

STANZA

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE MAINE POETS SOCIETY

VOLUME 28, NUMBER 4

DECEMBER 2020

PLANS FOR OUR WINTER GATHERINGS Both will take place on Zoom.

Winter Workshop – January 16, 2021

Jenny Doughty is offering a four-hour workshop on “What Can We Learn From The Romantics?”

A Zoom link will be sent to the first ten people to sign up by email to jmdought@maine.rr.com.

Time: 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., with a break for lunch from noon to 1pm.

During the morning session we will read and discuss some poems by the five most famous poets of the Romantic movement of the late 18th and early 19th centuries – Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats, Shelley and Byron. As well as enjoying the poems as written, we will look at what we can learn from them as poets in the 21st century. A handout will be sent by email to attendees.

During the afternoon session we will workshop poems that people bring to the workshop. If you want to workshop a poem, you will need to send it to Jenny before the day of the workshop so that it can be shared with other workshop members.

A Reading in the Round – March 20, 2021

Time: 10 a.m. to Noon

All MPS members current for 2021 will be invited to participate

Sally Joy will host this event. A link will be sent a few days beforehand to all members. Friends may be invited to listen in, but we ask that the link not be posted publicly. It would be helpful if those who know they want to read would email Sally at srjoy43@gmail.com at least one day prior to the event so she can start a list. If others decide as they enter the Zoom room that they would like to read, they can indicate that in the Chat Box, typing their first and last name and the words “would like to read.” If you do want to read, please come prepared with poems. We’ll go round as many times as will fit into a two-hour timeframe.

News of our Next General Meeting

Our next general meeting will be Saturday, May 22, from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. We have details available already! See Page 2. You’ll also find information in this issue about the option of submitting your poems via email. We ask that you not send submissions until after we’ve distributed the Spring issue of the *Stanza*, but do have fun with the writing prompt in the meantime.

May 2021 Contest

Times New Roman or Arial font preferred.

(REMINDER: Submission to a contest constitutes permission to publish.)

By USPS
 Send to: James Breslin*
 451 Bassett Rd.
 Winslow, ME 04901
DEADLINE: April 22, 2021
 1 poem (no fee)

- 2 copies of your poem (ONE with your name; one without)
- Envelope: Letter-size (long, #10) marked "CONTEST"
INCLUDE SASE!!

Look for news concerning email submissions on Page 3 of this issue. Details on how and when to do it will be included in our Spring issue which will be distributed in late February or early March.

ABOUT THE JUDGE

Dennis Camire teaches writing at Central Maine Community College and at the University of Maine at Augusta. For ten years he was the executive director of Maine Poetry Central which created and curated the Portland Poet Laureate Program and which brought nationally renowned poets like Tony Hoagland and Timothy Liu to Maine to read. His poems have appeared in *Poetry East*, *The Mid American Review*, *Spoon River Review*, *Hamilton Stone Review*, *Three Nations Anthology*, and Maine Public Radio's "Poems from Here." An AWP Intro Journal award winner, he has also been nominated for a Pushcart Prize. His most recent book is *Combed by Crows*, Deerbrook Editions, 2017. He lives in an A-frame in West Paris, Maine.

CONTEST DETAILS**Contest Poem — 30-line limit — A Persona Poem: Writing Prompt from the Judge:**

When I've taught creative writing, I've been astounded at the quality of the poems I receive when my students write a personification poem where they assume the perspective and voice of a flower, tree, walrus, dump truck, dog, etc. Indeed, taking on the perspective of an animal, plant, or inanimate object like a dump truck often provides a wonderful means for you to think imaginatively and to see the world from a refreshing perspective free of ego boundaries. It seems to free the muse, too, to truly speak as she would like to speak if the ego's "I" weren't always interjecting. This type of exercise, then will playfully combine personification and the dramatic monologue. Choose, then, to assume the perspective and voice of a plant, animal, inanimate object (icicle, stapler), or force of nature (wind, death, tidal estuary). The only real requirement of this playful prompt is that you get out of your head and personal agenda and to **BE IMAGINATIVE, A BIT OUTRAGEOUS, AND MAYBE EVEN FUNNY, FOR BEING SUCH DOES NOT PRECLUDE YOU FROM BEING HEARTBREAKING AND/OR PROFOUND AT THE END.** Also, as all of you bards already know, it is still quite easy to create a compelling thread between the persona of, for example, that said icicle if you put that icicle in a particular context (the icicle outside my father's ICU as he lay dying). Think imaginatively, then, and engage in compelling juxta-positioning if you feel compelled to connect the perspective and voice of your plant, animal, inanimate object, or force of nature with something from your personal life. Finally, regarding form, there are no restrictions: free verse, formalistic, a hybrid of the two. Regarding feeling and tone, be funny, or serious, or profound, or delighted, or somber, or shocking. Whatever feeling feels right, go with it! Enjoy yourself. I'm confident I'll discover a tremendous number of poems to love, savor, and envy!

Examples: Dennis sent a number of samples of these types of poems. Any of these can be found on the Internet. "Quilts" by Nikki Giovanni; "The Mad Yak" by Greg Corso; "Animals Are Passing From Our Lives" by Philip Levine; "Einstein's Bathrobe" by Howard Moss; "The Refrigerator Speaks of Love" by Scott Sigl; "The Toothbrush to the Bicycle Tire" by Sarah Kay; and "Pigeon Poem" by Jamila Woods. Your editor's personal favorite is found on Page 3.

A sample of the type of poem requested:**The Refrigerator Speaks of Love
by Scott Sigl**

you think you've confined me to a world of darkness
 you think I need your help to see the light
 you think I'm a cold heart
 a frozen wasteland

but have you ever seen the inside of me
 with the door closed?

have you ever seen the inside of anyone
 after they've closed their door to
 everyone?

a cold heart
 a frozen wasteland

Some closed their door a long time ago
 and haven't opened it since.
 Tell them there are vegetables rotting inside,
 soups and sauces
 salads and sausage
 long past expired

but even in the coldest fridge
 there is a light inside
 a light that never goes out
 a light that is waiting
 in darkness

waiting
 in rot

waiting

waiting
 for their door

to be opened

Email Entries for Contests

By the time the Spring Stanza is distributed there will be the option of submitting your poem via email. Here is the process as we currently envision it.

Members who want to enter by email must do so by the closing date specified. For the May contest, that will be April 22. Entries received after that will not be considered. **Only current MPS members** are eligible and only one entry per person is permitted. Mail your poem as an attachment to the address that will be provided. Identifying information should be inserted in the document in the upper right-hand corner, including your name, address, telephone number and email address. **Please send the poem in a .doc or .docx or .rtf format. Do not send it as a .pdf.**

James will open each document as it arrives and add an identifying number. He will maintain two documents – one showing the identifying information and one without it. He'll send the one showing only the numbers (no names or contact info) to the contest judge.

At the meeting, the judge will share his/her top 6 choices, as usual. After each is read, James will let us know whose work it is.

After the meeting, the judge will return the emailed poems, showing the judge's comments, to James. James will email each of them back to its rightful owner.

Postal entries, also with the judge's comments, will be returned to James in one envelope. James will mail them back to their owners in the SASEs which they have provided.

We are excited to offer this option and expecting it to go smoothly.

“When I began to listen to poetry, it's when I began to listen to the stones, and I began to listen to what the clouds had to say, and I began to listen to others. And I think, most importantly for all of us, then you begin to learn to listen to the soul, the soul of yourself in here, which is also the soul of everyone else.”

~ Joy Harjo

SEPTEMBER 2020 CONTEST WINNERS

Contest: “What America Means Now”—Judge, Adrian Blevins

First Prize—Jenny Doughty**Horizons**

From Height of Land I look over a lake,
balanced as if in a blue bubble
between sky dome and reflecting water;

ahead I see only hills, water, trees,
and I'm lost in the promise of land
stretching beyond limitless horizons.

My heart's with pioneers: their wagons
forged ahead over plains, rivers, mountains
to the home they would know when they saw it,

when horizons led us to dreams, called us
to the undiscovered. Now we have
only an image of possibility

and the world has shrunk to the dream
of a grassed yard and a white picket fence,
where we hope the neighbors aren't too close.

Second Prize—Sharon Bray**Approaching the Season of New Cranberries**

Remember our September at Miscou Island?

Tourists, we watched villagers walk
along the park road carrying containers
ash baskets; they bent into bog grasses.

Were we far north enough for bake apples,
cloud berries to put by for winter? One later
year we discovered cranberries at Abigweit.

North America borders beyond
possible cranberry bogs. How far—
the Labrador? Point Barrow?

Stars and maple leaf flap on poles.

Harvest calls all able hands,

backs strong to bend, carry

American cultivars, our berries.

Brave North Americans.

OPPORTUNITY GRANTS ARE STILL AVAILABLE

Opportunity Grants of up to \$100 (some of which could be used for gas/travel expenses) are available to members for any type of online or in person poetry seminar/workshop experience. Members must have renewed their MPS membership for the current year **on or before January 10** and be prepared to write a short piece for *Stanza* afterwards to tell other members about their experience. Individual members can only have one grant in any three-year period. Up to \$500 in total a year is available for grants – first come, first served. Go here to print out an application:

<http://www.mainepoetsociety.com/PDFs/2020-Opportunity-Grants-explanation-and-application.pdf>.

Or go to the Maine Poets Society website, click on the Membership tab, and then on “Download a Membership Opportunity Grant Application.”

Third Prize—Pat Karpan**Home**

Rearview mirrors with hanging masks;
 Not fuzzy dice. Discarded rubber gloves;
 Not rubbers. This is as upending as
 Being asked to chug Clorox and Lysol

Alone Instead of Bushmills or Modelo
 With friends. A-masked-sneeze-
 Into-elbow-or-down-shirt garners no
 ‘God bless’ or ‘Gusundheit’ only laser looks.

In my car I donned the mask and one
 Of the two straps snapped. At the
 Store I stood in line in drizzled darkness
 And at my turn the second one popped.

I shoved it to my face with panicked claws
 And said to the gatekeeper, “My straps
 Snapped.” “Oh,” she said. Maybe inhaling
 And exhaling death, I grabbed, paid, fled.

Home. Three tiered hand wash. Gargle.
 Blow nose. Forgot most of what I needed.
 Because of where I live, afraid to put the
 Sign in my yard; but I did. Afraid to write

Some things I’ve written; but I have. Scared
 To wear t-shirts with words that prompt
 Some cars to move too close; but I do. A
 Small part of the rescue team. Home.

First Honorable Mention—Nancy Orr**America**

all the fine words
 banners songs
 emptiness

lives
 and land
 stolen

and yet
 the sun still rises
 each morning

green sprouts
 spiders in wildfire scars
 resilience

America
 exasperating
 koan

Treasurer’s Message

Happy Holidays fellow poets! I hope this end of year has been fruitful for you all artistically in as many variations as it can. I am confident, though, in saying MPS has adapted with the times and kept up with our mission of expanding poetry in Maine thanks to your generous membership and enthusiasm to work with us as we navigate an unprecedented time.

We experienced a level of membership in 2020 we haven’t seen in a few years (50+ in 2020) as well as record renewals so far in December (26 for 2021!). I strongly encourage you to send in dues (\$20) for the year before January if you intend to take part in member workshops/contests, take advantage of Opportunity Grants, or enter NFSPS contests. I am heartened by what has come in so far. It sends a clear message to us on the board that we’re meeting expectations. And I’m thankful to you, the membership, for that. Please email me with any questions, or check out the website at www.maine-poets-society.com All the information is there.

Because of reduced costs associated with general meetings (rent, food, etc.) we have been able to offer a greater, more participatory model for general meetings with workshops/seminars. We absolutely plan to continue to explore maximizing online opportunities to meet and experience poetry in all its forms, so stay tuned to the website and your email for upcoming ideas/events. Rest assured we are working to make sure your dues bring the best, most enriching return we can provide.

Happy and safest of holidays to you and your families, good writing, and see you soon on the other side in 2021!

Gus Peterson, Treasurer & Membership

Second Honorable Mention—Ruth Guillard**Flags**

Today I saw an eagle
 Fly straight into the sun
 No scorched feathers, last shrieks
 Just gone, from the sight of one
 Who sits on her little porch below
 Waiting for the parade.
 All along Maine Street
 Brave Old Glories flutter—
 Not the time to be looking
 For omens. The guiltless sun
 Moves on...

**Third Honorable Mention—John R. Seksay
 Common Dreams**

There once was a common dream
 Until everyone's dream became
 A virtual meme. Contact grew digital,
 Privacy a question mark tilted
 Into a smirk on the face of
 My internet provider. Closeness
 Has become a matter of bandwidth
 Proven priceless by pandemic
 Where face-to-face is a dance
 With the possibility of disability or death.
 I ZOOM out of isolation
 And feel some liberation in
 The breadth of my reach from Maine –
 Massachusetts, Ohio, Nebraska,
 Even California in little rectangles
 On my screen. How bucolic compared
 To those who circle the globe!
 But intimacy? That's me taking
 Some fresh-baked coffee cake
 To my friend's house
 Where we exchange
 Greetings through masks
 From a safe distance on the patio.
 Pixels will never satisfy
 The raw desire to embrace tucked away
 In the yearning corners of our eyes;
 The common dream
 No camera can capture.

Remembering Andrew Twaddle

MPS member Susan van Alsenoy contacted us recently on the very day when she received the sad news that Andrew Twaddle had died from COVID 19. He and his wife Sarah were at their winter home in Columbia, MO. They have spent their summers in East Boothbay and have been members of the Maine Poets Society for more than a decade. Andrew also led a summer poetry group on Maine's Midcoast.

Susan tells us that "as soon as they had settled into their ME home, Andrew would rally us Bards, as he called us, and we would meet in each other's homes until the Twaddles packed up and headed back to MO."

"Membership came initially from writers who were attending the Midcoast Universalist Unitarian Fellowship but spread out to include others over the years. I'm sad to say that we didn't meet this past summer because of the virus. Currently the group has 5 members, not including Andrew or Sarah." Susan says this group has been personally very helpful to her.

Members who have been able to join us in person for general meetings will recall that Andrew and Sarah attended whenever they were in Maine and were excited to be able to participate on Zoom from Missouri. On hearing the news, board members immediately responded by saying that Andrew will surely be missed and noted that he was "intelligent" and "good humored."

Sarah also contracted the virus and is still in recovery. She has requested that no one attempt to contact her via phone or email. Should you wish to reach out to her by card or letter, please contact Sue van Alsenoy at svanalsenoy@gmail.com and she can provide you with Sarah's mailing address.

Publication & Member News

Poems

Alice Persons has a poem, "Haiku For A Pandemic," in the new anthology *Day After Day In Quarantine*, by the Peterborough Poetry Project in New Hampshire.

Robert Paul Allen's poem "A Member of the Team" was published in the Peterborough Poetry Project's Anthology *Day after Day in Quarantine* in November 2020; his poem "Fly Tying" was published by the *Frost Meadow Review* in Volume V Spring/Summer 2020.

Darlene Glover's poem "Wood Stove Wishing" was published in the Winter edition of *West Coast Maine Magazine*.

Jenny Doughty's poem "Cold Harvest" was published in the Portland Press Herald's "Deep Water" section selected by Megan Grumbling on December 13th.

Daniel Lance Patrick's poem "The Adirondack Chair" appeared in the September edition of the *Northern New England Review*. Another of his poems, "Missing Pieces," was shared on NPR.

Eileen Griffin has two poems accepted for *Reflections 2020*. *Reflections* is the annual journal of literature and art by members of Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at USM. Her poems are "Seeking Fallow" and "Remembering You."

Alice Haines's poem "Orienteering Newfoundland" was published on-line by *Touchstone Journal* in response to a call for sonnets and can be found online on their site. In September three poems were published by *The Northern New England Review*. The issue can be viewed on their website. Her poem "Prognosis" was published in October, in the 20th Anniversary Issue, Vol. 20 of *The Healing Muse*.

Books

My Mind's Eye, Poems by Marshall Witten, Illustrations by Elaine Franz Witten has been published by The Poetry Box, <https://thepoetrybox.com/bookstore/my-minds-eye>.

Richard (Craig) Sipe's new book of poems, *Lovely Dregs*, November 2020, is available through Atmosphere Press, Austin, TX, on Amazon, and through the author's website:

Ruth F. Guillard's new book of poems, *Up from the Sea* has been published by Tadorna Press, Ithaca, NY, and is available through Amazon/books. *Up from the Sea* was written in Maine, the last poem added just before Ruth moved to Fairfield, Iowa.

Maine Poets Society Survey 2020

Eighteen people responded to the survey questions we asked in the July issue. The majority of those felt that Zoom is working well for us. It was suggested that two hours is generally long enough to be on a Zoom meeting. That confirms the wisdom of our offering a workshop on the Saturday after the general meeting rather than attempting to do both on the same day. Some people who aren't close enough to attend general meetings in person have appreciated being able to connect with us online. Nearly all those responding indicated that they would like to have the option of submitting to our contests via e-mail. As noted elsewhere in this issue, we are working on a process and intend to offer than opportunity beginning with our May members-only contest.



President's Ink December 2020

Dear friends and fellow poets,

What a weird year it's been. Most of us have been unable to travel, unable to hug loved ones who don't live with us, unable to celebrate holidays as we normally would, and stuck at home quite a lot, working or otherwise. Some of us have had to risk our lives and health in essential jobs supporting ourselves and our communities.

In our own Maine Poets Society community, we have suffered the sad loss of Andrew Twaddle, a long-standing and valued member who died recently from COVID-19 and will be missed from our meetings. I last saw his cheerful face at our Zoom meeting in September and will be sorry not to see it, or to read the poems he often entered for our contests, in the future.

I do hope that the enforced lack of outside activity has enabled many of you to express yourself in poetry. I know I have been greatly helped through this time by taking a class through the Maine Writers and Publishers Alliance with Cate Marvin, professor of creative writing at Stonecoast and at Staten Island in New York as well as other classes run by Carol Bachofner of our own society and Annie Finch, daughter of Maggie Finch who was president of Maine Poets Society when I first joined. I am delighted that Cate Marvin has agreed to be the judge for our 2021 Prize Poem Contest.

It was my intention to hold Zoom conversations with poets, and I had agreed with Richard Foerster to begin with one held with him, but I regret to say that like a lot of good intentions it slipped away from me, and this does not seem a good time to revive the intention with Christmas on the way to occupy our minds. However, it is something we will hold in reserve for the future. I think that, much as we might all prefer meeting in person when possible, until there is widespread vaccination we will be on Zoom for quite a while yet. The feedback I got from our member survey was mostly very positive towards Zoom, and a lot of people commented that it was easier for them to attend that way.

We do have some winter workshops coming up on Zoom – see details elsewhere in this newsletter. Even on Zoom space will be limited because of the need for participation, but obviously the workshops are not quite as 'regional' as normal. I am offering a course on the Romantic poets for Senior College this winter, and I decided to piggyback from that to offer a workshop on what we can learn from them as poets. I do hope some of you will be interested in that.

I wish all of you the happiest possible holiday season in the circumstances.

Jenny

“Poetry is the journal of the sea animal living on land, wanting to fly in the air. Poetry is a search for syllables to shoot at the barriers of the unknown and the unknowable. Poetry is a phantom script telling how rainbows are made and why they go away.”

~ Carl Sandburg

STANZA, Maine Poets Society
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Augusta, ME 04330

FIRST CLASS

Stanza is the tri-annual
newsletter of the
Maine Poets Society
promoting good poetry
since 1936

FMI or to join, write
Gus Peterson
12 Middle Street
Randolph, ME 04346

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MPS website (MainePoetsSociety.com)

MPS Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1747588905507733/>. When you indicate an interest in joining the group, Jenny (as Administrator) will be able to confirm your request. You can also search within Facebook for Maine Poets Society. Choose the option that says “public group.”