

# President's Message



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**Northbrook – N. Suburban**  
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**Pontiac - N. Central**  
**Kathleen Murphy**

My Dear Family of Poets,

My wish for all of you in 2024 is that you and your family are in good health, and you have a fruitful and creative year! With the whirlwind of holiday activities behind us, and we start packing away the ornaments and decorations, it can be a great opportunity to explore what memories we created and save them in poem or prose.

In my last letter, I spoke about NaNoWriMo and how it's a time for writers to get 50,000 words written in in 30 days, thereby having a rough draft of a novel. I'd like for all of us to try this instead: NaPoWriMo is a poetry writing project held each April. The goal is to write a poem a day during that month. This fits well with idea that although most of us write in solitude, this is something we can all do. What better way to get working on a work of body for a manuscript than write a poem every day.

Whether this is your fifth or your second manuscript, or if you don't know where to begin, we will be having a Zoom series of fellow members and eventually publishers to share with us what works well for them.

One of the things that will help you get your poems ready is to participate in our Chapter meetings. This is where you can submit a poem for critique – for help smoothing over rough spots, or would this poem be better suited as a form poem instead of free verse and vice versa. All ISPS members can attend any meeting. In case you haven't yet, find a chapter in your area and contact that facilitator. If you are out-of-state, a Chapter that meets on Zoom might work best for you.

I need to recognize our website master Alan Harris. Alan is stepping back from maintaining our website. He has done so much to make sure poems from our members are posted on the website every quarter among so many other features. It's a job that sometimes goes unnoticed and I hope you can join me in thanking Alan for his hard work and dedication and wishing him a bright future!

With changes and growth come opportunities. With some tech companies providing websites for organizations and small businesses, we are looking at creating a new website. We sent out a survey a few weeks ago to hear what you have to say. If you didn't see it but have ideas about what features on the current website you'd like to see carried over, please reach out to me as well. If you have some website knowledge and would like to help, also reach out to me.

Our annual student contest is live! The flyer is in this newsletter; deadline to enter is February 29. And finally, with the days in a slow and aching return to more daylight, we need more poetry – so on **Thursday, February 15<sup>th</sup> at 7 p.m.**, we will have a Zoom reading of all the prize-winning poems. Watch your inbox from William Shakespeare for reminders to RSVP.

Keep Writing!  
Mary Beth Bretzlauf

# Tips on Writing Reviews, ISPS Interview with Michael Escoubas

Michael is a poet, ISPS member as well as editor and book reviewer with Quill & Parchment (<https://quillandparchment.com/qp-index-framed.php>)

**ISPS:** What is your connection to *Quill & Parchment*?

**ME:** I had been publishing poetry with Q & P off and on beginning in 2016. I was thrilled even to get an acceptance with that journal, given its prestige. When staff reviewer Ed Bennett died in late 2017, he left a void that was hard to fill. Editor-in-Chief, Sharmagne Leland-St. John was determined to fill the position. No one came forward despite many pleas. When Sharmagne asked me to try, I refused at first because I had never done this type of writing. Once I got my first review published in Q & P, I've never looked back. This was in March of 2018. Today, I love writing book reviews. As Senior Editor, I work with Sharmagne evaluating submissions for publication. Additionally, I am responsible for several administrative functions.

**ISPS:** How many reviews have you written?

**ME:** To date I have written 125 reviews. I usually write up to three reviews per month. Among the reasons I love writing book reviews is that they open my mind to an entire world of diverse perspectives. No poetry collection is like any other. I learn from each writer. In turn, writers learn from me. My reviews often reveal nuances that even the writers themselves did not perceive. Many times, authors have said, "You made me want to go out and buy a copy of my own book!"

**ISPS:** What tips would you offer to those who aspire to this type of writing?

**ME:** One of the best sources I've found is an article by Craig Morton Teicher, in the September/October (2022) issue of *Poets and Writers*. While Teicher's article, "On Writing About Books," is focused on reviewing books of prose, I find his principles, with minor adaptations, quite helpful in reviewing poetry collections. In summary:

1. **Trust your impressions.** Your job is to show the reader what the book looks like through "your" eyes.
2. **Remember the five-paragraph essay you learned in high school.**
  - Paragraph 1: Hook and thesis
  - Paragraphs 2-4: Supporting points and evidence
  - Paragraph 5: Conclusion

**Note:** Writing at an adult level and for an adult audience, naturally, this basic model will become more sophisticated.
3. **Read your review copy with pen and highlighter and take notes.**
  - Develop your own system of underscores, brackets and stars to make the book your own.
  - Enjoy the assigned text for its own sake.
  - You cannot write convincingly about a book you don't like.
4. **Do not "sign-on" with the book.**
  - Court a little "friendly" skepticism.
  - See the book from your point of view.
  - Writing a review is not a test for the reviewer; but a tour through its "scenery and themes," led by the reviewer.
5. **Write for a general interest audience.**
  - Write clear, accessible prose that anyone can understand.
  - Avoid inside jokes or jargon.
6. **As a reviewer you don't have to include everything you think.**
  - A reviewer's job is to make one basic argument about the book.
  - Keep your thesis simple, clean and clear.
7. **Writing criticism should be treated as writing good literature.**



- Make good sentences, have fun with turns of phrase.
- In other words, be an excellent writer, because that is what you are.

8. **Negative reviews: First ask yourself why.**

- Generally reviews are constructive, enthusiastic and supportive—find good things to say.
- If you take a writer to task, show and support why. Remember another writer’s feelings and possibly his future are in play.

9. **Show us what it feels like to be “you” reading this book.**

- The review acts as a window into the book “for” the reader.
- Show readers what it would be like to read this book if “they” were you reading it.

10. **Conclusion: lift off, zoom out!!**

- End the review by drawing from the book a broad life-application principle.
- Try to show that life is improved, enhanced, rewarded because of their reading experience.

**ISPS:** Above you refer to the “prestige” of *Quill and Parchment*. What makes that journal or any journal prestigious?

**ME:** Three things: **First** is longevity. Poetry journals, whether online or print, come and go. Q & P has established and maintained a high quality of product for 22 years and counting. This is due to a dedicated volunteer staff who work tirelessly to ensure that each issue is the best it can be. **Second:** it is who we publish that sets us apart. Some of the best poets writing today are published in Q & P. **Third:** We aspire to remain fresh and open. We are always looking to expand our family of contributing poets. We welcome poems by ISPS poets.

**ISPS:** How can our readers get involved with *Quill & Parchment*?

**ME:** Q & P offers three monthly opportunities for contributors. Regular poetry, an Ekphrastic section, and a Word-Prompt section. Contributors potentially can publish one poem per category. Our monthly themes and submission guidelines are available for the asking or on line at [QuillandParchment.com](http://QuillandParchment.com). We are always on the lookout for artists to feature each month. Quality painting and/or photography submissions are welcome. Please query first.

**Michael Escoubas** is Senior Editor of the highly regarded online literary journal *Quill and Parchment*. Michael learned to love words after he complained to his Mother (at about age 11) that he had nothing to do. Never mind that he was surrounded by toys! He avers, “Mother sat me down at the kitchen table and bid me read from the Encyclopedia Britannica. I think this was designed to teach me a lesson; had she not died quite young, she would have loved how it all turned out.” He is the author of six collections of poetry.

Please share the ISPS Student Poetry Contest information with any teachers and students in your creative network on this and the next page.

~ 2024 ~  
**ILLINOIS STATE POETRY SOCIETY**  
**Student Poetry Contest**

**Senior Division**  
 Grades 9–12

**Junior Division**  
 Grades 6–8

**Put YOUR school on the map in 2024!**

**Top 3 Winners in each of 11 Contests:**

- Win cash prizes
- Advance to the national Manningham competition

**Top 3 Winners plus 2 Honorable Mentions:**

- Have poems published in *Illinois Student Voices*, Vol. 2
- Receive a copy of the book, award certificate, and 1-year ISPS membership

**Contest Submissions**

- Deadline: Postmark by **February 29, 2024**
- Full guidelines at [www.illinoispoets.org](http://www.illinoispoets.org)

**QUESTIONS?** Contact the contest chair at [isps.manningham@gmailcom](mailto:isps.manningham@gmailcom)



# 2024 ISPS STUDENT CONTEST

ILLINOIS STATE POETRY SOCIETY December 1, 2023 — February 29, 2024

## AWARDS in EACH CONTEST

### Top Three Winners & Two Honorable-Mention Winners

have poems published in *Illinois Student Voices, Vol. 2*, receive a copy of the book (also available on amazon.com), a certificate; and 1-year ISPS membership.

**Top Three Winners** also receive cash prizes, and their poems advance to the National Manningham Trust Student Poetry Contest [See [www.nfspd.com/manningham.html](http://www.nfspd.com/manningham.html)]

## SENIOR DIVISION, Grades 9-12

### 1. Fantasy & Science Fiction Award

In memory of Ray Bradbury by James Lowell Hall

- SUBJECT: Speculative Poetry
- FORM: Any; LINE LIMIT: 40
- PRIZES: \$40/\$30/\$20

### 2. Noel Lederer Award

In memory of Noel Lederer by Willam Lederer

- SUBJECT: Music
- FORM: Rhyme; LINE LIMIT: 40
- PRIZES: \$40/\$20/\$30

### 3. The Ocean(s) Award

In memory of Richard Bretzlauf by Mary Beth Bretzlauf

- SUBJECT: Ocean(s); FORM: Any
- LINE LIMIT: 20
- PRIZES: \$40/\$30/\$20

### 4. Time Award

Sponsored by Ida Kotyuk

- SUBJECT: Time
- FORM: Any; LINE LIMIT: 40
- PRIZES: \$40/\$30/\$20

### 5. Wonders of Nature Award

In memory of Rachel Carson by James Lowell Hall

- SUBJECT: Wonders of Nature
- FORM: Any; LINE LIMIT: 40
- PRIZES: \$40/\$30/\$20

## JUNIOR DIVISION, Grades 6-8

### 6. Fantasy & Science Fiction Award

In memory of Ray Bradbury by James Lowell Hall

- SUBJECT: Speculative Poetry
- FORM: Any; LINE LIMIT: 40
- PRIZES: \$30/\$20/\$10

### 7. Love of Nature Award

Sponsored by William Marr

- SUBJECT: Love of Nature
- FORM: Any; LINE LIMIT: 20
- PRIZES: \$30/\$20/\$10

### 8. Pets in My World Award

In memory of Red, Rusty, Phil, Jackson, Kiki, Sunspot, Comet, Ursula and Zora by Jerry and Mary Hope

- SUBJECT: Pets in My World
- FORM: Any; LINE LIMIT: 40
- PRIZES: \$30/\$20/\$10

### 9. Shadow(s) Award

Sponsored by Ida Kotyuk

- SUBJECT: Shadows
- FORM: Any; LINE LIMIT: 40
- PRIZES: \$30/\$20/\$10

### 10. The Ocean(s) Award

In memory of Richard Bretzlauf by Mary Beth Bretzlauf

- SUBJECT: Ocean(s) FORM: Any
- LINE LIMIT: 20
- PRIZES: \$30/\$20/\$10

### 11. Wonders of Nature Award

In memory of Rachel Carson by James Lowell Hall

- SUBJECT: Wonders of Nature
- FORM: Any; LINE LIMIT: 40
- PRIZES: \$30/\$20/\$10

## SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Any submission that does not follow ALL guidelines will be disqualified.

**1. Eligibility.** Original work of a single student in a public or private Illinois school or home-schooled in Illinois.

**2. Entries.** Only one poem per category. No poem can be submitted to multiple categories.

**3. Unpublished.** Poems published in print or online or accepted for publication (except in school publications) are ineligible.

**4. Simultaneous Submissions.** Poems currently entered in other contests are ineligible.

## POEM & PAGE FORMATS

- **English** only.
- **Line Count.** All text and blank lines count except the title and one blank line after title.

- **Line width.** Maximum: 50 characters, including punctuation marks and spaces.
- **Single-spaced lines.**
- **One poem** per 8.5" x 11" page.
- **Typed** or computer-generated, 12 point, plain font (Times New Roman preferred) on white paper. No artwork.
- **Title** all poems except haiku.

## PREPARING SUBMISSIONS

**1. Submit two typed copies of each poem** (one anonymous for the judge; one with ID). Include contest number and title on the upper left of both.

**2. ID Copy Only:** On the upper right add:

- Student's name, age, grade level
  - School's name and address (city/state/zip required).
  - Teacher/Sponsor's name (first and last name and Mr./Ms./Mrs.).
  - Teacher/Sponsor's email address.
  - Add statement signed by the student: "I certify that this poem is my original work and has not been copied in whole or part from any author's poem in print or posted on the Internet."
- Signed \_\_\_\_\_

**3. Copies.** Do not separate the copies. Do not staple the copies together.

**4. Batched Mailings:** Teachers/sponsors may send all students' poems in one envelope.

- Sort poems by contest number.
- Keep anonymous and ID copies together (no staples or paper clips).
- Include your email address.

**5. Self-entered.** An individual student may submit entries in a single mailing.

**6. Fees.** There are no entry fees.

**DEADLINE:** Postmark must be between: **December 1, 2023–February 29, 2024**

### SEND TO:

ISPS c/o Mary Beth Bretzlauf  
426 Park Avenue  
Highland Park, IL 60035

### QUESTIONS?

Contact **Mary Beth Bretzlauf**  
[ISPS.manningham@gmail.com](mailto:ISPS.manningham@gmail.com)

Guidelines are also at: [www.illinoispoets.org](http://www.illinoispoets.org).

# ISPS Chapter News

**ISPS West Suburban Chapter** – Formerly the Darien Chapter. The next ISPS West Suburban poetry critiquing group will meet **Saturday, January 6**, from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. at **Brewed Awakening, 19 West Quint Street, Westmont, IL**. Please bring 8 - 10 copies of up to 2 poems for critique. There is no fee but attendees are encouraged to buy coffee and a pastry (*support the business that supports poets*). Contact Caroline Johnson at [carolinejohnson.author@gmail.com](mailto:carolinejohnson.author@gmail.com), Chapter facilitator, if you have questions.

**ISPS-Haiku Society of America Haiku Chapter** - The ISPS-HSA Haiku Chapter held its bimonthly Zoom chapter meeting on Sunday, December 10, 2023. Those who attended were **Jo Balistrieri, Tom Chockley, Jeanne Cook, Janice Doppler, Susan Farner, George Gerolimatis, David Green, Margie Gustafson, Jeff Kressmann, Elizabeth Shack, Jill Spealman, Jennifer Thiermann, Carole Novak, and Kathryn Haydon**. We began our meeting with an old haiku chapter tradition, discussion of a published haiku that delights. Then we enjoyed the discussion of participants' haiku. These were presented anonymously. And each poet had a chance to talk about the haiku moment that evoked the haiku as well as to ask for any additional feedback regarding the haiku. **Our next Haiku Chapter Zoom Meeting: Sunday, February 18, 2024**. The deadline for RSVPs to attend will be Tuesday, February 13. Contact Tom Chockley ([tomzhaiku@outlook.com](mailto:tomzhaiku@outlook.com)) to receive further information and to receive the Zoom meeting link to attend.

**ISPS Northern Chapter** and **ISPS Champaign – Central Chapter (Champaign)** will hold a joint meeting via Zoom and will meet on **Sunday, January 14 at 1 p.m.** on Zoom. Chapter meetings are open to all ISPS members. Those wishing to attend the meeting can contact Mary Beth at [ISPS.Manningham@gmail.com](mailto:ISPS.Manningham@gmail.com). You can also submit a poem for critique at that time as well.

**ISPS North Central Chapter (Pontiac)** will meet on **Saturday, February 10 at 10:00 am** via Zoom. Contact Kathleen Murphy, Facilitator, [kathleenzmurphy@gmail.com](mailto:kathleenzmurphy@gmail.com) for how to participate.

**ISPS Southern Chapter** has two upcoming meetings: (1) **1:30 p.m., Sunday, January 14**, Carbondale Library, 405 West Main, Carbondale, IL 62901. For directions, visit <https://www.carbondale.lib.il.us>. Please bring 10-12 copies of your poem for critiquing. (2) **1:30 p.m., Sunday, February 11**, Zoom meeting. Kathy Cotton, Facilitator, [sipoets7@gmail.com](mailto:sipoets7@gmail.com). The Southern Chapter welcomed six new members in 2023: **Lilie Allen, John Dickson, Teresa Harris, Kathleen Hartnett, Carmen Patterson and Tabitha Tripp**. Four chapter members published new poetry books in 2023: **Patty Pieczka** (*Gathering Sunlight*), **jacob erin-cilberto** (*All the Poems I Never Wrote*), **Jim Hanson** (*Perspectives: Educational Poems; Ruminations*), and **Kathy Cotton** (*Aligned with the Sky*).

**ISPS Southwest Suburban Chapter (Lisle)** The Chapter meeting in February will be hybrid. The meeting will be in-person at Lisle Public Library, 777 Front Street, Lisle, as well as on Zoom, at **1:15 pm CT on Sunday, February 4, 2024**. Email [wildamorris@ameritech.net](mailto:wildamorris@ameritech.net) for the Zoom link **and by February 1** to submit up to three poems (or three pages) for critique so they can be distributed via email to those who plan to attend in person or virtually. If possible, put your poems in one document, with each poem beginning on a separate page, with your name in the upper right-hand corner of each page. Those attending in person may bring snacks to share. You may want to bring some water, soda, or lemonade for yourself.

It is never too late to renew your membership!  
For membership information, renewal form, joining ISPS email [marjorierissman@gmail.com](mailto:marjorierissman@gmail.com), our new treasurer!

The Last Sunday of the Month Poetry Readings at **Brewed Awakening** in Westmont from 12:30 – 2:00 pm (co-sponsored by ISPS) will resume in January. Email Wilda Morris [@wildamorris@ameritech.net](mailto:@wildamorris@ameritech.net) to recommend someone as featured poet.

# 2023 ISPS Poetry Contest Winners!

**Category #1: Love Award** Sponsored by: ISPS Lisle Chapter (in memory Glenna Holloway, Nancy Carrigan, Michael Galati)

**Subject: Love Form: Any Judge: Amelia Martens**

1st Place: Marianne Peel, "Let Tenderness Come"

2nd Place: Julie Schwerin, "Unshelled"

3rd Place: Bakul Banerjee, "Synapses Are Dying"

HM #1: Maureen Tolman Flannery, "Aging Together Off the Grid"

HM #2: Jamie Wendt, "Beach Hazard"

HM #3: Wilda Morris, "Now that I have a fractured foot"

**Category #2: House Award** Sponsored by: Ida Kotyuk

**Subject: A house Form: Any Judge: Pat Taylor**

1st Place: Camille Balla, "A Day at the Cenacle Retreat House"

2nd Place: Gail Denham, "No Curtains"

3rd Place: Barbara Blanks, "In Residence"

HM #1: Judith Galati, "Going Home"

HM #2: Mary Jo Balisteri, "Returning"

HM #3: Marianne Peel, "Beneath the Surface in a Kentucky Kitchen"

**Category #3: Viator Award** Sponsored by: Michael Escoubas (in memory of Kathleen A. Rippey, his mother-in-law)

**Subject: Any Form: Viator Judge: Russell Strauss**

1st Place: John McPherson, "My Vile Companion"

2nd Place: Bakul Banerjee, "The Paper Boat"

3rd Place: Kathy Lohrum Cotton, "Drought"

HM #1: Elizabeth King, "The Hickory Grove"

HM #2: Judith Galati, "Breaking Silence"

HM #3: Lorraine Jeffrey, "Because of her"

**Category #4: ISPS Free Verse Award** Sponsored by: ISPS Board in honor of Past President Susan Moss

**Subject: Any. Form: Free Verse Judge: John Hinton**

1st Place: Anita Dee, "The View Through a Frosted Pane"

2nd Place: Amy Wray Irish, "Ipkabibble"

3rd Place: Terry Jude Miller, "lefty"

HM #1: Allison Joseph, "Homage to My Breasts"

HM #2: Jill Spealman, "Origami in April"

HM #3: Christopher Kuhl, "THE GIFT"

**Category #5: ISPS Formal Verse Award.** Sponsored by: ISPS Board in honor of Past Vice President Jim Lambert

**Subject: Any. Form: Any Set Form Judge: Bruce Hoffsommer**

1st Place: Rita Moritz, "Sarah Beth's Guitar"

2nd Place: V Kimball Barney, "Adoring Books"

3rd Place: Lynda LaRocca, "Despite Everything"

HM #1: Grace Diane Jessen, "The Man for his Time"

HM #2: Maya Dombroskie, "Naivete: A Haibun"

HM #3: Nancy L. Cook, "One Year to the Day"

**Category #6: Traditional Haiku Award** Sponsored by: ISPS

**Subject: Any. Form: Traditional 5-7-5 haiku Judge: Gail Denham**

1st Place: Christian Shute, "startled starlings fly"

2nd Place: Lynda LaRocca, "cherry blossom rain"

3rd Place: Mark Hammerschick, "In Situ" (frozen Hokkaido)

HM #1: Dennis Maulsby, "lilac dress for spring"

HM #2: Mary Jo Balisteri, "fields of poppies"

HM #3: Janice Doppler, "summer afternoon..."

**Category #7: Modern Haiku Award** Sponsored by: ISPS

**Subject: Any Form: Modern Haiku Judge: Jon Sebba**

1st Place: Ravi Kiran, "good prognosis"

2nd Place: Terry Jude Miller, "three inch pencil"

3rd Place: Janice Doppler, "whispering wind"

HM #1: Julie Schwerin, "all her children grown..."

HM #2: Dennis Maulsby, "the courting storm"

**Category #8: ISPS Southern Chapter Award** Subject: Pets. Form: Any Judge: Diane Taylor Reeves

1st Place: Nick Sweet, "Moore, Oklahoma, 2013"

2nd Place: Mike Orlock, "Night Sounds"

3rd Place: Mackenzie Mann, "Chronicles of a Courageous Canine: A Tail of Heroism"

HM #1: Kathy Lohrum Cotton, "I Won't Tell You About the Cat"

HM #2: Pamela Hatch, "Unbridled Wind"

HM #3: Jill Charles, "Familiar Scent"

**Category #9: Humor Award** Sponsored by Harold & Marie Asner

**Subject: Humor Form: Rhyme Judge: Elaine Person**

1st Place: Nick Sweet, "Ruse de Cezanne"

2nd Place: Jerri Hardesty, "Thanks to Hank"

3rd Place: Allison Joseph, "Retail Therapy"

HM #1: V Kimball Barney, "The Pastor's Choice"

HM #2: Jim Wilkerson, "A Sound in the Morning"

HM #3: Wilda Morris, "Barbeque"

**Category #10: Generosity Award**

Sponsored by: Jocelyn Ajami (in memory of David Nekimken)

**Subject: Generosity. Form: Any Judge: Katie Zale**

1st Place: Sheila Elliott, "Generosity"

2nd Place: Marianne Peel, "The Offering"

3rd Place: Michael Owens "Watching Peace Among Nations"

HM #1: Paul Buchheit, "The Generous Lion: A Sonnet"

HM #2: Nick Sweet, "Golden Rulers"

HM #3: Marie Asner: "The Octet"

**Category #11: Jack Griffis Edwards Award** Sponsored by: the late Idella Pearl Edwards Subject: I Miss You Form: Rhyme (20-line limit)

**Judge: Barbara Blanks**

1st Place: Christine Henderson, "Memory of Love"

2nd Place: V Kimball Barney: "Without You"

3rd Place: Sara Gipson, "Left Behind"

HM #1: Kathy Lohrum Cotton, "Dancing With You"

HM #2: Nick Sweet, "Rain on the Porch"

HM #3: Nancy L. Cook, "Morning"

**Category #12: Form Challenge Award Sponsored by: Highland Park Poetry Subject: Any Form: Rimas Dissolutas Judge: Budd Mahan**

1st Place: Barbara Blanks, "Cyrus Avery, Father of Route 66"

2nd Place: Crystie Cook, "Sparrows in the Straw"

3rd Place: Wilda Morris, "That Kind"

HM #1: Kim Reed, "Can You Still See Gaza Alight?"

HM #2: Candace Armstrong, "New Covenant of Faith"

HM #3: Rita Moritz, "In Praise of Peace"

**Category #13: Ekphrastic Prose Poem Award Sponsored by: Lennart Lundh Subject: Ekphrastic Form: Prose Judge: Patricia Laster**

1st Place: Marianne Peel, "Bebe in Bramble"

2nd Place: Sara Gipson, "Single Leaf Trapped in Ice"

3rd Place: Sandra McGarry, "of all the blue"

HM #1: John McPherson, Prometheus On Horseback"

HM #2: Amy Wray Irish, "Fallen Feather"

HM #3: Stephen Schwei, "Dear Universe"

**Category #14: Make Me Laugh Award Sponsored by: Nancy LaChance Subject: Any Form: Any Judge: Nancy LaChance**

1st Place: John McPherson, "Grandma's Colic-Frolic"

2nd Place: Trina Lee, "Where - O - Where"

3rd Place: Maureen Tolman Flannery, "Low Maintenance Morning"

HM #1: Paul Buchheit, "Super Fan"

HM #2: Mike Orlock, "Absurdly Adverbly Verbatim"

HM #3: Beverly Stanislawski, "Popeye's Power"

## Welcome New Members!

**Winifred Morgan** has written primarily academic prose (*An American Icon: Brother Jonathan and American Identity; The Trickster Figure in American Literature*), but she has been reading and occasionally publishing haiku since Robert Spiess was editing *Modern Haiku*. Her chapbook of haiku, *50 Plus*, came out in 2016.

**Crystal L. Goss**, resides in the Montgomery area, and is a self-taught writer/poet with a clear focus on Love Poetry. Page Publishing recently published her collection, *Lovin Me Always*. Crystal's employment with a public library led directly to her love of reading and writing. She aims to have the reader feel like they are part of the poem and can relate to the thoughts behind the words. Presently she works as a House Manager for Disabled Adults. Crystal has three children (Adrienne, Tracy, Jr., & Bryan) plus four grandchildren (Elijah, Elise, Cameren, & Evan).



### Peaceful - Crystal L. Goss

Put your mind at ease, and not think about the things that drive you crazy, when you think things are all over the place and the sky is kinda hazy, just put your mind at ease

Think Peaceful thoughts, and just relax and enjoy, if it don't concern, affect you, then just do what you do, Life can be so easy when you just let go and take a breath, breath in and exhale

When you consume yourself in others, feelings come and go, how do you really feel, do you even know

To be Peaceful with the mind is to be Peaceful with the heart, you'll have no problem knowing how you feel, and if the feelings are truly real

about others. Writing is her solace and puts her mind at ease.

**Maria Bellefeuille** was born in Oak Park, and spent most of her childhood in Melrose Park. She lived a seemingly normal life until her adolescent years when Cystic Fibrosis began having a noticeable impact on her daily life. Writing became her outlet and her release. Maria now lives in Winthrop Harbor with her husband, stepson and two cats where she hopes that by sharing these poems with you, you may be inspired to rise above the challenges you may face.

### Majestic - Maria Bellefeuille

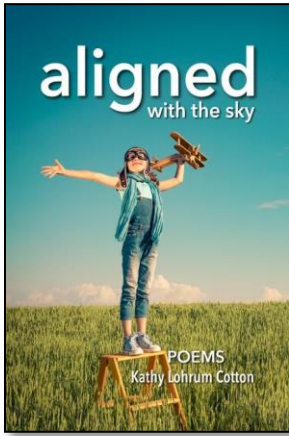
Sometimes the best view  
Is the view at the edge?  
The one that comes with  
Twist and Turns  
The view that gives you  
The Bigger Picture  
The view that gives you  
Peace

Sometimes the best view  
Is the view you do not expect?  
The one that comes with  
Hills and Valleys  
The view that gives you  
Butterflies and Hope  
The view that is  
Majestic



# ISPS Member News

**Charlotte Digregorio** was recently featured in two articles in Arkansas publications, (*The Sentinel-Record* newspaper and *Springs Magazine*), about her decades of work in educating the public about haiku. The articles appeared in conjunction with her three haiku speaking engagements in Central Arkansas, two sponsored by the Southern Region of the Haiku Society of America and one by the Poet Laureate of Hot Springs.



**Kathy Lohrum Cotton's** latest poetry collection, *Aligned with the Sky*, is available on [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com). She shares the charming title poem here – a poetic amuse-bouche to enjoy!

**Mark Hammerschick** recently had two poems recognized in the annual Florida Writers Association Royal Palm Literary Awards. His poem “Rise on Up” won a Gold First Place and his poem “Looking Beyond the Imperfections” won a Silver second place Royal Palm Literary Award.

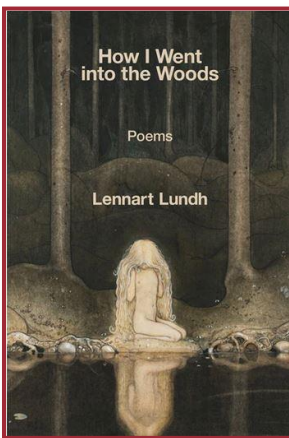
## Aligned with the Sky

by Kathy Lohrum Cotton

Hands flung wide, I whirl and twirl,  
a six-year-old toppling into  
the green margin between  
our Lithuanian neighbor's fence  
and Audubon Avenue. Dizzy drunk  
on school-vacation freedom,  
I lie sprawled face-up in wild grass,  
aligned with a wide blue expanse  
crowded with cumulus clouds.

I don't yet know cumulus  
from cirrus or stratus,  
but find shifting face-shapes  
in the billowy clouds,  
give them sky-people names,  
and compose little rhymes  
metered like Sunday School songs.

Such is the beginning  
of my life as a poet.



*How I Went into the Woods*, **Lennart Lundh's** new collection of ekphrastic poems, is now available. This is his third outing with Kelsay Books since 2020, and Lennart is grateful to Karen and her team for giving this manuscript a home. It's available directly from Kelsay Books, as well as the usual online vendors. However, if you'd like a signed copy (and free postage), contact Lennart directly at [lenlundh@aol.com](mailto:lenlundh@aol.com). Also available from Lennart (with free postage) are his first two Kelsay collections, 2020's *Pictures, Postcards, Letters*, and 2022's *Cutting a Sunbeam*. Lennart will read on **Saturday, March 9 at 4:00 PM** when he returns to Highland Park Poetry as featured poet.

Register for any - or all - of the next three sessions of *Wednesday Revelry* on Zoom, last Wednesday of the month, 7- 9 p.m. CST. This is a shared practice of writing from themed prompts with Sister-Poets **Gay Guard-Chamberlin** and Anara Guard (a.k.a Sibling Revelry) as tour guides. Open to adults and teens, limited to 18 participants, \$20/session suggested entrance fee. Questions? [info@newwindpublishing.com](mailto:info@newwindpublishing.com)  
To register: <https://newwindpublishing.com/events/revelry/> Upcoming schedule: JANUARY 31, 2024 *Doorways & Thresholds*. Like Janus, the god who looks in two directions, we will examine inner and outer worlds (and places in-between) which can enrich our writing practices. FEBRUARY 28, 2024 *Beginnings & Endings*. We will focus on starting and finishing work as well as how to strengthen our opening and closing sentences, one of the keys to memorable writing. MARCH 27, 2024 *Tricksters & Fools*. Tricksters are known for their pranks, but the Fool is the one who often speaks the truth. Let's bring puns, jokes, trompe l'oeil and other tricks to our truth-telling.

**Emory Jones** shared some recent successes. His poem “Eyes of Love” won Second Place (Alfred Von Brokoph Award) of the 2023 Florida State Poets Association Contest. “Sacred Music” won third Place (Agates Category) of the 2023 League of Minnesota Poets Contest. “Wise Men” was published in the December 2023 issue of *Pennsylvania's Poetic Voices*. Congratulations, Emory!



# More ISPS Member News

**Highland Park Poetry** seeks submissions for the **2024 Poetry Challenge**. This year's challenges are 1) Advice – Good or Bad, 2) Mystery, or 3) a poem on any subject written in the style of a Prime 53. Deadline is **January 29, 2024**. For complete contest guidelines, visit [www.highlandparkpoetry.org](http://www.highlandparkpoetry.org). Also, looking for volunteer book reviewers as well as poets with recent books they'd like to have reviewed. Plus, seeking feature poets for the 2024 monthly reading events line-up in Highland Park. Email [Jennifer@highlandparkpoetry.org](mailto:Jennifer@highlandparkpoetry.org).

Highland Park Poetry offers monthly reading & open-mic events on the Second Saturday of each month from 4PM – 6PM. Venues vary so be sure to visit the events page at [www.highlandparkpoetry.org](http://www.highlandparkpoetry.org). Upcoming features include: January 13 : POET with Orion Meadows & Blaq Ice / February 10: **Phil Cozzi** and Karin Gordon Tribute / March 9: **Lennart Lundh & Paul Buchheit** / April 13: **Maria Bellefeuille** & Anne Myles / May 11: **Michael Escoubas**.

Submissions are now open for **East on Central's** 2024-25 issue! We accept poetry, prose, and art of all kinds. Your work may be on any topic or may relate to this issue's special section, "Focus on ... Feathers, Fins & Fur." Visit the website <https://www.eastoncentral.org/submissions> for more details. Deadline is **February 29, 2024**.

Two ISPS haiku poets have been nominated for the Touchstone Awards: **Jo Balistreri** by *Pan Haiku Review* and **Wilda Morris** by *Five Fleas Itchy Poetry*.

If you're looking for more writing challenges like NaPoWriMo, ISPS Vice President **Gay Guard Chamberlin** highly recommends the annual Poetry Postcard Fest sponsored by [www.cascadiapoeticlab.org](http://www.cascadiapoeticlab.org). It costs \$15 for early-bird registration (*available now*). You will receive a list of 32 participating poets in early July. It's simple - obtain or make at least 31 postcards. Send postcard poems to the folks on your list (*your name is on the list, too, and you don't need to send one to yourself*). According to instructions, "the idea is to practice spontaneity, that is write directly on the card in one take. If that is hard at the start of the fest to do write spontaneously directly onto the card, it gets better as the month goes on." Bonus – you will receive postcards in the mail from participating poets and that's exciting.

## Help us keep our database up to date!!!!!!

Please let our treasurer, Marjorie Rissman, know of any address, phone number or email changes. We can only communicate with correct info.

[marjorierissman@gmail.com](mailto:marjorierissman@gmail.com)

## Chapter Contacts

All ISPS members are welcome at any monthly meeting (space permitting) after first contacting the facilitator.

### Southern Chapter (Carbondale)

Contact Kathy Cotton, facilitator  
[kacotton7@frontier.com](mailto:kacotton7@frontier.com)

### Central Chapter (Champaign)

Jim O'Brien, facilitator  
[journaljim@gmail.com](mailto:journaljim@gmail.com)

### West Suburban Chapter (Brookfield)

Contact Caroline Johnson, facilitator  
[carolinejohnson.author@gmail.com](mailto:carolinejohnson.author@gmail.com)

### Haiku Chapter

Contact Tom Chockley, co-facilitator  
[tomzhaiku@outlook.com](mailto:tomzhaiku@outlook.com)

### Southwest Suburban Chapter (Lisle)

For the Zoom link, contact  
Wilda Morris  
[wem@americtech.net](mailto:wem@americtech.net)

### North Suburban Chapter (Northbrook)

Contact  
Mary Beth Bretzlauf, facilitator  
[ISPS.Manningham@gmail.com](mailto:ISPS.Manningham@gmail.com)

### North Central Chapter (Pontiac)

Contact  
Kathleen Murphy, facilitator  
[kathleenzmurphy@mail.com](mailto:kathleenzmurphy@mail.com)

## Procedure for Posting ISPS Member Poems on Website

ISPS members may submit one poem and/or one haiga for posting on our website ([illinoispoets.org](http://illinoispoets.org)). Poets whose last initial is E - H may submit from January 1 - 7, and poets whose last initial is I - M may submit from February 1 - 7. For submission guidelines, please go to "Submitting Poems" ([illinoispoets.org/submitting.htm](http://illinoispoets.org/submitting.htm)) in our site.