



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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Eleanor Berry
31st NFSPS
President

Dear NFSPS Poets:

There is always a gap of nearly two months between when I write these messages and when they reach you who read them. However, when the gap includes all the winter holidays and the start of a new year, it seems especially hard to project myself across it. The fact that I am writing in the immediate aftermath of deadly ISIS-organized terrorist attacks on a Russian airliner and in Beirut and Paris, and with the threat of similar attacks elsewhere, makes it even harder than it would otherwise be to imagine what I can say now that will speak to readers early in the new year.

Of course, when we write poems we often have scarcely any notion who will read them or under what circumstances. Nonetheless, we hope that they will prove relevant, moving, and somehow valuable to those readers. Grief

and fear tend to draw people to poetry, both as writers and as readers. We saw that in the outpouring of poetry and the hunger for it after the September 11, 2001, attacks in New York and Washington, D.C. Like many of you, I both wrote poems dealing with those attacks and devoured others' poems about them. A couple of the poems I wrote that fall have been published (one of them in *Encore*), but one that seemed potentially strong I couldn't get right despite many attempts at revision. Last week, as I was preparing for a reading, I took it out again. Finally, I managed to pull it together. Thus, a poem I had begun while listening to the news on September 11, 2001, I finished in the midst of coverage of the November 13, 2015, attacks in Paris. I included it in the reading.

For that reading, I tried to choose poems that would speak to what the people gathered in a local bookstore to hear and share poetry would be thinking and feeling as the season moved toward winter solstice, as the holidays approached when family members and friends would be together but some would be missing, as our world was threatened by environmental and social ills, and violence seemed only to breed further violence. The people in the audience listened closely and responded gratefully. One friend and fellow poet told me that the reading had been what she'd needed.

Fortunately, not all poems receive their impetus from horrific events or derive the energy for their completion from further such events, and not all poems take 14 years to finish. But whatever their source and however long they take to write, poems can provide comfort and help toward healing—not by forced cheeriness or high-sounding abstractions, but by honest emotion and clearly presented particulars.

Among the saddening losses of 2015, as of every year, have been the deaths of poets whom we have known and admired, whether personally or entirely through their work. For comfort in our loss, we turn, of course, to their poems. One whom I was fortunate to know personally was a Salem, Oregon, poet named David Laing. He was steadfast in his quiet devotion to poetry and service to the poetry community. As one of the founding co-editors of a quarterly journal of poetry of western Oregon that was published for over a decade, he helped provide poets of this place a valuable forum for sharing their work. Though poetry was central to his life, he spoke of his own characteristically spare poems as "small" and never drew attention to them. A good number of people at the gathering to celebrate his life had not been aware he was a poet. But his poems were there, in copies of two chapbooks and in duplicates of several single poems. Some of us had been re-reading the poems and talked about them together. They are records of loving and patient attention, especially to the natural world. Reading them, we can see through the poet's eyes even though he is gone:

the sky darkens
a raft of yellow leaves
drifts slowly by

one year ends
another begins
just pay attention

Another poet whose death saddened me this past year I did not know personally, though I had the good fortune of attending a reading he gave in Portland a few years ago. C.K. Williams I knew through his poetry, which is the vehicle of an acute intelligence thinking [*continued on page 8*]

MAGNETIC MINNESOTA— ATTRACTING A NATION OF POETS NFSPS CONVENTION JUNE 9-12, 2016

Join us for the 2016 NFSPS Convention hosted by the League of Minnesota Poets at the Oak Ridge Hotel & Conference Center in Chaska, Minnesota. Experience a writing vacation in the natural setting of Minnesota, just a stone's throw away from McKnight Lake. Events and activities include:

- Small group peer review
- Generative writing workshops
- Speakers with a range of voices and styles
- Panels discussing everything from crafting poetry to publishing a book
- Layers: An infusion of music and poetry
- A lakeside BBQ
- An elegant evening with Natalie Goldberg, keynote speaker and author of *Writing Down the Bones: Freeing the Writer Within*
- A writing tour of the University of Minnesota Arboretum
- Craft a poem during a visit to a local craft brewery.

Visit www.nfspdconvention.com for more details and registration. You can also look for the April issue of *Strophes* for the convention registration form.

Book your room at www.oakridgeminneapolis.com. Enter code "nfspd" for the discounted rate, which includes breakfast.

2016 NFSPS CONTEST BROCHURE CORRECTIONS

On the back page of the NFSPS 2016 contest brochure, please be advised of the following corrections:

- Membership: Jim Barton's email is jbob214@yahoo.com
- Stevens Manuscript Competition Chair is now: Wilda Morris, 499 Falcon Ridge Way, Bolingbrook, IL 60449-2242 stevens.nfspd@gmail.com

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

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STROPHES

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* Submission Deadlines

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

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NFSPS MEMBER SOCIETY NEWS

ARIZONA STATE POETRY SOCIETY'S poets celebrated their 45th Annual Fall Conference hosted by the Tucson Poetry Society at the University of Arizona in Tucson with their local president, Stuart Watkins, presiding. Attendees were awed by the spacious beauty of the campus and the impressive structures even before attending the inspiring day of presentations. We were delighted to have our first Arizona Poet Laureate, Alberto Rios, greet us and recount his year of traveling about the state spreading the profound magic of poetry and well placed words. He left us with some memorable words "tell me and I will understand, tell me well and I will feel." Breakout sessions included Southwest artist Marless Fellows and acclaimed cowboy poet Gary Penny who combined their talents for an entertaining presentation. Poet Rod Drought read from his latest book which held connections to our place in the natural world. Joey Acey, award winning poet and dramatic presenter, gave her group concrete ideas on getting published. In-state favorite editor and publisher Charles Portolano of the quarterly online *Avocet, A Journal of Nature Poetry*, held a writing workshop. Winning poems from the fall contest were read and will be published in an edition of *Sandcutters*. Over \$1,000 in prize money was paid out. No conference would be complete without the poets in attendance having a chance to read their poetry. We had ample time for the varied readings. ~ *Molly Saty, Reporter*

POETS' ROUNDTABLE OF ARKANSAS' 68th annual Poetry Day was a wonderful event in Little Rock. Our thanks to Poetry Day Chair Laura Loughridge and the River Market Poets for graciously hosting. The conference annually honors Rosa Zagnoni Marinoni, Arkansas Poet Laureate (1953-1969) who established the first Arkansas Poetry Day on October 15, 1948. Poetry Day Chair Laura Loughridge welcomed a room full of guests and started the event with a poem by Jane Kenyon. President Dennis Patton read the Governor's Proclamation for Arkansas's 2015 Poetry Day. Then Laura introduced PRA's featured speaker, Hope Coulter, award-winning author and professor at Hendrix College in Conway. Coulter spoke on writing, reading and publishing poetry. Following a break, Coulter discussed critiques with ample group participation. The room was full of interested and interesting poets! Coulter also autographed her newest book for members. After lunch in the River Market, attendees remembered two PRA poets lost during this year: Gladys Palmer of Little Rock and Doreen Bailey of El Dorado. Past PRA President Cathy Moran announced the 2015

Merit Award winner, one of PRA's highest awards. Congratulations to Dennis Patton who received this year's award for his many hours of service to PRA. Finally, Poetry Day Contest Chair Donna Smith announced the 2015 winners. This year's entries were very competitive, up 42% from 2014's level and up 35% from 2013's. Winners came from all over Arkansas, 14 states and Canada. Before announcing the winners of the Sybil Nash Abrams Awards, PRA Treasurer and NFSPS 1st Vice President Jim Barton shared a short biography of Mrs. Abrams (1900-1980). PRA is sponsoring its first ever Collegiate Poetry Contest, and members are reaching out to colleges and universities throughout Arkansas. The entry fee for the contest covers a membership in PRA. PRA can then let the students know about all the activities, branches and contests PRA offers. We are also reaching out to middle and high school students for both our Sybil Nash Abrams Student Poetry Awards and the NFSPS Manningham Awards. The Senior High winner from 2014, David Xiang, was one of a handful of students across the U.S. who was invited to share their poetry with First Lady Michelle Obama. ~ *Laura Loughridge, Secretary*

COLUMBINE POETS OF COLORADO celebrated their annual Poets Fest on Sept. 12 at the Aurora Community College. Their featured poet was nationally acclaimed Pattiann Rogers, who is also a Colorado resident. Her workshop, "The Language and Music of the Earth," was enthusiastically received, and everyone was inspired to begin a new poem there. Afterwards, Ms. Rogers delighted and charmed us with her poems, old and new, even taking requests from the audience. The Poets Fest was also the occasion to announce the winners of our members contest in three categories: free verse, traditional form, and prose poem. Winners read their poems to us, and we also got to hear the comments from their judges. The judges were Pattiann Rogers, Kathleen Cain, and Dawn Kawahara. This year's Columbine Poets Fest, the best attended to date, brought together members from all four chapters across the state, as well as a number of non-members. It was a chance for us to meet new members, to showcase members' books, and to enjoy everyone's poetry at the final open reading. The icing on the cake had to be the unveiling of the blue windbreakers with the Columbine Poets logo stitched on the front, the brain child of our president, Julie Cummings. She ended up selling all of them, and we were honored when even Pattiann Rogers wore hers home. ~ *Anita Jepson-Gilbert, Secretary/Treasurer*

FLORIDA STATE POETS ASSOCIATION'S 2015 Annual Fall Convention held in Palm Beach Gardens at the Hilton Garden Inn was a definite success. On Friday evening, poets gathered for the new Ceremony of the Laurels to hail our two new Honorary Chancellors, Florida Poet Laureate Peter Meinke and renowned children's poet Lee Bennett Hopkins. A short poetry reading by both was a treat we will remember. Their encouraging words were motivation for all poets to keep writing. On Saturday, in addition to presentations by both Chancellors, Al Rocheleau, teacher of the 12 Chairs Poetry Writing Program, took us on an unforgettable walk through the Poets Corner in Westminster Abbey where many honored British poets and writers have been interred or memorialized, beginning with Geoffrey Chaucer in 1556. Al's presentation was inspiring and let us know that poetry is never too old; it is as good today as it was yesterday. Leslie Halpern and Oral Nussbaum gave us tips on writing ekphrastic poetry that was followed by a writing exercise. Poems were written about three different objects. How amazing it was to hear all the different poems about the same object. How different each poet saw what they were writing about. The highlight Saturday evening was the First Florida Invitational Slam Tournament conducted by MAC (Mainstreet Art and Culture) DeLand Slam Master Kevin Campbell. Twelve of Florida's best spoken word performers competed for the coveted prizes. What an amazing group of young poets. What an exciting competition. Our congratulations to the winners. As always we waited with anticipation to hear who the winners of the FSPA Poetry Contest were and to hear their poems. The thrill was to hear that all six winners of category 1 were from Florida. ~ *Mary-Ann Westbrook, Secretary, and Patricia Stevenson-Gingrich, Editor of FSPA's Of Poets and Poetry newsletter*

ILLINOIS STATE POETRY SOCIETY on February 21, 2016, will start another ISPS chapter. The group will be lead by Susan Auld, who plans to focus on English haiku rather than the more familiar Japanese style. This chapter will be the second one that meets at the Northbrook Public Library on alternating months, and will be the sixth chapter to form beside the online critique group. Tom Moran, a new board member, is our Manningham Contest chair for the ISPS-sponsored section of the upcoming contest. Beside some Illinois poets, there were several NFSPS members from out of state who received prizes and honorable mentions in our recent poetry contest. Congratulations to all the winners! ~ *Susan T. Moss, President*

MASSACHUSETTS STATE POETRY SOCIETY held its Autumn Meeting on Saturday, October 17, at the Winthrop Public Library. President Jeanette Maes presented a poetry workshop "What If...". She also read a proclamation by Governor Baker declaring October to be Massachusetts Poetry Month. The Waterfront CREW Poets presented an insightful poetic history of the Town of Winthrop. On October 24th at the North Shore Poets Forum, Roberta Hung presented "The Witch in Rhyme," researched by Nancy Pantano. A totally bewitching and fascinating event. A discussion on "How to Critique a Poem" followed. The November meeting will be on "Harvest" and a workshop on writing a villanelle is planned. The Louise Brogan Chapter meetings include a writing exercise which members then read and critique. In addition, a member will offer thoughts on a selected poet and his or her poetry. As well, local poetry events are noted. Joyce Heron was our guest speaker in October. The Brogan Chapter plans an anthology and has applied for a Massachusetts Cultural Council Grant. The next MSPS meeting will be December 5th at the Beverly Public Library. ~ *Patricia Bruen Tacelli, Reporter*

POETRY SOCIETY OF MICHIGAN held its fall meeting at the Writer's Hub in Grand Rapids on October 17 with over thirty members and guests present. Phillip Sterling from the Great Lakes Commonwealth of Letters welcomed everyone and explained the functions of GLCL. President Polly Opsahl presided over the meeting and introduced Honorary Chancellor Jack Ridl who presented the outreach CavanKerry project which encourages members to provide poetry for the disabled or shut-ins within our community. Members gave their unanimous support to participate in this endeavor. President Opsahl announced that due to rising costs, the Board approved the increase in membership dues to \$25.00 effective January, 2016. As well, the Board approved the new officers for 2016. It was announced that PSM member Carlina Duan won the NFSPS Edna Meudt Memorial Award for college students with her manuscript *Here I Go Torching*. As Editor, Ed Morin discussed the new anthology that will be published mid-year 2016. It was also announced that Janeen Rastall has won the 2015 Celery City Chapbook Contest. After lunch, Arnold and Deborah Johnston presented a program of poetry, readings, and music. Following a round of readings, Elizabeth Kerlikowske won the Traveling Trophy for her poem "Bottomless Lake." It was a most enjoyable meeting, with members looking forward to the annual spring meeting. ~ *Inge Logenburg Kyler, PSM Historian*

LEAGUE OF MINNESOTA POETS held its fall convention in St. Paul on the weekend of October 17-18, attended by approximately twenty-five members. Highlighting the event was the announcement of the award winning poems from LOMP's 2015 contest. Nearly 2,000 poems were entered by poets from across the nation and Canada. We would like to thank all of you who participated, and encourage everyone to consider entering your work in next year's contest. The convention was held at Hotel 340, the hotel previously chosen as the venue for our 2016 NFSPS convention. Unfortunately, or fortunately if you look at it another way, we found the hotel to not be adequate for our needs, and so the venue for the NFSPS convention this coming June has been moved to Oak Ridge Conference Center in Chaska, Minnesota. Chaska is a suburb of the Twin Cities, and offers a number of advantages including being situated very near the University of Minnesota Arboretum. Please monitor the League's website at www.mnpoets.com for more information, and also keep tabs through nfsps.com. ~ *Dennis Herschbach, President*

MISSISSIPPI POETRY SOCIETY has been busy since August. In October, North Branch met in the hometown of one of our members to present the first annual North Branch "Poet of the Year" award. Our first recipient, Mrs. Ruth Richmond, was surprised and pleased to receive this award. She was presented with her chapbook, *Magnolia Tower: Tablets*. After the presentation, members enjoyed lunch and a reading by Mrs. Richmond from her book. Each member then took a turn reading one or two of his or her own poems. Sadly, we said good-bye in November to a long-time member of MPS and a recipient of the Lifetime Achievement Award, Col. Mick Denington. Mick was an excellent poet and a dear friend. He will be greatly missed. His book, *Like a River*, is a fine example of his poetry. Please read more about Mick's life in the "Spotlight" portion of our website www.misspoetry.net. Central Branch continues to plan for the Spring Festival to be held next April. The venue is the Cabot Lodge North on E. County Line Road in Ridgeland (North Jackson). Please check our website for more information and also for information about our Spring Festival poetry contest. We are proud of Central Branch member, Jim Booth, who has just released his second novel, *The TaJarean Chronicles: An Ancient Prophecy Fulfilled*. South Branch has recently held its annual contest with Writers Unlimited. It was very successful. Winners were announced in November. They are listed on our website under the "Contests" tab. Student contest winners who are eligible will be entered into

the NFSPS Manningham Contest. We are happy to announce that our 2016 "Poet of the Year" is Dr. Emory D. Jones, of Iuka. Dr. Jones has been an active member of MPS since 1982. He has served in many capacities with MPS, and this is his second time to receive the coveted award. You may find him on our website homepage under "Poet of the Year." Congratulations, Dr. Jones! ~ *Dorothy Wiman, Secretary*

OHIO POETRY ASSOCIATION took submissions for its annual high school poetry contests through January 15 and will be hosting several workshops during winter 2016. In January, we welcome Becca Lachman to host a workshop on the role of poetry in fostering peace and community in our lives. In February, Cindy Bosley leads an ekphrastic workshop at the Toledo Museum of Art. And the Ides of March poetry contest deadline is, of course, March 15. We have a great year of events planned for 2016 and are very excited to get the new programming year under way. We encourage our friends in other states to join us if they're traveling to Ohio. ~ *Chuck Salmons, President*

POETRY SOCIETY OF OKLAHOMA wishes everyone a HAPPY NEW YEAR! We at PSO are looking ahead to a GREAT year. Many years ago members of PSO published an anthology of poetry titled *Red Earth*. In celebration of our 80th anniversary, PSO recently published an anthology, *Red Earth Revisited*. Poets from across Oklahoma and from other states who shared the vision of and membership in PSO are represented in *Red Earth Revisited*. The overriding theme for this publication was personal expression. Editor, Ed Roberts stated, "We put together this collection to honor all those Oklahoma poets who came before us and with hope that it might serve as an inspiration for those currently writing poetry and to those who choose to in the future. Poetry is not only the language of the heart but often whispers from our very soul. It has the ability to cross borders, cultures, and even time itself." PSO held its annual business meeting October 10th celebrating National Poetry Day. Vivian Stewart and Karen Kay Bailey gave a special "Surprise" presentation and then presented members that attended with a chapbook called *Giving Back*. First Vice President Marsha Kay Oldham was PSO's official facilitator for the day. An autumn theme for National Poetry Day decorated the tables – decorating done by Theresa Huston, Second Vice President. To further celebrate the day, the winning contestants of the National Poetry Day contest were announced, presented with certificates and their poems read. The business meeting followed and last (but certainly not least!) the officers for 2016 – 2017 were elected.

Looking ahead, PSO will hold its Spring Banquet at Twin Hills Country Club the 12th of March, 2016. Winners from the Annual Spring Contest will be announced, prizes awarded and poems read. And once again, a good time will be had by all! A reminder regarding the deadline for the 57th Annual Convention's 2016 Annual Contest: it is the 15th March 2016. So, get busy with writing those poems! That's all until next time. ~ *Patti Koch, President*

PENNSYLVANIA POETRY SOCIETY enjoys a unique service provided to its members: *Pennessence*. This is a monthly online journal created by Editor Ann Gasser, poet-artist, who accepts emailed poems of 28 lines or less, new or previously published, and creates illustrations to showcase the poems through PDF formats. *Pennessence*, "The Essence of PPS Poetry," began featuring one poem per poet each month, then was expanded with a second section: "On the Lighter Side." This new section is designed to explore the metric and rhymed skills necessary to create humorous poetry and verses. PPS members may now share one or two of their selected poems through this journal with each other and others who access it online. *Pennessence* has proved to be a useful tool and inspiration provided to PPS members. ~ *Marilyn Downing, President*

POETRY SOCIETY OF TENNESSEE's 58th Mid-South Poetry Festival took place at the University of Memphis Holiday Inn on October 5, and was a delightful celebration of poetry, as always. The winners' list is posted on poetrysocietytn.org. This annual event was preceded by a delightful potluck party at the home of Sarah Hull Gurley the prior night. The Festival speaker, Michael Porter, an expert in creativity on the U of M faculty, discussed Poe's "The Raven" in finite and interesting detail. The subject, appropriate for the month of Halloween, was a valuable learning experience for poets. Our group starts early to prepare for the June convention by holding critique sessions on potential contest poems. These sessions, six of them, occur prior to the regular meeting. In September, poems on the subject of breakfast (NFSPS contest #14) were evaluated. In November, double tanka (#44) was the subject of discussion, and brown-eyed girl (#4) is booked for December. These sessions, which are led by Russell H. Strauss, PST president and former NFSPS president, help members, especially newcomers, prepare their poems correctly for entry in the competition. In addition, Russell has recently sponsored a contest in cinquain sequence to encourage members to gain skill in that format. Definitions and examples of poetry formats on our forms blog poemssamples.blogspot.com

offer more help. After participating in all these helpful activities, we feel certain we'll hear our names called at St. Paul in June of 2016. ~ *Florence Bruce, Corresponding Secretary & Contest Coordinator, 2015 Mid-South Poetry Festival*

POETRY SOCIETY OF TEXAS' 59th Annual Awards Banquet was held at the Doubletree Hotel near the Galleria in Dallas on November 14, 2015. The theme was "Deep in the Heart of Poetry." Beth Turner Ayers was Chairman of the event and welcomed attendees. After the meal was served, President Catherine L'Herisson made introductions. Greetings from the National Federation of State Poetry Societies, Inc. were brought by 26th NFSPS president, Budd Powell Mahan, and as Chairman of the Hilton Ross Greer Outstanding Service Award, he announced that the 2015 recipient was Birma C. Castle. In the absence of Nancy Baass, Chairman of the PST Annual Contests, who was unable to attend, her Annual Contests Report was given by President Catherine L'Herisson. Vice President Budd Powell Mahan and President Catherine L'Herisson 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 2015 Edwin M. Eakin Memorial Book Publication Award, announced that the winner was Susan Maxwell Campbell. 2nd Place went to Catherine L'Herisson and 3rd Place went to Barbara Blanks. ~ *Nancy Baass*

UTAH STATE POETRY SOCIETY board of directors met in February and gave their new president, Dawnell H. Griffin, a vote of confidence as she assumed this role from past president Orlan Owen. We discussed plans for the year which include our annual contest and subsequent April Awards Festival, workshops and poetry book readings as well as increasing our membership and holding chapter meetings. Our April Festival was held at the Homestead, a beautiful resort in the heart of the Wasatch Mountains in Midway, Utah, with many of our poets in attendance. Pattiann Rogers and Kimberly Johnson were our excellent presenters. Candy Lish Fowler of St. George, Utah, was announced as the winner of our manuscript contest and our newest Poet of the Year. On October 10th, in conjunction with Poetry Day, we hosted a reading for Candy at the Orem City Library to showcase her book, *On a Road that Knows Me*. On November 7th, workshop director Steve Craner arranged for a gathering of poets in the Bountiful/Davis Art Center to listen to a presentation given by Judy Johns and Jon Sebba where we were given an opportunity to improve our poetry writing skills. We have worked hard to apply for grants, advertise, and

provide opportunities to keep UTSPS moving forward. Our chapter meetings are designed to help members improve their writing skills by bringing their poems for critique and offering suggestions to other poets. Lessons are presented which are both educational and encouraging. Some of the lessons presented in the group I have attended included a discussion of the Dramatic Monologue or persona poem where an audience is implied. The poet speaks through an assumed voice, but does not offer commentary. The emphasis is placed on the subjective qualities that the audience is left to interpret. One example presented was the poem, "My Last Duchess," by Robert Browning. In another lesson we were taught about the Organic Metaphor. In several types of poetry, metaphor is a common thread, "a figure of speech in which a word or phrase is applied to an object or action to which it is not literally applicable." One of the most famous of this type of poem, is Emily Dickinson's, "Hope is the thing with feathers." All of the elements of writing are incorporated in this type of poem, what, when, where, how and why. The exercise, in which we engaged, following the presentation, included the five senses and described some of these elements in our starting sentence. We discussed the exactness of form poetry, including the sestina. When we sponsor our annual contest, there are many submissions in some of our categories, and few in others. As we learn correct forms and add these skills to our 'free verse' repertoire, we become more versatile and accomplished poets. We have many older poets in our society who have developed an expertise in all kinds of poetry to whom we look as mentors. It is gratifying that they are willing to teach those of us who are just beginning, but who have a desire to learn and to improve. These kinds of experiences are invaluable as we continue to support each other and the 'so very fine' art of writing, appreciating and preserving poetry. On our calendar posted on utahpoets.com, the UTSPS 2016 Contest outlines the criteria for entries submitted by February 1, 2016. For our Junior Poetry Contest, we encourage students throughout the state of Utah from grades K-12 to submit their original poems. We are excited to once more be able to sponsor this UTSPS contest for our young poets. The Poetry In the Park program for 2016 has been set for March 3-4, with David J. Rothman teaching workshops at Zion Lodge in Zion National Park. These activities will be followed by the Redrock Writers Seminar in St. George on March 4-5. As the year winds down, we look back on our accomplishments with satisfaction, both as a Society and as individual writers, and we look forward to another year of associations and success. ~ *Dawnell H. Griffin, President*

WYOPOETS—On July 9, Wyoming celebrated the appointment of Rose Hill as Wyoming State Poet Laureate. Rose is a long-time member of WyoPoets, and a life-long writer, having served as her high school newspaper reporter, the editor of her college newspaper and a dedicated mentor of the poets and writers whose lives she has touched. Rose lives in Sheridan, Wyoming, in the heart of the Big Horn Mountains where she and her husband, Gail, owned and operated a small business, Ace Radiator Service, and raised their three children. After Gail's death she continues to work in the family business with her son. Rose serves in her church as historian, sings in the choir, and communicates her faith and philosophy through her poetry. In 2012 she was named Wyoming Senior Poet Laureate by the Amy Kitchener Foundation. Award winning poet, Linda M. Hasselstrom will be WyoPoets' 2016 workshop presenter on April 23 in Riverton, Wyoming. Linda is a South Dakota rancher and full-time resident writer at Windbreak House Writing Retreats. Among her achievements is the coveted Nebraska Book Award for Poetry won in 2012 for the publication, *Dirt Songs: A Plains Duet*, written with Twyla M. Hansen. The Spring Workshop will be preceded by a public poetry reading on Friday, April 22, 2016, at the Riverton Library to be followed by WyoPoets Workshop at the Holiday Inn. Look into all of these events on wyopoets.org. ~ *Lee Ann Siebken, Reporter*

POETRY ARTICLES

Interview with Peter Meinke

By Jim Lambert

Peter Meinke, Honorary Chancellor of NFSPS, is a busy man. When first contacted about this article, he and his wife, the artist Jeane Clark Meinke, had just attended a book festival and had sold all the copies of their children's book they had on display. "Now why don't my poetry books move that fast?" he ponders.

Peter's work has been published in *The Atlantic*, *The New Yorker*, *The New Republic*, *Poetry*, *Tampa Review*, eight books of the Pitt Poetry Series, and two collections of fiction. He is Poet Laureate of Florida and up until the bookfest referenced above, he had been the first-ever Poet Laureate of St. Petersburg. He frequently collaborates with wife Jeanne whose work has also been widely published.

Here is what Peter had to say about his love of poetry and the writing thereof:

"My favorite poems change from time to time: typically, with my own poems I move between free verse poems like 'Supermarket' and 'Artist of the Heart' and formal poems like 'The Secret Code' (a pantoum), and 'The

Contracted World,' an almost crazily precise poem written with the exact rhyme scheme and syllable count as (another classical poet—whose name shall not be revealed). [It] Took me forever to write. Nobody knows this, except you now, as far as I know. This is good, as I wanted it to sound like me, not like (the classical poet).

"My favorite poets also change. Here's a tidbit I've written about somewhere, but forget where right now: I come from a blue-collar background, and was, for reasons I'm not sure of, a closet poet: always loved it and liked writing poems, for myself. But one time, at Hamilton College, I gathered a bit of nerve, and along with the required essay I handed in a few of my poems to a Shakespearean Professor I admired, Robert (Bobo) Rudd. He handed the essay and my poems (which were truly bad) back, without comment, writing only 'Go buy the *Selected Poems of John Donne*.' I did that and sat up all night reading Donne's poems to my roommates, and have loved his poetry ever since, and wanted to write poems like that: formally elegant but passionate, thoughtful, funny and sexy at the same time . . . Bobo led me to the right book, as great teachers do. *The Contracted World*, which takes its title from a line in *The Sun Rising*, is my homage to Donne.

"My actual favorite poet (though I have many) is Yeats. I long ago memorized 'The Song of Wandering Aengus' (my favorite right now) and other Yeats' poems like 'The Second Coming,' 'Down By the Sally Gardens,' etc. I'm at least a semi-insomniac, and my habit is to recite memorized poems by Yeats, Frost, Larkin, Nemerov and others until I fall asleep."

Peter was born in New York City and moved to New Jersey when he was twelve. He graduated from Hamilton College (English Prize) in 1955. After two years in the Army, he married artist Jeanne Clark and they soon had four children. He taught high school English for two years, then went to the University of Michigan, receiving his M.A. in Literature in 1961. The next five years he spent teaching at Hamline University, and finished his Ph.D. in English Literature in 1965 at the University of Minnesota. The Meinkes then relocated to Florida where he taught at Florida Presbyterian which is now Eckerd College. (He took early retirement in 1993 so he could concentrate on his writing.) He has served as Writer-in Residence, Visiting Writer, and Distinguished Visiting Poet at many colleges and universities around the country.

Peter's poems began attracting national attention in the 1960's. Former Poet Laureate Ted Kooser has written "There is a little of the Ancient Mariner in the tenacity and urgency with which Peter Meinke addresses his

readers. These poems get hold of us by the coat lapels and when they release us we are delighted, shaken, and considerably wiser."

For more information on Peter, go to www.petermeinke.com. For a list of his books and how to purchase, click on the "Books" button near the top of his site.

Editor's note: Jeanne and Peter Meinke's charming book for children, *The Elf Poem*, is now available from Tampa Press at: ut.edu/TampaPress/pressDetail.aspx?id=24573

This Matter of Poetry

By Ron Weber

Note: The longer original of this article was written for the Albert Anthony Foundation in conjunction with its international writing competition. The article was first published by Literary Focus and reprinted by The Herald-Palladium, the leading daily in Michigan's southwest corner.

Does poetry matter? Can poetry matter? Should poetry matter? This issue of confirming the relevance of poetry, as well as of the arts in general, can be discerned quite readily by realizing how poetry matters. I'm referring to how poetry matters, and has always mattered, to the general public and to the common man as he or she reaches out to it. History shows that poetry matters and the arts are relevant. Poetry and the arts have been and are still braided to the hearts and expressed needs of man.

Poetry, much like all elements of the arts, meets our needs as those specific needs arise. Is poetry a player in setting major policy in the halls of Parliament or on the shores of the Potomac? No. Is poetry an influence in the world of power politics? Of course not, and neither is music, a symphony or a painting; and neither is song, dance, drama and philosophy. Yet we do need and have always required these creative underpinnings. Individually and in concert they have provided our rest, our joy and our solace in surviving each millennium.

The fact that poetry and the arts do indeed matter is confirmed on at least two levels. It is borne out by the challenges all of us endure in moving through this drama called life and how we fortify our spirit and humanity. Secondly, it is a proven fact of history when you realize what is and has been consistently meaningful to, and desired by, mankind.

As long as we hear poems at funerals, and we do, and give them in times of duress and great sadness, poetry is doing its work. As long as we hear poems as part of wedding ceremonies, and we do, poetry is on the job. As long as it is shared by those in love and given to one another, poetry is doing its work. The need within the family of man to share our emotional kinship prevails. And poetry is often our tool of choice.

The importance of poetry and the arts is a proven fact of mankind's history. It's a recorded reality of past societies. I have yet to read of a culture that did not develop verse, music, dance and the visual arts, even if just drawings on a cave. It is evident that man has always needed the arts, wanted the arts and, therefore, always created them.

Poetry and the arts matter because they are, quite simply, a self-evident truth of man's heritage. Their persistence stands as proof of their importance and man's desire to have them. It validates poetry and the arts as integral to man's definition of what he is and what he needs to be fulfilled.

Poetry matters the way lovemaking matters beyond procreation. Poetry matters the way tears and deep human empathy matter beyond the sympathy card. Poetry matters the way cuisine matters beyond nutrition and the way wisdom matters beyond knowledge. Poetry is part of man's intelligent endeavor to live life and not merely survive.

Poetry is the sovereign, free-spirited emissary for the conscience. It needs no passport or official papers to cross borders and traverse nations. If necessary, it only needs a stone and the blank wall of a concentration camp to etch its message. It is a patriot to the human activism of the ages; a cornerstone to man's need to feel and share.

If we choose to marginalize poetry and the arts, we do so at our peril. The degree to which we relinquish our embrace of them is the degree to which we sacrifice elements of our humanity. We will be erasing aspects of our very heritage and our kinship with one another within the human family.

Cheers! - Ron

CALL FOR POETRY ANTHOLOGY SUBMISSIONS

Wisdom of the Ages:

A Poetry Anthology for Women
of the Americas

This all-female anthology will address the theme: Whatever has meaning for you as a woman.

Guidelines for submission:

- * Poet must be a woman and have the copyright to each submitted poem
- * Deadline is February 15, 2016
- * Submit no more than three poems, each containing no more than 36 lines counting spaces between stanzas but not the title and poet's name. Each poet chosen for the anthology will be allocated a maximum of two pages. Poems exceeding 36 lines but not more than 72 lines may be accepted, but in such cases only one poem will be eligible.
- * Send poems in any Word format to women.chbmedia@gmail.com
- * Include in the submission the poet's name,

address, phone, and email

Poets chosen for the anthology will have the opportunity to purchase copies at 50% discount off the retail price and will be free to distribute them as they wish, including sales in retail outlets. They may not place the book online at Amazon or Barnes and Noble. Copyright to individual poems belongs to the poet. Copyright to the collected volume belongs to the publisher, CHB Media (chbmediaonline.com). CHB Media may not, however, publish any of the poetry contained in the anthology in any other form or place.

For questions, contact the anthology Editor, Elaine Person, at lnprsn@aol.com or 407-298-9636. Elaine is also President of the Orlando Area Poets Chapter of the Florida State Poets Association.

ENCORE COVER SUBMISSIONS NOW OPEN

Editor: Valerie Martin Bailey

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 (5 x 8) unless the photo or art can be used as a "wrap around" cover (9 x 12). 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 April 1, 2016.

I received a photograph I am interested in, but I have misplaced the name of the person who submitted it. If you submitted a photograph titled "Sandia Roses," I would like to hear from you.

2015 NFSPS CONVENTION EVALUATION

The 2015 NFSPS Annual Convention hosted by the Florida State Poets Association was held in St. Petersburg, Florida, June 24-28 at the Hilton Bayfront Hotel.

Garnered from approximately 40 evaluation forms, all of the lectures, workshops and presenters were well appreciated, especially the cowboys and the Dali Museum. Florida's newly appointed Poet Laureate Peter Meinke was a definite favorite along with the pirate raid. Rated very high was the layout and procedure in the bookstore room although one or two people would have preferred a way to use a credit card. Time spent together with old and new friends was also high on the happiness chart.

Most of the complaints came from things that we had very little control over: temperature of the rooms, parking, cost and variety of meals and inadequate microphones/speakers. By far, the largest complaint was the length of time needed to present and read the poetry contest winners. It was felt that streamlining is badly needed for this event.

Suggestions for improvement:

- * 90 minutes only for meals, speakers and awards
- * Give out a list of honorable mentions as opposed to reading the names
- * Read only first place winners. They are all in the anthology [Encore].
- * Have animated readers and only 2 people presenting to move things faster
- * At meals, no one speaks longer than 5 minutes.

Additional suggestions are:

- * More down time between events
- * More teaching workshops, more writing, less readings
- * Have an assignment to bring a poem to convention to be publicly critiqued by a skilled poet as a learning event
- * Have younger contemporary poets who will teach
- * Have buffet style meals for more variety
- * Have a room available all day for open readings

Suggested topics for future conventions are:

- * Marketing poetry
- * Writing children's poetry
- * Self publishing
- * Navigating publishing process
- * Song writing
- * Writing slam poetry
- * Greeting card verse
- * Genre, inspirational, narrative poetry

All of the evaluations were complimentary. Everyone had a good time. It was a very successful convention.

There is even a volunteer for the future: Indiana State Federation of Poetry Clubs; perhaps 2020 in Indianapolis.

Submitted by Mary-Ann Westbrook, Secretary, Florida State Poets Association

President's Message continued from page 1

with all the sensuous resources of the language—as one can think only in poetry. At the reading I attended, he read poems from his then-new book *Repair*, which so moved and excited me that I gave a copy to my father that Christmas. Last spring, I found a copy of his 2010 book *Wait* in a local independent bookstore. Again I was thrilled by poems that think with the full body of the language. When I heard the news of his death, of course I returned to his poems—and found him still here. He is as present as ever, as present as the poets he loves are to him in his poem “The Foundation”:

Watch me again, I haven't landed, I'm
hovering here
over the fragments, the remnants, the
splinters and shards;
my poets are with me, my soarers, my
skimmers, my skaters,
aloft on their song in the ruins, their
jubilant song of the ruins.

C.K. Williams's poetry, as that stanza exemplifies, tends to the exuberant, the breathlessly expansive—long lines spilling over into each other, often carrying complex reasoning in their flow. It is as full as David Laing's is spare. C.K. Williams is nationally recognized, winner of a Pulitzer Prize and a National Book Award. David Laing is a touchstone poet for western Oregon poets who have come in contact with him and his work. I am grateful that both of these poets, who died in this old year, will be with me through their poems in the new year and far beyond. I am grateful for the particular quality of each one's vision and craft, and for the sheer difference between them.

In a new book, *The Elf Poem*, Florida Poet Laureate and NFSPS Honorary Chancellor Peter Meinke and his artist wife, Jeanne Clark Meinke, introduce young readers to writing poetry. Peter's spritely verse and Jeanne's whimsical drawings, paired in two-page spreads, make poetry inviting without oversimplifying what's involved. This little book conveys an inclusive vision of the world of poetry—a world of happy poems and sad ones, ones in meter and with rhyme, ones with other kinds of rhythm and repetition, poems rich in sound, ones with interesting shapes on the page, poems that follow rules—and break them without losing control. It's a playful book that sees making poems as an especially engrossing kind of play—one with the power to bring happiness even in the midst of sadness:

And even when it makes you cry
A poem is fun: the reason why is,
Fun's what you want to do,
And if a sad poem's good, why then
You want to read that poem again:
The only poem that isn't fun
Might be a soft or sloppy one.

The final line quoted above gets a page to itself. In the drawing on the page opposite, an elf slumps on a sagging bench, holding a melting ice cream cone and tearfully watching it drip on the ground.

As we poets seek to renew our poetry at the beginning of the new year, we may want to resolve not to let ourselves get away with any “soft or sloppy” poems. As we prepare poems to enter in NFSPS or state society contests, to submit to journals, or to share with friends, we may want to post over our desks the final, summative bit of Peter Meinke's elvish advice:

So when you write, write carefully,
With gaiety and grace,
For when you write a lovely poem
The world's a better place.

Eleanor Berry ~ 31st NFSPS President

**2016 NFSPS COLLEGE
UNDERGRADUATE POETRY
COMPETITION**

Deadline for the 2016 NFSPS College Undergraduate Poetry Competition is Jan. 31, 2016. For complete submission guidelines, see nfsp.com/CUP.html.

**ST. GEORGE POETRY FESTIVAL in 2016
SPONSORED BY REDROCK WRITERS**

Utah State Poetry Society announces the 20th Anniversary Celebration for Spring Poetry Festival in St. George, Utah.

Mar 3-4, 2016—Stay at Zion Park Lodge zionlodge.com or at Cable Mountain Lodge cablemountainlodge.com (group discount: zarts)

Thu, Mar 3 at 7 pm a free poetry lecture at Canyon Community Center in Springdale

* Dr. David J. Rothman will present: Plein Air Writing and Poetry. David Klawitter says, “Dr. David J. Rothman is one of the best poets in the United States today. He should be as popular as Billy Collins if there is any justice in the world.”

Fri, Mar 4 POETRY IN THE PARK

* 9 am - 4 pm workshop at Zion Park Lodge in Zion Park, free entrance to park

* Guided naturalist walk

* Writing workshop with Dr. Rothman for prose and poetry. Fee is \$60. Bring sack lunch or eat at Redrock Grill.

* Register and pay by calling ZCFI Director Michael Plyer at 435-772-3264

* Event details at: poetry-in-the-park.com

Fri, Mar 4 CHAPARRAL POETRY FORUM

Winning youth contest poems will be read at 7 pm while adult contest winning poems at 8 pm. This event is free.

**Sat, Mar 5 REDROCK CREATIVE
WRITING SEMINAR**

* 9 am - 4 pm with four invited guests:

** David J. Rothman Professor at Western State Colorado Univ.

** Brian Passey, the great adventure writer

** Marilyn Richardson, tension in prose

** Marleen Bussma, Queen of Cowboy Poetry

* Make \$60 check out to REDROCK WRITERS SEMINAR and mail to Alma Richie at 61 North Firerock Trail, Ivins, UT 84738. Lunch included in the workshop fee.

* Event details at: redrockwriters.org.

Financial support is from the St. George Arts Commission, Utah State Poetry Society, Utah Division of Arts and Museums, and National Endowment for the Arts.