humble. Be proud of your work. Woo your audience to the World of Poetry—the power of first impression at the mic is HUGE! Don't hide behind it.

An excellent book to assist both the host/emcee and the poet is: *Stage Performance* by Livingston Taylor. This is an absolute must for all who plan to use the mic and for nearly all public readings as well. Another must-read book on speaking and performing at the mic is *Ace a Reading and Sell Your Chapbooks* by Jennifer Bosveld, Puddinghouse Publications, 2011.

If you want your audience and fellow poets to take you seriously, you must first seriously consider your own professionalism at the mic as well as your preparation and performance. The microphone is the heartbeat of every poem. Use it to your advantage. Learn the love language between the audio system and your listeners. And use it artfully well—wishing you more delightful, powerful open mics.

Photo Poems: For the Pictures You Wish You'd Taken—

or the Pictures You Imagine

David Harvey, Secretary,
Oregon Poetry Association

- * “I wish I'd gotten a picture of that!”
- * “The light was too dim for a good picture.”
- * “They didn't allow cameras in that museum/church/concert hall.”
- * “I ran out of film [my battery went flat] just before it happened.”
- * “It happened so fast! By the time I got my camera out—”
- * “I forgot my camera that day.”

Who hasn't come home from a vacation or special occasion saying something like that? Sometimes, just out for a walk, shopping, or waiting while they change our oil, there's a moment that would make a fantastic picture—only we aren't ready with a camera, and we miss it.

Actually, we don't miss it. We *see* it. There may even be a sound, aroma, texture, or taste involved, and we record that, too. It goes into our memory, as vividly as if we'd snapped it.

I propose that those memories can be shared in a way that brings them alive for our friends and families: photo poems, in which memories become words. Putting them into words can affect how we write, how we remember the sights/events we couldn't get into photos, and how others understand our experiences.

For many of us, the haiku is the most familiar photo poem. Jo Miles, writing over fifty years ago, remarked that “the haiku is the nearest thing in literature to a photograph.” This led me to see that certain other short forms, including short free-verse poems, can have the *effect* of photographs. They even have the advantage over most cameras in that they can record sounds, smells, textures, and tastes. They can record them in dim or even no light. They might even be pictures that *never happened at all*, or only in your imagination!

I used to begin the school year with my eighth-graders in Eureka with The Photo Poem Assignment. The rules I gave them may help you get started.

1. Any subject is OK, whether you are witnessing it as you write, you remember it from days past, or even if you only imagine what you might witness if it really happened.
2. Titles are OK. Let them be like the captions you might write beside photographs in an album, giving place, date, other pertinent information.
3. Any length between three and twenty lines. (In practice, poems longer than ten lines tend to become “video-clip poems,” but that might also be all right for you.)

4. Always set in present tense. (Like a photograph.)
5. Nothing but sense details—don't tell how it made you feel—just describe the details that gave you that feeling.
6. I didn't allow rhymes, because they tended with youngsters, to run away with the sense of the poem as they searched for rhyming words. However, as mature poets, you should be able to disregard this rule, and create "photos that *sing*."

You may enjoy setting your poems in classic forms. A few are listed below with examples.

Haiku: Always three lines, and many teachers—not all, including me—require 17 syllables, arranged 5-7-5. Classically, haiku poems are untitled. Apply "Rule 2" above, as suits you. Example by Pedro Miguel Lock, Panama Canal, Nov. 5, 1962, aboard the USS Okanogan:

Green lawns, sunset light,
gray walls, green with ancient moss—
tall gates close astern.

Trilet: Three lines, 18 syllables, arranged 3-6-9. Example by David Harvey, Jan 2008, on my bike above Emigrant Reservoir

Old 99, Climbing into a Snowstorm

Tires crackle
on scattered gravel; first
flakes fly in my face at Milepost Five.

Tanka. Five lines, 31 syllables, arranged 5-7-5-7-7. Example by David Harvey:

Going in My Geezer-Gear

At three miles an hour,
I slowly crank my burdens;
my chain's steady whir:
the pine trees pass down,
and the sweat runs in my eyes.

Crapsey Cinquain: Named for its inventor, the American poet Adelaide Crapsey. Five lines, 22 syllables, arranged 2-4-6-8-2. Ms. Crapsey cheerfully allowed an extra syllable, or an omitted one, here or there, if it made a better poem. I have had fun with "cinquain chains," poems of several stanzas, each following this form, but the last line of each stanza becoming the first line of the next.

Poetry Immersion at the Dodge Festival

Ginny Connors, Contest Chair,
Connecticut Poetry Society

The biennial Geraldine R. Dodge Poetry Festival took place October 11-14 in the downtown Arts District of Newark, NJ. I was lucky enough to attend, along with several poetry-loving friends. During the day, there were simultaneous events in multiple locations, all within a few blocks of the NJ Performing Arts Center, Prudential Hall, which served as Poetry Central during the event. Thursday was set aside for high school students and their teachers, and on Friday many students also attended.

A great range of poets gave readings, participated in poetry "conversations," on stage, and gave craft lectures. Among them were Philip Levine, Patricia Smith, Jane Hirshfield, Eavan Boland, Thomas Lux, Natasha Trethewey, Gregory Orr, Raúl Zurita, Henri Cole, Terrence Hayes, Dorianne Laux, Taylor Mali—the list goes on and on. Festival Coordinator, Martin Farawell, gave thoughtful introductions to the poets at the evening readings.

A focus of many of the craft lectures was the music of poetry, and music was also performed at some of the events. On Friday evening, tap dancer Maurice Chestnut performed along with poet/musician Kurtis Lamkin, who accompanied himself on the kora, an African stringed instrument. (Lamkin made his by hand.) Who would have thought that such a combination of art forms would work so well together? Saturday morning began with a performance by the Newark Boys Choir. On Saturday night, the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra String Quartet played along as Patricia Smith read dramatic and moving selections about those left behind in a nursing home during Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath. The poems were from her book, *Blood Dazzler*.

Among several craft lectures I attended, one by Dorianne Laux stood out. She spoke movingly of her initiation into poetry through watching a performance of *Romeo and Juliet*, and later listening to a performance of it over and over, concentration most especially on the rhythm. During the talk she quoted passages from memory in order to make her points clear. She recreated the process of thinking that she had gone through as a young woman from a family that had little use for books or for poetry. Laux talked about the power of certain words that break the rhythm and force a reader or listener to pause, to pay attention. Spondees, consisting of two stressed syllables, are such words. "These are mother words," she said. "They force you to pay attention. Come here. Sit down. Shut up." In *Romeo and Juliet*, one

spondee is "rough touch." It breaks the iambic pentameter so that a reader or listener lingers over it. It also foreshadows what happens later in the play.

Another poem that really made her think about rhythm in poetry was "Tarantulas on the Life Buoy" by Thomas Lux. She believes that the word "semi-tropical" (say it aloud) might have helped him find the rhythm and voice for this poem. (If you are interested in this poem, you can find it at: www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/178152). She also spoke of her belief that the best poems "stand on the knife edge of yes and no." Life is complex. The last line of a poem should probably emphasize that division, that teetering edge.

There is so much more one could say about the Dodge Poetry Festival experience (www.dodgepoetry.org), including the pleasure of joining a large community of people who are passionate about poetry, but the best thing I can do is to suggest that you try to attend the next Festival in 2014.