

2018, ISSUE 4

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Also available on our website
illinoispoets.org/news

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TL;DR. . .

Do you ever flip through a poetry collection or journal and read shorter poems first? Surely, I'm not the only one. Responding to the glut of available data—more in the past two years than in mankind's entire preceding history—we've been drawn to snack-size communications: bullet points, texts, tweets, emojis, and that succinct commentary: TL;DR (too long; didn't read).

To grab readers, poets must also practice a version of reduction: *Make every word count*. This month let's red-line lazy, tacked-on titles and yawning openers. Allow no hackneyed phrase, unnecessary article/conjunction, fluffy filler. Let's choose strong verbs, creative imagery, nuance, and word choices that add musicality to meaning. Our challenge is to make poems so good that "Didn't Read" doesn't happen. —Kathy Cotton, Editor



A Message from the President

Summer has fully revealed itself. It feels like we are living in an aviary with all the bird talk of nests, chicks and what seems to be a sheer joy of life blossoming everywhere. Our society also made a wonderful showing with eleven members who attended the NFSPS convention in Denver. Congratulations to all those ISPS poets who were successful in the national contest! (Listing on page 5.)

Beside the enthusiasm of so many attendees this year in Colorado, our society has reached a new high in membership of 167 poets, many of whom will have poems in the forthcoming anthology, *Distilled Lives Volume 4*. With more members comes the possibility of new interest and energy to help guide and serve ISPS.

A group like ours is a collective organization that relies on shared responsibility and collaboration of volunteers. Within a little over a decade, our society has grown from one to seven chapters with greater geographic diversity, improved coordinated communication to all members, and expanded interest in sharing ideas, events and members' accomplishments. It's individual commitment that drives an organization like ISPS and helps us stay connected.

Beside email messages from "William Shakespeare" and written notes, our newsletter has always been a vital method of reaching out to members in hard-copy, email and on the website. Each editor has brought different

formats and emphasis to what has become a very popular and efficient method of reaching our members. Kathy Cotton is no longer able to produce an ongoing letter but is happy to mentor a new volunteer who can bring his or her style and energy to this endeavor. We need a new editor, and it could be you.

We are also seeking a Manningham Contest Chair to manage and coordinate this student contest, which involves state winners who have the opportunity to be part of the national contest. Over the years we have had several winners who are acknowledged at the NFSPS convention. The position is another important part of what ISPS offers to celebrate and support poetry. Guidance and details are available to keep this outreach program alive and to maintain our state participation at both the local and national level.

Plans for the November 3 Gala are underway with volunteers helping to make this another exciting event. Mark your calendars and consider what you could do to help. Many of the needs are small but important to the success of this statewide gathering in Park Ridge.

When all is said and done, it's the poetry that we carry within and what needs to be recorded that drives our society and brings together so many wonderful and talented people. I look forward to hearing from you as we continue our efforts to make ISPS all that it can be. Thank you, Kathy, for all your good work.

Happy writing, Susan T. Moss

ISPS New Members / Members' News



Eleven ISPS members attended the National Federation of State Poetry Societies in Denver, May 31 to June 3. Pictured are Judy Tullis, Wilda Morris, Candace Armstrong, Susan Moss, (back row) Caroline Johnson, Myron Stokes, Michael Escoubas, and Melissa Huff. Also attending but not pictured were Eleanor Berry, Polly Opsahl, and Russell Strauss.



Three members of the ISPS board of directors will also serve on the 2018 appointive board of the National Federation of State Poetry Societies.



JUDITH TULLIS of Indian Head will begin her first NFSPS term as contest sponsors and brochure chairman.



JIM LAMBERT of Carterville continues as the associate editor of the *Strophes* newsletter.

KATHY COTTON of Anna continues as editor of the *Encore Prize Poems* anthology. She has resigned as editor for the two College Undergraduate Contest books.

RICHARD SHAW of Geneva returns as a patron member of the Lisle Chapter.

JOHN QUINN of Brookfield is a returning member to Darien Chapter.



JOCELYN AJAMI is a Chicago poet, artist and film maker. She received the coveted \$1,000 first-place prize in the 2018 NFSPS Founders Award contest.



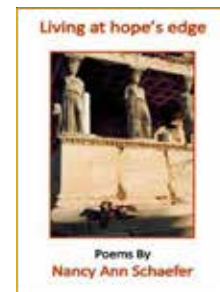
CHARLOTTE DIGREGORIO of Winnetka was honored to receive an Official Commendation from Governor Bruce Rauner for her accomplishments in poetry and other literary arts during the past 38 years. Further, Digregorio was recently appointed as an Ambassador of The Haiku Foundation and was a guest speaker at the Annual Conference of the Haiku Circle in Massachusetts. Her haiga will be exhibited at North Shore Senior Center in Northfield through August, and at Fremont Public Library in Mundelein through October.

CAROLINE JOHNSON of Willow Springs read from her new full-length poetry



collection, *The Caregiver* (Holy Cow! Press) at the Tattered Cover Bookstore in Denver on May 31. Among those attending the reading were poets Candace Armstrong, Myron Stokes, Judith Tullis (pictured with Johnson), Susan Moss, Melissa Huff and Wilda Morris—ISPS members who were in Denver for the NFSPS Convention.

NANCY LACHANCE of Lebanon, MO, began poetry writing in college but didn't get serious about the craft until retiring and joining a poetry group 12 years ago. The group offered support and advice on the art of writing. She attends poetry retreats, takes part in critiquing, and is a winner in sponsored contests. LaChance is past president of the Missouri State Poetry Society and current president of her local poetry chapter. Her poems cover family issues, humor, and nature themes. A former English, journalism, and drama teacher and part-time instructor at Missouri Baptist University, she holds an undergraduate degree from Southeast Missouri State University and master's degree from Southern Illinois University—Edwardsville. LaChance is a new at-large member of ISPS.



NANCY SCHAEFER announces the publication of a new poetry collection, *Living at Hope's Edge*. (Tiger's Eye Press, 2018). She is also the author of *Search of Lode* (918studio). All proceeds from the new book will go to support local animal rescue. Schaefer, a retired academic from Illinois, now lives with her husband, dog, and three cats in Bridgton, Maine. ✍️

POEMS BY MAUREEN FLANNERY

Path to the School Bus

Surly, persistent, unseasonal squalls
roared away any tender intentions
in the first days of that merciless May,
caused half the herd to calve early.

Slime of afterbirth glistened crimson atop
drifts we watched through fern-frost
on the clattering cabin windows.
Momma kept running out to grab a calf,

warm it on the wood stove's open door
until she could surmise it might live,
then carry it out again to its mother
and run in with another, just born.

Hungry steers, desperate for shelter,
their hides glistening white with hoarfrost,
pounded cold noses against windows and door.
Their thumping became the cabin's heartbeat

in the wheezing white noise of blizzard wind.
When it stopped we walked the lane
across frozen carcasses of cattle in a strange
new-day quiet to wait for the school bus.

Falling

Coyote, wily as time, is used to pursuing
his swift nemesis off the edge of a cliff,
blurred legs spinning like wheels,
the momentum of chase propelling him

straight out over the canyon where his
being oblivious carries him, keeps him aloft.
Only when some vague sense
of disequilibrium
suggest he check his ground does
the looking down

send him plummeting through
the nothing solid
where he is surprised to find himself.
For you the phone's ring was the movement
forward—off the edge of the world,

that trajectory from which it almost seems
you should be able to reverse the propeller of
numb limbs spinning, flailing, that they
might carry you back to the rim

of something firm that would hold your weight.
But you were racing onto air and
have looked down.
Now you are free falling
and cannot see the bottom.



Spotlight on Poet Maureen Flannery

Maureen Tolman Flannery's background—growing up on a sheep and cattle ranch in Wyoming, time in Mexico, and now life in Chicago—gives this English teacher, wood carver, and home funeral guide a unique poetry perspective. Among her eight books are *Tunnel into Morning*, *Destiny Whispers to the Beloved*, and Pulitzer-Prize-nominated *Ancestors in the Landscape*. More than 500

of this prolific writer's poems have appeared in journals, including *Connecticut River Review*, *North American Review*, *Xavier Review*, *Border Senses*, *Birmingham Poetry Review*, *Pedestal*, *Poetry East*, *Atlanta Review* and *Arroyo*.

Tell us about your journey into prolific writing and publishing your poetry.

Having always processed my experience in words, I did not validate my own poetic life until my children were grown and I was middle aged. By the time I began to publish, I had a huge body of work to choose from—and to revise. I began publishing in anthologies, since an editor's theme could help me decide what to submit. Soon I was sending poems to all the literary journals referenced in *Poets and Writers*. I found submitting most useful in that I paid attention to each poem, revised and polished it again every time I submitted. I attended Poets and Patrons, became a member of Poets' Club of Chicago, and worked with a small group of women poets in an informal workshop. I have always been very prolific, yet I found after I had begun to submit, that fewer ideas ever floated away unrecorded. I even began carrying a notebook in my purse instead of fumbling for a deposit slip to jot down lines.

How does the process of writing poetry personally benefit you?

A poem is often engendered in me by what I ponder or wonder. As Christopher Fry said, "Poetry is the language in which man explores his own amazement." My poems are frequently narrative, story-telling, if only the story of my own emotional response to what has been observed or puzzled at. Of course, I never expect the poem to answer the question, but what the poem offers is often an easing of the discomfort of bafflement. This is the gift of writing as therapeutic activity. The poem, by examining the wound, becomes the balm. We come away with a renewed relationship to that which we struggle to understand.

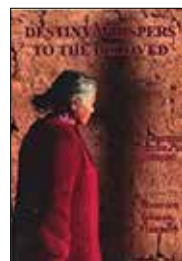
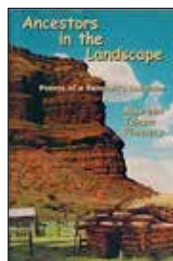
What poetry resources currently inspire your writing?

I read numerous journals, often those in which I have poems, my favorites being *After Hours* locally and *Atlanta Review* nationally. *Atlanta Review* consistently publishes poems I find myself wanting to return to again and again. The Second Saturday poetry workshop sponsored in Palatine by Northwest Cultural Council also has consistently good poets, both attending and leading.

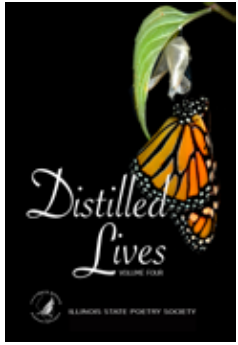
What are you working on now?

I am now writing about the purchase and move of two century-old log cabins to a plot of land in Wyoming. I have been obsessed with restoration of the cabins as well as the rich history of Wyoming ranch country. Thus, my book on the subject—*Following the Cabin Home*. ✍

Discover more about Maureen Flannery in the pages of her books: available at amazon.com.



Anthology Prep Underway



Editing of submissions for the fourth volume of the ISPS anthology is underway. One to two pages of poetry will be published for each member with qualified submissions. The book

will be available later this year. Cover by Kathy Cotton features a monarch butterfly, one of Illinois' state symbols. ✍

Sponsor a Category in ISPS 25th Annual Poetry Contest

July 16 is the deadline to sponsor categories in the 2018 ISPS Poetry Contest. By providing prize monies of \$55 to \$190, individuals or ISPS chapters can sponsor a contest category and select the poetry form/subject. Categories may be named in honor or in memory of a selected person.

The sponsorship form is available on the ISPS website, illinoispoets.org. For information, contact chairman Jim Lambert, jim@jimlambert.net. ✍

Stay with Us: Renew Your Membership Now

The ISPS new year begins July 1. To continue all the benefits of belonging to a great group of poets and poetry supporters, renew your ISPS membership. For the small annual investment of \$20 (optional \$30.00 for Patron status or \$50.00, Benefactor status), your renewal dues support poetry in Illinois and offer you all these perks:

- Triple membership: Illinois State Poetry Society PLUS National Federation of State Poetry Societies PLUS any of the seven ISPS chapters.
- ISPS bimonthly newsletter PLUS email notices of poetry events and news.
- Bimonthly publication of members' poems and haiga on the website, illinoispoets.org.
- NFSPS quarterly *Strophes* newsletter.
- Special submission rates for annual ISPS and NFSPS contests.
- Free admission to many ISPS-sponsored seminars and lectures and poetry.

A copy of the membership form is on page 6. ✍



Comments from the NFSPS Contest Judges

Fifty judges whittled nearly 7,000 submissions into the top 150 poems that now appear in the NFSPS 2018 *Encore* anthology (amazon.com). Here is what judges say they looked for:

- Poems that immediately grab me.
 - Interesting point of view, strong imagery, clean concepts.
 - Less telling; more showing why.
 - Imagination, nuance, and linguistic improvisation.
 - Fresh language, surprises, and intriguing titles.
- No trite phrases or obvious endings that don't invite into the magic of poetry words.
 - Detail and intimacy—poets writing from their hearts.
 - Poems that won't be eliminated for grammar and spelling errors or typos. ✍

Swanberg and Valente to Be Featured at July 29 ISPS–Sponsored Brewed Awakening

Two highly-respected poets, Judith Valente and Christine Swanberg, will be featured at Brewed Awakening (19 West Quincy, Westmont), 12:30 to 2:00 p.m., Sunday, July 29. The program will also include open mic readings. A \$10 cover charge includes cost of a beverage and snack.

Featured poets for the August 26 event will be announced later.

CHRISTINE SWANBERG

A multiple Pushcart nominee with numerous awards, Rockford poet Christine Swanberg is the author of *Tonight on this Late Road*, *Invisible String*, *Bread Upon the Waters*, *Slow Miracle*, *The Tenderness of Memory*, *The Red Lacquer Room*, *Who Walks among the*

Trees with Charity, *The Alleluia Tree*, and *Wild Fruition: Sonnets, Spells, and other Incantations*. Her poetry appears in many journals and anthologies, including *Spoon River*, *Wind*, *Louisville Review*, *Beloit Poetry Journal*, *Garden Blessings*, *Back to Joy*, *Gratitude Prayers and Poems* and *Earth Blessings*. Swanberg, a long-time writing teacher and mentor, gives readings and workshops throughout the United States.

JUDITH VALENTE

An award-winning poet, journalist, and producer, Judith Valente is the author of the poetry collection *Discovering Moons* and the chapbook, *Inventing An Alphabet*, selected by Mary Oliver

for the 2005 national Aldrich Poetry Prize. Valente's poems often explore the whimsical connections between the outer world and the inner spirit.

She covered religion and spirituality for many years for national PBS-TV and reported on both religion and the poetry scene for Chicago Public Radio. Valente is also the author of four books on how to live a more contemplative life, including: *The Art of Pausing: Meditations for the Overworked and Overwhelmed*, and most recently, *How To Live: What The Rule of St. Benedict Teaches Us About Happiness, Meaning and Community*.

She holds a masters in fine arts in creative writing from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. ✍

ISPS Members Take 60 Honors in NFSPS Contests: Ajami Wins \$1,000 Top Prize



Jocelyn Ajami



Myron Stokes

Two of the top three winners in the big-prize 2018 NFSPS Founders Award are ISPS members: \$1,000 first place, Jocelyn Ajami of Chicago; and \$250 third place, Myron Stokes of Oak Park. Also, Wilda Morris of Bolingbrook took an honorable mention in the #1 category, which drew the highest number of contest submissions.

Congratulations to all our members who were among those honored and cheered for by Illinois attendees at the National Federation of State Poetry Societies 2018 convention in Denver, May 31–June 3. ISPS took 60 of the 500 national awards.

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JOCELYN AJAMI

1st \$1,000 NFSPS Founders Award

JAMES F. AHEARN

4th HM Nevada Poetry Society Award

4th HM Freeda Murphy Memorial Award

VALERIE MARTIN BAILEY

1st Poetry Society of Tennessee Award

3rd Alice Mackenzie Swaim Memorial Award

ELEANOR BERRY

5th HM Mildred Vorpahl Baass Remembrance Award

7th HM William Stafford Memorial Award

VON S. BOURLAND

1st Alice Mackenzie Swaim Memorial Award

5th HM Florida State Poets Association, Inc., Award

5th HM Morton D. Prouty & Elsie S. Prouty Memorial Award

6th HM Georgia Poetry Society Award

7th HM Claire van Breemen Downes Memorial Award

KATHY LOHRUM COTTON

1st The Poets Northwest Award

1st Morton D. Prouty & Elsie S. Prouty Memorial Award

2nd Mildred Vorpahl Baass Remembrance Award

2nd Columbine Poets of Colorado Award

3rd Ohio Award

3rd Poetry Society of Michigan Award

3rd HM The NFSPS Board Award

3rd HM Poetry Society of Indiana Award

4th HM The Diamond T Award

6th HM Freeda Murphy Memorial Award

6th HM San Antonio Poets Association Award

GAIL DENHAM

1st Nevada Poetry Society Award

MICHAEL ESCOUBAS

3rd William Stafford Memorial Award

6th HM Maine Poets Society Award

BARBARA J. FUNKE

2nd Illinois State Poetry Society Award

CAROLINE JOHNSON

3rd Freeda Murphy Memorial Award

1st HM The Virginia Corrie-Cozart Memorial Award

NANCY LACHANCE

5th HM Arizona State Poetry Society Award

JIM LAMBERT

5th HM Land of Enchantment Award

WILDA MORRIS

1st Poetry Society of Texas Award

3rd HM Claire van Breemen Downes Memorial Award

4th HM Alabama State Poetry Society Award

4th HM NFSPS Founders Award

5th HM The Diamond T Award

POLLY OPSAHL

1st Winners' Circle Award

4th HM Land of Enchantment Award

6th HM Poetry Society of Texas Award

DONNA PUCCIANI

1st Louisiana State Poetry Society Award

2nd Poets' Roundtable of Arkansas Award

2nd Winners' Circle Award

3rd League of Minnesota Poets Award

1st HM Al Laster Memorial Award

2nd HM Wyopoets Award

5th HM Donald Stodghill Memorial Award

BETH STAAS

1st HM Poets' Roundtable of Arkansas Award

5th HM Barbara Stevens Memorial Award

5th HM Alice Mackenzie Swaim Memorial Award

MYRON STOKES

3rd NFSPS Founders Award

RUSSELL H. STRAUSS

1st The Diamond T Award

1st William Stafford Memorial Award

2nd Claire van Breemen Downes Memorial Award

3rd Poetry Society of Tennessee Award

2nd HM Massachusetts State Poetry Society Award

3rd HM CSPS James E. MacWhinney Memorial Award

4th HM Wyopoets Award

5th HM Alabama State Poetry Society Award

5th HM Minute Award

JUDITH KRUM TULLIS

2nd Georgia Poetry Society Award



Chapter Meetings

CENTRAL CHAPTER, CHAMPAIGN

1:30 p.m., Sundays, July 1, August 11
Champaign Public Library, Room 222
200 W. Green St., Champaign, IL
217-403-2000

Any beverage must be in a cup with a cover.
No snacks in Conference Room. Bring 12
copies of a poem if you wish to have a critique.

HAIKU CHAPTER, NORTHBROOK

1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Sunday, August 19
Northbrook Public Library, Civic Room
1201 Cedar Lane, Northbrook, IL
847-272-6224

Bring 12 copies of up to 6 haiku for critique, one
haiku that mystifies and one that delights, pub-
lication celebrations, and resources to share.

NORTH CENTRAL CHAPTER, PONTIAC

1:00 p.m., Saturday, August 11
Pontiac Public Library, 815-844-7229
211 E. Madison St., Pontiac, IL

NO. SUBURBAN CHAPTER, NORTHBROOK

1:00 to 5:00 p.m., Sunday, July 8
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, July 8
Carbondale Public Library, 618-457-0354
405 West Main, Carbondale, IL
Bring 10-12 copies of poems for critique.

SOUTHWEST SUBURBAN CHAPTER, LISLE

1:00 to 5:00 p.m., Sunday, August 5
Lisle Public Library, 630-971-1675
777 Front St., Lisle, IL (enter lot off Kingston)
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, July 7
Indian Prairie Public Library, 630-887-8760
401 Plainfield Road, Darien, IL
Bring a snack to share plus your own beverage
and 10-12 copies of one or two poems for
critiquing.

ONLINE CRITIQUE GROUPS

To request a copy of the guidelines or to join
an ISPS Email Critique Group, contact coordi-
nator Wilda Morris at wildamorris@ameritech.
net. Put "ISPS Email Critique Group" in the
subject line of the email. ✍



Are You Next? Time for a New Editor

Since I began to serve as your newsletter editor in 2013, I've had the pleasure of interviewing 30 ISPS feature poets, sharing the good news of your awards and accomplishments, and working with supportive resources. Now it's time for a new editor.

Just as I revamped the format of our bi-monthly newsletter five years ago, the next editor can start fresh with their favorite software and new point of view, or I'll be glad to pass along resources I've gathered. If you are interested, contact our president, Susan Moss, stm48@hotmail.com, for more information.

My thanks to you, the ISPS readers, and to all whose support has made my work possible. —Kathy Cotton ✍

Deadlines & Events: Mark Your Poetry Calendar

- **JULY 1**, new ISPS membership year begins. *Have you renewed?*
- **JULY 7**, closing of Charlotte Digregorio's haiga exhibit at Moats Gallery, Palatine. Upcoming exhibits are at North Shore Senior Center in Northfield through August, and Fremont Public Library in Mundelein through October.
- **JULY 16**, deadline for category sponsorships, ISPS Poetry Contest.
- **JULY 29**, 12:30–2:00 p.m., Brewed Awakening, 19 West Quincy, Westmont.
- **AUGUST 1**, deadline, Poetry Society of Tennessee 62nd Annual Poetry Contest, www.tnpoetry.org.
- **AUGUST 1–14**, poem and haiga submission period for our website, illinoispoets.org.
- **AUGUST 26** 12:30–2:00 p.m., Brewed Awakening, 19 West Quincy, Westmont.
- **SEPTEMBER 1**, deadlines for Helen Schaible International Sonnet Contest and the Poets & Patrons Annual Chicagoland Poetry Contest. Send submissions to Barbara Eaton, P.O. Box 936, Downers Grove.
- **OCTOBER 1–NOVEMBER 1**, submission period for 25th annual ISPS Poetry Contest.
- **NOVEMBER 3**, 2018 ISPS Gala, Park Ridge Country Club. ✍



ISPS Membership Application

RENEWALS DUE! 2018–2019 NEW YEAR BEGINS JULY 1

Renewal New Member \$20 Regular \$30 Patron \$50 Benefactor

VOTING CHAPTER (check one) Central, Champaign North Central, Pontiac
North Suburban, Northbrook Southern, Carbondale SW Suburban, Lisle
West Suburban, Darien Haiku, Northbrook At-Large

Name _____

Address _____

Phone (home or cell) _____

Email _____

Mail to: Judith Tullis, 6455 Big Bear Drive, Indian Head Park, IL 60525