

STANZA

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE MAINE POETS SOCIETY

VOLUME 28, NUMBER 3

JULY 2020

NEWS OF OUR NEXT MEETING

Our next meeting will be on Zoom on September 19 from 10 am. to 12:00 noon. The link will be sent to members via email a few days before the meeting. There will also be a workshop offered at no cost to members in good standing on the following Saturday, Sept. 26, from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. with Linda Aldrich. A link for the workshop will be sent a few days prior to the 26th.

Contest Submissions

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

Send to: James Breslin
451 Bassett Rd.

Winslow, ME 04901

DEADLINE: August 19, 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!!

CONTEST DETAILS

Contest Poem — 30-line limit — Topic: What America Means Now

We count on our poets to observe and aptly describe their own interior struggles, giving us better access to our own. Our poets also help us understand how to think and feel about the complicated exterior or secular world—they bear witness to political turmoil; they give voice to the struggles of others; they refuse to accept the political status quo. For this poem, lyrically interrogate what "America" means to you or to it. You might write of her, as Tony Hoagland or Claude McKay do:

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/42594/america-59779ff466e1f>

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/44691/america-56d223e1ac025>

Or you may write to her as Kathleen Graber <https://aprweb.org/poems/america-peaches>

Langston Hughes <https://poets.org/poem/let-america-be-america-again>

and Allen Ginsberg do: <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/49305/america-56d22b41f119f>

A persona poem would also work: <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/poems/151136/amrica>

The idea here is to find a way to express what it means to be in America right now either by writing to her or about her. Don't be shy! If our poets don't tell the truth, who will?

ABOUT THE JUDGE

Adrian Blevins is the author of the full-length poetry collections *Appalachians Run Amok*, *Live from the Homesick Jamboree*, *The Brass Girl Brouhaha*, and a co-edited collection of essays, *Walk Till the Dogs Get Mean: Meditations on the Forbidden from Contemporary Appalachia*. She is the recipient of many awards and honors including the Wilder Prize for *Appalachians Run Amok*, a Kate Tufts Discovery Award, and a Rona Jaffe Writer's Foundation Award, among many others. She is professor of English at Colby College in Waterville, Maine.

May 2020 CONTEST WINNERS

Contest: Truth Telling—Judge, David Sloan

First Prize—Robert Paul Allen**The Stepfather**

hovered over her bed
 with a lopsided smile,
 his random patches
 of short red hair struggling
 like desert scrub.
 He'd arrived for their "special" time.

In the adjoining twin bed
 her younger brother lay prone
 buried beneath
 his Spiderman comforter.
 His slow regular breathing
 never varied.

She'd pleaded with her mother
 not to leave for the weekend,
 even chased her down
 the smooth blacktop drive.
 "You'll be fine fussbudget,"
 her mother chided, then powered off.

The bed sagged
 as he moved in closer,
 his hands bore islands of age spots,
 his nails, clean, precise like a surgeon's,
 Her lower lip quivered
 as she tried to stay silent.

After he'd finished
 he shuffled out,
 the floorboards creaking
 with his halting gait.
 She clutched her Teddy
 with its right arm dangling,
 left eye long gone,
 and sucked her thumb.

Second Prize—Ruth Guillard**PANDEMIC SPRING 2020**

Find me a reason, any reason—
 The mind hunts for logic
 Houndlike, it ranges the field
 For any trace of explanation
 Finding none
 It lies down in acceptance
 And rests
 On a bank where snowdrops
 Shoulder their way up
 Through last year's leaves, searching
 For the sun

Note: This poem appears in Ruth's recent book *Confluence*, published by Tadorna Press, Ithaca, NY. It was submitted for our contest before publication.

<p>Linda Aldrich tells us her workshop on September 26 will be entitled "The Secret Lives of Words: Etymology in Poetry," with some ideas and representative poems and prompts for later. She says she doesn't imagine in two hours that there would be time to write and share; but there would be time to read and discuss and leave participants with things to try out. "Two hours," she says, "is just a wink and a nod," and adds: "If any of the participants would like to send me a poem for comment after the workshop, I'd be open to responding."</p>

Third Prize—Jenny Doughty**The revolution as physics**

The force of history - only inevitable
in the rear-view mirror, pendulum's swing, bending arc.

Objects in that mirror are closer than they appear;
the restoring force of pendulums is gravity

pulling the heavy bob to restore the status quo.
Before all movement is that which was at rest.

Bending arcs meet stiffness, resistance
against deformation: we must bend, re-bend, stretch

the tensile strength, talk about torque, choose
conventions to shape the bending moment.

Dead loads cause bending – compression at the top,
tension at the bottom, greatest in the center.

Oh pity those in the middle of the road - loaded
beyond endurance. Will you break or bend? And which way?

OPPORTUNITY GRANTS 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.”

First Honorable Mention**Alice Haines****First Time**

Somewhere a baby slept, and by the phone
a note, Keep in the cat, and Help yourself
to snack, they wrote, Be back at ten o'clock.
She heard him knock at eight, in spring's late
light,

her soft young waiting smell a gentle sin,
her bare feet ready for a pilgrimage—
yes, she, the slender hostess of this night,
hair long, unbound, a daring maid fourteen,

invited in her Romeo, a rebel
seventeen-year old, a short but muscled
star in high-tops, t-shirt, close-cropped hair,
who staggered there—then locked the door.
She felt their sonnet tilting, strangely wrong,
then smelled the sickly bite of sniffing-glue.

He slurred— I have to do this.

Time compressed.

His grip was tight, he'd turned
a dangerous guest.

But when she steered him to the master bed
it seemed the thing to do—
as if she should.

She turned the white sheet down
because she could

and fetched a towel to lay upon and helped
her panties off—

as if she could

say no—

she let him in and it was done...she'd lost

it, like she said she would,

then smoothed the sheets,

removed some hairs shed on the pillowcase.

The towel with spot of blood, she hid within

the dirty wash and thought If I pretend

that it's not there, it's not. And no one knew

he left at quarter past.

And no one knew.

Second Honorable Mention**James P. Breslin****Hasmukh**

Hasmukh said his Mother told him how she
 was able to maintain her composure
 while walking on the streets of Calcutta:
 “I don’t look down.”
 But Hasmukh did look down, felt compassion
 and became a doctor.

Shortly after we became close friends
 someone wrote Nigger on the side
 of Hasmukh’s tan Chevrolet,
 when he, a dark-skinned Jain,
 moved into an all-white neighborhood
 in Brownsville, Brooklyn.

When he told me this I phantasized revenge.
 No, he said and spoke of Gandhi.
 Then unabashed he introduced himself
 to all his neighbors, told them what had happened
 and said that if they found something
 in any way objectionable about him
 tell him and he would move.

Each household was ashamed and
 apologized on behalf of whomever it was that
 wrote the slur on Hasmukh’s car.
 Hasmukh had no trouble after that.
 He did not move.

Third Honorable Mention**Pat Violette-Hayden****Unmasked**

Entering a graveyard,
 reminiscing
 boldly written

On the headstone,
 “enough cruelty darling”
 I’m dead

Dozens of black roses,
 scattered on this grave
 are so well deserved

One for every ferocious,
 carnal blow
 inflicted by you

Shadowed from neighbors,
 a shield
 makeup concealed

Paid my respects,
 as obligated
 not a tear shed

As you fester,
 no green grass
 cloaks your grave

Rest in peace,
 and dully
 answer to our maker

The headstone unmasked,
 its true identity
 as I exit with sound-proof lips

“That best portion of a man’s life, his little, nameless, unremembered acts of kindness and love.” —*William Wordsworth*“

We spend precious hours fearing the inevitable. It would be wise to use that time adoring our families, cherishing our friends and living our lives.” —*Maya Angelou*

Publication & Member News

Poems

Jenny Doughty's poem "Self-portrait with wounds" appears in the March 2020 issue of *Sin Fronteras* journal.

Her prose poem "The Flamingo Cup" appeared on New Verse News on June 10th.

<https://newversenews.blogspot.com/2020/06/the-flamingo-cup.html>

Bill Frayer's poem, "The Weight of My Life," has been accepted for the anthology *What But The Music*, to be published by Gelles-Cole Literary Enterprises.

Susan Rancourt's poem "Quiet" will appear in the July 11 edition of *The Tiny Seed Literary Journal*.

Anne Rankin's poem, "How to Save Someone's Life," will appear in the October 2020 issue of *The Healing Muse*.

Books

Richard Foerster's *Boy on a Doorstep: New and Selected Poems* (Tiger Bark Press, 2019) won the 2020 Poetry by the Sea Book Award. Richard received \$500. The virtual award ceremony was conducted via Zoom on June 21 and can be viewed at <http://poetrybytheseaconference.org/2020-virtual-awards-ceremony/>. Richard's portion of the event and his reading begins at minute 47:50.

Margie Kivel's book *My Heart in a Cage* is self-published and available from the author. The cost is \$8.00, which includes shipping. Her mailing address is 192 Main St., Apt. 304, Thomaston, ME 04861. E-mail: poetspomp@gmail.com.

Maine Poets Society Survey 2020

We are asking our members to respond to questions regarding the use of Zoom. President Jenny Doughty will be sending the questions to you as a separate document soon; but if you prefer, you can copy the questions (or retype them) and send your comments to Jenny at jmdought@maine.rr.com. **Please put Maine Poets Society Survey 2020 as the subject line.** Or mail your comments to her at 31 Rustic Lane, Portland, ME 04103.

1. How do you feel about continuing to have our meetings on Zoom after the pandemic recedes? Is there a place still for our twice-yearly main meetings to be in person?
2. Are you interested in attending workshops on Zoom? How long do you feel the maximum length of a Zoom workshop should be?
3. Are you interested in being part of a writers' group on Zoom? Some of our members live in areas where gathering in person is difficult or they have nobody near to them.
4. We are planning a series of "In Conversation" events on Zoom, where I will have a conversation on Zoom with Maine poets about their work and their approach to poetry, and the poet will read some of their work. The idea is to have this as a live event that members can attend via Zoom, but also to record it and make a recording available on our website. How interested would you be in this? Which poets would you like to see if possible?
5. How do you feel about entering our contest via email? The tactic would be that you would email your entry to the Vice President, who would collate the entries into one anonymized document to send to the judge. Would you be more likely or less likely to enter that way? We could still preserve the possibility of entry by snail mail for people without internet access.

"Hello, sun in my face. Hello you who made the morning and spread it over the fields... Watch, now, how I start the day in happiness, in kindness." —*Mary Oliver*

As a member of the Maine Poets Society, what do I get?

I think it can be said, without question, that reality as we know it this year has morphed into something blurry, somewhere between the digital and actual. Thankfully, MPS has adapted well to this new normal. But there are some things your membership gives you that are not so immediately tangible in the current environment, and though we try to promote them in *Stanza* and on the website as much as possible I wanted to give you a cohesive outline of everything you get for your \$20/year, starting with the traditional ones and ending with more recent developments.

- 1. MPS Member Only Contests.** This is the most longstanding benefit. Twice a year we get to be judged by an accomplished practitioner (check *Stanza* on the website for recent judges) and receive personal feedback on a prompted poem. These contests are usually one half of the general meetings in Spring and Fall. Winners get a small cash prize and publication in *Stanza* (and yes, this counts as publication for your author bio!).
- 2. NFSPS Membership.** NFSPS, or the National Federation of State Poetry Societies, is the central body for state poetry societies like MPS, of which there are currently 30. Like us, they exist solely to promote the art of poetry. They do this in part by sponsoring contests both on the state and national level (MPS sponsors one with a Maine theme). Your membership gives you access to enter many of these contests, and a good portion of them have cash prizes. The best way to do this is check out their website at www.nfspd.com. **To enter a contest you must renew with MPS by March 15th**, which is the cutoff for us to notify them of our current active members.
- 3. Opportunity Grants.** This is the MPS's "scholarship" program. We maintain a yearly fund of \$500, disbursed in \$100 increments, on a first come first serve basis to assist membership in attending a workshop, class, or other educational endeavor related to poetry. **To do this you must be in good standing with dues by January 10th every year.** Full details for the application and disbursement process are on the website, or just contact me for information.
- 4. Prize Poem Contest.** We currently sponsor two statewide contests for published/non-published poets from Maine. Both have cash prizes and are open to all membership except board members. This annual contest exists solely as part of our mission to promote poetry in Maine and is separate from our member only ones.
- 5. Writing Workshops/Presentations.** Like the contests we moved to have these twice a year for members only as a benefit of attending meetings. Presenters can be an accomplished poet from outside MPS or the same from within membership. Recent topics have been an introduction to Slam Poetry from Portland, and an engaging workshop by member Claire Hersom over Zoom. We recently moved to this model versus having general meetings be simply a review and presentation of two members only contests.
- 6. Future Online Opportunities.** We are currently exploring at how to implement Zoom technology in a more frequent and accessible way for membership. President Jenny Doughty will be sending a survey around regarding this soon. I encourage you to respond with any ideas you may have.

I hope this helps invigorate and reinforce your continued enthusiasm and membership with us. As always, if you need your current status, or have any other question, just email me at glp3324@gmail.com. Stay safe, stay healthy, and may your inkwells brim with words.

Gus Peterson
Treasurer & Membership



President's Ink July 2020

Well, friends, we can certainly say that this has been a year (since March at any rate) conducive to staying home and writing poems! I hope all of you are well and safe, and using this opportunity creatively.

We here at the Maine Poets Society have been astonished to find that our use of Zoom technology was successful beyond our wildest dreams, and it has led us to think of how we can make creative use of it going forward. Our meeting in May on Zoom, with David Sloan judging our contest, attracted the largest attendance in quite some time – there were 28 of us there, including members who were currently out of state and attended from as far away as Missouri and Vermont. Claire Hersom's Zoom workshop on the following weekend also attracted a sizeable attendance, and was well received.

Your board members had a long discussion about this (on Zoom, of course) recently, and concluded that for many of our members this was preferable to having to travel quite some distance, as Maine is a largish state with a smallish population widely spaced. The saving on expenses involved in renting a space also enables us to enrich the offerings we make to our members, and you will see some benefit from that going forward.

On September 19th we will have the pleasure of a members-only contest judged by Adrian Blevins, and you will see information about that elsewhere in this newsletter. The following Saturday, September 26th, we are fortunate to have been able to arrange a workshop run by the current Portland Poet Laureate, Linda Aldrich, on a subject – “The Secret Lives of Words: Etymology in Poetry” – I don't think I've ever seen addressed in a workshop before. And yet words are central to our practice! I'm really looking forward to that one. Linda's presentation when she judged our contest a couple of years ago in Augusta was very popular indeed, so this should be good.

In October, we are trying out a new Zoom format, in which I will be “in conversation” with a poet. This will be a live event, open to any member who wishes to join in, but we will also record it and make it available on our website (all permissions permitting) for people who couldn't attend to catch up with later. The idea is to have a conversation about poetic practice and approach, and for the interviewee to read some poems from a current book. The first conversation will be with Richard Foerster, author of six books of poetry, who was our judge for the 2019 Prize Poem contest and is currently an MPS member. I am looking forward to this very much. The date is still to be confirmed, but it will be in the second half of October, and a Zoom link will be sent to all members. If this works as well as we all hope, there will be more of these over the next year.

We are still trying to work out how to do this, but at our Zoom board meeting we also discussed using that technology to link people who currently don't have a writing group and would like to be in one that works through Zoom. Watch this space, as we still have to iron out details of how to do this. I am also working on a survey to send round to members to ascertain how you envisage us using that technology going forward, and whether we still want to retain physical meetings in the Covid-19 era.

So, out of all the turmoil and stress of the pandemic comes a whole new flowering!

I hope you have as pleasant a summer as possible, and find time to enter the contest.

Jenny

STANZA, Maine Poets Society
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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

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.”