

**The Connecticut
Poetry Society
Newsletter**

The CPS website is <http://ctpoetry.net/>.

While you're online, *Friend us* on Facebook.

CPS Honorary Board

Antoinette Brim-Bell, Connecticut Poet Laureate

Margaret Gibson, Connecticut Poet Laureate, 2019-2022

Rennie McQuilkin, Connecticut Poet Laureate, 2015-2018

Marilyn Nelson, Connecticut Poet Laureate, 2001-2006

Vivian Shipley, CSU Distinguished Professor Emeritus

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Treasurer: Patti Fusco

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CRR Editors: Ginny Connors, Debbie Gilbert, & John Surowiecki

Newsletter: Ginny Connors

POP Director: Jeanne LeVasseur

Chapter Liaison: Pat Mottola

Youth Outreach: Nancy Manning



Spring Fling

Look for more information soon on our annual Spring Fling, which will be held on May 20th at Riverfront Community Center in Glastonbury. This will be a nice opportunity to catch up with long-standing poetry friends and to meet others.

Have You Renewed Your Membership?

Membership in CPS runs from April 1 to March 31. Dues are \$30 for members, \$15 for students and are payable via PayPal on our website

<http://ctpoetry.net/membership.html> or you can mail a check via USPS mail to Patti Fusco, CPS Membership, 311 Shingle Hill Rd, West Haven, CT 06516. If you owe dues, you will have received an email from Patti Fusco to remind you.

Email Patti pwfusco@gmail.com if you have questions. Please make sure we have your most current email, mailing address and phone number.

President's Message

Hello dear CPS Members!

As I sit here typing during our first real snow-storm of the year, at the end of February, I can't help thinking *shouldn't it be spring soon?*

Speaking of which, our annual Spring Fling will be held again at the beautiful Riverfront Community Center in Glastonbury on May 20th. Save the date!

And as always, our MOMs (Monthly Open Mics) and POPs (Poets on Poetry) are still getting along famously! The next two POP presentations are scheduled for March 19 (workshop with presenter *Antoinette Brim-Bell*, Connecticut State Poet Laureate), and April 6 (presenter Tim Seibles, former State Poet Laureate of Virginia). MOMs are scheduled for the last Friday of each month. Check emails for more information as the dates get near. And, check our website: ctpoeetry.net

There are lots of upcoming opportunities for you! Contests: Margaret Gibson PL Poetry Award in progress March 1 – April 15, followed by the Connecticut Poetry Award April 1 – May 31. And, *Connecticut River Review* is now accepting submissions through April 15. Good luck all!

Speaking of April, CPS dues are renewable in April – Poetry Month! Tie a string around your finger to remember – I just thought of that old trick. Do/did people really do that? Did your mother ever tie a string around your finger when you were little to remind you not to forget something? The string-on-finger typifies a category of mnemonics called "things out of place."

"Mnemonic" refers to any technique, device, tactic, formula or idea that can assist memory. (I digressed – just thought this was interesting.)

So then, stay warm, read a lot, and write a lot. *"As I write, I create myself again and again."* – Joy Harjo
And let's all look forward to spring!

Pat Mottola, President

Contest News

Congratulations to the winners of the Nutmeg Contest, which was judged this year by **Joan Kwon Glass**. The winners are as follows:
First prize: **Rohanna Ssanyu** for "An Aftermath of Empire"
Second prize: **Beth Brody** for "The Spectrum of You"
Third prize: **Arlene DeMaris** for "Turkeys"
Honorable Mention: **Polly Brody** for "Witness"
See these fine poems along with the judge's remarks on the CPS website.

All CPS members are also members of the National Federation of State Poetry Societies. This organization offers 50 poetry contests annually, each of which has a deadline of March 15th. Cash prizes vary in amount. Members can enter up to ten poems for a fee of one dollar per poem, except for the Founders Award, which requires a fee of five dollars and offers a prize of \$1,000. For more information on these contests go to https://www.nfsps.com/poetry_contests.htm. The Submittable link is <https://nfsps.submittable.com/submit>

CPS Chapters & Presidents

COVID-19 has changed the way our chapters meet. If you want to know more about meeting with a specific chapter, please get in touch with the chapter president.

Bethel

Liz Massey
finchwhistlehaven@gmail.com

This chapter meets at the Bethel Library on the second Saturday of each month, from 1-3 pm. Bring copies of a poem to discuss.

Farmington Valley

Debbie Gilbert
debbiewgilbert@hotmail.com

This chapter meets on the first Monday of each month, from 7-9 pm. Email Debbie to submit your poem for critique and to receive the Zoom link. So as to have enough time to respond to each poem, we cap each meeting at ten participants.

Greater Hartford

Julia Paul
Julia.Paul@cox.net

Currently, this chapter is meeting via Zoom. Members are looking forward to the resumption of in-person meetings.

Haiku Chapter

Marita Gargiulo
margararts1000@gmail.com

This online chapter welcomes CPS members interested in reading and writing haiku. Members of the group share haiku and senryu regularly. The chair collects the poems in advance and emails them to all chapter members so that the poems can be discussed during the meetings.

Manchester

Matthew Borrelli
matthewborrelli296@gmail.com

Manchester's Wit and Wisdom group meets on the second Saturday of each month from 1-3. They meet at the Firehouse in Manchester.

Middletown

Pamela Guinan
860-563-5761
Pamela.cps@hotmail.com

This chapter has been on hiatus but hopes to resume meeting soon.

New Haven

Laura Altshul
lauraaltshul130@gmail.com

The New Haven chapter meets on the third Saturday of each month from 10-12. Presently they meet via Zoom.

Orenaug Chapter: Woodbury, Watertown, Southbury, Roxbury, Bethlehem

Sandy Carlson
orenaugchaptercps@gmail.com

The Orenaug chapter meets on the third Saturday of each month at 9:30 am via Zoom. The ekphrastic workshops are held at the Woodbury Public Library on the first Saturday of each month at 1 pm. Contact Sandy Carlson for more information.

Ridgefield

Barb Jennes
barbjennes@gmail.com

The Ridgefield Poets' Roundtable meets every fourth Saturday from 10 am to noon, via Zoom. Email Barb to get the library registration page URL, which changes monthly. Interested CPS members can register on the library website they will subsequently receive the Zoom link and an email address to which their poems should be sent.

Wilton

Ray Rauth
Rayrauth@optonline.net

The Wilton Workshop meets from 2-4 on the third Saturday of each month at the Wilton Library.

Poet in the Spotlight: Mark Saba

"I've been interested in so many things over the years, but poetry is the only one that is able to contain them all," says **Mark Saba**. "In our current world of attention deficit related to the constant bombardment of information, poetry still matters. It distills information—including human intuition and emotions—and presents it most clearly."

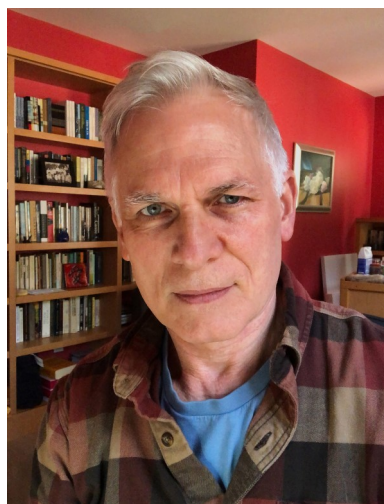
Saba began writing poetry while studying at Wesleyan, but at that time he focused mostly on fiction. In graduate school he began to focus more on poetry, and although he still writes fiction, he says that "over the years I've realized that my fiction is actually poetry—that is, I approach it in the same way, letting my instinct carry the story rather than worrying about plot lines, etc."

He writes slowly, rereading each line many times before continuing on. He generally keeps writing until he's finished a rough draft. During the revision process, Saba summons the original feeling he had when he first sat down to write the poem. It takes time to settle on an effective ending. He then lets a poem "cool off" for a while before checking it for errors and evaluating its success in cohering to his original vision. This can take months.

When he reads poetry, he looks for "honesty, nothing that seems contrived. You can tell when there is a glint of something that you recognize, but it is presented in such a unique way that it startles you and sheds a new light on it." Recently he has been reading an anthology of poems from Ohio's Appalachian area called *I Thought I Heard a*

Cardinal Sing. Other poetry books include Billy Collins' new book *Musical Tables* and Carolyn Forché's *In the Lateness of the World*.

Mark Saba recently retired from his work at Yale University as a medical illustrator and graphic designer. Now he has more time to focus on his writing and on interaction with writing communities. He also paints. His art training has influenced the way he sees things, and therefore the way he writes. He values Connecticut Poetry Society for its sense of community. It has helped him connect with many other writers, and has offered encouragement.



Mark Saba

Local Laureates Share Their Poetry

On April 2nd, from 2-4, pm, four local Connecticut Poets Laureate will share poems and conversation. This free event is sponsored by Arts Escape, located at 493 Heritage Road in Southbury. The poets are **Sandy Carlson** of Woodbury, **Rick Magee** of Bethel, **Deborah Rose** of New Milford, and **Faith Vicinanza** of Southbury. More information can be found at <https://www.artsescape.org/category/writing/>.

More Contest News

The **Lynn DeCaro Poetry Competition**, a contest for Connecticut high school students, is open to submissions through March 15. This year's contest will be judged by poet and educator **Vivé Griffith**, who was a childhood friend of Lynn DeCaro.

The **Margaret Gibson Poet Laureate Poetry Award** is currently underway. This special contest for Spring 2023 will offer first, second and third place prizes for a poem on *nature in a time of global climate change*. Submissions will be open through April 15, and there is no fee to submit. Connecticut Poet Laureate Emerita **Margaret Gibson** will act as final judge. See the CPS website for more information and submission guidelines.

The submission period for the 2023 **Connecticut Poetry Award** will begin on April 1. Open to all poets! Last year's winning poems can be seen on the CPS website, <https://www.ctpoetry.net/connecticut-poetry-award.html>. The 2023 judge is **Dolores Hayden**.

Steve Straight Is Presented with the 2023 William Meredith Award in Poetry

Congratulations to **Steve Straight**, whose book *Affirmation*, published by Grayson Books, won the 2023 William Meredith Award in Poetry. Former Connecticut Poet Laureate **Margaret Gibson** has described his work as "restorative, playful and wise poems by one of Connecticut's best poets." The poems in this book help affirm our common humanity.

March POP: In and Out: Beginning and Ending Lines

On March 19th at 4 pm, **Antoinette Brim-Bell** will offer a workshop on the poetic line. Poet and critic James Longenbach characterizes the line as "what distinguishes our experience of poetry as poetry." This workshop will examine lines from poems by noted poets and determine how these lines function. We will pay particular attention to lines that begin and end poems. Participants will discuss strategies for engaging the reader early in the poem, moving the reader down the page, and delivering a satisfying ending. In addition to examining poetry and discussing craft, this workshop will include generative prompts and sharing.

Register in advance for this meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZctdeghqT4sEtOsBn4YpT0QSyhjX6rbTJLc>

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.

Antoinette Brim-Bell, Connecticut's 8th State Poet Laureate, is the author of three full-length poetry collections: *These Women You Gave Me*, *Icarus in Love*, and *Psalm of the Sunflower*. She is a Cave Canem Foundation Fellow and an alumna of Voices of Our Nations Arts Foundation (VONA).

More information will be available soon regarding the April 6th presentation, which will be hosted by award-winning poet **Tim Seibels**, Virginia State Poet Laureate Emeritus.



We sadly note the passing of CPS member **Gerda Walz-Michaels**, of Storrs, Connecticut. Born in Germany, she wrote poems in English and in German. She loved flowers, art, classical music, traveling. She published several books and was working on a new one at the time of her death. As she approached death, she said, "My whole life is a miracle. I had everything." She leaves behind five adult children.

Our condolences also go out to Connecticut State Poet Laureate Emeritus **Rennie McQuilkin**, whose beautiful and talented wife **Sarah McQuilkin**, passed away at the end of January. They had been married for over 60 years. Sarah was known as an artist, a vocalist, and historic preservationist.

Connecticut River Review

Our annual, international poetry journal is presently accepting submissions. The deadline is April 15th, and submissions are considered on a rolling basis. Please send us your best original, unpublished poems via our Submittable Page.

<https://connecticutriverreview.submittable.com/>

Guidelines can be found on the CPS website.

New Books by John Stanizzi

John Stanizzi has been busy. Three recent book publications demonstrate that!

Sundowning is a poetry book published by Main St. Rag. **Nancy Daley** says of it "At the core of Stanizzi's poetry are love's rough edges...these poems articulate the essence of human connection."

Pond, published by Impspired Press, is based on a daily journey to a pond near John's home. The poems in this book reveal secrets of nature hidden in plain view.

Also published by Impspired Press is *Of Feathers and Bones*. It contains, according to **Michell Reale**, "poems that buzz and thrum in the head as well as the body."

Poetry Book Launch at Barney Library

John Stanizzi and **Debbie Gilbert** will share poems from their recent books at the Barney Library in Farmington on April 22nd at 1 pm. John's book *Feathers and Bones* and Debbie's book *imagine the small bones*, a collection of ekphrastic poems, will be featured.

This program will welcome spring with a deep dive into nature and an exciting new look at visual arts. Discussion will follow the readings and books will be available for sale.

Riverwood Poetry Series

Three poets will launch their latest books through the Riverwood Poetry Series on March 8th at Real Art Ways, 56 Arbor Street, Hartford.

The readings begin at 7 pm. The poets are **Julie Choffel**, **Aaron Caycedo-Kimura**, and **John Stanizzi**. An open mic will follow the featured readings. As well as a sale of authors' books, a book swap will be featured. Bring a poetry book, new or gently used, to swap for another book.

On April 12th, **January Gill O'Neil** will be the featured reader. This event will also take place at Real Art Ways, beginning at 7 pm. O'Neil is an associate professor at Salem State University, and the author of *Glitter Road* (forthcoming), *Rewilding* (2018), *Misery Islands* (2014), and *Underlife* (2009), all published by CavanKerry Press. From 2012-2018, she was the executive director of the Massachusetts Poetry Festival.

Marilyn Nelson Poetry Reading

CT Humanities is sponsoring a poetry reading by **Marilyn Nelson** at Eastern Connecticut State University on March 7th at 5:30, in Smith Library's Johnson Room. The event is free and open to the public.

Marilyn Nelson, a three-time National Book Award Finalist, is a University of Connecticut Professor Emerita and former Connecticut Poet Laureate. She is the author or translator of more than 20 books and chapbooks for adults and children, most recently *Augusta Savage: The Shape of a Sculptor's Life*.

Wordhouse Reading Series

The Wordhouse Reading Series takes place in the Noah Webster House in West Hartford. On March 18th at 2 pm poets **B. Fulton Jennes** and **Gian Lombardo** will share some of their work. Their reading will be preceded by an open mic.

B. Fulton Jennes is Poet Laureate of Ridgefield and Poet in Residence at the Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum. Her collection *Blinded Birds* received the 2022 International Book Award for a poetry chapbook.

Gian Lombardo's books include the prose poetry collections *Bricked Bats* (2021), *Machines We Have Built* (2014), *Who Lets Go First* (2010), *Aid & A Bet* (2008), *Of All the Corners to Forget* (2004), *Sky Open Again* (1997), *Before Arguable Answers* (1993), and *Standing Room* (1989), as well as the poetry collection *Between Islands* (1984).

Poems from Connecticut's Four Corners

On the first Wednesday of each month, tune into an evening of poetry featuring readings by poets representing each of the state's four corners, plus one from the central Hartford area. On April 5th, at 7 pm, the featured poets are **Margaret Gibson**, **Charles Rafferty**, **Pegi Deitz Shea**, **Srinivas Mandavilli**, and **Sandy Carlson**. Register in advance for this program of outstanding Connecticut poets, so that you will receive the Zoom link.

<https://ridgefieldlibrary.librarymarket.com/event/online-poems-connecticuts-four-corners-0>