TL;DR...

Do you ever flip through a poetry collection or journal and read shorter poems first? Surely, I'm not the only one. Responding to the glut of available data—more in the past two years than in mankind's entire preceding history—we've been drawn to snack-size communications: bullet points, texts, tweets, emojis, and that succinct commentary: TL;DR (too long; didn't read).

To grab readers, poets must also practice a version of reduction: Make every word count. This month let's red-line lazy, tacked-on titles and yawning openers. Allow no hackneyed phrase, unnecessary article/conjunction, fluffy filler. Let's choose strong verbs, creative imagery, nuance, and word choices that add musicality to meaning. Our challenge is to make poems so good that "Didn't Read" doesn't happen. —Kathy Cotton, Editor

A Message from the President

Summer has fully revealed itself. It feels like we are living in an aviary with all the bird talk of nests, chicks and what seems to be a shear joy of life blossoming everywhere. Our society also made a wonderful showing with eleven members who attended the NFSPS convention in Denver. Congratulations to all those ISPS poets who were successful in the national contest! (Listing on page 5.)

Beside the enthusiasm of so many attendees this year in Colorado, our society has reached a new high in membership of 167 poets, many of whom will have poems in the forthcoming anthology, *Distilled Lives Volume 4.* With more members comes the possibility of new interest and energy to help guide and serve ISPS.

A group like ours is a collective organization that relies on shared responsibility and collaboration of volunteers. Within a little over a decade, our society has grown from one to seven chapters with greater geographic diversity, improved coordinated communication to all members, and expanded interest in sharing ideas, events and members' accomplishments. It's individual commitment that drives an organization like ISPS and helps us stay connected.

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ISPS New Members / Members' News

JOCELYN AJAMI is a Chicago poet, artist and film maker. She received the coveted $1,000 first-place prize in the 2018 NFSPS Founders Award contest.

CHARLOTTE DIGREGORIO of Winnetka was honored to receive an Official Commendation from Governor Bruce Rauner for her accomplishments in poetry and other literary arts during the past 38 years. Further, Digregorio was recently appointed as an Ambassador of The Haiku Foundation and was a guest speaker at the Annual Conference of the Haiku Circle in Massachusetts. Her haiga will be exhibited at North Shore Senior Center in Northfield through August, and at Fremont Public Library in Mundelein through October.

CAROLINE JOHNSON of Willow Springs read from her new full-length poetry collection, *The Caregiver* (Holy Cow! Press) at the Tattered Cover Bookstore in Denver on May 31. Among those attending the reading were poets Candace Armstrong, Myron Stokes, Judith Tullis (pictured with Johnson), Susan Moss, Melissa Huff and Wilda Morris–ISPS members who were in Denver for the NFPS Convention.

NANCY LACHANCE of Lebanon, MO, began poetry writing in college but didn’t get serious about the craft until retiring and joining a poetry group 12 years ago. The group offered support and advice on the art of writing. She attends poetry retreats, takes part in critiquing, and is a winner in sponsored contests. LaChance is past president of the Missouri State Poetry Society and current president of her local poetry chapter. Her poems cover family issues, humor, and nature themes. A former English, journalism, and drama teacher and part-time instructor at Missouri Baptist University, she holds an undergraduate degree from Southeast Missouri State University and master’s degree from Southern Illinois University–Edwardsville. LaChance is a new at-large member of ISPS.

NANCY SCHAEFER announces the publication of a new poetry collection, *Living at Hope’s Edge*. (Tiger’s Eye Press, 2018). She is also the author of *Search of Lode* (918studio). All proceeds from the new book will go to support local animal rescue. Schaefer, a retired academic from Illinois, now lives with her husband, dog, and three cats in Bridgton, Maine.

Three members of the ISPS board of directors will also serve on the 2018 appointive board of the National Federation of State Poetry Societies.

JUDITH TULLIS of Indian Head will begin her first NFSPS term as contest sponsors and brochure chairman.

JIM LAMBERT of Carterville continues as the associate editor of the *Strophes* newsletter.

KATHY COTTON of Anna continues as editor of the *Encore Prize Poems* anthology. She has resigned as editor for the two College Undergraduate Contest books.

RICHARD SHAW of Geneva returns as a patron member of the Lisle Chapter.

JOHN QUINN of Brookfield is a returning member to Darien Chapter.

Eleven ISPS members attended the National Federation of State Poetry Societies in Denver, May 31 to June 3. Pictured are Judy Tullis, Wilda Morris, Candace Armstrong, Susan Moss, (back row) Caroline Johnson, Myron Stokes, Michael Escoubas, and Melissa Huff. Also attending but not pictured were Eleanor Berry, Polly Opsahl, and Russell Strauss.
Path to the School Bus

Surly, persistent, unseasonal squalls roared away any tender intentions in the first days of that merciless May, caused half the herd to calve early.

Slime of afterbirth glistened crimson atop drifts we watched through fern-frost on the clattering cabin windows. Momma kept running out to grab a calf, warm it on the wood stove’s open door until she could surmise it might live, then carry it out again to its mother and run in with another, just born.

Hungry steers, desperate for shelter, their hides glistening white with hoarfrost, pounded cold noses against windows and door. Their thumping became the cabin’s heartbeat in the wheezing white noise of blizzard wind.

When it stopped we walked the lane across frozen carcasses of cattle in a strange new-day quiet to wait for the school bus.

Falling

Coyote, wily as time, is used to pursuing his swift nemesis off the edge of a cliff, blurred legs spinning like wheels, the momentum of chase propelling him straight out over the canyon where his being oblivious carries him, keeps him aloft. Only when some vague sense of disequilibrium suggest he check his ground does the looking down send him plummeting through the nothing solid where he is surprised to find himself. For you the phone’s ring was the movement forward—off the edge of the world, that trajectory from which it almost seems you should be able to reverse the propeller of numb limbs spinning, flailing, that they might carry you back to the rim of something firm that would hold your weight. But you were racing onto air and have looked down. Now you are free falling and cannot see the bottom.

Spotlight on Poet Maureen Flannery

Maureen Tolman Flannery’s background—growing up on a sheep and cattle ranch in Wyoming, time in Mexico, and now life in Chicago—gives this English teacher, wood carver, and home funeral guide a unique poetry perspective. Among her eight books are Tunnel into Morning, Destiny Whispers to the Beloved, and Pulitzer-Prize-nominated Ancestors in the Landscape. More than 500 of this prolific writer’s poems have appeared in journals, including Connecticut River Review, North American Review, Xavier Review, Border Senses, Birmingham Poetry Review, Pedestal, Poetry East, Atlanta Review and Arroyo.

Tell us about your journey into prolific writing and publishing your poetry.

Having always processed my experience in words, I did not validate my own poetic life until my children were grown and I was middle aged. By the time I began to publish, I had a huge body of work to choose from—and to revise. I began publishing in anthologies, since an editor’s theme could help me decide what to submit. Soon I was sending poems to all the literary journals referenced in Poets and Writers. I found submitting most useful in that I paid attention to each poem, revised and polished it again every time I submitted. I attended Poets and Patrons, became a member of Poets’ Club of Chicago, and worked with a small group of women poets in an informal workshop. I have always been very prolific, yet I found after I had begun to submit, that fewer ideas ever floated away unrecorded. I even began carrying a notebook in my purse instead of fumbling for a deposit slip to jot down lines.

How does the process of writing poetry personally benefit you?

A poem is often engendered in me by what I ponder or wonder. As Christopher Fry said, “Poetry is the language in which man explores his own amazement.” My poems are frequently narrative, story-telling, if only the story of my own emotional response to what has been observed or puzzled at. Of course, I never expect the poem to answer the question, but what the poem offers is often an easing of the discomfort of bafflement. This is the gift of writing as therapeutic activity. The poem, by examining the wound, becomes the balm. We come away with a renewed relationship to that which we struggle to understand.

What poetry resources currently inspire your writing?

I read numerous journals, often those in which I have poems, my favorites being After Hours locally and Atlanta Review nationally. Atlanta Review consistently publishes poems I find myself wanting to return to again and again. The Second Saturday poetry workshop sponsored in Palatine by Northwest Cultural Council also has consistently good poets, both attending and leading.

What are you working on now?

I am now writing about the purchase and move of two century-old log cabins to a plot of land in Wyoming. I have been obsessed with restoration of the cabins as well as the rich history of Wyoming ranch country. Thus, my book on the subject—Following the Cabin Home. 

Discover more about Maureen Flannery in the pages of her books: available at amazon.com.
Anthology Prep Underway

Editing of submissions for the fourth volume of the ISPS anthology is underway. One to two pages of poetry will be published for each member with qualified submissions. The book will be available later this year. Cover by Kathy Cotton features a monarch butterfly, one of Illinois' state symbols.

Sponsor a Category in ISPS 25th Annual Poetry Contest

July 16 is the deadline to sponsor categories in the 2018 ISPS Poetry Contest. By providing prize monies of $55 to $190, individuals or ISPS chapters can sponsor a contest category and select the poetry form/subject. Categories may be named in honor or in memory of a selected person.

The sponsorship form is available on the ISPS website, illinoispoets.org. For information, contact chairman Jim Lambert, jim@jimlambert.net.

Stay with Us: Renew Your Membership Now

The ISPS new year begins July 1. To continue all the benefits of belonging to a great group of poets and poetry supporters, renew your ISPS membership. For the small annual investment of $20 (optional $30.00 for Patron status or $50.00, Benefactor status), your renewal dues support poetry in Illinois and offer you all these perks:

- ISPS bimonthly newsletter PLUS email notices of poetry events and news.
- Bimonthly publication of members' poems and haiga on the website, illinoispoets.org.
- NFSPS quarterly Strophes newsletter.
- Special submission rates for annual ISPS and NFSPS contests.
- Free admission to many ISPS-sponsored seminars and lectures and poetry.

A copy of the membership form is on page 6.

Comments from the NFSPS Contest Judges

Fifty judges whittled nearly 7,000 submissions into the top 150 poems that now appear in the NFSPS 2018 Encore anthology (amazon.com). Here is what judges say they looked for:

- Poems that immediately grab me.
- Interesting point of view, strong imagery, clean concepts.
- Less telling; more showing why.
- Imagination, nuance, and linguistic improvisation.
- Fresh language, surprises, and intriguing titles.
- No trite phrases or obvious endings that don't invite into the magic of poetry words.
- Detail and intimacy—poets writing from their hearts.
- Poems that won't be eliminated for grammar and spelling errors or typos.

Swanberg and Valente to Be Featured at July 29 ISPS–Sponsored Brewed Awakening

Two highly-respected poets, Judith Valente and Christine Swanberg, will be featured at Brewed Awakening (19 West Quincy, Westmont), 12:30 to 2:00 p.m., Sunday, July 29. The program will also include open mic readings. A $10 cover charge includes cost of a beverage and snack.

Featured poets for the August 26 event will be announced later.

CHRISTINE SWANBERG

A multiple Pushcart nominee with numerous awards, Rockford poet Christine Swanberg is the author of Tonight on this Late Road, Invisible String, Bread Upon the Waters, Slow Miracle, The Tenderness of Memory, The Red Lacquer Room, Who Walks among the Trees with Charity, The Alleluia Tree, and Wild Fruition: Sonnets, Spells, and other Incantations. Her poetry appears in many journals and anthologies, including Spoon River, Wind, Louisville Review, Beloit Poetry Journal, Garden Blessings, Back to Joy, Gratitude Prayers and Poems and Earth Blessings. Swanberg, a long-time writing teacher and mentor, gives readings and workshops throughout the United States.

JUDITH VALENTE

An award-winning poet, journalist, and producer, Judith Valente is the author of the poetry collection Discovering Moons and the chapbook, Inventing An Alphabet, selected by Mary Oliver for the 2005 national Aldrich Poetry Prize. Valente's poems often explore the whimsical connections between the outer world and the inner spirit.

She covered religion and spirituality for many years for national PBS-TV and reported on both religion and the poetry scene for Chicago Public Radio. Valente is also the author of four books on how to live a more contemplative life, including: The Art of Pausing: Meditations for the Overworked and Overwhelmed, and most recently, How To Live: What The Rule of St. Benedict Teaches Us About Happiness, Meaning and Community.

She holds a masters in fine arts in creative writing from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.
ISPS Members Take 60 Honors in NFSPS Contests: Ajami Wins $1,000 Top Prize

Two of the top three winners in the big-prize 2018 NFSPS Founders Award are ISPS members: $1,000 first place, Jocelyn Ajami of Chicago; and $250 third place, Myron Stokes of Oak Park. Also, Wilda Morris of Bolingbrook took an honorable mention in the #1 category, which drew the highest number of contest submissions.

Congratulations to all our members who were among those honored and cheered for by Illinois attendees at the National Federation of State Poetry Societies 2018 convention in Denver, May 31–June 3. ISPS took 60 of the 500 national awards.

JOCELYN AJAMI
1st $1,000 NFSPS Founders Award

JAMES F. AHEARN
4th HM Nevada Poetry Society Award
4th HM Freeda Murphy Memorial Award

VALERIE MARTIN BAILEY
1st Poetry Society of Tennessee Award
3rd Alice Mackenzie Swaim Memorial Award

ELEANOR BERRY
5th HM Mildred Vorpahl Baass Remembrance Award
7th HM William Stafford Memorial Award

VON S. BOURLAND
1st Alice Mackenzie Swaim Memorial Award
5th HM Florida State Poets Association, Inc., Award
5th HM Morton D. Prouty & Elsie S. Prouty Memorial Award
6th HM Georgia Poetry Society Award
7th HM Claire van Breemen Downes Memorial Award

KATHY LOHRUM COTTON
1st The Poets Northwest Award
1st Morton D. Prouty & Elsie S. Prouty Memorial Award
2nd Mildred Vorpahl Baass Remembrance Award
2nd Columbine Poets of Colorado Award
3rd Ohio Award
3rd Poetry Society of Michigan Award
3rd HM The NFPS Board Award
3rd HM Poetry Society of Indiana Award
4th HM The Diamond T Award
6th HM Freeda Murphy Memorial Award
6th HM San Antonio Poets Association Award

GAIL DENHAM
1st Nevada Poetry Society Award

MICHAEL ESCOUBAS
3rd William Stafford Memorial Award
6th HM Maine Poets Society Award

BARBARA J. FUNKE
2nd Illinois State Poetry Society Award

CAROLINE JOHNSON
3rd Freeda Murphy Memorial Award
1st HM The Virginia Corrie-Cozart Memorial Award

NANCY LACHANCE
5th HM Arizona State Poetry Society Award

JIM LAMBERT
5th HM Land of Enchantment Award

WILDA MORRIS
1st Poetry Society of Texas Award
3rd HM Claire van Breemen Downes Memorial Award
4th HM Alabama State Poetry Society Award
4th HM NFSPS Founders Award
5th HM The Diamond T Award

POLLY OPSAHL
1st Winners’ Circle Award
4th HM Land of Enchantment Award
6th HM Poetry Society of Texas Award

DONNA PUCCIANI
1st Louisiana State Poetry Society Award
2nd Poets’ Roundtable of Arkansas Award
2nd Winners’ Circle Award
3rd League of Minnesota Poets Award
1st HM Al Laster Memorial Award
2nd HM Wyopoets Award
5th HM Donald Stodghill Memorial Award

BETH STAAS
1st HM Poets’ Roundtable of Arkansas Award
5th HM Barbara Stevens Memorial Award
5th HM Alice Mackenzie Swaim Memorial Award

MYRON STOKES
3rd NFSPS Founders Award

RUSSELL H. STRAUSS
1st The Diamond T Award
1st William Stafford Memorial Award
2nd Claire van Breemen Downes Memorial Award
3rd Poetry Society of Tennessee Award
2nd HM Massachusetts State Poetry Society Award
3rd HM CSPS James E. MacWhinney Memorial Award
4th HM Wyopoets Award
5th HM Alabama State Poetry Society Award
5th HM Minute Award

JUDITH KRUM TULLIS
2nd Georgia Poetry Society Award
Are You Next? Time for a New Editor

Since I began to serve as your newsletter editor in 2013, I’ve had the pleasure of interviewing 30 ISPS feature poets, sharing the good news of your awards and accomplishments, and working with supportive resources. Now it's time for a new editor.

Just as I revamped the format of our bi-monthly newsletter five years ago, the next editor can start fresh with their favorite software and new point of view, or I'll be glad to pass along resources I've gathered. If you are interested, contact our president, Susan Moss, stm48@hotmail.com, for more information.

My thanks to you, the ISPS readers, and to all whose support has made my work possible. –Kathy Cotton

Deadlines & Events: Mark Your Poetry Calendar

- **JULY 1**, new ISPS membership year begins. Have you renewed?
- **JULY 7**, closing of Charlotte Digreggorio's haiga exhibit at Moats Gallery, Palatine. Upcoming exhibits are at North Shore Senior Center in Northfield through August, and Fremont Public Library in Mundelein through October.
- **JULY 16**, deadline for category sponsorships, ISPS Poetry Contest.
- **JULY 29**, 12:30–2:00 p.m., Brewed Awakening, 19 West Quincy, Westmont.
- **AUGUST 1–14**, poem and haiga submission period for our website, illinoispoets.org.
- **AUGUST 26**, 12:30–2:00 p.m., Brewed Awakening, 19 West Quincy, Westmont.
- **SEPTEMBER 1**, deadlines for Helen Schaible International Sonnet Contest and the Poets & Patrons Annual Chicagoland Poetry Contest. Send submissions to Barbara Eaton, P.O. Box 936, Downers Grove.
- **OCTOBER 1–NOVEMBER 1**, submission period for 25th annual ISPS Poetry Contest.
- **NOVEMBER 3**, 2018 ISPS Gala, Park Ridge Country Club.

ISPS Membership Application

RENEWALS DUE! 2018–2019 NEW YEAR BEGINS JULY 1

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

VOTING CHAPTER (check one)

- Central, Champaign
- North 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