

STANZA

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE MAINE POETS SOCIETY

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DECEMBER 2019

NEWS OF OUR NEXT MEETING

Our next meeting will be Saturday, May 16, 2020, at the First Universalist Church, 169 Pleasant St. in Auburn. Bring a bag lunch. Coffee, tea, and bottled water and some breakfast goodies will be provided. A \$10 registration fee will help defray the cost of renting the facility.

Agenda for Meeting

9:30	Registration and coffee	12:30	Open Mic – sign up at registration - first readers will be those who have not submitted a poem for the contest.
10:00	Business Meeting	1:00	<u>Contest</u> : “Truth telling”– free verse preferred – 30 line limit Judge: David Sloan
10:30	Mini Workshop led by Claire Hersom		
12:00	Lunch (bring your own) - Book exchange to replace the Silent Auction (If books you bring are there at the end of the meeting, you may reclaim them. Otherwise they’ll be given to Good Will.)	1:50	Judge reads his own work and/or offers poetry writing helps.

Contest Submissions

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

Send to: James Breslin
451 Bassett Rd.

Winslow, ME 04901

DEADLINE: April 16, 2020

1 poem (no fee)

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

ABOUT THE JUDGE

David Sloan is a graduate of the University of Southern Maine’s Stonecoast MFA Poetry Program. He teaches at Maine Coast Waldorf High School in Freeport. His debut poetry collection—*The Irresistible In-Between*—was published by Deerbrook Editions in 2013. His poetry has appeared in *The Café Review*, *Chiron Review*, *The Cider Press Review*, *Confrontation*, *Down East*, *Innisfree*, *Lascaux Review*, *Moon City Review*, *Naugatuck River Review*, *New Millennium Writings and Passager*, among others. He received the 2012 Betsy Sholl Award, Maine Literary awards in 2012 and 2016, The Margaret F. Tripp Poetry Award, and has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize. He was the first winner of the Maine Poets Society Prize Poem contest. He is currently enjoying life's latest delight—grandfatherhood!

Notes from the judge about the contest poem:

Contest Poem— Truth-telling covers so much territory. It can imply a tension between concealment and revelation, between deception and confession; or it can just be a wading through a dark swamp toward some dim light or firm footing. It can be as much a rueful self-realization as an admission under oath. Truth-telling lays bare, interrogates, tattles, whispers, exposes, betrays, broadcasts, lets slip, peels the onion, breaks the news. So many great poets and great poems exemplify this theme; here are a few: Carolyn Forché's "The Colonel," Robert Hass' "A Story about the Body," James Wright's "Lying in a Hammock at William Duffy's Farm in Pine Island, Minnesota," Sharon Olds' "Ideographs" or "I Go Back to 1937," Elizabeth Bishop's "One Art," Mary Oliver's "In Blackwater Woods," and Joseph Fasano's "Figure."

Here's a "truth telling" poem of David's own:

Two Approaches to Gardening

You don't seem to mind the rain as you kneel
straw-hatted in the garden and weed around
drooping peonies. The butterfly bush has finally
sprouted again, proof, despite your protests,
my zealous pruning has only mimicked murder.

You're so focused on this futile scrabbling,
as if weeding could keep stars from winking out,
or forestall other inevitabilities. I watch you work
without detection and wonder what keeps us
together. Children gone, we agree now

on so little; you want pine bark mulch,
I prefer seaweed. You're yearning for bees,
but I know who will have to tend them.
You desire fellowship, long phone calls,
a glass of wine in the evening. I could spend
days pedaling back roads skirting the bay,
sifting a weedy garden of words in need
of constant pruning. I've given what I could,
but you want more—even now, some
wordless assurance that, shears shelved,
I'll take my place beside you in the rain.

Winter Gatherings – 2020

We are planning two regional meetings this year. Anyone is welcome to participate in either or both. An RSVP is asked for the Southern Maine gathering. RSVP is not necessary for the Open Mic in Augusta.

Regional Gathering Southern Maine Area

Saturday, January 11, 2020 (Snow date, January 18)

9:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

HOST: Jenny Doughty

Location: The home of Alice Persons, 16 Walton Street, Westbrook.

NOTE: There are cats at this location

BRING: \$5 registration fee. A brown bag lunch, a notepad and pen, and poem(s) to share. Coffee/tea and water will be provided. Also cookies (everything goes better with cookies).

RSVP by January 4 to Jenny at jmdought@maine.rr.com or (207) 207-699-9243.

FORMAT: Up to 10 people

EMPHASIS: Finding Your Poetic Roots

9:30	Check-in and coffee
10:00-12:00	Finding your poetic roots
12:00	Lunch and conversation
12:45-2:30	Workshop. Please include in your RSVP if you would like to bring a poem with you to be workshopped and bring 12 copies of the poem with you. If more wish to participate than time will allow, slots will be allocated on a first come, first served basis according to when the request was received. If you have never taken part in a poetry workshop before, please check out http://www.mshogue.com/poetry/wkshp.html . Line length of poems for workshopping should not exceed 24 lines.
2:30-3:00	Reading in the round, vote on 3 poems to send to the <i>Stanza</i> . 24 line limit.
3:00	Fill out evaluation forms; farewell and homeward.

Regional Gathering Augusta Area

Saturday, February 22, 2020 – 10:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

HOST: Sally Joy

Location: Maine Authors Room, Maine State Library, Augusta

BRING: Several poems to share (Time allotted for each reader will depend on number of attendees.)

RSVP not required – Consider yourself invited. Feel free to invite others, whether to read or just to listen.

FORMAT: Open Mic – number not limited (**Note:** There is no cost to attend or to participate.)

10:15	Sign-in; meet and greet.
10:30-12:30	Open Mic

October 2019 CONTEST WINNERS

Contest—Subject: Place— Judge, Kevin Sweeney

First Prize— Alice Haines**Kennedy Park, Lewiston**

The gray-green Union soldier stands at ease,
companion to a spacious domed gazebo.

Genteel elms were long ago replaced
by oaks and maples, half a century old.

Their columned trunks mark geometric lanes
along wide lawns with views nine acres deep.

We see our neighbors gathered, visiting
on iron benches, picnicking on grass.

The park's carved name commemorates in gold
the visit of a president, our pride
until two cultures brawled one late June night;
a black man killed a white man with a brick.
We held our breaths. Some feared, some wished, revenge.
The bell-tower blazed with light, police patrolled,
curfews stole our leisure. A year of restraint,
of cautious steps, and finally an arrest.

Now tiny girls in pigtails and pink shorts
dart about with friends in miniature gowns.
Young men jostle for a basketball,
children swing, a college dance troupe leaps.
And though we side-step strangers still
the bandstand shelters all kinds when it rains.
Our soldier grips his rifle like a staff
above the plaque to *Freedom's Victory*.

Second Prize—Paul Liebow**Island Rules**

We all played together, but always by *Island Rules*—
very different rules, even from small town rules!

It's fine if someone just happens to drive a big
bulldozer across your lawn during breakfast,
as long as they wave at you through the window,
smile, miss all your lawn furniture and the dog.

It's ok to shoot the legs off of someone's picnic table—
just don't shoot the legs off the someone picnicking.

It's nice to drive your truck off the road twice
on one night, with twelve drunk teeny boppers
from away lying in the truck-bed, on a tiny
island with barely three miles of old dirt roads

but please don't leave anyone pinned underneath
or any warm beer to feed the slugs in the woods
and you can then be seen pounding the door back
into shape in your front yard for three days straight.

It's all just in fun if you spray paint
your name and *yellow truck* on your truck
as long as your truck is of another color,
particularly if your truck is a car or a scooter.

It's good to borrow beer on a long-term basis
if your truck can only be driven backwards,
has a pirate's face painted on a black trash bag
and an upside-down American flag beneath it.

It's legal to use radar-assisted lobster-harvesting
at night, as long as you put the blue ones back.

It's wise to scream you're running drunk into the sea,
but just don't let yourself remember next morning
they held you down failing on the beach for three hours
instead of calling 911 for Police, Fire and EMS.

Third Prize—Sally Joy**This Place We Chose**

I stand here quietly before the polished granite stone,
your name and dates on the left-hand side,
my name and birth date on the right.

I've brought a plastic gallon jug with water
for the flowers that I placed here late in May:
red, white and blue for Memorial Day.
I have scissors to clip the gone-by blossoms from the red geranium
and a bag to carry them away.
Removing them will give new blossoms center stage.
White alyssum and blue lobelia are doing well.
Last year, white petunias overtook the whole display.

I know that you're not here.
I have not come to visit, but do reminisce.
I remember when you showed me where our lot would be
and I realized it was not far from that of friends.
"Lil and I will be within shouting distance," I declared.
You said it would not matter.
Maybe not, but there was comfort in the thought.
Still is.

I walk the half-block distance to their stones
and stand in front of them a while,
remembering their more than 70-year marriage,
and how very much they valued one another.
I recall his chuckle when she'd say something that amused him
and his words of endearment: "Lillian, you darn fool!"

I walk back again to our lot,
glad you honored my request that it
be in a place where there are trees.
It matters, at least as much as having Lil nearby.

1st Honorable Mention—**Darlene Glover****Wedding Gone Awry**

It wasn't the church aisle she had envisioned
as she walked the corridor
on the arm of her grandson.
It wasn't the tuxedo he had been measured for
as he pulled the sheet
to hide his too-short johnny
and his newly acquired scar.
It wasn't the sound of a thundering organ
but slightly off-key tenor
of the janitor humming Lohengrin
while the nurses threw rose petals
on a floor that smelled of bleach.
Outside the hurricane howled
and the impromptu guests were strangers
bonded by long hours in the ICU waiting room.
The cafeteria sent cupcakes.
Although the groom could not consume,
he gently fed one to his bride
and she kissed a dab of frosting on his lips.
They were wise enough to know
a wedding isn't a place
but a space
where all the broken parts
are healed.

Reminder: Members of MPS are automatically members of the National Federation of State Poetry Societies, and thus eligible to enter their contests. You can find a full list of the contests in each edition of the NFSPS newsletter, *Strophes*, so check out the January issue of *Strophes*, which has been posted to <http://nfspss.com/>

NOTE: The deadline for Publication & Member News for the next *Stanza* is June 10, 2020.

2nd Honorable Mention—Sharon Bray Last August Afternoon at the Shore

One distant Great Blue, assorted ducks, and loons
survive the hunger of eagles.
Freshwater streams from inland bogs
carve steep banked curves
across wide mud flats on the tide.
Six o'clock sun lays down reflective reminders:
almost over...almost gone...
Tomorrow autumn falls. Time I cannot grasp longer
than this riverbank holds rocks or driftwood.

Do you remember a movie or song long after most memory falters?
The Unbearable Lightness of Being comes close to saying what I feel.
So many tasks, all good work, await my return
to the house up across the field.
But the last light of August holds fast
between boulders and leaning trees.

Why would I want to freeze peaches, wash dishes, cook garden greens
when no one is keeping track of minutes, hours of my absence?
At dark, duty (such as it is) will force me
to find my way over the field where deer come out
with spotted fawns and yearlings to eat fresh up from the mowing.
I won't need much light to find the way home.

Publication & Member News

Poems

Jenny Doughty's poem *Imago* is included in the newly-published climate change anthology by Littoral Press, *A Dangerous New World*. Her poem *Self-portrait With Wounds* will be published in the magazine *Sin Fronteras* in March.

Richard Foerster will have poems in the next online issues of *Citron Review* ("First Poem"), *One* ("Aspens"), and *Quiddity* ("In Darkness and Distance"). His poem "Despite" is included in the anthology *A Dangerous New World: Maine Voices on the Climate Crisis*.

Douglass M. Allen has a new poem called *Fetish* scheduled for publication in *Asses of Parnassus*. His poem *Serial Repeater* is scheduled for publication by *Lighten Up* in March. Doug is trying out a trial subscription to *Duothorpe*.

James Breslin was nominated for a Pushcart Prize for his poem "In Ceide Fields, County Mayo, Ireland"

Jim Brosnan's *Nameless Roads*, a poetry collection with colored photos, is now available from Moon Pie Press or from Jim at drjimbroshnan.com. "Early Sunday Morning" in the collection was recently nominated for a 2019 Pushcart Prize. "And What If I Didn't," "Spellbound," and "Trespassing in Topeka" were published in November by *Eunoia Review* in Singapore.

Nancy Orr's poem, "Reclaiming the Earth," was published in *A Dangerous New World: Maine Voices on the Climate Crisis*, released in November 2019 by Littoral Press.

Darlene Glover's poem "January 2019" was published in the winter/spring 2020 edition of *West Coast Maine* magazine.

3rd Honorable Mention—Carol Bachofner The Name of a City, a poem for Kobenhavn

The name of a city is a sacred name.
The name of a city is a sound
that strikes itself on the heart of a people

like a bell in a tower,
a marker for Time itself to notice.

I want all those vowels and consonants
to blow across my ears, every hard and soft sound
to echo along my semi-circular canals,

like the canals of this archipelago.
A friend warns: Don't say Kobenhavn as the Germans do.

We ought always to listen, my friend says,
The city will speak its own name. Listen. Listen.
Don't listen to names invaders pushed on this place.

Don't count pronunciations that might evolve later.
Cover your ears if you must.

For me, I'll ask the ancestors of this place.
The name of a city is its own sacred name.
The name of a city is its own sound.

Books

Monday Morning Poets (Including MPS members, Darlene Glover, Kathryn Tracy, Nancy Orr, Linda DeSantis, and Bill Frayer), *Wit, Wisdom, and Whimsy*, available on Amazon.

James Breslin, *Hummingbird, New and Collected Poems*, Moon Pie Press, 2019

Sarah J. Woolf-Wade's book of poems, *Wolf Moon Down*, Goose River Press, 2018 is available from Goose River Press, Amazon, from Sarah herself at sallyjww@gmail.com, and now also at Sherman's Bookstores.

Ruth F. Guillard's new book, *Bob and His Universe: A Portrait of a Natural Man*," will be available from Tadorna Press, Ithaca, NY, in early 2020. This small, hardcover memoir is an engaging, often humorous tribute to her late husband, Dr. Robert Guillard, oceanographer and microbiologist famous for his "green thumb" in growing algae.

Several MPS members, including President Jenny Doughty, have poems included in *A Dangerous New World*, published by Littoral Press, December 2019, price \$20, with a foreword by Governor Janet Mills.

THE MAINE POETS SOCIETY PRIZE POEM CONTEST 2020

The Maine Poets Society is proud to present our third annual \$100 prize poem contest. This year we are again also offering an additional \$50 prize to Maine poets whose poetry has not been previously published. Publication in a newsletter or an online workshop does not count for this purpose.

The contests are open to all Maine residents, including seasonal. If your entry will be postmarked out of state, please enclose a letter verifying your address when resident in Maine. Entries must be postmarked between January 15th and March 30th 2020.

There is a \$5 entry fee for the \$100 prize poem contest, and a \$2.50 entry fee for the \$50 contest for previously unpublished poets. You can enter up to 4 poems, but you must cover each poem with an entry fee. You may not enter a poem that has been previously published.

Topic and form are left open, but there 50 line limit. Entries exceeding this will be disqualified.

Our distinguished judge for the \$100 prize poem contest in 2020 will be Richard Foerster, winner of the 2019 contest and author of eight poetry collections, whose honors include two fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts. Board members of the Maine Poets Society will judge the contest for previously unpublished poets.

Our prizes will be presented at the 2020 Maine Writers and Publishers Alliance awards evening. The shortlists will be announced beforehand by email and on the MPS Facebook page.

Please send two copies of your poem, one of them identified with your name, contact details (mailing address, email address and telephone number) and which contest you are entering, and one with no additional information on it, to MPS President Jenny Doughty, at 31 Rustic Lane, Portland, ME 04103. Mark your envelope CONTEST.

Enclose a check payable to Maine Poets Society, with 'Contest entry' on the memo line. Entries will not be returned, so please retain a copy.

Additions are being made to the links page on our website:

<https://setup.com/blog/sit-down-and-write-poetry-resources> This one was suggested by a young girl who has used the links page on our website with a reading group in which she participates.

<https://creativewritersopps.blogspot.com/> Three times a week, poet Allison Joseph posts links to creative writing opportunities.

<https://winningwriters.com/> is one of the Writer's Digest 101 Best Websites for Writers



President's Message

Friends and fellow poets

The holidays are almost upon us, and I expect that like me many of you are rushing around with commitments to fulfill and very little time to write anything.

I have grown used to the fact that my year has times when the writing blossoms and fruits more readily and times that are fallow. However, as any gardener knows, the times when nothing is growing are the times when the soil is getting ready. The snow is blanketing it for the winter and (in Maine at any rate) nothing is blooming, but that same snow is keeping the soil warmer and getting the buried bulbs ready for spring bloom.

What do we do during those times? I try to notice things – natural world observations, things about people, thoughts that fly, and I try if I can to jot them down in a small notebook I carry in my handbag. Mostly they are scribbles, and most of them come to nothing. However, if I write one scribbled thought a day and only ten per cent of them amount to anything in the end, then I have three healthy seedlings of new poems at the end of the month.

The same applies to those months when you have energy and time, and you try and write a poem a day (as some people do). Most of them will be like the seed fallen on stony ground, but some will take root and develop into a poem worth keeping.

Enough of the gardening metaphors – I'm only writing them because until my never-ending house renovations are done the garden has to wait. In the meantime, I have a cup of tea on one side of my computer, and my cat is sitting on the other side purring and head-butting me. Christmas is coming, my poem file is not getting fat, but I hope to see some of you at my winter workshop in January, which will be on the topic of "Finding your poetic roots". What's in your poetry DNA?

And of course, let's not forget that in addition to our regular MPS contest on the topic of "Truth telling," we have our annual Prize Poem contest. See details elsewhere in this newsletter.

Happy winter to all.

Jenny

"Sometimes I have loved the peacefulness of an ordinary Sunday. It is like standing in a newly planted garden after a warm rain. You can feel the silent and invisible life." — Marilynne Robinson, from *Gilead*

"Poetry lifts the veil from the hidden beauty of the world, and makes familiar objects be as if they were not familiar." — Percy Bysshe Shelley, from *A Defence of Poetry and Other Essays*.

"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, from *The Atlantic, March 1923*.

"He who draws noble delights from sentiments of poetry is a true poet, though he has never written a line in all his life." — George Sand, from *The Devil's Pool*.

STANZA, Maine Poets Society
16 Riverton Street
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
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Board Members

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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.”