



2017, ISSUE 2

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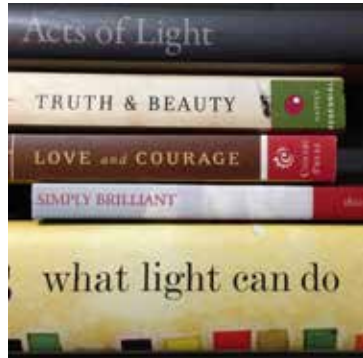
Also available on our website
illinoispoets.org/news-links.htm

IN THIS ISSUE

Book-Spine Poetry Challenge	1
President's Message	1
New Members / Members' News	2
Brewed Awakening	2
Doreen Ambrose-Van Lee	3
Poetry Month and Beyond	4
Chapter Meetings	5
Mark Your Poetry Calendar	5
Membership Form	5

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A Poetry Challenge Straight from the Shelves

In January I took up the challenge of a book-spine poetry contest. The rules were simple: choose a stack of books whose titles create a poem, snap a photo of the book-spine poem, and submit it to the contest by email. Sure, I was willing to try stacking some spines from my crowded book shelves. And, sure, by the end of the week, I was hooked on this new poetry/art project and began to plan an exhibit for National Poetry Month.

Now I pass the challenge to our newsletter readers. Create a spine stack from your own books or choose a selection from the shelves of your local library. Send me a photo of your best book-spine poem for our next issue. Bet you can't make just one!

Kathy Cotton, Editor kalcotton@gmail.com ✍



A Message from the ISPS President

With the new year now underway, ISPS is busy gathering poetry submissions for April Poetry Month's library displays centered on "travel." Be sure to send your three poems no later than February 28 to isps.submissions@gmail.com and your bylaws changes vote to Wilda Morris. Also consider joining with Poets and Patrons for an evening of reading personal work at

After-Words Bookstore in Chicago on April 13. The owner is offering to sell our own books that evening from 5:30 to 8:00 p.m.

This year ISPS will share a table at the Chicago Poetry Fest held on April 29 at the Harold Washington Library. Several interesting programs will be offered that day, and members' books can be sold. Another future event will be in June with a joint art and poetry project sponsored by the Downers Grove Art League. More creative possibilities will be announced as time goes by. Members are invited to submit ideas for other opportunities to share poetry among ourselves and with the public.

In this politically charged time, no matter what our personal beliefs, it is quite likely that our poetry has been affected. As we go forward flipping through calendar pages and tiptoeing through time, we can help record preferred outcomes and characteristics that improve the well-being of us all. Ron Asheton, punk guitarist of the Stooges, stated that "You take a little of the truth from everyone and mix it with a little of your blood and it comes out with your music."

We are being challenged to make good observations and listen to a variety of information in order to write with an open mind and inquiring spirit. Throughout history, poets have been a source people turn to and can be influenced by when other voices are ignored or drowned out. Poetry can also be a powerful tool for guidance and restoring equilibrium. Thus, like so many poets who have gone before us and who live among us, we are part of a national and world project to make this a better place through the written and spoken word. As Adam Zagajewski's poem, "Poetry Searches For Radiance," states, "Poetry searches for radiance,/poetry is the kingly road/that leads us farthest."

Happy writing, Susan T. Moss ✍

ISPS New Members / Members' News

LEE JOHNSON of Downers Grove is a new member of the Lisle Chapter.

SUSAN MOSS of Evanston has been selected as judge of the 2017 Jo-Anne Hirshfield Memorial Poetry Awards contest. She was also recently interviewed by the *Evanston Review and Round Table*.



CURT VEVANG of Palatine has released a new book, *The Nature of Things*, which includes a selection of thought-provoking, introspective, humorous and compassionate poetry and essays, as well as short, short stories about growing up in Chicago in the 40s and 50s. The new book, along with *A Scant Bagatelle*, *The Prince and the Elf* and *The Prince and the Elf, Too*, may be

viewed on Vevang's website, www.curtvevang.com and are available on Amazon.com.



DOROTHY BURY SHAW of Downers Grove, is a new member of the West Suburban Chapter. She writes that a crushing review of poetry submitted to her high school literary magazine left her cloistered with her writing in secret for many years while she pursued fine arts. A graduate of the Chicago Academy of Fine Art, Shaw spent several years as a freelance editorial illustrator, immersed in an artistic community that was both innovative and necessarily commercial. In 2013 her life turned to creating sacred art and poetry, a culmination of a lifetime's journey, exploring different cultures and religions from a place of compassion.

Shaw's work may be viewed on her website, www.dburyshaw.com, and at upcoming shows, including the Chicago Art Show at Navy Pier, April 8 and 9, 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.



DAVID GROSS of Pinckneyville, announces the upcoming release of his poetry collection, *Little Egypt*, published by Flutter Press.



KATHY COTTON of Anna, will exhibit her collection, "On the Edge: Book Spine Poems," at the Carbondale Public Library for Poetry Month. The exhibit closes May 15. Cotton is the winner of the 2017 Book Spine Poetry Contest. ✍

ISPS and Brewed Awakening Co-Sponsor Featured Poets and Open Mic Events

Poets Donna Pucciani and Sheila Elliott will be featured poets at Brewed Awakening, 19 West Quincy (across from the train station), Westmont, on Sunday, March 26. Tom Roby and Jenene Ravesloot will be featured on Sunday, April 30. Poetry readings begin at 12:30 a.m. There will also be open mic readings. Cover charge of \$10.00 includes coffee and a snack.

MARCH 26: ELLIOTT AND PUCCIANI



Sheila Elliott strives to master many literary disciplines—poetry, in particular. Her poems have been published in anthologies and took honors in the 80th Annual Writer's Digest

Writing Competition, and in Poets and Patrons competitions. Elliott is also a frequent reader in the public reading program of Oak Park Writers Group. A native to the Chicago region, she lives in Oak Park.



Donna Pucciani has published poetry on four continents in such diverse journals as *Shi Chao Poetry*, *Poetry Salzburg*, *Journal of Italian Translation*, *Istanbul Literary Review*, *Journal of Medical Humanities*, and *Atlanta Review*. She will read from her seventh book of poetry, *Edges*, as well as her new chapbook, *Ghost Garden*, poems about her family in Italy.

APRIL 30: ROBY AND RAVESLOOT



Tom Roby publishes and performs his poetry in Chicago and also leads workshops and critiques. He is the president of The Poets' Club of Chicago and has developed The Poetry Wheel and The Omniphonic Poetry Trio with Jenene Ravesloot and Lem Roby. His poems have appeared in print

and online, including *Packingtown Review*, *After Hours Press*, *Poetry Fish*, and *Frog Pond*. Some of Roby's readings can be viewed on YouTube. He has written three books of poetry, most recently *Pressure Points*. Two of Tom's poems have been made into a video poem by a member of The Poetry Storehouse and Pool.



Jenene Ravesloot is a member of The Poets' Club of Chicago, ISPS, and Poets & Patrons. She has written five books of poetry, including her newest book, *Sliders*.

Her poems have been published in the *Caravel Literary Arts Journal*, *After Hours Press*, *Connotation Press*, *Packingtown Review*, *The Miscreant*, *Exact Change Only Press*, *The Poetry Storehouse*, and other journals online and in print. ✍

Spotlight on ISPS Poet Doreen Ambrose–Van Lee



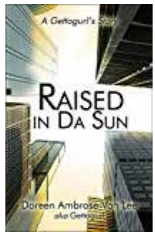
Chicago native Doreen Ambrose–Van Lee was born in 1969 in one of the city's most notorious neighborhoods, Cabrini-Green, where she grew up with two sisters, two brothers, and her parents (mother a substitute teacher; father a factory worker). She earned a BA in print journalism from Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville, served in the Armed Forces for three years, and has worked at the Department of Human Services, State of Illinois, for more than 17 years. She has three

children, ages 21, 18 and 13.

Among Ambrose–Van Lee's published works are *Memo to Maya* (2001, Watermark Press), *Raised in Da Sun* (2006), *Diary of a MidWestern Getto Gurl* (2007), and *Life After Cooley High & Good Times* (2011, available on Amazon.com and BarnesandNoble.com). Her poems and short stories have been published by major publications and appear widely in magazines and anthologies. She is also a founding member of the North Austin Public Library Poetry Group.

Doreen, tell us how you first became interested in poetry.

I began writing at age nine after I heard a poem read by a teacher. It was "The Ballad of Birmingham" by Dudley Randall, and it made me cry. I ran home to my mother and told her what I heard, and I couldn't stop crying. Then I couldn't stop writing poetry.



Your book, Raised in Da Sun, includes poetry from your childhood at Cabrini-Green. Tell us about the collection and the related docu-play.

Raised in Da Sun is a culmination of poems written over a ten-year period, from my youth in Cabrini-Green to being a single parent. It has poems of struggling to adjust as a child, going to school and being married and then becoming a single parent. It has passionate stories of self-love and love and acceptance.

My story was included in the 2015 docu-play, *The Project(s)*, which ran for a season at the American Theatre Company in Chicago. The play touched on me writing poetry as a child and suffering from a speech impediment. In the playwright's summary: "Growing up in Cabrini-Green in the 1970s and '80s, Ambrose saw two contrasting sides of a community. While she felt 'a village was raising her,' Ambrose also witnessed such tragedies as a friend's murder. Now a poet, Ambrose has put these memories on paper. As the play progresses, you see how her poetry is a means of processing both the good and the bad." The American Theatre Company has now teamed up with the National Public Housing Museum to showcase the programs in schools.

What advice do you have for fellow poets?

I would advise poets to write what they feel. Write when they are happy and write when they are sad. I have written a number of poems and read them at funerals or the poems were included in obituaries.

What can you share with our readers about marketing self-published books?

Most of my poetry books were self published. It is a lot of hard work because you have to sell your books yourself. I have marketed my books by word of mouth, and at the *Project(s)* play, at work, church, and at our group's poetry recitals at the library. I've also made websites around my poetry books.

What poetry projects are you currently working on?

I write all the time because I am constantly thinking about life. Currently, I'm working on new poems to send to various newspapers and to recite and share with my poetry group at The North Austin Public Library. ✍

POEMS BY AMBROSE–VAN LEE

LIFE BEYOND THE CLOUDS

(For Nailah Franklin, 4/12/1979 - 9/18/2007)

My heart was heavy upon hearing "body of young,

beautiful and gifted woman" read aloud.

I couldn't fully process the shock

but I took comfort in knowing that

there is abundant life beyond the clouds.

I know that she is experiencing

everlasting joy, peace

and no more pain or stress.

She is with the Father living in absolute

certainty

with no need to wonder or guess.

I can imagine when she entered the

heavenly gates the

trumpets sounded and the moment

the angels saw her their arms were

outstretched.

They immediately embraced her and

said "you are safe

from evil doers, demons and wretches."

While placing a halo atop her head the

cherubim said "there are

no veils of secrecy, no politics, plots,

pretenses, cover ups or shrouds.

Nailah, you are in a much better place, you are

experiencing life beyond the clouds."

–Austin Voice

THIS PLACE

We come to this place too often

Makeshift memorials and coffins

From Dantrell to Derrion

From Hadiya to Trayvon

We are losing ground

So many babies Heaven bound

Leaders and clergy cram for a solution

To age old city pollution

But each time they hold gun turn-in rallies

A body turns up on a street or in an alley

There is no refuge from the morning and

evening news

I turn on the radio and there is even more

abuse

But I have stopped saying "what's next"

and started saying "Thank you, Lord, you know what's best"

One day in the by and by it will all unravel

long after any verdict is reached and long after

the echoing sound of the gavel. ✍

Expanding Our Solitary Craft: National Poetry Month and Beyond

As poets, we view our craft as solitary work. Imagine reclusive Dickinson, penning one of her 1,800 poems in the privacy of a bedroom, or Welsh poet Dylan Thomas writing, "my craft or sullen art / Exercised in the still night / When only the moon rages. . . ."

But beyond our private penning, the art of poetry expands with opportunities to serve the craft itself. Since 1996, when the Academy of American Poets initiated National Poetry Month, each April is set aside to focus on awareness and appreciation of poetry. ISPS will celebrate the month with its annual library exhibits of members' poetry, plus an open mic poetry reading in Chicago. Here are more ideas submitted by ISPS chapters of how we have expanded the reach of poetry through our projects and events.

EKPHRASTIC EXHIBITS. Central Chapter plans a repeat this year of their successful exhibit of poetry inspired by artwork at the Pontiac Art Center. Southern Chapter, which has co-sponsored ekphrastic contests and exhibits with the Shawnee Hills Art Council and with the Carbondale Library, will have their third exhibit May 22 through June 17.

CHALKING THE WALKS. David Alexander of Central Chapter brought poetry to a May community event by chalking original poems on public sidewalks.

POETRY EVENTS. ISPS sponsors twice-monthly readings at Brewed Awakening, Westmont. Southern Chapter has sponsored a poetry writing workshop in Anna, as well as several events at public venues with guest poets and open mic readings.

GUEST POETS. The Haiku Chapter invited internationally known haikuist Lee Gurga to speak at a meeting; he also addressed the ISPS 2016 Gala.

GIVE-AWAYS. Chapters have sponsored poetry give-aways, including free poetry journals, books and bookmarks, at poetry events such as the 2016 Gala and at public libraries during Poetry Month.

POETRY CONTESTS. ISPS chapters and some individual members support the annual ISPS Poetry Contest by funding prizes for additional categories. ISPS also provides one of the 50 annual NFSPS contests and runs a state-level Manningham Student Contest for grades 6-8 and 9-12.

FREE ADVERTISING. Some chapters promote their meetings and members' accomplishments with press releases and/or keep in touch with their members and promote events through chapter email newsletters and Facebook posts.

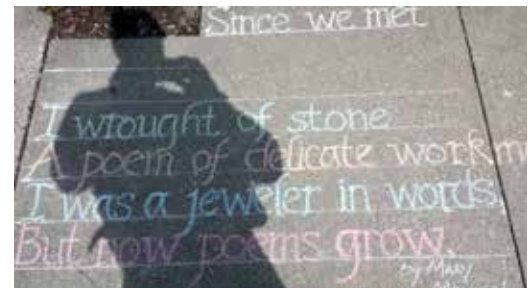
ANTHOLOGIES. ISPS has created three *Distilled Lives* anthologies of members' poetry, the latest released in November 2016. Southern Chapter has also published a members' collection, *Where We Walked*, and an ekphrastic collection, *Pointry*.



Ekphrastic Event, Pontiac Arts Center



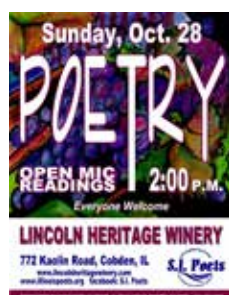
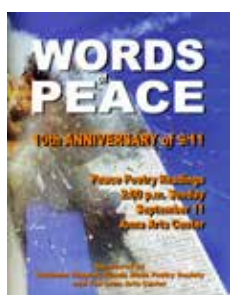
Ekphrastic Event, Anna Arts Center



Chalking the Walks, Pontiac



Poetry Reading, Makanda





Chapter Meetings

CENTRAL CHAPTER, PONTIAC

1:00 p.m., **Saturday, April 8**
Pontiac Public Library, 815-844-7229
211 E. Madison St., Pontiac, IL

HAIKU CHAPTER, NORTHBROOK

1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., **Sunday, April 23**
Northbrook Public Library, Civic Room
847-272-6224
1201 Cedar Lane, Northbrook, IL
Bring 10 copies of 6 haiku for critique.

NO. SUBURBAN CHAPTER, NORTHBROOK

1:00 to 5:00 p.m., **Sunday, March 12**
Northbrook Public Library, 847-272-6224
1201 Cedar Lane, Northbrook, IL
Bring 8-10 copies of poems for critique. No food/
beverages allowed in this room.

SOUTHERN CHAPTER, CARBONDALE

2:00 to 4:00 p.m., **Sunday, March 12**
Carbondale Public Library, 618-457-0354
405 West Main, Carbondale, IL
Bring 10-12 copies of poems for critique.

SOUTHWEST SUBURBAN CHAPTER, LISLE

1:00 to 5:00 p.m., **Sunday, April 2**
Lisle Public Library, 630-971-1675
777 Front St., Lisle, IL (enter lot off Kingston)
Bring your beverage, 20 copies of poems for
critique, and a snack to share.

WEST SUBURBAN CHAPTER, DARIEN

1:00 to 4:00 p.m., **Saturday, March 4**
Indian Prairie Public Library, 630-887-8760
401 Plainfield Road, Darien, IL
Bring your beverage, snack to share, and 20
copies of poems for critique.

ONLINE CRITIQUE GROUPS

To request a copy of the guidelines or to
join an ISPS Email Critique Group, contact
coordinator Wilda Morris at wildamorris@
ameritech.net. Put "ISPS Email Critique
Group" in the subject line of the email and
be sure to include your name with your
request. ✍

Events & Deadlines: Mark Your 2017 Poetry Calendar

MARCH 1, deadline to sign up for the
ISPS/P&P open mic event at Af-
ter-Words Bookstore, 23 East Illi-
nois, Chicago, 5:30 to 8:00 p.m.,
Thursday, April 13. RSVP to Caro-
line Johnson at twinkscat@aol.com.

MARCH 15, deadline for NFSPS annu-
al 50 contests. See nfsp.com for
details. Mail entries to Emory D.
Jones, 608 N. Pearl St., Iuka, MS
38852. Alternate electronic entry is
available for the Founders Award
and Student Award at nfsp.submit-
table.com.

MARCH 15, deadline for NFSPS con-
vention attendees to submit poems
for a special Texas-sponsored con-
test. Details at nfsp.com/conven-
tion2017.pdf.

MARCH 15, deadline for new NFSPS
BlackBerry Peach Awards contest
for spoken-word poetry. Submit au-
dio files to nfsp.submittable.com.
See nfsp.com for details.

THROUGH APRIL 1, Solo exhibit, Char-
lotte Digregorio, Haiku with Art,

Fremont Public Library, Mundelein.

MARCH 18, 8:00 p.m., Donna Vorreyer
reading and open mic, Madame ZuZu's,
582 Roger Williams, Highland Park.

MARCH 26, ISPS at Brewed Awakening,
featured poets and open mic, 12:30
p.m., 10 West Quincy, Westmont.

APRIL 1-14, submission period for mem-
bers' poetry on the illinoispoets.org
website. Email submissions to Alan
Harris, oasis@alharris.com.

APRIL 22, 8:00 p.m., Sylvia Cavanaugh
and Ed Werstein reading, plus open
mic, Madame ZuZu's, 582 Roger
Williams, Highland Park.

APRIL 29, Chicago Poetry Fest at the
Harold Washington Library, 400
South State Street, Chicago.

APRIL 30, ISPS at Brewed Awakening,
featured poets and open mic, 12:30
p.m., 10 West Quincy, Westmont.

JUNE 29-JULY 2, NFSPS Convention
hosted at the historic Hilton Fort
Worth in Fort Worth, TX. Details
at nfsp.com/convention2017.pdf.

Invite a Fellow Poet to be a Fellow ISPS/NFSPS Member

Share the triple benefit of belonging to the Illinois State Poetry Society PLUS the National Federation of State Poetry Societies PLUS any of the ISPS chapters by encouraging friends to join or giving a gift membership. For the small investment of \$20 (optional \$30.00 for Patron status or \$50.00, Benefactor status), your dues support poetry in Illinois and beyond through June of 2017.

MEMBERSHIP THROUGH JUNE 30, 2017

Renewal New Member \$20 Regular \$30 Patron \$50 Benefactor

VOTING CHAPTER (select one):

Central, Pontiac North Suburban, Northbrook Southern, Carbondale
SW Suburban, Lisle West Suburban, Darien Haiku, Northbrook At-Large

Name _____

Address _____

Phone (home or cell) _____

Email _____