



Illinois Poets

News of the Illinois State Poetry Society

May – June 2020

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President's Message



When I have spoken with other poets these past few months, some say that they are writing lots of poems, many about the pandemic. Others, however, state that they just can't seem to write much lately. For many reasons, it's hard to find something to say that isn't about virus ground zero. We tend to seek far from our home base of inspiration. There is often a belief that our poetry has to be rich with metaphor, worldly experiences or other subjects that we have not experienced or are not in the right frame of creative insight to explore.

Much can be said of little daily events, observations, tastes, smells, textures and sights that are often overlooked when we must focus on staying sequestered or hidden behind a mask. There is nothing too mundane when examined under the microscope of poetic curiosity. The juicy orange at breakfast, its sweet wakeup call blended with first bite of buttery toast, can be worth exploring, perhaps as a memory of childhood or breakfast with a long-ago friend. We can imagine and free associate endlessly if we give ourselves a chance to record our own observations without self-judgment.

It can be lonely when we can't meet in person to critique poetry or perhaps discuss an idea for a collection about some pertinent or unusual topic. We seek ways to connect, and poetry is surely one way to be reminded of those who are no longer with us or to revive memories of our own lives. In an extra section of the ISPS website, our webmaster, Alan Harris, has recently provided some glimpses into members' poems that appeared in years past and in so doing, remind us that poetry endures and binds us.

Let's look around and join in celebrating the vernal season that we also share. No matter what is plying us with dark statistics and scary news, our usual pipe dreams and the fragrance of sweet mock orange blossoms, heady lilacs and pungent viburnum, and soon the roses and peonies call us to the "now" of our lives. The scent and shocking pinks of crabapple trees or softer shade of azaleas among other budding beauties can draw us into a place where as Robert Frost wrote in "A Prayer in Spring": "Oh, give us pleasure in the flowers to-day;/And give us not to think so far away/As the uncertain harvest; keep us here/All simply in the springing of the year."

We can count on what doesn't change—the creative forces of spring and the moments that offer us a special invitation to look to such beauty.

Happy writing,
Susan T. Moss

Whatever Happened to National Poetry Month in 2020?

One ISPS member took matters into her own hands...

In 1996, April was designated National Poetry Month by the Academy of American Poets, and has continued every year since. For State Poetry Society chapters and other poetry boosters across the country, this involves many events to showcase our favorite literary art form. Public readings by poets well known and not-so well known, exciting slam poetry competitions, open mics, and special writing workshops are scheduled, planned and publicized. Participating poets begin to sort their collections, picking poems they wish to showcase before a crowd. They begin to practice reading their poems for best effect, learning to project and how to animate their reading to carry meaning to people who will only hear the text, rather than read along as it is presented.

As we all know, *spoken* poetry often has a stronger impact than it has when read silently from a page—but on the other hand, without seeing the words, listeners can lose track of the thread.

Statewide, library displays are painstakingly planned and accomplished with at least four months of preparation. Adequate space for displaying poems must be reserved with participating public and school libraries. A theme is designated after careful consideration by the ISPS Board. Then relevant poetry samples are solicited, collated, printed in a legible size and font, and mounted attractively. Volunteers are sought to take the poetry boards to participating libraries and see that they are displayed appropriately with adequate lighting. Those same volunteers return to collect the display boards at Poetry Month's end. These logistics are not trivial! But in 2020, all such plans that were put into place fell to naught, due to social distancing requirements and uncertainty about the duration of the Covid-19 quarantine. And yet...

and yet..... all was not lost. A **Poet Tree** Grew (is Still Growing) in Evanston, thanks to ISPS member Susan Gundlach. On the parkway outside her home on Judson Street, she displays a rotating collection of original and favorite published poems—many proposed by her friends and neighbors. She alternates the offerings from day to day to repeatedly engage the masked passersby who linger to read the latest set. Other locals send or bring her pieces to post.

Susan has two assistants on the Poet Tree team, a sibling duo from next door. A poem by each of them (printed here with permission) appears on page 3, as thanks and recognition for their help. And help *is* needed—the Poet Tree display comes down each evening, and when rain or strong winds are forecast. Even so, a copy of Robert Frost's *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening* took flight one breezy day, but a passerby caught it midair and returned it to the Poet Tree project team.

The Poet Tree project was featured in an April issue of the daily [Evanston RoundTable](#) online, including two of Susan Gundlach's poems and two by her young assistants. The editor of that publication, Mary Helt Gavin, also wrote the original article, which is no longer posted. She ended the piece with a delicious pun which we are delighted to quote here:

“The Poet Tree could branch out.”



The Poet Tree planning committee, April 2020

All photos courtesy Susan Gundlach

School

Get out of the way,
she said and smacked him
like he was a mosquito
on her arm.
Yo,
he said, holding his hand up
Little CJ,
The teacher said like he loved the kid
That was all you, he said,
trying to act tough
Bet,
They said like always...
But this year is different
This year is filled with latex gloves and
blue masks
This year we have to stay six feet apart
This year we cannot go to school
This year we cannot feel like a normal
person
This year,
This year the world is sick
And we have to fix it
So we can see our friends
So we can go to school
So
We
Can
Feel
Like
Normal
People

Aden Johansen, age 12



Coronavirus

I don't like the coronavirus.
I can't see my family and friends.
I can't go to school.
I can't hug my grandma and grandpa.
I can't wait until it leaves.
The first thing I'll do when it's gone
is hug everyone really tight.
Then I will have a big party.
I don't like the coronavirus.

Beckett Johansen, age 6



Susan Gundlach reports that some people react to certain poems with tears,
and one person did a "happy dance" on her lawn.

Chapter Meetings

Recall that all ISPS members are welcome at any monthly meeting, after first contacting the facilitator.

While Gathering Restrictions are in place statewide, please contact the chapter facilitator for information on possible meetings online or outdoors.

Southern Chapter (Carbondale)

Meeting details TBD. Contact
Kathy Cotton, facilitator
kacotton7@frontier.com

Central Chapter (Champaign)

Meeting details TBD. Contact
Kathy Robinson, facilitator
krobdzyns@gmail.com

West Suburban Chapter (Darien)

Meeting details TBD. Contact
Caroline Johnson, facilitator
twinkscat@aol.com

Haiku Chapter plans a Zoom meeting on June 14, at 1:00 pm.

Contact Tom Chockley for sign-in details.
tom.chockley@outlook.com

Southwest Suburban Chapter (Lisle)

plans a Zoom meeting for June 7 and possibly in August. Contact
Barbara Eaton, facilitator, for
sign-in details.

Eatonb1016@aol.com

North Suburban Chapter (Northbrook)

Meeting details TBD. Contact
Mary Beth Bretalauf, facilitator
mhbretzlauf@comcast.net

North Central Chapter (Pontiac)

Meeting details TBD. Contact
Kathleen Murphy, facilitator
kathleenzmurphy@mail.com

Member News

Charlotte Digregorio recently published her seventh book, *Ripples of Air: Poems of Healing*. This timely poetry/reference book (236 pages) contains her award-winning poems of 14 forms and inspires writing as a healing exercise. It includes essays/prose passages, multiple resources on where to teach, speak, and be published, plus ideas for contests, media interviews, and poetry readings and exhibits. It also has an extensive bibliography.

Wheaton Public Library will hold online poetry readings to replace some canceled April Poetry Month events. ISPS members will read at 7 pm: **Bakul Banerjee** on July 7, and **Ray Ziemer** on July 23. Check the library website in early July for access details.

ISPS has two new members, for a current total of 155.

David P. Eldridge, of Springfield, IL, chose to be an at-large member since his home is not near any existing chapters. Here is the bio David submitted for the ISPS website:

“A native Illinoisan, David began writing poetry in 1995. In 1996, while in law school in New Orleans, he published his first poem. In 1998, he wrote a manuscript of 42 poems, but did not follow through with publishing it. Then, from 2000 to the Spring of 2020, he wrote relatively little. While staying-at-home due to Covid-19, he started thinking about his writing and compiled all of his poems (including that old manuscript, poems written in journals, and poems he was newly inspired to write), into a new manuscript. He has found a renewed soul with his writing. He is submitting the book and individual poems for publication while he is again writing. Professionally, David is an attorney. Personally, he resides in Springfield with his wife and their two daughters.”

David’s email contact is dpeldridge@comcast.net

Hanh Chau, of San Jose, California, also is an at-large member—because for her, a drive to monthly meetings would be *completely* impractical. To welcome her, email hanhchau387@yahoo.com.

The bio info Hanh submitted appears below.

“Hanh received her undergraduate degree in business administration at San Jose State University and an MBA at the University of Phoenix. She is currently working in Patient Care Services at Kaiser Permanente Hospital, where she has been for 15 years. She enjoys writing poetry, public speaking, listening to music, and maintaining physical fitness.”

As for “current” membership...

Recall that the ISPS membership year ends June 30; this is a good time to consider whether you will renew at the standard level, or if you feel moved to step up. If you are renewing and feel sure that your status and contact info is unchanged, your signed check is sufficient. But if you are wise, you may want to err on the side of caution and fill out the form with all current information. Send your completed form and check to ISPS at the address shown on the form. Note that this mailing address is new.

Prospective members, please also use the form below and include your check. Note that you may choose any chapter, but most commonly the chapter nearest your home, or, if no chapter meets near enough to be practical, choose to be “at-large.” All ISPS members are welcome to attend any regular ISPS meeting after checking with the chapter facilitator.

If you have bio updates to share, send to ois@alharris.com; for possible member news, send to ISPS newsletter editor, Kathy Robinson, at krobdzyns@gmail.com. The ISPS website is at: illinoispoets.org.

How to Join the Illinois State Poetry Society (ISPS)

Membership is open to anyone interested in poetry. You do not need to be a poet or a resident of Illinois. To join, fill out this form (or a copy) and send it with a check* for the **yearly dues (July 1 -June 30) of \$20** (or \$30 for patron status, \$50 for benefactor status) to:

**Illinois State Poetry Society
PO Box 307
Western Springs, IL 60558**

You are invited to send a short (1 paragraph) bio for the newsletter and, for the website illinoispoets.org, a possibly longer bio (see existing bios for examples). Send a paper copy of your bio with your dues check, or email it as directed in the small box above. If you are renewing, consider whether you need to update your bio.

Name _____

Street Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip code _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Please indicate which chapter/location you wish to consider your “home” (you may visit other chapters):

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Carbondale (Southern Illinois) | <input type="checkbox"/> Lisle (SW Suburban Chicago) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Champaign (Central Illinois) | <input type="checkbox"/> Haiku (meets at Northbrook, separately) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Darien (W. Suburban Chicago) | <input type="checkbox"/> Northbrook (N. Suburban Chicago) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pontiac (North Central Illinois) | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> At-Large (for members who live far from a chapter locale – full member benefits apply) | |

* If you join(ed) in May or June of 2020, you will not need to renew until June of 2021.

Be an ISPS Contest Sponsor!

We encourage you, your ISPS chapter, or a group of poetry friends to help make the 27th Annual ISPS Poetry Contest our biggest and best ever by sponsoring a contest category. It's easy:

1. Choose the amount of prize money you will provide
2. Give us information about you and your contest
3. Send a check with the completed form (see next page)



ILLINOIS STATE POETRY SOCIETY 2020 Poetry Contest Sponsorship

- Complete and mail a form for each 2020 Poetry Contest sponsorship.
- Make check payable to **Illinois State Poetry Society**. If your proposed category is not accepted, your check will be returned.
- Submission must be postmarked no later than **TUESDAY, JUNE 30, 2020**.
- Mail form(s) to: **Jim Lambert, 300 Twin Lakes Road, Carterville, IL 62918**

SPONSOR INFORMATION [Please Print]

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Phone _____ Email Address _____

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PROPOSED CONTEST INFORMATION

Contest Category Name _____

In Memory of: _____

In Honor of: _____

Contest Category NOT In Memory or In Honor

Sponsored by _____

Subject: Any Designated Subject _____

Poetry Form: Any Designated Form _____

Line Limit: 40 Lines Designated Line Limit _____

Prizes: <input type="checkbox"/> \$190 Sponsorship:	1st \$100	2nd \$60	3rd \$30
<input type="checkbox"/> \$150 Sponsorship:	1st \$75	2nd \$50	3rd \$25
<input type="checkbox"/> \$120 Sponsorship:	1st \$60	2nd \$40	3rd \$20
<input type="checkbox"/> \$90 Sponsorship:	1st \$50	2nd \$25	3rd \$15
<input type="checkbox"/> \$55 Sponsorship:	1st \$25	2nd \$20	3rd \$10
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER \$ _____	1st \$ _____	2nd \$ _____	3rd \$ _____

Thank you for encouraging and supporting the art of poetry with this sponsorship.
For more information contact the contest chairman: **JIM LAMBERT: jim@jimlambert.net or 847-519-2603**