



NATIONAL FEDERATION OF STATE POETRY SOCIETIES, INC.

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

Strophes

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April 2020



Julie Cummings
33rd NFSPS
President

Hello my poetry family,

As I write this, I am reflecting on the last two years as your interim and then elected president. I became the acting president when my mentor Jim Barton, 32nd President of NFSPS, passed after a battle with cancer. Then, at the convention in Denver, Colorado, sponsored by the Columbine Poets, my state poetry society, I was elected to serve as the 33rd President of NFSPS. I have been so proud to serve as your president. I have talked with many of you for hours on the phone, have made email friends, and have tried to

be an effective leader.

As we plan the activities for this year's convention, I am reflecting on everything that NFSPS has meant to me since I joined Columbine Poets many years ago. I hate to sound like a broken record, but I am indebted to the presidents I know who served before me: Nancy Baass, Russell Strauss, Budd Powell Mahan, Susan Stevens Chambers, Eleanor Berry, and Clarence Socwell, who recently passed away. I hope Clarence knows I will miss his smile, his conversation, his poetry, and his late-night visits to my room during convention for read arrounds. I am also indebted to our keynote speaker for this year's convention who served on the Executive Board for many years, Diane Glancy. Diane and I sat together at meals at many conventions and she has never failed to offer her wisdom and insight to me. I have also never failed in my ability to make her chuckle (at least I think I made her laugh.). I believe it is the least I could do, in return.

I never imagined the depth of relationships I would cultivate with so many amazing people. Lucille Wilson is my mid-America bestie and is always available for guidance, insight, humor, and pie. I always plan to drive through Des Moines and have a meal with Lucille whenever I can. I was at the September Alpha Chapter Poetry Society meeting and while in Des Moines, I was able to test my reflexes and get the Perkin's bill before Lucille could. I consider this my greatest accomplishment in Iowa. In early February, I went to Memphis to hang out with Russell Strauss and JoAn Howerton and the Poetry Society of Tennessee. What fun I had! I love visiting with the different poetry societies and seeing how meetings are held. I know how Columbine conducts their meetings every week and it is refreshing to learn from each and every state society meeting I can attend.

During the convention this year, I will be handing off the president's gavel. I am contemplating what my role will be after that. I hope I can get to meetings in the rest of the states the next few years. I plan to retire from my teaching job within the next three years, and I want to meet every one of you. I want to attend a meeting in each state. I want to meet every member I possibly can! Once my presidency draws to a close this year, I will continue to be involved with NFSPS as long as I am able and as long as you will have me.

As the National Federation of State Poetry Societies moves into its 61st year, there could never be a more crucial time for the poetry community to engage in bold and brave conversations about the current state of poetry. These dialogues are vital as we continue to see challenge after challenge in our organization, all the way down to the state and local levels. Our membership and our participation in events are decreasing. We need to glean ideas from each other and brainstorm new ideas. If an organization is not growing, it is dying. We need to come together to establish a plan for growth, not only for state societies and the national federation, but to save our poetry mission. (continued on page 8)

CONTENT IN THIS ISSUE PREDATES COVID-19 IN USA

Content in this April issue was submitted to the Editor in February and early March. Please check nfspd.com and state poetry society websites for potential changes to future events.

NFSPS 2020 CONVENTION CELEBRATING POETRY WITH A 2020 VISION!

June 11-14 ~ Kansas City, Missouri

The National Federation of State Poetry Societies invites you to Kansas City, Missouri—The City of Fountains—as we are *Celebrating Poetry with a 2020 Vision!* Our convention headquarters is the historic, award-winning Aladdin Hotel, located at 1215 Wyandotte Street in Kansas City, Missouri. The schedule below lists our line-up of programs and activities. In this issue of *Strophes*, you will also find bookroom information, speaker bios, and registration. Come early so you can see it all!

Sincerely, Julie Cummings, NFSPS President

NOTE ON CONVENTION REGISTRATION

If interested in registering for the 2020 NFSPS convention in Kansas City this coming June, please go to nfspd.com and click on the Convention Information link. You will see the following links: 1) "Registration and Meals" to view/print the registration form, and 2) "Room Reservations" to book a room at the convention hotel, Holiday Inn Aladdin Hotel. Note that on the registration form, the "Breakfast Buffet" meal option is available Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. So if you want to pay ahead for the hotel's breakfast buffet for all three mornings, enter "3" as the number of meals.

CONVENTION UPDATE

As of the third week in March, the convention is still on. Please register by May 10 and plan to attend. Payment will not be required until May 31st. Checks mailed in with registration forms will not be cashed until the end of May. Should the need arise, you will be told directly that the convention is cancelled. Room reservations need not be made until early May. We are working with the hotel for those who have already made reservations.

NFSPS 2020 CONVENTION SCHEDULE

THURSDAY, June 11

- 8:00 am – 3:00 pm Registration
- 3:30 – 5:30 pm NFSPS Board Meeting
- 6:00 – 7:00 pm Dinner
- 7:15 – 8:30 pm Presidents' Reading: Eleanor Berry, Russell Strauss, Susan Chambers
- 8:30 – 10:00 pm Open Mic FEATURING YOU!

FRIDAY, June 12

- 7:30 – 8:30 am Open Mic
- 8:00 – 9:30 am Registration
- 8:00 – 9:00 am State Presidents Meeting
- 9:30 – 11:30 am Rosemerry Wahtola Trommer: *Escaping Into the Present*
- 12:00 – 1:00 pm Lunch

(continued on page 3)

NATIONAL FEDERATION OF STATE POETRY SOCIETIES, INC.

Organized October 17, 1959 ~ Mary B. Wall, Founder
Honorary Chancellor: David J. Rothman

EXECUTIVE BOARD ~ 2018-2020

Elected, NFSPS Convention ~ Denver, CO, June 2018

PRESIDENT: Julie Cummings

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ARIZONA: Arizona State Poetry Society
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ARKANSAS: Poets' Roundtable of Arkansas
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KENTUCKY: Kentucky State Poetry Society
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MISSISSIPPI: Mississippi Poetry Society
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NEW MEXICO: New Mexico State Poetry Society

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STROPHES

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

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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.

NFSPS PAST PRESIDENTS (Presidential Advisors)

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*Wauneta Hackleman	Jeremy M. Downes
*Jack Murphy	Eleanor Berry
*Barbara Stevens	*Jim Barton

* Deceased

NFSPS 2020 CONVENTION SCHEDULE (continued from page 1)

FRIDAY, June 12

- 1:30 – 2:30 pm Manningham Winners and NFSPS Contests Results
- 3:00 – 4:30 pm Deborah Jacobs:
Crosspollination: R_x for Stuck Poems
- 4:30 – 5:30 pm Plenary Session
- 6:00 – 7:00 pm Dinner
- 7:00 – 9:00 pm College Undergraduate Winners and NFSPS Contests Results
- 9:00 – 10:00 pm Open Mic

SATURDAY, June 13

- 7:30 – 8:30 am Open Mic
- 9:00 – 10:15 am Eleanor Berry: Poetry as Deep Conversation
- 10:30 – 11:45 am Steven Concert: Critique Workshop
- 12:00 – 1:00 pm Lunch
- 1:00 – 2:30 pm NFSPS Contests Results
- 3:00 – 4:30 pm Robert Stewart, editor of *New Letters*, Reading
- 4:30 – 5:30 pm NFSPS Board Meeting
- 6:00 – 7:00 pm Dinner
- 7:15 – 8:00 pm Stevens Book Manuscript Award Winner
- 8:00 – 9:00 pm NFSPS Contest Results
- 9:00 – 10:00 pm Convention Contest and BlackBerry Peach Awards Results

SUNDAY, June 14

- 7:30 – 8:30 am Open Mic
- 8:30 – 10:00 am NFSPS Board Meeting
- 9:00 – 10:30 am Town Meeting for the Future
- 12:00 – 1:00 pm Lunch
- 1:30 – 2:30 pm NFSPS Contests Results
- 3:00 – 4:00 pm Budd Mahan: *Poetry, Is There Something It Isn't?*
- 4:00 – 4:30 pm Book Signings for all Authors
- 5:00 – 6:00 pm Reception
- 6:00 – 7:00 pm Dinner
- 7:15 – 8:30 pm Diane Glancy: Keynote
- 8:30 – 9:00 pm NFSPS Contests Results
- 9:00 – 10:00 pm Open Mic

CONVENTION SPEAKERS



Diane Glancy is professor emerita at Macalester College. Currently she teaches in the low-residency MFA program at Carlow University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Her 2019 books are *It Was Over There by That Place*, *The Atlas Review Chapbook Series*, and *The Book of*

Bearings (Wipf & Stock, Cascade Imprint, Poiema Series). A new collection, *Island of the Innocent, a Consideration of the Book of Job*, is forthcoming from Turtle Point Press in 2020. Diane Glancy has received two National Endowment for the Arts Fellowships, a Minnesota Book Award, an Oklahoma Book Award, an American Book Award, and a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Native Writers Circle of the Americas. Her other books and awards are on her website: dianeglancy.com.

Rosemerry Wahtola Trommer served as the third Colorado Western Slope Poet Laureate (2015-2017), co-hosts *Emerging Form* (a podcast on creative process), is the co-founder of Secret Agents of Change and co-directs Telluride's Talking Gourds Poetry Club. Her poetry has appeared in *O Magazine*, on "A Prairie Home Companion," in *Rattle.com*, and on river rocks [actual rocks]. Her forthcoming collection, *This Very Here*, won the Halcyon Poetry Prize (Middle Creek Press, 2020) and *Naked for Tea* was a finalist for the Able Muse book award in 2018. She teaches poetry for 12-step recovery programs, hospice, mindfulness retreats, women's retreats, scientists and more. Since 2006, she's written a poem a day. You can find them at <https://www.wordwoman.com/a-daily-dose-of-poetry/>.



Workshop: "Escaping Into the Present"

By Rosemerry Wahtola Trommer

The act of writing a poem can bring us more closely to the essence of the moment, can help us exist in immediacy. In this session, both practical and playful, we'll sharpen our observational skills to engage with the poetry in everything—objects, locations, situations, conversations. As Mary Oliver writes, "the world offers itself to your attention, over and over." Let's meet it, pen in hand.

Deborah Jacobs is a publisher, editor, and poet living in Nisswa, Minnesota. She has been a literature professor, a restaurateur, an arts administrator, and a professional singer; she is also a lifelong writer, road tripper, organic gardener, and proud grandma. In October 2018, she founded Danielle Dufy Literary and its imprint, French Press Editions, in order to publish portable, affordable, collectible literature. The mission? To get more short literature that matters into the hands of as many people as possible. To that end, she publishes *Stone Gathering: A Reader* five times a year. It is her work as *Stone Gathering's* Series Editor that has led her to offer this workshop on crosspollination.

The *Stone Gathering* Readers are small-format paperbound anthologies of accomplished and inviting (mostly previously published) short literature—poems, small fictions, essayettes—intended for a wider audience than might typically pick up a literary collection. Contributors to *Stone Gathering* are from all over the country—writers you know and writers you'll be glad to know. *Stone Gathering* is available by subscription, retailed through independent booksellers and book-friendly small businesses, and sold at conferences, book fairs and festivals. Learn more at www.danielledufy.com.

Workshop: "Crosspollination: R_x for Stuck Poems"

By Deborah Jacobs

In this workshop we'll look briefly at some examples of how crosspollinating poetry with other short genres can bear fruit, and then we'll get to work. Bring a short poem (25 lines or fewer), one that's stuck or languishing but which you don't want to abandon. Or, quickly craft a new poem on site with prompts provided. We'll practice moving our own *stuck* poems in (and back out of) other genres like flash fiction, essayette, epistle, recipe, etc.—as a way to reveal what's amiss in the poem, move past impassés, perhaps even let go of that *perfect* line, image, rhyme, stanza, even persona that isn't serving us after all. And it's fun! We'll share our discoveries as time allows.

Workshop: "Looking with a Critical Eye"

By Steven Concert

Learn how critique can be used as a tool for developing your own craft. What is critique? Why critique? What makes a good critique? These are some of the questions this workshop will seek to answer. Steven will share some sample critiques with workshop participants. Finally, through break-out groups, participants will try their hand at critiquing.

CONVENTION BOOKSTORE GUIDELINES 2020

To give all NFSPS members equal opportunity in the limited Bookstore space we will have at the 2020 NFSPS Convention in Kansas City, we will allot each author a 30"x22" space on the table. You may display up to 10 titles, 5 copies of each, at a given time. You may switch out titles and replenish copies as needed.

For each space, the Bookstore will supply a 5"x7" card (or bring your own) to publicize your work and/or list additional products for sale/trade. You may display other promotional material if it fits in your allotted space.

Please place in every book offered for sale a 3"x5" index card with author's name, title

and price of that book. When you bring in your books, please hand the Bookstore staff: (1) a 3"x5" index card with your name, mailing address (with ZIP code), email address, and phone number, and (2) a legal-size, self-addressed, stamped envelope (SASE). We'll use both of these when we mail you your checks, so please give us accurate and complete information. We will do our best to complete that task by mid-July.

The Bookstore will accept cash, check, and credit cards. We hope to open for setup and book intake on Thursday, June 11, but may not get access until late that day; you must pick up your unsold books by 2:30 p.m. on Sunday, June 14.

Can't wait to see you in KC!

~ Shirley Blackwell, Bookstore Manager

MEMBERS INVITED TO APPLY FOR CONVENTION ATTENDANCE FELLOWSHIPS

Again as in recent years, NFSPS is offering several fellowships to help make it affordable for active members of affiliated state societies to attend the convention. The amounts of the fellowships are \$500 for those living over 300 miles from the 2020 convention site in Kansas City, Missouri, and \$300 for those living closer.

State society members who wish to attend the 2020 convention and would appreciate financial assistance are encouraged to apply. All NFSPS members except 2019 fellowship recipients are eligible in 2020. An application form is on the NFSPS website (nfsp.com) on the Convention Information page. The deadline for applying is April 30.

The Convention Attendance Fellowship Committee (Eleanor Berry, Diane Glancy and Lucille Morgan Wilson) will try to notify fellowship recipients by May 15.

2020 COLLEGE UNDERGRADUATE POETRY COMPETITION WINNERS

By Steven Concert, College Undergraduate Poetry Competition Chair

I am pleased to announce the results in the 2020 CUP Competition.

The Florence Kahn Memorial Award winner is Jacie Andrews for the manuscript *Sweetwork*. Jacie is a senior at Hendrix College in Conway, Arkansas. Jacie is pursuing an English-Creative Writing degree with a minor in Religious Studies.

"*Sweetwork* brims with diction, language, and imagery that immediately pulls the reader into a specific time or scene to learn more about what it means to have faith or to question it; what it means to keep going or give up; what it means to have an abundance of or very little hope. The poems are lean yet full of lyrical lines that often break into a run to the finish line. 'Magic' ends with:

'But nobody pays / attention when you / are usually good / And I was usually good.' Pay attention to *Sweetwork*. It's so much more than 'usually good.'" ~ Dawn Leas, 2020 CUP Judge

The Edna Neudt Memorial Award winner is Rebecca (MeiMei) Liu for the manuscript *Survival of the Fittest*. Rebecca is a junior at Whittier College in Whittier, California. Rebecca is pursuing an English degree with a Creative Writing emphasis.

"Don't let the quiet, contemplative nature poems that begin *Survival of the Fittest* fool you. They open the door to social and political commentary that picks up speed with each turn of the page. Individually, these poems speak up. Collectively, they collage a story that speaks out. There's robust energy here. There's a tightrope of tension that stitches these poems together. Even if you're afraid of heights, it's a walk worth taking." ~ Dawn Leas, 2020 CUP Judge

Invitations to attend the NFSPS Convention in Kansas City have been extended to both students.

Three Honorable Mentions were also named. First Honorable Mention went to Kevin Alberto Sanchez for the manuscript *Mosaics*. Kevin is a junior at Arizona State University in Tucson, Arizona. Kevin is pursuing a degree in English and Creative Writing. Second Honorable Mention went to Ariel Horton for the manuscript *chasm in color*. Ariel is a junior at Whittier College in Whittier, California. Ariel is pursuing a double-major degree in English-Creative Writing and Theater Performance. Third Honorable Mention went to Taylor Gaede for the manuscript *To Dip Fingers in Tar*. Taylor is a senior at Palm Beach Atlantic University in Palm Beach, Florida. Taylor is pursuing a degree in English with a minor in Creative Writing.

This year's judge was Dawn Leas from Kingston, Pennsylvania. Dawn is a former associate director of the M.A./M.F.A. Creative Writing program at Wilkes-University in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania. She is a writer, editor, and writing coach. Her work has appeared in *Literary Mama*, *San Pedro River Review*, *The Pedestal Magazine*, and elsewhere. Dawn is the author of *Take Something When You Go* (Winter Goose Publishing, 2016), and *I Know When to Keep Quiet* (Finishing Line Press, 2010).

NFSPS MEMBER SOCIETY NEWS

ALABAMA STATE POETRY SOCIETY will hold its annual Spring Conference on May 8-9 in beautiful Gulf Shores. We will have workshops led by award-winning spoken-word poet Asia Samson. Our spring

contests are underway. Visit alpoets.org for details. ~ Jessica Temple, Reporter

POETS' ROUNDTABLE OF

ARKANSAS' 2020 Dr. Lily Peter Spring Celebration is April 18 at the Butler Center for Arkansas Studies in downtown Little Rock. Guest speaker is Jake Sawyer, a poet and writer from Mena, Arkansas. He received first prize in PRA's Jeannie Dolan Memorial Collegiate Poetry Contest in 2018. He also won the University of the Ozarks' Project Poet competition in 2017, then went on to manage and host the event in subsequent years. He is finishing a degree in Environmental Studies and English. Laura Trigg of River Market Poets will serve as Spring Celebration Chair. PRA's 2020 Poetry Day Conference is scheduled for Saturday, October 10 at the Darragh Center Auditorium in the Little Rock Main Library. More at poetsroundtableofarkansas.org. ~ Laura Bridges, Reporter

GEORGIA POETRY SOCIETY held its winter meeting in Decatur, in January. The officers for 2020 include President Steven Shields, Vice President Alyson Shields, Secretary Ann Gillespie, and Treasurer Lyn Hopper. Board Members include Kristin Gorell, Edward Hall, Andrea Jurjevic, John Ottley, and Ann Willis. GPS members thanked the outgoing president, Miriam Jacobs, and vice-president, Trish Percival, as well as departing board members, Michael Diebert and Erica Gerald Mason, for their outstanding service. Featured reader and speaker for the meeting, Jericho Brown, is the recipient of a Whiting Writers' Award and fellowships from the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation, the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard University, and the National Endowment for the Arts. Brown has written several prize-winning books. He is an associate professor and the director of the Creative Writing Program at Emory University. The Side Door Poets (Karen Paul Holmes, Diana Anhalt, Maggie Blake Bailey, Jesse Breite, Ricks Carson, Jennifer Dracos, Rupert Fike, Erin Ganaway, Andrea Jurjevic, Jim Langford, Kathleen Lewis, Sally Mohney, Patricia Percival, Jane Simpson, and Dan Veach) were the featured poetry readers. Collectively, they have published 23 books and chapbooks. The GPS Spring Meeting will be held on April 25, location and Speakers TBA. ~ Duanne Kaiser, Reporter

ILLINOIS STATE POETRY SOCIETY

has recently shared two ekphrastic events involving artists and participating ISPS poets. The first gathering was at the Addison Center for the Arts in Addison. Poets attended "Expressions: Art and Verse" with the Artists' Association of Elk Grove

Village on February 15. On March 1 we joined Poets and Patrons of Chicago and artists, who have studied with Jennifer Hereth, for the exhibit: "Cosmic Blueprint, Archetypes in Contemporary Art." The event took place at Benedictine University in Lisle. ISPS will be displaying members' poems on the theme of "water" for April Poetry Month in many libraries throughout the state. On April 25 many members will participate in the Poetry Fest held annually at the Harold Washington Library in Chicago. A members' open mic will be held at the Evanston North Branch Public Library on April 13. Brewed Awakening in Westmont continues to feature poets and offer an open mic on the fourth Sunday of each month. This year we are preparing to create our fifth anthology of *Distilled Lives*, and the book launch will be at our November Gala. Information on ISPS critique sessions and membership can be found at illinoispoets.org. ~ *Susan T. Moss, President*

INDIANA POETRY SOCIETY has a new Premier Poet: Sarah E. Morin-Wilson. She has already hit the ground running as witnessed by our PSI Website and Facebook page. We are so very pleased to have this gifted wordsmith at the helm and are excited about the projects and opportunities to come. Our departing premier poet, Michael Erdelen, has served us well; we are so appreciative! During our recent Fall Rendezvous, Dr. George Wolfe, our keynote speaker, showed us new perspectives, new ways of seeing and thinking, and shared with us his created poetic form of 'Verses Re-Verse.' It can be found in his recent book, *Clapping with One Hand*. Also, we honored eleven of our PSI members who published a book in 2019. These honorees appreciated the wonderful support they each received from PSI. Our Spring Fling will be held in Fort Wayne on April 25 (the registration form is available on our website). The keynote speaker will be Curtis Crisler, who returns for a repeat performance. Prior to this event we will be offering a members-only poetry contest. Since it is being held during Poetry Month, we will again offer the Daily Writing Prompts for each day in the month of April (see FB page and website). ~ *Deborah Petersen, President*

LOUISIANA POETRY SOCIETY has gained more members. "Poetry Workshop 2nd" will be held April 4th, 2020, from 3:30 to 5:30 pm at the Goodwood Library in Baton Rouge. Our Annual poetry celebration will be held at the Scotlandville Library in Baton Rouge. LSPS' 2019 "Lyric Louisiana" Spring and Fall Contests

Winning Poems has been published and available for \$8.00. Contact Sandra J Nantais at sirn2016@gmail.com for copies. Rita Roark, member of the Monroe chapter, passed away last fall. Rita had published several chapbooks of poetry. The Monroe Chapter was one of the sponsors of "A Celebration of Literature" in St. Francisville, held in February. Various speakers shared diversity writing and read. The most recent "Writers and Reader" Symposium Celebration was held February 20, 2021. The GNO-Fleur de Lys Chapter will host LSPS's Spring Festival on April 18 at the Brick Oven Café in Kenner. Our guest speaker will be Dr. Mona Lisa Saloy. We have been pursuing community outreach with monthly Haiku workshops at the East Jefferson Regional Library. GNO-Fleur de Lys will host a "Laurel of Poet Laureates" on June 7, 2020, at 7:00 pm at the East Jefferson Regional Library. Dr. Julie Kane will discuss her latest book, *Mothers of Ireland*. ~ *Kaylon Allen, President*

MAINE POETS SOCIETY will meet on Saturday, May 16, 2020, at the First Universalist Church, 169 Pleasant St. in Auburn. Attendees are asked to bring a bag lunch. Beverages and morning refreshments will be provided. A \$10 registration fee for members and guests will help defray the cost of renting the facility. Registration begins at 9:30 am. The morning session will include an open mic and a mini workshop on memoir in poetry led by Claire Hersom. In the afternoon, David Sloane, judge of the members-only contest ("truth telling" with a 30-line limit) will announce the results of the contest and offer feedback, after which he will share some of his own work. The meeting is expected to end around 3:30 pm. Details are available on the society's web site, mainepoetsociety.com, as are membership application forms. ~ *Sally Joy, Reporter*

MISSISSIPPI POETRY SOCIETY's Emory Jones, North Branch member and Student Contest Coordinator, reported 273 entries. It was fully funded by non-MPS donors. Attendees at the next North Branch meeting will continue springfest plans and share poems written over a century ago by Mississippi poets. 565 entries were submitted for the 26 categories in the MPS Spring Contest, co-chaired by Central Branch members Stephen Curry and Daniel Pickett. Prizes of \$2,135.00, some donated by Mississippi businesses, will be awarded. Prizes and certificates will be presented at the festival in April or mailed. All winning poems from both contests will be published by MPS. For MPS, Briana Brown has created two social media presences:

[misspoetrycentral](https://www.instagram.com/misspoetrycentral) on Instagram, and [Twitter@misspoetrycent](https://twitter.com/misspoetrycent). Mary Anderson Pickard, daughter of the prominent painter and writer, Walter Anderson, was guest speaker for the South Branch's February meeting. She spoke about his works and read poems from several books about his life. Walter Anderson's Museum of Art is located in Ocean Springs. South Branch member Brenda Brown Finnegan, 2020 Poet of the Year, announced that her new chapbook, *Horn Island Vista*, will be ready for the Spring Festival. Information about our Poet of the Year is available on misspoetry.net. ~ *Janice Canerdy, Secretary*

POETRY SOCIETY OF OKLAHOMA had its Annual Spring Awards Banquet in March in Oklahoma City. This March was quite an event! Winning poems were read, poets recognized, awards given, and a delicious luncheon served to celebrate this special day. We decided our 2020 banquet theme would be an observance of St. Patrick's Day. April is National Poetry month. PSO will be joining that celebration and looking forward to the OKC City Council presenting a Proclamation of National Poetry Month in Oklahoma City (for the ninth year in a row!). And, our Oklahoma State Legislators will present a Resolution stating National Poetry month for the State of Oklahoma (again, for the ninth year in a row!). Once again PSO is looking ahead to an exciting summer. In July, PSO will host a workshop at Twin Hills Country Club; this is a morning and afternoon workshop with a keynote speaker and members of PSO leading poetry exercises. We also present awards for the July contest winners at this workshop. Our workshops always include a luncheon. PSO encourages everyone to check angelfire.com/poetry/psa and our Facebook page for current PSO information. "Come and grow with PSO!" ~ *Patti Koch, President*

OHIO POETRY ASSOCIATION's Sayuri Ayers and Rikki Santer presented the "Bootleg MFA" (motto: *Come learn how to become a better poet without the expense.*) at our January meeting. We took part again in this year's Winter Writing Festival where we sponsored three poetry workshops. We also closed out our annual high school poetry contests and Ides of March contest. Winners will be announced in July. In April, Marcus Jackson will be our poetry workshop leader. We will again sponsor the annual Ohioana Book Festival in Columbus. May will see another edition of the Bootleg MFA. We will host our annual picnic in July, feature contest winners, and hold several raffles. It's a great afternoon of potluck and

poetry. Our friends in nearby states are invited to come join us. The OPA team is now planning the fifth annual Sun & Moon Poetry Festival, to be held in Yellow Springs August 21–23. Our keynote poet, Hanif Abdurraqib, will lead a workshop and give a dynamic reading. We'll have other poets and artists join us for various workshops and special programs. After last year's highly successful festival, it's safe to say that this weekend-long event is not to be missed!
~ *Chuck Salmons, President*

PENNSYLVANIA POETRY SOCIETY will meet Saturday, April 25, from 9 am to 3 pm at Bethany Village, Mechanicsburg for our annual Spring Conference along with a celebration of our annual poetry contest and awards ceremony. Our new publication of *PPS Prize Poems* (contest winning poems anthology) will be released, followed by a reading to members and guests. PPS has been diligently working on programs aimed at including and recruiting young students who are interested in poetry and those who do not realize that they have an interest in poetry. Our membership level has been maintained at the number that we had expected. ~ *Emiliano Martín, President*

POETRY SOCIETY OF TENNESSEE has a lot happening. PST-Northeast is expanding their outreach for Poetry Month, as well as their work with the Appalachian Fair. PST-Knoxville is currently working to identify a new meeting location. PST-West Tennessee will host a Haiku Madness tournament in March and is reaching out to poets in Middle Tennessee who are trying to form a new chapter. Frances Cowden and her volunteers have just finished judging our annual student poetry contest, which is open to elementary, middle, and high school students. Winning poems from in middle and high school divisions are sent on to Nationals. Student awards will be announced at PST-West Tennessee's April 2020 meeting. We plan to have the brochure for our annual October poetry festival published in April/May. Watch for that on poetrytennessee.org. Questions? Contact us at poetrytennessee@gmail.com. ~ *Lori Goetz, Corresponding Secretary*

POETRY SOCIETY OF TEXAS meetings are presently held September through May on the 2nd Saturday of the month at 2:30 p.m. at the Preston Royal Library in Dallas. One exception to this schedule is the Annual Awards Banquet, held at a Dallas Hotel, which takes the place of the November meeting. In June, attendance at the NFSPS Convention is encouraged. In July, the three-day Summer Conference is held at different sites around

the state (exception: the event is not held in years when the NFSPS Convention is hosted by PST). The 2019-2020 Executive Board is comprised of President Irene C. Robertson, Vice President Richard Weatherly, Treasurer Steve Sanders, Recording Secretary Barbara Blanks, Corresponding Secretary Susan Maxwell Campbell, and Directors J. Darrell Kirkley, Domingo Rodriguez and Susan Mardele. ~ *Nancy Baass reporting*

UTAH STATE POETRY SOCIETY continues to offer opportunities for poets throughout Utah to express themselves by attending one of eight chapters across the state. This year our annual festival is a one-day event on April 17 in Salt Lake City. Winners of our annual contest will be revealed, and they will (if present) read their poems. Markay Brown, UTSPS 2019 Poet of the Year, and Rasoul Sorkhabi, founder of the Rumi Poetry Club of Salt Lake, will address us during the festival. Along with our April 17 event, the 2nd annual Utah Poetry Festival will be held Saturday, April 18th, at the University of Utah. Ten UTSPS members have been invited to read their poetry. In March, our two chapters in southern Utah, the Redrock Writers and Dixie Poets, held the writing workshops: the 11th annual Poetry in the Park (Zion National Park) workshop on March 6th, featuring Utah Valley University Professor and poet, Rob Carney, while on the 7th the Redrock Creative Writer's Seminar was held in St. George. UTSPS President Paul Ford completes his 2-year term in April. He will hand over leadership to Steven Leitch, who has been co-president of Valley Winds (Salt Lake City Chapter). ~ *Steven Leitch, President Elect*

POETRY CONTESTS

OHIO POETRY DAY CONTEST

In our 83rd year, Ohio Poetry Day offers a contest with 25+ categories. Opens March 1, closes May 15. Prizes awarded in October. If you are not on our current mailing list, send a postcard with name and address, or a #10 SASE, to Amy Jo Zook, 3520 State Route 56, Mechanicsburg, OH 43044.

POETRY SOCIETY OF TEXAS ANNUAL CONTEST

Deadline: August 15, 2020 (postmark). The brochure listing all contests, procedures and rules are at: poetrysocietyoftexas.org or by mailing a SASE to PST Annual Contests Chairman Nancy Baass, 408 E. Warren Ave., Victoria, TX 77901-4847.

POETRY ARTICLES & NEWS

NATIONAL POETRY DAY

By Shirley Blackwell, National Poetry Day/
National Poetry Month Co-Chair
Hey, State Society Reporters, Heads Up for Poetry Day/Month!

Want to avoid the rush and all those headaches which deadlines bring? Then write up your Poetry Day/Month reports and get them in early. The NFSPS email account, poetry.day.month@gmail.com, is open year-round to receive your reports so that you can de-stress about doing them just before the Annual Convention.

At last summer's convention when the NFSPS Board instituted October 15 as National Poetry Day (NPD), I thought we might see some early reporting, but nothing so far. Please feel free to send articles about your Society's observance of NPD by early August, so that I can share them in the October *Strophes* with all of our members.

As for National Poetry Month (NPM) in April, we suggest that those tasked with reporting keep track of what your group does to celebrate the month and submit a report online by May 15. If you have folks who observe NPM in their own special ways, they may also report individually at poetry.day.month@gmail.com. Once again, I will forgo handing out certificates at the Convention in favor of highlighting your accomplishments in *Strophes*. It's a great way to get and share ideas across our entire membership (and maybe even get your name recorded permanently in NFSPS archives).

I will collate the entries and select the most imaginative and/or useful to feature in the October *Strophes*. So, if you want your (or your Society's) name up in lights, go do something spectacular for Poetry Month, and let me know about it at the Gmail address above (NOT at my personal email). See you in KC!!

A GROUP POEM EXERCISE FOR HIGH SCHOOL

By Rosemerry Wahtola Trommer,
Youth Chair

One of my favorite ways to get high schoolers involved with writing poems is to begin the class by writing a group poem—a poem in which (most) everyone contributes a line. List poems work best for this. There are four easy steps to navigate this exercise.

1) Choose a list poem model to read and discuss together. I particularly like William Stafford's "Yes." This poem is basically a list of terrible things that could happen followed by positive things that could happen. You can find it here: <https://writersalmanac.publicradio.org/index.php%3Fdate=2004%252F11%252F22.html>

2) Have the students make lists on their own. In this case, have them list three difficult things. Give them a few ideas: anything from getting a failing grade in art to global warming. Ask them to be specific. Then ask them to write a list of three things that they are grateful for. Again, give them a few examples: anything from snuggling with their cat to shooting stars.

3) Steal a line from the model poem to begin with, perhaps the first line? In this case, I like to use “It could happen anytime,” or a line from the middle, such as “No guarantees in this life.” Then ask for volunteers to give you a line from their challenging list. Write the lines on the board. I often edit as I go (changing tense, etc., so that the emerging poem is cohesive). I also find it helpful to guide the students by asking for more specific detail when needed. Then, for this exercise, add a *but* and move into items from their positive list. Ask if anyone has a good last line. Or if you hear one, tell that person to hold on to it. It’s also possible you will be called on to spontaneously come up with a good last line.

4) Reread the poem to the class. Talk about why it works (repetition, specific detail, using different senses, etc.)

Classes are always surprised by these poems—they feel proud of them, and slightly thrilled that they’ve written a poem together. It’s very low risk and it helps embolden them to write individual poems next.

What writing prompts or programs for students have worked for you? Send me your ideas (wordwoman@rosemary.com) and I will highlight member ideas in future columns.

GRATIFYING

By Emiliano Martín, Pennsylvania Poetry Society President

As humbling as it can be, the perils of revising anything we have written once or twice—maybe three times or more, especially poetry—it’s for sure an obligation we must go through and endure to succeed.

It is an odious task. Yes indeed, it takes time away from productivity, I agree, but it is also gratifying by enhancing the belief, that anything we write, deserves the most attention by providing an honest effort, before our own eyes; and before the ones of our readers.

12TH CENTURY JAPANESE MONK’S POETRY AESTHETIC

By Paul Ford, *Strophes* Editor and NFSPS 1st VP

Here’s a quote from the monk Shun’e (born 1113 CE, likely Japanese) about his view of poetry:

“It is when many meanings are compressed into a single word, when the depths of feeling are exhausted but not expressed, when an unseen world hovers in the atmosphere of the poem, when the mean and common are used to express the elegant, when a poetic conception of rare beauty is developed to the fullest extent in a style of surface simplicity—only then . . . will the poem [be true poetry].”

The above quote is from the Introduction to the *Classical Japanese Prose: An Anthology*, Compiled and Edited by Helen Craig McCullough, published by Stanford University Press, 1990.

We might think our exploration of poetry to be following innovative Western concepts (eg, Keat’s negative capability) but you can see in this 12th century monk’s thoughts that he has some of the same views as we have been discussing in the 21st century!

THE IMPERATIVES OF POETRY

By Ron Weber

The term “imperatives” has that declarative and commanding essence that leads one to assume it references inflexible rules or principles. However, when it comes to the art of poetry, or any other art form for that matter, we aren’t talking about an unbending adherence to some rules that are applicable to and accepted by all practitioners of a particular endeavor. The imperatives that coalesce in the arts are developments over time and are unique to each individual. They end up consistently informing a poet’s approach to his/her craft.

Personal imperatives ultimately contribute to what becomes a poet’s voice or style or preferred approach to a broad range of topics. The results are an infinity of possibilities for the types of poems we encounter: poetry of place, poetry of love, poetry of war and peace, of understanding and encouragement, of sorrow and grief, of joy and rejoicing, of desperation, of fulfillment, and of nature.

In what I hope might be food for thought, here are my five very personal imperatives of poetry that have developed and settled in over the years to direct, guide and inform my efforts at producing meaningful and worthwhile verse that readers and listeners will feel is not a waste of their time. What are your imperatives? You may not realize it, but you have them.

Respect the common. We already know most of that which poetry might tell us. But is that enough? How well is it that we might think we know things? The insights of poetry can help us realize common things better. When is the last time you read a poem about a factory, an office, fixing a car, a sales rep, or working in a restaurant? Most

poets seem to be academics of some form or another, so there are areas of life that poetry seldom touches.

As Adrienne Rich so aptly put it, “The making of art is rooted in non-art labors – repetitive, toxic, body-breaking, minimum wage or less or none – that everywhere underlie those privileged creations.” I’ve always felt that one true test of whether poetry is any good is if it gets read by people whose lives are about things other than poetry.

It’s about language, not the poet. Coleridge called poetry “the best words in the best order.” Wordsworth called it “emotion recollected in tranquility.” It is indeed more a matter of language than feelings. It is the poet’s artful use of language that creates feelings. The right words or phrases can almost magically pull other words and phrases around it. It’s not about the poet. It’s the ongoing focus on language. Storks don’t bring babies while workshops and MFA degrees don’t guarantee poets of any merit. So often we’re told that poems mean more than they say. Fact is, they mean exactly what they say.

Inspiration doesn’t keep office hours. Be alert! You can’t afford to retract your antenna. Poetic ideas don’t stand around calmly playing *rock, paper, scissors* waiting for you to welcome them in. And don’t be under-experienced. Talk to people, listen to them. Eavesdrop and take notes. Closely and constantly observe this menagerie we call the family of man.

The duty, the challenge. The beginning of a poem is like trying to see if you can fly by running off a cliff. Or trying to catch a black cat at midnight. It’s a challenge! A serious poet is never free of the obligation to respond to the world. It’s been said that it is in battling life that one becomes a fit person to speak through poetry. “It is the duty of the poet to make his verse memorable long before it is the duty of the reader to remember it.” – Auberon Waugh, *The Literary Review*

Obscure poetry is an insult. I personally think any fool can write obscure poetry. And I feel it is extremely difficult to write clearly and concisely while still expressing interesting ideas, observations and narratives of the human experience that may touch our fellow men and women. Good poets are good communicators. So-called difficult poetry is rude and insulting! It all but actually ignores me as a reader. It puts verse in front of me but doesn’t really want to address me.

There you have it. My five imperatives of poetry. And again, these only apply to me, and that’s good enough. What might yours look like?

President's Message (continued from page 1)

The current landscape of poetry around the country and beyond is challenging. It is essential for us to both reflect on how to use these challenges to inform the creation of robust state societies that meet our mission as well as how to ameliorate difficulties in order to create a sound organization that assists all poets in developing their full poetic potential. In addition to dialogue, it is incumbent upon us to also theorize and execute solutions to these challenges. What I am most proud of is our commitment to sharing ideas, creating and disseminating high-quality poetry, and developing a warm and engaging community. With those basic values in mind we welcome anyone who is interested, and there are many ways to become involved. At convention this year, we will be holding a "Future Talk" where anyone can come and share ideas and assist in forming the future of NFSPS!

In this issue of *Strophes* you will find information ranging from the history of our organization, state reports, awards we offer, information about our annual meeting to be held in June, and our executive board. I encourage you to explore our website and the websites of all our state societies. In addition to hitting the links to find out more about the organization and how to become a member, you can also follow us on Social Media, specifically Twitter and Facebook. Please feel free to reach out to any of the Board or me for more information. We wish you the best this year and hope you can join us for our annual meeting and Convention 2020, June 11-14, in Kansas City, Missouri! We've secured the historic Holiday Inn, Aladdin Hotel, the same one Greta Garbo frequented in the 1930's. This historic restored jewel reflects back on the roaring 20's of the last century in art deco style! Join us as we roar in to the new 20's!

Your sister in words,

Julie Cummings, 33rd NFSPS President

POETRY ARTICLES (continued)**ALONG POETRY'S PATH**

By Ron Weber

Many years ago, as I finally internalized this thing called poetry and could no longer deny it as a defining part of my life, I found myself obsessed with the insights you find along poetry's path. I'm referring to the many observations, perceptions, assertions, judgements, declarations, sensitivities, points of wisdom and personal discernments from other poets. They helped give form, substance and meaning to this curse of verse that has afflicted me ever since.



Along with poetry itself, I read every interview of a poet and every article by a poet I could find. I ended up becoming a chronic jotter of notes and quotes. Allow me to share some of them here for I believe there is value in their wisdom.

"Poetry fills a human appetite: it matters the way cuisine matters beyond nutrition, or lovemaking matters beyond procreation. Like music and dance, it is at the center of human intelligence." ~ *Robert Pinsky*

"As long as poems are read at weddings and funerals, and exchanged between lovers, and given to people in times of duress, poetry is doing its work." ~ *Jane Hirshfield*

"Of course poetry is irrelevant to the 'real' world of power politics, but so is philosophy, painting, music and any other human activity where something genuine can be found." ~ *Charles Simic*

"Poetry connects us to what is deepest in ourselves. It gives us access to our own feelings, which are often shadowy, and engages us in the art of making meaning." ~ *Edward Hirsch*

"In the end we go to poetry for one reason, so that we might more fully inhabit our lives and the world in which we live them, and that if we more fully inhabit these things, we might be less apt to destroy both." ~ *Christian Wiman*

"Poetry's essence is not to show or tell as we say of fiction, but to reveal." ~ *Patricia Hampi*

"Poetry's become like Amnesty International or Greenpeace. Few people would dispute its merit. But they don't actively support it." ~ *Peter Fallon*

"Lyrics can lift one's heart, prose can make one think, and speeches can move one to action. Poetry can do all three." ~ *Robyn Hammer-Clarey*

"If every person in the country was buying poetry and it was available on every street corner...Poetry probably wouldn't be doing its job." ~ *Simon Armitage*

"People in love or in mourning do feel that they must rise to a big occasion, when they must use the best language there is. Ordinary prose, which is used for instructions on how to clean the cooker and so forth, won't do." ~ *U.A. Fanthorpe*

"Writing poetry is the best way I know of untying the knot of obsession. It's cheaper than therapy and better for you than getting drunk." ~ *Gwyneth Lewis*

I'll close with one that is a favorite of mine and one that I feel is most sentient for those of us involved in this lover's quarrel with mankind as we strive to touch a heart, a mind, a soul. "But poetry is an independent ambassador for conscience: it answers to no one, it crosses borders without a passport, and it speaks the truth. That's why, despite talk about its marginalization, it is one of the most powerful of the arts." ~ *Ellen Hinsey*

ENCORE 2019

NFSPS' anthology of 2019's top 150 prize-winning poems is on amazon.com for \$13. Buy two copies and get free shipping. All royalties support NFSPS. ~ *Kathy Cotton, Encore Editor*

