



Illinois Poets

Summertime News of the Illinois State Poetry Society

May - August 2019

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President's Message



As we spend our summer days either enjoying the warmth plus garden produce and colors or longing for cooler climes, there is much to consider and celebrate. First, Illinois was eloquently represented by many Illinois poetry winners, from top prizes to honorable mentions in the NFSPS contests. Congratulations to all our outstanding poets!

I was proud to share this year's national convention with several ISPS members who added to the excitement of also seeing people met and befriended from past gatherings. It is always fun to have extended time to share ideas, meals and easy camaraderie.

This year the state of New Mexico chose a new poet laureate who was introduced to us at the Santa Fe capitol building. Those of us attending the program had an opportunity to read our own poetry and share in the special gathering. This open invitation to help celebrate was one of the outstanding events of the convention. A Native American theme throughout the Hotel Santa Fe added a serene and interesting motif which provided the backdrop for workshops and visiting. What all conventions share, no matter the location, is the opportunity for poets to bond based on a love of poetry, comradeship, new ideas and the desire to improve their own work as well as their state societies.

The same kinds of mutual interest and fellowship are available at our ISPS chapter meetings, readings and casual get-togethers. We can support and inspire each other while improving our poems, way of seeing the world around us, and experimenting with different styles. That is the power we all have to discover our best selves and encourage others through the means of, as the Russian poet Anna Akhmatova said, "Freshness of words, simplicity of emotions."

A last comment is a reminder to submit dues for this next year's membership renewal. The benefits are abundant and members worth knowing!

Happy writing,

Susan T. Moss

Notes from the 2019 NFSPS Diamond Jubilee Convention

Shown are Illinois poets gathered to celebrate **Melissa Huff's** presentation of her poem that earned third place in the "BlackBerryPeach Prize for Poetry" competition. This is a relatively new contest for "spoken and heard poetry," requiring the submission not just of an excellent poem, but an outstanding taped performance by the poet. For third place in this competition, Melissa was awarded \$250. The venue for the BBP Prize readings was the stunningly grand rotunda of the New Mexico State Capitol Building.



L to R: Candace Armstrong, Kathy Robinson, BlackBerryPeach Prize 3rd-place winner Melissa Huff, Susan T. Moss, Barbara Funke, and Judith ("JT") Tullis.

At that point in the convention we had not learned of all 42+ placements of Illinois poets in the annual writing contests sponsored by NFSPS—*nor* that the recipient of the **NFSPS Founders \$1,000 Prize** was our very own **Wilda Morris**, of Bolingbrook. This is the second year running that an Illinois poet has taken top prize; last year, winner of the Founders Award was Jocelyn Ajami of Chicago.

More **first-place** Illinois poets in the 2019 NFSPS contests included **Caroline Johnson** (Illinois State Poetry Award), **Beth Staas** (two firsts: Poetry Society of Indiana, and also the Massachusetts State Poetry society), and **Curt Vevang** (Humorous Poetry Award). We also learned that **first prize** in the **Manningham Competition** for High School and Middle School students was awarded to an Illinois student, **Sarah Kim**. **Kathy Cotton** won five(!) **second-place** prizes; second-place prizes also were won by **David Bond**, **Caroline Johnson**, **Beth Staas**, and **Judith Tullis**. **Patty Dickson Pieczka** won a **third-place** prize, as did **Beth Staas**.

The following ISPS poets all received **Honorable Mentions**—multiple HMs for some poets, indicated by a number in parentheses: **Jocelyn Ajami (2)**, **Candace Armstrong**, **David Bond**, **Kathy Cotton (7)**, **Michael Escoubas**, **Mark Hudson**, **Caroline Johnson (3)**, **Wilda Morris (3)**, **Patty Dickson Pieczka**, **Donna Pucciani (2)**, **Kathy Robinson (2)**, **Beth Staas**, and **Judith Tullis**. In addition, an Illinois middle school student, **Zainab Nazeer**, won a Manningham HM.

We poets of Illinois have so many reasons to be proud of each other's accomplishments! More news of convention activities is on page 4.

Chapter Meetings...

in alphabetical order by location. See MapQuest.com for directions or phone the venue at the number provided.

Carbondale - Southern Chapter
Sunday, Sept 8, 1:30 pm, Carbondale Public Library, 405 W. Main, 62901. Facilitator: kacotton7@frontier.com. ISPS members and other interested poets are invited. Bring 10 - 12 copies of your poem. **Library: (618) 457-0354.**

Champaign - Central Chapter NOT meeting in August, meeting **Sunday, Sept 8** at the **Champaign Public Library**, 200 W. Green St., Champaign, 61820. Facilitator: Kathy Robinson, krobdzyns@gmail.com. Bring 10 - 12 copies of your poem, covered drinks only; (no snacks in conference rooms). **Library: (217) 403-2000.**

Darien - West Suburban **Sat., Sept 7, 1 - 4:00 pm, Indian Prairie Public Library**, 401 Plainfield Rd. Fac: Caroline Johnson, twinkscat@aol.com. Please bring 10 - 12 copies of 1 or 2 poems for critique and a snack to share plus your own drink. **Library: 630-986-1976.**

Lisle - Southwest Suburban Chapter
Sunday, Aug 18, 1 - 4:30 pm, Lisle Public Library, 777 Front Street, Lisle 60532. Barbara Eaton, facilitator: Eatonb1016@aol.com. Please bring about 20 copies of one or two of your poems and a snack to share plus your own drink. **Library: (630) 759-2102.**

Northbrook - Haiku Chapter **Sunday, Aug 18, 1-4 pm. Northbrook Public Library**, Civic Room, 1201 Cedar Lane, Northbrook 60062. Tom Chockley & Jim Sullivan, facilitators. Bring eight to ten copies of six to ten haiku on a single page. tom.chockley@outlook.com. **Library: (847) 272-6224.**

Northbrook - North Suburban Chapter
Sunday, Sept 8, 1 - 5 pm, Northbrook Public Library Civic Room, 1201 Cedar Lane, 60062. Facilitator: Mary Beth Bretzlauf: mbbretzlauf@comcast.net. Bring 8 - 10 copies of one or two poems. **Library: (847) 272-6224.**

Pontiac - North Central Chapter **Sat., Aug. 10, 1:00 pm. Cup and Scone Coffee Shop**, 213 W. Madison St, Pontiac 61764, Kathleen Murphy, facilitator. (Note the "z" in her email): kathleenzmurphy@mail.com. Please bring one or two of your poems.

ISPS 26th Annual Poetry Contest Upcoming

The deadline for entering the 26th Annual ISPS Poetry Contest is November 1, 2019. Mark your calendars well before that! All the categories have cash prizes, and modest entry fees that differ depending on membership in ISPS and the number of poems submitted. For full details, see the official guidelines at illinoispoets.org, or the digital version sent out to the membership by our own William Shakespeare.

To summarize, there are eleven separate poetry awards. Six of the awards accept poems in *any* form (sonnet, haiku, free verse, etc.); the remaining five contests specify the form to follow.

On the flip side, four of the contest *subjects* are unspecified; the seven remaining topics are (alphabetically): Bipartisanship, Brothers, Compassion, Gratitude, Home, Humor, and Shawnee National Forest.

Poems must not have been published (in print or electronically) and must be the original work of the contestant. Poems that have previously won monetary awards are ineligible.

Two of the categories have a 24-line limit. The others must not exceed 40 lines. In all cases, line count includes blank lines after the title and between verses (if any). Poems must be typed and single spaced. For full guidelines, see the official announcement mentioned above, at illinoispoets.org.

ISPS thanks the chapters and individuals who are sponsoring the awards. Now, poets, fire up your grey cells and sharpen your pencils—or electronic devices, as the case may be. Happy writing to all!

Member News

Michael Escoubas (Pontiac chapter) has a new book available at Amazon, *Steve Henderson in Poetry and Paint*. It is similar to Escoubas' first collection, *Monet in Poetry and Paint*, in that both are ekphrastic collections. For those not familiar with Henderson's art, Michael says, "To me, Steve is a modern-day Monet. His rural scenes transport me back to my childhood. His depictions of water, surf and sailing put me in the boats as the wind whips the sails. To view a painting by Steve Henderson is to feel empathy with the human spirit."

Wilda Morris Makes a Splash with Melville

According to Will Hansen, facilitator of adult education classes on *Moby-Dick* at Newberry Library in Chicago, **Wilda Morris's** new book, *Pequod Poems: Gimming with Moby-Dick*, is a wonderful companion to Melville's masterpiece. It "is formally adventurous, deeply entertaining, both funny and philosophical—and redolent of the sea. Some poems provide backstories for characters, or suggestions of what happened later; others respond to quotes from the book (showing their relevance to the 21st century). A few are about Melville himself."

Wilda's book was published this year by Kelsay Books. Among the places she has been invited for readings and to sign books are Arrowhead, the estate in Pittsfield, MA where Melville wrote his great novel, and at the Athenaeum on Nantucket. You can read a review at <http://quillandparchment.com/archives/July2019/book.html>. The book can be purchased from Kelsay Books or amazon.com. To purchase an autographed copy, email wildamorris@ameritech.net.

New / Returning ISPS Members (since April-May 2019 news)

Biographical info below comes from the ISPS website. **All** members are encouraged to submit bios to the website and to **update** them periodically—publications, awards, etc. Send new and revised bios to oasis@alharris.com.

Eric Bodwell, Lisle chapter – info to come

Patricia Claeys, Northbrook chapter– info to come

Leo Gher, Southern chapter– info to come

Marilyn Peretti, Lisle chapter, was editor of the ISPS newsletter in the early '90s. She has been active in Arlington Poetry Project, Arbor Hill Group, and Upper Crust writing group. For more details, see the ISPS website.

Mike Ruhland, Southern chapter, reports, "I'm 71. I hated poetry in high school. I don't remember any poetry terms. But sometimes I feel the need to write outside the structure of prose. I like Rumi."

Jay Sturner, Lisle chapter, naturalist, poet and writer, was born in Harvey, Illinois, raised in the western suburbs of Chicago. For 10 years he was a botanist at Morton Arboretum. He also writes flash fiction, short stories, music lyrics and nature essays. He now resides in Knoxville, Tennessee. He has published four books of poetry as well as stories and photographs. For more, see the ISPS website.

Michael Talaga, Darien chapter – info to come

Loren Yeager, Haiku chapter – info to come

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

More Notes from the NFSPS Diamond Jubilee Convention

“Poetry Now: Where We’ve Been, Where We Are, Where we are going...”

The keynote speaker at the NFSPS banquet was **Valerie Martinez**, former poet laureate of Santa Fe (2008 – 2010). She is a poet, educator, arts administrator, and collaborative artist. Currently the Director of History and Literary Arts at the National Hispanic Cultural Center in Albuquerque, she sketched for us an impressive history of poets and poetry in North America from colonial days up to the present. At an afternoon reception and book-signing session she also gave readings of her own work.

Cowboy Poet-Singer-Songwriter

Mike Montoux, from Silver City, New Mexico, entertained us by sharing his stories, poems and songs about “wild rides and cattle drives,” and gave us “a chance to look closely at life, love, and some mighty fine country through a cowboy’s eyes.”

NFSPS Convention Leaders, Presenters, Judges

The following poets—all with multiple awards and numerous publications—led the convention workshops. **Debbi Brody**, **Nathan Brown** (Oklahoma State Poet Laureate, 2013-14), **Steven Concert**, **Manuel Gonzáles** (Albuquerque City Poet Laureate 2016-2018), **Jules Nyquist** (founder of Poetry Playhouse Retreat Center in Placitas, NM), **David Meischen** (Pushcart honoree and co-founder and managing editor of Dos Gatos Press), **Sylvia Ramos**, **John Roche** (co-editor with Nyquist of the five-volume *Poets Speak* anthology series), **Barbara Rockman**, and **Scott Wiggerman**, an editor for Dos Gatos Press. Some of the contest judges also were in attendance. The BBP Poetry Prize winners were selected by the writer/poet/actor/musician/producer and director known as **SETH**, who was vital to any number of deeply moving informal discussions. Other judges present were **Chen Chen** (Stevens Poetry Manuscript Competition), and **Barbara DeCesare** (College Undergraduate Poetry Competition).

Illinois Students Win NFSPS Manningham Prizes Sarah Kim won **First Place** nationwide in the high school division of the NFSPS Manningham Competition. Zainab Nazeer won **honorable mention** in the middle school division. Other Illinois student contestants include Alicia Koogler, Emily Maher, Uzma Nazeer, Kinnason Jackson, Alyssa Bernardino, and Landon Mulhstade. These latter six read their poems at the Brewed Awakening Open Mike in on July 28. Many thanks to Ida Kotyuk of ISPS, who was the 2019 Illinois Manningham Chair. She writes, “I am proud and pleased for the students, their parents, and especially their teachers.”

How to Join the Illinois State Poetry Society (ISPS)

Membership is open to anyone who is interested in poetry. You do not need to be a resident of Illinois. To join, fill out this form (or a copy) and send it with a check for the yearly (July 1 -June 30) dues of \$20 (\$30 for patron status, \$50 for benefactor status) to:

Illinois State Poetry Society
c/o 6455 Big Bear Drive
Indian Head Park, IL 60525

You are invited to send a short bio for the newsletter and a possibly longer one for the website so we can introduce you to the members. Send with your dues, or email bios as directed in the small box on p. 3.

Name _____

Street Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip code _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Please indicate which chapter/location you wish to consider your “home” (you may visit other chapters):

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Carbondale (Southern Illinois) | <input type="checkbox"/> Lisle (SW Suburban Chicago) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Champaign (Central Illinois) | <input type="checkbox"/> Haiku (meets at Northbrook, separately) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Darien (W. Suburban Chicago) | <input type="checkbox"/> Northbrook (N. Suburban Chicago) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pontiac (North Central Illinois) | |