



September, 2019

The Connecticut Poetry Society Newsletter

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

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

CPS Honorary Board

Margaret Gibson, Connecticut Poet Laureate
Rennie McQuilkin, Connecticut Poet Laureate,
2015-2018

Marilyn Nelson, Connecticut Poet Laureate,
2001-2006

Vivian Shipley, Connecticut State University
Distinguished Professor at SCSU

CPS Officers

Co-Presidents: Tony Fusco & Pat Mottola

Vice President: Victor Altshul

Secretary: Christine Beck

Treasurer: Mark Sheridan

Contests: Joan Hofmann

Webmaster: Tony Fusco

Membership: Patti Fusco

CRR Editor: Ginny Connors

Newsletter: Ginny Connors

Publicity: David Cundy

Outreach: Mark Sheridan & Christine Beck

Program Director: Victor Altshul

Member at Large: Julia Paul

Summer Picnic Nourishes Heart and Soul

The CPS annual picnic continues to be a source of inspiration and camaraderie. We saw record attendance, with 50 poets, reflecting the ever-growing membership of CPS. We acquired two new members and four renewals at the picnic, bringing our membership to over 200 strong!

Vivian Shipley and Ed Harris once again provided the beautiful setting at ocean's edge, which set the backdrop to a most eclectic open mic. Gwen Gunn, NFSPS Winners' Circle winner, read her winning poem. The new *Connecticut River Review* was distributed to members by Editor Ginny Lowe Connors. And, as always, there was an abundance of food and drink.

Thanks to the Executive Board, led by Co-Presidents Tony Fusco and Pat Mottola, for arranging yet another stellar event and providing an opportunity for all to come together to share their deepest thoughts, their joy and sadness, love and laughter.



CPS Chapters & Presidents

Bethel

Liz Massey
finchwhistlehaven@gmail.com

This chapter meets at Bethel Library, 189 Greenwood Avenue, on the second Saturday of each month, from 2:00 - 4:00 PM Bring 6 to 8 copies of a poem for the workshop, or just come to listen and respond. To receive an e-mail reminder each month, contact Liz.

Farmington Valley

Terence McCaffrey
860-416-6684
tmccaff24@hotmail.com

This chapter meets one Tuesday of each month in the library at Tunxis Community College from 6-8 pm. Contact Terrence to get more information and to get on the email notification list. Bring copies of your poem if you want feedback.

Greater Hartford

Julia Paul
Julia.Paul@cox.net

The Greater Hartford chapter meets on the 2nd Sunday of each month, Sept. through June from 2-4 pm at Welles Turner Library, 2407 Main Street, Glastonbury. Bring copies of a poem to share if you want feedback on your work.

Manchester

Ollie Jones
wwpoetryclub@gmail.com
or ojpianist@yahoo.com

The Manchester chapter meets from 1-3 pm on the second Saturday of each month from September through June at The Arbors, 403 West Center Street in Manchester. Bring ten copies of a poem to share, although we do not give serious critiques of the poems. The chapter meets informally in July and August at the same location.

Middletown

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

The Middletown chapter meets at the Russell Library, 123 Broad Street at 6 pm on the last Wednesday of each month. Bring copies of a poem for reading and critique.

New Haven

Vic and Laura Altshul
lauraaltshul130@gmail.com

The New Haven chapter meets on the third Saturday of the month at the Friends Room at Miller Memorial Library, 2901 Dixwell Ave., Hamden, from 10:15 am-12:15 pm.

Pomfret

Christine Kalafus
CEKworks@charter.net

This chapter meets the second Monday of every month, excluding July and August. The meeting time is 7 pm and the location is Pomfret Town House, 17 Town House Road, Pomfret.

Southbury

Marion McGauhy
860-354-2157
Mcgauhy@aol.com

The Southbury Chapter meets on the fourth Sunday of the month at 2 pm. Meetings are held at the Southbury Public Library, 100 Poverty Road. New and prospective members should contact Marion for summer meeting schedule times as the library's hours change during the summer.

Wilton

Ray Rauth
Rayrauth@optonline.net

This group meets every third Saturday from 2 to 4 pm in the Wilton Library, 137 Old Ridgefield Road. Members bring in copies of poems to distribute to all of the attendees. The poems should be no more than 40 lines.

Presidents' Message

*"...and then, I have nature and art and poetry,
and if that is not enough, what is enough?"*

—Vincent van Gogh

Once again autumn is upon us, and as the leaves begin changing color may we all appreciate the beauty around us. In this current climate we realize there is much to inspire our writing. Indeed, poets *are* the true historians.

Our CPS Executive Board is expanding, as we welcome two new Board Members – David Cundy and Patti Fusco. The Board is an amazing combination of talents who keep our organization running and going strong! Thanks to all our Board Members for their dedication, their time and their selflessness in ensuring that CPS is one of the most stellar poetry societies in the nation:

Tony Fusco, Co-President, Web Master
Pat Mottola, Co-President
Victor Altshul, Vice-President; Program Director
Christine Beck, Secretary; POP Coordinator;
Outreach
Mark Sheridan, Treasurer; Outreach
Ginny Connors, CRR Editor, Newsletter Editor
Joan Hofmann, Contest Chairperson
Patti Fusco, Membership Chairperson
David Cundy, Publicity Chairperson
Julia Paul: Member at Large

Our POPS (Poets on Poetry) programs continue to expand. Our membership is now over 200 strong and growing! Your dues keep poetry alive and thriving in Connecticut and beyond. Our *Connecticut River Review* continues to garner national recognition. Members will be receiving their copies this month.

CPS has chapters in New Haven, Danbury, Middletown, Farmington Valley, Greater

Hartford, Manchester, Southbury, Pomfret, and Wilton.

Stay tuned for information about our Holiday Party (date TBD). And above all, keep reading, keep writing, keep inspiring.

—Co-Presidents Tony Fusco and Pat Mottola

CPS Well-Represented Among Winners in NFSPS Annual Contests

Many CPS members earned recognition in the poetry contests sponsored annually by the National Federation of State Poetry Societies. These contests receive entries from all over the country.

Gwen Gunn earned first prize in two contests: the Winners' Circle Award and the Alabama State Poetry Society Award. She also received an honorable mention in another contest.

CPS Co-President Tony Fusco earned first prize in the Nevada Poetry Society contest and took home honorable mentions in two other contests.

James Mele earned 2nd prize in the Columbine Poets of Colorado Award.

Laura Altshul earned 3rd prize in the Utah State Poetry contest.

Elaine Zimmerman earned honorable mention in four separate contests, while Pegi Deitz Shea earned honorable mentions in two contests.

Well done! These contests are worth entering. It's hoped that we continue to make a good showing when awards are made in the future.

Poet in the Spotlight: Rennie McQuilkin

Rennie McQuilkin served as Poet Laureate of Connecticut from 2015-2018. He grew up in Rochester, New York and earned degrees from Princeton and Columbia Universities. After teaching English at Phillips Academy in Andover, Massachusetts and at Miss Porter's School in Farmington, Connecticut, he co-founded the Sunken Garden Poetry Festival, which he directed for nine years. His poetry has appeared in such prestigious journals as *Poetry*, *The Atlantic*, *The American Scholar*, and *The Yale Review*, among others, and he's published several poetry collections. Among his awards are fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Connecticut Commission on the Arts, the Connecticut Center for the Book's Lifetime Achievement Award, and its 2010 poetry award under the aegis of the Library of Congress. He also has helped many other poets bring their work to a wider audience through his small press, Antrim House Books. With Sarah, his wife of almost 60 years, McQuilkin recently moved from Simsbury to Seabury retirement community in Bloomfield.

McQuilkin grew up in a musical family, but his talents and interests leaned more toward poetry, which carries a music of its own. During his student years, he loved the poetry of Keats and Dickinson, but it wasn't until he was a teacher at Phillips Academy that he fell into the habit of regularly writing poetry. He responded to the same writing assignments he gave his students, and he's been writing ever since. Later, his life on a small farm in Simsbury inspired much of his writing. Coping with cancer and a move to Seabury retirement community have influenced recent poems. McQuilkin says, "As the world has grown



increasingly precious, I have been writing a poem a day."

He is not an admirer of inscrutability in poetry; rather, he admires clarity, particularly if it leads to new levels of meaning during multiple readings. McQuilkin's poetry is often written in a conversational free verse format, incorporating elements of music such as rhythm, syncopation, internal rhyme and the like in his work.

A passion for nature is evident in McQuilkin's poetry, and he sees humanity as an integral part of that world. He tries to write poems that celebrate life, while avoiding easy optimism and unrealistic expectations. He also believes that "in a world under environmental and political siege, poets are more than ever important...a poem need not be overtly political to affect social change. Any praise of the natural world is an argument for environmental action; any praise of a generous heart is an argument for equality."

Poets on Poetry Program Expands Its Reach

Poets on Poetry, affectionately referred to as POP, is an outreach program of CPS. It began in 2015 at the Hartford Public Library with a presentation on the poet Pablo Neruda by Christine Beck, with Spanish assistance from Bessy Reyna. POP presenters provide a short biography of the poet under discussion followed by an interactive close reading of three to five poems written by the poet. Handouts of the poems are distributed to those present. Each year, we ask those present to nominate poets they would like to see discussed. POP program facilitators are Christine Beck and Mark Sheridan.

Now in its 5th year, POP has presented programs on over forty poets, including Mark Doty, Emily Dickinson, Edna St. Vincent Millay, Lucille Clifton, Richard Wilbur, William Blake, Walt Whitman, Rainer Maria Rilke, and Gertrude Stein. Moderators have included poets such as CPS members Mark Sheridan, Maria Sassi, Ginny Connors, Jim Finnegan, Luisa Caycedo-Kimura, and Julia Paul. Each POP has donated a book of the poet under consideration to the library hosting the program. The event is free and open to the public.

In 2018, POP expanded to the Southington Public Library. This past year, due to fundraising success by Mark Sheridan, as well as his outreach to many libraries

we are pleased to announce that the fall 2019 program will be presented in five libraries in Connecticut: Hartford, Southington, Avon, Middletown, and Wallingford. In addition to donating a book of poetry to each library, POP now raffles a free copy of the book to CPS members present.

POP is grateful for the support of its partner local libraries, particularly its flagship location, the Hartford Public Library. Our program closely aligns with the CPS mission to spread the love and appreciation of poetry. If you have not yet experienced POP, we welcome you. Our full schedule is available at CtPoetry.net and attached as the last page of this newsletter.

CPS welcomes Two New Board Members

CPS welcomes David Cundy to the post of Publicity Chair. He has had careers in graphic arts and academia, including teaching at Yale and at Fairfield University. David Cundy is the author of a children's book: ***Animals Spell Love***.

CPS is also fortunate to have Patti Fusco on board as the new membership chairperson. She has been contributing unofficially to the success of CPS for years!

News from Our Manchester Chapter

The Manchester chapter of CPS, the Wit & Wisdom Club, has a new chapbook in print. Called ***Poetry Corner: Wit & Wisdom Poetry Club***, it is published by Flying Horse Press of West Haven, Connecticut.

This chapter is welcoming new leadership. As of mid-September, Ollie Jones will take over as president and Kimball Hunt will serve as vice president.

Connecticut River Review, 2019 Available Now

All CPS members are entitled to a free copy of *Connecticut River Review*, a national poetry journal sponsored by this organization. It's published annually, and the 2019 edition contains poems by Connecticut poets, poets from around the country, and even a few from other countries! We receive a large number of submissions and have to turn away many fine poems, as there is just not room for all. Winning poems of two contests sponsored by CPS are included in the journal.



Members should have received their copies by now. More can be ordered through the CPS website or through amazon.com or the online Barnes & Noble site. CPS is proud to sponsor a literary journal that has gained prestige in poetry circles around the country.

New Publication by Pat O'Brien and Her Son

On Mother's Day of 2017, Richard Manders asked his mother, Pat O'Brien, if she'd like to collaborate with him in writing a book about their journey through adoption, separation,

Reunion, and the years that followed. *The Laughing Rabbit: A Mother, A Son, and the Ties that Bind* was written as a result, and is now in print. Richard, his mother, and other family members contributed chapters to the book, which narrates a story that started in 1962 with chaos and heartache, a story that turned a momentous corner in 1982 with a reunion, and a story that continues today, with love, healing and wonder.

CPS member Pat O'Brien, a resident of Old Saybrook, is the town's Poet Laureate, and a long-time activist for adoption reform, including for open records.

Praise for Dolores Hayden's New Poetry Collection

Red Hen Press has published *Exuberance*, a poetry collection by Dolores Hayden. The poems focus on the daredevil pilots, men and women, in the earliest years of American aviation.

Writing about this book, Katha Politt, well-known poet and columnist comments, " 'I have the air intoxication,' says Harriet Quimby, a journalist who was the first American woman to get a pilot's license and the first woman pilot to fly the English Channel. 'Only a flier knows what that means.' Hayden's lush and energetic poems give us earthbound readers, used to shuttling from airport to airport, a sense of what that intoxication must have felt like."

Doris Hayden is an award-winning poet and historian of American landscapes. She has earned many accolades for her work.

Guilford Poets Guild Welcomes Gemma Mathewson for September Reading

The Guilford Poets Guild welcomes poet Gemma Mathewson for its September Second Thursday poetry reading to be held on Thursday, September 12 from 6:30-8:30 pm at the Guilford Free Library.

Gemma is co-host of Pi (Poetry Institute) in New Haven, along with Mark McGuire-Schwartz. She co-produces Poetry of Immigrants, a public access TV show, with co-host Frank Crowley.

There will be an open mic. at this event.

Meriden Poet Society Hosts Meetings

Eddie Morales reports that the Meriden Poetry Society will meet on the first Saturday of each month from 9:30 to noon, and the third Wednesday of each month from 1:30 to 3:00. Meetings will take place at Meriden Public Library, located at 105 Miller St. in Meriden.

Laureates Share their Work in Ridgefield

On Friday, September 27 at 7:00 pm, several poets will share their poetry at the Ridgefield Library, 472 Main Street. The poets include Cortney Davis, Poet Laureate of Bethel; Cheryl Hale, Poet Laureate of Middletown, David K. Leff, Poet Laureate of Canton, and Laurel Peterson, Poet Laureate Emeritus of Norwalk.

Best Video/New Haven CPS Series

A reading by Kathleen McIntosh and Peter Ulisse will take place on Tuesday, September 24 at 7:00 pm. Best Video is to be found at 1842 Whitney Avenue in Hamden.

Poetry Read-In at Noah Webster House

Nancy Clarke Otter and J. I. Abbot are the featured poets for a poetry read-in at the Noah Webster House, 227 South Main Street, West Hartford. The event takes place on September 22 from 1:00 to 4:00. Audience members are encouraged to participate in the open mic. Light refreshments will be served. Maria Sassi is the hostess for this long-running series.

Riverwood Poetry Series to Host Connecticut's Poet Laureate

Riverwood Poetry Series' September event will feature Connecticut Poet Laureate Margaret Gibson. The poetry reading series meets at Real Art Ways, 56 Arbor Street in Hartford. Margaret Gibson's reading will take place on September 10th at 7:00 pm.

The Evolution of CPS

Here's a bit of history regarding our organization. You can find more on the CPS website.

Our group was founded in 1974, so it's been in existence for about 45 years. Its original name was the Connecticut State Poetry Association, and its first meeting was at the Hartford Public Library. Then meetings were held monthly at Asylum Hill Congregational Church in Hartford. In 1975, we became affiliated with the National Federation of State Poetry Societies. In the years since, we've grown from a group of about 15 members to an organization of over 200 poetry-lovers.

Poets to Present as Part of Program on Witchcraft and Persecution

Poems from their books focusing on witchcraft accusations will be part of a program sponsored by University of Connecticut-Hartford and hosted at the Hartford Public Library's Center for Contemporary Culture. This multidisciplinary program will take place on October 19th from 12:30 to 4:30 pm at the Hartford Public Library.

Pegi Deitz Shea will host this program, called ***Witchcraft in Connecticut: Past & Present Persecution of the Other***. CPS members Sherri Bedingfield and Ginny Lowe Connors will participate in a dramatic reading from their books ***The Clattering*** and ***Toward the Hanging Tree***. Antoinette Brim and Margaret Plaganis will participate in this part of the program also.

Keynote speaker is to be Cynthia Wolfe Boynton, author of ***Connecticut Witch Trials: The First Panic in the New World***.

Bedingfield and Connors will participate in a panel discussion including UConn History Professor and State Historian Walter Woodward, Lawrence Goodheart, UConn History Professor Emeritus, and Suzanne Wingrove, award-winning playwright and Wiccan ritual leader.

A discussion of Wiccan Samhain Ritual, offered by Suzanne Wingrove, will round out the program.

"Persecution of the Other" is a timely topic, and looking at it from several angles, including through a poetic rendering, can enhance our understanding of it.

Connecticut Poetry Award Winners Announced

The winners of Connecticut Poetry Award have been announced. Judge Vivian Shipley commented, "Picking the top poems was a very lengthy and difficult experience because the submissions were all carefully crafted, very strong and unique."

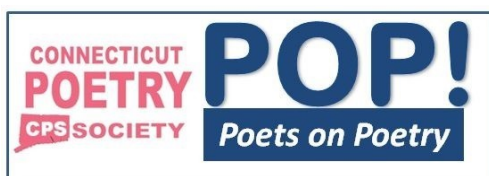
Michael Lepore won first place for his poem "Impaired."

Curt Curtin was awarded second prize for his poem "Girl of Darfur."

Carol Amato earned third prize for her poem "See-Saw, Margery Daw."

Honorable Mentions went to Pegi Shea and Gunilla Norris.

In other contest news, the Connecticut River Review Poetry Contest is accepting submissions through the end of September. Prizes of \$400, \$100, and \$50 are offered, along with publication in our journal, ***Connecticut River Review***. Leslie McGrath will serve as this year's judge for the contest. Check the CPS website for details on how to enter.



Poet

Moderator

Date

Hartford Public Library, 500 Main Street, Saturdays, 10AM-Noon – Classroom 139

John Keats	Mark Sheridan	Sep 28
Emanuel Carnevali	Dennis Barone	Oct 26
Jack Gilbert	Matthew Mercure	Nov 23

Southington Public Library, 255 Main Street, Mondays, 6:30-8:00PM

Rumi	Mark Sheridan	Oct 7
Jane Hirshfield	Ginny Connors	Nov 4
Pablo Neruda	Luisa Caycedo-Kimura	Dec 2

Avon Free Public Library, 281 Country Club Road, Thursdays, 2:00-4:00PM

Jane Hirshfield	Ginny Connors	Sep 12
William Carlos Williams	Mark Sheridan	Oct 10
Rita Dove	Maria Sassi	Nov 14
Jane Kenyon	Christine Beck	Dec 12

Middletown – Russell Library, 123 Broad Street, Thursdays, 6:30-8:00PM

Rumi	Mark Sheridan	Oct 17
Gwendolyn Brooks	Christine Beck	Nov 7

Wallingford Public Library, 200 North Main Street, Wednesdays, 6:30-8:00PM

Sylvia Plath	Mark Sheridan	Oct 16
Pablo Neruda	Luisa Caycedo-Kimura	Nov 13