



# NATIONAL FEDERATION OF STATE POETRY SOCIETIES, INC.

An educational and literary organization dedicated to the writing and appreciation of poetry in America.

## Strophes

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www.nfspd.com

April 2021



Julie Cummings  
34th NFSPS  
President

### Dear Poetry Family,

As I sit writing this, I am fresh from an exhilarating weekend of poetry with my Colorado Family. I have written of this weekend in years past, but this year, poets joined us from all over the country and also from Mexico. How? The Poemfest was virtual!

By the time you read this, it will be spring. As I reflect on 2020, the word “first” keeps coming to mind. We experienced a generational pandemic, a first in our lifetime for the vast majority of us. That thrust other “firsts” upon us. For many, it was the use of video conferencing for the first time. It was the first time that many of us could not

gather in person with extended family members and friends to celebrate graduations, birthdays, and holidays or to grieve the loss of a loved one. “Firsts” such as the ones created by the pandemic are stressful. However, other “firsts” can be exciting, filled with positivity and opportunity. Think about your first date, your first kiss, your first published poem, or the first time you attended a convention! These are all firsts that make and shape our lives. Think about the “first” shaping our future with technological advancements: we can meet, we can see each other, we can talk, laugh, read poetry together and even write together all while staying safe and enjoying the comfort of our own home! Virtual experiences are coming! Our 2021 Convention theme:

### *Anywhere and Everywhere: Poetry Coast to Coast*

I know the 2021 conference is not what we had planned and certainly not what our founders could have ever anticipated. With all that technology we now have easy access to, I’m excited about the 2021 virtual conference. I’m excited about what our committee has been able to plan so far and I am excited about the opportunity for all our members to join us virtually from their safe and comfortable place. I’m happy our members who, for a variety of reasons, ordinarily wouldn’t have the ability to travel to our in-person conventions can come to this one! Consider attending! We’re planning to have a ‘test run’ to help attendees become more comfortable with the technology we’ll use for virtually attending. Perhaps by attending some of the open mics I host would also help some of you become more comfortable before the convention! Email me for information. There are open mics scheduled in April, May, and June and they are free to attend and everyone is welcome!

I’m excited that we all get to try something new, and that we get to do it together. If I’ve learned anything from this past year, it’s that being together is what counts—being together with friends and family—it is important. Just as I’ve recently learned to gather together differently, I’ve seen some great opportunity for future gatherings. Honestly, because of the pandemic, I’ve attended some great events and with people who normally couldn’t attend in-person events; this is exciting and fun.

Please take a look at the agenda we’ve planned for you, which has the traditional open mics, meetings, and contest awards—all virtual. We have breaks scheduled throughout the day and will have schedules prepared for your time zone so you don’t need to figure out times! Your food selection this year will perfectly meet your needs since that catering is coming from your very own kitchen or your favorite delivery service!

Register for this new experience. The full virtual convention pass is only \$45 per member, which includes your very own copies of the 2019 and 2020 *Encores*, keynote address, all workshops, all open mics, all meetings, and award presentations. What a deal! If you’re unable to attend the full convention you can easily sign up for a daily pass (*continued on page 8*)

### NFSPS 2021 VIRTUAL CONVENTION

JUNE 10-13, 2021

### *Anywhere & Everywhere: Poetry Coast to Coast*

Never attended an NFSPS annual convention before? What an opportunity this year’s convention offers: Zoom attend! Instead of spending on flights, lodging, and meals, you can attend from the comfort of your home (with convenient snack breaks) while absorbing poetry in the form of presentations by respected poets and hearing winning poems from more than 50 categories in the 2021 contest. As well, get a front-row seat at two plenary sessions (open to all NFSPS members) and put faces to names of NFSPS board members and other members from our 32 state poetry societies.

Yes, there will be a registration fee to help cover expenses to host this four-day online festival. However, the \$45 full convention fee (just a little over \$10/day) is much less than the typical \$75 registration fee charged for the last few annual conventions. There are options for attending one or two days for less. Did we mention the \$45 full convention fee includes both 2019 & 2020 *Encores* shipped to you? Not so for the one-day registration options.

We encourage you to join us online—four days, one day, or something in between. If you have attended a Zoom session before, you are ready to jump in. If this would be your first Zoom, you simply need an Internet connection for your computer, tablet or smartphone. Only have an older desktop PC? Even if you don’t have a mic on your desktop PC, you can still view and listen to the Zoom sessions (need either speakers or headphones to listen). For those who are new to Zoom, we will also offer at least one session in early June for those registered to test “How to use Zoom.”

We want you to join us! Young or old, Zoom expert or novice, Internet connection via fiber or phone line (dial-up won’t work!), you can soak up poetry and link up with poets across the country. *Poetry & Poets & Encores: Oh Yes!*

The Convention’s online registration is at [nfspd.us](http://nfspd.us). Choose from the options for the full 4-day convention package (includes 2019 & 2020 *Encores*) or one-day passes for either June 11th, 12th, or 13th.

### NFSPS 2021 CONVENTION SCHEDULE

*Note: All schedule times are in Central Time Zone*

#### THURSDAY, June 10

11:00 am NFSPS Board Meeting  
1:00 pm State Presidents Meeting  
4:00 pm Plenary Session

#### FRIDAY, June 11

1:00 pm Welcome & Announcements  
1:30 pm Contest Results  
3:30 pm Break  
4:00 pm Rosemerry Wahtola Trommer:  
*Escaping into the Present*  
6:00 pm Break

*(continued on page 3)*

**NATIONAL FEDERATION OF  
STATE POETRY SOCIETIES, INC.**

Organized October 17, 1959 ~ Mary B. Wall, Founder  
Honorary Chancellor: David J. Rothman

**EXECUTIVE BOARD ~ 2020-2022**

Elected, NFSPS Online Voting, July 2020

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**ARKANSAS: Poets' Roundtable of Arkansas**

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**CALIFORNIA: California State Poetry Society**

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**CONNECTICUT: Connecticut Poetry Society**

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**FLORIDA: Florida State Poets Association**

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**GEORGIA: Georgia Poetry Society**

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**MICHIGAN: Poetry Society of Michigan**

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**NEBRASKA: Nebraska Poetry Society**

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**NEVADA: Nevada Poetry Society**

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**NEW YORK: New York Poetry Forum**

James DeMartini, President ~ 7941 78th Ave., Glendale,  
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**TENNESSEE: Poetry Society of Tennessee**

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**WYOMING: WyoPoets**

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**STROPHES**

*Strophes*, the newsletter of the National Federation of State Poetry Societies, Inc., is published four times a year: August (\*June 25th) ~ October (\*August 25th) ~ January (\*November 25th) ~ April (\*February 25th). News items and information on contests may be sent via regular mail or email, which is preferred, by authorized members of NFSPS member state societies to:

Paul Ford, *Strophes* Editor

10239 Hickory Pt. Dr., Sandy, UT 84092-3960  
pmford3@gmail.com

\* Submission Deadlines

*Strophes* is available without cost to all paid-up members of NFSPS member state societies when mailed/shipped in bulk to the president or other designated person, who is responsible for ordering the number needed by the submission deadline for each issue. Individual subscriptions are \$4.00 a year to cover handling costs. Special orders are mailed separately. To order a single issue: specify the issue ordered, include a #10 SASE and \$1.00 per copy.

**NFSPS PAST PRESIDENTS  
(Presidential Advisors)**

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Nancy Baass

Russell H. Strauss

Jeremy M. Downes

Eleanor Berry

\*Jim Barton

\* Deceased

## NFSPS 2020 CONVENTION SCHEDULE (continued from page 1)

### FRIDAY, June 11

6:30 pm CUP Awards  
7:00 pm Contest Results  
9:30 pm Open Mic

### SATURDAY, June 12

10:00 am Open Mic  
11:30 am Break  
12:00 pm Contest Results  
2:00 pm Break  
2:30 pm Budd Powell Mahan:  
*Poetry Potpourri*  
4:00 pm Carol Clark Williams:  
*Are YOU talking to ME?*  
5:00 pm Break  
5:30 pm Manningham Award  
6:00 pm Stevens Manuscript Award  
6:30 pm Diane Glancy Keynote Address  
7:30 pm Break  
8:00 pm Contest Results  
9:45 pm Open Mic

### SUNDAY, June 13

10:00 am Plenary Session  
11:00 am Eleanor Berry  
12:15 pm BlackBerryPeach Awards  
1:15 pm Break  
1:45 pm Contest Results  
3:45 pm Closing Comments  
4:30 pm NFSPS Board Meeting

Check [nfsp.us](http://nfsp.us) for convention program updates and reports/presentations available for download.

### CONVENTION SPEAKERS



**Diane Glancy** is professor emerita at Macalester College. Currently she teaches in the low-residency MFA program at Carlow University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Her 2019 books are *It Was Over There by That Place*, The Atlas Review Chapbook Series, and *The Book of Bearings* (Wipf & Stock, Cascade Imprint, Poima Series). A new collection, *Island of the Innocent, a Consideration of the Book of Job*, is forthcoming from Turtle Point Press in 2020. Diane Glancy has received two National Endowment for the Arts Fellowships, a Minnesota Book Award, an Oklahoma Book Award, an American Book Award, and a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Native Writers Circle of the Americas. Her other books and awards are on her website: [dianeglancy.com](http://dianeglancy.com).

**Rosemerry Wahtola Trommer** served as the third Colorado Western Slope Poet Laureate (2015-2017), co-hosts Emerging Form (a podcast on creative process), is the

co-founder of Secret Agents of Change and co-directs Telluride's Talking Gourds Poetry Club. Her poetry has appeared in *O Magazine*, on "A Prairie Home Companion," in Rattle.com, and on river rocks [actual rocks]. Her forthcoming collection, *This Very Here*, won the Halcyon Poetry Prize (Middle Creek Press, 2020) and *Naked for Tea* was a finalist for the Able Muse book award in 2018. She teaches poetry for 12-step recovery programs, hospice, mindfulness retreats, women's retreats, scientists and more. Since 2006, she's written a poem a day. You can find them at [wordwoman.com/a-daily-dose-of-poetry](http://wordwoman.com/a-daily-dose-of-poetry).



**Carol Clark Williams** is poet laureate emerita of York, Pennsylvania, and a founder of the Silken Tent literary readings for the Yorkfest outdoor arts festival. Carol's poems have been published in print and online journals including *Fledgling Rag*, *Grasslimb*, *Mad Poets Review*, *Margie*, *Byline*, *PPS Prize Poems*, *Encore*, and *Welcome to the Resistance*. In 2017, she received the Above and Beyond award from NFSPS for her work with young people.



#### Workshop: "Are YOU talking to ME?"

By Carol Clark Williams

In poetry, language levels amplify the theme and impact of the poem. Vivid words that carry precise connotations are vital tools in providing the hook that snags your reader. Let's take an hour to talk about the value of accurate word choice and fresh comparisons, with opportunities to write and share your own poem in its best language.



**Eleanor Berry** has taught writing and literature at Willamette University, Marquette University, and other colleges. She is a past president of NFSPS and of the Oregon Poetry Association. Currently, she chairs the Mid-Valley Poetry Society, an open group of poets and poetry lovers living in and near Salem, Oregon. Her poems and essays on poetry and prosody have been widely published in journals and anthologies. Her most recent book of poetry is *No Constant Hues*, published in 2015 by Turnstone Books of Oregon. Her first full-length collection, *Green November*, was published by Traprock Books in 2007.

### NFSPS CONVENTION MADNESS! POETRY CONTEST

Must be an NFSPS member (ie, reported to NFSPS as a current State Society Member) and registered to attend this convention to submit & win. Awards: 1st Place \$600, 2nd Place \$200, 3rd Place \$100. Three Honorable Mentions will each receive the current Stevens Manuscript winning manuscript. Contest rules are as follows:

- Any form, any subject, limit one page, 12-point type or larger. May be previously published.
- No limit on number of submissions, so long as a new entry fee is included for each set of 3 poems.
- Fee: 3 poems for \$10. Make checks payable to the National Federation of State Poetry Societies.

Submission deadline is April 30, 2021. Winners will be notified by June 1, 2021.

#### Workshop: "Escaping into the Present"

By Rosemerry Wahtola Trommer

The act of writing a poem can bring us more closely to the essence of the moment, help us exist in immediacy. In this session, both practical and playful, we'll sharpen our observational skills to engage the poetry in everything—objects, locations, situations, conversations. As Mary Oliver writes, "the world offers itself to your attention, over and over." Let's meet it, pen in hand.

**Budd Powell Mahan** served as the 16th and 19th president of the Poetry Society of Texas. He was president of the National Federation of State Poetry Societies, Inc from 2004-2006. He was editor of *Encore*, the anthology of NFSPS from 1999 to 2004. Mahan's manuscript, *Falling to Earth*, won the Edwin M. Eakin Memorial Book Publication Award for 2005. His manuscript, *Harvest*, won the Stevens Manuscript Competition of NFSPS for 2006. His book, *Witness*, was the 2010 winner of the John and Marian Morris Manuscript Competition of the Alabama Poetry Society and in 2011 he was the winner of the Dallas Poet's Community chapbook contest with his book, *One Saturday*. In 2016 his manuscript, *Names in a Book*, won the William D. Barney Memorial Chapbook Contest. Mahan is an actor who has appeared in many theatrical performances in the Dallas area, as well as many speaking engagements and poetry readings. He has won awards for both painting and photography, but he has found his greatest fulfilment through his writing.



#### Workshop: "Poetry Potpourri"

By Budd Powell Mahan

A talk on my personal philosophy of poetry, how to find inspiration, entering competitions expediently, assembling or creating a manuscript.

To submit by mail: Include two copies of each poem. One copy with name, address, phone number, e-mail and State Society membership and one copy with no identifying marks. Include a S.A.S.E. for winner's list. Mail your entries to: Susan Stevens Chambers, Contest Chair, 56376 Doc Jones Road, Mankato, MN 56001.

To submit online via Submittable.com (to submit, you need a Submittable account, which is free to set up), go to NFSPS.submittable.com.

### NFSPS 2020 STEVENS MANUSCRIPT CONTEST WINNER

NFSPS is honored to announce the 2020 winner of the Barbara Stevens Manuscript Award. "In The High Weeds" by Jennifer Hambrick of Ohio "is an extraordinary journey from youth to maturity through an immersion in art, mythology, and family memories." commented Jared Smith, contest judge. The manuscript is scheduled to be published in June.

### NFSPS MEMBER SOCIETY NEWS

**ARIZONA STATE POETRY SOCIETY** has become even more active and vital. On January 22 & 23 we held our 2021 Annual Conference via Zoom and it was a great success. Talks were presented by Bob Nelson on publishing a book of poems and Jack Evans on what judges look for in contest entries. Alan Perry and Gene Twaronite presented "Tips on Submitting Poems to Journals," and Phoenix Poet Laureate Rosemarie Dombrowski presented a workshop on writing micro-poems. The day ended with readings of the 2020 Annual Contest winning poems. Three of our branches have been meeting monthly by Zoom with good success. If interested, email azpoetryorg@gmail.com. With travel and in-person events being limited, marketing has become a challenge, so our website, azpoetry.webs.com, has opened the Poets' Marketplace for members to list their books and chapbooks for sale. Our 2020 *Sandcutters*, with winners from our annual contest and our monthly member contests, has been published and is now available for orders. It features the photography of Kim Sosin (who recently helped establish the Nebraska Poetry Society). We are changing the format of the 2021 *Sandcutters* so it will be both a contest winners' showcase and a member anthology to enable more member participation. Our 2021 Annual Contest will open from June 1st through August 31st. ~ Christy White, President

**POETS ROUNDTABLE OF ARKANSAS'** annual spring event, our Dr. Lily Peter Spring Celebration, will be on April 10, 2021 (in person or virtually) and

chaired by Laura Trigg. This year's speaker is Suzanne Underwood Rhodes. Suzanne moved to Fayetteville in 2018 from Virginia Beach and fell in love with the trees, mountains, birds and friendly people. She's the author of several books of poetry and creative prose, including *Weather of the House*; *Sketches of Home*; *What a Light Thing*, *This Stone*; *A Welcome Shore*, and, her new, full collection of poems, *Flying Yellow*. Her poems appear regularly in journals like *Christian Century*, *Image*, *Poetry East*, *Slant*, *Midwest Quarterly Review*, and others. Suzanne teaches poetry workshops and is an associate editor of the *Sow's Ear Poetry Review*. She has an independent writing and editing business, PR Flair, and holds an MA degree from Johns Hopkins University in poetry. Suzanne's husband is Wayne Rhodes, a landscape photographer; together they enjoy using their different ways of observation to create poetic and visual art as they hike and travel throughout Northwest Arkansas. Please visit poetsroundtableofarkansas.org or contact PRA President, Frieda Patton, patton.frieda@gmail.com. ~ Laura Bridges, Reporter

**CALIFORNIA STATE POETRY SOCIETY:** Tumultuous 2020 gave us plenty of departures. After the resignations of Pearl Karrer and Nancy Cavers Dougherty as *California Quarterly* Editors in the spring, Terry Ehret is leaving her role as Editor (she will stay on as a Director) and Margaret Saine ended her decades of service as Secretary and Editor of both the *California Quarterly* and *Poetry Letter*. Ambika Talwar is now the Acting Secretary, while Bory Thach is one new Editor, and we are searching for additional talented and dedicated volunteers to join us. CSPA Annual Contest Judge, Kacey McCormick, selected the 2020 winners: 1<sup>st</sup>, Anara Guard; 2<sup>nd</sup>, Susan E. Gunter; and 3<sup>rd</sup>, Barbara Allen. The awarded poems are published in the *California Quarterly* 46:4 issue. CSPA Vice President and Monthly Contests Chair, Keith Van Vliet, died at 93 in July 2019. Alice Pero now serves as Monthly Contest Judge. Poems she selects appear in the *Poetry Letter*, emailed and on CaliforniaStatePoetrySociety.com. Both venues also feature poetry book reviews; links are posted on our Facebook page. Thanks to Submittable.com and requests that published poets join the CSPA, our membership continues to grow. ~ Maja Trochimczyk, Ph.D., CSPA President

**CONNECTICUT POETRY SOCIETY** is the oldest and longest-running poetry organization in Connecticut with nearly 240 members. Our Executive Board is ten

members strong. CPS initiatives are widespread, bringing poetry to every corner of Connecticut as well as beyond. Each year in the summer we publish the *Connecticut River Review*, a nationally renowned poetry journal. We sponsor monthly POP (Poets on Poetry) educational programs. We also sponsor four major poetry contests annually, including one specific to Connecticut high school students. Our quarterly newsletter includes local and national poetry happenings. We currently have 12 "Chapters" throughout the state which offer free poetry workshops to CPS members. Membership dues are \$30 annually; \$15 for students. Visit us at ctpoetry.net. ~ Pat Mottola, President

**ILLINOIS STATE POETRY SOCIETY** members are settling in for hopefully a warm spring in Illinois. Extended time in the house over the winter gave members extra creative time to work on poems and share with each other at Zoom chapter meetings. The Brewed Awakening coffeehouse poetry readings continue on Zoom once a month. On February 19, the top three winners in each ISPS contest category had the opportunity to read or have someone else read their poems in a Zoom event. As more people get vaccinated and public places are safe and comfortable for meeting in person, we shall start gathering at libraries again and plan for future possible workshops and poetry readings. We will soon be voting for another two-year term for board members and likely continuation of the same chapter facilitators. Please visit illinoispoets.org for ongoing information and member news. ~ Susan T. Moss, President

**POETRY SOCIETY OF INDIANA** added a "Tech Guru" to our Board in order to stay connected and to support each other here in Indiana. Our Tech Guru teaches us all sorts of new technologies and techniques to help us continue our work, keep in touch, and impart information. (Thank you, Alys!) Lately we learned about Dropbox and WeTransfer, along with ways to navigate Zoom. This enabled us to virtually hold our "First Tuesday" meetings for our PSI members. After checking in and giving short stories, we jump into our agenda which includes a bit of business information and calendar events, a writing and/or project workshop, and a round robin of shared poems. Plans are in the works for our Annual Spring Fling to be held electronically on Saturday, April 24th. This day-long event is available to members and non-members. As usual, there will be an assortment of workshops, some business issues to tend to, and poetry to share. See poetrysocietyofindiana.org for more details

along with daily events scheduled for the Poetry Month of April. ~ *Deborah Petersen, President*

### IOWA POETRY ASSOCIATION

expands its offerings of online poetry opportunities in 2021. Building on the success of last year's online spring and fall workshops, IPA has developed new twice-monthly programming called IPA LIVE! Workshops are offered monthly to members through Zoom, and include craft presentations, panel discussions, and interviews. Poetry readings feature the voices of IPA poets reading on different topics each month. Programs are promoted through the IPA member newsletter, email, and IPA's Facebook page. January and February workshops were presented on writing haiku, sonnets, poetry for children, and poetry for national and world events. IPA members from across the state have enjoyed the opportunity to meet, connect, and learn online. With a year of programming ahead, IPA anticipates discovering more ways to engage with members in the future. Here is an update on IPA's 75th Anniversary: due to the continuing spread of COVID-19 and concerns regarding large gatherings, the IPA executive board has decided to cancel all in-person celebrations. The evening of poetry readings and conversations with Iowa Poet Laureate Deb Marquart and honored guests, Ray Young Bear and Rustin Larson, has been moved into the IPA LIVE! schedule, with both spring and fall 2021 workshops continuing online. ~ *Marilyn Baszczyński, Reporter*

### MASSACHUSETTS STATE POETRY SOCIETY'S

2021 National Poetry Day Contest brochure is now available. It contains 27 sponsored contests covering a variety of poem themes and forms with cash prizes for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place winners. Entry fee for members is \$10, for non-members is \$15. The entry fee covers all contests with a limit of one poem in each category. Poems must be unpublished, not currently entered in any other contest, and not have won a prize in any contest. We welcome all entries. Deadline for submissions is August 1, 2021. To receive a brochure, send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to Jeanette C. Maes, President, 64 Harrison Ave., Lynn, MA 01905-1350. Two of our Chapters, the Louise Bogan Chapter and the Waterfront CREW Chapter, continue communicating through Zoom and email as we wait for a significant reduction in Covid to allow physical meetings again. One round robin by mail continues to circulate for critiquing poems. Winner's Circle for our 2020 Poets' Choice Poetry

Contest were: 1st Prize, Sandy Hokanson, Danvers, MA; 2nd Prize, Patricia Gomes, New Bedford, MA; and 3rd Prize, Sylvia Reilly Collins, So. Hamilton, MA. Congratulations to all Poets! ~ *Beverley Barnes, Reporting*

**MAINE POETS SOCIETY** will meet on Zoom on Saturday, May 22, from 1 to 3 pm. The Zoom link will be sent to members prior to that date. The members-only contest, with a 30-line limit and a submission deadline of April 22, will be a Persona Poem in which the poet assumes the perspective of an animal, plant, or inanimate object. Additional details are in our March newsletter and on [mainepoetsociety.com](http://mainepoetsociety.com). The judge will be Dennis Camire, who teaches writing at Central Maine Community College and at the University of Maine at Augusta. He will announce his top six choices: 3 for small cash prizes and 3 for honorable mention. Dennis will also have an opportunity to read from his own work. His poems have appeared in *Poetry East*, *The Mid American Review*, *Spoon River Review*, *Hamilton Stone Review*, *Three Nations Anthology*, and on Maine Public Radio's "Poems from Here." His most recent book is *Combed by Crows* (Deerbrook Editions, 2017). An unrelated online poetry workshop will be offered to members the following Saturday, May 29. Details again are in the March issue of our newsletter and on our website. ~ *Sally Joy, Reporter*

### POETRY SOCIETY OF MICHIGAN

members are all here wearing ugly but warm clothes, trying to make it through the winter. We had a Zoom meeting/workshop in October and we are planning another in April. To keep our group together, we post a daily writing prompt and will publish some on [poetrysocietyofmichigan.com](http://poetrysocietyofmichigan.com). Our online presence is attracting interest and we have more members joining the group, including younger ones, which is very exciting. Our newsletter editor has begun printing a few seasonal poems in each issue, which is appreciated. We issue two publications a year, one for members only, and also a contest edition. VP Jennifer Clark is busy getting together our five-year anthology. By the time it is out, we are hopeful that we can meet in person and celebrate its arrival. If you are interested in the prompts, just go to our website or to our PSM Facebook page. Writing is part of a healthy life. ~ *Elizabeth Kerlikowske, President*

**MISSISSIPPI POETRY SOCIETY:** With COVID social restrictions still in place, Mississippi Poetry Society officers met via Zoom on January 19 to make decisions about future state gatherings. They voted to

cancel the state convention scheduled for April. They will determine whether or not to have a fall meeting at a later time. Winners in the Spring Contest will be posted on the website in April. The results of the student division of the contest will also be posted there. During the pandemic, South Branch members honed their poetry skills and stayed in touch by writing collaborative poems and emailing the products to each other. Forms selected included acrostic, couplet, and sonnet. To get the writing started, someone in the group suggested a form or subject, and members took turns adding a line or two until the poem was complete. Participants enjoyed the activity, which helped to foster a sense of togetherness during the long months of sheltering at home. Brenda Finnegan participated in an online workshop, which helped her write several new poems. We congratulate Dr. Emory D. Jones, who has recently been nominated for a Pushcart Prize. ~ *Jeanne S. Kelly, MPS Secretary*

### NEBRASKA POETRY SOCIETY

is so happy to join this great network of state poetry societies! Our [NEpoetrysociety.org](http://NEpoetrysociety.org) site launched in January and is off to a good start. We were surprised and honored to have the local newspaper call us for a quote about our response to Amanda Gorman's Inaugural poem. Nothing like getting some press within your first 30 days. Using the virtual platform that so many are comfortable with now, we are hosting writing workshops and classes that are open to anyone—you do not have to live in Nebraska to participate. Currently they are all free with membership. We have three on the schedule and several more in the pipeline, including one that will be free and open to the public. All are taught by educators and leaders in the field of poetry. Our March session will be led by Nebraska's State Poet Laureate, Matt Mason, who is always a big hit. We are looking forward to meeting you and learning about our fellow state societies. ~ *Charlene Pierce, President*

**NEVADA POETRY SOCIETY:** Last November's sudden passing of our long-time leader, Sam Wood, was a huge loss to us all. Sam was totally engaged to the end and although he missed hosting our meetings, he enjoyed our monthly newsletter published by NPS Treasurer Carol Quinn. It has kept our group connected and the poetry challenges vital. Sam had a special last request to have NPS archives housed in the Special Collections Department at the University of Nevada. NPS Historian Craig Downer organized the transfer and the Deed of Gift was signed and completed on

January 20, 2021. NPS was established on April 4th, 1976 by Thelma Ireland & Sister Margaret McCarran. As we celebrate 45 years, it is good to know that our rich history is held in a safe place for posterity. ~ *Phyllis Peacock, President*

**OHIO POETRY ASSOCIATION** has continued its monthly members-only open mic series, which continues to be very popular with members. These events take place on the fourth Monday of each month (unless it is a holiday) and features OPA members who sign-up in advance. Non-members may attend as audience members. In February, we sponsored two poetry workshops as part of the third annual Ravenna Winter Writing Festival. And in March, we sponsored a special free webinar on copyrights for creatives. April will see two special occasions for National Poetry Month: First, our quarterly poetry workshop featuring William Evans on April 10 and second, we are launching a brand-new biweekly podcast series. Title of the podcast has not been set, but it will feature OPA member Jeremy Jusek interviewing Ohio poets and those connected to our poetry community. Each episode will run about 30–45 minutes. In May, we will sponsor a special weekend virtual poetry retreat led by Ohio State Poet Laureate Kari Gunter-Seymour, winner of the inaugural NFSPS BlackBerryPeach poetry competition. Visit [ohiopoetryassn.org](http://ohiopoetryassn.org) for updates on the podcast and all event and publication details. ~ *Chuck Salmons, OPA President*

**POETRY SOCIETY OF OKLAHOMA** found that 2020 was certainly a year like no other we have ever seen or lived through. We have dealt with changes that have been very challenging, to say the least. On the upside, what a variety of subjects we have had to write about! We believe this is a key to making 2021 a Great Year, and a better year for each of us. PSO is going into it with the right mindset. We were not able to hold our annual banquet but will still have our Annual Poetry contest winners and awards in March. In April, people all over the world will be celebrating National Poetry Month. Each year PSO looks forward to the OKC City Council presenting a Proclamation for April as National Poetry Month in Oklahoma City (this is the tenth year in a row!). And our Oklahoma State Legislators will present a Resolution stating April as National Poetry Month for the State of Oklahoma (again, tenth year in a row!). Please remember to check our PSO website [angelfire.com/poetry/ps/](http://angelfire.com/poetry/ps/) for information and our PSO Facebook page. Until next time—keep writing those poems! Come and Grow at PSO. ~ *Patti Koch, President*

**OREGON POETRY ASSOCIATION** is pleased to announce the publication of *Pandemic 2020*, a special collection of poetry written by members of the Oregon Poetry Association about the experience of living through this past year. We also held our Spring Contest (which closed on March 15). Winning poems will be published in the 2021 issue of *Verseweavers*, the journal of the OPA. For National Poetry Month, we plan to host several readings and workshops over Zoom. ~ *Jenifer Rood, President*

**PENNSYLVANIA POETRY SOCIETY** continues to publish its quarterly bulletin, *The Sylvan*, with Kate Walker as its new Editor. PPS will celebrate our Annual Poetry Contest with winning poets reading their works in a virtual gathering in May. Also in May we plan to publish these winning poems as a book to be made available to PPS members and others interested in it. We are also planning a members-only anthology of poems during the months of May and June. Lastly, we are looking forward to our annual Spring Conference via a virtual gathering in May. ~ *Emiliano Martín, President*

**UTAH STATE POETRY SOCIETY** had planned our 2020 Annual Poetry Festival last April but due to onset of the novel coronavirus, we cancelled our festival as did countless other public and private events. For 2021, our annual Poetry Festival will be via Zoom on April 23-24. At the festival, this year's poetry contest results will be announced. Winning members and non-members who register to attend will receive the Zoom link and invited to read their winning poems. The festival will include a poetry workshop by long-time UTSPS member, Maurine Haltiner. The Society is also very pleased to have noted poet, Edward Hirsch, as our keynote speaker. Mr. Hirsch is an American poet and critic who wrote the national bestseller, *How to Read a Poem and Fall in Love with Poetry*, along with nine books of poetry and five prose books on poetry. He is President of the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation and a past Chancellor of the Academy of American Poets. ~ *Steven Leitch, President*

**WYOPOETS's** 2021 fun-filled Spring Workshop will be held on April 23rd and 24th in Gillette, Wyoming. Dr. Norma Clark Wilson will be presenting. She received a Ph.D. in English at the University of Oklahoma, taught for twenty-seven years at the University of South Dakota and retired as English Professor Emerita in 2005. She will be presenting "Writing with the Muses." Sessions will include "The Persistence of Memory as Muse: Writing the

Poetry of Place, and Morning Light." Workshop Coordinator Don Oakley promises two days of instruction and interaction to enhance our mission: "to provide a base for mutual help and inspiration by encouraging interest in poetry." We are proud to announce two new scholarships to attend the Spring Workshop: The General Scholarship and the UP Scholarship. They cover the cost of registration, meals, and a one-night stay for the workshop and a one-year membership. To apply for the General, write a 500-word essay explaining why you need assistance. To apply for the UP Scholarship, which is for poets who feel that their poetry style, orientation, subject, social, ethnic, race, or racial point of view is underrepresented, write a 500-word essay about the obstacles you faced and the aspirations you have for your poetic voice. You can submit them at [wypoets@gmail.com](mailto:wypoets@gmail.com). For additional details and full guidelines, visit [wypoets.com](http://wypoets.com). ~ *Angel Mizner, Reporter*

## POETRY ARTICLES & NEWS

### A CLOSE READING OF LINDA PASTAN'S "IN THE HAPPO-EN GARDEN"

By Christine Irving, Poetry Society of Texas

#### In the Happo-En Garden, Tokyo

The way a birthmark  
on a woman's face defines  
rather than mars  
her beauty,

so the skyscrapers—  
those flowers of technology—  
reveal the perfection  
of the garden they surround.

Perhaps Eden is buried  
here in Japan,  
where an incandescent  
koi slithers snakelike

to the edge of the pond  
where a black-haired  
Eve-san in the petalled  
folds of a kimono

once showed her silken body  
to the sun, then picked a persimmon  
and with a small bow  
bit into it.

~Linda Pastan

This poem begins with a birthmark:

The way a birthmark  
on a woman's face defines

In many communities, birthmarks are thought to result from an external traumatic event experienced by the mother during pregnancy, such as a fright or fall. Linda Pastan was herself the mother of three. Surely, like most new mothers, she checked her newborn all over for any anomalies.

rather than mars  
her beauty,

In her poem, "Agoraphobia," Linda Pastan compares the inability to leave home, with the trauma of birth a baby experiences:

dreading only the moment  
of contraction when it will be forced  
into the gaudy world.

By choosing the word birthmark, she implies that the very act of being born stamps itself onto one's, features, marks or *mars* and begins to shape them. Additional experiences, encountered as a woman matures, only add to her beauty, imprinting her face with character. Also, these lines seem to speak to the way contrast enables and hones discernment, and slightly more obliquely, to the necessity of valuing one's whole self in order to gain a valid sense of self-worth.

The poet continues her thought in the next stanza:

so the skyscrapers—  
those flowers of technology—

I detect a note of irony in calling these skyscrapers "flowers of technology." However, while 'flowers' might be used ironically, it is also a valid metaphor. Pastan is always straightforward and unambiguous in her choice of words, and very careful that each word stays true to its literal meaning. Alternative meanings are suggested by the choice and arrangements of those particular words. It's up to the reader to discover all the layers.

Here's what she says about her process: "I have a natural instinct to condense... Anytime, I try to start anything too long, I keep trying to take out anything extraneous ... and I end up with a small lyric poem that just happens."

reveal the perfection  
of the garden they surround.

Pastan has not failed to notice the encroachment of mankind's clever constructs on the 'perfection' of the natural world. The garden is 'surrounded,' besieged. If we refer back to "Agoraphobia" and also "The Safecracker" and "The Cossacks," we see this is a recurring theme on three levels—the personal, the communal and, with "The Death of the Bee," the ecological.

'Garden' has been a metaphor for women's sexual integrity since poetry began. This hint of erotica becomes increasingly explicit as the poem progresses. Skyscrapers, for example, are often viewed as phallic symbols. As the poem continues, it becomes obvious that part of the tension Paxton creates depends on the introduction of both feminine and masculine elements in order to make use of the natural sexual tension inherent in such juxtaposition. Let's look at the next verse:

Perhaps Eden is buried  
here in Japan,

In 'buried Eden' we can again detect a hint of irony, a drop of bitterness for all that is being lost to increased pollution, clear cutting, and urbanization. We can also imagine Pastan is referring to the animism of Shinto shrines so different from Biblical Eden. The old Japanese way of honoring nature spirits and the spirits of place 'bury' the premise of a monotheistic Lord of creation.

where an incandescent  
koi slithers snakelike

Pastan links the koi to Eden's original serpent with the phrase, "snakelike slithering." Long before Judeo-Christian theology turned the snake into Satan's ally, it symbolized the power of women to bring forth life. Coincidentally, it has also been regarded as a phallic symbol since ancient times.

Koi symbolize good luck, abundance and perseverance, all qualities associated with giving birth. And though fish is a symbol strongly associated with the masculine Christ, it also carries connotations of feminine sexuality. This theme continues in the following verse:

to the edge of the pond  
where a black-haired

Bear in mind that *Yin*, the feminine force of nature in most Asian philosophy, is associated with darkness, cold, or wetness.

Eve-san in the petalled  
folds of a kimono

Here Linda Pastan endows Eve with the honorific *san*, a Japanese title of respect between equals. Perhaps by making Eve-san her peer, Pastan is also giving equal weight to the masculine and feminine forces of nature. Her use of 'the petalled folds' used to describe Eve-san's kimono further serves to emphasize the erotic ambience in this garden. In the final verse, she makes her intention even clearer:

once showed her silken body  
to the sun, then picked a persimmon

*Yin's* counterpoint, the masculine *Yang* in Asian philosophy, is associated with heaven, heat, and light.

and with a small bow  
bit into it.

Unlike the Judeo-Christian Eve, Pastan's Eve-san bites into her persimmon with considerable ritual. She respects the fruit, honors it, and acknowledges its worth before tasting. Eve-san (Pastan) underscores her esteem for all beings—sentient and insentient, a very Buddhist precept—at the climax of the poem in the midst of a garden where Buddhism and Shintoism beliefs inextricably combine.

In this poem whose five stanzas contain only two sentences, and each verse flows into the next, like one of those bamboo teeter-totters, so prevalent in Japanese gardens, spilling water from one level to another. We are meant to accept her poem as an organic whole, and in the process, learn to do the same for ourselves.

#### A HELPING HAND

By Emiliano Martín, Pennsylvania Poetry  
Society President

So much has been written, so much has been said, and yet poetry remains to be that vehicle by which a thought in written words can easily travel distance with elegance and wit.

The diversity of topics adds intrigue to every poem. Conformity and style mixed with visual symbols and originality always evoke inspiration. A clear vision, good thinking, knowledge of the language and its grammar are the paramount of any poet. The rest is a piece of paper and a pen spreading ink. Of course, an attitude and good luck also lend a helping hand. The rest is to keep on writing within our daily dreams.

**President's Message (continued from page 1)**

for only \$20 per day, which includes all events and activities for that specific day. Please consider joining us in this exciting new technology format that helps keep us all safe and comfortable! This is going to be a wonderful opportunity, and certainly will help us open up the convention to many more attendees than we could have in an 'in person' format this year.

Registration is OPEN NOW and will remain open until at least June 1st. Registration is online at [www.NFSPS.us](http://www.NFSPS.us).

I hope you are able to join us June 10-13, 2021, for our First Virtual Convention!

*Your sister in words,*

Julie Cummings, 34th NFSPS President

**POETRY ARTICLES & NEWS  
(continued)**

**THE FRUITS OF MENTORING**

By Inge Logenburg Kyler, Poetry Society of Michigan

Sometimes we get so involved with our own work that we forget the rewards of mentoring others. As I look back upon my own life, I remember with fondness the gifts of mentoring from many of my fellow poets. Those fellow poets are, for the most part, long gone, as I am now in my eighties. But when I first started attending poetry meetings I was in my early twenties, busy with motherhood, home and career. Yet I tried to attend, whenever possible, the monthly meetings of our local and state poetry organizations.

It was those dear poetry friends that so encouraged me with their advice and counsel. I remember poetry meetings in the Woman's Clubhouse in Lansing, Michigan and watching as the "older" poets served tea while wearing white gloves and veiled hats. Bear in mind that during that time, anyone thirty and over, was considered "old!" When asked, these days, who inspired me in my lifetime, I have to admit that it was my poetry friends that gave me the most inspiration and encouragement.

The local *Lansing State Journal* newspaper had a poetry column. My poetry friends encouraged me to submit, which I did. I still have old scrapbooks of my poems that were published during those years. It was also an honor to have poems in *The American Bard*, *the Cyclotron*, *The Orphic Lute*, and several other literary magazines. I submitted to all of them and was rewarded by seeing my poems in print.



Of course, today we have the Internet and also many opportunities to have poems published through contests and their booklets. In one recent contest, one of my poems was accepted for a reading on YouTube. What a challenge it was to learn how to submit for that venue, but I finally figured it out.

Today's opportunities may present challenges but end up being rewarding if one is patient.

But none of that would have been possible had it not been for those wonderful early poetry friends who gave willingly of their time and effort to encourage young poets such as myself. And as I think back on all of it, I realize that mentoring has its rich rewards. We may not visit in groups in our homes for an afternoon as we did back in my early days, but we can text, email, or, yes, even use snail mail or the telephone. We just never know where our mentoring will take us and who it will influence, or who will be the better from it if we just take the time and effort.

**POETRY CONTESTS**

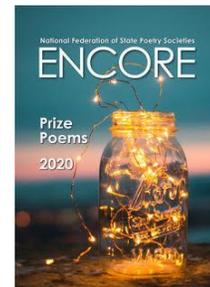
**MONTHLY POETRY CONTEST**

Wilda Morris, former president of the Illinois State Poetry Society, posts a contest for other poets each month on her blog. New contests are posted on the first of the month; deadline is the 15th of the month. No charge to enter. Previously published poems are okay, but not simultaneous submissions. Winning poems are published. Guidelines at: [wildamorris.blogspot.com](http://wildamorris.blogspot.com).

**POETRY SOCIETY OF TEXAS**

2021 ANNUAL CONTESTS. Deadline: August 15, 2021 (Postmark). The brochure listing the contests, procedures and rules are at [poetrysocietyoftexas.org](http://poetrysocietyoftexas.org).

**ENCORE 2020**



The anthology of our top 159 prize-winning poems from NFSPS 2020 contests is on Amazon for \$13. The 2019 edition that would have been distributed

at the June 2020 convention is also available. All royalties support NFSPS. ~ Kathy Cotton, *Encore* Editor