

STANZA

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE MAINE POETS SOCIETY

VOLUME 25, NUMBER 3

DECEMBER 2017

NEWS OF OUR NEXT MEETING

Our next meeting will be Saturday, April 28, 2018, at the First Universalist Church, 169 Pleasant St. in Auburn. Due to the limited number of attendees at our last several meetings, we ask that people bring a bag lunch. Coffee, tea and bottled water will be provided. A \$10 registration fee will help defray the cost of renting the facility. Previous spring meetings have happened in May, but we believe the April date may work better for a number of our members.

Agenda for Meeting

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| 9:30 | Registration and coffee | 1:00 | <u>Contest</u> : a poem of no more than 30 lines that connects an experience from your own or your family history with a broader social, political, or historical context. Judge: Lee Sharkey |
| 10:00 | Business Meeting | | |
| 10:30 | Open Mic (Poets' Corner) sign up at registration - first readers will be those who have not submitted a poem for the contest. A total of one hour will be allotted for this. | 1:50 | Judge reads her own work and/or offers poetry writing helps. |
| 11:30 | Nate Amadon, of <i>Word Portland</i> will give a presentation on slam poetry. | 2:30 | Announcements and closing |
| 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.) | | |

Contest Submissions

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

Send to: James Breslin
451 Bassett Rd.
Winslow, ME 04901
DEADLINE: March 28, 2018
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 Poem—SUBJECT: Write a poem of no more than 30 lines that connects an experience from your own or your family history with a broader social, political, or historical context.

In "The Dancing" (on page 2), Gerald Stern describes the scene in his parents' house when the family hears over the radio that Germany has surrendered and World War II will come to an end. Stern's poem connects his direct experience on a powerful emotional level to what has been happening in Europe, specifically the murders in the concentration camps.

The Dancing

Gerald Stern, b. 1925

In all these rotten shops, in all this broken furniture
 and wrinkled ties and baseball trophies and coffee pots
 I have never seen a post-war Philco
 with the automatic eye
 nor heard Ravel's "Bolero" the way I did
 in 1945 in that tiny living room
 on Beechwood Boulevard, nor danced as I did
 then, my knives all flashing, my hair all streaming,
 my mother red with laughter, my father cupping
 his left hand under his armpit, doing the dance
 of old Ukraine, the sound of his skin half drum,
 half fart, the world at last a meadow,
 the three of us whirling and singing, the three of us
 screaming and falling, as if we were dying,
 as if we could never stop—in 1945—
 in Pittsburgh, beautiful filthy Pittsburgh, home
 of the evil Mellons, 5,000 miles away
 from the other dancing—in Poland and Germany—
 oh God of mercy, oh wild God.

ABOUT THE JUDGE

Lee Sharkey is the author of *Walking Backwards* (Tupelo, 2016), *Calendars of Fire* (Tupelo, 2013), *A Darker, Sweeter String* (Off the Grid, 2008), and eight earlier full-length poetry collections and chapbooks. Her poetry has appeared in *Consequence*, *Crazyhorse*, *FIELD*, *Kenyon Review*, *Massachusetts Review*, *Seattle Review*, and other journals. Her recognitions include the Ballymaloe International Poetry Prize, the Abraham Sutzkever Centennial Translation Prize, the *RHINO* Editors' Prize, and the Maine Writers and Publishers Alliance's Distinguished Achievement Award.

Winter Gatherings – 2018

Once again, instead of a general meeting in February, we will hold three regional meetings during the winter months. There will be no contests. A \$5 registration fee will cover costs associated with the meeting. Anyone is welcome to participate in any or all of the three. Please note that an RSVP is asked for prior to each meeting.

Regional Gathering Southern Maine Area**Saturday, January 20, 2018 (Snow date, Sunday, January 21)****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 6** to Jenny at jmdought@maine.rr.com or (207) 207-699-9243.**FORMAT:** Up to 12 people**EMPHASIS:** Telling by Showing

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| 9:30 | Check-in and coffee |
| 10:00-12:00 | Telling by showing: writing exercises and handouts to facilitate this. |
| 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 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 17, 2017 – 9:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

HOST: James Breslin

Location: Emmanuel Lutheran Episcopal Church, 209 Eastern Ave, Augusta

BRING: \$5 registration fee. A brown bag lunch.

8 copies of each of two poems of your own. Sign one; do not sign the second. Explanation will be given at the meeting.

RSVP by February 3 to James at jameslindabreslin@gmail.com or (207) 872-5469

FORMAT: Up to 15 people

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| 9:30 | Registration; meet and greet. Please bring your own coffee or other beverage and munchies. |
| 10:00-11:00 | The theme will be Voice. The poet as a person, the poet as a crafts-person, the voice of any characters who speak. Also we'll talk about the audience addressed. A prayer, for example, is addressed to God by a person who prays. Handouts will be provided. |
| 11:00-12:00 | Presentation of poems brought. |
| 12:00-1:00 | Lunch |
| 1:00-2:30 | Continuation of discussion of poems brought. |
| 2:30-3:00 | Fill out evaluation forms; farewell and homeward. |

Regional Gathering Central Maine Area
Saturday, March 3, 2018 – 1:00 to 4:00 p.m.

HOST: Bill Frayer

Location: First Universalist Church, 169 Pleasant St., Auburn.

BRING: \$5 registration fee. Coffee/tea and cookies will be provided

RSVP by February 24 to Bill at billfrayer@gmail.com or 207-899-2822.

FORMAT: Up to 20 people

EMPHASIS: Open Mic

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| 12:45 | Check-in and coffee |
| 1:00-1:15 | Conversation about the Maine Poets Society |
| 1:15-2:15 | Open discussion about "What makes a good poem?" |
| 2:15-4:00 | Open Mic |
| 4:00 | (Evaluations?) Farewell and homeward. |



For the third year, MPS member Bill Frayer led a Senior College Poetry workshop through the University of Southern Maine—Lewiston Auburn College. This year the workshop enrolled twelve participants from Central Maine area, including MPS member, Diane Glover. (Photo by Mary Jane Beardsley)

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| September 2017 CONTEST WINNERS |
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Contest—Subject: Fairy Tale/Popular Culture – Judge, Jeri Theriault

First Prize— Jim Brosnan**Piper’s Promise**

An Irish Folktale

Off the Irish coast
of Donegal
under a blood moon,
a charred chunk
of floating wood—
the yearly sign
requested
by his mother
dead for a century—
settles amidst
cracked clam shells,
blue beach glass,
and a starfish:
proof the blind man
who married
the mermaid
is still alive.

Third Prize—Jenny Doughty**The Dancing Jew**

The rabbi’s tale: a musician, unknown
but talented, came into town, stood
on a street corner and began to play.

People streamed to hear his lilting tunes,
and the whole crowd began to dance, swayed
to the beat, jumped and waved their arms around.

A deaf man walking by thought they’d gone mad.
The rabbi explained that everything
in God’s creation sends out melody,

and Chassidim are moved by this. He asked
if they should cease to dance when they seemed mad
to those who could not hear the music too.

A click-bait FaceBook quiz about religion -
my poet friend and I fell for it and laughed
when he, ex-priest, came out a Dancing Jew.

Poets are those who call to us to the dance.
I picture my friend Greg dancing on stilts
above the crowd, “Look how absurd!” he says

in his own music, set out on the page
in black and white, “Dance with me,” and I jump
and sway, wave my arms around, happy to hear.

Second Prize— Bill Frayer**The Singing Tortoise**

*“It is man who forces himself on things,
not things which force themselves on him.”
The turtle’s song from a West African fairy tale.*

I come upon a modest turtle in the woods
on a smooth stone warmed by the sun,
singing praises to her circumstance.

Her clear notes fall into the cool water
of the nearby brook and carry her secret
deep into the eternity of the dark forest.

She sees me peering, behind a fern,
pauses in mid-verse, silently staring
at me with red, reptilian eyes.

I desperately want to document
this natural miracle and gently prop
my phone against a tree and wait.

We stare. I do not speak. I settle in.
We sit in silence long into the afternoon.
At dusk, she retreats into her shell.

I sit by the light of the moon. Phone on,
awake all night while the battery dies. At dawn
she pokes her head out to observe me, in defeat.

I sit, exhausted, by the gurgling brook.
A dragonfly lands on her shell.
And as I drift off to sleep

I hear her tiny voice, uncaptured,
singing, quietly, again enraptured.

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| <p>NOTE: Due to the limited number of entries in the September contest, the judge opted to select only three for special recognition. She said that was absolutely not a negative statement on the remainder.</p> |
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**Deadline for Member and Publication
News for the next *Stanza*: July 10, 2018.**



President's Message

As I write, Christmas and the New Year are almost upon us. I hope everybody had a splendid holiday season, and that the bathroom scales are kind to you in January.

This year has been a struggle for the Maine Poets Society. Membership is low, and the board is searching for ways to improve that. Our society is a vital part of the poetry community in Maine. Whether we are experienced writers or not, all of us who love to read and write poetry both contribute to and support the literary arts in our beautiful state.

One approach we have decided to adopt is to run a state-wide poetry contest as well as our own contest for members. You will find further details of this elsewhere in this issue of *Stanza*. Our distinguished judge will be former Maine poet laureate Betsy Sholl, and the \$100 prize will be presented during the Maine Writers and Publishers Alliance awards ceremony on May 31, 2018.

We have also reworked the agenda for meetings to allow for more open mic time, to allow members to share their work freely, and to allow time for presentations and workshop as well as for one contest. Prizewinning poet Lee Sharkey will judge the next contest, for our meeting in April. We are also continuing to run our regional meetings in the winter. These have proved very popular, so book your space soon!

Nate Amadon, co-founder and co-executive director of Port Veritas, has also agreed to be with us for our April meeting to share some thoughts about slam poetry. The Portland based nonprofit is now in its eighth year and this summer will send its 7th team of poets to the National Poetry Slam. Nate has represented Port Veritas and Portland Maine at 5 National Poetry Slam Inc. events, coached and co-coached six Port Veritas Teams. He has taught dozens of performance and writing workshops at schools across mid-coast and southern Maine and has been acting, writing and performing in Maine for the past 15 years.

Speaking of membership, I would like to ask all our members reading this to do two things that would help us enormously. One is to renew your own membership as soon as humanly possible. While using up your Christmas leftovers, as you stir your turkey soup or curry with one hand, with your spare hand please write a check for \$20, payable to Maine Poets Society, and as you put out the turkey bones with the trash, take a trip to the mailbox and send it to our Treasurer, Gus Peterson, 12 Middle Street, Randolph, ME 04036. Renewal date is January 1st.

The second thing you can do to help us is to please bring a friend to one of our meetings – either a winter regional meeting or our spring meeting (details elsewhere in *Stanza*). If you belong to a local writers' group, encourage them to come along. If you don't belong to a local writers' group, ask at your local library or community college and see if there is one you can join. And then bring them along!

I wish you all the best for 2018 both in your poetry and your personal lives.

Jenny Doughty (President, MPS)

THE MAINE POETS SOCIETY PRIZE POEM CONTEST 2018

Maine Poets Society is proud to present our inaugural (but we hope annual) prize poem contest.

The contest is open to all Maine residents, including seasonal residents, with the exception of current members of the MPS board. If your entry will be postmarked out of state, please enclose a letter verifying your address when resident in Maine. There is a \$5 entry fee.

The topic and form are left open to the poet's judgment, but there is a line limit of 50 lines. Entries exceeding the limit will be disqualified.

Our distinguished judge in 2018 will be Betsy Sholl, Maine Poet Laureate from 2009-2013. Our prize of \$100 will be presented at the 2018 Maine Writers and Publishers Alliance awards evening, which will be held on Thursday, June 14 in Portland.

Please send two copies of your poem, one of them identified with your name and contact details (mailing address, email address and telephone number) and one with no additional information on it, to MPS President Jenny Doughty, at 278 Flagg Meadow Road, Gorham, ME 04038. Mark your envelope CONTEST.

Entries may be sent any time after January 1, 2018. The closing date for entries is March 10 and entries should be postmarked on or before that date.

Enclose a check for \$5 payable to Maine Poets Society, with 'Contest entry' on the memo line.

Enclose a stamped self-addressed envelope if you would like your entry returned.

Membership Chair's Annual Message

Happy Holidays fellow poets! We are about to embark on a new year, and so comes my yearly duty of asking you to help us see that through as we try some new and exciting things. As you may have garnered from above, MPS is entering a new chapter in its history by sponsoring a statewide contest. This is part of an effort to reach out to different groups and names in the Maine poetry scene not only to attract new membership but to learn from their wisdom and experience in turn. This is, after all, the core mission of MPS.

In addition, we have set up a public Facebook page where members can share anything and everything related to Maine poetry. We have also set up a Round Robin closed group where members can share work in progress and receive feedback if they so wish. Just search for MPS on Facebook or contact myself or Jenny Doughty via email.

All of this is possible solely through your membership renewal: \$20 for one year. A small price to pay to have esteemed poet Lee Sharkey judge your work in this Spring's member-only contest. As always, you also automatically gain membership to the National Federation of State Poetry Societies, and the eligibility to participate in all their contests (more info at www.nfsps.com). What better way to vet your Round Robin offering?

If you need to know your current membership status, don't hesitate to contact me via email or snail mail. I hope your writing this year has been bountiful, and I look forward to seeing all of you in 2018 as we take the next step! Be safe and have a great holiday season.

Gus Peterson
Treasurer and Membership Chair

Publication & Member News

Poems

Karen Farrell has one poem in *Maine Woman Magazine*, October 2017 Issue titled “The Kurpie,” a poem she wrote about a journey she took with her mother to research their ancestry on the Northern border of Poland and Belarus.

Tammi Truax’s poem “Say Her Name” was recently published at The Fem.

<https://thefemlitmag.com/say-her-name-by-tammi-truax-c6b5102682d6>

Richard Foerster’s poem, “Deep Water At The Cove” was featured in the Portland Press Herald. <http://www.pressherald.com/2017/03/19/deep-water-at-the-cove-by-richard-foerster/>

Books

Jenny Doughty, *Sending Bette Davis to the Plumber*, Moon Pie Press, 2017.

Readings

Jenny Doughty will be reading at The Local Buzz in Cape Elizabeth at 4 p.m. on Saturday, January 27 and on Saturday, March 17 at 7 p.m. at Lowry’s Lodge in Westbrook.

Other Member News

Carol Willette Bachofner was selected as the winner of Belfast’s 2017 Maine Postmark Poetry Contest. Her winning poem was “Passagassawaukeag.”

Gus Peterson was featured in the Fall/Winter Issue of The Aurorean.



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 October 2017 issue of Strophes, which has been posted to <http://nfsp.com/>

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
Gus Peterson
12 Middle Street
Randolph, ME 04346

Board Members

Jenny Doughty, President, jmdought@maine.rr.com
James Breslin, Vice President and Program Chair, jamesbreslin7843@gmail.com
Bill Frayer, Secretary, billfrayer@gmail.com
Gus Peterson, Treasurer & Membership Chair, glp3324@gmail.com
Sally Joy, Publicity, Newsletter jsjoy@roadrunner.com

Webmaster, DiTa Ondek dita@dita.org

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.”