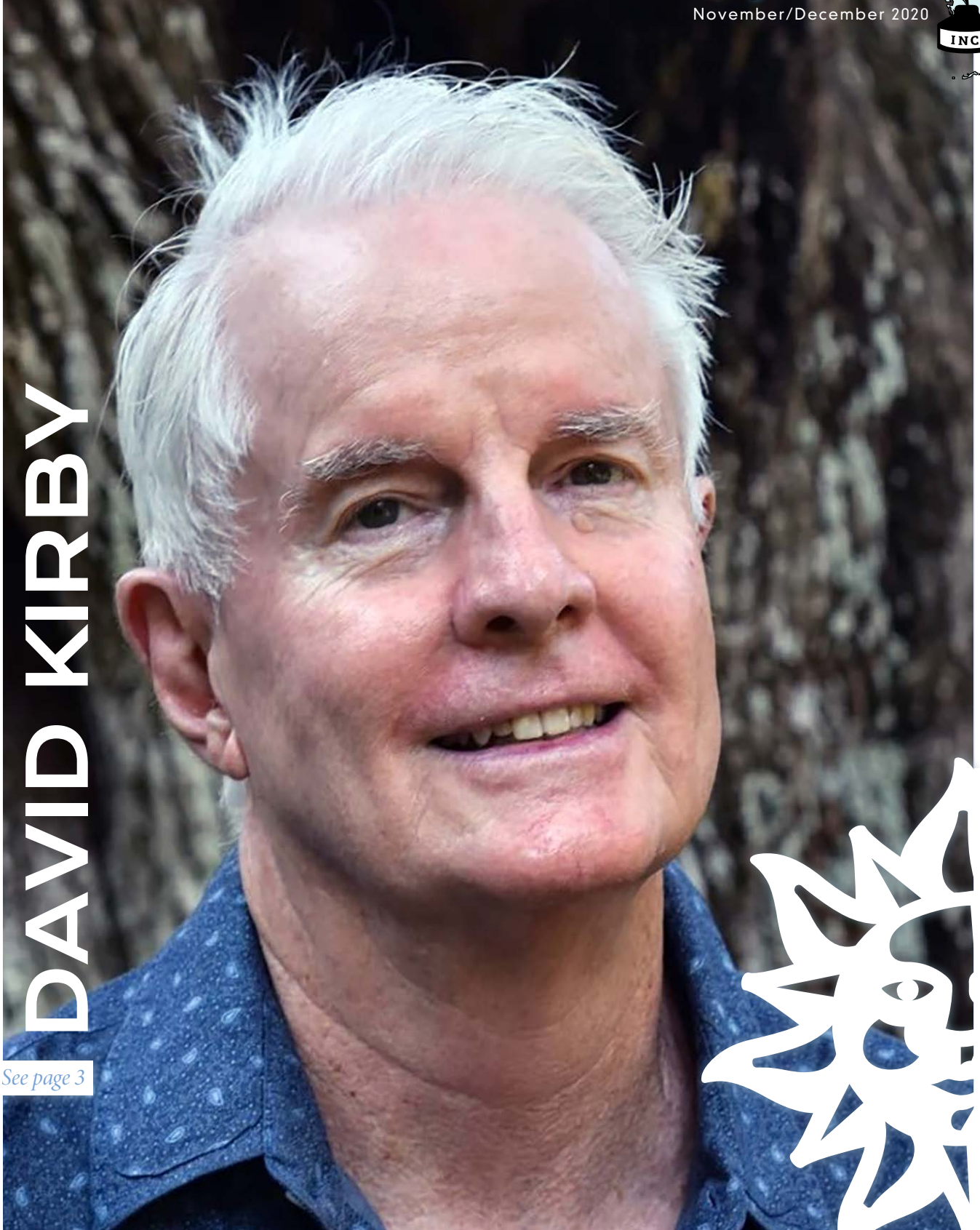


# Of Poets & Poetry



A PUBLICATION OF THE FLORIDA STATE POETS ASSOCIATION VOL. 47.6

November/December 2020



DAVID KIRBY

See page 3



Cover photograph by Ramsey Mathews





Robert E. Blenheim  
Past President of  
Florida State Poets Association  
and indomitable leader of  
The Live Poets Society  
of Daytona Beach

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### FALLING LANDSCAPE



POEMS  
SILVIA CURBELO

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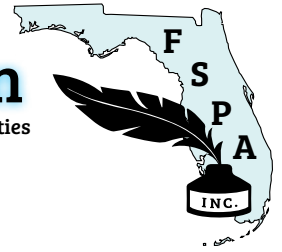
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# Florida State Poets Association

An affiliate of the National Federation of State Poetry Societies



Mary Marcelle

## FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

It's not an exaggeration to say everything's changed. In less than a year, we've endured a pandemic that spread across the earth like a cancer – coldly taking our loved ones, viciously isolating the sickest and dying, and robbing many of us of our livelihoods and the companionship of our friends and our families. The total effect COVID-19 will have on the future of our health, our economies, and our way of life is still to be seen.

Everything we know has become slightly unfamiliar, like we've moved to a new neighborhood and are still trying to orient ourselves to where everything is. Personal losses are uncountable. And I think we're all grieving the loss of what we had before, that free and easy, nothing to worry about, the future looks bright sort of outlook we cannot have now.

So, this is where the hard part starts. This is the enduring, difficult problem that we continue to fight with all the resources we can throw at it. We've gotten through the initial shock, and now we have to do the work. There is no telling how long it will take, and I know we're all hoping things get back to comfortable soon. And sadly, we've just heard of the death of one of our most active members and a past president, Bob Blenheim.

This is not the message I thought I'd write as I took the reins of FSPA from Al Rocheleau. I certainly tried to write about anything else. But this is our world today. Like the generations that have endured long-lasting world wars, a decade-long economic depression, or mysterious plagues without benefit of medicine, we have met one common enemy that we all must fight.

The truth is, becoming the president of a state poetry association is something I never imagined for myself. In 2016 I was asked to track attendance at a Spring Fling, and I've had some kind of job with FSPA ever since. I have the honor of serving FSPA and its members because I'm somebody who occasionally has an idea, and I follow through by doing the work necessary to make it happen.

My job now is to keep FSPA moving forward through this difficult situation we are all in together. We didn't have a convention this year, but we will meet again. We're a strong organization made up of strong and talented people. And on behalf of the entire membership, I want to thank Al Rocheleau for the extraordinary leadership and service he has given to FSPA, not just as president, but also as a teacher and trusted advisor to so many.

The entire world is taking a pivot, and the Florida State Poetry Association is doing the same. We turn to face the challenges ahead. From this new perspective, we'll find new ways for poetry to be heard.

Take care,

Mary

# OUR NEWEST CHANCELLOR, DAVID KIRBY



Florida State Poets Association Chancellor David Kirby. Photography by Tracy Doering.

...SENSE IS WAY OVERRATED.  
IT'S MORE IMPORTANT TO  
STAY OPEN TO SURPRISES.  
IT'S THE SOUND THAT COUNTS,  
SPECIFICALLY, THE MUSICALITY.

– DAVID KIRBY

# ABOUT DAVID KIRBY



David with Patsy on his lap. Photography by Barbara Hamby.

Poet, critic, and scholar David Kirby grew up on a farm in southern Louisiana. He received a BA from Louisiana State University and, at the age of 24, a PhD from Johns Hopkins University.

Influenced by artists as diverse as John Keats and Little Richard, Kirby writes distinctive long-lined narrative poems that braid together high and popular culture, personal memory, philosophy, and humor. “One thing that I want to do in the poems is to portray the mind as it actually works,” he stated in a 2007 interview with Craig Morgan Teicher.

Kirby is the author of more than thirty volumes of criticism, essays, children’s literature, pedagogy, and poetry. His numerous collections of poetry include *The Ha-Ha* (2003), short-listed for the Griffin Poetry Prize, and *The House on Boulevard Street: New and Selected Poems* (2007), a finalist for the National Book Award and winner of the Florida Book Award and the Southern Independent Booksellers Alliance Award. In nominating *Boulevard Street*, the National Book Award committee noted, “Digression and punctiliousness, directed movement and lollygagging, bemusement and piercing insight are among the many paradoxical dualities that energize and complicate the locomotion of his informed, capacious consciousness.”

Kirby has also won several Pushcart Prizes, the James Dickey Prize, the Brittingham Prize, and the Millennium Cultural Recognition Award. He has received fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Florida Arts Council. His poetry has been featured in numerous anthologies, including several issues of *Best American Poetry*. In 2016, Kirby received a Lifetime Achievement Award from Florida Humanities, which called him “a literary treasure of our state.”

Kirby is a member of the National Book Critics Circle. Since 1969 he has taught at Florida State University, where he has received several teaching awards. He lives in Tallahassee, Florida, with his wife, poet and professor Barbara Hamby.

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## III AL ROCHELEAU CHATS WITH DAVID

ON THE ART OF THE LINE, THE POET'S METHOD SURPRISING THE READER, WHY SENSE IS OVERATED, ON VIVALDI AND LITTLE RICHARD, AND MUCH MORE.

**Rocheleau:** Let me occupy an audience of one, spouting off accordingly. I've noticed that over the years your work has become looser. While you have always worked with long lines, you may not be nearly as interested now in the line itself, and exactly where things begin and end. Has that occurred to you, or it is just my fancy?

**Kirby:** I can give you a firm yes and no on that, Al. That is to say, I think an individual line is like a table leg or the slat of a chair, a part of the whole that should be perfect in itself and perfect in its contribution to the work overall. But a given line shouldn't be the boss of the rest of the poem. I try to make every line as smooth and straight and blemish-free as I can. But then my loyalty shifts to the poem as a whole. I'd never sacrifice the poem's integrity to the demands of a single line.

**Rocheleau:** I have also sensed over time you have worked your way back lyrically toward prose, albeit a kind of prose poetry not dependent on blocks. I also know you have done the opposite thing at some points, working specifically with shapes or patterns, just to mess up dumb analytical questions like this one regarding your method, but that's OK.

**Kirby:** You're right to say that I'm going in both directions at the same time. Yes, I did establish a signature look early on, but more and more these days, I'm trying to be both prosier on some days and more lyrical on others. I'm trying to surprise the reader, which means I'm always trying to come up with new strategies to surprise myself. It may come off differently to others, but I never think of even my prosiest work as prosey-prosey. I still try for musicality there, but it's more like the music of everyday speech than that of, say, a sonnet.

**Rocheleau:** A personal point: In your earlier work especially, but in what has also carried on to today, is that sort of detached, conscious streaming. While you're not the only one who does this, you do it effortlessly, gliding and quick like you're on a bobsled run. You've said you like to write like the mind itself works. For me, I get the same feeling reading you I got in my young twenties reading Vonnegut, especially the detached, observant, whimsical Vonnegut of *Breakfast of Champions*. Was it always that free and easy for you, going all the way back?

*continued on the next page*

**Kirby:** No. Back in the day, I was hampered by the notion that I had to make sense. Then I realized what all the great poets have realized, which is that sense is way overrated. It's more important to stay open to surprises. It's the sound that counts, specifically, the musicality. And guess what? If the sound is right, the sense comes through anyway, and it's usually a better sense than the plodding kind. But never the other way around: all by itself, sense per se just ain't musical.



Barbara and David at home.  
Photography by Catherine Husum Taylor

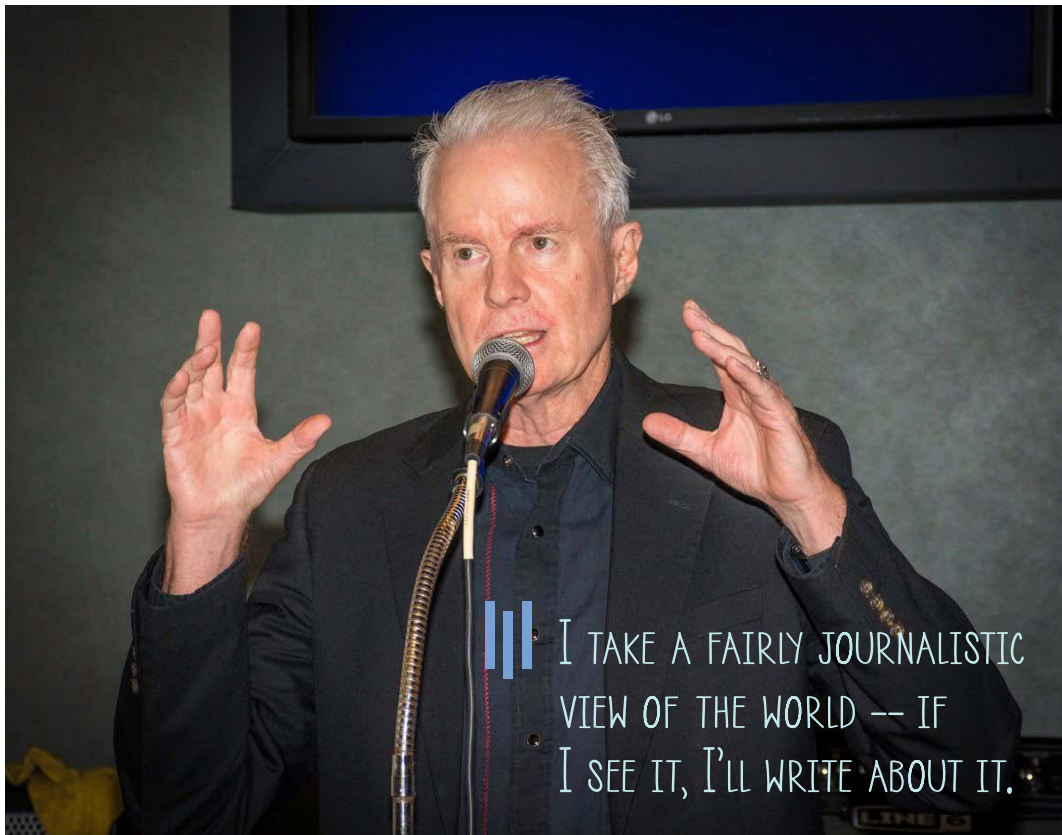
**Rocheleau:** Look out, obvious question: What has it been like over the years having another great poet in the house (your wife, Barbara Hamby)? Competitive, collegial, collaborative? Or do you lay such latinate words aside, along with the poetry itself, and just enjoy each other? (And don't worry, I will ask some shade of this question again when I hopefully interview Barbara for a future issue).

**Kirby:** Are you kidding? What could be more wonderful than for a poet to live with another poet? Of course, you have to love each other first, or then the relationship will turn competitive and toxic. You know, I think this is really a marriage question, not a poetry question. But the fact is that Barbara and I love each other and we talk poetry all day long every day. It's paradise.

**Rocheleau:** What is your take on the connection of philosophy and poetry? Not the high-minded treatise-based stuff, but just the poet's everyday look upon things, greater and lesser?

**Kirby:** I drive my more artsy students crazy when I tell them that to me a poem is a little problem-solving machine. So, yeah, you can't say "here comes some philosophy, folks!" But as a poet, you do move playfully towards Big Ideas. Those come secondarily. They're embedded in and borne along by the music of the poem, but that's what we do. We look at everything. The poetry store's always open – other stores may close when the sun goes down, but the poetry store's open 24/7.

*continued on the next page*



David Kirby speaking. Photography by Bob O'Lary

**Rocheleau:** Your career has been filled with various stops and residencies around the globe. How has the layout of those pins and strings over time informed your work?

**Kirby:** I've been lucky to travel as much as I have. And you've probably figured out that I take a fairly journalistic view of the world – if I see it, I'll write about it. I'm answering this question in the fall of 2020, which means only crazy people travel these days. And it's rough for me to stay at home. I love to lope across the face of this beautiful earth and talk to people and get chased by dogs and dip into art museums and buy a hot dog from the guy with the cart on the corner. Where's my damned passport, damn it!

**Rocheleau:** I once wrote a poem called "Artusi Attacks Modern Music," which started with an epigraph from Little Richard. (Giovanni Artusi's actual contemporary and target, out of the 16th century, was Monteverdi.) I do know you revere Richard Penniman as I do. Your own poems are filled with references to music and art, and to their purveyors. Do you draw a distinction between high and low art, or is it, to you, one gold thread winding through everything, whether pop or permanent?

**Kirby:** I see the distinctions, but I don't let them slow me down. Listening to Vivaldi and Little Richard make me feel equally dancy. I do recognize that  
*continued on the next page*

Middlemarch makes me feel feelings and think thoughts that I don't feel or think when I read a Lee Child novel, but I love both. I'd die if I couldn't go to a French restaurant from time to time and eat a lovely piece of trout with a sorrel sauce, but I feel the same way about the five-buck barbecue I get from the guy with the roadside cooker. Your old-school aristocrats could paint and write sonnets and fight duels and go to war and woo members of the opposite sex with equal skill and fervor. Why should we not do our best version of that? There's too much to experience out there. Let's have it all.

**Rocheleau:** OK, here's just a standard question during which I am making an Old Fashioned, my pandemic standby, with my laptop on the sink. Poetry influences for you, aesthetic influences, non-aesthetic ones, personal ones? I like that you mention Keats, by the way. It's true that modern poets will sometimes drop a Donne or Keats just as credit to a way-dead emblem, but with you, as with Peter Meinke, I know it's not that.

**Kirby:** Recently I was in the audience as one of the great Muscle Shoals musicians was asked a question about influence. I think everyone expected him to say he was influenced by Ray Charles or B.B. King or Bo Diddley. But what he said was that the most important influence on his work was the guy standing next to him in the studio that day. Sure, I love Keats. He's my go-to. But on a given day, he might just leave me cold. That same day, I'll hear somebody say something as they pass me on the sidewalk that makes me feel as though I've stuck my finger in a wall socket. Be open, I tell my students. Be open to everything.

*continued on the next page*



Kirby accepting Lifetime Achievement Award (Little Richard Portrait). Photography by Bob O'Lary

**Rocheleau:** What aggravates you about poets and about “The Poet Game?” (I love to call it that. There was a great play by that name from the early seventies, saw it on PBS while I was still a young prose writer, Anthony Hopkins playing you.)

**Kirby:** The poetic vices are pretty much the vices of any profession. It’s just as bad for a poet to bray about an acceptance from a choice journal as it is for an investment banker to boast about how big his bonus was last year. Anybody can be gauche. But probably the worst poetic vice is to think yours is the only way of doing things. Most of the poets I know are very generous and giving, but some are gatekeepers. That’s a mistake. In the right hands, a poem can be anything, and anything can be a poem. At least that’s what I told Tony Hopkins when I was helping him prepare to play me.

**Rocheleau:** What’s the very best little piece of advice you can give to a working poet that you consider is important, but that they likely haven’t heard?

**Kirby:** First thing I’d say is, listen. Don’t rush to judgment or to commit your words to paper. You can do that later. For the moment, just keep your ears open and make sure you’re not just hearing but really listening. After that, I’d say learn to tell a joke. Jokes have everything poems do: economy, timing, a crisp finish. Poems don’t have to be funny, though many are, but the best ones all have that same joke structure. As far as that goes, study improv. The one rule of improv is you never say “no,” only “yes and.” So when somebody says “when Jane was over at our house for dinner, did you notice she had spinach in her teeth?” a non-poet might say “what are you talking about?” A poet would say “yes, and we weren’t even serving spinach.” You never know where a good joke’s going, but it always knocks you off your feet. Same with a good poem.

**RECENT RELEASE  
BY DAVID KIRBY**



**BUY THE BOOK**



Kirby with Japanese school children. Photography by Barbara Hamby



**Mary Weiss of the Shangri-Las Explains It All to You**

A student I haven't seen for months stops by to say hello,  
and she's wearing a sundress, and when she gets up to leave,  
I see she has a tattoo on her shoulder, so I say, "Hold on  
a sec, let me take a look," and when I see  
it says, "Poetry is not reflection; it is refraction," I say, "I like that,"

and she says, "You should. You said that in the first class  
I took from you." It's times like this that I impress myself.  
Not for long, though: the more interesting thing to think  
about is not my excellence but the process whereby  
we turn our experiences into art that moves others, to do, for example,

what Mary Weiss of the Shangri-Las did when she sang "Leader  
of the Pack," recalling "I had enough pain in me, at the time,  
to pull off anything. And to get into it, and sound—believable."  
We believe you, Mary. Mainly because you're so  
restrained when you sing that song, as though you're not really bothered

by the fact that the love of your life has just roared away  
on his motorcycle only to be turned into a pile of hamburger  
somewhere out on Highway 30. Restraint: that's the thing,  
isn't it? Discipline. Self-command. The more  
he wrote songs, the more Burt Bacharach's music took odd turns,

became clipped and staccato, offbeat. "One-level records  
always made me a little bit uncomfortable after a while,"  
he says. "They stayed at one intensity. It kind of beats you up,  
you know? It's like a smile. If you have a great  
smile, you use it quick, not all the time." Burt Bacharach sounds

*continued on the next page*



like a smart guy. You have to trust the listener to pick up  
on the little thing, to change and color it  
until it's the biggest part of the song, even though it's the smallest.  
And the least true, maybe, in the factual sense.  
I don't remember telling my class about reflection and refraction,  
but if I did, I was freeing the students from the absolute need  
to reflect their world and telling them that  
what they refracted was theirs to make, that you can disconnect  
your image from reality. Mary Weiss says,  
"The recording studio was the place where you could really release  
what you're feeling without everybody looking at you." And the poem  
is the place where we poets do the same. Everybody  
listened to Mary Weiss—that song was number one  
on the pop charts in 1964—and we poets, too, want  
to lose ourselves in our early poem drafts so we can write and rewrite  
and revise until the poem is so good that everybody loves it,  
whether or not they actually end up doing so. When I ask  
my former student what other tattoos she has, she says  
that's the only one, and when I say, "Wow,  
it means that much to you, huh?" she says no, it really hurt.

~ David Kirby



### More Than This

When you tell me that a woman is visiting the grave  
of her college friend and she's trying not to get irritated  
at the man in the red truck who keeps walking back and forth  
and dropping tools as he listens to a pro football  
game on the truck radio, which is much too loud, I start  
to feel as though I know where this story is going,  
so I say Stop, you're going to make me cry.  
How sad the world is. When young men died in the mud  
of Flanders, the headmaster called their brothers out  
of the classroom one by one, but when the older brothers  
began to die by the hundreds every day, they simply handed  
the child a note as he did his lessons, and of course the boy  
wouldn't cry in front of the others, though at night  
the halls were filled with the sound of schoolboys sobbing  
for the dead, young men only slightly older than themselves.  
Yet the world's beauty breaks our hearts as well:  
the old cowboy is riding along and looks down  
at his dog and realizes she died a long time ago  
and that his horse did as well, and this makes him  
wonder if he is dead, too, and as he's thinking this,  
he comes to a big shiny gate that opens onto a golden  
highway, and there's a man in a robe and white wings,  
and when the cowboy asks what this place is, the man tells  
him it's heaven and invites him in, though he says animals  
aren't allowed, so the cowboy keeps going till he comes  
to an old rusty gate with a road full of weeds and potholes  
on the other side and a guy on a tractor, and the guy  
wipes his brow and says you three must be thirsty,

*continued on the next page*





come in and get a drink, and the cowboy says okay,  
but what is this place, and the guy says it's heaven,  
and the cowboy says then what's that place down  
the road with the shiny gate and the golden highway,  
and when the guy says oh, that's hell, the cowboy  
says doesn't it make you mad that they're pretending  
to be you, and the guy on the tractor says no,  
we like it that they screen out the folks who'd desert  
their friends. You tell me your friend can't take it  
any more, and she turns to confront the man  
who's making all the noise, to beg him to leave her alone  
with her grief, and that's when she sees that he's been  
putting up a Christmas tree on his son's grave  
and that he's grieving, too, but in his own way,  
one that is not better or worse than the woman's,  
just different, the kind of grief that says the world  
is so beautiful, that it will give you no peace.

~ David Kirby



**A World in Which These Things Happen**

*The Ionian Sea, noon to early evening*

Driving onto the ferry at Patra isn't difficult  
because there's nowhere to go except onto the ferry,  
though once you're on, the trouble starts: the guy  
who is guiding you into place not only wants you to back

your car into a space exactly the size of the car itself  
but also wants you to watch him, not the cars  
on either side, so he stands facing you with his hands  
on an invisible steering wheel that he turns all the way

to the right, and you don't know whether that means  
you should turn to the right, which is his left, or whether  
he wants you to think of him as a mirror  
image and turn the wheel to the left, a choice that would be

clear if he were to face away from you, though  
then he couldn't see you and the car would never  
get parked or at least parked correctly,  
which it does eventually, meaning you're free now to go up

on deck and look at all the other ships as you chug out  
of the harbor, and as you do, you wonder if these  
beat-up freighters have something on  
them they shouldn't—a duffel full of heroin, a shipping

container loaded with AKs, a body—but even if they  
don't, you're no more the kind of person who wants  
to live in a world where such things are  
unimaginable than you are the kind who, when the car ferry

*continued on the next page*



reaches Vathi, doesn't do everything he did to get on board  
in the first place, only this time in reverse, so that  
by now you're more than ready to take a little  
something at the port café where the only empty seat is next

to a guy who's maybe eighty and has a houndstooth fedora  
and the kind of tinted glasses favored (at least in movies)  
by Baltic spies, and after a few minutes,  
you're absolutely certain that he is about to say I understand

the cheese pies are excellent here in Vathi and you'll  
wait a bit and say Yes but they are even better  
in Frikes and he'll say The oracle speaks, yet  
the priest cannot shoe his horse and you'll say My wife's uncle

is sick because the highway is green and finally he'll say  
Just tell us where the stolen art is buried or When  
does the invasion begin or Who abducted  
the prime minister, and that's when you realize how little


you understand anything about anything, which  
is okay, because if you had to understand everything,  
the world wouldn't work at all, though  
you're fairly certain that if one part of this endless day

were to change, then the whole day would change  
and you as well, that you might even disappear,  
that he might say fruit pies  
instead of cheese pies and poof, like that, you're gone.

~ David Kirby

# Season's Seasonings

We may not be able to be together as we typically would during these holidays, but we sure can share some of its warmth and well-loved flavors.

So we asked a few of our members to share with you some of their favorite holiday recipes, many added to their offering a poem too ~ it's what poets do. We hope you enjoy. 

# Mother's Sweet Potato Pie

Serves 6-8

## Ingredients:

- 3 large sweet potatoes
- 2 eggs, beaten
- ½ cup milk
- ¼ cup melted butter
- 1 cup brown sugar, packed
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 1 tablespoon finely grated lemon peel
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- ½ teaspoon cinnamon, optional
- ½ teaspoon nutmeg
- 1 unbaked 9-inch, deep-dish pie shell

## Preparation:

Boil whole unpeeled sweet potatoes in water to cover until tender, about 30 minutes. Drain and set aside until cool enough to handle. Peel potatoes and mash in large bowl until velvety smooth. Add eggs, milk, melted butter, brown sugar, lemon juice, lemon peel, vanilla, nutmeg and cinnamon. Beat until well blended and creamy smooth.

Pour mixture into pie shell. Bake at 425 degrees 10 minutes. Reduce temperature to 325 degrees and bake until knife inserted in center comes out clean, about 35 minutes. Serve warm, at room temperature or chilled.

— Mary Rogers-Grantham



Mary Rogers-Grantham

## The Prodigal Smell of a Southern Thanksgiving Dinner

Some dishes are major stars at the dinner table. When they show up on the menu screen, families and guests bury their appetite deep inside a special place in the stomach.

Some dishes are supporting stars at the dinner table. Major or supporting—Succotash, a fun word to say, offers a soft aroma from the kitchen. Fresh fall garden greens simmer tenderly into a mouth-watering role. Green bean casserole, cornbread dressing and honey buttermilk biscuits baking their way into waiting nostrils that discreetly flare and return.

Roast turkey energizes the prodigal smell of Thanksgiving emanating from the kitchen, while elegant sweet potato pie awaits its debut.

© Mary Rogers-Grantham, 2020



Katherine Nelson-Born

### One Palmyra Christmas

At the carved cypress table scented with pine boughs,  
through a bare-assed turkey, I see between the bones  
my sister winking at me.

Our first Christmas in our newly purchased shotgun  
on Palmyra Street, New Orleans, Mid-City,  
we are proud as pea hens we own this home,  
the first we've ever known,  
wiping the slate clean of nights  
under bridges or in foster care.

Laughter rises like champagne bubbles.  
Dad loosens his belt, belts out Cabaret tunes  
like he's a member of the Rat Pack,  
a Norse Sammy Davis, Jr.

Dinner conversation waning, he ducks out  
for the corner bar, an old haunt.  
He doesn't return one last time.  
Mother's our new roommate,  
a surprise present I don't know  
to appreciate until nearly too late.  
Her skin turned the color of the cypress table,  
she ladles out words I write to keep her.

She loved that old shotgun,  
her easy chair, dime novels.  
Sometimes before snoring off,  
"remember" dripped from her lips.  
Together we'd drift back to that Christmas  
when bruised hearts unbent and peace reigned  
among the turkey remains.

© Katherine Nelson-Born, 2020

*In NOLA, what's a turkey without its dressing?  
(Naked, of course!)*

## Chef Emeril Lagasse's New Orleans Oyster Dressing Ya'll

### Ingredients:

- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 1/2 cup chopped onion
- 1/2 cup chopped green bell pepper
- 1/2 cup chopped celery
- 2 tablespoons chopped garlic
- 3 cups cubed day-old French bread
- 2 cups oysters with their liquor
- 1 cup chicken broth
- 1/4 cup chopped green onions
- 2 tablespoons chopped parsley
- 1 tablespoon Creole seasoning
- 1/2 teaspoon hot pepper sauce
- Salt and freshly-ground black pepper

### Preparation:

Preheat oven to 350° F. Generously oil a medium baking dish. In a large skillet heat oil over medium-heat and add onion, green pepper and celery and saute, stirring frequently, 2 minutes. Add garlic and cook 2 minutes longer. Lower the heat and fold in bread cubes, oysters and their liquor, and broth until moistened. Add green onions, parsley, Creole seasoning, and hot pepper sauce. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Pour dressing into baking dish, cover with foil and bake for 30 minutes. Remove foil and bake 20 minutes longer, until golden brown and crispy on top.

Here's a [link](#)

— Katherine Nelson-Born

# MELAMAKARONA COOKIES

(Greek Honey Dainties)

## Ingredients:

- 1/3 cup cooking oil
- 1/2 cup unsalted butter, softened
- 1/3 cup sugar
- 1 tablespoon orange juice
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 3/4 to 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 tablespoon cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon ground cloves
- 1 teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 3/4 cup sugar
- 1/2 cup water
- 1/3 cup honey
- 2 cinnamon sticks
- 1/3 cup finely chopped walnuts

## Preparation:

In mixer bowl beat cooking oil into butter until blended. Beat in the 1/3 cup sugar. Add orange juice, baking powder, and baking soda; mix well. Add enough of the flour, a little at a time to make medium-soft dough. Shape dough into 2-inch ovals and place on ungreased baking sheet. Bake in 350° oven for 20-25 minutes or until cookies are golden. Cool cookies on a wire rack. Meanwhile, in a saucepan combine the 3/4 cup sugar, water, and honey. Boil gently uncovered for 5 minutes. Dip the cooled cookies into the warm syrup (carefully, so they do not fall apart). Sprinkle immediately with nuts. Dry on a wire rack. Store in loosely covered container. Makes 2 1/2 to 3 dozen.

— Dina Tanner

*This recipe (with a few personal tweaks) is from a magazine I found decades ago. My dad's parents came from Greece, so these pastries have been part of holiday meals since I was born. Cookies are the most common dessert at our table.*



Dina Tanner

## Greek Christmas

Shiny new black patent leather shoes  
make little clicking sounds  
proclaiming my arrival.  
Eager cousins wait on top  
of old wooden stairs.

Familiar odors snake through the air.  
Theo Pete's pipe, Uncle Jim's cigar,  
Popouli's cigarette smoke  
Thea Bess' Chantilly perfume  
reveal their presence to my nose.

Sparkly silver tree stands by the window.  
We run past to the little bedroom  
I toss my fake fur coat carelessly  
onto a bed piled high with real furs  
and black flannel trench coats.

Loud Greek conversations  
bounce around the dining room.  
Dessert offered, finally! Baklava,  
koulourakia, kourambiedes, melomacaronia  
My little fingers take one of each.

The BEST part of Christmas  
was doing the dishes in the old farm sink.  
We washed and dried and stacked them high.  
And then, my cousins would start to sing  
Silent Night in four part harmony

I still hear them in my heart.

© Constandina Tanner, 2020



Gordon Magill

## Soup!

Soup! As venerable as pots in fact, termed “pottage” in olde England, “potage” in France —five thousand years before the soup was simmering on someone’s hearth for whenever there was water pure, meat from forest, grain from field, roots hidden underground, and friendly herbs that could be procured there would be soup!

Soup! It’s like growing a garden . . . you start with the root vegetables: garlic, onions, carrots, potatoes and turnips then come the vines — beans red white yellow and green, and tomatoes, all kinds Italian, American, green purple and plum then the bouquet of the garden: the herbs parsley, basil, and thyme, rosemary and sage coriander and comfrey, oregano and marjoram

Soup! It’s been the salvation of stomachs forever  
What did you get as a kid, when sick? Soup!  
What do you want when you’re tired of steak? Soup!  
When the rich start their banquets,  
what do they sup first? Soup!  
When the poor have nothing but a bone and potatoes,  
what do they make? Soup!

Soup can feed the world one bowl at a time  
Soup will nourish the soul one sniff at a time.  
Soup joins us together as we sup soup ensemble.  
Soup is a metaphor for the beautiful diversity of humankind.

Let’s all join the United Nations of Soup!

# Gordon’s Poor Poet’s Vegetarian Minestrone Soup

— Makes 4 or more quarts

Great with crusty Italian country bread, and red or white wine!

## Ingredients:

- 2/3 cup green cold-pressed olive oil
- 2 large onions chopped
- 1 large head of garlic (peeled and chopped)
- 2 or 3 medium green zucchini
- 2 medium yellow squash
- 1 large bunch green or red chard (coarsely chopped)
- 6 medium red potatoes, cut into large cubes
- 1 bunch Italian parsley (minced)
- 1 bunch fresh basil (minced)
- 1 large can red or white beans (if desired)
- 2 cups dry Italian small pasta or pastina shells such as ditalini, grattoni, rotini, or orzo.
- 2-Large cans diced Italian tomatoes
- 2-3 quarts vegetable stock
- 2 cups basil pesto
- 1 lb. of fresh or dry Parmesan or Romano cheese, finely grated
- 2-3 tablespoons of dry oregano

*Seasonings:* Salt, pepper, dried oregano.

## Assembly of soup:

If possible, use heavy-bottomed large, 6- or 8-quart soup kettle or stock pot. Gently sauté onions in olive oil until yellow. Do not burn! Add chopped garlic and sauté another few minutes. Remove onion and garlic mix from oil with slotted spoon or mesh. Add zucchini, squash, potatoes. Saute these 5 minutes or until just soft. Do not overcook! Then:

- Add back onion and garlic mix to pot
- Add diced Italian tomatoes
- Add chopped chard, parsley, and basil to soup
- Add can of beans
- Add add 2 quarts of vegetable stock  
May add more stock if soup looks too thick
- Add 2-3 tablespoons of dry oregano

Bring soup mixture to boil, then turn down heat to simmer. Simmer soup mix about 30 minutes. Don’t overcook! Separately cook pastina shells or rotini in large saucepan with water until “al dente” or just beginning to be chewy. Drain and add to soup. This will save the vegetable stock which otherwise would be soaked up by the pasta. Simmer another 30 minutes or longer until pasta is soft, beans are very soft, and vegetables are well cooked. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Allow minestrone to rest about 30 minutes before serving, keeping well-warmed.

Serve with garnishes of pesto and grated cheese.

— Gordon Magill



## Potato Latkes for Hanukkah

Serves 6-8

### Ingredients:

- 5 grated raw Russet potatoes
- 3 eggs, beaten
- 1 Tbsp. salt
- 1 Tbsp. flour
- pinch of baking powder
- 2 medium yellow onions, grated



Holly Mandelkern

### Preparation:

Grate potatoes and drain. Combine all ingredients. Mix well. Drop pancake mixture by the tablespoon into hot olive oil. Fry on both sides until brown. Serve piping hot with applesauce or sour cream. Serves six to eight people.

— Holly Mandelkern

*This recipe is from my old Jacksonville Jewish Center Sisterhood Cookbook. It was assembled by my cousin and includes many recipes from my Aunt Sophie, Grandma Rose, and others whom I remember from the congregation. My mother still belongs to the Center, and I grew up in this synagogue. So I feel connected to my roots whenever I make a recipe from this worn and loved cookbook.*

## Pumpkin Bars

### Ingredients:

- 4 large eggs, room temp.
- 1-2/3 cups sugar
- 1 cup canola oil
- 1 can (15 ounces) solid-pack pumpkin
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 2 teaspoons ground cinnamon
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon salt

### Icing:

- 6 ounces cream cheese, softened
- 2 cups confectioners' sugar
- 1/4 cup butter, softened
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 to 2 tablespoons whole milk

### Preparation:

In a bowl, beat the eggs, sugar, oil and pumpkin until well blended. Combine the flour, cinnamon, baking powder, baking soda and salt; gradually add to pumpkin mixture and mix well. Pour into an ungreased 15 x 10 x 1-in. baking pan. Bake at 350° for 25-30 minutes or until set. Cool completely. For the icing, beat the cream cheese, confectioners' sugar, butter and vanilla in a small bowl. Add enough milk to achieve spreading consistency. Spread over bars. Store in the refrigerator.

— Charles Hazelip

*This is one of my wife's favorite Pumpkin Bar recipes.*

## A Taste of Freedom

We hear the hammering Maccabees who fought to dedicate the Temple post-Antiochus— with oil to consecrate.

So we recall and indulge in latkes fried in oil, kindling heat and memory, a Temple spared from spoil.

A miracle to revel in we celebrate with food. Candles burning, lights returning— freedom tasted good.

© Holly Mandelkern, 2020



Charles Hazelip



Carlton Johnson

## Indian Pudding — Serves 6

### Ingredients:

- 4 cups whole milk
- 1/2 cup cornmeal
- 1/2 cup molasses
- 1/4 cup pure maple syrup
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, softened, plus more for baking dish
- 2 large eggs, beaten
- 1 teaspoon table salt
- 2 teaspoons granulated sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon ground ginger
- 1/8 teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg

### INDIAN PUDDING

The old Joy of Cooking stood dog-eared and gravy stained in the pantry next to the large pots and pans, the specialty crockery brought down for special occasions like Thanksgiving. In a household, where everyone had a job on Thanksgiving, mine was preparing Indian pudding. Eight cups of milk simmered on the range. Into this I fold in a cup or two of corn meal along with many fragrant spices—cinnamon, nutmeg, ginger, molasses, allspice. Then stirring seemed like hours. In the end the consistency was sometimes like a pudding, other times a gravy. Either way, Dad loved it with vanilla ice cream my siblings did not care for it but that was their loss.

© Carlton Johnson, 2020

### Preparation:

Preheat the oven to 300° and grease a 1 1/2-quart baking dish. Bring milk to a simmer in a double boiler over high heat. Slowly add the cornmeal, whisking to combine. Continue to cook, whisking constantly, for 15 minutes. Slowly add molasses, then remove from heat. Add maple syrup and the rest of the ingredients and stir until smooth. Pour mixture into the prepared baking dish, and bake until the pudding is set and the top is browned, about 2 hours. Serve hot or cold, topped with vanilla ice cream or whipped cream.

— Carlton Johnson

*On Thanksgivings, when I was growing up, everyone had a chore to do. I became the maker of the Indian pudding. I looked forward to mixing up the ingredients on the gas stove. My dad always liked it with vanilla ice cream, while my siblings preferred the usual pumpkin and apple pies. As for me, I preferred the pudding.*

## Jo's Famous Cheesecake

### Ingredients:

- Graham cracker crust for a 10" springform pan (about 1/3 more than 9" pie pan recipe)
- 20 oz. cream cheese
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 4 eggs, room temperature, separated
- 2 1/2 tablespoon lemon juice
- Rind of 1 lemon
- 1 teaspoon vanilla

### Ingredients for topping:

- 1 3/4 cup sour cream
- 2 tablespoon sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla

### Preparation:

Prepare graham cracker crust and line 10" springform pan with it. Preheat oven to 300°. Separate eggs, reserve whites. Put egg yolks, sugar, peel, juice, vanilla, and 1/3 of the cream cheese in a blender and process until well blended. Add remaining cream cheese in two portions and process until all is well blended. Place egg whites in mixer bowl and beat until stiff. Fold cream cheese mixture into egg whites. Pour into crumb crust and bake for at least 45 minutes.

NOTE: Make sure you place the springform pan on an edged cookie sheet, as butter will drip out of it and burn in your oven. Mix topping ingredients until smooth. When cake seems done, remove from oven and spread the topping over it, then return it to the oven for another 5-10 minutes (until top solidifies and begins to appear cracked. Turn the oven off and let the cake cool in the oven.

— Marc Davidson

*This recipe is by Josephine Davidson, former food editor of the Daytona Beach Journal, and my dear mother.*



Marc Davidson

## Christmas past, present and future

There's an awful lot of chopping  
pounding, rolling, baking, icing  
going on in our kitchens these days.  
It's Christmas looming large  
in our beleaguered psyches, holding  
out the promise of peace and plenty,  
good cheer and comradeship, freely  
given, as promised in song and story.

Whatever happened to taking it easy  
and letting Christmas flow? Must have  
been what we had as children, before  
the onus of preparations fell on us.  
Now we make Christmas for another  
generation. Their turn to bask in the  
glow of sweets and gifts, without  
the worry of making ready to go.

Christmas caroling on the green  
or up and down the street seems  
a lost art. The music blares at us  
from loudspeakers and radios  
losing all meaning and all excitement  
which it used to bring. Fa la la la  
and bring out the figgy pudding  
but only if it's gluten free and low carb.

I've had enough. I'm too old fashioned  
for these goings on. I want rhyme and  
meter, like this:

Come sweetheart, take my hand  
and let's take Christmas easy.  
The rain has blown away  
and the atmosphere is breezy.

Come sit upon my lap  
and hum old fashioned carols  
and let us take a nap -  
ignore all Christmas perils.

Let others do the baking  
and dress the Christmas tree  
A feast of others' making  
is best for you and me.

For things could be much worse  
But still we mustn't fear it  
This fine, old-fashioned verse  
should boost our Christmas spirit.



Ruth Van Alstine

## LEMON “BREAD” — *Makes 2 large breadpan loaves*

### Ingredients:

- 1 lb butter (2 cups or 4 sticks)
- 1 lb sugar (2 ½ cups)
- 1 lb of flour (4 cups)
- 1 lb nuts
- 1 lb candy cherries
- 1 lb chopped dates
- 1 level tsp baking powder
- 1 tsp salt
- 2 oz lemon extract
- 6 eggs

### Preparation (Steps):

1. Soften butter & cream sugar in
2. Break eggs, beat each in.
3. Add lemon extract.
4. Dredge cherries, nuts & dates with some of the flour. Set aside.
5. Separately mix flour, baking powder & salt together.
6. Slowly stir flour into butter/sugar/egg mixture until all in.
7. Mix nuts and dates in.
8. Add candy cherries last, mix only until folded in, so as not to break cherries up. You want them whole.

Grease bread loaf pans and fill a little over half-way. Bake at 325° for one hour, or until cake tester comes out clean. Turn pan on side for 10 minutes then turn cake on other side for a few minutes, then turn out of pan. Continue to cool cake on its side for about 10-15 minutes. Wrap tightly in several layers of plastic saran wrap to keep in moisture and then place multiple loaves in a large freezer baggie for extra sealing in of moisture. Place these in refrigerator for several weeks before serving to “marinate”. Can be served sooner, but flavor is better the longer you wait.

— Ruth Van Alstine — *An old family recipe*

# Holiday Chicken & Sausage Gumbo

Serves 12

## Ingredients:

- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 2/3 cup vegetable or olive oil
- 2 quarts chicken stock
- 1 cup water
- 1 - 6-oz. can tomato paste
- Olive oil or butter for sauteing
- 3 cups chopped sweet onions
- 2 cups chopped celery
- 1 cup (or less) chopped bell pepper
- 4 cloves garlic, crushed
- Pinch of thyme, salt, pepper
- 8 - 10 boneless, skinless chicken thighs cut into chunks
- 3 pkg. precooked sausage - a mixture of Beef Kielbasa, Hillshire Farm Cajun Style Andouille or Johnsonville Andouille, Savoie Cajun Sausage, sliced in ¼ to ½-inch rounds.
- 1 cup chopped green onions



Diane Jones Skelton

## Preparation:

Make a baked roux of the flour and oil in a heavy pot in a 400-degree oven, stirring every 10 minutes for about 45 minutes or until it reaches a dark caramel color.

While the roux cooks, lightly brown the sliced sausage on both sides in a small amount of oil in a skillet. Removed with slotted spoon and drain sausage in colander or on paper towels. Reserve the oil in the skillet.

Lightly salt and pepper the chicken, sprinkle with pinch of thyme. Brown the chicken on both sides in the reserved oil. Drain. Add to the sausage.

In a separate skillet, sauté the onion, celery, and bell pepper in 1/4 cup olive oil until the celery and bell pepper are limp and onion translucent. Do not brown. Set aside.

When the roux is brown, remove from oven and slowly add chicken stock, water, and tomato paste and stir, mixing completely. Transfer to a larger pot. Bring to a boil and lower to a simmer. Add the cooked vegetables and garlic to roux mixture. Cover, bring to a boil, reduce heat, and simmer for about half an hour. Add the chicken and sausage to the simmering roux. Cover and cook gently for 1 or 1 ½ hours or until the chicken is completely cooked. Skim off the fat. Add half the green onions in the last half hour of cooking.

Serve over hot rice and garnish with remaining green onions on top of each bowl. Better and spicier the second day.

— Diane Jones Skelton

## Homage to a Housewife's Poetry

Before Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings moved to Florida and earned fame for *The Yearling* and her Cross Creek books, she wrote poetry. As a young writer and homemaker in New York, she struck a deal with the *Rochester Union Times* to write a poem six days of the week. In less than two years, she penned more than 450 poems. They were so popular her column went into syndication. The collection of often short, witty, wise, rhyming, and sometimes ironic poems is titled *Songs of a Housewife*. Topics included gardening, cooking, pets, nature, and neighbors. In her honor, I offer "newspaper genre poems" describing household events in my life one week in June.

1.  
Gumbo's on the stovetop  
The kitchen's quite a mess  
Scrubbing down the counters  
Remains my final quest.
2.  
Peppers, onions, celery  
Await a rich brown roux  
But when the blasted cell phone rings  
My gumbo becomes a stew.
3.  
My neighbor called with the latest news  
Her figs are ready to pick  
She even offered a ladder to use  
If I'd hurry and show up quick.
4.  
My neighbor picked fresh herbs for me  
And told me to hang, dry, and bind  
So now I have a crumbling mess  
But is it oregano, mint, or thyme?
5.  
My roses are fighting torpedo grass  
The lantana's gasping for breath  
The gard'ner escaped through a crevice  
Leaving the flower bed strangling to death.

© Diane Jones Skelton, 2020



Linda Marie Cossa

Circle to circumference pastry

Sweet tart alchemy  
Mango lime mix and marry  
Loving life of Pi

© Linda Marie Cossa, 2020

## Mango Lime Pie

### Filling Ingredients:

- 1 cup mashed fresh mango
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup of sugar
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup freshly squeezed lime juice = 4 limes
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup cornstarch
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup fresh orange juice
- 2 large eggs
- 2  $\frac{1}{2}$  tablespoons butter
- 2 teaspoons grated lime rind

### Assembly of Filling:

Combine mango, sugar, lime juice, cornstarch, orange juice, and both eggs in a saucepan. Stir mixture with whisk. Bring mixture to light boil over medium heat to thicken. Cook 1 minute stirring constantly with whisk. Remove from heat, stir in butter and lime rind. Mix well. Spoon mango mixture into a bowl. Place bowl in a larger, ice-filled bowl for 10 minutes or until mango mixture comes up to room temperature, stirring occasionally. Spoon mango mixture into prebaked pie shell or crust. Refrigerate pie until well chilled.

### Meringue: (optional)

- 2 egg whites at room temperature
- $\frac{1}{4}$  tsp. cream of tartar
- 3 tablespoons sugar

### Meringue Directions:

Whip 2 egg whites with  $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon cream of tartar, 3 tablespoons of sugar until stiff. Before serving, cover top of mango mixture with meringue. Brown lightly under broiler if desired.

— Linda Marie Cossa

## Chess Pie

### Ingredients:

- 1 ½ cup of sugar
- 1 tablespoon of flour
- 1 tablespoon of cornmeal
- 5 large eggs, well beaten
- 2/3 cup buttermilk
- ½ cup (1 stick) salted butter, melted
- 9-inch pie crust

### Preparation:

In a large bowl, whisk together sugar, flour, and cornmeal. Beat in eggs and buttermilk till well blended. Stir in melted butter. Pour in unbaked crust. Bake at 350° until light brown and set (about 45 minutes).

Cook's note: Some recipes call for just flour, some for just cornmeal. But I prefer this one that adds a tablespoon of each.

— Tom Kelly



Tom Kelly

## Chess Pie

It's time for family dinner.  
My son-in-law sits to my right,  
pretty far to my right.  
He wants to talk far into the night  
about the history of democracy,  
how there's a plot to destroy it.  
He makes a lot of sense sometimes.  
I tell him so, as his eyes grow wide,  
because he knows how I truly feel,  
but he's eyeing the pie  
that will finish our meal  
and he'll be quick to "oh boy!" it.

It's time for family dinner.  
My brother-in-law sits to my left.  
In truth, he sits to most people's left.  
He's absolutely sure he knows what's best,  
talking about the history of tyranny  
and how it's up to you and me to destroy it.  
He makes a lot of sense, sometimes,  
and I tell him so. He's rather surprised  
since he knows how I truly feel.

As I cut the pie,  
I'm cutting a deal.  
We're friends; let's not let opinions spoil it.

One thinks that I'm a liberal;  
the other says I'm conservative.  
They both like sharing my pie.  
I add kindness and respect  
as a preservative.  
Perhaps that's the reason why.

© Tom Kelly, 2020



Mark Andrew James Terry

## Holiday Aromatics

Her swirling hand cajoles familiar aromas to drift out of the kitchen. Honey-baked ham and Vermont cheddar cheese blend with maraschino cherries, sweet Georgia peaches, pineapples and Armenian apricots.

The aromatics seduce my senses, pulling me from the cocoon of a well-worn leather chair, away from the warming coals of fire-dog-cradled flames.

It all whirls in a dervish dance, mingling with joyous multi-color lights and presents' plenty under the tree. Ella's elegant, jazzy rendition of "Moonlight in Vermont" anticipates the syncopated beat of four free-range bantam eggs that will bind Jane's superb soufflé to a delicate but deliberate dash of cayenne pepper.

Yes, it's enough to make any grimacing grinch want to live like a Who down in Whoville, once more.

© Mark Andrew James Terry, 2020

## Christmas Breakfast — Serves 6

### *Ham & Cheese Soufflé* (Prepare one day ahead)

#### **Ingredients:**

- 3 cups of cubed French bread
- 2 cups of cubed ham
- 8 oz. of cubed cheddar cheese
- 3 tablespoons flour
- 1 tablespoon dry mustard
- 3 tablespoons melted butter
- 4 eggs
- 3 cups of milk
- A dash of cayenne pepper

#### **Preparation:**

Butter a two-quart baking dish (7 1/2 x 11). Mix the eggs and milk. Mix flour, dry mustard and cayenne pepper. Layer 1/3 of the cubed French bread, 1/3 ham and 1/3 cheese, heaping a tablespoon of flour mixture, then 1 tablespoon of melted butter. Repeat two more times. Then pour milk and eggs over it all. Cover and refrigerate over night. Bake at 350° for one hour after sitting out two hours to reach room temperature.

### *Curried Fruit* — (Prepare one or two days ahead)

#### **Ingredients:**

- Two 16 oz. cans of pear halves
- One 16 oz. can of sliced peaches
- One 16 oz. can of pineapple chunks
- One 16 oz. can apricot halves
- 12 maraschino cherries cut in half
- 1/2 cup light brown sugar
- 1 or 1 1/2 teaspoons of curry
- 1/3 cup melted butter
- 2/3 cup slivered almonds

#### **Preparation:**

Drain the fruit, then add sugar and curry to melted butter. Mix the fruit and almonds together in a baking dish. Pour the butter and curry mixture over the fruit. Bake at 325° for one hour, then refrigerate overnight. When ready to serve, reheat at 350° for 20-30 minutes after sitting out two hours to reach room temperature.

Serve English muffins with butter and jelly, and orange juice.

— Mark Andrew James Terry

*This meal is standard fare for our Christmas morning after all presents are opened. The recipe is Jane's, my wife of 40 years, come February 2021.*







**Congratulations,  
Katherine!**

**Meet the next  
Poet Laureate  
of Northwest  
Florida,  
Katherine  
Nelson-Born**

*Photo by Belinda Todd*

**by Nikki Fragala Barnes**

*An interview with Nikki Fragala Barnes*

This past week, right in the middle of a warm October, I had a video call with Katherine Nelson-Born, newly appointed Poet Laureate of Northwest Florida.

She was in her office, with her stacks of books. She confessed to not quite being able to tackle all the organization she aspired to, though from my end, her space looked airy and bright and inviting, and I was glad to share the time together. So, let's bring you into our conversation — here's what we talked about, such a tender range of topics including social justice and hope, Florida mockingbirds, Moscow Mules, and the natural inspiration in mornings. Read on.

**Nikki:** It's so nice to meet you and thanks for talking with me this afternoon.

**Katherine:** Oh, thanks for talking with me — I was so happy to hear from Mark Terry inviting me.

**Nikki:** Yes, he's wonderful — he has such a heart not only for poetry, but also for poets.

**Katherine:** Well, that's good; we need lots more people like that. So how would you like to get started?

**Nikki:** Congratulations on your new title, Poet Laureate of Northwest Florida.

**Katherine:** Yes, I am excited, mostly excited.

**Nikki:** What was the process like for you to become Poet Laureate?

**Katherine:** Well, it was an interesting process because several years ago, for the current outgoing Poet Laureate, I was on the committee that did the interviewing. When I was invited, this was very much like applying for a job and turning in a resume, and answering several pages of questions, like what would your vision be. It was very much like applying for a job, which it is, it's true, it's a job.

**Nikki:** And, how did they announce your appointment? How did they tell you?

**Katherine:** Well, actually, I believe it was an email following a zoom meeting of finalists. There's since been press releases and announcements, all very exciting.

**Nikki:** So I notice that you use sound a great deal in your work, both the sounds of the words themselves and also the sounds that one would hear, kind of the imagery of sound. Can you talk about the importance of sound, and how you seem to so naturally write about what we hear?



Photo by Tim Born

Katherine Nelson-Born grew up in New Orleans where she earned her undergraduate degree in English from the University of New Orleans before moving to Richmond, Virginia, to earn her MFA from Virginia Commonwealth University. Katherine then attended Georgia State University, where she earned her PhD in English.

Katherine's poems have appeared in numerous journals, including *Alyss*, *Birmingham Poetry Review*, *Emerald Coast Review*, *Excelsior ReView*, *GSU Review*, *Longleaf Pine*, *Maple Leaf Rag* and *Penumbra*. Katherine's poetry earned "Honorable Mention" at the 2015 Alabama Writers Conclave. Her poetry also previously won the University of New Orleans/Tennessee Williams Ellipsis award for poetry and placed twice among finalists in the Agnes Scott College Writer's Festival.

Katherine's premiere poetry chapbook, *When Mockingbirds Sing*, was published in 2016 by Finishing Line Press. Katherine's first full-length book of poems, *Bone Geometry*, is coming soon.

Currently, Katherine is completing a new novel and consulting for K & K Creative Editing.

Katherine currently lives and writes in Pensacola, Florida, with her husband of over 25 years, Tim Born, with whom she raised her daughter, Rowan Born, who currently attends the University of Southern California.

**Katherine:** Well, I'm glad you noticed about sound. Because for me, sound is important: to avoid the obvious rhyme scheme, but I like to have the complementary sounds, the slant rhyme, what helps the work flow. And I've just always found wordplay and sounds important. I grew up with radio, so music is my first love, and then putting words to music is my second love. So having words that sound musical in my ear, I find pleasing. I really love wordplay. There's a fine line so that it doesn't become "the sound and the fury," where the sound is all you hear, and you lose the message. Sound is always important to me.

**Nikki:** What do you want readers to know about your Act One, and what do you want us to know about what you're doing now?

**Katherine:** Well Act One is like the opening act, where you're getting introduced to your life, your story. Act Two, you get to the meat of it, and by the time you get to Act Three, you figure out how to pull it all together and really coalesce all of the ends into something beautiful, whether it's a work of art in words or music. You get to the final act, and the people that have gone with you and stayed with you all the way — it means you must have done something well.

**Nikki:** You have lived both in Louisiana and Florida — both the South, but so different.

**Katherine:** Living in Florida is a real eye-opener. Course, even when I moved away from the South, I didn't get past Richmond [Virginia], the seat of the Confederacy. It was a wonderful experience because it let me know the South covers a great deal of territory. But Florida, I always had this exotic idea of it — and Louisiana is quite exotic — but more like South Florida: palm trees and beaches. It's kind of like the First Act and Second Act. When I first got here, it's another southern state, and has a nice beach, and then when you get to know the politics and some of the history — once I started doing some research there's a beautiful book, *Lay that Trumpet in Our Hands*, [a novel by Susan McCarthy] some of the history of racism, that Florida had its own history, like Louisiana or Mississippi. That was an eye-opener. So, it was educational.

**Nikki:** Would you please talk a little about the title poem from your chapbook, *When Mockingbirds Sing*?

**Katherine:** It was in response to (back in 2008), I applied for a Big Read grant from the NEA, and it was based on Harper Lee's *To Kill A Mockingbird*. So that got me started and inspired. I am very much in tune to social justice and self-expression. It makes me think of the saying, 'the personal is political;' I do believe that. And, I also realized I had a book from back in the 1980s, and I didn't realize that I may have been influenced by — Charles Bukowski's *Mockingbird, Wish Me Luck*, a friend gave it to me back in 1988 — and on page seventy-one was "Mockingbird," and I was thinking, oh! I remember that! And, I just recently pulled it out — so something told me I had more influences mixing in. And also the whole point about mockingbirds: it's the state bird of Florida, so not only that, it's excellent at mimicking other birds. So all of those things came together for me: the state bird, living in Florida, social justice, wanting to be a writer. We all want to be original, even knowing, 'there's nothing original under the sun.' Even so, we know [Ezra] Pound says, 'make it new.' So, to make it new and make it mine — this is where it came from.

**Nikki:** And, what is it that you love about chapbooks? (I love chapbooks, too.)

**Katherine:** It's easier to carry a theme within a chapbook. In poetry, it's almost as if I had written a collection of short stories — this is a collection of poems. I think you can carry a theme or an idea more concisely in a chap. And, I am promoting a chapbook competition coming up. My first activity as Poet Laureate — and it's open to all — I'm hosting a poem-a-day in November. So I'll be posting on our Facebook page and on Twitter, a prompt. It's a poem-a-day for thirty days. And then, in the first two weeks of December, if you've written original poems, then you send them for a chapbook competition. It's an honor system — I'll put out the prompts. I hope they move people to write. The idea

is similar to NaNoWriMo. Folks can write anything in response to the prompts. People have thirty days, and then should have thirty poems, and out of that you should have 25-30 poems for a chap.

**Nikki:** I love this idea, and I love the way you speak of chaps, and how they work for writers, even emerging writers.

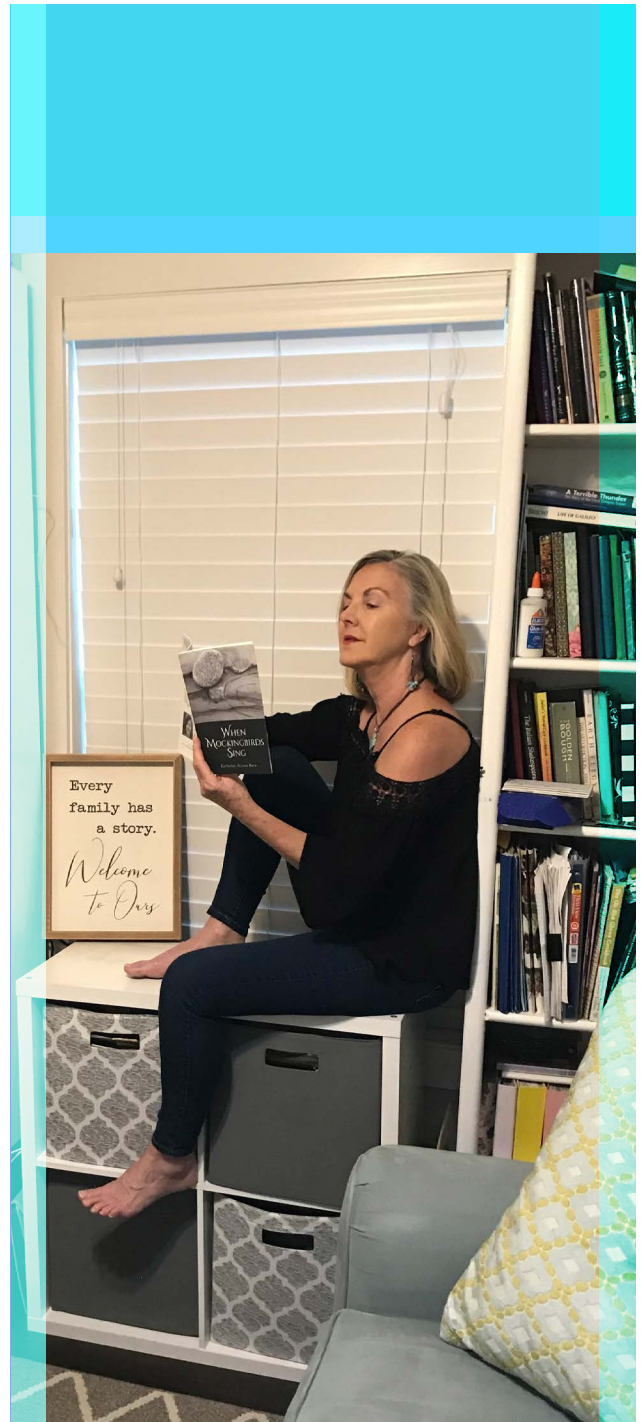
**Katherine:** Chapbooks are a way to find your way as an emerging writer — to come up with your first collection, and another collection, and along the way, you may be able to put together a longer work. It's certainly a good way to build your work.

**Nikki:** And speaking of that, you've written both: novels and poems. It can be so different to write using stories and structures; I really see a lot of magic in it. Do you find that one informs the other? How does that relationship work?

**Katherine:** Some of the poetry that I have written, I think it would fall into narrative poetry; it's lyrical, condensed stories. Whether you're writing a short story, a memoir, a work of fiction, you want your words to leap off the page just as beautifully in a work of fiction as in a poem. There's gotta be a reason for every single word to exist on the page — just as in poetry. As you know, I like sound, so when I tell my stories — well, in another life, I'd be a professional storyteller or maybe a dramatic actress! I love telling stories; I love acting them out. I used to enjoy the story hour with my daughter when she was very young. Even when I taught workshops — I've taught workshops with kindergartners on up to college — again, it's wordplay. It's bringing the words to life and making them sing.

**Nikki:** I'd love for you to talk more about your laureateship. You're going to be supporting education and community, poetry in the community. How is that beginning to take shape for you?

**Katherine:** Well, I'm excited for the poem-a-day project, and as far as education goes, I will conduct workshops next year, probably over Zoom.com, for people who are interested. I am also going to apply for another Big Read grant — what those are so encouraging for, is to work outside of your comfort zones to engage with libraries and schools. The work I'm looking at centering is Claudia Rankine's *Citizen: An American Lyric* (although she has a brand-new book out). It deals with some of our social justice issues that we are facing, even though this came out



Photography by Tim Born

in 2014. So, if I'm able to receive that grant, then I'll be able to use it to work with the schools in addressing some of these social issues as well as the larger community. Near here we have the large naval base, and I'd be able to engage with them again. I worked with them last time, and we were able to bring the play for *To Kill A Mockingbird* into the schools as well. I just love this work, *Citizen*, because it promotes the idea of citizenship and the different viewpoints we have about what that means and privilege and many other interesting things. So that's one major project right now.

Another fun one, is that I'm working with a group of young local poets who have actually gone to regional Florida poetry slams. One group recently placed third. There are students involved, though it's community-wide. Trying to broaden our horizons and incorporate more of the spoken word and word art — the thing about poetry slams is there is a format, and that's one way of supporting our young poets. I've seen very promising work — and the format and the rules of poetry slams help push them forward with their work and their performance and move beyond rhetoric and get to art. And it's a good challenge for me, as a more traditional reader, and I've pushed myself more in recent years to perform my work, not just read it. It takes work, and I want to do more of that. And in our days of Zoom.com, I think spoken word works really well, works better.

**Nikki:** That is one of strange blessings of this pandemic landscape that some things that would be completely inaccessible — we are now able to participate over vast distances.

**Katherine:** Yes, that reminds me that Claudia Rankine is reading at UCLA (my daughter is at USC), and I have a ticket! And even the upcoming Palm Beach Poetry Festival is virtual. I want to see more about how people are making these events compelling because we can learn from them and build on some of their ideas. We usually have a regional writers' conference, but a lot of that has now had to become virtual. So I want to see how people are doing that better, and make it better to engage more people.

**Nikki:** I know, too, from your profiles online,

about how much Anne Sexton's work means to you, and I like to speak about how we claim our literary heritage, almost in terms of ancestors. So who are some of those writers for you?

**Katherine:** Sharon Olds really turned me on to the power — her work let me see that one can use one's art to negotiate difficult material — she had all those poems about her relationship with her father. With some of the difficulties I had as a child, her work showed me it can be artistic. She was one of my heroes. The more recent one is *I love Cornelius Eady*. I got to meet him at APA before things closed down. His opening poem, "The Couch," is so powerful. Of course, Natasha Trethewey because of her southern roots and the ways she is able to negotiate that well and so wonderfully. Jesmyn Ward is a fiction writer, and her work is awesome. Anne Sexton, Maxine Kumin, of course [Sylvia] Plath. Those are mine.

**Nikki:** Let's talk about your next novel. It's YA with LGBTQ characters.

**Katherine:** Yes, novel number two — it's actually a trilogy. The (working) title is *The Fire Upstairs* — I'm sure that will change. The premise of the trilogy — well, novel number one was based on historic events from the 1970s, a tragic sniper event in New Orleans in 1973, a tale of racism. And then six months later, there was the [UpStairs] Lounge fire that was deliberately set — it was a gay bar — a place my dad used to go a lot — and many people died tragically. It was around the time of the movement and protests in San Francisco. Those events both had enough mystery and unsolved events around them that it gave a writer a way in, some space.

**Nikki:** And how are you advocating for the voices from those communities in terms of social justice?

**Katherine:** I'm still wrestling with being sensitive, especially supporting the hashtag own voices (#ownvoices) and their experiences — I'm very concerned about not writing from a place of appropriation. I'm not a person of color. I'm not gay, but my father is. And I think as someone who grew up in The Quarter,

in the gay community, I have some validity to my experience and sharing those voices. I think it's still difficult, and when my father hadn't come out, and was trying to hide within a marriage, I saw, even then and even now, the prejudices that are either flagrant or thinly disguised. They are still very present. The story is basically a story of human love, but it tackles some of the issues, and how they can tear apart lives and/or make them stronger.

**Nikki:** Thank you. So we gotta talk a bit about COVID-19. How has this brought challenges and opportunities?

**Katherine:** Well, it made me a hermit for a while. I did get some writing done for a good bit of it, and that was good. The challenge that I have, is my theme is hope. I do think hope is important. Without hope, what have we? So, the challenge is that sometimes things are hard and full of negativity. Hope is such an important theme in my poetry, in my thoughts, in my life. Because I think you have to have some kind of hope, or it's hard to go on. So with COVID, it's been a challenge for me. I think one of the poems I wrote during this time is about how COVID and climate change are not two separate issues. My daughter (who's all of 21) I think she's going to grow older in a world much different than the one I grew up in. I don't think this is all going to be over next year. And so the challenge I face is that part of me thinks about what's next, and the other part of me thinks, whatever is next, we have to face it, overcome it, adapt to it, do whatever it is you need to do to find what moments of beauty can be found. Which is kind of what my fiction addresses as well.

**Nikki:** Thank you so much. Ok, so the holidays — what are you doing for the holidays? What does that look like? Are you reimagining things? Are you keeping things the same?

**Katherine:** I'm not sure about the holidays. I've always had this love/hate relationship with the holidays because when I was younger it was not something that was part of our normal lives. And then for many years, I tried to overcompensate, and then I was over the overcompensation, and now . . . I have mixed emotions about the holidays, and my birthday is right in the middle of them! Right between Christmas and New Year's, I turn the big six-oh — so I'm really ambivalent — how did I get



Photo by  
Belinda Todd



### [Link to book](#)

#### LINKS OF INTEREST:

<https://katherinenelsonborn.ink/index.html>

Official announcement: <https://wilf.org/PoetLaureate>

On GoodReads

[https://www.goodreads.com/author/show/15888764.Katherine\\_Nelson\\_Born](https://www.goodreads.com/author/show/15888764.Katherine_Nelson_Born)

Poem: Midsummer Musings

<https://silverbirchpress.wordpress.com/2016/07/28/a-midsummer-nights-musings-poem-by-katherine-nelson-born-beach-and-pool-memories-poetry-prose-series/>

Poem: in memory of my mother, born on halloween

<https://www.facebook.com/knb.ink/photos/2320122978098643>

to be that age? I'm about twelve at heart! So I'm like, what's going to be next? I am ready to get over 2020. Part of me wants to just skip the holidays and go to the new year after January. So, I'm ambivalent about the holidays. The holidays are supposed to bring hope!

**Nikki:** Well, I think most people contain the hope where the holidays fit in the calendar, and it sounds like your work and perspective open that up to the whole year, so I think you're probably doing fine. (Both laugh.)

Okay, so some of your favorite things right now. What is your favorite drink?

**Katherine:** I recently discovered the pleasures of ginger beer. It goes in what's called a Moscow Mule. As a matter of fact, on my Christmas list are those little copper mugs you're supposed to make the Moscow Mule in. I like the combination. I like ginger in all kinds of ways. There's gotta be a poem in there somewhere.

**Nikki:** What is your favorite time of the day?

**Katherine:** I'm gonna say I'm basically a morning person. I like the time before the day gets started, the quiet that can be there. It's the dawning of the new day, morning. First, if you wake up, well, that's a good sign! You have a chance to choose — which I try to, each day at that time, whatever it brings, to make the best of it.

And then evening happy hour...!

**Nikki:** Do you have a favorite constellation?

**Katherine:** Well, I'm a capricorn, so that one.

**Nikki:** Would you like to leave us with some parting words — what else would you like to say? This is your chance.

**Katherine:** I do want to leave you with hope. Hope is the healing in poetry — it's for everyone. I do believe that in our hearts most of us are poets, waiting to be discovered. And I would invite others to discover in themselves the magic of words — the spoken word, the written word — don't be afraid of words. If you own them, and you are willing to share them, people will feel that from you. I do want to encourage others to own the magic that is a part of every one of us.

**Nikki:** I forgot to ask you about teaching — what poems did you love to teach?

**Katherine:** I was blown away by Morgan Parker's "13 Ways of Looking at a Black Girl," which of course reimagines "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird" by Wallace Stevens. I think those inspire important conversations. And, the classics, when I was in a traditional classroom, Langston Hughes, "I, Too, Sing America," alongside Walt Whitman's, "I Sing the Body Electric," because that again approaches those issues of social justice that are near and dear to my heart. And, of course, Sexton and "Her Kind." And, it's older, for fiction, Toni Morrison is my hero. Everything she wrote is so beautiful and so heart-rending. It could be beautiful and awful at the same time — that's what made her work so good.

**Nikki:** This was wonderful — thank you so much for your time today!

**Katherine:** Thank you — I just loved it. I have even more ideas now. People ask me what I get out of the Poet Laureate experience, and it's synergy. What I do with others makes me better. Even when I'm scared to death, if I overcome that fear, and I can accomplish something, even if it's helping someone else do something they might not have done, or finished something they were working on and didn't think they'd finish. It's the synergy. It's fabulous. Working with and promoting things that we love. And, I love poetry; I love the written word; I love poets. So, there you have it.

**Nikki:** I feel like we covered a lot of fun ground. Thank you for sharing so much with all of us. I'm already looking forward to your November poetry prompts and can't wait to play with those.

**Katherine:** That hour went by so fast! Thank you so much!

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**Nikki Fragala Barnes**, member of FSPA and the Orlando Area Poets, is an experimental poet and participatory installation artist. An arts activist, Barnes centers material works on accessibility, land-based public histories, and the poetics of place, including monuments and multilingual/translated works. Barnes has exhibited/performed works at the Orlando Museum of Art (Orlando, FL), the Atlantic Center for the Arts (New Smyrna Beach, FL) and The Liminal (Valencia, Spain). Her work is also held in private collections internationally. She is earning a Ph.D. in Texts and Technology while teaching poetry writing at the University of Central Florida. [bynikkibarnes.com, @bynikkibarnes]

**Return to Palmyra**

*(Inspired by Adam Zagajewski's "To Go to Lvov")*

To get to Palmyra, take the Superdome Exit.  
U-turn at the blue shotgun two houses from the corner.  
Or head northeast of Damascus where  
the golden colonnaded avenue beckons, where  
caravan camels spit into the thicket,  
christening a salamander the color of sand  
beneath palms holding up the moon, where  
a withered olive tree bears witness.

Careen across the serpentine river  
into the Big Easy where pedicabs hover,  
gleam of wax in the wet black morning,  
wisp of smoke wafting from levees.  
(It was never that easy.)

Green medians laced with purple beads  
invite tourists from western New York State.  
Empire Exit 43 finds the "Queen of Canal Towns"  
whistling Dixie beneath the Temple of Baal  
over carved cypress tables scented with pine boughs.  
Click. Pythia smiles through the bones,  
laughter like champagne bubbles rising to the rafters.  
Rooftops tip into Katrina's waters.  
Atoll palm fronds whisper benediction  
over washed-out coral. If you feel lost,  
the fossils point the way.

~ Katherine Nelson-Born



### Falling Up

A wind gust flips up rusty leaf skirts.  
Flaming heavenward, breezy ballerinas  
twirl across a blue stage backlit  
by dispelled ragweed sundrenched in jeweled skies  
alive with crackling grass blades chasing grackles.  
It's a dance gone wild with spiraling gyres.  
Ospreys eyeball the merriment from above.

Across the universe  
otherwise known as my backyard  
march yellow Marigolds bursting from their borders,  
gunning for the sun. Another blast of cold air  
rips off the heads of bright red  
bat-faced flowers. Grinning, they spin off  
over roof tops, break free of gravity,  
falling up.

Perhaps eternity looks this way – a funhouse mirror  
dwarfing infinity into a bowl curved into itself,  
a clown grin stretched across a multitude of infinities,  
able to gobble up several Milky Ways in a single gulp.

And me? Well, you see –  
I'm the Blue Fairy chasing Monarch butterflies  
late for flight to Mexico. You'll find me,  
hips gyrating into chorus-girl kicks  
at heaps of leaves begging to be re-purposed,  
sent sailing back up into the sky from whence they fell.  
In this alien world, I am Glinda and Elphaba,  
and I clash with everything. Like the leaves  
set free from earth's orbit, meteors ablaze,  
I am just another case of cosmic debris  
firing across the universe.

~ Katherine Nelson-Born

### When Mockingbirds Sing

The crickets cheer the sun's descent into the lake.  
The sky yawns and swallows the sun's cherry-red  
globe sliced with orange, like candy in a child's mouth –  
absorbing the shrinking orb until the last  
sliver slides into throaty darkness.  
All that is left is the sweet afterglow.

A few stray chirps, then silence grows  
until – in the blue-black velvet a call comes.  
Some call it a Catbird. Some think it's a sin  
to shoot one. They make music and bother  
no one, except cats, perhaps, who have it coming  
anyway. I think they mock me. I sit here  
working to make words sing when they sing  
without effort. So perfectly do Mockingbirds mimic  
other birdsong, the human ear cannot tell the difference.  
So sweet, their mocking seems the real thing,  
like a knock-off Gucci bag at an Italian market,  
so beautiful a mimicry, who cares?  
Like soft Italian leather, the burra burra of  
the Bluebird, the blush of the setting sun,  
the Mockingbird's music mesmerizes.

Tired of tripping over my own words,  
I open my ears, hear the music of the spheres,  
and sing like the Mockingbird of a time  
older than the ruins of Pompeii,  
newer than the morning of a day not yet born.

~ Katherine Nelson-Born

### On Learning the Origin of Haint Blue

Thunder trundles across the sky.  
I sit under the Haint Blue porch roof,  
bruised clouds scudding by.  
Across the cosmos, two nebulae  
slowly collide, create new suns.

The bright expanse I am resounds  
louder than the clash of ancestors in my head.  
Singing in tongues, I celebrate those who came  
before me, coloring the auburn of my hair,  
orange freckles on my nose, the fore-shortened  
knuckles of my hands meant for labor,  
for digging in the soil, for washing sheets.

My soul sings in blue ink  
shaping words, shoving ghosts  
through Indigo windows. They resist,  
rooted to this earth, yearning to be  
more than shadows tinting the porch ceiling.  
Spirits crowd the veranda like old shoes  
too weathered to be let in,  
too solid to banish. Worth one more dance.  
Veneers of what they once were, their voices thrum,  
upending the bowl of my universe.  
Together, we uncover the next and the next,  
purple hue of space melting like grapes  
on my tongue. Taurus, Scorpius, Gemini  
I wear on Orion's Belt slung across my hips.

And still I expand, a celestial wind  
defying physics, gravity,  
the apple falling up, forgiveness  
rain falling from my eye,  
terrestrial home a cats-eye marble  
rolling from my opened palm,  
falling into a new constellation  
of my making.

The poem starts here.

~ Katherine Nelson-Born

# FSPA 2020 CONTEST WINNERS

## Cat. 1 FSPA Free Verse Award

**Subject:** Any / Form: Free Verse – 83 Entries  
**JUDGE:** JILL ANGEL LANGLOIS, IL  
**1st PL** BJ Alligood, FL “My Mother’s Purse”  
**2nd PL** Catherine Moran, AR “Taking a Look at Our Humanity”  
**3rd PL** Barbara Blanks, TX “His Daughter Called This Morning”  
**1st HM** Bruce Woodworth, FL “Baroque Visions”  
**2nd HM** Robert E. Blenheim, FL “The Cornflower Girl”  
**3rd HM** Peter M. Gordon, FL “Family Plot”

## Cat. 2 FSPA Formal Verse Award

**Subject:** Any / Form: Formal Verse – 55 Entries  
**JUDGE:** JANET QUALLY, TN  
**1st PL** Joyce Shiver, FL “The Weeping Willow”  
**2nd PL** Gail Denham, OR “Irma Speaks”  
**3rd PL** Dr. Emory D. Jones, MS “The Spirit Moves You”  
**1st HM** Gail Denham, OR “Fractured”  
**2nd HM** Janet Watson, FL “When They Go Through My Things”  
**3rd HM** Jerri Hardesty, AL “Lesson From Childhood”

## Cat. 3 Listening Award

**Subject:** Listening / Form: Any – 54 Entries  
**JUDGE:** RAFAEL LANTIGUA MEDINA, IL  
**1st PL** Barbara Blanks, TX “The Sounds of Summer”  
**2nd PL** Tanya R. Whitney, LA “Listen to Me”  
**3rd PL** BettyAnn Whitney, FL “A Day to Remember”  
**1st HM** Janet Watson, FL “Healing Voices”  
**2nd HM** Judi Gerard-Houghton, FL “Autumn’s Child”  
**3rd HM** Gordon L. Magill, FL “A Symphony of Birds”

## Cat. 4 Tomoka Poets Award

**Subject:** At the Beach / Form: Any – 46 Entries  
**JUDGE:** TIEL AISHA ANSARI, OR  
**1st PL** Peter M. Gordon, FL “Sheltie”  
**2nd PL** Gail Denham, OR “Spouting Horn”  
**3rd PL** Mary Ellen Orvis, FL “At the Beach in Northern Ireland”  
**1st HM** Carlton Johnson, FL “This beach.”  
**2nd HM** Jan Godown Annino, FL “Surfing”  
**3rd HM** Jonathan Bennett, TN “Ocean”

## Cat. 5 Willard B. Foster Memorial Award

**Subject:** Threat to the Environment / Form: Any – 36 Entries  
**JUDGE:** BARBARA BLANKS, TX  
**1st PL** B. Alexander, ON “Let the Trees Breathe”  
**2nd PL** Mark Andrew James Terry, FL “New Age of the Sloth”  
**3rd PL** Judith Krum, FL “All that Remains”  
**1st HM** Suzanne S. Austin-Hill, FL “A Clerihew to the Environment”  
**2nd HM** Clarice Hare, FL “Secrets of Dis-ease”  
**3rd HM** Cheryl A. Van Beek, FL “Abstract Art”

## Cat. 6 Orlando Area Poets Award

**Subject:** Theme Parks and Attractions / Form: Any – 21 Entries  
**JUDGE:** JENENE RAVESLOOT, IL  
**1st PL** Janet Watson, FL “Your Disney World Credit Card”  
**2nd PL** Robert E. Blenheim, FL “Who Wants to Go Back to Disney World Anyway?”  
**3rd PL** Barbara Blanks, TX “Just Another Attraction”  
**1st HM** Peter M. Gordon, FL “Hulk”  
**2nd HM** Mark Andrew James Terry, FL “March 20, 2020”  
**3rd HM** Mary Ellen Orvis, FL “Thrill”

## Cat. 7 June Owens Memorial Award

**Subject:** Secret Languages / Form: Any – 38 Entries  
**JUDGE:** DEBORAH PETERSEN, IN  
**1st PL** Amy Wray Irish, CO “Speaking Serpent”  
**2nd PL** Janet Watson, FL “Blood Moon”  
**3rd PL** Diane Neff, FL “Know”  
**1st HM** Nancy Simmonds, IN “Gossip”  
**2nd HM** Peter M. Gordon, FL “Secret Names”  
**3rd HM** Catherine Moran, AR “The Secret Language of Lovers”

## Cat. 8 The Poet’s Vision Award

**Subject:** Any / Form: Any – 56 Entries  
**JUDGE:** IDA KOTYUK, IL  
**1st PL** Llewellyn McKernan, FL “To the Carver from the Wood”  
**2nd PL** Robert E. Blenheim, FL “Hysteria Incorporated”  
**3rd PL** Judi Gerard-Houghton, FL “Matching Tears”  
**1st HM** Lynn Schiffhorst, FL “Stately Homes”  
**2nd HM** Jerri Hardesty, AL “Drum Circle 4”  
**3rd HM** Nancy Simmonds, IN “Memories of Memorial Day”

## Cat. 9 New River Poets Award (In Honor of Our Deceased Members)

**Subject:** Any / Form: Any – 49 Entries  
**JUDGE:** LENNART LUNDH, IL  
**1st PL** Nancy Simmonds, IN “Songs of the Celestial Voyager”  
**2nd PL** BJ Alligood, FL “Celestial Soul”  
**3rd PL** Trina Lee, OK “Pursued”  
**1st HM** Cheryl A. Van Beek, FL “Prayer”  
**2nd HM** Janet Watson, FL “Hummingbird”  
**3rd HM** Andrea McBride, FL “Hidden”

## Cat. 10 Villanelle Award

**Subject:** Any / Form: Villanelle – 30 Entries  
**JUDGE:** DAVID RUTIEZER, OR  
**1st PL** Von S. Bourland, TX “I Dream of an Eternal Garden”  
**2nd PL** LaVern Spencer McCarthy, OK “Crossword Consternation”  
**3rd PL** Barbara Blanks, TX “Rhinoplasty Is Not an Option”  
**1st HM** Joyce Shiver, FL “We’ll Never Know”  
**2nd HM** Sara Gipson, AR “Is Spring Here?”  
**3rd HM** Mary Ellen Orvis, FL “Don’t Bother Me”

## FSPA 2020 CONTEST WINNERS (continued)

### Cat. 11 Humor Award

Subject: Humor / Form: Rhymed and Metered – 35 Entries

JUDGE: BUDD POWELL MAHAN, TX

1st PL [Tim Schlutz, FL](#) “Bonfire Rendezvous”

2nd PL Joyce Shiver, FL “A Minimalist?”

3rd PL Jerri Hardesty, AL “Just A Coincidence”

1st HM Diane Neff, FL “The Poet”

2nd HM Lynn Schiffhorst, FL “Late

3rd HM Angie M. Mayo, FL “Darkness”

### Cat. 12 The Live Poets Society Award

Subject: The Dark Side / Form: Any – 52 Entries

JUDGE: MARY A. COUCH, IN

1st PL [Amy Wray Irish, CO](#) “What She Learned at School”

2nd PL Ruth Van Alstine, FL “Echo”

3rd PL Judi Gerard-Houghton, FL “Generous Rapist?”

1st HM Von S. Bourland, TX “Inhumane Death”

2nd HM Janet Watson, FL “After Suicide”

3rd HM Catherine Moran, AR “Taking Time With the Dark”

### Cat. 13 Miami Poets Award

Subject: Trees / Form: Any – 52 Entries

JUDGE: KAREN K. BAILEY, OK

1st PL [BettyAnn Whitney, FL](#) “Life After Death”

2nd PL Llewellyn McKernan, FL “Facing the Tree”

3rd PL Frank Yanni, FL “Live Oak”

1st HM Sandra Spurney, FL “The Mulberry Tree”

2nd HM Carolyann J. Scully, FL “The Cottonwood Tree”

3rd HM Robert E. Blenheim, FL “Beyond the Tree Line”

### Cat. 14 Kate Kennedy Memorial Award

Subject: Any / Form: Any – 55 Entries

JUDGE: LYNDA LA ROCCA, CO

1st PL [LaVern Spencer McCarthy, OK](#) “Algebraic Angst”

2nd PL Susan Stahr, FL “Recollections of a Porch Banister”

3rd PL Helen Roselyn Tucker, FL “Company”

1st HM Diane Neff, FL – Haiku

2nd HM Jonathan Bennett, TN “Birthday Boy (for Shasta)”

3rd HM Christian Shute, WY “She Smiles”

### Cat. 15 Weinbaum/Glidden Award

Subject: Issues and Concerns Faced by LGBTQ Community and Those Who Love Them / Form: Any – 14 Entries

JUDGE: JON SEBBA, UT

1st PL [Peter M. Gordon, FL](#) “Dazzler”

2nd PL Mary Ellen Orvis, FL “Cold Day in June”

3rd PL Elaine Person, FL Haiku

1st HM Jerri Hardesty, AL “Chrysanthemum”

2nd HM Robert E. Blenheim, FL “Ellenroy the Elepotamus”

3rd HM Lela E. Buis, TN “Mama Has Gone Off the Deep End Again”

### Cat. 16 Henrietta & Mark Kroah Founders Award

Subject: Wedding / Form: Any – 35 Entries

JUDGE: CAROL M. SISKOVIC, TX

1st PL [Diane Neff, FL](#) “Wedded”

2nd PL Mark Andrew James Terry, FL “To the Bride and the Groom”

3rd PL Lynn Schiffhorst, FL “Let’s Always Be Lovers”

1st HM BJ Alligood, FL “Vows”

2nd HM Gail Denham, OR “How Were Those Marriage Years?”

3rd HM Sonja Jean Craig, FL “Down the Aisle”

### Cat. 17 Past Presidents Award

Subject: Answers / Form: Any – 35 Entries

JUDGE: DORIS STENGEL, MN

1st PL [Judi Gerard, FL](#)—“The Question”

2nd PL Elaine Person, FL “Get On With It: Thoughts of a Single Woman”

3rd PL Sara Gipson, AR “Answers Revealed”

1st HM Dr. Emory D. Jones, MS “Speaking of Daughters”

2nd HM Mary Ellen Orvis, FL “Seeking Answers”

3rd HM BettyAnn Whitney, FL “The Woodcarver’s Reply”

### Cat. 18 Frank Yanni Award

Subject: Books / Form: Any – 36 Entries

JUDGE: SARA GIPSON, AR

1st PL [Tim Schultz, FL](#) “The Lean-To circa 1969”

2nd PL Peter M. Gordon, FL “Inscriptions”

3rd PL Catherine Moran, AR “Reading in the Fullness of Time”

1st HM Lorraine Jeffery, UT “Used People”

2nd HM Gail Denham, OR “Library Riches”

3rd HM Joyce Shiver, FL “Hooked on Reading”

### Cat. 19 Janet Binkley Erwin Memorial Award

Subject: Any / Form: Any – 51 Entries

JUDGE: GAIL DENHAM, OR

1st PL [Lynn Schiffhorst, FL](#) “Coming!”

2nd PL Judi Gerard-Houghton, FL “Aging Rage”

3rd PL Helen Roselyn Tucker, FL “The Old Screen Door”

1st HM BettyAnn Whitney, FL “Woman Writing a Letter”

2nd HM Robert E. Blenheim, FL “My Secret Little Pet”

3rd HM Marcy Clark, FL “You Can’t Always Get What You Want”



**Congratulations to everyone.**

*See page 59 for information about FSPA’s Anthology for 2020 – Cadence.*

Mary Rogers-Grantham  
2020 FSPA Contest Chair

# Peter Gordon

Peter M. Gordon won the 2019 Thomas Burnett Swann award for poetry from the Gwendolyn Brooks Writers Association of Florida. His poems have also won several FSPA and other Florida contests, and they have been published by websites and journals including; *Slipstream*, *The Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings*, *Journal of Florida Literature*, *Sandhill Review*, *The 5-2 Crime Poetry* blog, and *The Poeming Pigeon*. Peter's authored two collections, *Two Car Garage* and *Let's Play Two: Poems About Baseball*. He helped found and was the first President of Orlando Area Poets.

"I get most of my ideas for poems from my life and experiences. For example, my father really did pile up clothes in our living room before he left on a trip. Jack Hartland was the father of a good friend of mine, and a decent man. I was watching a Rays baseball game and thought I would enjoy getting married at home plate. But of course, poetry is not reporting – a job I've also held – so my challenge is finding the poetry under the surface of everyday life."

"I've spent my career in entertainment, working in every area, from live theatre to digital video. The majority of my time was spent in television programming. I moved to Orlando in 1994 to become the first head of programming at Golf Channel and stayed for 15 years." Peter currently teaches Business of Film in Full Sail University's Film Production MFA program.

"I always loved reading poetry," Peter said. "I still own the *Norton Anthology of Poetry* I bought for Freshman English. Even though I was also writing for newspapers, magazines, and baseball history journals while working in TV, I didn't write poems. About a dozen years ago, when I turned fifty, I tried to write an essay about taking my son to college, but after days of writer's block, a poem came out instead. I've been writing poetry ever since."



Peter Gordon on the beach of the island of Iona, off the Scottish coast.



Left: Peter Gordon with Dr. Stephen Caldwell Wright in 2019 after receiving the Thomas Burnett Swann Poetry Prize in 2019.

Below: Peter's father in uniform in February 1945. He was a radioman on the destroyer U.S.S. Mansour, and a signed Joey Wendel (#18) Baseball of the Tampa Bay Rays, Peter's favorite player, right now.



**I Want to Be Married at Home Plate**

My bride in a frilly white dress spilling  
over the white rectangle marking  
the left hand batter's box.

She twists her spikes in sugary dirt  
digging in at the back of the box peering  
over her shoulder and through the veil at

Lefty, the minister, toeing the pitcher's rubber.  
Day so dazzling we wear long brim caps.  
Bride slowly swings her bat back and forth.

I race in from third in my morning coat  
Execute a perfect hook slide around the catcher  
shower brown clay all over her gown.

She pulls me to stand by her side  
We brush each other off, grab bats,  
take our stances, stare down Lefty,

who lobs in a softball: "do you  
promise to cleave to one another,  
forsaking all others?"

We knock it out of the park.  
Start life together dirty  
sliding home under the tag.

~ Peter Gordon

### **Home of the Brave**

Our PTA meeting began with the pledge,  
followed by the Star-Spangled Banner.  
Naomi, a short, thin, black woman, long hair  
braided and beaded, stood and sang

the first verse acapella. Her soprano resounded  
off cinder block walls, surrounding us as she hit  
each note from low 'C' to high 'G'. When she trilled  
the high notes for "rockets' red glare" I thrilled

as if hearing it for the first time. Afterward, during  
coffee, I complimented her artistry. "That wide range  
of notes makes our anthem a hard song to sing,"  
"Yes," she said. "Do you know all the song's verses?"

"Well," I said, "I seem to remember reading about  
those last three verses and references to blood,  
triumph, free men, hirelings, and slaves."

"Yes," she said, "It's a hard song to sing."

~ Peter Gordon



**Travel Agent**

About a week before we left on vacation  
Dad started piling clothes on our living room  
sofa. He'd begin with weather, either

wool sweaters, watch caps, mittens,  
for Vermont or Bermuda shorts, flip flops,  
tee shirts for Florida. Each day he'd

add garments until clothes covered every surface –  
socks, undershirts, striped ties, shorts,  
belts, wing tips, pajamas, and long underwear.

I was married before I found out  
not every family did this. Most people  
see packing as a chore to finish fast.

Dad saw potential energy pulsing  
through every pair of socks. When  
I put boxer shorts on our couch

two days before a trip my wife  
called my therapist. She didn't understand  
my family's need to physically manifest

our desire to look forward to things.  
The night before we left Dad, and only Dad,  
took our two biggest suitcases and packed

everything in order, underwear on bottom  
dress shirts on top. In hospice at his end,  
Dad said to stack some shirts and socks

on the plastic chair in the corner.  
Just in case he needed something  
where he was going.

~ Peter Gordon

### How Things Get Better

In the end I believe we will be saved by Decent People.  
School teachers, nurses, firemen, little league coaches,  
will rise, finally, sickened by coarseness of discourse,  
cruelty, and cries from children ripped from families,

caged in steel holding pens, or shot by terrorists  
in churches, night clubs and shuls. We bury decency  
in obituaries while crime leads nightly news,  
yet Decent People endure, like Jack Hartland from

Johnstown, Pennsylvania, who served his country,  
married Shirley, raised three children, gave loyalty  
to his job and love to his family, fought cancer  
five years and left a legacy of love

to inspire those of us that still struggle on.  
Yes, Decent People will rise, after an honest  
day's work, helping, helping, everyone,  
shining light in dark corners until we live

as the prophet promised, in a world where  
we do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly  
with our God. Although they may tarry,  
I believe they will arrive.

~ Peter Gordon

### Published poetry collections by Peter Gordon



[Link to the book](#)



[Link to the book](#)

# FSPA CHAPTER NEWS & UPDATES

## CHAPTER PRESIDENTS

### Big Bend Poets & Writers

Gordon Magill  
tallyman01@comcast.net

### Live Poets Society of Daytona Beach

Robert Blenheim (Deceased)  
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### Miami Poets

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### North Florida Poetry Hub

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ruth@northfloridapoetryhub.org

### Orlando Area Poets

Diane Neff  
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### Poetry for the Love of It

Charles Hazelip  
dochazelip@comcast.net

### Space Coast Poets

Jim Peterson  
outdabox@aol.com

### Sunshine Poets

Cheri Herald  
c\_herald@hotmail.com

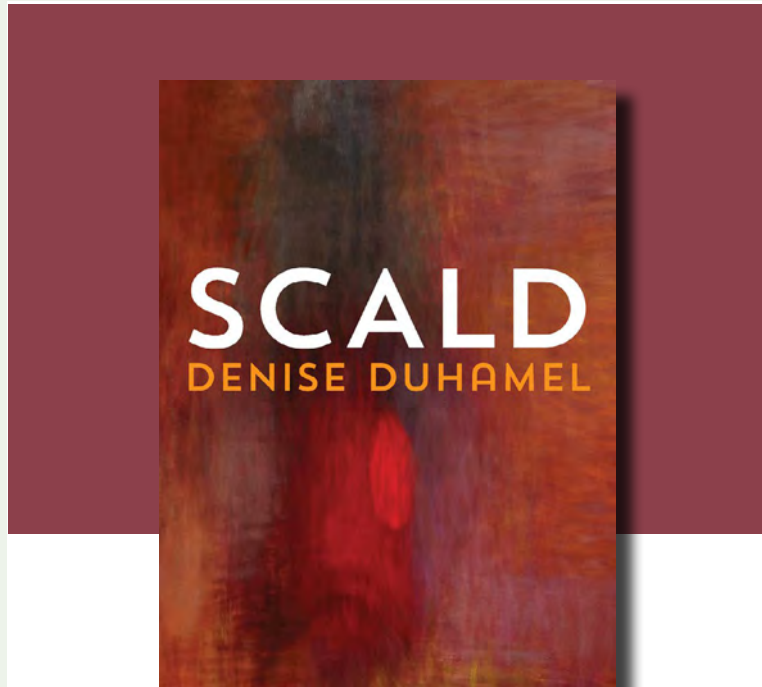
### Tomoka Poets

Mary-Ann Westbrook  
1poetry.3@gmail.com

### New River Poets

Janet Watson  
JMPWAT@aol.com

! **Are you missing the latest FSPA emails?** Members sign up for our email list here:  
• <https://mailchi.mp/bf76829821ed/florida-state-poets-association-email-list>



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“Denise Duhamel’s *Scald* deploys that casual-Friday Duhamel diction so effortlessly a reader might think heck, I could write like that, but then the dazzling leaps and forms begin. . . Duhamel’s sentences don’t even break a sweat, sailing on with her trademark mix of irony, grrrl power, and low-key technical virtuosity, like if Frank O’Hara, Carrie Brownstein, and Elizabeth Bishop had a baby.” —*Chicago Review*

UNIVERSITY OF  
PITTSBURGH PRESS



Tere Starr



Connie Goodman-Milone



Zorina Frey



Cheri Herald

## Miami Poets

Miami Poets gather by Zoom.com each first Wednesday for the Virtual Miami Poets Soirées, facilitated by **Tere Starr**, as we share poetry, encouragement and friendship. Recent themes welcomed autumn, but the poems we bring cover a variety of subjects, often leading to motivating discussions. Poems inspired by current events or politics reminded us of Percy Bysshe Shelley’s belief that “Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world.” We agree. On second Mondays, we join **Steve Liebowitz** for virtual poetry critiques. Thanks to technology, we use Zoom’s share screen function to offer real time editing suggestions.

Achievements: **Connie Goodman-Milone’s** poem, “Haiku Present,” was published in *45 Magazine Women’s Literary Journal*. Her letter, “News of the Day,” appeared in the *Miami Herald*, and “A Love Letter to Books & Books” was a featured blog on the South Florida Writers Association’s website along with **Pat Bonner Milone’s** essay, “In Limbo.” **Ricki Dorn** held a virtual poetry workshop on her website, rickidornpoetry.com. We are honored to have **Holly Iglesias** join us for our gatherings. She is a featured performer in the [Scheherazade Project](#), 101 nights leading up to election night. Holly is also proud of the recent release of the collaboration chapbook, *Myth America*, published by Anhinga Press. **Patricia Asuncion** continues to host the monthly Virtual Global Open Mic from Charlottesville, Virginia. August’s theme was Women’s Equality Day and September was the Peace Day Show. Both can be viewed on Patsy’s YouTube channel. **Zorina Frey** will be featured on October 17th at 6:15pm for South Florida Writers Association’s Virtual Authors’ Showcase to discuss her recently published trilogy. **Tere Starr** continues to host virtual Poetry Soirées for the Brandeis Women’s South Miami Chapter, spreading the love of poetry to the greater community.

Poetry remains our priority.

~ Tere Starr, President



Pat Milone



Steve Liebowitz

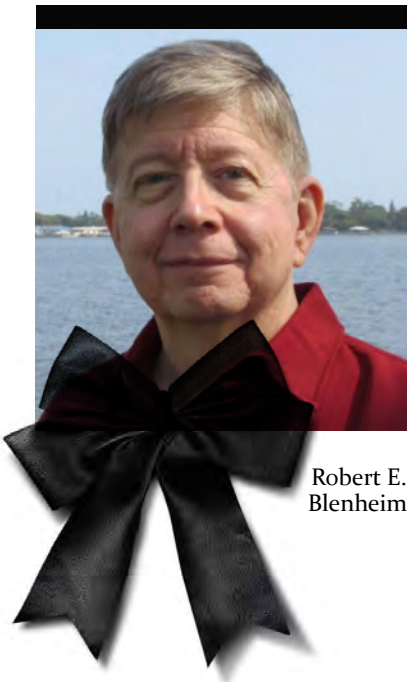
## Sunshine Poets

Sunshine Poets meets on the second Thursday of each month at 10 am in the Central Ridge Library in Beverly Hills. We study a new form each month and gently critique each other’s poems. Member, **Joyce Shiver**, lost her husband, Jim, and President, Cheri Herald, was out of town, so we did not meet in October. Regular meetings will resume in November.

~ Cheri Neuman Herald, President

## The Live Poets Society of Daytona Beach

Our friend Robert Blenheim died from COVID-19 on October 16, 2020. Bob was the founder and facilitator of the Live Poets of Daytona. Bob welcomed all into the group with open arms, no matter the level of poetry. We always had great discussions. Bob was generous with his time and his knowledge. Our two-hour classes were on the level of a college tutorial. Bob gave the group challenges to write sestinas, pantoums, villanelles. He would challenge us to write poetic forms from all over the world. When the pandemic struck, Live Poets didn't quit. He would send us weekly challenges and our wonderful discussions continued online.



Robert E.  
Blenheim

Bob was an active member of the Florida State Poets Association. Last October he organized our very successful convention in Daytona. A renaissance man, he had a deep love of cinema and we all waited anxiously for his insightful previews of the Academy Awards. Not only was Bob a wordsmith, he was also a songsmith. He dazzled us with his poetic song parodies (available on CD). One time along with a poem, Bob sent a picture of himself at four years old. Then as well as now, Bob had a great head of hair.

We are all so saddened by his passing. There will always be a place for Bob at the poetry table. We hope he's parsing and critiquing poems with Keats and Byron amid the soundtrack of the classical music he loved so much.

The Live Poets Society of Daytona Beach met on the computer, and was relatively active since the virus invaded our lives.

**Vicki Iorio** has a new poetry collection called, *Not Sorry, Alien Buddha* Press, available on Amazon. Iorio also has a poem, "The Gagootz", published on the online website, [The Disappointed Housewife](#). Two poems, "From One Girl to Another," and "Bobsie Showed Me How to Insert a Tampax," will be published in the forthcoming anthology *Aunt Flo*.



Vicki Iorio

**Llewellyn McKernan's** poem "Today Four Pole Creek" has been published in the Appalachian magazine called *Pine Mountain, Sand and Gravel*.

**John McKernan's** poem "Self Portrait" was published in the most recent issue of the journal *Visions International* 102.

Our beloved **Marc Davidson** who is technically not a member of Live Poets, is putting together a book of Covid-19 poems. Many of the contributors are Live Poets as well as many poets in the Volusia County area. Marc hopes to get the book done by Christmas.

~ Vicki Iorio on behalf of the late Robert E. Blenheim,  
President



Diane Neff



Elaine Person

## Orlando Area Poets

Many Orlando Area Poets participated via Zoom.com in the Maitland Public Library Coffeehouse on 9/25/2020. The theme was “Just Before Waking.” The next Coffeehouse will be held on 1/29/21 and will feature the theme “Coming of Age.” The library also sponsors workshops to write to the theme, led by **Elaine Person**. To join these events and to see other Maitland Public Library literary events, click on the event on their calendar at <https://www.maitlandpubliclibrary.org/events/>

Several Orlando Area Poets are also featured in the DeLand Museum of art exhibit. The Museum postponed the awards ceremony scheduled for October 16th. The new date for the reception and awards presentation will be Friday, November 20, 2020, and has reopened voting. The public will be able to cast their vote for their favorite art/poetry combo through Sunday, November 15th, until 4 p.m.

Elaine Person’s short story “Something’s Amiss” got accepted by *Reedsy Prompts* online. The prompt was “Second Chances.” Elaine Person led her Crealde School of Art workshop: Inspired Words, Writing to Art on 9/26/20, and will facilitate another session on 12/12/20.

**Stan Sujka’s** book, *Man Behind the Mask*, was published on Amazon.com on October 7.

Orlando Area Poets chapter continues to meet via Zoom.com for poetry critiques and camaraderie.

~ Diane Neff, President



Mary-Ann Westbrook



David Axelrod



Sonja Jean Craig

## Tomoka Poets

Due to Covid 19, Tomoka Poets are still not able to meet in the Ormond Beach Library. However, many of our members have been busy poets. **BJ Alligood**, **Marc Davidson**, **Sonja Jean Craig** and **Melody Dimick** all have first place poems on display at the Deland Art Museum for the Poetic Visions competitions. The contest allowed poets to choose 3 works of art and write a poem to their choices. BJ, Marc and Melody read their winning poetry at the Summer Slam event held at the Clara Street Amphitheater in Deland. This event was hosted by the African Art Museum and MACDeland. Thank you to Kevin Campbell for putting this whole affair together. Congratulations to **David Axelrod**. His poem “The Guru Gives Advice” is published in *Pratik* — a magazine of contemporary writing. Congratulations also go out to **Marc Davidson** for his newest publication *Notable Wonders Vol. 2 — Windows on Life*.

**Mary-Ann Westbrook** and **David Axelrod** had the honor to serve as two of the judges for the Poetic Visions competition. What a treat it was to see and hear the winning poets read their work at the Deland Summer Slam. **Sonja Jean Craig** has been hosting writing prompt sessions at many interesting locations in the New Smyrna Beach area and is also reading at an event sponsored by the Atlantic Center for the Arts. COVID it is preventing us from meeting together, but is not stopping us from doing what we love.

~ Mary-Ann Westbrook, President



Gary Ketchum

## New River Poets

This is my first report for OPAP as the newly elected president of our chapter. It is more than a little daunting to be replacing a legend like **Janet Watson**. Janet was our president for over twelve years of effective and loving service to our chapter and was a superb representative for us at the Florida State Poets Association. Thankfully, she will remain an active poet and resource for us as our group's President Emeritus and Historian. Other officers are as follows:

Vice President: **Cheryl Van Beek**  
Secretary: **Susan Stahr**  
Treasurer: **Beverly Joyce**

We are proud to announce that two of our members were recently recognized for their winning submissions to Poetry Jumps Off the Shelf. Congratulations to **John Foster** for his entry titled, "New Normal" and to **Cheryl Van Beek** for two winners called, "Resilience" and "Window Workout." Since last March, New River Poets has not met in person due to our concerns regarding the pandemic. In August, our member, **Ken Clanton** suggested we consider a virtual meeting. Although some of us had prior experience attending Zoom.com meetings with other groups, none of us had ever hosted such an event. I'm happy to announce that after receiving some tutoring from an associate of mine, I was able to set up a practice session on September 12th and schedule an official session on September 19th. It was considered a great success so we decided to continue to meet via Zoom.com every third Saturday of the month until we can once again safely meet in person.



John Foster

~ Gary Ketchum, President

## Big Bend Poets & Writers

The Big Bend Poets & Writers chapter continues to be fairly quiet during this pandemic. Most of our members, like Florida poets everywhere, have been writing from home, and posting poetry on our blog. Currently there are 26 poems posted. Our expanded web site, which **Linda Wright** manages, is getting rave reviews, check it out. [Here is the link](#)

In further news, several of our BBP&W members, including myself (**Gordon Magill**), **Linda Marie Cossa**, **Twanda McBride**, and **Cynthia Rose Portalatin** had poems accepted and exhibited at LeMoyne Arts exhibition entitled "Justice Through Art" which was held at LeMoyne Arts in Tallahassee, September 10 through 21st, 2020.

Big Bend Poets & Writers is looking forward to the eventual resumption of our three "live" poetry venues as the pandemic winds down. We hope!

~ Linda Wright, Secretary  
for Gordon Magill, President



Gordon Magill



Ruth Van Alstine



**When we meet:**

North Florida Poetry Hub Chapter Meeting is the last Saturday of each month 2 to 3:30 pm on Zoom.com.

Workshops 1st and 3rd Thursday of each month 6-8:30 pm. Link on Events Facebook page the day of. All are welcome.

## NORTH FLORIDA POETRY HUB

North Florida Poetry Hub (NFPH) was launched by Hope at Hand, a non-profit organization which provides poetry sessions for at-risk youth populations in Duval, Alachua and St. Johns Counties. On September 9th North Florida Poetry Hub sponsored an event for the 10th Anniversary of 100,000 Poets For Change celebration with a virtual [Open Mic](#) on Zoom.com. Annually, global events are held throughout the month of September to bring focus on peace, justice and sustainability. This year also focused on the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Our theme was the hope of unfolding positive change with inspiration from our words. We had 11 participants, which included NFPH members **Sally Wahl-Constain**, **Pat Krause**, **Ruth Van Alstine** and **Laura Dill**, who also shared her art piece “Resilience.” Musicians **Chris Kastle** and **Goliath Flores** performed with poets from Ann Arbor, Michigan, Ormond Beach, St Augustine, Gainesville, Ponte Vedra, and Jacksonville all stepping up to the mic and combining their voices for an evening of poetry, art and music.

We are growing! We are excited to introduce two new members, **Laura Dill** and **Paula Veloso Babadi**. Laura Dill lives in Jacksonville, Florida with her husband of 20 years. She has always enjoyed photography and capturing the unretouched beauty around her. Laura’s exquisite photography is highly admired in various venues. A budding artist, beginning in early 2019, she has developed her own unique style and gained her first solo art exhibition at the Players by the Sea Theater’s Grune Family Gallery in early 2020. She was included in the Virtual COVID Art Exhibition with FemArt Gallery from June to September, featuring her two paintings “Await” and “Resilience”. This past year has seen an evolving new passion: poetry, and in pursuing that, Laura joined NFPH to explore this dimension of artistic expression with new friends. Her poetry and artwork are to be featured in “(a) *River Rising, Blooms Anthology*”, due out this Fall. **Paula Veloso Babadi**, previously a FSPA Member-At-Large recently transferred into our Chapter. Paula has had a career in the healthcare industry after serving in the Navy Nurse Corps. Growing up in England and Pensacola, with Filipino and British parents, then marrying into her husband’s Iranian family, she now makes her home in Jacksonville, Florida. The Babadi’s have three sons, a daughter, and three delightful grandchildren living close by. She is board Chairperson of the St. Johns Chapter of the Catholic Writers Guild (CWG), regular contributor to *St. Joseph’s Reflections Magazine*, and past “Poet’s Voice” columnist. Her book, [Everywhere Hope](#), published in 2018, captures life experiences with prose, poetry and pictures to rekindle hope in daily lives. Eloquently written, this collection is a journey to be experienced more than once.

Welcome, Paula and Laura to North Florida Poetry Hub, and Laura to FSPA. We look forward to sharing words of poetry, fellowship, and a long, mutually beneficial relationship with you both.





Laura Dill

A well-attended virtual Zoom.com NFPH Monthly Chapter meeting, held the afternoon of October 3rd, included Chapter business segment followed by a short poetry share, then Special Featured Speaker, **Dr. Ben Atkinson**, Assistant Professor of Flagler College, and author of *Spider Lightning*, gave a reading from his book and shared some of his experiences on writing and publishing his work. His poetry in *Spider Lightning* has been described as composed “with the eye of a natural scientist and the images of a poet.” His poems have been published in *Cadence*, *Chelonian Conservation and Biology*, *Facets*, *FM Quarterly*, and *Refractions*, among other outlets. Ben and his work were featured on the Scribbler’s Corner podcast, recording at River of Grass Studios in Jacksonville. It was a special afternoon enjoyed by all.



Paula Babadi

Saturday, October 31st, our virtual NFPH Monthly Chapter Meeting was a fun afternoon with a Spooky Open Mic which followed our regular Chapter business meeting and was well-attended. We had much fun reading our Halloween and Fall themed poetry. Costumes were optional, but welcome. We experienced what Zoom means by “video filters.” Do you know what those are? Quite hysterical and fun!

A free Zoom “Haiku” Poetry Workshop was led by **Ruth Van Alstine** in October for the benefit of our members and the community. It is the first of a series of poetry workshops planned to be held over the next year, which will be recorded and posted on our new NFPH YouTube Channel Page which is located on our Sponsor’s [HopeAtHand YouTube Channel](#) for future viewing.

So, we continue to grow as a Chapter, can continue to bring regular and special programs to both local and far-reaching communities safely, even amidst the global pandemic with the power of the virtual platform of Zoom.com. A bonus, we are reaching folks we might not otherwise have attend our events. It is a blessing.

~ Ruth Van Alstine, President

## Poetry For the Love Of It



Charles Hazelip

Poetry for The Love Of It (PLOI) continues to conduct virtual meetings. The group welcomed **Jan Godown Annino** as a new member. We completed our discussions about **Rebecca Starks**, our notable poet for this month and look forward to learning about Rudyard Kipling in October. **Pat Stanford** presented a plan for a website for PLOI. The site may contain published books for sale by members, short bios of members, contact numbers, and links to FSPA generally and OPAP specifically. Drafting the site continues in October. Pat also achieved publication of her book, *A Motley Miscellany; Misfit Poems That Fit Together*. Two of **Linda Whitefeather**’s haiku were selected for the national Poetry Jumps Off the Shelf Contact Tracing Project.

~ Charles Hazelip, President

## EDITOR'S CHOICE POETRY CHALLENGE

### **Holiday Time**

This is a poem of happiness  
as we think of the December holidays,  
a time to celebrate that which we have,  
love of family, friends, children.  
Gifts, surprises, joy, laughter, fun.

A time suited for believing in elves and Santa,  
a time for baking delicious treats,  
attending holiday dinners, hosting parties,  
of lighting the menorah and spinning the dreidel,  
and carrying on family and religious traditions.

This is also a time to remember  
the homeless, the downtrodden, the orphans.  
A time to extend a hand of assistance,  
perform a mitzvah, an act of human kindness,  
a chance for us to obtain some redemption  
for the past year of sins and selfishness.

The holidays should be a time  
not just for happiness and celebration,  
but of compassion for those less fortunate  
than yourselves, extending a generosity of spirit.

Whatever philosophy you may have,  
religion or rituals you follow,  
may December be a special time  
of faith, love, and remembrance of miracles.

~ Ruth Van Alstine

## EDITOR'S CHOICE POETRY CHALLENGE

### **The Gifts are the Point**

Assembled in my mind,  
based on dinner table repartee,  
this story about  
me, my brother, and Santa.

I, in single digits,  
my brother, nine years older,  
yuletide adornments  
held our eyes hostage.

Bubble lights' wonder,  
no doubt clouded my vision;  
never seeing what he saw,  
that with which he  
authoritatively announced -

"There is NO Santa Claus."

To this our Mom  
gave no response.  
The day wore on, his comment noted;  
finally, it was time for bed.

Visions of gifts, gifts, and more gifts  
(not sugar plums),  
danced in our heads.  
We slept fast,  
as our grandmother often recommended.

At dawn's earliest light,  
down the stairs we two bolted.  
A quick turn to the left,  
beneath the tree, no space remained;  
But from Santa, there was a surprise for my brother.

Gifts by size, shape, and name  
found their way to their rightful owners.  
What came his way? Not one box or bag;  
this year like no other.

Eyes like saucers, mouth opened wide,  
At how things had turned out;  
this story ended with his clarion call-  
"I believe! I believe! I believe!"

A lasting impression for some sixty years;  
the absence of gifts explains why  
you'll NEVER, EVER hear me say  
"There is NO Santa Claus."

~ Suzanne S. Austin-Hill

## EDITOR'S CHOICE POETRY CHALLENGE

### COVID Christmas

Some might well ask  
  where have you been all year  
now that you've officially arrived.  
Sad that we had to cancel Easter Mass.  
It's just not right to stay aloof from God.  
But I found you anyway, present  
in the eyes of my ninety-year-old mom.  
I saw you one day amidst the rubbish--  
a homeless man's encampment on the street.  
And there you were in a sweet baby's eyes.  
I figured out this was to be a year  
of hide and seek. I rolled up my sleeves  
and went to work, sad the churches  
  were closed.  
God, I suddenly found you everywhere!  
Sometimes in unexpected places:  
having tea in a busy luncheonette  
with a couple of angels by your side.  
This whole year was our "trial by existence."  
This strange year consigned many souls to  
heaven. Those of us left behind for now  
sit at the beginning of Christmas  
Mass, shell-shocked but firmly still among  
the faithful. The priest nods to the choir.  
I knew You were here. Here all along.

~ Dennis Rhodes

#### Next Issue:

#### Editor's Choice Poetry Challenge

Prompt: Newness

Form: Any

Submit by: December 1, 2020

to Mark@TKOrlando.com

January/February issue

**Of Poets & Poetry is published six times per year: January, March, May, July, September & November.**

## FOR SUBMISSIONS

Due Dates:

January: Due by December 1  
March: Due by February 1  
May: Due by April 1  
July: Due by June 1  
September: Due by August 1  
November: Due by October 1

Submittal Specifications:

Format for text:  
Microsoft Word (.doc or .docx),  
RTF, TXT, or PDF format files.  
Please do not embed your  
submission in an email.

Format for images:  
150 to 300 pixels/inch resolution  
but no larger than 3.5M in JPEG  
(.jpg) format. If you are unable  
to do this, contact the Editor at  
407.620.0158.

Note: Please know that we will  
make every effort to include all  
qualified submissions, if space  
allows, and we may choose to  
edit your submission.

Email submissions to:  
mark@TKOrlando.com

## IN THE NEWS

### Billy Collins' New Release

I have been in great anticipation awaiting the arrival of Billy Collins' latest collection of poetry, *Whale Day*. If I was to order the book online at BarnesandNoble.com, I would have had the option to select a book with additional poems, or to have one that was signed by Billy. However, both of these options were not that important to me. I prefer, whenever possible, to support our local independent bookstore, The Writer's Block. Sure it was \$4 more to purchase at the store, but I consider the money well spent and it will be a nice social distanced, masked outing. One of the things I love about an independent bookstore is the personal service. They called me on Wednesday to let me know it was in: I intend to pick it up today. I will read it and will offer a review (my humble opinion for what it's worth) in the next issue of OPAP. You can find the Writer's Block at 316 N Park Avenue in downtown Winter Park. ~ Carlton Johnson, FSPA member

### Louise Glück Awarded Nobel Prize for Literature

The Nobel Prize in Literature for 2020 is awarded to the American poet Louise Glück "for her unmistakable poetic voice that with austere beauty makes individual existence universal." She is the first woman in 27 years to win. Louise made her debut in 1968 with *Firstborn*, and was soon acclaimed as one of the most prominent poets in American contemporary literature. To learn more click [here](#).

### Spoken-Word Poet Brandon Leake Wins America's Got Talent

Leake, who was the first spoken word performer on the show, was given the Golden Buzzer by Howie Mandel in an earlier round. He performed pieces about the Black Lives Matter movement, family and loss. "This is a huge win for the spoken-word community," Leake said Wednesday during the two-hour season finale. "For an art form that has not been on the mainstream ever to have a chance to win 'America's Got Talent' is bigger than anything." He beat the competition, taking home the \$1 million prize and headliner status for an "AGT" show in Las Vegas. To learn about Leake click [here](#).

### November 2020 Poem-A-Day Chapbook Challenge!

West Florida Literary Federation ([wflf.org](http://wflf.org)) and the new Poet Laureate of Northwest Florida invite YOU to participate. Winning chapbook gets publication, with five free author copies and \$100 prize! NOVEMBER 1-30, 2020, WFLF will post each morning on its [Facebook page](#) a daily poetry prompt. ANYONE ANYWHERE can participate in the PAD, no registration required, but original work only please! PAD participants submit a Microsoft Word manuscript of 20-30 pages by or before DECEMBER 15, 2020, ONLINE to WFLF with \$15 reading fee and this subject line: 2020 WFLF NOV PAD Chapbook Challenge (subject line very important). Winner will be announced January 2021 at WFLF's 3rd Tuesday Open Mic celebrating 100 days of the new Poet Laureate of Northwest Florida and YOUR new chapbook! Chapbook Final Judge is newly appointed Northwest Poet Laureate Katherine Nelson-Born. Contest is limited to first 50 submissions.

~ Mark Andrew James Terry, editor



# Cadence 2020 is here!



## THE THIRTY-EIGHTH ANNUAL EDITION

of the Florida State Poets Association anthology is now the fourth to wear the name, Cadence. This year's volume of Cadence is published in a difficult time. Cadence is usually introduced as a highlight of FSPA's annual convention in October, but because of the pandemic the 2020 gathering was cancelled. Yet, the quality of the poetry in this latest volume speaks to the health of the word-based arts in Florida. While whirlwinds swirl in the culture, poets are keeping the creative spirit alive, and in so doing are proving that reconciliation remains possible if we will only think with the heart. This truth is more important now than ever.

Readers will notice the front cover has an impressionistic quality caused by the irregular surface of the water on which the scene is reflected. It seemed appropriate for these times in which life in general appears to be not quite in focus.

Find it on Amazon at this [link](#)

It should also appear on Barnes and Noble and Books a Million as part of Amazon's expanded marketplace.

To order directly from FSPA, send a check for \$15 to:

**Gary Broughman**  
**725 Laurel Bay Circle**  
**New Smyrna Beach, FL 32169**

Or, use paypal to pay FSPA Treasurer Robyn Weinbaum at [FSPA treasurer@aol.com](mailto:FSPA treasurer@aol.com)

# *A Little Lagniappe:*



## Quarantine

rippling blue water  
cumulus clouds sail blue skies  
awaiting return

~ Ruth Van Alstine

Do you have A Little Lagniappe?  
If you have a short poem associated  
with an image that you created, and  
would like them considered  
for publication in *Of Poets & Poetry*,  
please send the poem and image to  
me at [mark@TKOrlando.com](mailto:mark@TKOrlando.com).

A great holiday gift idea for your favorite poet...you. ;~)



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THE POET'S TRIANGLE CONSISTS OF: CRAFT, SCOPE, AND VOICE  
WE ACQUIRE THEM IN SEQUENCE; EACH SUPPORTS EACH  
OBJECTS AND THEIR MOVEMENTS DRIVE YOUR POEM  
A PERFECT OBJECT IS DEFINED BY THE CLEAREST WORD  
THE OBJECT ITSELF CAN BE FOUND AT THE ROOT OF ITS WORD  
MORE THAN ANYTHING, POETS AND POEMS SAY SOMETHING  
SENSE AND OBSERVATION MAKE QUESTIONS AND/OR ANSWERS  
THOUGHT OR EMOTION, SMALL OR GREAT, MAKES UP YOUR TAKE  
POEMS BUILD NOT WITH A SUBJECT, BUT WITH A TAKE

That's just a taste of the Short Course; but are you intrigued? Now you can try the course out at home, free. FSPA is offering a one-month trial of the accredited Twelve Chairs Course on a flash-drive, compatible with any computer system. The drives contain the full Short Course along with all course handouts. After one month, if you are enjoying the course and its benefits, simply send in your \$50 payment. If you are not happy with the course, you can return it. No obligation.

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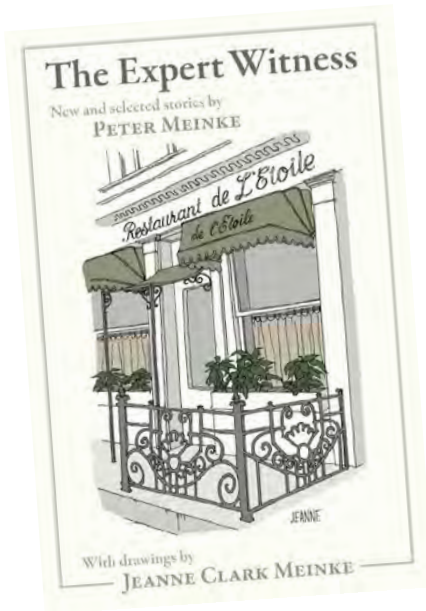
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**PETER MEINKE** is an author whose work has been published in *The Atlantic*, *The New Yorker*, *The New Republic*, *Poetry*, *Tampa Review*, eight books of the Pitt Poetry Series, and in two collections of fiction. He is Poet Laureate of Florida. **JEANNE CLARK MEINKE** is an artist whose drawings have appeared in *The New Yorker*, *Gourmet*, *Yankee*, and numerous other periodicals. Together they have collaborated on a previous children's book and many other publications, including *Lines from Neuchatel*, *Truth and Affection*, *The Shape of Poetry*, and *Lines from Wildwood Lane* (a collection of her own drawings), all published by the University of Tampa Press.



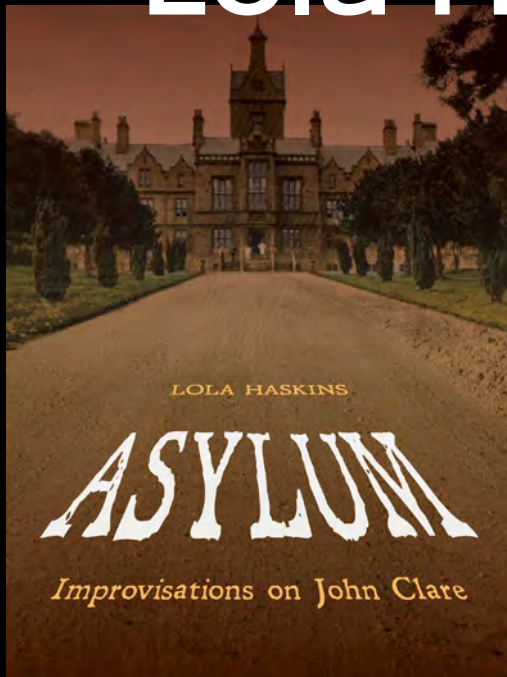
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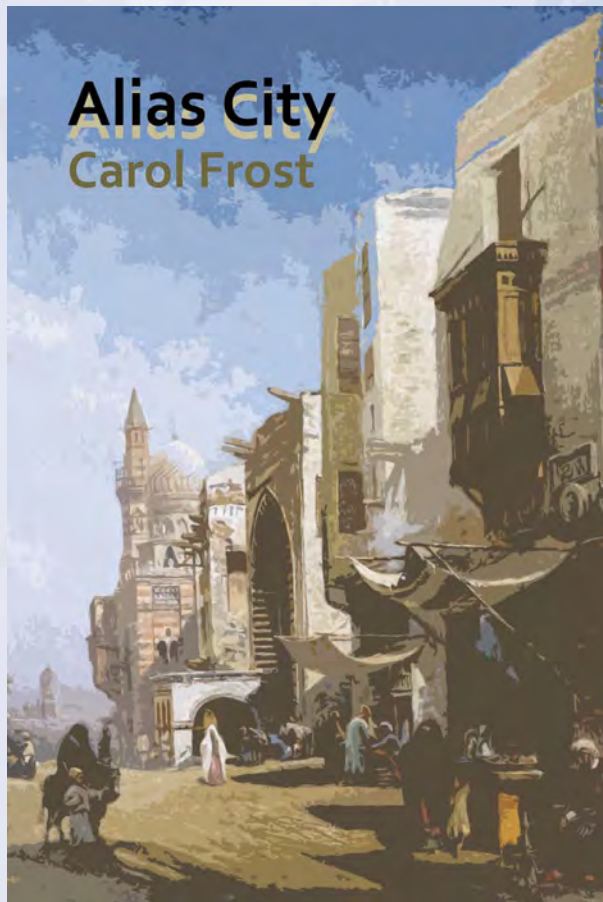


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## Alias City by Carol Frost

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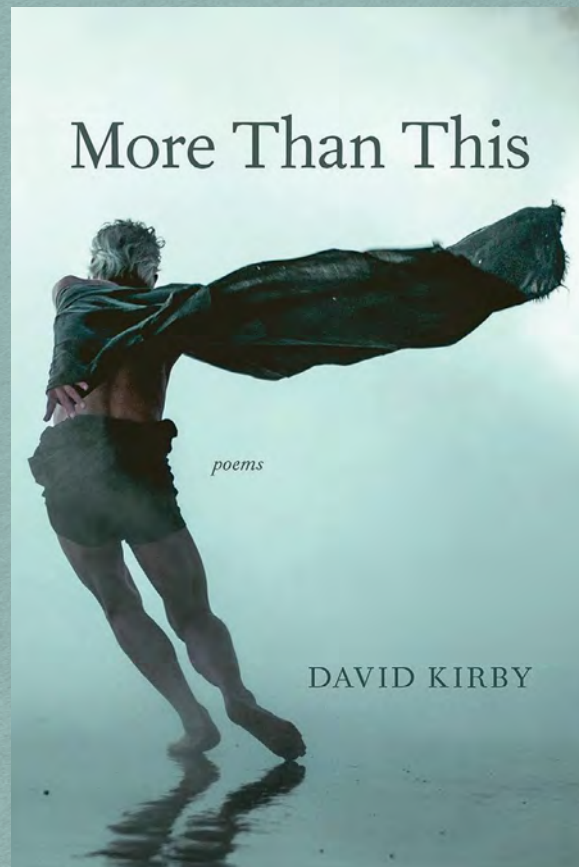
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