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2014, Issue 1

Editor, Kathy Cotton

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WANTED: PHOTOS, NEWS, FEATURES

While the header for this issue features a winter skyline, future newsletters can spotlight other Illinois vistas or art. Your editor is also looking for fresh ideas for feature stories, interviews and writing prompts, as well as news and photos of chapter meetings and poetry events.

Email photos (jpg or tiff) or an idea or news for consideration to kacotton7@frontier.com. Please send photo files as attachments. ✍️

ISPS Announces 20th Annual Contest Winners

Poets from 17 states plus Canada and Pakistan submitted 311 qualifying entries to the ISPS Poetry Contest. Sixty-three percent of entrants were from Illinois. Note that a poet may win only once in a category; in the case of multiple wins, next-place winners are moved up.

FREE VERSE, 144 ENTRIES

- 1st Patty Pieczka, Carbondale, IL
- 2nd Kathy Cotton, Anna, IL
- 3rd Joan Colby, Elgin, IL
- HM #1 Judith Tullis, Indian Head Park, IL
- HM #2 Susan T. Moss, Evanston, IL
- HM #3 (Duplicate winner in this category)

HUMOR, 59 ENTRIES

- 1st Jean Marie Purcell, Eugene, OR
- 2nd Deborah Rohde, Northbrook, IL
- 3rd Barbara Blanks, Garland, TX
- HM #1 Mark Hudson, Evanston, IL
- HM #2 Madelyn Eastlund, Beverly Hills, FL
- HM #3 (Duplicate winner in this category)

FORMAL VERSE, 48 ENTRIES

- 1st Gail White, Breaux Bridge, LA
- 2nd Wilda Morris, Bolingbrook, IL
- 3rd Jean Marie Purcell, Eugene, OR
- HM #1 Judith Tullis, Indian Head Park, IL
- HM #2 Doris Grant Frey, Herrin, IL
- HM #3 Beth Staas, LaGrange Park, IL

HAIKU, 60 ENTRIES

- 1st Charlotte Digregorio, Winnetka, IL
- 2nd Becky Alexander, Cambridge, Ontario
- 3rd Patricia Daharsh, Pinellas Park, FL
- HM #1 Lucas Kovacevich, Ursa, IL
- HM #2 Wilda Morris, Bolingbrook, IL
- HM #3 (Duplicate winners in this category)

A Message from the President

By Susan T. Moss



I would like to wish each of you a very happy and healthy new year filled with inspiration and also to offer a welcome to our many new members. This 2014 will be exciting with work on our second anthology and more opportunities for sharing our poetry through workshops, displays and readings for the public.

Our poetry reflects so many aspects of our lives. The impulses that guide the inspiration can come, as E.O. Wilson states in *The Creation*, from our primal relationship to nature. "Poets, at the highest human level of expression" evoke "experiences lost from conscious memory" because they are aware that "something fundamental moves beneath the surface of our conscious minds, something worth saving."

On a more conscious level, there are many other sources that can awaken memory including conversations, objects, sensory experiences and even the influences of nursery rhyme cadence and whimsy or seasonal sentiments to express a story. The latter seems apparent in this excerpt from Noel Coward's poetic lyrics spun from a heart-felt longing in the song, "Come The Wild, Wild Weather."

In our striving to keep ideas and memories secure and embedded on the page, we share, according to Barry Lopez in *Crossing Open Ground*, a "spiritual exhilaration, compassion, futility, final causes...drawing on...human meditation." With so much impermanence of objects and notions of what rules or social guidelines are in vogue, poetry plays an ever-increasing role in keeping "something worth saving." Happy writing, Susan T. Moss

Come the wild, wild weather,
Come the wind and the rain,
Come the little white flakes of snow,
Come the joy, come the pain,
We shall still be together
When our life's journey ends
For wherever we chance to go
We shall always be friends.
We shall always be friends.

First Place Winners, ISPS 20th Annual Poetry Contest

FIRST PLACE FREE VERSE

Judge, Arlene Gay Levine
New York, NY

Under an Electron Microscope

by Patty Dickson Pieczka

Nucleotides twist
into a ladder of tiny pearls.
A twirl of DNA ropes
into sedge and steam.

A man steps down
from its dangling,
bare feet imprinting clay.

He carves out his life
with a musk-oxen horn,
carries hammerstone
and a bear-tooth awl.

His woman buried near
a scorch of caribou,
he migrates through
the woodwind valley,

carries his son
down the sacred melt
through dogtooth violets
and gooseberry deer paths.

The silver stream has learned
her voice, her laugh, curves
its arms to touch him.

As trees whelm the earth with
darkness, he breathes a fire
from flint and rock, throws
his heart into the flame.

A charred stone in his chest,
he searches for God's face
in wavers of smoke and spark.

At this end of the microscope,
I wear his hungry eyes.

FIRST PLACE HAIKU

Judge, Dr. Randy M. Brooks,
Millikin University

Haiku
by Charlotte Digregorio

advancing age...
pine needles in the forest
soften the path

FIRST PLACE FORMAL VERSE

Judge Bruce Guemsey
Eastern Illinois University

The Nuns Bury a Sister

by Gail White

Under the pine trees and the snow,
black on white, and row on row,
we leave our sisters when they go.

We age and die, we fill our space
and no one younger takes our place.
What a mysterious thing is grace

that makes us willing to be gone,
forgotten in our soundless lawn,
even the Order passing on.

Whatever good we might have done
is like the prints where foxes run,
lost when the snow melts in the sun.

But what we've learned above the ground
is to love silence more than sound,
white more than any color found.

The work of all our lifetime lets
us look on death with no regrets:
We vanish as the snow forgets.

FIRST PLACE HUMOR

Judge, Dr. Katherine Leisering
Parkersburg, WV

I Don't Like Haiku

by Jean Marie Purcell

Between me and you
I don't like Haiku.

It's a bit—"Too Too!"
Ideas are few;

syntax askew.
In my grim view

those few who do,
it drives highcuc-koo!

Board Plans Meeting

The ISPS board of directors will hold the first meeting of 2014 on Saturday, Jan. 25 at the home of Shelia Kirscher. Agenda will include discussion of constitutional amendments, anthology, and online critique procedures. The board selected "animals" as the 2014 Poetry Month exhibit theme. ✍

HIGHLAND PARK

HPP Announces Themes

Highland Park Poetry announces that the 2014 Poetry Challenge themes are Colors, Legends & Fairy Tales or Cinquain. Submission guidelines and entry forms are available at www.highlandparkpoetry.org. Deadline is March 3, 2014. ✍

OAK BROOK

Juried Poetry Reading Set

ISPS will sponsor a juried poetry reading at the Oak Brook Public Library on April 13 at 2 p.m. Interested poets should submit four to five poems to Caroline Johnson (twinkscat@aol.com) or mail them to her, at 125 Willows Edge Ct., Unit #E, Willow Springs, IL 60480. Poets must be available to read on April 13 in order to participate. The library is located at 600 Oak Brook Road. ✍

NORTH AUSTIN

Poetry Slam Planned

The Chicago Public Library will sponsor an open mic poetry slam from 2:00 to 3:00 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 15. Bring original poems to share or old favorites (appropriate for an audience of both adults and children). The North Austin Library at 5724 W. North Avenue will host the event. ✍

ISPS Online Submissions: Even Months, First Two Weeks

The next bimonthly submission period for member poetry on the ISPS website is February 1 through February 14. Members may submit one piece of original work, maximum two pages, to Alan Harris at oasis@alharris.com or by mail to Alan Harris, 543 E. Squirrel Tail Dr., Tucson, AZ 85704. Member poetry and bios are archived and viewable by poet or submission period at www.illinoispoets.org. ✍

Spotlight on ISPS Poet Joan Colby



Prolific poet Joan Colby is the author of 11 books, the latest of which, *Selected Poems*, contains selections from 8 previous books and received the 2013 Future-Cycle Poetry Book Prize. Her work has appeared in numerous journals and anthologies as well. [Check her web site: www.joancolby.com.]

Colby is the recipient of an Illinois Arts Council Fellowship, two literary awards, and the New Renaissance Award for Poetry. She twice received honorable

mentions in the James Hearst Poetry Contest (*North American Review*) and was twice a finalist in the Nimrod International Pablo Neruda Prize and a finalist in the 2013 Atlanta Review International Poetry Contest. She has been editor of *Illinois Racing News* for 30 years and resides on a small horse farm in northern Illinois with her husband and assorted animals.

What inspires you to write?

Working as a journalist inculcated a propensity for noticing things. Many of my poems start from a visual observation. Others just pop into my mind; the trick is to be observant and follow the path of the poem to a conclusion that tells you something you didn't know beforehand.

Where have you published your poetry?

Virtually all of the poems in my 11 books [see list on page 4] were previously published in journals, including *Poetry*, *Atlanta Review*, *Grand Street*, *The Hollins Critic*, *Gargoyle*, *Spoon River Poetry Journal*, *After Hours*, and many others.

What is your advice to aspiring poets?

Reading, of course, is crucial. Not necessarily poetry. My earliest influences were short story writers (I began by writing stories, then found my way to poetry) such as Flannery O'Connor, Chekhov, Joyce Carol Oates, Katherine Mansfield, et al. I also think it is important to have contact with other writers and poets. I've participated in a number of poetry workshops over the years and currently belong to an online invitational group. The best groups are those in which the members support each other with hard truths as well as deserved applause.

Do you have any advice about how to get published?

The work has to stand on its own. That's my belief. As a young poet, I didn't have any important contacts—I just sent out my poems to publications I admired. Some got published and some editors became mentors and supporters of my work. Having confidence in your work and being diligent about submitting it and not being discouraged about rejections: that pretty much sums it up.

Do you ever get writer's block?

No. The opposite might be true. I have too many ideas and sometimes I don't work hard enough on revising, because I want to go on to the next poem. That's where a writers group comes in handy; your colleagues force you to make more of an effort.

Do you write every day?

Most of the time, I do, but not with a deliberate schedule. I write when I have an idea for, or an inkling of, a poem. Poems seem to come in bursts of short duration. I revise heavily as I write—and I write in longhand. My first draft is a mess of scribbles. Thus, when I type up the poem, it is often complete. Not always. It's helpful to put a poem on ice, and then return to it in an editorial frame of mind. ✍

WHITE LILACS by Joan Colby

The white lilac has a hundred ghostly fingers.
It points at the first stars.
It points at me
standing in a May twilight
with barbed wire hooking the darkness where
barbs of stars bloom astonishingly.
The cones of the white lilac
shake in a dark wind from the south.
Fragrance rattles
into air, odor of sweet bones, night-mouths.
All night the lilacs will shudder here
at the edge of the meadow while
stars dazzle the sky's bush—
that black bush of menace.
A ghost
walks over my grave as my flesh rises.
The roots of the lilacs
strive through my skull, discovering the holes
I gaze out of. Existence
is terrible. The white lilacs tremble as I tremble,
departing into themselves,
into their clusters of oneness,
refusing to be a symbol,
admitting nothing.

A WOMAN SCORNE by Joan Colby

A woman scorned sets fire to the tent
Where the new wife is celebrating.
Carves her name and yours into a tree
Then chops that tree down with her nail file.
Cages a bird and teaches it to speak
In a language where every verb is an obscenity.
Combs her hair with broken glass until
It glitters like a million diamonds
That you stroke until your hands bleed rubies.
Watches how you sit quietly near the water
While she poisons the tea she is about to serve.
Drives a team of black horses down the avenue
Of your lovers whipping them white as judges.
Climbs through the window
that you forgot to secure
Wearing a burglar suit sewn of her eyelashes.
Picks a bouquet of jimson weed, hydrangea,
Lily of the valley, poison ivy, rhododendron
To prove the base and beautiful can both be lethal.
Paints graffiti on the wall of your Facebook
And for good measure stamps
a letter with your heartsblood.
Enters your dream unbidden
Wearing the scarlet dress you once admired.
Paces up and down, up and down
Before your place of business.
Removes all the signposts pointing to
The street you used to live on
when you were happy.

ISPS Chapter Meetings

CENTRAL CHAPTER, PONTIAC

1:00 p.m., Saturday, Feb. 8
Pontiac Public Library
815-844-7229
211 E. Madison St., Pontiac, IL

NO. SUBURBAN CHAPTER, NORTHBROOK

1:00 to 5:00 p.m., Sunday, Jan. 12
Northbrook Public Library, Civic Room
847-272-6224
1201 Cedar Lane, Northbrook, IL
Bring your beverage, 8-10 copies of poems for critique, and a snack to share.

NOTE: Due to library renovations, the chapter plans to relocate in March.

SOUTHERN CHAPTER, CARBONDALE

2:00 to 4:00 p.m., Sunday, Jan. 12
Carbondale Public Library
630-986-1976
405 West Main, Carbondale, IL
Bring 8-10 copies of poems for critique and a snack to share.

SOUTHWEST SUBURBAN CHAPTER, LISLE

1:00 to 5:00 p.m., Sunday, Feb. 2
Lisle Public Library 630-971-1675
777 Front St., Lisle IL
Bring your beverage, 20 copies of poems for critique, and a snack to share.

WEST SUBURBAN CHAPTER, HINSDALE

1:00 to 4:00 p.m., Saturday, Jan. 4
Hinsdale Public Library
630-986-1976
20 East Maple Street, Hinsdale, IL
Bring your own beverage, 12 copies of poems for critique, and a snack to share.

ISPS New Members and Members' News

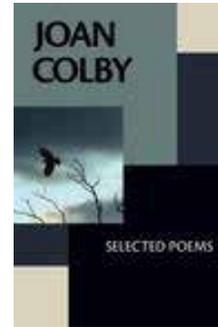
DR. ELANA ASHLEY of Northbrook is a multi-talented entrepreneur with a doctorate in Ugaritology. In addition to being a poet, Ashley is the head of two companies, a researcher, writer, dramatic performer of educational and entertaining programs, an author, story teller, public speaker, TV performer, ventriloquist, song writer and artist. She looks forward to publishing a poetry collection about her diverse personal experiences.

DON CORNWELL, a long-time member of ISPS, passed away in December. Don served as president of Illinois State Poetry Society, Poets Club of Chicago, and Poets and Patrons. Watch for Don's poetry in a special issue.

ELEANOR DUFF of Olive Branch is a new Southern Chapter member.

GOLDIE ANN FARKONAS is a new member of Northbrook Chapter. Goldie taught school for 33 years and is presently retired. She lives in Long Grove with her husband John, her widowed daughter Anne Renee and her daughter's two children. She has been writing all her life and recently compiled her work in notebooks and scrapbooks.

RON FRIEDMAN (aka Judah Soledad) of Gurnee is a new member the Northbrook Chapter.



JOAN COLBY's latest of 11 books, *Selected Poems*, was named the 2013 FutureCyle Poetry Book Prize winner. The volume includes poems from Colby's previous collections: *Blue*

Woman Dancing in the Nerve (1979), *Chagall Poems* (1980), *Dream Tree* (1980), *The Boundary Waters* (1982), *How the Sky Begins to Fall* (1982), *The Atrocity Book* (1986), *The Lonely Hearts Killers* (1986), and *Dead Horses* (2012). Colby's other books include *Beheading the Children*, *Eleven Poems*, and a new chapbook, *Bittersweet*, forthcoming from Main Street Rag Press this year.

GLENNA HOLLOWAY, 85, of Naperville, again won the title of Illinois Senior Poet Laureate. Her 2013 poem, "Critics Review of a Leading Role," was about death.

TIMOTHY J. HOLT of Chicago is a new at-large member.

SHAWN SCHESKIE of Northbrook is a new member of Northbrook Chapter.

Send your news notes for the next issue to kacotton7@frontier.com.

ISPS and Brewed Awakening Sponsor Featured Poets and Open Mic Events

Poets Gary Ketchum and Daniel Stafford will be featured poets at Brewed Awakening, 19 West Quincy, Westmont, on Sunday, Jan. 26 at 12:30 p.m. On February 23, also at 12:30 p.m., Pamela Larson and Michal Mendelsohn will be featured poets. The reading and open mic events have a \$7.00 cover charge, including coffee and a snack.

GARY KETCHUM has lived in Illinois most of the last 30 years, now residing in Naperville. Ketchum is an award-winning public speaker and performer of oral interpretation of

literature, prose and drama as well as free verse and prose poetry in contests, recitals and festivals.

DANIEL A. STAFFORD, a poet since 2000, has published three chapbooks through www.lulu.com, appears in six poetry anthologies and has published more than 1,700 poems on www.lightverse.com. He has done readings at a number of venues, including Green Mill Poetry Slam in Uptown Chicago.

PAMELA LARSON was recently published on www.dagadapublishing.com,

poetrysuperhighway.com, and in *bottle rockets #29* and the *2013 Haiku Society of America Anthology*. She also received a Pushcart nomination for one of two poems published in *JOMP 16* and has won awards from Highland Park Poetry.

MICHAL MENDELSON, a lawyer and the second U.S. woman ordained as a rabbi, writes sermons, poetry, and prayers and has one book of universal poems, *Chasing Moonbeams*, on Amazon. She is writing her memoir, *Rabbi, Your Cleavage is Showing*, and a chapbook, *Drowning in the Desert*.

"To Become a Better Poet"

If one of your 2014 New Year's resolutions is to become a better poet, your fellow poets in an ISPS chapter can support you with:

- Insightful critiques of your work
- Encouragement to write
- Opportunities to read and showcase your poetry
- Information about contests, workshops and poetry events

ISPS is "Where Poets Improve Poems." This year *plan* to improve the quality (and maybe quantity!) of your writing and help your poet-friends *keep* their resolutions. ✍

ISPS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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At-Large Member, Sheila Kirscher
jkirscher@comcast.net

High Five! Recommended Reading

This issue's High Five! offers you links to videos of famous poetry readings. Listen to poets performing their own works, then look for other favorite poems and poets online. We also invite you or your chapter to submit a list of five favorite poetry books or online poetry sites to recommend to readers of upcoming issues.

1. **SEAMUS HEANEY.** The much-loved Irish poet Seamus Heaney died in 2013. His poetry earned him the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1995, and a vast array of other awards. Listen to him read some favorites. www.theguardian.com/books/2013/aug/30/seamus-heaney-poems-video-favourites
2. **ALLEN GINSBERG.** Listen to Ginsberg's reading of "Howl," considered one of the great works of American literature. The 1950s poem came to be associated with the break-through writers known as the Beat Generation. www.youtube.com/watch?v=MVG0Y9gom50
3. **NATASHA TRETHERWEY.** The 19th U.S. Poet Laureate, Tretthewey was appointed in July 2012. www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ux_g5sBzshs5.
4. **GWENDOLYN BROOKS.** (1917–2000) The late Illinois Poet Laureate reads her famous poem, "We Real Cool." www.youtube.com/watch?v=i5YqYL4nkMk
5. **SLAM POETS.** A collection of ten amazing performances brings you the poetry and voice of contemporary slam poets. Included is Taylor Mali, whose poem, "What Teachers Make," has had nearly 5 million YouTube hits. Wouldn't you like to have that audience for one of your poems? www.onlineuniversities.com/blog/2010/07/10-most-amazing-slam-poets-on-youtube/ ✍

2014 NFSPS Contests Open

Submission period for the annual 50 contests of the National Federation of State Poetry Societies begins January 1 and closes March 15. Winners will be announced at the 55th annual convention to be held in Salt Lake City, Utah, in June. Contest information is available online at www.nfsp.com.

Manningham Contest

The Illinois Manningham Poetry Contest is open through Friday, Jan. 27, to Illinois students in grades 6–8 and 9–12. Winners receive cash prizes, and poetry from the top ten in each division will be entered in the NFSPS contest. Contact chairman Gail Goepfert, gaile13@aol.com, for information and forms. ✍

ISPS MEMBERSHIP FORM

Send the form with a check for annual (July 1, 2013—June 30, 2014) dues of \$20.00 to **Judith Tullis, 6455 Big Bear Drive, Indian Head Park, IL 60525**
New members please send also a short bio.

Voting Chapter (select one):

- At-Large Chapter Central, Pontiac North Suburban, Northbrook
 Southern, Carbondale Southwest Suburban, Lisle West Suburban, Hinsdale

Name _____

Address _____

Email _____

Phone (home or cell) _____