



Illinois Poets

Bimonthly news of the Illinois State Poetry Society

April 2019

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Message from the President

With the vernal equinox, signs of spring have begun to bud and bloom here in the northern section of Illinois. Ice mounds have receded to make room for early-blooming yellow anemone and white snowdrops. Vibrant songs of robins and redwing blackbirds fill the chilly air. There is a string of continuity that calls living creatures and plants to start over again.

As we venture into the next season, Illinois State Poetry Society is pleased to welcome Kathy Robinson, current facilitator of the Champaign chapter and recent editor of the fourth volume of *Distilled Lives*, as our next newsletter editor. After many years of productive efforts, our former editor Kathy Cotton has retired, and we appreciate her years of service.

Another change to the ISPS Board is the historian position. Our gratitude goes to Frank Hubeny, now a transplant to Florida, who added a digital archive system of the work initially documented by Carolyn Jevelian. We look forward to our new historian, Mike Freveletti, who will also continue in the William Shakespeare role, sending out announcements.

For some of us, spring seems a good time to declutter and reevaluate what takes up space both literally and metaphorically in our lives. We may find old poems close to being finished but not quite right, the ripples of a new idea which wait at the



corner of consciousness, scraps of paper filled with words and phrases to be tossed or braided into the next poetic endeavor. With longer daylight, it might be a good time to plan new poems and weed the old.

We celebrate the lives of two fine and well-known poets who passed away this year. Both Mary Oliver and W.S. Merwin filled their work with observations of life and efforts to connect with a greater whole.

Oliver noted in *The Poet with His Face in His Hands*, "the thrush/puffing out its spotted breast, will sing/of the perfect, stone-hard beauty of everything."

Merwin, in his poem *To the Tongue*, reminds us that "Whatever we say/we know there is another/language under this one."

It's all right here—out the window, under our footsteps, in memories, as far as we can see and beyond. We endeavor to explain what persistently slips just beyond grasp, and yet that is the poet's job, the reason we keep creating.

Happy writing,
Susan T. Moss

Does Illinois Need a Poet Laureate?

According to the Library of Congress website, most states have a poet laureate. Illinois has not had one since late 2017, when Bradley University Professor Kevin Stein's 14-year tenure ended. One might imagine budget played a role in not continuing the post; as reporter Judith Valente of [NPR radio station WGLT](#) summarized the situation in 2017, "**It's a position with a grand title but no job description, no budget, no staff, and no salary.**" Nonetheless, Stein himself said that "being Illinois' Poet Laureate was one of the best jobs in the state." Among his projects was to establish a state-sponsored website showcasing the work of notable Illinois poets, visiting poets, and student writers. He also donated, using his own funds, collections of Illinois poetry to public schools and libraries across the state. His website lists 237 public poetry events in which he was involved during his tenure as laureate.

What do we poets think—should our state re-establish the post of poet laureate (and fund it properly)? And if so, are we not, as a statewide body of passionate poetry advocates, the logical group to push for the naming of a new laureate? The ISPS Board is looking for members who are interested and able to do some background investigation into this topic. Contact the Board at isps.board@gmail.com.



A Few Words from the (new) Editor

Two months ago, feeling confident after completing the *Distilled Lives 4* anthology project, I rashly agreed to try to fill Kathy Cotton's shoes as editor of this bimonthly newsletter—"once the holidays were behind us and life settled down to normal." *Ha!*

I had not anticipated the challenge involved in creating a new layout, which was necessary as I do not have the top-notch software Kathy Cotton uses and thus could not simply adopt one of her fine issues as the basis going forward.

As a result, I missed a number of self-imposed deadlines, and (no doubt) tried the patience of other members of the Board. And, of course, the opportunity of providing timely information to our membership slipped away as well. I humbly hope to improve in the months to come.

Please contact me if I have made mistakes or omissions pertaining to you or your work. I will try to rectify any such infelicities in a future newsletter.

I am holding my breath that this issue will actually open up correctly when it is accessed across the State on different types of digital devices or (the true nail-biter) is printed on *real paper*. I don't know, the margins look a bit narrow for my printer....

—Kathy Robinson ("the *other* Kathy")

April is National Poetry Month— but you knew that already, right?

Participating libraries:

Carbondale Public Library
Evanston North Branch Public Library
Geneva Public Library
Glencoe Public Library
Highland Park Public Library
Hinsdale Public Library
Indian Prairie Public Library
Lisle Public Library
Northbrook Public Library
Northfield Public Library
Palatine Public Library
Pontiac Public Library
Warren Public Library
Wilmette Public Library
Winnetka Public Library

Members were invited to submit poems on the theme of *Music* for display in participating Illinois libraries.



photo credit: Caroline Johnson

A sample of the fine displays prepared by ISPS members for the National Poetry Month observance. This is at the Hinsdale Public Library. More photos will appear in the May–June issue of this newsletter.

Contact ISPS newsletter editor Kathy Robinson at krobdzyns@gmail.com.
Access the ISPS website at illinoispoets.org.

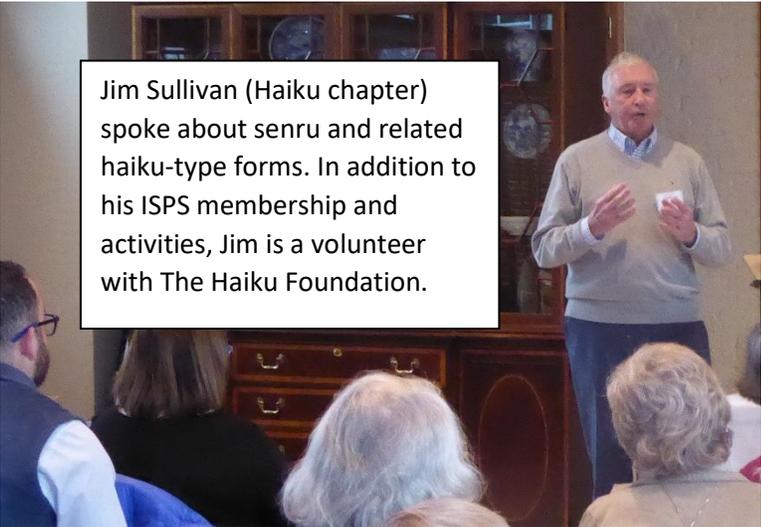
Distilled Lives 4 Launched at the Gala, November 4, 2018



Everything is going well, Hurrah! (left to right) President Susan T. Moss, Secretary Melissa Huff, Carolyn Jevelian (who took most of the photos), and at-large member Sheila Kirschner. Note Melissa's butterfly scarf, in keeping with the Monarch theme.



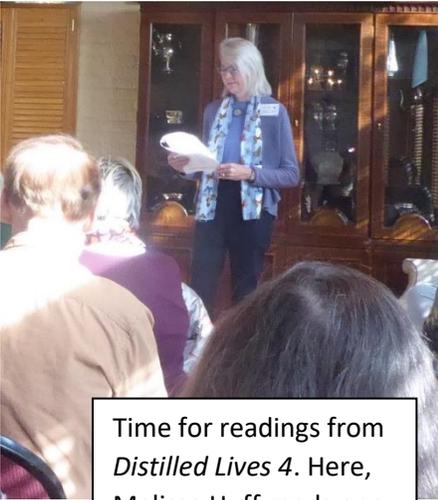
Jennifer Dotson encouraged us to stretch our skills by analyzing published poetry collections and writing reviews of them.



Jim Sullivan (Haiku chapter) spoke about senryu and related haiku-type forms. In addition to his ISPS membership and activities, Jim is a volunteer with The Haiku Foundation.



Susan introduced our keynote speaker, Dan Flannery, who wrote and presented as Robert Frost in *Climbing with Rhyme on the Darkened Road*. In this piece he created for our gala, he imparted many interesting details of Frost's life. Dan is a professional actor with numerous stage and film credits, and the husband of ISPS prize-winning poet Maureen Tolman Flannery.



Time for readings from *Distilled Lives 4*. Here, Melissa Huff reads one of her poems.



Could the venue be more elegant? The tables were filling fast. Here, catching up on each other's news are (right to left) Marjorie Rissman, Emma Koalenko and spouse Anthony Bilotti, Sheila Elliott, Beth Staas, & Mike Freveletti.

New ISPS Members (since July 2018)

The biographical information below comes from the ISPS website. All members are encouraged to submit bios to and to revise them periodically. Send new and updated bios to oasis@alharris.com.

Janet G. Bixler (Carbondale Chapter)

Mary Beth Bretzlauf (Northbrook Chapter) has lived and worked in Lake County her whole life. She is a member of two local writing groups and is always up for the challenge of learning more about the craft of writing. Recently her poems "Waxing Lemons" and "O Elixir of Life" were selected by Highland Park Poetry for their summer muses. This year, the *East on Central Anthology* also published her poems "Fear" and "Scars."

Molly Edwards Britton (Carbondale Chapter)

Terry Cahill (Darien Chapter)

Kate Dobrovny (Champaign Chapter)

Goldie Ann Farkonas (Northbrook Chapter) has been writing poetry for most of her life. Much has been published "here and there"—schools, church, Village of Long Grove magazine, Greek Cultural radio station (in English).

Michael Giglio (Darien Chapter)

Theresa Harris (Carbondale Chapter) lives in beautiful southern Illinois and teaches high school. She earned her MFA at the University of New Orleans.

Laverna Bringham-Johnson (At Large member) is still here! She's "been in love with poetry for at least 84 years. It's good for one's long life and makes it seem not quite so long." She has been blessed with family, friends, and poetry!

Joseph Kozma, M.D. (At Large member) is a practicing physician, Internal Medicine. While he has written poetry all his life, he just recently "went public." He is a member of the Academy of American Poets and the International Poetry Society. He has been published in two anthologies and a third will come out in the fall of 2018. He is active in the poetry section of the Imagine Foundation in Jacksonville, IL. Samples of his poetry are at www.poetry.com.

Kathleen Peterson (Champaign Chapter)

Rafael Lantigua Medina (Haiku Chapter) is from the Dominican Republic, the Caribbean. He moved to Illinois from California 4 years ago to work at Hannibal Regional Hospital as Clinical Coordinator for the IT department. He has been writing poetry and short stories for some 30 years, in both Spanish and English. Some poetry has been published back home and, at Stanford Medical Center, he participated in a contest as a finalist. He looks forward to being an active member in the Illinois State Poetry Society.

Lidia Rozmus (Haiku Chapter)

Michael Schoenberg (Haiku Chapter)

Scott Schaffer (Pontiac Chapter)

James Tosh (Champaign Chapter) is a graduate of Illinois Wesleyan with a major in History. He taught History/Social Studies in Jr. High for 9 years. He published an autobiography 12 years ago. His book *A Baby Boomer's Book of Poems* was published by Book Baby in November of 2018 and is available at Barnes & Noble and Amazon.

Chapter Meetings

Listed in date/time order

Central Chapter (Champaign) Sunday, April 7, 2019, 12:30 - 3 pm. Champaign Public Library, 200 W. Green St., Champaign, IL 61820. Kathy Robinson, Facilitator, krobdzys@gmail.com. Bring 10-12 copies of your poem and a covered drink if you wish; no snacks allowed in the conference rooms. **Directions:** MapQuest.com, or the library: (217) 403-2000, www.champaign.org.

Southwest Suburban Chapter (Lisle)

Sunday, April 7, 2019, 1 - 4:30 pm, Lisle Public Library, 777 Front Street, www.lislelibrary.org. Barbara Eaton, Facilitator, Eatonb1016@aol.com. Please bring a snack to share and your own drink, and about 20 copies of one or two of your poems. **Directions:** MapQuest.com, or the library: (630) 759-2102.

North Central Chapter (Pontiac) Sat., April 13, 2019, 1:00 pm. Pontiac Public Library, 211 East Madison St., 61764, <http://pontiacpubliclibrary.org>, Fac., Kathleen Murphy, kathleenzmurphy@mail.com. **Directions:** MapQuest.com, or library: 815-844-7229.

Haiku Chapter (Northbrook) Sunday, April 14, 2019, 1-4 pm. Northbrook Public Library, Civic Room. 1201 Cedar Lane, 60062. Tom Chockley & Jim Sullivan, facilitators: tom.chockley@outlook.com. Bring 8-10 copies of 6 to 10 haiku on a single page. **Directions:** MapQuest.com, or library: (847) 272-6224, <http://www.northbrook.info>.

West Suburban Chapter (Darien) Sat., May 4, 2019, 1:00 pm. Indian Prairie Public Library, 401 Plainfield Rd, Darien, 60561. Caroline Johnson, Fac., twinkscat@aol.com. Bring 10-12 copies of one or two poems for critique and a snack to share plus your own beverage. MapQuest.com, or library 630-887-8760, <http://ippil.info>.

Southern Chapter (Carbondale) Sunday, May 5, 2019, 1:30 pm, Carbondale Public Library, 405 W. Main, 62901. Kathy Cotton, Facilitator: kacotton7@frontier.com. All ISPS members and other interested poets are invited. Bring 8-10 copies of two poems for critiquing, and a snack to share. **Directions:** MapQuest.com, or library: (618) 457-0354.

North Suburban Chapter (Northbrook), Sunday, May 19, 2019, 1 - 5 pm, Northbrook Public Library Civic Room, 1201 Cedar Lane, 60062. Susan T. Moss, facilitator stm48@hotmail.com. Bring 8 - 10 copies of a couple of poems for critique. **Directions:** MapQuest.com, or the library: (847) 272-6224, <http://www.northbrook.info>.

**NFSPS
Annual
Conference
June 23-26**

Santa Fe, New Mexico
nmpoetry.com/convention