

Meet Max, an ISPS Member in Paris



While Max Seifert of Wilmette, Illinois, was studying in France, the manuscript he submitted online to the National Federation of State Poetry Societies College/University Competition was back in the States earning him one of two coveted awards. Seifert's imaginative poetry collection, *The Hole of Everything, Nebraska*, took the Florence Kahn Memorial Award with its \$500 cash prize, publication plus 75 copies of his chapbook, and a \$300 stipend for travel to the NFSPS convention. Oh, yes, there was one more small perk: ISPS was proud to give the winner from Illinois a complementary membership in our society. Completing his junior year in France, Seifert will return to the University of Iowa to complete a bachelor's degree in the fall. As the editor for his chapbook, I have enjoyed working with this well-rounded poet who also has an improv troupe, Skinny Horses, and punk band, Riot Fire. You can meet our new member at the convention in St. Petersburg, Florida, in June. —Kathy Cotton, Editor ✍



A Message from the President

As we drift into warmer days and ease of moving beyond housebound routines, I hope that you are going to respond to a recent survey of ISPS members about a possible future gathering to celebrate poetry. The three possible locations include the Chicago area, Pontiac or Springfield. This event could be one day or could be over a couple of days. Workshops, opportunities to read poetry and many yet-to-be decided plans would be offered. Please respond by hard copy to the ISPS secretary, Wilda Morris, 499 Falcon Ridge Way, Bolingbrook, IL 60440 or by email to ISPS.PamL@gmail.com.

Another way to participate in sharing poetry is to attend this year's National Federation of State Poetry Societies convention in St. Petersburg, Florida, from June 24-28. Several ISPS members plan to attend interesting workshops and enjoy camaraderie with new and known poets.

On the subject of sharing poetry, I was recently at two different events where cento poetry was written and presented. Cento is the Latin word for "patchwork," and this type of poetry borrows lines from other poets to create a new poem. Variations of this could be phrases rather than a whole line, and even using your own work might be a good challenge. It's important to clarify that the new poem is a cento or modification, however.

One more idea for trying something fresh for spring is to write a poem that will fit on a postcard and which relates to the picture on the card. It could be a persona poem from a traveler or a response to something observed or felt relating to the scene and perhaps include a salutation to a real or fictional reader.

Now that the blooming season has arrived, we might find new inspiration in the surprise of blue scilla waving like inland seascapes over lawns and parkways. Perhaps the call of cardinals and other birds awakens us from winter's long nights. It's surely a time when we find fresh reminders of life reinventing itself, just as we too discover ways and words to celebrate beginnings. As recently deceased poet Steve Kowit stated, "Let it all influence you."

Happy writing, Susan T. Moss ✍

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Also available
on our website
www.illinoispoets.org/
news-links.htm

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WANTED: PHOTOS, NEWS

Your editor is 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.



Spotlight on ISPS Poet Michael Escoubas

Michael Escoubas recently added to his résumé a new title: poet. His retirement in 2013 from a 48-year career in the printing industry opened the opportunity for Escoubas to live his dream of writing and publishing poetry. Since joining the ISPS Central Chapter, Pontiac, in 2014, he has been a first-place free-verse winner in the ISPS annual poetry contest, a January 2015 featured poet for an ISPS Brewed

Awakening reading, and a published author. Escoubas lives in Bloomington with Trudy, his wife of 46 years.

What inspires you to write?

My mother was an early influence. She kept an excellent library, and when boredom set in I was encouraged to simply “sit down and read.” By doing so, I began to experience the power of words. When I was about 11, my mother said, “You have a gift for language; you feel life deeply.” That still inspires me. Now I write because I find in poetry life-applications that meet my needs. If this is true for me, perhaps my poems will have a similar influence in the lives of my readers.

When did you first start writing poetry?

I began writing poetry in earnest when I retired at age 66. During the previous 30 years I read poetry for what it could do for me spiritually. I attempted to write and sent a few things out to journals without success. Upon my retirement I came to realize that I would never publish without support. This is what ISPS has meant to me: objective evaluation of my poems so that now I am better equipped to produce poems worthy of publication. I have been writing for approximately two years.

Which poets are your favorites?

Wallace Stevens, Emily Dickinson, and Robert Frost have been important to me. David Budbill, W. S. Merwin, and Wendell Berry stand out to me among contemporary poets. What I like about this latter group is their relatively direct, conversational style. It is as if poetry is simply talking about what is real in life.

Where have you published your poetry?

I am currently publishing my poems in *Limited Magazine*, a lifestyle magazine that reaches a circulation of approximately 11,500 subscribers.

Have you discovered writing tips that may help other poets?

When my writing is blocked, I try syllabic forms such as Fibonacci or ether-ee. The idea is to get back to the fun of writing. I also hand-copy in my journal, poems that move me, allowing me to interact with greatness. There is value in slowing down, giving myself fully to the words, ideas, and style of poets like Carl Sandburg or Mary Oliver. I also “warm-up” before I attempt to put words on the page by reading poems such as Mary Oliver’s “I Want to Write Something So Simply,” or Jane Kenyon’s “What Good Poets Do.” This gives me a perspective on art and tends to center me.

How much time do you spend writing?

I write every day, simply because I can’t think of anything else I would rather do! I spend about six hours working with poetry, including time spent learning from the members of my ISPS On-line Critique Group. They are all accomplished poets who are my teachers and mentors. ✍

Poems by Michael Escoubas

FIRST THINGS

Following February’s late-winter blast
we feel an old man’s chill piercing
to the bone, like a lonely train-whistle
calling from the valley below.
Junipers bend weighted with ice.
Pine trees stand crusted with snow.

March arrives with overtures of things to come:
Robins return showing orange breasts,
Starlings appear streaked in blue and black,
Redbirds flame singing on wires,
brown grass says, “I’m turning green,”
Tulip blades emerge an inch above black sod.

Then, April explodes her paradise of color:
Bluebells blanket forest floors,
Purple phlox dine with Lilacs,
Forsythia flashes glory in yellow,
Clematis climb the trellis and salute,
birds and squirrels hustle building mansions.

The once-brown grass now tall and green
sputters lawnmowers when they’re cranked.
Tulip blades, all up, must be replanted;
hands are deep in peat and potting soil.

But none of this could be without March:
singer of first things, whose purpose is
to show, take a bow, then be forgotten.

First published in *Limited Magazine*

MOMENT OF WINTER TWILIGHT

Spread your arms mighty oak,
like my father and his before him.

In you, I’m in their arms wrapped
warm in a shawl of blue-cream

fringed in white powder. Amber-glow
softens the rough-edged tree-line.

In the seam of time between night
and day, this twilight moment unveils

a vacancy long denied: the embrace
I never knew, like a puzzle-piece

put in place by nature’s sleight-of-hand,
a timely fit; this grown man now complete.

From Spark 2, Lemont Art Center

From Chicago to Carbondale, ISPS Celebrates National Poetry Month

Photos: Caroline Johnson at Hinsdale Library, Georgiann Foley at Westmont Library, Bloomington Library display, Kathy Cotton at Carbondale Library, Jenene Ravesloot reading at Poetrybomb in Lincoln Square, Downers Grove Library's chalkboard display with a poem by Gail Denham.

From one end of Illinois to the other, ISPS poets gave readings, sponsored projects, and displayed their poetry in libraries during April's National Poetry Month. The celebration continues into May at Woodridge, Downer's Grove and Carbondale.

Forty-five poems submitted by 30 poets to ISPS project chairman Sheila Kirscher were displayed in Aurora West, Bloomington, Downers Grove, Glenview, Highland Park, Hinsdale, Lemont, Lisle, Pontiac, Westmont, Wheaton, Wilmette and Winnetka. ✍

Central Chapter Event



Central Chapter, Pontiac, sponsored an ekphrastic event at the Pontiac Community Art Center. "Ode To..." featured art work inspired by poems from Central Chapter members plus readings by the poets. The exhibit showed through March. ✍

Ekphrastic Contest Winners

Winners in four categories of the Renee Mavigliano Ekphrastic Poetry Contest were announced by the Carbondale artist. Winning poets are Candace Armstrong, Kathy Cotton, Jim Lambert and Patty Pieczka. Submissions by Southern Chapter members and the paintings are exhibited at the Carbondale Public Library through May 15. The display also includes art/poetry pieces by Kathy Cotton, Carol Dooley and Marie Samuel. ✍



Out-of-State Poets at May 31 Brewed Awakening

Two highly regarded poets, Wisconsinite Mary Jo Balistreri and Iowan Mike Bayles, will be featured at Brewed Awakening, 19 West Quincy (across from the train station), Westmont, on Sunday, May 31, at 12:30 p.m. An open mic will follow readings. Cover charge of \$7.00 includes coffee and a snack. Bill Johnson will provide music from noon until 12:30 p.m. The readings are sponsored by the Illinois State Poetry Society and Brewed Awakening. More information is available at www.illinoispoets.org.

MARY JO BALISTRERI has two books of poetry, *Joy in the Morning* and *Gathering the Harvest*, published by Bellowing Ark Press, and a chapbook, *Best Brothers*, published by Tiger's Eye Press. She has recent work in *Parabola*, *The Hurricane Press*, *Plain-songs*, *The Tiger's*



Eye, *Avocet*, *Crab Creek Review*, *Quill and Parchment*, *The Heron's Nest*, *Acorn*, and *A Hundred Gourds*. The Poetry Storehouse has offered videos and a soundscape of two of her poems. Balistreri has six Pushcart

nominations, and two Best of the Net. She was one of the poetry judges for Arizona Writers.

Two of her favorite venues are Wilda's Blogspot and Grace River Poets, an outreach for women's shelters, churches, and schools. Visit her at maryjobalistreripoet.com.

MIKE BAYLES lives and writes on the Iowa side of the Mississippi River.



His poetry is about different connections to Midwest settings, both rural and town. His first poetry collection, *Threshold*, features his ties to Iowa. *Threshold* won

the 2013 Book of the Year Award from Rockford Writers' Guild. Bayles' second collection, *The Rabbit House*, focuses on nuances of small town living. His poetry and short stories are widely published in literary magazines and anthologies.

Bayles has twice won the Quad Cities Senior Olympic short story competition. He has also been the winner of the Midwest Writing Center poetry competition. ✍

ISPS New Members / Members' News



DOREEN AMBROSE of Chicago has original poetry about growing up in Cabrini-Green in the 1970s and '80s.

Her story is featured in a docuplay, *The Project(s)*, at the American Theater Company, Chicago. The play runs through May 24.

ISPS POETS Bakul Banerjee, Caroline Johnson, Wilda Morris, Donna Puciani, James Reiss, Jenene Ravesloot and Tom Roby are among 11 Chicagoland poets featured in readings Saturday, June 6, at the Printers Row Lit Fest in downtown Chicago. The event, *Dancing with Shadows*, is sponsored by Poets and Patrons.

JOAN COLBY of Elgin announces a new 36-page hand-sewn chapbook. *Pro Forma*, the winner of *Turtle Island Quarterly's* 2014 Editor's Choice Chapbook Award, is available from Foot-Hills Publishing.



JACOB ERIN-CILBERTO of Carbondale, announces a new collection, *Demolitions and Reconstructions*, available from Water Forest Press and on Amazon.com. A book signing for this 14th poetry collection by Erin-Cilberto is set for May 16 at The Bookworm.



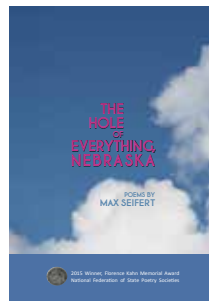
MARDELLE FORTIER, past ISPS president will lead a Summer 2015 Writers Group at College of DuPage. The class meets 9:00 a.m. to 1:50 p.m. Tuesdays, June 9 through July 28, on the main DuPage campus. For further information, email Fortier at fortier@cod.edu.

GAIL GOEPFERT's photograph "Friendship Flowers" took a third-place win in a recent Rattle Poetry Ekphrastic Challenge. Poems inspired by her art piece are featured online at www.rattle.com.

CONSTANCE KOSTELC of Pontiac is a former member of ISPS and is welcomed back by the Central Chapter, Pontiac.

CAROL SCHOTT MARTINO of Peoria is a new At Large Chapter member. Her poems have appeared in numerous journals and anthologies, including *Kansas Quarterly*, *Cedar Rock*, *Pudding*, and *The Sandhills* and other anthologies. In the 1980s, she and Patricia Lieb founded *Pteranodon*, a literary magazine which featured poetry, essays, interviews and photography. They also co-authored *Catholics and Publics*, a poetry chapbook. She was an associate editor and poetry therapy columnist for Pudding House Publications.

Martino says one of her greatest joys has been presenting The Poetry of Rocks workshops for troubled teens, encouraging them to listen to their own stories through the shapes and patterns of rocks that have skipped or been thrown into their lives. She also worked for several years as a journalist and columnist.



MAX SEIFERT of Wilmette is a new at-large member. He is a creative writing student at University of Iowa and the 2015 winner of the NFSPS Florence Kahn Memorial Award. Seifert will read from his winning chapbook, *The Hole of Everything, Nebraska*, at the NFSPS convention, June 26.

Try a Golden Shovel

This issue's poetry challenge is the Golden Shovel, created by Terrance Hayes with inspiration from Gwendolyn Brooks' famous poem, "We Cool."

- Take a line or lines from a poem.
- Use each of the line's words, in order, as an end word in your poem.
- Give credit to the poet who originally wrote the line or lines.

Send your Golden Shovel to kacot-ton7@frontier.com to be considered for the next ISPS newsletter.

ISPS Expands Annual Poetry Contests

Board-approved changes to the 22nd annual ISPS poetry contests will offer poets more opportunities to win, along with an earlier deadline.

For the first time, category sponsorships were solicited from the society membership. With the May 1 deadline, co-chairs Wilda Morris and Jim Lambert expect the addition of at least four new categories, doubling the traditional size of the annual competition. This year's contest will also have an earlier deadline and winner announcements. Submissions will be due by September 10. Watch for contest rules and submission information to be available by ISPS email and on our website, www.illinoispoet.org.

ISPS Board Elections

At the first meeting of each chapter after May 1, ISPS members will vote on two-year-term nominees for the society's four officers (president, vice president, secretary and treasurer), chapter facilitators, newsletter editor, and historian.

Members unable to attend a meeting may mail or e-mail their vote for officers to the Wilda Morris, wem@ameritech.net, to be received no later than June 13.



Chapter Meetings

CENTRAL CHAPTER, PONTIAC

1:00 p.m., Saturday, June 13
Pontiac Public Library, 815-844-7229
211 E. Madison St., Pontiac, IL

NO. SUBURBAN CHAPTER, NORTHBROOK

1:00 to 5:00 p.m., Sunday, May 17
Northbrook Public Library
847-272-6224
1201 Cedar Lane, Northbrook, IL
Bring 8-10 copies of poems for critique. No food/beverages allowed in this room.

SOUTHERN CHAPTER, CARBONDALE

2:00 to 4:00 p.m., Sunday, May 17
Carbondale Public Library, 630-986-1976
405 West Main, Carbondale, IL
Bring 10 copies of poems for critique and a snack to share.

SOUTHWEST SUBURBAN CHAPTER, LISLE

1:00 to 5:00 p.m., Sunday, June 7
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, DARIEN

1:00 to 4:00 p.m., Saturday, May 2
Indian Prairie Public Library
(630) 887-8760
401 Plainfield Road, Darien.
Bring your own beverage, 12 copies of poems for critique, and a snack to share. ✍

ISPS Board of Directors

President, Susan T. Moss
Vice President, Jim Lambert
Secretary, Wilda Morris
Treasurer, Judith Tullis
Historian, Carolyn Jevelian
Newsletter Editor, Kathy Cotton
Central, Facilitator David Alexander
North Suburban, Facilitator Susan Moss
Southern, Facilitator Kathy Cotton
Southwest Suburban, Facilitator Barbara Eaton
West Suburban, Facilitator Caroline Johnson
Past President, Mardelle Fortier
At-Large Member, Sheila Kirscher

Simple Tips for Reading Your Poetry Aloud

Do you want to improve your open mic skills or poetry performances? Former poet laureate Billy Collins, in his 180 project, gave students simple tips for reading poetry aloud: Read slowly in a normal, relaxed tone; pause where there is punctuation; and practice pronouncing unfamiliar words.

From poetryoutloud.org come these suggestions for poetry competitions:

- ☆ Project to the audience. Capture the attention of everyone, including the people in the back row. Don't mistake yelling for good projection.
- ☆ Do not speak so slowly that the language sounds unnatural or awkward or to create a false sense of drama.
- ☆ With rhymed poems, be careful not to recite in a sing-song manner.
- ☆ Know how to pronounce every word in your poem. Articulate.
- ☆ Decide whether a break requires a pause and, if so, how long to pause.

- ☆ Too much dramatization distracts from the language of the poem.
- ☆ Have confidence that your poem is strong enough to communicate without a physical illustration. Let the words of the poem do the work.
- ☆ Avoid monotone delivery. However, too much enthusiasm can make your performance seem insincere.
- ☆ Be attentive to the messages, meanings, allusions, irony, tones of voice, and other nuances in your poem.
- ☆ Deepening the interpretation enlivens the poem. Capture meanings, themes, allusions, irony, tones of voice, and other nuances.

And here's a tip that your editor finds useful for both writing and reading:

- ☆ Download a free copy of Audacity at www.audacityteam.org, to easily record your poems. Record and play back repeatedly until your poem and reading are at their best. ✍

Mark your Poetry Calendar for May/June 2015

- **MAY 2 & 3**, Ninth Annual Red Carpet Corridor Festival along Route 66. Our Central Chapter plans a sidewalk chalk poetry project in Pontiac. For Pontiac poets to participate, contact chapter facilitator David Alexander.
- **MAY 5**, Poetry After Hours, 5:30–7:00 p.m., First Bank of Highland Park, 1835 First Street. Limited space; RSVP required.
- **MAY 15**, Poetry Pentathlon, North Shore Edition.
- **JUNE 1–14**, online poetry submission period; submit to Alan Harris at oasis@alharris.com.
- **JUNE 6 & 7**, Printers Row Lit Fest, juried poetry readings outside at Dearborn and Polk Streets in the Loop. ISPS will share a display table with Poets & Patrons.
- **JUNE 24–28**, National Federation of State Poetry Societies annual convention at Bayfront Hotel, St. Petersburg, Florida.
- **SEPTEMBER 1**, deadline for Helen Schaible sonnet contest. Check www.illinoispoets.org/pdf/sonnet-contest-2 for details.
- **SEPTEMBER 1**, deadline for submissions to Poets & Patrons 59th Annual Chicagoland Poetry Contest. Send entries, inquiries, and fees to: Barbara Eaton, Contest Chair, 416 Gierz Street, Downers Grove, IL 60515.
- **SEPTEMBER 1**, deadline for Indiana State Federation of Poetry Clubs annual poetry contests, www.isfpc.org/annual-contest.
- **SEPTEMBER 10**, deadline for submissions to ISPS Annual Poetry Contest with at least eight categories this year. Watch for details, www.illinoispoets.org. ✍