

STANZA

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE MAINE POETS SOCIETY

VOLUME 24, NUMBER 1

MARCH 2016

NEWS OF OUR NEXT MEETING

Our next meeting will be Saturday, May 21, 2016, in the Fireplace Room of the Randall Student Tech Center at the University of Maine, Augusta.

Directions to the Augusta campus:

From the North: Take Interstate 95 south to exit 112, turn left off exit ramp. Go about .75 miles and turn right at the UMA entrance sign.

From the South: Take Interstate 95 north to Exit 112 A, turn right off exit ramp. Go about .75 miles and turn right at the UMA entrance sign.

As usual, there will be a \$12 registration fee which includes lunch. (Please note that the fee applies to all attendees and is the same even if individuals opt not to share in the lunch.)

Agenda for Meeting

9:30	Registration and coffee	1:00	<u>Subject Contest:</u> "Wild Animals" – 24-line limit Member judge: Woody Woodsum
10:00	Business Meeting	1:50	Member judge reads own work
10:30	<u>Form Contest:</u> Ekphrastic – 24-line limit Guest judge: Carl Little	2:30	Announcements and closing
11:20	Guest judge reads own work	2:45	Reading in the Round
12:00	Lunch and Silent Auction		

Contest Submissions

(Submission to a contest constitutes permission to publish.)

- Send to Jennifer Doughty
278 Flaggy Meadow Rd.
Gorham, ME 04038
- **DEADLINE:** April 21, 2016
- 1 poem per contest (no fee)
- 2 copies of each poem (ONE of each identified)
- Envelope: Letter-size (long, #10) marked "CONTEST"
- INCLUDE SASE!!

Reminder: In order to participate in MPS contests, you have to be a current member of MPS. Membership terms run January through December 31. Dues are still \$20, and checks should be sent to our Treasurer/ Membership Chair Margie Kivel, 71 Ben Paul Lane, Apt.1, Rockport, ME 04856.

Benefits of membership include a chance to be part of the poetic community in Maine, to have your work evaluated, participate in a round robin, internal workshops, financial support for state workshops, to share what other poets are doing, to socialize with other poets at lunch, and have an opportunity to talk to the judges.

Also note: The mailing lists will be updated prior to the next *Stanza* to reflect only those with current memberships. We urge members to renew for 2017 before the end of the year.

AM Poem—FORM, Ekphrastic (24-line limit): Guest Judge, Carl Little. For centuries, works of art have inspired poets to put pen to paper. The ancient Greeks called the form “ekphrasis”. In those days, the term referred to a vivid description of an object—a piece of fine clothing, say, or household items of superior craftsmanship, or exceptionally splendid buildings. An oft-cited example of early ekphrasis is the bard Homer’s lyrical account in the *Iliad* of how the blacksmith god Hephaestus forged the famous Shield of Achilles.

Ekphrastic poems are now understood to focus on works of art. And modern ekphrastic poems have generally shrugged off antiquity’s obsession with elaborate description, and instead have tried to interpret, inhabit, confront, and speak to their subjects. According to poet John Hollander, ekphrastic approaches include “addressing the image, making it speak, speaking of it interpretively, meditating upon the moment of viewing it, and so forth.” Hollander published the standard text on the subject, *The Gazer’s Spirit: Poems Speaking to Silent Works of Art*, in 1995.

For the past several decades, art-inspired poetry has undergone something of a renaissance; these days, it seems that nearly every new book of verse features at least one poem based on an artwork—a painting, sculpture, photograph, what have you. For some years now, I have collected poems for presentations on the ekphrastic form. Part of my motive is to complete the pairing by showing a particular work and reading the poem it inspired. To have one without the other seems a bit unfair to the artist, whose work has been, in a manner of speaking, appropriated into the service of poetic expression. And rarely are the artwork and verse joined in one place.

For this contest, I would like to have the poem and the image that inspired it, even if the latter is a photocopy. Having both will help me in judging the work.

PM Poem—SUBJECT, Wild Animals (24-line limit): Member Judge, Woody Woodsum. Wild animals, including insects and fish, have inspired poets from the very beginning. The range of styles and topics is immense. Recall or read Lawrence’s “Snake” or his “The Elephant is Slow to Mate”. There is Frost’s “Design,” Blake’s “The Tyger,” Dickinson’s “I heard a Fly Buzz When I Died” and “A Narrow Fellow in the Grass,” not to mention Mary Oliver’s “Hummingbirds,” “The Hermit Crab,” and many more of her animal poems. Whitman wrote “A Noiseless Patient Spider”; Bishop wrote “The Armadillo” and “The Fish.” Hopkins wrote “The Windhover,” and Kumin wrote “Woodchucks”. One fun favorite is Ciardi’s “The Shark”. These poems and more focus on sex, fear, wonder, varmint infestation, beauty, cross species communication, death, and more. Some of these poems barely mention the animal (Oliver’s “Wild Geese”) and many focus on the animal in every line or almost every line. Feel free to explore that range.

Woody Woodsum has written about doves, a dead whale, crickets, basking sharks, and slugs. He looks forward to reading your animal poems. Please be sure to honor the 24-line limit.

ABOUT THE JUDGES

Guest Judge Carl Little is a native New Yorker, who has lived in Somesville, Maine, since 1989. He holds degrees from Dartmouth, Middlebury and Columbia. Prior to joining the staff at the Maine Community Foundation in 2001 as director of communications and marketing, he directed the public affairs office and the Ethel Blum Gallery at College of the Atlantic.

He has published two collections of poetry: *10,000 Dreams Explained* and *Ocean Drinker: New & Selected Poems*. His poems have appeared in a number of journals ranging from the *Black Fly Review* to *Words & Images*, as well as in three anthologies edited by Wesley McNair, Maine’s Poet Laureate. His poem “Glacial Erotic” was recently featured in McNair’s syndicated “Take Heart” column.

Among his most recent art books are *Jeffery Becton: The Farthest House* and *Irene Hardwicke Olivieri: Closer to Wildness*. His book *Eric Hopkins: Above and Beyond* won the first John N. Cole Award from Maine Writers & Publishers Alliance in 2012.

Member Judge Woody Woodsum has taught at two universities and five public schools. His poetry has appeared in many publications, including *Rattle, Down East, Yankee, Prairie Schooner, The Southern Review*, and *Beloit Poetry Journal*. His work has been broadcast on Maine Public Radio. He is a former Ruth Lilly poet, a two time winner of the Avery Hopwood Award, and a winner of the Bread Loaf Poetry Prize. His work is online at *Poetry Daily* and *fishhousepoems.org*. Moon Pie Press published his first book, *The Lawns of Lobstermen*.

REPORTS OF REGIONAL MEETINGS

Gathering #1 – Rockland: “A Day of Writing Dangerously”

For six hours on January 9th, six MPS poets got “down and dangerous” in a workshop about taking risks in poetry. Led by veteran workshop leader, Carol Bachofner, the group was eased into somewhat uncharted waters “off the coast of *standard*.”

Birthday cake was served at one of the breaks as the group celebrated Carol’s birthday. They wrote poems they did not expect, in ways they had not imagined. All were interested in doing this kind of gathering again, and suggested we somehow incorporate workshop writing/teaching into at least one of our regular meetings.

Carol had several handouts for the participants, including an essay by Djelloul Marbrook, *What Poetry is Made Of*. The essay provided a platform for Carol’s discussion on ways to open up poems and take more risks with style (think structure) and content. Workshop participants took it upon themselves in the subsequent three writing exercises to do just that. Attendees expressed the positive results they attained in the day’s writing experience:

I loved your workshop. It kicked my ass right into the no-fly zone of poetry. The workshop was inspiring! The workshop, it was very helpful. Dangerous poetry is well — thrilling! Thank you again for today’s great workshop! Wow. Never a better spent \$5. :) Wonderful format, content, group, and poems! What have I been writing before this? I am off on a rocket ship to new galaxies! Nothing better than expertly-guided writing to make you feel brave.



Breaking and bending form, the group is engrossed in spreading their poetic wings.

Gathering #2 – Central Maine

On February 13, the Regional MPS Meeting for Central Maine, led by James Breslin, took place at Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Augusta. The meeting was preceded by coffee, donuts, and time for socializing. The meeting began with handouts of two poems that would be discussed: “Ars Poetica” by Archibald MacLeish and “Paradoxes and Oxymorons” by John Ashbery. Participants were asked to look for specific devices in those poems.

There was further discussion of various literary devices that poets may use in their poems, with many examples from the poetry of Robert Frost. The discussion was based on printouts of material from the website FrostFriends.org. These were very useful, because the poems illustrated a variety of devices in Frost’s work.

Participants then made a collaborative effort to write a short poem on the theme of winter. There was a great deal of lively discussion on appropriate lines, phrases and images.

After lunch each participant was invited to read aloud a poem of his or her creation that had been brought for that purpose. Three poems were selected by vote of the members of the group to go into the *Stanza*.

Gathering #3 – Southern Maine

On March 12, the Southern Maine regional gathering was a workshop on rhythm and meter led by Jenny Doughty. The venue was the home in Westbrook of Alice Persons of Moon Pie Press, who generously donated not only her space but also baked goods, tea and coffee, and (even more welcome) joined us for the day. We really appreciate Alice's generosity towards MPS.

In the morning, the workshop focused on the basics of syllable counting, stress patterns, and the most commonly used meters. We also studied the stress patterns in various poems, and looked at how poets used different stress patterns to create the effect they were looking at. We did a writing exercise using one of the poems as a model poem and will send our poems to Carol Bachofner for her workshop portfolio, when we have all had time to tweak them.

In the afternoon, we workshopped five draft poems brought by members of the workshop, and then did a reading in the round of some finished poems and voted on which to send to *Stanza*. Everybody enjoyed the workshop and hoped to see more events like this in future.

POEMS FROM GATHERING #1 - ROCKLAND

o r i o n
i
r s
a e s
over the hills,
known to most neophytes
stargazing this seamless night,
thankful there is no monster moon,
devouring lunar light to hinder night sight.

— Susan VanAlsenoy
January 2016

Lament

Oh Head, Oh Ears

Phalanx against false light,
habituation,
Shadows
thrumming my back.

Double-breasted Self
perpetuates,
scrapes,
limps,
hungers,
Inserts Mind's forecept
between
Time,
Refuses to rehearse
doubt's sullen dirt.

Words swirl, thicken,
Pull down,
spread-out-petals'
open mouth,
seething joy,
plum.

Voices stand in the corner
spin webs
gnaw purple bone.

Oh Head, Oh Ear

— Catherine Neuhardt-Minor
January, 2016

The Province

Say the unsayable.
 Occupy the rafters, cantilevers, eaves.

Measure
 your tolerance for alchemy

Be in the province of ecstasy and epiphany

WARNING:

*The poet is the messenger
 We shoot messengers
 We bury messages*

*deep
 dank
 Hoffa-esque*

Be in the proximity of alchemy:

no timid poetry
 no holy of holies
 no jongleurs

Say the thing you don't know
 Sing the song of the dog whistle
 Be in the province of waiting — with your mouth on fire.

— Carol Willette Bachofner
 January 2016

**Please Let Us Know
 When Your Contact Info Changes**

Whether you receive the *Stanza* by email or by the US postal service, it is important that you let us know of changes as soon as they occur. Margery Kivel, Membership Secretary, is the person to contact with changes (address, phone number, and/or email address). She can be reached at mtkivel@gmail.com.

POEMS FROM GATHERING #2 – CENTRAL MAINE

Bird on Snow

A sparrow perching
 on the crusted
 snow that covered
 last year's garden
 seemed a brown

and fragile thing.
 And still she held
 the white world
 spread about her
 in the cold clasp
 of tiny claws.

-- James Breslin

January in Major

Wind came last night,
sudden as a conductor's tap.

The murmuring cloud,
hushed, took their seats.

Who knows what notes bowed
slender strings of moonlight,

but like a crash of cymbal
this morning's sunrise

striking every surface,
the lead laden air given way

to crescendos of laughter,
small staccato of kindness -

a door held open, the seat
for an organ of weary bones,

small filigrees of smile
like clef notes on the lips

of passers by chugging
beneath plumes of breath,

a measure of spring in the beat
of their frozen feet,

as if they were light, like music
kissed through a flute.

-- Gus Peterson

Hanging Fall

White-washed sky suspends
the yellow ball schedule
of comings and goings.

Chimney smoke pokes the firmament
for signs of movement, as if
the only recourse is to go back,

corner-fold
sky's misfortune.

I sweep and wash floors,
lay down a shine
 bounce some light

but clarity evades
this Dada-sort-of-day,
where clocks

 droop,

 and hens

 stoop

under weight of sky's
ambivalence – all things
move

 ver-y

 slowly.

 -- Margie Kivel

Opportunity Grant Appreciation

Dear Maine Poets,

I had an opportunity to avail myself of an Opportunity Grant to attend a workshop this past summer with Lee Sharkey, former Editor of the *Beloit Poetry Magazine*. Lee is herself an accomplished poet who has been widely published. She has written several books. After a short introduction, participants each presented a poem we had previously sent to her. All, including Lee, made comments and suggestions. The workshop was small, so each of us had chance to spend up to a half hour during which she worked with the poet on improving and refining our poems. She was very helpful to me. This made this the most beneficial workshop I have had the pleasure to attend. Thank you, thank you MPS for this wonderful day.

-- James Breslin

POEMS FROM GATHERING #3 – SOUTHERN MAINE

Redneck

He kept strange company drank too much, got in fights in biker bars
 and picked up girls twenty years his junior. He was a charmer. Grant him that.
 He called death Uncle Mort for he liked to take chances which got him
 A Bronze Star in 'Nam and made him Sergeant on only his second tour.
 He came home feeling betrayed by America
 when it pulled out and gave it to the Commies anyway,
 believing that "God, Guns, and Guts" had made America great.
 He married a girl with a savior-complex who saw good in him few others saw.
 except his friends who were all drunks and druggies anyway.
 If she called him on his drinking and drugging
 he would sulk for days then promise to reform but didn't.
 She divorced him to marry the kind of man she had hoped he'd become
 giving her three children and contentment until she died of breast cancer
 just as her oldest daughter graduated with a full scholarship to Swarthmore.
 He came to the wake smelling of bourbon and Bud
 driving his souped up Harley apologizing to her husband
 and those around him, to the embarrassment of the family,
 for letting her down with tears in his blood-shot eyes.
 Who was that they asked saying O...and what did she ever see in *him*?
 He went home reflecting on his life, the only woman he had ever loved,
 and all he had lost by being who he was and wasn't.
 Then he put a Ruger 357 Magnum into his mouth and fired.
 His friends poured beer on his grave saying of him
 he was the most generous man that each had ever known.

-- James Breslin

Gradation

Ledges lay low, waiting, waiting for the dawn-crack
 to lift the weight of dark, separate life from myth,
 swing the clapper, ping memories of violets under
 leaves with their crisp-folded intentions for love, feel
 the blue that hangs with crimson, come to make us
 whole.

In the loving hall now, dishing it out on trays for the
 hungry, free for the taking, no tricks or strings, just
 open-door donation of light-dust.

-- Margie Kivel

Reunion

I miss who's hugging me by five decades.
 The smile hidden in overgrowth like vetch,
 Hippie hair or Bush hair?
 Eyes more green than blue
 or do I mis-remember?
 They must have seen too much
 for the skies we once knew, something hard
 something like too much life.
 Thick in denim he'd never have worn then
 waiting for a voice — waiting for a laugh —
 I'm lost, want to be the one
 who knows him without a stumble.
 Come on!
 His name.
 His name.
 Come on!

-- Carol Willette Bachofner

Member Profile – Robert M. Chute

by Anne Hammond, Historian



Born in Naples, Maine, Robert explored Long Lake from his father's hotel, a large house which his parents turned into a hotel. The bus dropped people off 50 feet from the front door. It was the days of large, one-stop hotels for people wishing to escape the city.

Robert went to a one-room school house with Ruth Pitts his teacher for eight years. When he finished his work early, she sent him to the swamp to see what he could see. It was the beginning of a career in biology.

Miss Pitts also had him read AA Milne and Kipling which inspired him to write poetry. He described the day exactly as it occurred. One day he was sitting in the window listening to the rain when he began to write. "I'm seeing things the way I never have before," he said at age 12.

What was the subtext of his poetry? "I never thought of it that way. Verse and rhythm were started so people could remember a story."

He joined Maine Poets Society with an award from the Maine Publishers and Writers Alliance for being a judge in a Waterville contest 20 years ago.

He doesn't join social or political groups. "I'm asocial" he explained. But attendance to the Maine Poets Society, formerly known as the Poetry Fellowship of Maine, was interesting to him because he liked hearing people talk about poetry.

Also the freedom of the gathering: you say nothing or something as you feel.

After Fryeburg Academy, his high school, he joined the military. In 1944-45 he was in the Air Force where he was trained in a Texas airbase in cryptography. When he retired, he used the GI bill for four years at the University of Maine, Orono and the Johns Hopkins School.

Here he made a critical decision. "I like biology, but not administration." Thus he started on a career of 40 years in the classroom.

He met his wife Vicky in high school. They married and had two boys. One of the boys lives with him, as he is 90 years old.

He and his wife began their career in California, but after two years, they decided they didn't like cities.

A letter from six of his students makes him quite proud. They commented on his seminar, the Independent Seminar, which meant students could select their own topic and make up their own curriculum.

Hearing about a job at Bates College, he applied, and soon Vicky and Robert were living on Upper Range Pond, Poland, Maine. They found a peninsula which allowed them to see the water from three sides, built a house and lived there for 20 years.

Robert has published three mystery novels and 16 books of poetry. The novels are the best I have seen on warden life. He creates a running narrative with intriguing description that evokes the woods.

His poems describe what he has faced: the six generations of Chutes in York County, the wilds near his home. Not wilderness, but wilds. He sees many things in the rocks, the trees and the woods which most people don't notice.

"People chase after things they think will make them happy," he quoted a mystic. "But the real happiness is in your own head." His own career has made that happen.

Member News: Margie Kivel's poem, "Jailhouse Rock" was awarded First Place in *Iron Horse Review's* inaugural PhotoFinish contest. It was published on New Year's Eve on Twitter. Their epub link is: http://issuu.com/ironhorsereview/docs/ihr_photo_finish_2015_final_single?e=7943022/31982462. Use the arrows to page through the publication. The Contributors Page at the end includes Margie's genesis of her poem as well as a brief bio.



President's Ink

Poets! Lovers of Poetry!

Spring is trying to spring, and I give thanks for a mild winter. What that means in terms of climate change is not yet known, but I appreciated the lack of ice, falls, breaks, and the incessant shoveling and plowing that was our fare last winter.

Keeping me particularly warm this winter were the three Winter Gatherings, the first in Rockland, the second in Augusta, the third in Westbrook. I attended all three and am pleased to report what is, in my estimation, a huge success. As Anne Hammond said following the January gathering, "best five dollars I've spent in a long time." I agree with her. Each gathering was unique and each offered participants a chance to learn something new (or review) in a relaxed setting, with a hardy band of poet-people interested in learning and the hands-on experience of writing and learning together. Each gathering produced amazing work, had great handouts to take home, and spawned a renewed energy for writing.

I am looking at how we can insert that kind of experience into our regular meetings, to keep us excited and to entice new members. Our numbers are in a downward trend right now for many reasons, including our aging membership and LIFE intrusions (illness, caring for a person at home, health issues, etc.). In the coming months I will be putting together a proposal to remedy the numbers. Watch for this proposal at the May meeting in Augusta.

Finally, along those lines, please do plan on attending our May meeting at UMA on May 21st and PLEASE bring a friend or offer transportation to a member who prefers not to drive.

Wishing you, as always, GOOD INK.

Carol

Electronic Copies of Poems for the *Stanza*

When you submit poems for our contests, please keep an electronic copy ***as submitted*** on your computer. If your work is selected for recognition by a judge (whether a prize or an honorable mention), please email an electronic copy to *Stanza* editor, Sally Joy, as soon as possible after you are aware of this. If you've made changes since your submission, please do not include them. Give us the poem as it was judged. Thank you.

Deadline for Member and Publication News for the next *Stanza*: August 11, 2016.

STANZA, Maine Poets Society
16 Riverton Street
Augusta, ME 04864

FIRST CLASS

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

FMI or to join, write
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Check out our Website!

Please check out the MPS website (MainePoetsSociety.com) for all you need to know about the Maine Poets Society: Gatherings, Directions, Membership Application, Contests, Contact Information, President's Message, Opportunity Grants and more.