A LETTER FROM OUR PRESIDENT

by Terry Cox-Joseph

Congratulations to all who were honored and who attended “In the Company of Laureates” at Northern Virginia Community College the weekend of October 10. So many familiar faces and voices, including Luisa Igloria, Bill Glose, KaNikki Jakarta, Kathy Smaltz, and Grace Cavalieri.

Our new website is live! If you haven’t heard of Wix, check it out. Thank you, Steven Dorsey! We are posting the details of our North American Book Contest and our Annual Poetry Contest with the help of Submittable this year. Our 2023 Centennial plans are in the works, with the help of Ed Lull, on the Centennial Book, “A Commonwealth of Poetry,” and Mike Maggio, who is organizing events with the help of all our VPs. We will also be doing some grant writing to ensure that we create memorable events worthy of our 100th birthday.

As I type this, the skies are dull, the weeping cherry trees are shivering, and we enter our season of turning leaves. A time to turn in on ourselves and give thanks to those who came before us. Reflecting on amazing talent from the 1700s to the present, we celebrate Black Poetry Day October 17. The father of African-American literature, Jupiter Hammon, born a slave and never freed, was the first published black poet in the United States in 1746. The first-known poem by a black American poet is Lucy Terry’s “Bar Fight,” published in 1855. (A bit confusing since spoken word was so important to African-American slaves, and many of their sermons and poems were not published until years later.) Jupiter Hammon’s poem “An Evening Thought”/“An Evening Prayer” was published in 1760. I don’t remember learning about any of these poets until I was well into adulthood, but I do recall learning about Phillis Wheatley, who in 1770 published her first poem and, three years later, a volume of verses. We were lucky to have Langston Hughes’s history and poems occupy several pages in our high school English textbooks. I have loved his work ever since.

Reaching toward where no one has gone before, we checked out the skies (or the computer screen) to watch the launch of Jeff Bezos’ Blue Origin on October 12 when “Star Trek” actor William Shatner and three other tourists flew to the edge of space. (Mr. Spock, at left, went long ago.)

Since Shatner is 90, he will be relieved of his captain’s responsibilities during the automated trip. The brief, 11-minute mission will allow the passengers to briefly experience weightlessness and to see the curvature of the Earth and its thin atmosphere against the blackness of space. The original Star Trek series distinguished itself from “Creature from the Black Lagoon” and other brain-eating SF fare by using morality plays and titling episodes using quotations from HAMLET, Greek proverbs, the Bible, and Alexander Pope. Yes, science fiction can be literary.

October 31 is the perfect day to revisit some of Edgar Allan Poe’s works, with or without ravens and heartbreak over a way-too-young bride. Daylight Savings Time ends the first Sunday in November. A sad time for us sun-worshippers but there are plenty of other events to follow. Veterans’ Day is November 11. Keep an eye out for readings specific to and by veterans in Virginia.

Don’t miss this important event, November 15: National Clean Out Your Refrigerator Day. Just in time to stack it full for the following week of Thanksgiving.

Write on!

Terry Cox-Joseph, President
Hello from the Northern Region!
Some in-person events are back! I am grateful to have been able to participate in two in-person readings recently. The Written in Arlington Reading, narrated by Katherine E. Young at Lubber Run Amphitheater, was magical on one of the first cool nights of the season. Enjoy the recording! At Lake Anne in Reston, I participated with a small group of talented poets in an open mic sponsored by Nathan Leslie (Reston Readings) at Reston’s Used Bookstore. The October reading will be at least partially open mic. Spilled Ink met in person at Jirani Coffee House, Manassas, for the first time in September, and Slammin’ Saturdays continue in Herndon. Epicure Cafe is also inviting people to participate in open mics. Others continue virtually. It’s difficult to keep up!

“In the Company of Laureates” was amazing! Get a taste of what you missed by listening to a recording of each laureate’s first poem. Thanks for filming, Bill Glose, and thanks Kindra McDonald, who helped while he was on stage.

October Plaudits
PSV member Derek Kannemeyer was featured in Katherine M. Gotthardt’s column, “Get Happier, Dammit.” Katherine was interviewed by Authority Magazine about her mixed-genre book, Get Happy, Dammit: Staying Inspired and Motivated in an Often-Unhappy World, which includes short essays and poetry.

Congratulations to Jacqueline Jules, whose poem, “Hindenburg,” appears in the Autumn issue of the Lowestoft Chronicle. This poem wonders why some historical tragedies remain in collective memory while others fade.

Congratulations to JoAnn Lord Koff, whose poem “Illuminations on Ocracoke Ferry,” was selected to be in The Art of Everyone, along with her thoughts on poetry, biography, photography, and a link to her website.

Congratulations to Michal Mahgerefteh, whose poem “Red String Around My Wrist” was published in ARC Magazine (29 edition). I posted her last plaudit with the wrong last name. She uses Mitak only for her visual artwork: www.Mitak-Art.com. Her poem, “Unwanted Element,” was accepted by The Jewish Writing Project (winter 2021 edition). Her poem, “Passing Through the Cemetery,” will be the featured poem in the Voices Israel Group of Poets October Newsletter, representing the Global Voices Group.

Congratulations to Susan Notar, who will have three poems published in Bougeon!

Congratulations to Sally Zakariya, whose poems, “Plumbing” and “Walk, Swim, Fly,” were posted on Third Wednesday. Her poems, “Canal in Autumn” and “Community of Trees,” were published in the Autumn Equinox issue of Plants & Poetry Journal, edited by Jamie Nix. For every submission to this nature-inspired journal, a tree or other plant is planted.

November Poetry Events will include:
Our second Publishing Panel on Wednesday, November 10, with Mike Maggio, Rich Follet, and likely Michal Mahgerefteh. Write by the Rails will hold a live, three-hour workshop November 13: “From Visual to Literary Art.” Rich Follett will conduct a poetry reading and discussion group with his friend and fellow poet, Constance Stadler, on November 20 at the Strasburg Community Library.

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North Central Region

David Anthony Sam, VP

PSV NC/NW meets on the third Saturday of the month at 2 p.m. currently via Zoom.
We held our annual October Poetry Festival, cosponsored by Germanna Community College, on October 28.

Member news:
Elizabeth Spraggins’ book, Waltzing with Water, received second place in the Virginia Outdoor Writers Association Excellence-in-Craft Competition. Her poem “The Devil’s Garden” has been published in Masque and Spectacle.

Jim Gaines won an honorable mention in the 2021 Maine Poets Society contest of the National Federation of State Poetry Societies for a poem entitled “The Sailor’s Friend.” He also won the Riverside Writers First Tier competition in the Virginia Writers Club Golden Nib competition for a poem entitled “Spinning Illusions.”

David Anthony Sam had poems accepted for publication by december magazine, The Big Windows Review, and Smoky Blue Literary and Arts Magazine.
**Northwest Region**
POSITION VACANT

Combined NW and NC regions continue to meet via Zoom on the third Saturday of every month at 2 p.m.

**Eastern Region**

KATHLEEN DECKER, VP

Williamsburg Poetry Guild meets 2nd and 4th Mondays at 10 am in Williamsburg Regional Library, Scotland St. It had its first “back in-person” meeting outside the library in October. Members of that group are also sending poems and feedback via email. For further inquiries about this group, contact Linda Partee at: lindakp11@cox.net. Jamestown poets group is active but is closed to new members at this time. Contact Linda Partee at: lindakp11@cox.net with questions.

There will be an Ekphrastic Poetry/Quilt Exhibit at the Mancuso Mid-Atlantic Quilt Festival in February, 2022. PSV poets wrote poems for the event, and quilters are busy designing quilts to accompany the poem. Sixty-three poets submitted poems, and thirty-five quilters are in process of creating the quilts - some quilters are making two quilts to accompany the poems. The exhibit has also been accepted to travel to the Original Sewing and Quilt Expo in October 2022. I am currently negotiating with both venues to conduct poetry readings at each venue, along with discussion of the quilt and poem. Finally, a book will be created with full-color pictures of the quilts and all of the poems, available (hopefully) in February 2022.

I am organizing an in-person PSV reading in November, with logistics to be announced later via email. Contact Kathleen Decker at sam.jones459@yahoo.com if you would like to participate.

**Southeast Region**

KINDRA MCDONALD, VP

Dear Poets: I hope you all are enjoying some cooler weather and fall activities. Here’s a roundup from the region:

Our region will hold a two-day fall event Voices of Service November 5 in honor of Veterans’ Day and our poets who have served. There was a panel of poets featuring Colin D. Halloran as keynote. Join us in person on November 6th from 3:00-6:00 at the VFW for a panel poetry reading featuring Nathan Richardson, an audience Q&A, an open mic, and a reception/networking opportunity.

The Muse Writers Center fall schedule has been posted. Please check http://www.the-muse.org/ for classes, all of which will be online this semester.

The Hampton Roads Writers Conference was held September 23-35 with great success. It was great to see so many of our PSV members in person. I taught four poetry classes and was happy to see a full room for nature poetry/ecopoetics.

I had the pleasure of attending “In the Company of Laureates” in Northern Virginia and it was an amazing event full of state, regional and youth poet laureates. Check out the YouTube videos from this event @VirginiaPoetryOnline.

Poetry on the Pavement in Norfolk has been unveiled thanks to a City Arts Commission initiative. Follow @ArtsNorfolk for more information on where these poems will be located.

Be well, stay healthy, keep writing!
Kindra McDonald

**Central Region**

JOANNA LEE, VP

Happy fall from the Central Region!
Thank you to everyone who came out for our annual meeting in September. We enjoyed local refreshment in the open air event space at Blue Bee Cider, while listening to readings and publication wisdom from panelists Darren Morris (Poetry Editor, Parhelion), Jean Huets (Circling Rivers Press), and Dorinda Wegener (Co-founder, Trio House Press). We
rounded out the afternoon with poems from our members in a lively open mic.

Our Central Region peeps are doing big things! Check out the members’ news section for forthcoming publications and events featuring poets you may know.

As always, live and virtual community events continue in Richmond, Charlottesville, and beyond, so if you’re looking for poetry happenings, get googling River City Poets and the Bridge Progressive Arts Initiative, or get in touch and we’ll get you connected!

**Ron Smith** will be a part of Station to Station, Plume at the Writing Center-Session 6 November 6. His fifth book, *That Beauty in the Trees*, is forthcoming from LSU Press.

**Richard Rose** has a new collection, *PUSHBACK*, from Atmosphere Press. His next workshops, on “The Poetry of Wonder,” will take place in Richmond on Saturday, February 26, 2022. (For information, contact Anna Perry Miller, annapmiller@rrbc.org.)

**Michele Riedel**’s first chapbook, *Tumbling Lessons*, is forthcoming from Finishing Line Press.

**Diana Woodcock**’s fourth full-length poetry collection, *Facing Aridity* (a finalist for the 2020 Prism Prize for Climate Literature), was just published by Homebound Publications (Wayfarer Books).

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**WESTERN REGION**

**ANGELA DRIBBEN, VP**

The Western region had an amazing reading by **April J. Asbury** and **Pedro Larrea** in September. We celebrated April’s newest collection, *Woman With Crows*, from Finishing Line Press. The featured readers had us laughing, crying, and melting at the knees. The Open Mic brought more stunning work. Attendance was incredible. I couldn’t be more grateful than to be part of such a prolific and gifted region. Looking forward to the next gathering to come in Winter of the New Year.

We are still gathering Holiday Poetry cards to send to the residents of Heritage Hall in Lexington, Virginia. If you can help by creating even a few cards, I and the residents will appreciate you. Please reach me at http://angeladribben@gmail.com.

Big Celebration to our members’ achievements:

**Edison Jennings** published another full length collection, *Intentional Fallacies*; was a guest of Rattlecast (a podcast) with Tim Green, editor of *Rattle*; and published poems in *Rattle, Vox Populi, Alba, and Innisfree.*

**Erica Stephens** recently won the Carolyn G. Ennis Creative Expression Award associated with Alpha Kappa Alpha. Her first collection, *Black Doves Fly to Freedom*, was published in August 2021 by New Degree Press associated with the Creator Institute based out of Georgetown.

**Marjorie Gowdy** had poems published this fall in *Floyd County Moonshine* and *Clinch Mountain Review.* Earlier this year, her poem “My Spanish Veil” and visual poem “The Runner” were published in Artemis. “The Runner,” a poem + collage, is also on display through December at the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine as part of the exhibit “What Did You Do During the Pandemic?” Three illustrations based upon, and including lines from, her poems “Oakey’s Porch” and “Miss Elsie,” are on display into 2022 at the Roanoke Municipal Building as part of an exhibition “Welcome to Roanoke.”

**Angela Dribben** published in *Orion, Big City Lit, Cutthroat, Adanna, The Night Heron Barks, Harpy Hybrid Review,* and *Aquifer (Florida Review Online).* She also had reviews and interviews about her recent debut collection *Everygirl* published in *Beltway Quarterly, American Microreviews,* and on Rachel Sandell’s blog: https://rachelsandell.com/2021/07/24/interview-with-angela-dribben/.
Poems from the Ranks of Poetry Society of Virginia

We would love to publish your poems when space allows! Please send to marjie01@gmail.com by December 15 and by February 15, 2022, for consideration in the January and March newsletters (and by the 15th of every other month thereafter as well.)

Stuff

By Donna Isaac

After the agony, the tragedy, the death, the day of my mother’s funeral, her husband dumped her stuff onto the living room floor—purses cradling Kleenex and matchbooks, a “Proud to be Polish” sweatshirt, gossamer blouses, too-small dresses, tennis shoes, costume jewelry, puffy coats (Kleenex and matchbooks in pockets) T-shirts emblazoned with cardinals, butterflies, “Virginia is for Lovers,” elastic-waisted slacks, house slippers, footies, cardigans.

His family swooped in like ravens arms full of clothes, stuffing bags with things while we seven watched from the kitchen.

Couldn’t we linger, finger a silky scarf, speak in hushed tones of her wearing this at a sister’s wedding, the baby barfing on her shoulder?

Why did they claim her one-and-only-bathing-suit, a rope of “pearls”?

The free-for-all over, we picked up wire hangers, boxed discards for the poor-muddy garden mocs, a big-shouldered blazer emanating Chanel #5, a slightly smoky mu-mu. Stuff didn’t much matter after all.

But we didn’t get to share mom stories about the pink tulle, her Easter suit. We shuffled back into the kitchen.

Her husband told us to take down the grocery and to-do lists taped to the refrigerator.

She had planned to put up storm windows, buy Kleenex.

Wisdom

By Peter Haslett Kelly

I heard a rumor, it might just be an urban legend, that common sense is not common.

But God help the common man, should he ever be exposed to common sense, for it is usually mistaken for wisdom.

Blank Verse

By Edward W. Lull

I want to write a poem in blank verse but can’t come up with anything to write. Perhaps I need to take a walk outside and hope that nature can fill in the blanks.

The rain has stopped, so let me get my coat. The wind is blowing and it has a bite; I don’t believe this will be any fun. Well I’ll be darned, it’s dripping rain again.

I’m heading back inside, I’ve had enough. It seems like nature’s just a soggy drag, unlikely to produce a thought or two.

I think I’ll just forget blank verse today.
**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**Sliding into the deadline: Call for Submissions: Writers/South Awards**
Charlotte Lit is holding their first annual Writers/South Awards and invites submissions from members the Poetry Society Virginia. The contest is open September 1 to December 1, 2021, and current or past residents of North Carolina and its four border states, Georgia, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia, are eligible. For more information, please visit their contest page at https://www.charlottelit.org/writerssouth/awards.

**BOOK REVIEWS: REQUEST FOR SUBMISSIONS**
Virginia Living magazine is interested in highlighting the work of Virginia writers. If you have had a collection or chapbook published within the past year and would like to have the work reviewed and/or considered for other possible coverage, please send 3 sample poems, a biography of 150 words or fewer, and a brief description of the work (1-2 sentences) to be reviewed to the attention of Mr. Konstantin Rega, Assistant Editor, at konstantinrega@capefear.com.

**PSV News on Social Media from Catherine Fletcher**
Did you know that the PSV has a Facebook group for members? Visit this group to post news of your latest publication or event, as well as to catch up on poetry news in those months when there’s no newsletter. Go to https://www.facebook.com/groups/134868043229477 to exchange updates with other writers. For organizational news, catch up on Facebook at https://www.facebook.com/PoetryVA; Twitter at https://twitter.com/PoetryVirginia; and Instagram at https://www.instagram.com/posocva.

**Holiday Poetry Luncheon of the Poetry Society of Virginia**
After a year stolen by Covid-19, the Holiday Poetry Luncheon at Fords Colony Club in Williamsburg is back on December 4 at 11:00am. It includes featured poets, delightful plated luncheon, and open mic where everybody gets to read. Coming approximately halfway between PSV Poetry Festivals, it has historically been a popular pre-bad-weather event. We hope to host members from Virginia Beach to Abingdon, Winchester to Alexandria, and in between. It’s a once-a-year event; don’t miss it!

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**THE POETRY SOCIETY OF VIRGINIA**

**Annual Pre-Holiday Season**

Luncheon and poetry at Ford’s Colony Country Club, Williamsburg

**FIVE FEATURED POETS**

**PLATED LUNCH**

**OPEN MIC**

Saturday, December 4, 2021
11:00am

DO NOT MISS

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**New Address for PSV!!**
For memberships, renewal, and contests:

Poetry Society of Virginia
P.O. Box 5154
Virginia Beach, VA 23471-0154
THE POETRY SOCIETY OF VIRGINIA

Annual Pre-Holiday Season

luncheon and poetry

at Ford’s Colony Country Club, Williamsburg

FIVE FEATURED POETS
PLATED LUNCH
OPEN MIC

Saturday, December 4, 2021
11:00am

Plated Lunch with Three Entree Choices
A. Herb-Roasted Chicken
B. Cedar Plank Salmon
C. Broccoli and Cheddar Quiche

Open Mic (Everybody gets to Read)
Price: $20

Detach and return with payment

Name: ___________________________________________ Phone:______________________________

Email: ___________________________________________ Number of Guests:_________

Guest Names: ____________________________________________________________________________

Entree: Self: A ____ B ____ C ___ Guest: A ___ B ___ C ___

#Adults X $20 = _______ Please remit by November 29, 2021

Poetry Society of Virginia
P. O. Box 5683
Williamsburg, VA 23188

Questions: Ed Lull
(757)258-5582
http://ewlull@verizon.net
On blue
By Angela Dribben
i want to say it is the color
of after-dinner constellation of wing-span of soar
polyommatus icarus evolution transition
dusk and dawn of storm soothsaying of alkaline soil but i am concerned
for America it seems it is the color of institution of uniform and badge of
postmortem staining competition prize and privilege of bound at all costs

Angela Dribben’s collection, Everygirl, a finalist for the 2020 Broadkill Review Dogfish Head Prize, is out with Main Street Rag. She is Contributing Reviews Editor at Cider Press Review, a Bread Loaf poetry contributor, and an MFA candidate at Randolph College.

Summer
By Kathleen Decker
it’s a riot of color
ruby reds
dark pinks
lacy lavenders
wispy whites
the crape myrtle
of a southern summer
set against a backdrop
of gorgeous greens
near-tropical rain forest
remembered summers
hiking in the heat or running, with teen agility
up golden brown rolling hills
of California
scrambling up scree
of Mt. Shasta
kayaking in Northwest sloughs
cool, rainy days
eagles and herons for company occasional freshwater oyster shells
amid sprawling blackberry canes
making a stop at the bank to pick berries
like a native
less an athlete
more an observer
summer has its charms everywhere at every age

Kathleen Decker is a poet, physician, and musician. She has authored several books of poetry: Essence of Woman, Russian Reverie, Whispers on Paper, and edited two anthologies for the Haiku Society of America. She has served as VP of the PSV, Eastern Region since 2020. Her collected works of poems, Nature, Love, and the Psychiatrist is in press.
Christian Pascale recently published his first book of poetry entitled Poetry of Wonder on September 29. It is available on Amazon, Barnes and Noble sites and on Kindle. You can also be redirected to these sites from his website christianpascale.com

Edward W. Lull has received word that his poem, “A Poet is...” will be published in a literary periodical in San Antonio, Texas, Lone Stars #97.

Donna Isaac has a new reading series called Literary Bridges, co-hosting and curating out of Next Chapter Booksellers in St. Paul, MN. Her poem “Anticipatory Set” was recently published by Shark Reef; her poem “Late October” was published in the Ramsey Co. Library’s collection This Was 2020, responses to the pandemic and the killing George Floyd; and she won five awards in the NFPS 2021 contests published in the Encore Prize Poems 2021 anthology, available on Amazon.


Janice Hoffman participated in the Williamsburg Book Festival on Oct. 2 and had book readings/signings at The Book Warehouse in Williamsburg and the A-Ibañez Museum and Gallery in Kilmarnock in Oct. She will share again on Fri., Nov., 5, at the Gloucester Arts Center (3:40 p.m.) and on the Neal Steele radio program, Xtra 99.1 FM (8:05 a.m.) on Tues., Nov. 30. Her new children’s book, Four Fairy Friends Celebrate Christmas, was recently released by High Tide Publications just in time for the holidays. Visit her evolving website at jan-hoffman.com.

Joan Mazza has four poems featured at the OpenDoor Poetry Magazine. https://www.opendoorpoetrymagazine.com/joan-mazza/?fbclid=IwAR1Fa9kIuU0fWBGAGA7UHChFIPiiyFWBArtFLxKHchl8uibL9HNyF8_QCE Her poem “Rule of Three” is published LEON Literary Review. http://leonliteraryreview.com/issue-10-joan-mazza/_ Also, five poems are featured at In Parentheses Journal, https://inparentheses.art/2021/09/08/disruptors-and-more-works-by-j-mazza/?fbclid=IwAR3CQ8LHbT6xYW5B7Nre0QtD-xrS0D99KGnqBKRvjGCgn1d4kCXHigtQA Other poems forthcoming at International Poetry Review, Flora Fiction, Muddy River Poetry Review, Spelt Magazine, and Gyroscope Review. MacQueen’s Quinterly accepted a poem that had been previously submitted 30 times since 2008. (JoanMazza@gmail.com) She also has two poems in the current issue of The Silent World of Her Vase. https://www.hervase.com/mag.../after-the-follow-up-mammogram andhttps://www.hervase.com/magazine/blood She also has two poems in the October issue of Verse-Virtual. https://www.verse-virtual.org/2021/October/mazza-joan-2021-october.html MacQueen’s Quinterly has accepted “False Positive.” This was the 31st submission for this poem. Two of her poems forthcoming at The Avenue and three at The Hitch Lit Review. (JoanMazza@gmail.com)

Sharon Ackerman’s poetry collection “Revised Light” is available now from Main Street Rag Publishing Company. The collection explores the Appalachian Migration, ancestry, and place. Her poems “I Never Met My Grandfather” and “The Memory of Quilts” have been accepted by Cumberland River Review for fall 2021 publication.
Sarah Kohrs has had her poem “Stuck Awake” accepted to Wingless Dreamer’s It’s Twelve O’Clock Poetry Anthology, 2021.

Julia Travers recently had two poems published in Mala Leche from The Feminist Union of Charlottesville Creatives (online at heyfucc.com/mala-leche-3), and one poem published with the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council’s “Poetry and COVID” project. She was also awarded a Martha’s Vineyard Institute of Creative Writing Poet-Author Fellowship.

Patrice Wilkerson’s article will be featured in the devotional book entitled, Dear God: 118 Devotional Prayers for Teens and Young Adults. It is available on Amazon.

MEMBERSHIP NEWS
Are your membership dues up to date? Please contact Membership Chair Peter Kelly to check: http://psovmembership@gmail.com
See our PSV website for details: https://poetrysocietyofvirginia.org/membership/

CONTRIBUTORS OF POEMS IN THIS ISSUE

Poet Donna Isaac, teaching artist, lives in the Twin Cities, Minnesota; she curates and hosts the reading series, Literary Bridges, working with Cracked Walnut (League of MN Poets’ chapter). She has a B.A. (English) from James Madison University; an M.A. (English) from the University of MN; and an M.F.A. from Hamline University. Published poetry work includes Footfalls (Pocahontas Press), a paean to growing up in Appalachian regions; three chapbooks, Tommy (Red Dragonfly Press); Holy Comforter (Red Bird Chapbooks); and Persistence of Vision (Finishing Line Press). Her work also appears in literary journals such as The Tishman Review, The Saint Paul Almanac, and The Penn Review. <donnaisaacpoet.com>.

Peter Kelly grew up in Newport News Virginia, the son of Robert and Peggy Kelly. He recently returned home to Newport News for an early retirement and to be closer to his family in 2015. Peter graduated from Ferguson High School in 1976. After training at the Oberlin Conservatory as a classical musician and pursuing a degree in Mathematics at Oberlin College, Peter won an audition with the ARS Musica Baroque Orchestra of Ann Arbor Michigan in 1980. This launched a career that allowed him to help establish the Lyra Baroque Orchestra after moving to the Twin Cities in 1985. He was the principal baroque oboist with the Lyra Baroque Orchestra for nine years. At the same time Peter followed his passion for mathematics and computers by developing a career in programming computers, managing teams of software developers and most recently as a Senior Systems Business Analyst.

Edward W. Lull, After graduating from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1955, his first career was in the Navy, serving primarily in submarines. He earned an MS from The George Washington University in 1969. Lull began writing poetry in retirement; he has published seven books, served four terms as President of PSV, and has been runner-up for Poet Laureate of Virginia.

Review: Eleanor Speak, Poems by Nan Ottenritter
Finishing Line Press, 2021
If only every woman, young and old, could read Eleanor, Speak, Poems by Nan Ottenritter. This magnificent collection of poems touches upon the views of both women of history and women imagined and met during Ottenritter’s lifetime. Each work explores the emotional depths of its subject and brings to every personality a magical reinvention by the poet. A mother, reading this book, would nod in shared pain at the stories of grief and sudden loss. The woman on the train would read into the poems her own aspirations and disappointments. The young girl, seeking heroines, would find them here, whether in a tattooed waitress or a sculptor who flew and stumbled.
This reader, a third generation of mystery aficionados, learned that her own hero, Agatha Christie, kept writing well into old age even as her faculties were possibly dimmed by dementia (“The Seventy-Third Book: Letter to Agatha Christie”). There is something in the creative soul that demands a way out, as Ottenritter writes in her quartet of poems about the doomed sculptor Camille Claudel: accused of appropriating the work of her lover Rodin, Claudel defended herself by saying she had “too many ideas rather than too few.”

It is in daily interactions that Ottenritter also draws inspiration. In “Little Lincoln,” she writes if a young mother with few means could name her baby Lincoln Alyosha (adding in a nod to the tale “something like that”), then “all…will be well.” Ottenritter reflects on a brilliant protégé in “Educating Rachel”:

“What do I want for her? To taste paradise, drink deeply of love, trust her voice, and treasure her creations.
I want this to happen, yet fear it may not.”

Ottenritter brings fresh insight into the lives of well-known women. The impression of Florence Foster Jenkins in a recent film trailer is of a gadfly with Hugh Grant at her side. In “Verdi Would Have Wept,” the story is both grand and sorrowful, yet with a hopeful end note: “no one can ever say I didn’t sing.” In the title poem, “Eleanor, Speak,” the poet writes also as an activist wondering how the grand First Lady would have reacted to the dangerous tumult of these times: “Eleanor, what would you do...wear a pussy hat, pen a poem?” In “Notre Dame,” that most elegant of inanimate ladies is remembered in the aftermath of the 2019 fire:

“...glorious rose windows, sonorous pipes and bells, all in peril.”

Grief is the through line in much of this collection, a raw and unforgiving grief that is felt in the soul of every woman - and man. In “I Know How,” the nurse assures a family forced to face life’s end for a beloved brother. Both the dying brother and the nurse on duty suffer from cancer. Horror and grief are expressed in “Making of an Enemy,” as a young teen’s menstrual cycle and pregnancy are tracked by a past presidential administration. “The Mothers of the Movement squint in TV lights” in “The End of This,” a poem, like “Keeping Count,” that stirs our collective grief at the violence of this time.

Ottenritter has an ear for the silence in conversations and an eye that translates movement and hesitation into words. Her poems such as “Metallic Transfer Cases” and “The Gesture” show humanity at its best in noble and humble ways. Yet, overall, a sense of joy abounds in soft brush strokes throughout the collection. Ottenritter is a poet in the purest sense, a teller of tales and recorder of the little moments. “When My Mother Met the Queen” and “mom’s cast-iron skillet” are simply delightful, as is “Downsizing”:

“...Champagne! A toast! The party is wonderful. You boxes, you knew all along!”

Open this lovely book, and join Camille Claudel as she rides through the City of Lights over 100 years ago (“Camille Bicycles through Paris, Spring 1887”). Hear the “cobblestone-clatter”, watch her “French braid unbraided”, riding “silt- and sand-dusted” and topless through Paris. Sit at the café and observe with Ottenritter the magic of an earlier time as yet another courageous woman reviled in her day rides toward the glory of a happier future.

~ Review by Marjorie Gowdy

Next Deadline for Your Announcements & Poems

The deadline for the January 2022 PSV Newsletter is December 15.
Please send up to three poems for consideration, if you like, and also a four-line biography to the Newsletter Chair, marjie01@gmail.com. Illustrations and photographs, preferably in black and white or grayscale, are also welcome!
POETRY SOCIETY
OF VIRGINIA
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