



Illinois Poets

News of the Illinois State Poetry Society

June – July 2021

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President's Message



Summer has finally come with warm temperatures and outdoor activities, not to mention drought and then flooding. Perhaps the last two issues will be topics for poets as Covid slows its deadly pace. On the other hand, there is much to celebrate with nature's beauty and an easier lifestyle with new approaches to getting our poems across.

During the National Convention shared virtually early in June, techniques for writing about any topic were discussed by various workshop leaders. Looking at different approaches to presenting poetry and experimenting with them can bring fresh energy to our work. One focus was on writing "poetry that brought us here" by Rosemerry Wahtola Trommer. Her suggestions and Eleanor Berry's comments about poetry offering a "deep conversation" as well as Carol Clark Williams' "Are You Talking to Me?" conveyed that there is always another approach to presenting poems in fresh ways. In the process of creating we often discover ideas and turns that weren't initially present in our thinking. In any piece it's important, however, to write about what we know, as emphasized by Bud Powell Mahan. There is an overall takeaway that poetry can be a conversation between the poet and anything from plants to art or other humans. Transcribing thoughts in a poetic style is a version of this idea of conversing.

ISPS strives to offer poets opportunities not only to critique each other's work but also to learn new approaches to writing poetry. If you have a workshop you could share with other members, the Board could arrange a Zoom session for the event. Let me know your thoughts.

Another topic is the reading of the *Strophes* publication sent to members in digital format by NFSPS. Are you happy receiving the informative publication by email or is hardcopy preferable? Please consider what is better for you and which method is more likely to hold your interest. You may let me know if you would prefer a change.

In closing, David Budbill, poet, writer and playwright, said that "All worthwhile writing relies finally upon details, on things seen (and felt) with exactness from an individual point of view." He believed that "word music" is what helped make Chaucer such an enduring wordsmith.

Happy writing,
Susan T. Moss

Brewed Awakening 15th-Year Celebration

by Susan T. Moss

On May 30, 2021, ISPS celebrated fifteen years of partnership with Brewed Awakening coffeeshop in Westmont, Illinois. Our shared last-Sunday-of-the-month readings were started in 2005 by Wilda Morris with the support of shopkeeper Craig Pro, who was presented an honorary Certificate of Appreciation as part of the celebration.

The first year, like all succeeding years, had featured readers and an open mic plus occasional music. Poets reading at the recent gathering include most of the ones present at the first event, reading in the order they initially read: Georgina Milsted (representing her deceased father, John Mahoney), Donna Pucciani, Christine Swanberg, William Marr, Marilyn Peretti, Caroline Johnson, Barbara Eaton, Marilyn Huntman Giese, Wilda Morris, John Gordon, Mardelle Fortier, Georgiann Foley, Ruth Goring and Susan T. Moss. Readers from 2005 Judy and Michael Galati and Rama Rao did not attend. Don Cornwell and Marvin Young, who also read in 2005, are now deceased.

One of the highlights of the Sunday gathering was the attendance of our new state poet laureate, Angela Jackson. She kindly shared several of her poems and received a Certificate of Honorary Membership in the Illinois State Poets Society, presented by President Susan Moss.

Another special event was recognition of the Manningham Contest winners , both at the state and national levels. The Manningham Contest is designed to support the teaching of poetry in schools. ISPS Board member and Manningham Contest chair Mary Beth Bretzlauf introduced those present and their readings of winning poems. See her article about the students and their teachers on page 3.

The joint virtual and in-person afternoon at Brewed Awakening was a big success and a fitting tribute to our Illinois poets and their creativity.

Ekprastic Project Deadline Approaches!

We have been invited to join with the Artists' Association of Elk Grove Village to create an exhibit in February 2022. Artists will respond to poems we submit based on the theme **Colors in Nature**. Our contributions must meet the following guidelines:

1. One page only with single column and 14-point font size
2. Family friendly content
3. Submit by **July 15, 2021**

Send hardcopy or email copies (**no** PDF) to Judith Tullis:
jtullis@ameritech.net or 215 Wildflower Lane, LaGrange, IL 60525

If you have questions or concerns please email Susan Moss stm48@hotmail.com.

Have fun and enjoy the creative process!

Manningham Trust Poetry Competition 2020-21

by Mary Beth Bretzlauf, Youth Chair

Despite many disruptions to the school year for students and teachers alike, we received 126 poems from 22 elementary, middle and high schools across the state. This was just slightly lower than the previous year, my first year as ISPS Manningham Chair.

Announcement of the annual poetry contest, sponsored by the NFSPS, begins in August. As schools are bustling to get ready for their students, I contact principals of private and public schools, and include a notice in the Illinois State Board of Education Newsletter which is also sent to home schools. The teachers and students have until February 1st to get their poems to me.

From there, two judges review the blind copies and select the top ten in each division – the junior division, which is 6th to 8th grade students, and the senior division consisting of high school students. Their poems are forwarded to the NFSPS Manningham Chair and I begin the exciting task of notifying teachers and students. Traditionally these students are invited to read their poems at a Brewed Awakening event in the spring.

Since this year was so challenging, letters of recognition was also sent to the school boards of our winning students, not only to notify them of an exceptional student, but also of the effort and commitment of their teacher.

This year, just two days before our state finalists were going to read at Brewed Awakening, I received the most wonderful email – five of our poets were national finalists! It was my pleasure to announce this to not only them, but their parents and in a couple cases, their teachers who joined us that day. Many of these students were in the junior division and I look forward to many more years of their entries. Here are our national finalists:

Junior Division

Stella Abarca –State: 1st place, National: 4th place
8th grade, Heritage Grove School, Plainfield

Lucille Wiesbrook – State: 3rd Place, National: 5th place
7th Grade, St. Thomas School, Philo

Eva-Rae Rivera –State: HM #2, National: HM #2
7th grade, Roycemore School, Evanston

Anne Schwenk –State: 2nd place, National: HM #5
8th grade, St. Thomas School, Philo

Senior Division

Kara Puckett – State: HM #1, National: 5th place
Sophomore, Wheaton-Warrenville High School, Wheaton

Illinois Poets Shine at NFSPS Convention

At the convention of the National Federation of State Poetry Societies, winners of the 50 state-sponsored contests and a number of NFSPS-sponsored contests are announced. There are usually 500-some possibilities to win First, Second, or Third place, and numerous Honorable Mentions. Illinois poets typically make us proud at this event, and 2021 was no exception. Here is the list of Illinois poets who were recognized at the June convention. Poems that “placed” (First, Second, or Third) will be published in the upcoming *Encore* anthology, edited by our own Kathy Cotton.

Jocelyn Ajami, Chicago

2nd Poetry Society of Texas Award

Kathy Cotton, Anna

1st Mississippi Poetry Society Award

1st Miriam S. Strauss Memorial Award

2nd Illinois State Poetry Society Award

2nd Alice Makenzie Swaim Memorial Award

2nd Save Our Earth Award

1st HM Barbara Stevens Memorial Award

1st HM Iowa Poetry Association Award

2nd HM Naomi Stroud Simmons Award

4th HM The Robbie Award

Mark Hudson, Evanston

6th HM Utah State Poetry Society Award

Wilda Morris, Bolingbrook

1st Illinois State Poetry Society Award

2nd Barbara Stevens Memorial Award

3rd Naomi Stroud Simmons Award

3rd The Poets Northwest Award

7th HM Donald Stodghill Memorial Award

7th HM Jesse Stuart Memorial Award

Donna Pucciani, Wheaton

1st HM Morton D. & Elsie S. Prouty Memorial Award

2nd HM The Virginia Corrie-Cozart Memorial Award

6th HM NFPSP Founders Award

6th HM Al Laster Memorial Award

6th HM Alice Makenzie Swaim Memorial Award

ISPS Biennial Election of Officers 2021 – 2022 and 2022 – 2023 term

The existing ISPS Board-officers have been re-elected by the the members for the July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2023 term:

President: Susan T. Moss
Vice-President: Jim Lambert
Treasurer: Judith Tullis
Secretary: Thomas Chockley

If there have been any changes in local chapter leadership, please share that information with the Board via email to the editor of this newsletter, Kathy Robinson, at krobdzyns@gmail.com, so that the local chapter contact information can be updated in the newsletter and the ISPS historical records.

New ISPS Members

We have a new member in the Champaign - Central chapter, **Elizabeth Felts Olmsted**. Beth has been interested in poetry since her grandmother introduced her to the Romantic/Lake poets, who remain her favorites. She is retired from higher education where she was a fundraiser, first at the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign, then later she specialized in capitol campaigns for community colleges in Southern Illinois and Michigan. Beth now lives in Urbana with her husband. She is active in several local poetry groups.

Michael D. Scott is a new member in the Southern Chapter. He retired in 2021 following a 313-year career as an emergency physician. He loves words and their effect on him. He promised himself to try writing poetry when he got the chance, and is seizing that chance now. He says he is a new writer, “not counting the scrap-paper scribbling over the years, and he will see where this leads.” Michael lives in Carbondale, IL.

Terry Slaney will be introduced in the next edition of this newsletter.

A reminder to all members: You should periodically check your bio online at Illinoispoets.org to be sure it is current and complete.

More Member News

Reminder: Haiku Publishing

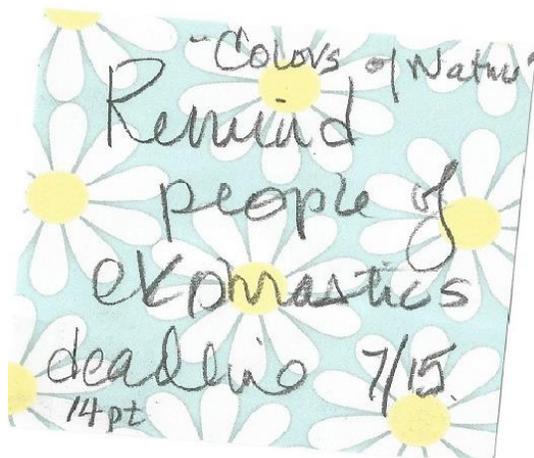
Member Jim O'Brien of Urbana is seeking entries for the *Champaign Urbana News-Gazette* weekly haiku. In 2021, metaphors, synonyms, and poetic descriptions of *Hope* are encouraged.

If your piece is timely for a specific date or event (Mothers' Day, or a full moon, for instance), be sure to submit as far in advance of that as possible. Each Sunday's haiku is selected by the preceding Tuesday.

The typical English-language haiku format of 5-7-5 syllables in three lines is not required, but space is limited. Submit via email to cupoetry@gmail.com with "C-U haiku" in the subject line. In the body of your email, include your name and city of residence, as these are printed with the selected haiku.

The project is sponsored by two groups in Champaign-Urbana—CU Poetry, and CU Haiku.

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



See page 2 if this post-it reminder has you stumped.

Chapter Contacts

While Covid-19 gathering restrictions are in flux statewide, please contact the chapter facilitator for more info on possible meetings online and how to access them.

All ISPS members are welcome at any monthly meeting (space permitting) after first contacting the facilitator.

Southern Chapter (Carbondale)

Contact Kathy Cotton, facilitator
kacotton7@frontier.com

Central Chapter (Champaign)

Contact Kathy Robinson, facilitator
krobdzyns@gmail.com

West Suburban Chapter (Darien)

Contact Caroline Johnson, facilitator
twinkscat@aol.com

Haiku Chapter

Contact Tom Chockley, co-facilitator
tomzhaiku@outlook.com

Southwest Suburban Chapter (Lisle)

For the Zoom link, contact Barbara Eaton
Eatonb1016@aol.com
or Wilda Morris
wem@americtech.net

North Suburban Chapter (Northbrook)

Contact

Mary Beth Bretzlauf, facilitator
mbbretzlauf@comcast.net

North Central Chapter (Pontiac)

Contact

Kathleen Murphy, facilitator
kathleenzmurphy@mail.com