A Message from the ISPS President

Another year closes, and many ongoing and new members have made a commitment to ISPS. We mourn the passing of several members (see page 3) and look forward to the start of a haiku chapter on February 21 at the Northbrook Public Library. Some other exciting plans are also underway with more information forthcoming as they evolve.

We often take an accounting of the past year’s personal accomplishments, and as poets, our writing is one of those markers of time and intention. It is also an opportunity to consider what might be fresh approaches to writing as well. Here are a couple of ideas that might be interesting if you have not tried them already.

One suggestion relates to a recent Wisconsin Public Radio broadcast of Jean Sibelius’s music in celebration of his one hundred and fiftieth birthday. It made a pleasant drive through parts of Minnesota and Wisconsin back to Illinois. The program included sections of his choral symphony entitled *Kullervo* which was based on *The Kalevala*, Finland’s national epic. He also created tone poems, musical structures usually in a single continuous movement that evokes a poem’s content. These pieces were based on mythology and folklore and the music spoke for the original words. Both formats are interesting ways to reinvent our own poetry, perhaps in collaboration with a musician.

Another idea, which some of us have tried or are presently doing, is to write a series of poems that relate to one theme that runs through and informs a variety of these works. Both metaphorical and literal portrayals of the central idea can be applied as well as different forms. Examples of a central guiding idea could be journey, memory, loss, love, beginnings and endings among innumerable other possibilities. Perhaps a whole collection might result or a section of a collection. This challenge can allow for a variety of approaches, opinions and deeper research into self and observation that might not occur with only one poem on a given topic.

May the new year bring you inspiration and peace.

Happy writing, Susan T. Moss
Spotlight on ISPS Poet Sheila Kirscher

ISPS members share their poetry in numerous ways. We enter contests, submit to journals, post online, compile books. Sheila Kirscher of Wilmette brings to the list a few additional venues. Hers is a life-long story of applying writing skills to make people happy wherever she happens to be.

To honor individuals and groups on special occasions Kirscher wrote parody poems. When working for a local textbook publisher, she regularly shared her light verse in the company’s employee newsletter, even including names of all the staff members in four poems that spread out over the entire year. Now retired, Kirscher is collecting personal history and writing her memoirs—each chapter opening with a poem about a family member or a remembered event from her "long and happy life." She has also been a Brewed Awakening featured poet and director of the annual ISPS Poetry Month project. Kirscher serves as an at-large member of the board.

When did you first start writing poetry?
Poetry has provided me with comfort and inspiration since my youngest years. My aunt, who was a high school English teacher, started me out with Robert Louis Stevenson’s A Child’s Garden of Verses. I began writing rhymed poems when I was in second grade.

What inspires your current writing?
In the past few years, travels with my family to France, Tanzania and the Galapagos Islands have been one source of inspiration for my poems. Meeting with other writers, like the ISPS North Suburban Chapter and my memoir class, is also inspiring.

Tell us about your practice of writing poems to honor people and events.
In high school I started reading The New Yorker regularly and collected a folder of poems from the magazine over many years. From my earliest days with the New Yorker, I was hooked on Frank Sullivan’s "Greeting Friends" poetry and started using it as inspiration for writing my own poems to give people to honor occasions such as holidays, birthdays, anniversaries, travel—especially group walking trips in Switzerland—and individual participants in the various events. Often these poems were in the form of parodies of songs. One example is a song parody I wrote to celebrate the 40th anniversary of neighbors, both lawyers. Years later at the memorial service for one of them, I was asked to perform the poem. The part designed for the chorus was repeated by the audience at my signal, resulting in a fun and happy remembrance for all.

You’ve been reading poetry since childhood. Whose work do you most enjoy now?
Current favorites are Ted Koozer, Billy Collins and my contemporary, Marilyn Taylor, and my teacher, Robin Chapman.

How has your poetry style changed over the years?
After spending most of my life doing parody poems and the "Greeting Friends" style of poems—certainly rhyming is a key element of both—I went to poetry camp at The Clearing in Door County, Wisconsin. There I met a number of poets connected with ISPS and learned it is not necessary to have everything rhyme. As a rank beginner in writing free verse, I am now working to improve my lyrical, non-prosaic poetry. Being a member of ISPS has taught me new ways to make my poetry sing.

How do you overcome writer’s block?
At one point I rented an office because I felt it was too difficult to keep at it at home—too many distractions household and family distractions.

Poems by Sheila Kirscher
Serengeti Sounds and Silences
On the vast, grassy savannah where acacias and baobabs shade the Great Migration routes and cape buffalo roam beside wildebeest and zebra, falling asleep in a small canvas room is hakuna matata. Staying asleep is another matter.

Some nights the noise is constant depending how close to the tent the wild ones are. Wildebeests moan. Both ostriches and lions hoot but only the duration of the sound tells us which one is calling. Hyenas whoop—shrill scary, insistent, ceaseless.

Other nights settle deathly still. Zipped into my tent, I wake. Not a sound is to be heard until I sneeze. Instantly, hoof beats fill the night. Twenty, forty, perhaps four hundred legs just beyond my bed jump, leap, bound, rustle then vanish into the silence.

Our Secret
Some time ago when I was young but old enough to think about love, I confessed I loved you best.

You, though old, were young enough to embrace what I’d confessed and told me back you loved me best.

We could not let the others know, and so, we chose a sign to send each other anytime.

It was the letter “C” the coded message our hands flashed between us you and me.

(For my Grandmother, Poetry Invitational, Class of 1960)
A Glance Back: Our 2015 Featured Poets

In 2015 ISPS featured six poets: Joseph Kuhn Carey of Glencoe, Thomas Chockley of Plainfield, Michael Escoubas of Bloomington, Mary Jo Balistrari of Gennessee Depot WI, Gail Denham of Sun River OR, and Jacob Erin-Cilberto of Carbondale.

Farewells to our Poet Laureate and Three ISPS Members

Phillip Levine, the 18th U.S. Poet Laureate, died February 14. The ISPS also said goodbye in 2015 to members Glenna Holloway of Naperville and Doyle Raymond Vines of Cobden (pictured) and Marguerite McClelland of Winthrop Harbor.

NFSPS CONVENTION

Nine ISPS members attended the 2015 National Federation convention in Florida. Pictured are Gary Ketchum, Susan Moss, Kathy Cotton, Candace Armstrong, David Bond, and Judith Tullis.

SEVENTH CHAPTER APPROVED

In 2015 the ISPS approved its seventh chapter and welcomed its facilitator, Susan Auld, to the board. The new group is our first ISPS focused chapter. Contemporary English Language Haiku Chapter will hold its inaugural meeting from 1:00 to 4:30 p.m. on Sunday, Feb. 21, at the Northbrook Library Civic Room. It is open to all ISPS members.

Mark your Poetry Calendar for the New Year

- **JANUARY 1**, NFSPS contest submissions open. Contest deadline is March 15. Information is available at www.nfsps.com.
- **JANUARY 5**, deadline for submissions to NFSPS 2016 convention contest. Prizes include hotel accommodations, meal package, and convention fees.
- **JANUARY 31**, deadline for chapbook submissions to NFSPS College Undergraduate Poetry Competition. Submissions at nfsps.submittable.com.
- **FEBRUARY 1—14**, submission period for member poems on the ISPS website.
- **FEBRUARY 15**, submission deadline for Poetry Month displays and bookmark project.
- **FEBRUARY 21, 1:00 p.m.**, the new Contemporary English Language (CEL) Haiku Chapter will hold its first meeting at the Northbrook Library Civic Room.
- **FEBRUARY 27**, Feature poet reading and open mic at Madame ZuZu's, Highland Park.
- **FEBRUARY 27, 1:00 to 4:00 p.m.**, poetry workshop, "In Praise of Praise Poems," by Tom Roby and Jenene Ravesloot at the Harold Washington Library, 400 S. State St., Chicago.
- **MARCH 1**, submission deadline for Northbrook Arts Contest and Juried Reading. Cash prizes. Awards and reading of winning poems is April 17, 1:30 p.m., Northbrook Library (winners must be present).
- **MARCH 15**, deadline for NFSPS poetry contests.
- **MARCH 26**, featured poet and open mic at Madame ZuZu's, 582 Roger Williams, Highland Park.
- **JUNE 9—13**, NFSPS convention in Chaska, Minnesota.
ISPS New Members / Members' News

DAN FITZGERALD, a new member of the Central Chapter, says he has written off and on for a number of years. When he found he could not write in complete sentences, he stuck with poetry. His poems have been published in The Writer’s Journal, PKA Advocate, Nomad’s Choir and many others. His work has also appeared in several anthologies. He has written three chapbooks, Random Tales, Musing, and Your Star & Other Poems. He lives quietly in Pontiac, Illinois, tending to home and garden.

JANAY GARRICK of Chicago is a new member of North Suburban Chapter.

MELISSA HUFF of Champaign is a new at-large member. She says she has returned to a love of writing that she first discovered in her college days, now exploring formal poetry as well as free verse. She is also pursuing mixed media collage and photography, having earlier enjoyed 15 successful years creating one-of-a-kind jewelry. She holds degrees in both mathematics and art.

HILDEGARD "MARGUERITE" McCLELLAND of Winthrop Harbor passed away May 29, 2015, at the age of 71. She was a member of the North Suburban Chapter. Following is a poem by Marguerite from the ISPS website.

Now
I'm only passing here,
A thousand rippling rivulets
converging in this place
grace
the flowing face of time.
A knot unravels here
before the chocking of the chain.
A breeze sings the leaves of silent trees
into a fleeting form
fitting into oblivion immediately.
I am not
but passing here.
Tomorrow I’ll be gone.  -HMM

Dunn and Huff, Hutchinson and Skelly, to Read at ISPS-Sponsored Brewed Awakenings

Featured poets will read at Brewed Awakening, 19 West Quincy, Westmont, on January 31 and February 28 at 12:30 p.m., followed by open mic. Cover charge of $10.00 includes coffee and a snack.

SUNDAY, JAN. 31

PATRICK DUNN of Aurora is the author of the 2011 poetry collection, Second Person, and four books on esoteric spirituality. He is an associate professor of English at Aurora University, where he teaches linguistics, creative writing, and stylistics. His current project is a poetic translation of the ancient Greek Orphic Hymns.

MELISSA HUFF, who won several awards in poetry contests this fall, enjoys exploring both formal poetry and free verse, experimenting with many avenues of expression. She also pursues the making of mixed media collage using acrylic media and photography, www.melissahuff.com.

SUNDAY, FEB. 28

KATE HUTCHINSON has taught English for 30 years at a large high school northwest of Chicago, and each summer she teaches poetry writing at a local university. She is the author of a new poetry collection, Map Making: Poems of Land and Identity. Her chapbook, The Gray Limbo of Perhapes, was published in 2012. Hutchinson’s poems and creative essays have appeared in dozens of literary magazines and anthologies, including Shenandoah, The Sow’s Ear, and The Doss Passos Review; she was a 2010 Pushcart prize nominee. Find more of her work at PoetKateHutchinson.wordpress.com.

JENNIFER THIERMANN of Glenview, a new member of North Suburban Chapter, says she can’t remember a time when poetry was not part of her life. "My parents had poems or parts of poems memorized that they would often recite as situations triggered them. For my tenth birthday, my mother gave me a thick book I treasure to this day, Favorite Poems Old and New. I began memorizing a poem a week.

"I was fortunate at that same age to have Lucille Nixon come into our Palo Alto school and introduce us to haiku. I took to it and thereafter always had a few haiku books on my bookshelf. In college I took courses in Chinese literature and modern poetry. Three years ago, I began a serious study of haiku literature and poetry and took writing haiku as a committed practice. I am grateful to be a member of a group of haiku artists that meets at Arlington Heights Library once a month to critique our haiku."

MARJORIE SKELLY has won first place in the Poets and Patrons and the Jo-Anne Hirshfield Poetry awards contests, along with reaching finalist status for the Gwendolyn Brooks Poetry Slam in Chicago. Skelly is the author of the 2015 book, The Unpublished Poet: On Not Giving Up on Your Dream, available on Amazon. She has taught English at Loyola University of Chicago and Northeastern Illinois University and poetry and fiction writing at a variety of venues.
Library Displays and Bookmarks for April Poetry Month

Current ISPS members are invited to submit poems for our two National Poetry Month projects. In addition to displaying poems at libraries, some brief submissions with fairly short lines will be printed on bookmarks along with information about ISPS. After all submissions are collected and mounted, we will provide a list of libraries where members' poems are displayed and a list of the poems selected for bookmarks. Submission guidelines follow.

- **THEME.** "Books, Books, Books."
- **COPYRIGHT.** If the poem you submit has been previously published, include the name of the first publisher. Note that a poem published on a widely distributed bookmark will be considered published.
- **FORMAT.** Submit your poem in 14 point Georgia. Center the poem on the page.
- **TITLE.** Center the title at the top and skip two spaces before beginning the poem. Do not use bold type, quotation marks or underlining in the title.
- **FILE.** Send as a document file. Do not send in PDF format.
- **IDENTIFICATION.** Put your name two spaces below poem and to the right of center.
- **DEADLINE.** February 15, 2016.
- **EMAIL SUBMISSION.** Send your entry as an attachment to isps.submissions@gmail.com
- **MAIL SUBMISSION.** If unable to send via email, mail hard copy to:
  
  Ms. Barbara Eaton  
  416 Gierz Street  
  Downers Grove, IL 60515-3838

Short Poems for the Issue 6 Challenge

In the last ISPS newsletter our poetry challenge was short poems (seven or fewer lines). Here are a few responses provided by our members.

**INA G. PERLMUTER, NORTHBROOK**

**A Walk With Man's Best Friend**

Tethered by leash to whiff and paw  
we move in unison from tree to tree  
walking leisurely when days are bright  
moving faster in dark of night  
my winter I lament won't any tree to do  
my feet are cold, yours must be too

**Contrast in Hard and Soft**

Beyond the chain link softly  
Creamy violet hydrangeas  
Rustle as tushy soft paws work  
Their way among their stems  
Searching for a prize

**DAVID GROSS, PINCKNEYVILLE**

**Impermanence**

all morning
a spider
spins her web
all afternoon
a hummingbird
unweaves it

Published in *Hummingbird*

**Bottomland**

rows of corn
suffer the heat
sparse tassels
hiss like snakes
in dry wind

Published in *Cotyledon*

**DORIS ANN FREY, MURPHYSBORO**

**Evening**

Out of the sunset
There comes a hazy rosy glow
That wraps around me
Like a cozy winter fire
And then I think
Again
Of you

Published in *Hummingbird*

**JACOB ERIN-CILBERTO, CARBONDALE**

**no milk today**

roast chocolate blues  
dark scent in Paris cafe  
overturned coffee

**PHILLIP EGELESTON, JONESBORO**

the moon -- almost full  
cricket on a cedar stump  
no shadow, no sound

**Couple**

Our first date, first kiss...  
love, marriage, life together...  
short drive at sunset.
ISPS Online Submissions
The next bimonthly submission period for member poetry on the ISPS website is February 1 through 14. Members may submit one piece of original work to Alan Harris at oasis@alharris.com or by mail to Alan Harris, 543 E. Squirrel Tail Dr., Tucson, AZ 85704. Poetry is viewable by poet, poem title, or submission period at www.illinoispoets.org.

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At-Large Member, Tom Moran
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Bring a Friend to ISPS
Do you know a poet who would be inspired by belonging to ISPS? For the small investment of $20—optional $30 for Patron status or $50, Benefactor status—your poet/friends can join you in supporting poetry in Illinois. Tell them about all these perks:

☆ Triple membership: the Illinois State Poetry Society PLUS the National Federation of State Poetry Societies PLUS any of the ISPS chapters.

☆ ISPS bimonthly newsletter plus email notices of poetry events throughout the state.

☆ NFSPS quarterly publication, Strophes.

☆ Special submission rates for annual ISPS and NFSPS contests.

☆ Free admission to ISPS seminars and lectures and all chapter meetings.

☆ Poetry critiques at chapter meetings across the state, plus availability of online critique groups.

☆ Bimonthly publication of a poem submitted to the ISPS website.

For your convenience a membership form follows and is also on the website, www.illinoispoets.org. Print out a few copies of the form and hand them to your friends, or tell them to send their checks with name, address, email address, phone number and voting chapter (Northbrook, Darien, Lisle, Pontiac, Carbondale, Haiku or At Large).

Your new-member-friends are encouraged to submit a brief bio for the newsletter and website, and if you haven't submitted a bio, please do! Email it to kacotton7@frontier.com.

GIVE A COPY TO A FRIEND!

ISPS Membership Form PLEASE PRINT

Complete the information below and send the form with a check: membership through June 30, 2016 annual dues, $20.00 (optional $30 for Patron status or $50 for Benefactor) to the address below. New members please send also a short bio for our newsletter and website.

MEMBERSHIP:

☑ Renewal  ☑ New Member  ☑ $20 Regular  ☑ $30 Patron  ☑ $50 Benefactor

VOTING CHAPTER (select one):

☐ Central, Pontiac  ☐ North Suburban, Northbrook  ☐ Southern, Carbondale
☐ SW Suburban, Lisle  ☐ West Suburban, Darien  ☐ Haiku, Northbrook  ☐ At-Large

Name _____________________________________________________________

Address ___________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________

Phone (home or cell) _______________________________________________

Email _____________________________________________________________

Mail to: Judith Tullis, 6455 Big Bear Drive, Indian Head Park, IL 60525