

## 2017, ISSUE 3

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Also available on our website  
illinoispoets.org/news-links.htm

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## How Do You Know When a Poem is Finished?

Fifteen minutes after I sent an email to our chapter members, I received my first response: a poem inspired by one of the 23 attached pictures of artwork for an ekphrastic challenge we're co-sponsoring. It was an excellent seven-stanza poem by Jacob Erin-Cilberto. Not an old one pulled from his store of more than a dozen published books, "Splitting Flags" was a focused, freshly inspired, seven-stanza poem downloaded in toto from his remarkable brain and mailed within a quarter hour. I am on the other end of this writing time line. I never created a poem I didn't edit...and edit again. Some are tweaked for years before they "feel complete."

So, how do you know when a poem is finished? While the response may be unique for each of us, poet Naomi Shihab Nye answers the question like this:

"When you quietly close / the door to a room / the room is not finished. / It is resting. Temporarily. / Glad to be without / you for a while / . . . When you return, /you might move the stack of books, / freshen the water for the roses. / I think you could keep doing this forever. / But the blue chair looks best / with the red pillow. / So you might as well / leave it that way."

Read Nye's poem in its entirety at poets.org and know that your poetry, done or undone, is awaiting you or your readers. -Kathy Cotton, Editor ✍



## A Message from the ISPS President

The public library poetry displays were a big success this April. With the theme of travel, many interesting and varied interpretations gave observers a variety of poems about places and ideas related to the topic. This yearly project, which sometimes drifts into May, offers members an opportunity to address a larger audience and thereby put work out into the world. Many thanks to Sheila Kirscher for collecting, collating and dispensing all the submissions. Thank you also to all those who created the various displays in libraries throughout the state.

I recently had the privilege of judging a contest that included three youth categories. What I found in many of the poems was a vivid and thoughtful chronicling of concerns about justice toward refugees, gender-related issues, racial prejudice, respect for self and others, establishing one's place in the world, as well as recognizing the beauty in nature and our relation to the planet.

These entries had the capacity to provoke controversy as well as joy. Each of them offered insight as to what young people can and do think about as they mature. Youthful angst, fears, confusion, love and compassion were among the emotions often succinctly expressed. Hopefully, their endeavors will evolve into lifelong passionate efforts to capture life in imaginative connections between topic and expression.

When reading adult poetry, some of the questions posed in youth have been resolved while other concerns linger to be contemplated more deeply as we experience and examine life. Some of the topics reflect the greater human endeavor to resolve difficult situations that have always haunted humanity. In any event, our poetry can be a journal of our personal existence—a record of varying stages of discovery and a way to break the silence of our lives.

Happy writing, Susan T. Moss ✍

## ISPS New Members / Members' News

**DAVID BOND** of Carbondale (Southern Chapter) received an honorable mention in the premier NFSPS BlackberryPeach Prizes competition for spoken/print poems.

**IDELLA PEARL EDWARDS** of Marion is a new member of the Southern Chapter. Edwards served as a Certified Lay Speaker for the United Methodist Church for more than 20 years and in 2005 retired from the State of Oklahoma as a public purchaser and moved to Marion with her husband, Jack. They have 5 children and 12 grandchildren. Edwards writes a monthly faith column for *The Marion Star Newspaper* and has published several books: *Hope Through the Eyes of Faith*, *Magnify*, *Inspirational Poetry for the Soul*, *Respect for Parents 101*, *Look at the Birds*, *Don't Hang Your Harps on the Willow Tree*, and four children's

books. She is also a member of the Little Egypt Writers' Society in Marion.

**MICHAEL ESCOUBAS** of Bloomington (Central Chapter) has been named features editor at *Whispers On-Line Poetry*, a world-wide journal with contributors from approximately 40 countries. Escoubas creates *Whispers'* poetry activities and also hosts Partners in Poetry, a collaborative writing opportunity. Contact Escoubas at farside747@hotmail.com for more information.



**DAVID GROSS** of Pinckneyville (Southern Chapter) announces the release of his poetry collection, *Little Egypt*, by Flutter Press.

**SHONTAY LUNA** of Chicago is a returning member to the At Large Chapter.

## ISPS Celebrates Eleventh Anniversary with Brewed Awakening

On Sunday, May 28, ISPS will celebrate its eleventh anniversary of poetry readings at the Brewed Awakening coffee shop in Westmont. The event will feature poet Georgiann Foley along with middle- and high-school winners of our Manningham Poetry Contest who have been invited to read their prize-winning poems.



**MAY 28**

An ISPS member since the 1990s, Georgiann Foley of Wheaton is a writer and a teacher who has organized poetry readings for her junior high students at a local bookstore, providing a venue for them to perform their work.

Foley's poetry has taken wins in contests of The Poetry Center of Chicago, Poets and Patrons, and Highland Park Poetry. Her work has appeared in such publications as *DuPage Arts Life*, *Byline*, *Möbius*, and *Seeding the Snow*, and in two *Distilled Lives* anthologies.



**JUNE 25**

One of the ISPS featured poets (the other, to be announced) is the award-winning author, Bakul Banerjee of Wheaton. She has been writing poems, short stories, and essays for literary magazines, both in the U.S. and India, for two decades. Banerjee has published two collections of poetry: *Synchronicity: Poems* (2010) and *Bathymetry: Poems* (April 2017). She also conducts poetry workshops and organizes reading events.

Banerjee received her Ph.D. degree in computational geophysics from The Johns Hopkins University and worked as a scientist at facilities operated by the U.S. Department of Energy.

Each event includes an open mic. The \$10 cover charge includes coffee or other beverage and a snack. Brewed Awakening is located at 19 West Quincy, across from the METRA station in Westmont. ✍

## Challenge: Book Spine Poems

The March/April poetry challenge was book spine poems, a visual arts form created by stacking books to make a poem from their titles. We thank Michael Escoubas (Central) and Wilda Morris (SW Suburban) for these book spine poems.



## 2017 NFSPS Convention

The Poetry Society of Texas will host the "Art and Soul of Poetry" NFSPS convention June 29 through July 2 at Hilton Fort Worth. The weekend features programs, workshops, guest speakers, entertainment, contest announcements, and an ongoing poetry/art project, as well as Fort Worth attractions. See [nfsp.com/convention](http://nfsp.com/convention) for information and the registration form. ✍

## Vote for Officers by May 21

For the new two-year term beginning July 1, 2017, nominations for ISPS officers are:

President, Susan Moss  
Vice President, Jim Lambert  
Secretary, Melissa Huff  
Treasurer, Judith Tullis

Through Sunday, May 21, members may vote at chapter meetings or by email at [isps.submissions@gmail.com](mailto:isps.submissions@gmail.com). Chapters should also vote for and report the names of facilitators for the next two-year term. ✍



### Haiku by Thiermann

burying Dad's ashes  
on Ship Island  
the stink of guano

May Day  
first snake  
in the rattle grass

October leaves  
how many years  
of letting go

storm's tale...  
the silence  
of uprooted trees

a thank-you letter  
from the eye bank;  
dark afternoon

overnight snow  
the feral cat's tracks  
reveal a sixth toe

solitude  
the sound of a paddle leaf  
unfurling

tangled mistletoe  
we are in  
over our heads

glass beach  
no sharp edges left  
to her remarks

old racer  
gone to pasture  
no shoes

Earth Day  
a puddling of butterflies  
rises from the dung pile

## Spotlight on ISPS Poet Jennifer Thiermann

Jennifer Thiermann grew up in Palo Alto, California, in the 50s and 60s. After earning a B.A. in psychology at Oberlin College in Ohio, Thiermann helped create a homesteading commune on a ridge top in northern California, where the "back-to-the-land" movement was flowering. She says, "I always felt an affinity to the natural world, whether I was climbing the redwood trees in my backyard, walking the dog in the Stanford hills, going to the beach, or camping and hiking with my family in Yosemite and Lake Tahoe."

After 17 years of living 45 minutes up a dirt road, she and her husband faced economic realities and moved to Chicago to join an uncle's video and corporate communications production company. They had two sons and moved to Glenview in 1990. She still spends a month off the grid at her California cabin, and another month lake-shore in Ontario, Canada, in a small cabin and boathouse, a legacy from her Canadian mother.

*Tell us how poetry became a part of your life.*

My earliest memory of poetry is Mother's reading aloud A.A. Milne's amusing poems. Also, both my parents frequently quoted snippets of poetry, often Shakespeare's. On my eleventh birthday, Mother gave me *Favorite Poems Old and New*, a 566 page anthology for children. I began memorizing a poem a week from that book and still enjoy reciting them in light moments.

My introduction to haiku was in fifth grade. I took to it: the simplicity, the requisite nature reference, and the taste for finding a microcosm that could illuminate the macrocosm. Once I began buying my own poetry books, I always had some sort of little haiku book on my shelf.

*Tell us about your writing journey.*

I have been journaling since I was twelve. When I reread parts of my journals, I can extract all kinds of material for haiku, for memories can trigger sensory moments in the present as well as recalling moments in the past.

My poetry has been sporadic and mostly private, with the exception of birthday poems I write to others. In California, I wrote for a women's collective magazine, "Country Women." Half the articles were on how-to skills and half on feminist consciousness raising. The magazine

was a great outlet for my publishing both types. I also wrote, with a friend, a radio play extracted from the letters between Virginia Woolf and Vita Sackville-West. I began writing short stories as well; when I moved here, one was published in the *Northshore Pioneer Press*.

Five years ago, I decided to study and write haiku in a disciplined fashion. I read dozens of books about haiku, as well as haiku itself. Then I discovered haiku internet groups and websites, which led me to finding the two critique haiku groups I am in today, one of which is the new chapter in ISPS. These supportive groups, plus the deadlines for print and on-line journals, keep me charged up and writing.

My haiku has been published in several anthologies, on-line and print journals, and newspapers. My goal is simply to keep on keepin' on, with the modest goal of collecting enough "good" haiku to make a chapbook.

*Any recommendations for our readers?*

If you'd like to try writing haiku, I recommend the website, [ahapoetry.com](http://ahapoetry.com), the book *Writing and Enjoying Haiku* by Jane Reichhold, and anything by Lee Gurga (see ISPS Poet Spotlight, Sept./Oct. 2016).

*What tips can you give to prospective haikuists?*

- Always carry a little notebook for images and insights.
- Commit to sitting down once or twice a week to rework and edit your haiku.
- Take on the challenge of making every word count.
- Hold your reader in mind, i.e., show not tell. Leave your haiku open to mystery and the reader's own experiences. Haiku is like an iceberg, mostly underwater.
- Get outside. Turn on all your senses.
- Drop your ego.
- Stick up some Post-It notes for reminders. Right now, I see two of mine:

Get Started  
Keep Going

Throw Out  
Keep Going

# ISPS Celebrates National Poetry Month

Libraries hosting ISPS members' poetry include at Aurora West, Bloomington, Carbondale, Glencoe, Glenview, Highland Park, Hinsdale, Indian Prairie, Lisle, Northbrook, Pontiac, Wilmette, and Winnetka.

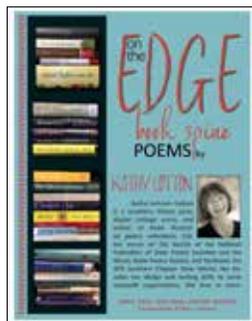


Row 1. Readers Joe Carey, Judith Tullis, and Melissa Huff at the After-Words Bookstore ISPS and Poets & Patrons event, April 13.

Row 2: Pontiac Library. Carbondale Library. Susan Moss and Sheila Kirscher, Indian Prairie Library.

Row 3. Judith Tullis at Aurora West Library. Bloomington Library table display. Lisle Library. Winnetka Library.

Row 4. Sheila Kirscher displaying ISPS bookmarks. Book Spine Poetry exhibit by Kathy Cotton, Carbondale Library. ✍





## Chapter Meetings

### CENTRAL CHAPTER, PONTIAC

1:00 p.m., **Saturday, June 10**  
Pontiac Public Library, 815-844-7229  
211 E. Madison St., Pontiac, IL

### HAIKU CHAPTER, NORTHBROOK

1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., **Sunday, June 11**  
Northbrook Public Library, Civic Room  
847-272-6224  
1201 Cedar Lane, Northbrook, IL  
Bring 10 copies of up to 6 haiku for critique and a haiku that mystifies or delights from a recent journal for discussion

### NO. SUBURBAN CHAPTER, NORTHBROOK

1:00 to 5:00 p.m., **Sunday, May 21**  
Northbrook Public Library, 847-272-6224  
1201 Cedar Lane, Northbrook, IL  
Bring 8-10 copies of poems for critique. No food/ beverages allowed in this room.

### SOUTHERN CHAPTER, CARBONDALE

2:00 to 4:00 p.m., **Sunday, May 14**  
Carbondale Public Library, 618-457-0354  
405 West Main, Carbondale, IL  
Bring 10-12 copies of poems for critique.

### SOUTHWEST SUBURBAN CHAPTER, LISLE

1:00 to 5:00 p.m., **Sunday, June 4**  
Lisle Public Library, 630-971-1675  
777 Front St., Lisle, IL (enter lot off Kingston)  
Bring your beverage, 20 copies of poems for critique, and a snack to share.

### WEST SUBURBAN CHAPTER, DARIEN

1:00 to 4:00 p.m., **Saturday, May 6**  
Indian Prairie Public Library, 630-887-8760  
401 Plainfield Road, Darien, IL  
Bring your beverage, snack to share, and 20 copies of poems for critique.

### ONLINE CRITIQUE GROUPS

To request a copy of the guidelines or to join an ISPS Email Critique Group, contact coordinator Wilda Morris at wildamorris@ameritech.net. Put "ISPS Email Critique Group" in the subject line of the email and be sure to include your name with your request. ✍

## Events & Deadlines: Mark Your 2017 Poetry Calendar

**MAY 1**, 7:30 p.m., Evening with poet Joy Harjo, Heller Auditorium, Chicago.

**MAY 3**, 5:30 p.m., Poetry of Witness Workshop, Mary and Leigh Block Museum of Art, Evanston.

**MAY 20**, 8:00 p.m., Jacqueline Nicole Harris Reading and open mic, Madame ZuZu's, Highland Park.

**MAY 21**, 6:30 p.m., Solace Sundays open mic, 2423 E. 75th St., Chicago.

**MAY 21**, deadline for voting on ISPS officers.

**JUNE 1-14**, submission period for members' poetry on illinoispoets.org.

**JUNE 22**, Northbrook Library and the

Park District host an inaugural "Poetry in the Park" event, featuring two award-winning poets and an open mic. See the form at jotform.com/70237732452150.

**JUNE 29-JULY 2**, NFSPS Convention hosted at the historic Hilton Fort Worth in Fort Worth, TX. Details at nfspss.com/convention2017.pdf.

**JUNE 30**, ISPS 2016-17 annual membership ends. Renew for 2017-18.

**JULY 1** through September 1, submission period for Poetry Society of Indiana annual poetry contests.

**JULY 15**, deadline, Florida State Poetry Association annual contest.

## Renew Your ISPS Membership: Due June 30

The ISPS membership year expires June 30, so it's time to renew. Your support of poets and poetry has benefits that will last for a full year, through June 2018. Here is a reminder of all you receive for the small investment of \$20:

- Triple membership:** the Illinois State Poetry Society PLUS the National Federation of State Poetry Societies PLUS any of the seven ISPS chapters.
- ISPS bimonthly newsletter** plus email notices of poetry events throughout the state.
- Strophes**, the NFSPS quarterly publication.
- 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 on-line critique groups.
- Bimonthly publication** of a poem submitted to the ISPS website.

### MEMBERSHIP THROUGH JUNE 30, 2018

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