

# VERSE WISCONSIN

FOUNDED BY LINDA ASCHBRENNER AS FREEVERSE 1998

**POETRY BY** PAULA D. ANDERSON ♦ STEPHEN ANDERSON ♦ LINDA ASCHBRENNER ♦ SHARON AUBERLE ♦ GERALD D. BAHR ♦ MARY JO BALISTRERI ♦ ELLEN WADE BEALS ♦ GUY BEINING ♦ LINDA BENNINGHOFF ♦ DAVID BLACKKEY ♦ JAN HASSELMAN BOSMAN ♦ JEFF BURT ♦ JOHN L. CAMPBELL ♦ KOSROF CHANTIKIAN ♦ KELLY CHERRY ♦ LENORE COBERLY ♦ CATHRYN COFELL ♦ BARBARA CRANFORD ♦ RACHEL DACUS ♦ KATHLEEN DALE ♦ ALICE D'ALESSIO ♦ BRUCE DETHLEFSEN ♦ CX DILLHUNT ♦ SUSAN ELBE ♦ SHERRY ELMER ♦ FABU ♦ WILLIAM FORD ♦ ED GALING ♦ KATHIE GIORGIO ♦ JESSICA GLEASON ♦ KAREN HALEY ♦ K.S. HARDY ♦ RONNIE HESS ♦ MARYANN HURTT ♦ ANN IVERSON ♦ JOAN WIESE JOHANNES, ♦ JUDY KOLOSSO ♦ ELLEN KORT ♦ LEN KRISAK ♦ JACKIE LANGETIEG ♦ KRISTIN LAUREL ♦ LINDA LEE ♦ JOHN LEHMAN ♦ MARY ELLEN LETARTE ♦ KRISTI LEY ♦ CHARLES LIEDL ♦ SANDRA LINDOW ♦ ELLARAINÉ LOCKIE ♦ BETH MATHISON ♦ MARY MERCIER ♦ PATTY MILER ♦ WILDA MORRIS ♦ RICHARD MOYER ♦ ELMÆ PASSINEAU ♦ SIMON PERCHIK ♦ NANCY PETULLA ♦ KATHLEEN PHILLIPS ♦ TARA POHLKOTTE ♦ ZARA RAAB ♦ FRAN RALL ♦ GEORGIA RESSMEYER ♦ HARLAN RICHARDS ♦ JENNA RINDO ♦ JAMES P. ROBERTS ♦ MARY RODRIGUEZ ♦ MEG ROTHSTEIN ♦ G. A. SCHEINOH ♦ ROBERT SCHULER ♦ KATHLEEN SERLEY ♦ MARGARET SHERMAN ♦ DANNY EARL SIMMONS ♦ THOMAS R. SMITH ♦ J. R. SOLONGHE ♦ ROBIN STUEBBE ♦ HEATHER SWAN ♦ MARILYN L. TAYLOR ♦ ELIZABETH TORNES ♦ CHARLES TRIMBERGER ♦ DIANE UNTERWEGER ♦ CAROLYN VARGO ♦ LISA VIHOS ♦ MOISÉS VILLAVICENCIO BARRAS ♦ PHYLLIS WALSH ♦ ED WERSTEIN ♦ MARILYN ZELKE-WINDAU ♦

If you are going to edit/publish poetry, ask yourself: *Am I a hermit? Could I be a hermit? Do I love to spend time alone with poetry?* It also helps if you can let other things go—like sleeping, or having a perfectly clean house at all times—or at any time.

—Linda Aschbrenner

Actually, that is all I'm looking for. Brevity. It has to hold up on its own, not just look short or fit the page. A certain tightness of expression and emotion that I don't think is really achieved in a longer poem.

—Phyllis Walsh

## FEATURES

POEMS FOR ELLEN KORT  
GUEST EDITED BY FABU

2013 COWFEATHER PRESS POETS—  
CATHRYN COFELL & MOISÉS VILLAVICENCIO BARRAS

SMALL PRESS POETRY PUBLISHING:  
I ASK MYSELF WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT—  
THE HISTORY OF FREE VERSE AND MARSH RIVER  
EDITIONS BY LINDA ASCHBRENNER

CONVERSATIONS WITH PHYLLIS WALSH & CX DILLHUNT

HUMBLE INHERITANCE: REFLECTIONS ON MY INTERNSHIP  
WITH PHYLLIS WALSH BY TRISH STACHELSKI



# Editors' Notes

Dear Sir: As two women volunteers who work long hours unofficially and for free outside of institutional support, either through funded grants or titled academia, we're very used to being listed "second," or even not at all, in people's assessments. As poets and scholars, we're used to being underestimated due to our gender, subject matter and approach. As someone who has no knowledge of our record, or our writing, and who probably hasn't bothered much to look it up anywhere or seek it out, why should it offend us if you underestimate and misunderstand our project, our attitude, our expertise and our possible contributions to any partnership with you? Our egos would have to be delicate indeed if that were to discourage us from the work we do.

Sarah wrote that to Wendy recently, to get it off her chest without exploding at the "sir" in question this time (another reason it's good to edit with another person). To which, Wendy responded, "uh-huh." As Sarah noted, our egos may not be delicate, but our boundaries have needed constant defending. Sadly, we could have written it multiple times over the last few years, at any which moment it would have been appropriate to some interaction or other we were involved in at the time. Maybe that's not unexpected. We've tried something here at VW admittedly unusual: a journal which crossed boundaries in all kinds of ways: print and online, intellectually rigorous and community based, small-town friendly with a wider scope. We know we're not "prestigious,"

and we publish each issue with just enough in the bank to publish the next, but those truths have given us the freedom to experiment. With this issue, we turn the focus to "Women and Publishing."

Appropriately, we celebrate two of the godmothers of Wisconsin poetry, our first state Laureate, Ellen Kort, and Phyllis Walsh, the founding editor of *Hummingbird*. We also explore, in the online issue, the question of women writers and this relatively new form of publishing known as blogging, and we open up a little more about our own experiences as writers, as publishers, and as women trying to balance these activities with our own lives in a collaborative essay, "EveryMom: How and Why to Support Wisconsin Writers." As we've said before, the opportunity to edit VW was a gift from that other figure fundamental to Wisconsin poets, Linda Aschbrenner; making VW a product of our own vision has been invaluable to both of us in our growth as writers, activists and thinkers.

So this seems an appropriate moment to officially announce our plans to exit gracefully from the stage in a few more issues. When we took on this adventure, we said from the outset to ourselves and our Advisory Board that we'd give it five years. As we have moved through the seasons and issues, that has remained our constant plan. We'll have a good run, we hope, through the end of 2014. And then we'll be...

done. Of course, we'll still publish poetry through Cowfeather, and we want to remain involved in multiple ways in the cultural life of the state. But *Verse Wisconsin*, as we've brought it into the world, will cease. And that's not a bad thing. Nature abhors a vacuum, after all, and we're confident other projects, and possibly other editors of this magazine, will emerge to give new voice and vision to Wisconsin's poets and those of you who have been part of the VW family from further abroad. We hope and expect new experiments and new definitions. We're looking forward to seeing what happens next.

In every issue, we have tried to remain true to our core beliefs: that great writing can emerge from any community, any place, any kitchen, any office, at any time, and we all need to stay open to hear it. That our connections and conversations should be nurtured and appreciated. And it needs to be stated that you all have backed us up in this and proven what we only theorized at first. We'll repeat this often over the remaining issues, but we can't say it enough: thank you to you all, for your poems, your articles and reviews. For your subscriptions and donations. For the ideas, the comments, the complaints and the enthusiasms you have shared with us. We hope you will continue to share all of these through the coming seasons. After all, we're not done yet—we have three more issues to go, and we're full of ideas!

VERSE WISCONSIN appears twice a year 2013-4. Please consider a subscription for your local library, high school, senior center, or other institution. Yes! I'd like to:

Subscribe (2 issues): (\$15 regular, or \$10 student) School: \_\_\_\_\_

Give a gift subscription (\$15)  Make a donation \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Get on the email list for news  Advertise  Review books

Volunteer (e.g., proofreading, distribution, publicity)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

For Subscription:  Renewal  New Subscription  Gift Subscription

(All subscriptions concurrent with calendar year.)

Mail to (checks payable to Verse Wisconsin):

VERSE WISCONSIN  
P. O. Box 620216  
Middleton, WI 53562-0216

Thanks to Alice D'Alessio, Ramona Davis, and CJ Muchhala for volunteer proofreading help. Lingered errors are, of course, the responsibility of VW's editors.

Contact us: [editors@versewisconsin.org](mailto:editors@versewisconsin.org)  
© Verse Wisconsin 2013

Printed by Thyse Printers, Inc., Oregon, WI.

## Co-Editors

Sarah Busse  
Wendy Vardaman

## Advisory Board

Linda Aschbrenner  
B. J. Best  
Cathryn Cofell  
Ron Czerwien  
Tom Erickson  
Fabu  
David Graham  
Angela Rydell  
Marilyn L. Taylor



## Books Received Sept 2012-Feb 2013

Publisher & author links available online

L. Ward Abel, *American Bruise*, Parallel Press, 2012  
Ray Bayley, *A Collection of Wisconsin Alphabetical Geographical Limericks*  
John F. Buckley, *Sky Sandwiches*, Anaphora Literary Press, 2012  
John F. Buckley & Martin Ott, *Poets' Guide to America*, Brooklyn Arts Press, 2012  
Gary C. Busha, *On the Dock*, Wolfson Publications, 2012  
Jamie Buehner, *dessert poems*, A Binge Press Book, 2011  
Kelly Cherry, *Vectors*, Parallel Press, 2012  
Rod Cockrum, *Immediacy*, Author House, 2010  
Joan Colby, *Dead Horses*, FutureCycle Press, 2012  
Christina Cook, *Lake Effect*, Finishing Line Press, 2012  
Lisa Dordal, *Commemoration*, Finishing Line Press, 2012

## Books Reviewed & Noted Online

Stephen Anderson, Chris Austin, Paul Enea, Elliot O. Lipchik and Steve Pump, *Portals and Piers*, Sunday Morning Press, 2012, by Kathleen Serley  
Tiel Aisha Ansari, *High Voltage Lines*, Barefoot Muse Press, 2012, by Susan Delaney Spear  
Mary Jo Balistreri, *gathering the harvest*, Bellowing Ark Press, 2012, by Charles Portolano  
Catherine Barnett, *The Game of Boxes*, Graywolf Press, 2012, by Linda Aschbrenner  
Ellen Wade Beals, Ed., *Solace, in So Many Words*, Weighed Words, 2011, by Kathleen Eull  
Mark Belair, *While We're Waiting*, Aldrich Press, 2013, by Tim McLafferty  
Gary C. Busha, *On the Dock*, Wolfson Publications, 2012, by Richard Swanson  
Lisa Cihlar, *The Insomniac's House*, dancing girl press, 2011, by Lou Roach  
Alice D'Alessio, *Conversations With Thoreau*, Parallel Press, 2012, Two Reviews: by Tim McLafferty, and by Jeanie Tomasko  
Nick Demske, *Skeetly Deetly Deet*, Strange Cage, 2012, by Charlie Rossiter  
Susan Elbe, *Where Good Swimmers Drown*, Concrete Wolf Poetry Chapbook Series, 2012, by Linda Aschbrenner  
John Elsberg and Eric Greinke, *All This Dark, 24 Tanka Sequences*, Cervená Barva Press, 2012, by Judy Swann  
Richard Fein, *The Required Accompanying Cover Letter*, Parallel Press, 2011, by Judy Swann  
Keith Gaustad, *High Art & Love Poems*, Broken Bird Press, 2012, by Freesia McKee  
Gail Fishman Gerwin, *Dear Kinfolk*, ChayaCairn Press, 2012, by Nancy Scott  
Deborah Hauser, *Ennui: From the Diagnostic and Statistical Field Guide of Feminine Disorders*, Finishing Line Press, 2011, by Richard Swanson  
Claire Hero, *Dollyland*, Tarpaulin Sky Press, 2012, by Lucia Cherciu  
Lowell Jaeger, *We*, Main Street Rag, 2010, by Ramona Davis  
Athena Kildegaard, *Cloves & Honey*, Nodin Press, 2011, by Kathleen Serley  
Mark Kraushaar, *The Uncertainty Principle* [Winner of the 2010 Anthony Hecht Poetry Prize], The Waywiser Press, 2011, by Judy Barisonzi  
Mike Lane, *They Can Keep the Cinderblock*, Exot Books, 2012, by Elmae Passineau  
Micah Ling, *Settlement*, Sunnyside, 2012, by Lou Roach  
Diana Randolph, *Beacons of the Earth and Sky*, Savage Press, 2012, by Hope McLeod  
Jo Sarzotti, *Mother Desert*, Graywolf Press, 2012, by Linda Aschbrenner  
J.D. Smith, *Labor Day at Venice Beach*, Cherry Grove Collections, 2012, by Carmen Germain  
Chuck Stelton, *The Platformist*, The Cultural Society Brooklyn 2012, by Paula Anderson  
Alison Stine, *Wait* [Winner of The Brittingham Prize in Poetry], UW Press, 2011, by Susan Delaney Spear  
Alison Stone, *From the Fool to the World*, Parallel Press, 2012, by Tim McLafferty  
Bruce Taylor, *The Longest You've Lived Anywhere, Poems New and Selected*, 2013, by Adam Halbur  
Richard Taylor, *Fading Into Bolivia*, Accents Publishing, 2011, by Judy Barisonzi  
Lisa Vihos, *The Accidental Present*, Finishing Line Press, 2012, by Tim McLafferty  
George Young, *Bird of Paradise*, Parallel Press, 2011, by Richard Swanson  
Timothy Young, *The Mississippi Book of the Dead*, Parallel Press, 2011, by John Oliski  
& micro-reviews of 9 micro books, by Wendy Vardaman

Susan Elbe, *Where Good Swimmers Drown*, Concrete Wolf Poetry Chapbook Series, 2012  
John Elsberg and Eric Greinke, *All This Dark, 24 Tanka Sequences*, Cervená Barva Press, 2012  
Hugh Fox and Eric Greinke, *Beyond Our Control, Two Collaborative Poems*, Presa Press, 2012  
Louisa Loveridge Gallas, *Rescue the Good Stuff*, Zarigüeya Press, 2012  
Michael Kriesel, *Whale of Stars*, Sunnyside, 2013  
Janet Leahy, *Not My Mother's Classroom*, Poetry People Press, 2012  
Gerald Locklin, *From a Male Perspective*, Presa Press, 2012  
Peter Ludwin, *Rumors of Fallible Gods*, Presa Press, 2012  
Glenna Luschei, *Sprouts*, Presa Press, 2012  
Richard Merelman, *The Imaginary Baritone*, Fireweed Press, 2012  
B.Z. Niditch, *Captive Cities*, Presa Press, 2012  
Kyle Potvin, *Sound Travels on Water*, Finishing Line Press, 2012  
Diana Randolph, *Beacons of the Earth and Sky*, Savage Press, 2012  
Steven Sher, *Grazing on Stars*, Presa Press, 2012  
J.D. Smith, *Labor Day at Venice Beach*, Cherry Grove Collections, 2012  
t. kilgore splake, *coming home*, Presa Press, 2012  
Jeanine Stevens, *Women in Cafés*, Finishing Line Press, 2012  
Alison Stone, *From the Fool to the World*, Parallel Press, 2012  
Bruce Taylor, *The Longest You've Lived Anywhere, Poems New and Selected*, 2013  
Jeanie Tomasko, *if i confess before 5:00*, Right Hand Pointing [digital chapbook], 2012  
A.D. Winans, *Wind on His Wings*, Presa Press, 2012  
Wanita Zumbunnen, *All Mortals Shall Dream Dreams*, Finishing Line Press, 2012

Submission guidelines can be found at [versewisconsin.org](http://versewisconsin.org). Please send us a review copy of your recently published book or chapbook! Join us on Facebook for announcements & news.

## MISSION STATEMENT

Verse Wisconsin publishes poetry and serves the community of poets in Wisconsin and beyond. In fulfilling our mission we:

- showcase the excellence and diversity of poetry rooted in or related to Wisconsin
- connect Wisconsin's poets to each other and to the larger literary world
- foster critical conversations about poetry
- build and invigorate the audience for poetry

## Books Received May-August 2012

Publisher & author links available online

Tiel Aisha Ansari, *High Voltage Lines*, Barefoot Muse Press, 2012  
Charles Bane, Jr., *The Chapbook*, Curbside Splendor, 2011  
Catherine Barnett, *The Game of Boxes*, Graywolf Press, 2012  
Ron Carlson, *Room Service*, Red Hen Press, 2012  
Robert Cooperman, *The Lily of the West*, Wind Publications, 2012  
Robert Cooperman, *Little Timothy in Heaven*, March Street Press, 2011  
Paola Corso, *Once I Was Told the Air Was Not For Breathing*, Parallel Press, 2012  
Alice D'Alessio, *Conversations With Thoreau*, Parallel Press, 2012  
Nick Demske, *Skeetly Deetly Deet*, Strange Cage, 2012  
Franki Elliott, *Piano Rats*, Curbside Splendor, 2011  
Chris Emery, *The Departure*, Salt, 2012  
Nausheen Eusuf, *What Remains*, Longleaf Press, 2011  
Dana Gioia, *Pity the Beautiful*, Graywolf Press, 2012  
Albert Goldbarth, *Everyday People*, Graywolf Press, 2012  
Nathalie Handal, *Poet in Andalucia*, University of Pittsburgh, 2012  
George Held, *After Shakespeare: Selected Sonnets*, Cervená Barva Press, 2011  
Karla Huston & Cathryn Cofell, *Split Personality*, Sunnyside, 2012  
David W. Landrum, *The Impossibility of Epithalamia*, White Violet Press, 2011

W. F. Lantry, *The Structure of Desire*, Little Red Tree Publishing, 2012  
Bradley Lastname, *Insane in the Quatrain*, The Press of the 3rd Mind, 2011  
Carol Levin, *Stunned by the Velocity*, Pecan Grove Press, 2012  
Micah Ling, *Settlement*, Sunnyside, 2012  
Leslie Adrienne Miller, *Y*, Graywolf Press, 2012  
Tom Montag, *That Woman*, Red Kite Press, 2012  
James Pollock, *Sailing to Babylon*, Able Muse Press, 2012  
D. A. Powell, *Useless Landscape, or A Guide for Boys*, Graywolf Press, 2012  
Jo Sarzotti, *Mother Desert*, Graywolf Press, 2012  
Noel Sloboda, *Circle Straight Back*, Cervená Barva Press, 2012  
Cynthia Spencer, *In What Sequence Will My Parts Exit*, Plumberies Press, 2011  
Chelsea Tadeyeske, *Heeldragger*, Plumberies Press, 2012  
Jennifer Tamayo, *Red Missed Aches*, Switchback Books, 2011  
Lisa Vihos, *The Accidental Present*, Finishing Line Press, 2012  
Liu Xiaobo, *June Fourth Elegies* (trans. Jeffrey Young), Graywolf Press, 2012  
Kevin Young, *The Grey Album: On the Blackness of Blackness*, Graywolf Press, 2012  
Saadi Youssef, *Nostalgia, My Enemy* (trans. Sinan Antoon and Peter Money), Graywolf Press, 2012

THANKS TO THESE DONORS!

UP TO \$100  
MARY JO BALISTRERI  
BJ BEST  
JUDY KOLOSSO  
MARY MERCIER  
CJ MUCHHALA  
KATHLEEN PHILLIPS  
MARY PRESTON  
ROB POCKAT  
CHARLES RIES  
LOU ROACH  
TIM WALSH

\$100-499  
ANONYMOUS  
ROBIN CHAPMAN  
RON LEWIS  
RICHARD ROE  
MARY WEHNER

\$500+  
WFOP

## Advertise

(Single Issue Rates)  
Business card \$35  
1/4 page \$75  
1/2 page \$125  
Full page \$200



# ELLEN KORT

## FIRST WISCONSIN POET LAUREATE

When you look at Ellen Kort's extensive biography, you read about an accomplished poet who has shared her work worldwide. Her bio is the mere bones of Ellen, and to know her really is to experience the warm flesh of her poetry. Ellen Kort is truly loved by all of us who have written these poems of tribute. We appreciate our kind meetings, her life affirming words and steadfast encouragement to continue with poetry. I thank the Editors of *Verse Wisconsin* for the opportunity to return to Ellen a little bit of the honor that she has always shown me and my work. —Fabu

*We're pleased to include two previously unpublished poems by Ellen Kort in this issue. Poems for Ellen Kort start to the right and appear on pages 5-15.*

### The Long Continuous Line

*When eating fruit, think of the person who planted the tree.—  
Vietnamese Proverb*

When I was nine my grandpa gave me an apple tree  
in his orchard *This one is yours* he said  
*It breathes the same air as you and me Every time  
you touch a tree you become part of the story of the earth*  
I didn't know what it meant to own a tree  
There was something overwhelming about a gift  
that belonged to the earth but I loved that tree  
and the past into which it has gone The nurturing  
fragrance of apple blossoms bees wild with delight  
my touch-and-know of branches blessed by wind  
and rain moon and sun My tree My very own tree  
giving its fruit without me even asking Grandpa  
and me sitting in the grass leaning against my tree  
listening to the rustling murmur of leaves watching  
a flock of geese measuring the sky distant sounds  
that could be words I loved the quiet unfolding  
between us each of us taking a bite into the sweet  
sacrament of an apple its tight red skin  
hugging a generous white heart and tucked inside  
a little star-house of seeds The only smell better than  
those first white blossoms was the autumn tumble  
of windfalls the warm smell of pie baking  
in grandma's oven and applesauce spiced with cinnamon  
I knew that tree the whole taste of it and all of its  
luminous gifts like seeds in my pocket So much gets  
lost in the echoes and loneliness of memory  
our hunger for roots our need for steadiness the promise  
of tomorrow Even now when I hold the round red  
universe of an apple in the palm of my hand I can still  
lean against that apple tree and the man who planted it

—ELLEN KORT, APPLETON, WI

### A Poem About Ellen Kort

Gentleness floats in circles  
around her spirit.  
Kindness wets her mouth  
to comfort, yet challenge  
with words.

Ellen saw me and smiled  
shared her poetry about  
our Wisconsin.  
I have loved her from then  
until now.

—FABU, MADISON, WI

### The Stream of Life

*To be great, art has to point somewhere.—Anne Lamott*

Point and shoot is what I told my sons  
when they were little Lift the lid  
and they did circling it in rhythmic yellow  
One floated a toy plastic boat in the toilet ocean  
a perfect aim could make it spin One tried  
writing his name on the wall stopping  
and starting in a valiant attempt to dot the I  
I caught them peeing yellow rivers in their sandbox  
watering my flowers the oak tree in the backyard

My Uncle Pete said some of the best conversations  
he ever had some of the best business deals  
he ever made took place while standing in front  
of a urinal He liked the simple sense of truth  
the zipping up the closure the handshake

I dressed as a man once for a Halloween party  
Trench coat hat and shoes from Goodwill  
a Richard Nixon mask and one cut-off leg of pantyhose  
stuffed and sewed to the front of a pair of trousers  
After the party we went to a bar and my friends  
dared me to go into the men's restroom I took the dare  
I pictured all the men I've ever known standing  
in front of those urinals Mr. Success and his perfect aim  
full stream ahead The jokester who talks non-stop  
I stayed long enough to read the carefully printed sign  
above the row of urinals

*Please do not splash  
The guy next to you might be barefoot*

—ELLEN KORT, APPLETON, WI

# POEMS FOR ELLEN KORT

GUEST EDITED BY FABU 

## If Death Were a Woman

I'd want her to come for me  
smelling of cinnamon wearing  
bright cotton purple maybe hot  
pink a red bandana in her hair  
She'd bring good coffee papaya juice  
bouquet of sea grass saltine crackers  
and a lottery ticket We'd dip  
our fingers into moist pouches  
of lady's slippers crouch down to see  
how cabbages feel when wind bumps  
against them in the garden  
We'd walk through Martin's woods

find the old house its crumbling  
foundation strung with honeysuckle  
and in the front yard a surprise  
jonquils turning the air yellow  
glistening and ripe still blooming  
for a gardener long gone We'd head  
for the beach wearing strings of shells  
around our left ankles laugh

at their ticking sounds the measured  
beat that comes with dancing  
on hard-packed sand the applause  
of ocean and gulls She'd play  
ocarina songs to a moon almost full  
and I'd sing off-key We'd glide  
and swoop become confetti of leaf fall  
all wings floating on small whirlwinds  
never once dreading the heart  
silenced drop And when it was time  
she would not bathe me Instead  
we'd scrub the porch pour leftover  
water on flowers stand a long time  
in sun and silence then holding hands  
we'd pose for pictures in the last light

from *If Death Were a Woman* by Ellen Kort, (1994)

**Ellen Kort** served as Wisconsin's first Poet Laureate from 2000-2004. The author of 11 books and 8 collections of poetry, Ellen's work has been featured in a variety of anthologies and incorporated architecturally in downtown Milwaukee's Midwest Express Center, the Green Bay Botanical Gardens and the Fox River Mall. Her poetry has been performed by the New York City Dance Theatre and recorded on audio by Ellen Burstyn, Ed Asner and Alfre Woodard. Ellen uses her skills as a poet and teacher to reach out to the community in numerous ways, teaching at local universities and schools and conducting writing workshops for at-risk teens, nurses, physicians and for survivors of cancer, AIDS and domestic abuse.

## By Green Lake

We talked late and long  
Ellen and I  
Our different stories  
Somehow fitted  
The poet's view  
Of all things connected  
Through life itself  
And the many turns  
We are  
Required to make--  
The way lake water  
Washes shores  
Beyond our sight.

—LENORE MCCOMAS COBERLY,  
MADISON, WI

## River Sanctuary

The discontent of a cold late winter  
Has already been more than enough.  
Now in the early morning, full of hope  
The people walk to the river.

We are a people split apart by gods  
Of a golden calf who teach exclusion.  
We are a people of longing, like Spring.  
Hurrying we carry our dreams to the river.

Ice unclenching itself floats apart  
While geese, like trumpeters,  
Honk "everything is possible."  
The river opens changing as it flows.

—NANCY PETULLA, MERRILL, WI

until at last, we can embrace our own quest;  
begin to trust ourselves;  
tentatively reach  
for a star.

—LINDA LEE, EAGLE, WI

*I discovered Ellen Kort's poetry in a rest stop in Door County and bought the chapbook, If Death Were a Woman. I started classes with Ellen at the School of the Arts in Rhinelander, Wisconsin, the year she became Wisconsin's first Poet Laureate. I value Ellen's gifts as a teacher and a friend. She has been instrumental in helping me achieve my "Impossible Dreams."*

## To Ellen

Owl woman  
you were wise  
you knew my words  
before I spoke  
pronounced them  
song  
set me on the path  
to singing

—KAREN HALEY,  
WAUWATOSA, WI

## Impossible Dreams

This tiny Don Quixote boldly  
strides forth, wielding a  
crumpled sword of startling  
words and jeweled images.  
We are compelled to follow.

Courage unwavering,  
she tilts at windmills...  
ignorance, doubt, fear.  
Vision clear, she moves on,  
slashes new paths.

Like Sancho and Dulcinea,  
we trail behind, fearful,  
wanting so much to believe...  
This persistent knight  
gently guides us onward,

## Red Chemo Bear

The first one was supposed to be small  
the rotten red raspberry nano briar bear  
pushing his way  
through the open door of my blood  
crawling through the mossy quagmires  
of intestines, seeking indiscriminately for game,  
anything that moves or grows,  
growling through my body,  
killing willy-nilly,  
stomach lining gobbling, hair follicle twanging,  
leaving me reeling from an assault  
I am powerless to stop.  
The circus-peanut-candy-pink chemo nurse  
smiles sweet, complicity, Beauty and the Beast.  
and all I can think is, "Fucked!"

—SANDRA LINDOW, MENOMONIE, WI

## The Brown Box

By hefting the box and the five pound bag of flour,  
I estimated that the box weighs over four pounds.  
Heaven knows it cost enough to be mailed to us...  
\$16.45, registered mail.  
It won't do for a bookend or a leveler for an  
Uneven table.  
And it's too precious just to empty in the garden,  
Even if we used the fenced one where the tulips live.  
So I can put it back in the drawer along with  
The proclamation of Jennie Mae Rall Day  
In Palm Springs, California.  
Keeping all the bits and pieces together.  
Waiting, still, for the ashes to be scattered  
Somewhere, sometime.  
And it seems a little fitting to see that box  
Still in the place where she last lived  
With her pictures and memories.  
Only the bed is gone. Just her sketches  
Which her Mother saved and framed so long ago.  
Happy Mother's Day, Dear  
I vacuumed your room today and watered the plants.

—FRAN RALL, MADISON, WI

## The Belonging Song

(for Ellen Kort)

choose the longest leg bone of the poet  
place the bone in the clearing on the stump  
wet it with your tears    bleach it in the sun  
for years let mice chew an octave of holes  
the wind will whistle through its hollowness  
wind from the west makes the saddest music  
the east wind plays the laughter of children  
hide the bone inside your pocket closest  
to your heart    feel it vibrate hum and sing  
the oldest songs    the song of acceptance  
tune of inclusion    song of belonging  
there is no metaphor    the poet's bone  
tells you forever you're no place but home  
you're no place but home    you're no place but home

—BRUCE DETHLEFSEN, WESTFIELD, WI

## Advice for the Intrepid

(after Ellen Kort's "Advice to Beginners")

"Nibble on everything."  
Take up flying    or skydiving    or skim the trees in a hot air balloon  
Trail your fingers in cool water    tickling fish    from an old rowboat  
Inscribe tombstones with pithy epitaphs  
Weave corn silk    and long-stemmed roses    into garlands

Survey the world    from the top of a Ferris wheel  
Enfold a child in a bear hug  
Clamber up a slide    before gliding down it  
Scatter bath bubbles    from a rooftop

Heap strawberries, sweet peas    and daisies    on Grandma's porch  
Barter a poem for a fiddler's tune  
Capture hail    and sculpt a snowman  
Crush grapes for wine    under a scumbled sky

Steal the wind    and make it sigh you to sleep  
Mask a stone with feathers and moss  
Taste watermelon    spitting black seeds    chin dripping stickiness  
Defy time    and if necessary    bargain with the devil

—ELMAE PASSINEAU, WAUSAU, WI

## Fill the Cup

She said, "Spill and share.  
We all have stories  
that want to be told.  
What are yours?"

She said, "Tweak and send."  
Just a little editing,  
a few word changes."

Ellen Kort.

She is why I am published.  
She is why someone calls me  
"poet."

It had been enough  
until her beckoning:  
a lifetime of words,  
kept in notebooks,  
on ruled paper  
three ring binders,  
cardboard separated,  
from high school,  
from college,  
from marriage,  
births of three daughters,  
career, holidays,  
caregiving, death,  
all in a drawer,  
shut from others' eyes.

"You can. You have.  
You should. You will."

She filled my cup,  
encouraged me to  
refill it with words,  
with emotion,  
with stories,  
with life, to share.

—MARILYN ZELKE-WINDAU,  
SHEBOYGAN FALLS, WI  
*visit VW Online for audio by this author*

## Grandfather's Summer Evening

*For Ellen Kort*

Ears of corn listen  
winds rattling  
leaves surrounding  
corn silk wave  
at sundowns of glistening  
workhorses galloping  
to join their shadows' muffled  
thunder mist blankets  
quieted wind with silhouettes  
sheltering livestock awaiting  
light of day.

—CHARLES TRIMBERGER,  
MILWAUKEE, WI

## We miss her

She is not here  
but her spirit is everywhere  
and in the candle flame

we see a turtle  
she is there and even  
under the full moon  
so cold and cruel  
she is there

she is in the leaves of the aspen  
who sing in the wind  
in the voices of the poets listen  
she is not far away

—CAROLYN VARGO, MILWAUKEE, WI

*Every year poets would race to send in their registration to Rhinelander School of the Arts because Ellen's class would fill up so early. She started almost every class by lighting a candle. Her classes are a spiritual experience. Then one year, she could not be there because of cancer. I wrote this in my yoga class that year.*

## Rose Sacramento

The white wooden trellis bowed  
under their red weight in late May.

My mother rose when it was not yet  
blistering hot to cut the clusters,

bind them, fill a dozen coffee cans  
saved all winter, covered with tinfoil.

My father drove, Mother and I always  
sitting in silence through drought-ravaged

Kansas to the cemeteries of Great Bend,  
Hutchinson, Stafford where

one or two cans, topped off with warm  
water from the lone tap in brown buffalo grass,

were screwed into the hard, cracked clay  
next to each gray stone chiseled with a family name.

I found the roses' scent sickening,  
overripe in the stifling, fenced

enclosures of loss. I would not shed  
tears for my sister for many years.

I had never known grandparents.  
As I fidgeted and played on stone lambs,

my mother stood silent before her best  
offering, pricked fingers wrapped in Band-Aids.

As our car crunched away, I never looked back  
but saw the roses already opening

their hidden parts, easy victims,  
to the harsh wind. They would never

hold together long, readily offering up  
their bared hips, their untethered ghosts.

True sacraments are hard to come by.

I should have paid better attention.

—KATHLEEN DALE, MILWAUKEE, WI  
*visit VW Online for video by this author*  
"Rose Sacramento" connects with Ellen Kort's work with  
grief/therapy groups.

## The Morning After Dying, Ellen Calls Me

She calls me one morning and  
tells me she died.  
For a few minutes, she says.  
She told the nurse, "It's time  
for me to go."

And she did.

Gone. Just like that.  
Syllables, vowels, consonants  
a new lyric in a single flat line.

She didn't see lady's slippers or jonquils  
or sea grass or cabbages  
or the sweet of honeysuckle vines.

But she did see Heaven.

On the phone, she says,  
"I came back. The nurse told me to  
and I did."

And then she tells me a joke  
about a man who drops his drawers  
in a nursing home.

You need to laugh every day, she says.  
Come on, she says.  
And I do.

She reads a poem about waving  
goodbye to a nurse and then  
coming back at her call. She calls it  
The Poem I Never Wanted to Write.

I want to ask her what Heaven was like.  
If her poems were carved in the gates.  
If she grew wings and flew like confetti.  
I want to ask her if Death was a Woman.

When she writes the next poem  
she never wanted to write, I will  
stand by her side on a porch.  
Our feet laureled with leaves  
and with seasons.

Our ankles will tick, her left and my right,  
with sea shells found under the last  
low-hanging full moon.  
Our fingers thick with salt and  
harvest as we string them.

On that porch, in the fall, we will stand a long time,  
in sun and in silence, holding hands.  
We will pose for pictures in that last light.

She tells me to laugh every day.

Ellen will see Heaven.  
And I will say,

Come back.

—KATHIE GIORGIO, WAUKESHA, WI

## Walk With Me

*All the truth we could ever know  
can come on a day like this.* —Ellen Kort

walk with me tonight  
and I will feed you  
rain-kissed raspberries  
show you the tracks  
of an elegant fox  
and how last light falls  
through the feathers  
of white birds

tell me what you never said before  
how sometimes you're scared  
but till now you never stopped  
long enough to feel it

hold onto me  
like it was the first  
and the last time  
while night spreads  
her star-spun blanket  
over our trembling bodies

—SHARON AUBERLE, SISTER BAY, WI

## Remember Me

*On the way to my very first poetry workshop, a Red-Tailed  
Hawk flew across my windshield. Ellen Kort taught me  
everything is poetry.*

the morning you died  
a red tail scudded past my windshield  
its eyes sunk into my heart  
like talons not wanting to let go  
but knew what it had to do  
and burst into brighter light

this morning I ran on hills  
you loved like I love  
you came back  
screeching over my head  
wings spiraling out of vision

*Remember Me, Remember Me*

—MARYANN HURTT, ELKHART LAKE, WI



## Potatoes Make Everything Possible

—after Ellen Kort's poem "There Is Something Ancient Here"

Antoine-Augustin Parmentier would have liked that line, Ellen, had you too been born and raised in 18th century France. Had you shared a garden plot surely you would have recited the poem to him, about cutting out old eyes, birthing mother poems from plain earth.

I peel back the curtain for a moment and see you both standing on common ground, muck up to your knees. He no crackpot pharmacist, you no half-baked writer, not mincing words about famine, the notion that potatoes are just for the hogs. Together you dice and slice potatoes, concoct classics like potage parmentier and pommes Ellen. Together, you carry potato blossoms to the King. And flower girl that you are, Ellen, you wear one in your hair. Ben Franklin at court falls for you, as does Lavoisier, eyeing your slim ankle peeking out from the bottom of your skirt. But it's Parmentier you favor, his long intelligent nose, the way his eyes fairly cross when he holds his plants to the light. He draws sketches at his desk while at yours you scratch away with a feather pen.

I bring your poem back from that past in wonder. Traveler through the land of smoke and mirrors, woman of wild rice country, pipe dreamer, you speak of the hand, Ellen, the heart that beats in it. Amazing to me how sure you are that every palm is worthy of being opened, melodies of the heart nurtured, sustained, fed.

—RONNIE HESS, MADISON, WI

visit [VW Online](#) for more work by this author

My father died and I struggled  
to write of him. Ellen told me  
the poem would come.  
One night I wrote:

The man  
who taught me  
the language  
of fireflies  
left quietly,  
encoding  
his final goodbyes  
in flickering  
dots and  
dashes.

I ran down the dark path to her room  
and knocked on the door. "I knew  
you could do it" she said.

Thank you Ellen.

—KATHLEEN PHILLIPS, MILWAUKEE, WI  
*A poem first written at the Clearing in 2002.*

—JOAN WIESE JOHANNES, PORT EDWARDS, WI

There once was a word magnet named Ellen  
for poets and their hearts she was gellin'  
she walked everywhere  
pulled words from the air  
now we are poetica a'swellin.'

—PAULA D. ANDERSON, WALES, WI

## As I Enter Here

my mother's womb, full as the rich soil  
lay heavy with ripened crop

along her path leaves burning red,  
that match the birthing blood

bending, ebbing road and body  
rock her to a rhythm of her own

the boundary waters hurry past  
as her current brings forth life

the raven with its sharp, strong cry  
echoes my own deep drawing of first breath

...at last darkened hands that work the land,  
now work the outline of my face.

—TARA POHLKOTTE, APPLETON, WI

## Bloodline

*For Ellen Kort*

When I first found your poetry,  
dear cousin,  
it caught me by surprise  
to discover at this age  
another member of the family,  
to discover there had been an unknown  
aunt or uncle in my dad's family.

I admit it baffles me  
how for all those farm visits,  
all those Sundays with other cousins  
(none of whom knew of you either),  
baffles me how we experienced  
the same things, but separately;  
knew the same cows and horses,  
walked the same fields,  
gathered the same nuts,  
ate from the same apple trees,  
yet never met  
until I opened your books.

But each time I sit with your poetry,  
dear cousin,  
I am more convinced that we share  
the same blood, knew the same  
grandfather.

—ED WERSTEIN, MILWAUKEE, WI  
*visit VW Online for audio by this author*

## My Grandmother's Hands

Grandmother's hands, I remember  
fine lines etched back and forth  
from years of picking up babies and  
washing dishes and turning the rich dark earth  
beneath her gentle gaze  
Her hands in other women, I see  
those gone before us  
crafting words and holding babies and  
folding hands and working the rich dark earth  
where once  
there was only silence

—BETH MATHISON, BROOKFIELD, WI  
*visit VW Online for audio by this author*

## Ellen Kort

In my story you are the one  
whose words are a bridge,  
words crossing  
from your heart to mine.  
You are the one who said  
don't be afraid to remember,  
don't be afraid to write;  
the one who said  
stretch this way, stretch  
that way, try again.  
In my story you are the one  
who said yes and yes and yes.

—WILDA MORRIS, BOLINGBROKE, IL

## Before I Understood Metaphor

there was Ellen Kort, encouraging  
a class of would-be poets  
at Rhinelander School of the Arts.  
Before I understood rhyme  
and off-rhyme, line breaks

and endjambes, there was Ellen Kort,  
crossing my path, celebrating life  
and death, especially if she were a woman.  
Before I understood music and meter,  
Ellen fed fish at Alburys and walked  
on water. Before I valued words,

she omitted "the" but left room for adverbs  
like *simply*, *sometimes*, and *always*.  
Before I touched a human heart  
with my verse, she touched my soul  
and helped me to find my voice  
and my well-hidden poems.

—JAN HASSELMAN BOSMAN, WOODSTOCK, IL

## Ellen

world wide poet  
mother grandmother mentor  
survivor

—PATTY MILER, APPLETON, WI

## Molasses Cookies

When Grandma moved from the farm  
We no longer drove to the country every Sunday  
No more walks to the cow pasture before dinner  
No rope-swinging from bale to bale  
Up in the hayloft with the cows below us

She moved to a red brick two-story  
Across the street from St. Patrick's  
Happy to attend Mass every day and  
Welcome students from the Parochial school  
To sit beside her at the kitchen table  
Teaching them reading and phonics

My father would visit at least once a week  
Taking whoever wanted to go  
And that was usually all the girls  
Hardly stopping as we entered the kitchen  
where the cookies would be cooling

We'd rush to the living room to claim our spot  
Fighting over two mahogany rocking chairs  
Big enough to swallow two or three of us  
But only one was allowed  
Otherwise we'd fight and fidget

Eventually Grandma and Dad would join us  
With molasses cookies  
Big and round and thin  
And glasses of milk

We'd listen to the two of them  
Discuss family matters and argue politics  
"Oh, go on with ya!" she'd blush  
Laughing when he teased her

That narrow living room a cave of comfort  
On many an afternoon  
Eating molasses cookies, drinking milk  
Listening, laughing, and yes  
Admiring the regal white-haired beauty  
Who was my father's mother

—MARY RODRIGUEZ, MCFARLAND, WI

## The Way I See You

the tree has no wish to stir  
it is after all earth standing  
on part of itself

but the wind does move at its pleasure  
and will occasionally pass through  
touching the leaves and roots of the tree

this is how I see you  
the beginning of space  
where your song invents itself

as it rises through the sky  
first touching each finger  
then your eyes

and afterward  
every part of  
you

—KOSROF CHANTIKIAN, LARKSPUR, CA

## How Long the Night

*(From Ellen's "The Last Mile Flying")*

When she can no longer see the moon  
she rises from bed, pads into the living room

and picks up her fox flute, the one

she bought in Montana the same day  
she gave herself the new name—  
She with Sorrow in Her Heart.

She plays now, to the vanished moon  
the slender flute sad and plaintive.  
Her fingers cover and bare the holes;  
the melody changes from Prairie Land  
to Broken Bow, the low notes trembling  
making the flute feel alive in her hands.  
She named the flute, Fox in the Woods.

Dawn is arriving, so she will put away  
the flute and go about her morning ablutions.  
She treads heavily through life but this bit  
of connection helps her face another day.  
With the rising sun, her face becomes soft and waiting.

—JACKIE LANGETIEG, VERONA, WI

## Bookcase Treasures: Ellen Kort's Four 1994 Chapbooks

Four exquisite chapbooks  
plump with stunning poetry and evocative illustrations  
burst forth upon Wisconsin in 1994.

Seek these books.

Savor them—treasure, preserve, and protect them.  
Honor them. They're heritage, history, heart.  
They're the life of Ellen Kort.

*Poet:* Ellen Kort

*Illustrator:* Jeffrey Hargreaves

*Publisher:* Fox Print, Inc., Appleton, WI

*Size:* 5 1/8 by 7 1/4 inches

*Covers:* textured earth tone cardstock, French wrap

*Paper:* luxurious thick cream paper, pages folded over to provide  
a fitting canvas for each poem and illustration

*Pressrun:* 2,500 copies (each of the four)

*Titles:*

*If Death Were A Woman:* 6 poems, 17 pages

*Letter From McCarty's Farm:* 12 poems, 32 pages

*Notes From A Small Island:* 12 poems, 25 pages

*Uncle Jake:* 8 poems, 20 pages

In these books, see the world anew—hear wind, waves, trees.  
Learn the trajectory of the moon. Feel roots hugging bones. Watch  
fiddles being made, the delivery of spring lambs. Follow blue herons,  
geese, a turtle. Walk on water.

Gather up Ellen Kort's images: These four lines from "Wind":

A bird flies like  
a crooked stick is stopped  
for a moment the sky's  
dangling participle

Other images from her poems:

"September editing / dark purple trees plum by falling plum"

Geese as "hang gliders / chalk marks / the season's laundry /  
strung across sky"

"geese rowing the sky / in long shuddering strokes"

"Geese lift like fever / from the lake"

"see where the woodpile / is stitched together by spiders"

"Your hands / stained with sun"

Tomatoes "expand / like balloons / shine like /  
bright / lanterns / in the day's / half light"

"Bees hyphenated the air over the garden"

"mountains with cheekbones of stone"

"Nothing / I name could match the shiver of light /  
that peeled back dark skin of night"

Relish verbs, similes: From "Wind" in *Notes From A Small Island*:

Water rolls  
back on itself like a conch shell

then floats quietly like two  
middle letters of a word  
spreads sky all over the ground  
douses red fire from hibiscus  
spills seeds throws a palm branch  
against the shed

The books name our world—coffee, cabbages, pumpkins, peppers,  
pin cherries, raspberry jam, papaya juice, saltine crackers, lottery  
ticket, wild mint, lady-slippers, baby's breath, daisies, honeysuckle,  
jonquils, hibiscus, sea grass, chicory, alyssum, buttonwood,  
red bandanna, The Narrows, Corn Bay, Cat Island, island cat.

Names: Aunt Erma, Aunt May, Grandma Isobel, Uncle Laine,  
Uncle Harold, Uncle Joe, Uncle Jake, Grandpa. Granddaughters.  
My Father. Mama.

Savor the sounds of words strung together:

"applause / of ocean"  
"wind-tossed waves raged"  
"studies slant / of moonlight on slick rock"  
"early frost / unnerving the garden"  
"confetti of leaf fall"

Go ahead. Enter Ellen Kort's word-scapes of scents and colors,  
magic, secrets, confessions, family history, whimsy, truth, and  
everything you'd ever hope to find anywhere.

"If Death Were A Woman" closes life with "we'd pose for pictures  
in the last light." A surprise ending that's endearing and perfect.

—LINDA ASCHBRENNER, MARSHFIELD, WI

### Prairie Poem for Ellen

Prairie is always  
There she says, I know I grow  
Live along the edge—

—CX DILLHUNT, MADISON, WI



## Noon Walk at The Clearing

Objects in nature  
reach out.  
Good friends  
and lovers  
line my path.

I am married to stone.  
a fine flat slab  
warmed by the sun  
tread squarely upon  
feels whole  
caressing my arch  
and solid —  
The comfort of permanence.

The dirt trail shouts  
Good friend.  
Fragrant cedars  
cushion  
like wool perhaps  
a give and take  
deep layers  
there when I need it.

Moss.  
Like showy clumps of sponge  
it sits on rocks.  
Not so easy to depend on,  
I step lightly and test with my toes  
rock back and forth.  
Although unsteady, I smile.  
There is a time and place for moss,  
I decide.

In any path  
roots interrupt  
And in life too  
They jut.  
Unstable  
New acquaintances  
I fear injury.  
I choose to avoid roots.  
Step around  
too risky.

I crumble a handful of cedar,  
lift to my nose  
the smell of  
faint fern  
and nothing more,  
thinking back on days of incense and lessons  
learned.  
The heat of day robs me  
of true smell.  
Pregnant air  
swollen with heat and dust  
sits  
waiting for morning.

—ROBIN STUEBBE, NEW HOLSTEIN, WI

## Stone Heart

*for Ellen*

“Tell me,” the shaman says, about  
how you connect to this stone,”  
and I palm  
the translucent egg,  
marveling at the long work  
of the river’s grinding  
and the elemental shape...  
“But there is more,”  
she says, “inside.”  
Oiled by long caressing,  
it gleams faults, fissures  
and a wandering trauma of oxide  
along which my stone  
may someday split,  
expose its secrets.

—BARBARA CRANFORD, HANCOCK, WI

## For Ellen

*From “Notes From a Small Island”*

Your moon was a yellow fist  
fighting its way up through branches...  
mine was a narrow fingernail  
going down, sliding below the trees  
before I could seize  
its slender cusp.

But your moon shone bright enough  
for all of us—illuminating  
the dark paths, the slippery stumbles—  
quietly showing the way.  
We held our breath  
and tiptoed forward.

—ALICE D’ALESSIO, MADISON, WI

## A Poem For The New Poet

*(with thanks to Ellen Kort)*

And here we stand another generation  
each of us trying to engrain  
thick-tongued words with meaning.  
Each of us poignant though unrecognized,  
our fingers clacking memories into an unfeeling  
computer-box, all for the love of our written silence.

As this year calmly flashes by  
for Wisconsin let us scrawl let us  
trample our words down, not disheartened.  
Let us sacrifice our memories at least one more  
time. Just for today. Let us believe that  
our words really can breathe into you something different.

—JESSICA GLEASON, LAKE GENEVA, WI

## For Ellen

She came home  
 from a long way away  
 following a map  
 leading everywhere  
 and nowhere.  
 She found home  
 by firefly light,  
 the roots of trees,  
 the smell of lilacs.  
 She knew home  
 by the sound of its words  
 and the shuffle of its feet.  
 She stopped  
 and drank in  
 the air of home  
 and wrapped it  
 around her  
 like a long lost love.

—LISA VIHOS, SHEBOYGAN, WI

## Midwife to the Poets

*for Ellen Kort*

She doesn't fear the sweat of labor  
 doesn't shrink back  
 from blood staining her hands

She wipes the weary brow  
 her faithful mouth urging onward  
 encouragement always on her lips

She is ever ready  
 to catch the fragile newborn  
 to celebrate each precarious breath

She exults in the joy of creation  
 lifts each throbbing life  
 up to the expectant sky

A thousand poems' hearts beat—  
 a generation she delivered

—SHERRY ELMER, HILMER, WI

## In the Time of Daffodils

*for Ellen Kort*

Her open arms welcome pianist not poet  
 offer bear wisdom  
 and strength  
 honey light in her eyes

Up and down the poets' table she goes  
 searching for nuggets of imagination  
 unearthing mud-covered gems  
 Ellen cleans them off  
 looks for sparks

In the dark soil of my prose  
 she scratched and clawed  
 to find the one line of wafting spring  
 sung by a yellow wind  
 her hands filled with daffodils—a line of them  
 bright against the dark

And though I didn't want the poetry  
 she watered the seeds nursed the flowers  
 Little did I know my healing had begun  
 or that a morning with Ellen would change  
 my life forever

Ellen my first muse of poetry  
 harbinger of spring  
 sower of words  
 always a yellow daffodil

—MARY JO BALISTRERI, WAUKESHA, WI

## Note to Ellen

I smile when I think of you—born storyteller and poet—  
 who loves to stay up talking deep into the night.  
 You carry the loss of your son, Chris, the members  
 of your “Gruesome Foursome” writing group,  
 and others unknown to me, yet you are not above  
 a drag-out midnight pillow fight or a spontaneous  
 dance in the streets of your beloved Appleton.

Your wonderful creative talent distills stories  
 into poetry—a love of which you carry everywhere  
 you go and always. You have inspired thousands  
 of us—you were the first person, up at Green Lake  
 a dozen years ago, who said that what I wrote  
 was poetry, and you got me to believe that!

A lot of people write poetry, Ellen, but you are  
 poetry. I thank you for being who you are...

—JUDY KOLOSSO, SLINGER, WI

## Spilling

*after reading Ellen Kort*

### Ellen's Poems

Somehow she detains the words  
on their way to the page  
and breathes on them, giving  
them grace, and shows them  
how to dance— tentatively  
at first, but then, always,  
that unexpected leap  
that fills the soul  
of the reader  
until the world is  
re-invented, beside itself,  
taut with longing  
awash with love  
and better than before.

—MARILYN L. TAYLOR, MADISON, WI  
*visit VW Online for more work by this author*

October robbed this kettle pond  
Only the lone blue heron robed  
in slate, eye to throat to thigh, denies it  
She keeps her place, her  
beak a ready spear

Proud sandhill cranes  
who paraded babies round our basin  
June to September, are over it  
They winter in Arizona now  
what with the kids grown and gone

But someone still sleeps in those  
milkweed drops fat with floss  
feather seeds ready to roll  
from mummy bags, unzipped and  
spilled over this gray space

I sleep here, too, and with you  
We align like feathers until  
A girl in blue pajamas  
splits our bed at its seam, delighted  
at our tumble and One. Two. (Wish)

—MEG ROTHSTEIN, MIDDLETON, WI  
*I first read Ellen Kort when a teacher gave me a copy of  
the Wisconsin Poets' Calendar in high school. I found  
Kort again in my 20s in Sandra Martz's and other  
anthologies while shelving books at A Room of One's  
Own Bookstore. I've been enjoying Ellen Kort's poetry  
ever since.*

### Ways to Begin

*dedicated to Ellen Kort*

Write. Keep on writing. Put down  
everything. Teach yourself to lie  
outrageously. When you can't find  
the words, hum, fill in the blanks  
with colored pencils. Wear rose  
colored glasses, and stare up at trees.  
Hug an ancient pine. Make friends  
with the insect world, watch  
fly shadows creep across paper.  
Eat melted chocolate with a spoon.  
Lean back, observe how birds fly. Walk  
the magic forest alone, without fear. Stay  
up late to watch the northern lights,  
and tan in the rays of the full moon—  
there's time enough to sleep when we die.  
Get intimate with God and the Devil.  
Go fishing for diamonds. Soak in  
the sound of falling leaves, outswim  
the little fishes, sip the errant waves.  
Invite bees to drink your honeyed tea.  
Sleep with poems, devour their music  
when you dream. Run your fingers  
through the forest floor, stretch your mind  
like a rubber band. Outline the circumference  
of a mother's love, then map it out.  
Eat at dives and diners, listen closely  
to the conversation. Taste factotum,  
simulacrum, and let bygones be bygones.  
Resuscitate dead words, and catch notes  
swept alive in a gust of wind. Use them.

—ELIZABETH TORNES, LAC DU FLAMBEAU, WI

### Why You Write

*after Ellen Kort's "When You Write"*

because permanence scares you with its pen on  
paper pressure and indelible legible fonts Write to  
catalyst prayer vapor to solid words or to evaporate  
the irrational sludge and grit of bad days heavy sighs  
over too slow struggling students This is why you write  
to trap to praise to weed to frame the insignificant  
moments as if you can share such interior strain or light  
away the mildew speckled stains that take hold yellow and gray  
Write when you'd rather read and write when it's easier to sleep  
or sit trance-like in the blue glow of bad T.V. Take  
a tablet outside and write low where weeds spread roots and  
fire ants carry sweet crystals and crumbs to their queen  
Write with the pen pressed hard in your hand Write because  
thoughts rush manic and hot Write because the short  
days of winter leave you starved and blocked Write  
since the modern world conspires against  
such deliberateness

—JENNA RINDO, PICKETT, WI

## CATULLUS: *Carmina*, 46

Now spring brings everything that's palmy-mild.  
Again the pleasant Zephyr's hushed half-wind  
Has calmed the equinoctial skies once wild.  
Catullus, leave the Phrygian fields behind;  
The warm Nicaean farmlands, green and rich.  
Let's head for Asian towns. Spring gives the mind,  
The restless mind, that self-same wandering itch  
The feet feel too, to be where things are beckoning.  
Good friends, farewell: a sweet-sad final reckoning.  
For those who came together once from Rome,  
A hundred different byways carry home.

—TRANS. BY LEN KRISAK, NEWTON, MA

## I Sit In the Garden Where No One Goes

I sit in the garden where no one goes,  
except to go through as a short cut,

a way to avoid the longer way around.  
I want to sit here for as long as it takes

for the words *short cut* to die from neglect,  
or to find something altogether else to mean.

—J. R. SOLONCHE, BLOOMING GROVE, NY

## I Sit On the Piano Bench

I sit on the piano bench  
in the practice room.  
I want to see if I still regret  
not taking the piano lessons  
I had the opportunity  
to take as a child. I open  
the piano lid. I put  
all ten fingers on  
the keys and push down.  
The piano answers,  
its voice all dissonance, *Yes*.

—J. R. SOLONCHE, BLOOMING GROVE, NY

## War and Lunch

Lean words spread like soft cheese  
and ground ham on rye.

In short gasps we laugh, the sound saves  
this black May day. We are not versed for war.

Guns doffed by young and old kill  
old and young. No one knows the facts,

we are not told. Kin kills kin,  
some live with pork and beans.

War is sold as the way  
for peace. Do we know where peace is?

We meet for lunch, head to head  
strife we mix with bread, with beer.

John plays the mouth harp, we hear him  
blow taps: ... from the hills, from the lake,

the soup grows cold.

—MARY ELLEN LETARTE, LUNENBURG, MA  
*visit VW Online for audio by this author*

## Rain, when tempered

Shale faced,  
untoward,  
like night my humility was  
turning blue.  
Deftly raiding the  
nightstand,  
rifling dreams of  
blotch stained hue.  
Visions of sun strips,  
relics of oil,  
collected  
upon stern brows.  
Such as rain,  
when tempered  
and speeded does in soil.

Light,  
confections  
made sprightly  
come, liting top  
regards  
through and  
upon the air.

—CHARLES LIEDL, EAU CLAIRE, WI



## Seasons of Extreme

The husband tells her  
she can buy the coat when an 8 fits  
But her 14 can't do the math  
fast enough for this fashion season  
She dreams of the hood's faux fur trim  
haloing the Very Berry lips  
she wears to her women's book club  
When he thinks she's visiting a rest home

He prefers the company of his 1950 Chevy anyway  
Craves that control with the flex of one foot  
But his hands, how they turn tender  
at the touch of steering wheel  
Unlike high octane's stranglehold on the environment  
which he considers liberal bullshit  
Believes what his bar buddy said in Peps  
That cosmic rays from the stars cause global warming

He's as out of touch as the antique tools he collects  
Even the apple tree is budding in January  
The cedar waxwings already mating  
And the mountain bears haven't yet hibernated  
They all know without TV, newspapers  
or computers that things are drying out  
heating up, bubbling over

There could be Missouri River floods  
County water rationing by summer  
A winter wheat fire any day now  
An ice storm in the bedroom

—ELLARAIN LOCKIE, SUNNYVALE, CA  
*visit VW Online for audio by this author*

set against fields  
swept clean by autumn's harvest  
purple asters bloom



brittle cedar boughs  
stand dark in the light spring rain  
too late, renewal



beaded on berries  
rain jells on dormant branches  
a mere notion, spring



not my son, the one  
balanced on titanium  
war's camouflage

—KATHLEEN SERLEY, WAUSAU, WI

## At the Richmond, Illinois Dog 'n' Suds

I ordered the 1969 cheeseburger  
you know the thick patty seared almost  
black on the outside pink as a baby's cheek  
in the center the bun so huge it took  
two hands to hold it and the cheese was hot and gooey  
and burned your fingers

It came with 1971 french fries  
crisp and zig zaggy lightly salted  
with that perfect crunch spilling over the edge  
of the basket you didn't like ketchup  
which bugged your little sister back then  
but she's not with you today

The young high school girl in hot pants brought  
your order how you miss those roller skates straight  
to your restored 1965 Chevy Corsair setting the hooks  
of the tray on your half-raised driver's side  
window chewing gum and her ponytail slapping  
against the red and yellow Dog 'N Suds jacket

But what you really came for driving  
almost one hundred miles from Madison  
to Illinois was the root beer served in those  
frosty mugs with a foam head so large it made circlets  
on your nose taking that first long slurping drink  
cold enough to make your teeth chatter

It was Friday night in Waterloo and Mom and Dad  
were still alive and though you had two brothers  
over in Nam you knew they would come back  
for a little while anyway  
Friday night and Dog 'N Suds and  
the baseball game on the radio

Now it's 2012 and the long stream  
of traffic on the highway that runs past  
the Dog 'N Suds in Richmond, Illinois  
never seems to end and you sit there  
with your Texas burger and fries  
and that oh so delicious still frosty root beer

You sit there in the hot afternoon  
somewhere in July with the ghosts  
of Mom and Dad and music on the radio  
transported back and forth  
with each mouthful and noisy sip  
thankful there are still such places for holding on to things.

—JAMES P. ROBERTS, MADISON, WI

## Writing a Poem with Monet

It's April and I'm growing green,  
but bills bore into my desk.  
Riches arch in my deposit book  
like the mineral caves  
carved by the surf  
at Pourville, where Monet stood  
at his easel to paint thundering waves  
flecked black and white.

I sign my check  
in the lower right corner  
as artists will, re-total  
the balance and turn up  
a new one. Diamonds  
a mile down in Monet's sea  
crack, chip, erode. A crash  
and the salty wave  
spreads geodes on sand.  
I cross-hatch a sketch  
on the "payee" line.

Monet painted in a hurry.  
Maybe I should write  
checks quicker. I scrawl  
a verse on "amount."  
On "date" I riddle time.  
Another smash. More gems  
float away, twinkling,

and my ledger's full  
of emptiness, dark water  
tipped by snowy zeros.  
A few more lines  
and I'm broke,  
but I think of Monet

as I lick stamps, close  
envelopes, face the slack tide  
of pocket, lifted on a new surge.  
There's the pen, glowing  
in shifting, pastel light.

—RACHEL DACUS, WALNUT CREEK, CA

## Good Friday

We'd go hungry every year until sundown,  
all the neighborhood Catholics'  
dead-eyed fish thawing  
in the sink, sequins

of scales shining through thin gessos of ice,  
but in our house, leftovers—  
Hungarian goulash covered  
with a taut seal

of Saran wrap—in the fridge ready to be  
heated. Always around noon, the sky  
collapsed right on schedule,  
*darkness unto,*

the way the Bible says it did, no heavens  
opening, just eerie light  
the color of old nails  
and a lace of cold rain

hanging from the eaves, all afternoon  
myth to mystery, rumbling  
in our empty bellies—hunger  
teaching us patience

—SUSAN ELBE, MADISON, WI  
*visit VW Online for more work by this author*

## Making Butterflies

It must be  
God's hobby,  
Making butterflies,  
Stooped over  
His cluttered workbench,  
A jeweler's glass  
Wedged in his eye,  
With tweezers in  
Arthritic hands  
Cautiously placing  
The stained glass colors  
In delicate wings,  
His spit, his glue.

—K.S. HARDY, BOWLING GREEN, OH

## **Eve in the West**

She sets her bucket down.  
With each step from  
The river bank it grew  
More heavy as if filled  
With round bottom stones.  
She is halfway to the cabin.  
Smoke curls like a serpent  
From the chimney climbing the sky.  
She has felt so alone out here,  
A two day ride from  
The closest civilization.  
It's as if they were exiled,  
Thrown out of the world.  
Why did she let Adam  
Seduce her into leaving  
The comfort of St. Louis.  
And yet there is a beauty  
Here, a wild garden.  
Creation unrestrained.  
A shot rings out in the woods.  
Crows scatter from the trees.  
Adam will be bringing  
Their supper in, fresh meat.  
She must sharpen her knife.  
She picks up the bucket  
And begins her toil anew.

—K.S. HARDY, BOWLING GREEN, OH

## **The Deer**

Lay the deer on the shallow ground.  
We have carried her miles,  
from under the oak  
where she was shot.  
Pray for the dead,  
the young dead,  
all of them you remember,  
their tendrils of hair,  
the noise their legs made when they ran.  
Let the wind waft  
the papery leaves,  
make more leaves,  
make a sound of whispering.  
Cover the shallow ground  
with white winter grass  
and flowers,  
the pyrocantha,  
the chrysanthemum snow,  
new and soft between your hands.

—LINDA BENNINGHOFF, LLOYD HARBOR, NY

## **If Not Now When**

So many things  
Promised.  
The list too long  
To list here  
In this poem,  
It would have  
To be an epic  
Over multiple  
Volumes to  
Rival Dante,  
Which reminds me  
Of the elephant  
In the Sistine Chapel,  
The Second Coming.  
We are still waiting.

—K.S. HARDY, BOWLING GREEN, OH

## **What the Heart Remembers**

Though madness  
was a factor  
you asked me to love you  
and I did.

I remember the heat  
of that July morning  
the yellow telephone  
I listened on

the soft breathing  
of my boy and girl  
asleep in their tangled sheets.  
Such small details

the heart holds onto.  
But not the time  
you asked me to stop  
and I did. Cold

what I remember of that.

—SHARON AUBERLE, SISTER BAY, WI

# CATHRYN COFELL

---

## FROM *SISTER SATELLITE*

### The Brain Tumor Speaks

Please. Please. I will wait  
everything.  
The horrible man coming,  
have you been to him?  
They'd come and it would be  
ok, right? I need  
to talk to this people, first  
thing. I renumber, I sure do:  
270-0Nate32.  
I have to talk to him  
before it's cover.

I saw the invention I was given.  
See the thing I saw?  
Here it is. It's all yours.  
It's all now.  
We have to give it to  
me. It will take it.  
I promise.

I can still stand if you have to.  
I will up with you.  
I have Koinonia for the doctor:  
here it is. It's all now.  
I'll tell you in the pinks.  
Can we grabble in morning?  
Then, we are wonderful.

I will stay. Here.  
I will lay by my lay.  
From the behind of my heart.  
You are my sunshine my only  
sunshine. Good might  
sleep glove.  
I live you. I live  
you.

**"With six chapbooks already to her credit, Cathryn Cofell presents her first full-length collection, and it's wonderful. *Sister Satellite* has sass and snap, a fresh and entertaining voice, but it also wields a sharp edge, cutting deeper as it goes deeper. Sharper and deeper. Frankly feminist, Cofell's energetic, unconventional poems tell hard truths with wit and wide-open eyes. Every woman should read this book. So should every man."**—Kelly Cherry, author of *The Retreats of Thought: Poems*

### High-Speed Connections

I took a digital picture of my hand  
and sent it away,  
emailed to a psychic in West Bend.  
At first, it was *undeliverable*.  
Then a *suspicious attachment, needs  
authentication*.  
A third time she replied,  
said my palm was fuzzy.  
I became her \$20 pay pal  
and suddenly she had clarity,  
a map quest, a maze of intersections.  
She saw a scoundrel's name,  
*Lucy or Cin*,  
a flamboyant but unremarkable life.  
Wrong, I said, that was not my life-  
line she was reading,  
it must have been a silver hair  
caught on the lens as the shutter closed.  
But she held firm,  
said it was more than just the palm  
she read, she knew me, she saw  
how my lines crossed with others,  
a flash of pain in every touch.  
She saw a future as a circus act  
or a hit man and I knew she had me,  
caught in her sights, that day  
I let you fall from my slick palms,  
that endless Hitchcock drop,  
hands forever clutching,  
cliffs of straw and chaff.

*first appeared in Oranges & Sardines*

### Appeal for Eclipse

Enough about the damn moon.  
Bulimic bitch, four fits  
of clothes, all that cellulite  
and she still prances,  
still tries  
to light up the sky  
when he wants only to be dark,  
to be Johnny Cash and strum  
the train ride right out of her.

Enough from the poets,  
the artists, the astronomers.  
Quit coveting her behind his back.  
She needs to learn the ways  
of a docile woman,  
to be viewed askew  
from inside a cardboard box,  
her trashy peep show ass  
puppeted from the earth,  
strung up behind the sun  
curtained by this ring of fire.

*first appeared in Oranges & Sardines*



# MOISÉS VILLAVICENCIO BARRAS

## FROM *LUZ DE TODOS TIEMPOS / LIGHT OF ALL TIMES*

### Torcazas para el Aire

Sale usted de su casa  
para encontrarse con la presencia muerta del vuelo:  
menos dos torcazas para el aire de junio.

*Estoy solo  
soy el niño que vimos en la oscuridad de San Bartolo.*

En el jardín de su casa,  
siembra usted alas y paisajes nunca vistos  
en los ojos de esos pájaros.

*Yo no crecí con la certidumbre del pan en la mesa  
y cuando mi hermano se cortó las venas le llovieron palos.*

Hace unos días, sin que usted lo supiera  
me robé uno de sus tulipanes y lo puse a la orilla de la carretera.

*Yo caminé con el coyote y la tía Estela.*

¿Cuántos vuelos entierra cada día?

*Desde un tren aprendí sobre la angustia  
de no tener territorio.*

¿Cuántos vuelos?

### Doves for the Air of June

You leave your house  
to find a dead presence of flight:  
less two doves for the June air.

I am alone  
like the child we saw in the darkness of San Bartolo.

In your yard  
you plant wings and landscapes never seen  
in the eyes of those birds.

I did not grow up with the certainty of bread on the table  
and when my brother cut his veins  
sticks rained down on him.

A couple of days ago without you knowing  
I stole a tulip from you and put it on the side of the road

I walked with the coyote and with Aunt Estela

How many flights do you bury every day?

From a train I learned the agony  
of not having territory

How many flights?

“Moisés Villavicencio Barras’ second collection of poetry offers us in lush, sensual language his childhood in Oaxaca and his Mazatec ancestors, his family life both there and in the U. S., and the experience of belonging to both far and near. In these poems, his self-reflective vision of living at once in the North and South awakens us to what is near, just outside the window, and to what is far, the jaguar in the ravine. In this bravely envisioned collection of poems, we read and feel transformed in its light, having grown closer to one another and to the earth, the source of song and beauty.”—Roberta Hill, University of Wisconsin-Madison

### El Tren en Casa

Dejemos que pase el tren  
y salude desde la ventana  
a los limonares de la tía Inés.  
Dejemos que pase  
y se siente en nuestra mesa,  
y se refresque la garganta  
con corrientes que usualmente no puede.  
Dejemos que el tren pase y vea  
los recuerdos que guardamos de él,  
no sólo las imágenes, sino las conversaciones  
y todas las quejas de los animales.  
Dejemos que el tren entre a nuestro  
patio, y observe desde ahí, su casa de rieles  
entre las montañas que se abren y cierran.  
Dejemos por un momento, una vez en la tierra  
que el tren descansa bajo nuestras sábanas,  
que él solo apague su luz,  
como nuestros hijos después de dos tres cuentos.

### Train at Home

Let us let the train come in  
and greet from the window  
Tía Inés’ lemon grove.  
Let us let him come in  
and sit at our table  
to refresh his throat  
with the currents that he usually can’t drink.  
Let us let the train come in and see  
the memories that we have of him,  
not just the images but also the talks  
and all the animals’ complaints.  
Let us let the train come into our yard  
and observe from there his house of rails  
among mountains that open and close.  
Let us for a moment once on earth  
let the train rest under our sheets,  
turn off his own light  
like our sons after two or three books.

## Prosperity's Prison

In prosperity's prison,  
managing gadgets  
is the business of life.

What a price my soul  
pays, so burdened with  
stuff that it gasps and

wheezes in the lonely  
dark of packing boxes,  
plastic bags, and padded

envelopes, longing to  
slip through the cracks  
to a patch of sunlight

in an empty space. Oh  
for a life of nothingness—  
my soul says, and I say—

rich in drift-potential on  
currents of air or water,  
going nowhere slowly,

infinitudes of beauty  
all around me, the life of  
a vagrant, panhandling

freedom from vagabond  
clouds, allowing nothing  
smaller than Earth or

Galaxy to hold my gaze,  
or play the mystic music  
of my nights and days.

—GEORGIA RESSMEYER,  
SHEBOYGAN, WI

## Wind Song

Wind seething, swirling, rattling snow against windows, rasping stones, bricks,  
spilling over hedges and fences, flooding roads. Drones, howls, drowns, stacks  
high white against piers of houseless, footless, adrift. In the black box, fire hisses,  
leaps, sputters, falls, into ashes.

Wind was is and always shall be: hewer, delver, bone-scraper, wawan, wheel-  
whirler, bull-roarer, bell-ringer, ear-hammer, huracan, kuklon, tornado, tractor truck-  
tossler, breast-thudder, eye-raker, spine-shaker, spear-carrier, water-bearer, mystical  
screamer of songs epic, lyric, sent from ten thousand places, rumbling north into  
darkness, beyond time and light, gone.

—ROBERT SCHULER, MENOMONIE, WI  
*visit VW Online for more work by this author*

## vision, garden in the wild

*How long before you lost it—  
a scene like this?*  
—Su Tung-p'o

a pine wind-blown down  
off the limestone cliff lying  
plumb within the fork  
of a two-trunked oak  
all the way to the river's edge  
its limbless trunk encircled  
by primrose vines and ferns  
stems cut so you could climb  
a notched ladder up through  
shadows to waves of pearl-blue above  
pause to watch the spirits of the air  
pass below monarchs and swallowtails  
raspberry-red purple finches  
American redstarts yellow warblers  
gaudy cardinals and orioles  
modest brown wrens and swallows  
the rhythms and counter rhythms  
drummed by hundreds of woodpeckers  
sunflowers branching  
above the trail's dust

—ROBERT SCHULER, MENOMONIE, WI  
*visit VW Online for more work by this author*

## Listening to Shostakovich

Shostakovich's surreal  
sad and lovely  
and frightening quartets  
the sturdy lady cardinal bold red-billed  
her crest streaked red  
in the winter windows  
blizzarded with snow  
what is to become of us  
within these winds  
these lost suns and moons and stars  
what is this place  
why has it been given to us  
why have we been given to it  
the valleys the thicketed hills  
the blue silos blown-out pockets of sand  
the roads the condos  
groves of oaks and maples gone  
the immaculate beauty and idiosyncratic shocks  
of the violins of Shostakovich  
bolting through the night  
I shall not sleep shall not miss  
the delights the mysteries rolling far past morning  
and noon into the stone days  
the prison days  
hearts tossed into the ditches  
blood running in the weeds  
a dimness  
a vanishing

—ROBERT SCHULER, MENOMONIE, WI  
*visit VW Online for more work by this author*

Open the lid! if you have to  
use teeth: hailstones  
left over from the winter making room—

inside the can  
its paint spins backwards  
covers a rot that never leaves

and when the carpenters finish  
rust—you stir till winds  
begin to warm from the rain

brush against your arm  
pulling the sun closer  
firmly on the sill—

sometimes it takes all Spring  
sometimes a few weeks, the air  
little by little growing mold

worn out though the year  
that has nothing to do with love opens  
before you can catch your breath.

—SIMON PERCHIK, EAST HAMPTON, NY

## Clover Fortune

I smelled clover  
For the first time  
Wafting on the breeze  
Which surprised me.  
'Cause I didn't know  
Clover had a scent  
Strong enough to experience,  
Especially here, where there  
Is so little green, so much brown.  
From those rare, green patches  
Beautiful clover flowers  
Ride the wind  
With the nicest scent I've found  
Since coming to Stanley.

—HARLAN RICHARDS, STANLEY, WI

## Kite

The cursive beauty of a kite—  
Its flowing flight, its punchdrunk sway—  
Calls back the elementary day  
When Teacher taught us how to write  
According to the Palmer method  
Of penmanship, not that we learned  
In a day, struggle as we did  
To shape our letters for the stern  
Woman who stood over us,  
Watching as we labored away  
For what seemed hours. Wasn't it play  
Time yet? Nap time? Time for the school bus?  
We wrote on lined paper in booklets  
Made specially for the Palmer method.  
If I had any thoughts in my head,  
They are lost to time, which always gets  
The better of us, but I recall  
The fabulous freedom of cursive writing  
And how it felt like crazily running,  
Wind at my back, kite a seagull.

—KELLY CHERRY, HALIFAX, VA

You store in your mouth  
the sky, for better or worse  
the sun though her lips

flake off bite by bite  
and each morning more leaves  
found dead on the doorstep—

you eat the way these leaves  
lose their way  
still open their wings

thrown back as if the wind  
once was everywhere  
all the sweet water on Earth

on your lips clinging to hers  
afraid what's down there  
growing huge in your cheeks

filled with sunlight year after year  
returning to the tree  
that lost its fire

and somewhere inside a wooden box  
calls out for stone :a single spark  
to heat her bones with flesh

become a face again  
and in your mouth the smoke  
whose fragrance is her mouth.

—SIMON PERCHIK, EAST HAMPTON, NY

## Video at Thirty Thousand

The angry birds are tumbling from the sky  
in 7C, beside me. Why  
such red red rage  
as cabered cardinals arc and fall—  
depth-charge cartoons  
wrath catapulted from a cage  
to fire-bomb the city  
in the night below?  
The mayhem has her in its thrall  
launch after launch, with pretty,  
repetitious, pixeled moons.  
It's ruby-thick with ruffled feathers.  
She flings her furious flyers without pity,  
glaring as they wamble, plunge, and blow  
to bits the skyline. From bombardment heights,  
they plummet to self-immolation,  
then re-compose at every Total Score—  
the sure and certain image of some terror.  
Our modest jet survives all that it weathers,  
the scarlet suicides live out their flights,  
and on she games, the laptop free of pilot error.  
On rigid wings, I wonder what her fear is for.  
The angry birds rise from their devastation.

—LEN KRISAK, NEWTON, MA

## A Cabin Cruiser in Late Afternoon

You sketch the scene just now  
into how it will look in the night  
when you hear that car again  
spinning its wheels in the snow  
slowly at first then faster and faster  
into a smoke that beggars prayer.

The light will be peach-colored  
then turning slowly into the purple  
of a very ripe plumb, the waves  
from the boat frothing white  
on one side, ruby black on the other—  
and no sign of a coming storm.

The boat will be going nowhere  
very fast nor will anyone be seen  
on the fantail or in the wheelhouse,  
and only later will the chug-chug  
of the engine under no strain  
echo as the boat nears the point.

You will have this scene with toast  
and coffee, your thoughts annealed  
to the one at risk in snow so late  
no one could help if they would,  
until the boat's quite well out of sight,  
its wake just now kissing the shore.

—WILLIAM FORD, IOWA CITY, IA

## Flying

I flew from the roof,  
at nine,  
an angel  
into a welcoming snow bank.

I flew at twelve  
over the handlebars  
of a Schwinn Flyer,  
my collar bone  
snapping like a dry twig.

At sixteen I flew  
into the woods  
to hear the whisper of  
woodland fanfare.

I flew into despair at eighteen  
over a cheerleader  
named Claire who twirled  
as if bewitched.

I flew like a dandelion  
through adult life,  
catching a breeze  
to college, and a job  
back in a humdrum hometown.  
Bound to earth  
by the ordinary,  
I no longer fly off the handle.

—DAVID BLACKKEY, LA CROSSE, WI

## Flight 006

I did not really believe the stick-thin *porteño* seated next to me on the flight from Santiago to Buenos Aires when he leaned into me with an elbow-tap and voluntarily confessed to me that, in all his years as an air traffic controller, only once did he experience a UFO, one that five months before had hovered above the glass tower of the main airport in Buenos Aires for what seemed like a frozen minute before shooting a laser-like beam that cleanly pierced the glass tower just seconds before it flew off and became instantly invisible. I noticed the peculiar way the man with the pencil-line mustache nodded as he narrated his tale, as though he were trying to convince himself of what he had just related. After all, grabbing a stranger on a plane to tell all that to was, I thought, marginally bizarre if not downright so. And to add to the strangeness, we later parted with just a handshake as we exited the plane once in the land of the *porteños*.

This life is undeniably full of enigmas, not to mention quirky people, so *flake* is the word-impression I had as I glanced across the carousel as he appeared to be in a deep state of impenetrable thought, oblivious to everyone and everything around him. I retrieved my bag and exited through Customs never to see the man again.

As plagued as I was at the time by what might be described as the Peace Corps Volunteer wanderlust syndrome, I arrived about two weeks later in Buenos Aires after my travels up to Uruguay and Brazil with just about enough money to pay for a flight over to Mendoza, just over the Andes from Chile where I needed to return like three days before. It just so turned out that there happened to be a U.S. Air Force base there where two pilots adopted this feckless wayfarer for three days before paying for a taxi-van up over the Andes to Santiago. As they were driving me to the taxi, I related the story about the man on the plane, and, as I was doing so, they looked at each other and grinned. They both flew “missions” over South America, and they seemed to know of what I spoke.

—STEPHEN ANDERSON, MILWAUKEE, WI  
*visit VW Online for audio by this author*



## On a Wet Weekend

we haul out the board games,  
playing with our ten-year-old  
grandson, showing a fourth  
grade Capitalist how  
he should manage his money.

I sit across and watch him,  
a youth with innate avarice  
become a Wall Street titan,  
a cutthroat, ruthless landlord,  
a blond Scrooge collecting  
rent, fees, taxes and penalties  
in a simulated life adventure,  
the game called Monopoly.

Time passes in the kitchen,  
hours meld into another day,  
it's marathon Monopoly  
as he acquires both utilities,  
buys railroads, Boardwalk,  
invests in pricey Park Place,  
builds houses and hotels,  
a bona fide Capitalist,  
a younger Donald Trump.

Landing on Park Place often,  
I mortgage all, go belly-up.  
Being railroaded into poverty,  
content with a go-to-jail card,  
I sneer at the gloating winner,  
skipping around the table,  
clutching his money overhead.

—JOHN L. CAMPBELL, BROOKFIELD, WI

## My Name is G, G-7

My name and number are not in my grandson's  
cell phone. I take charge. Enter them but I can't  
seem to get those letters after the Grandpa "G."

I try. It comes out 7,7,7,7... Then I think, there  
are several sets of grandkids all with two  
grandfathers, "Grandpa," to some, "Poppa"

to others. Confusing for older men. But now  
I am agent G-7. "G-7 reporting." "So what's my  
mission, kid? G-7, yes G-7, got a problem with it?"

—JOHN LEHMAN, CAMBRIDGE, WI

## Free Harry

He possessed much that inspired.  
A personable likeable man, Grandpa.  
But somehow Grandma, a woman who loved to  
hear sweet whispers from others about what a  
lady she was (she never hung out her underwear  
to dry during daylight hours),  
kept him as her pet poodle who would  
heel wherever she strolled,  
speak at her every command.

Her taunts were many:  
Harry, there's a car behind us.  
There's a stop sign, Harry.  
Pull over, Harry, and let me drive.  
Harry, is that jam on your cheek?  
*Who's* been playing in the butter dish, Harry?  
She once even led him  
by the ear  
to the cupboard  
after he had brought her a  
soup bowl instead of a  
saucer.

Such ridicule was borne well  
by turning the other cheek,  
or more often than she knew it  
by lending a deaf ear.  
Yet on this cold November night  
he was bucking a different headwind,  
struggling to clutch what was left of his life  
that cancer had not slighted  
that Grandma had not tainted.

The candle flickering on the table  
might well have been the moon;  
his face shown so pale—  
one tallow-ossified sphere  
day by day  
swallowed up by his fat pillow,  
his body now a framework of broom handles  
smothered by a patchwork quilt.

Only after Mother checked his pulse  
did the flame become restless  
irregular,  
his breathing began to lapse.  
Gasp.  
Now a raspy groan.  
Then  
eyes transcendent,  
the eternal yawn  
that set him free.

—GERALD D. BAHR, MENOMONIE, WI

## Success Story

I loved and owned Visal Steel,  
computerized the production line  
with an IBM system.  
Sheets of strong light steel  
rolled off onto another line  
where they were cooled by purified water.  
Next they went to the rolling plant where  
they were molded into a fine metal skin  
for use by the US ARMY in the SCALLIWAG,  
one of the most mobile helicopters  
ever invented.  
It made two billion dollars for me.  
I moved onto the Forbes 500 list of  
The Wealthiest Men in America.  
I spent three years making speeches  
about Being an Entrepreneur in America.  
I taught a class on the subject for a year  
at the Harvard Business School.  
I appeared fifteen times on CNBC.

I was never at home.  
My wife divorced me.

—RICHARD MOYER, BERWYN, PA

## Elephant String

They say an elephant  
can be controlled  
with a piece of string  
tied around one leg –  
just start early  
with hard enough steel.

Before long, it's all about  
eating peanuts,  
walking in circles  
with strangers on your back  
and getting hosed down  
for the next day's show.

Deep in my brain  
where I cannot reach,  
I hear her whispering  
and there is no need for string.

—DANNY EARL SIMMONS, LEBANON, OR  
*visit VW Online for audio by this author*

## The Rabbit and the Tulip

It happens every spring, I should  
be ready. I'm not the only one  
who waits for this. The earth  
erupts in beauty, green and freighted  
with a thousand petals folded into wands—  
pale umbrellas waiting for a fall of rain  
to spring them open into bloom again.  
And every one will call to mind  
our garden days, when you first gave me  
that green patch of earth, and tulips were  
the first bulbs that I planted  
(and later they grew wild  
beneath the trees). So now I wait  
for them and, waiting, think of you.  
And when they bloom, I celebrate with you  
until the rabbit (waiting too) eats every one

and only stems remain in dawn's sweet light.  
*What would you do?*

I spray, I gate, I fence in spring  
but, really, I can hardly bring  
myself to chase  
the rabbits who are tulips now  
or the bold and crazy tulips that are  
rabbits now.

—MARY MERCIER, MADISON WI

## I kiss you on the forehead as you sleep in your chair

Does everything become brilliant before it dies?  
White birch leaves do.  
They capture goldenness and exude it until the sky sulks into grey.  
They fall so hushly.

How do they stay moist and shining on the ground?

Maybe they are brilliant because they are together.  
Maybe they are brilliant because they finally got it right.

As a girl I un-created Hell because I didn't know anyone  
who deserved to go there. Maybe some of us *have* been here on earth before.  
We are only trying again and again until we feel the surface.

I watch as the sky darkens behind you.  
You are hushed and not-quite-falling.  
We breathe in the same air and I clutch it in my chest  
the way we clutch all things when we are scared.

Will you become a birch tree?  
I will look for you, lives later, in another September.

You will be a kokanee salmon in New Mexico, silvery with shining crimson  
on your sides. You will build a nest on the shoreline of a stream and spawn before you  
swim away to die. The eggs, thousands of them, stay behind,

hush and moist.

—KRISTI LEY, SANGKHLABURI, THAILAND

## Earth Day

Just today thinking about  
how to save what's left  
I realized I had expected too much  
of one humble landscape artist  
reclusive and content to paint  
the sunsets and moonrises  
over his tropical backyard garden.  
He just didn't foresee things  
around the edges of his estate  
evolving further.

How could he come close  
to divining that those pests  
he had kept in check  
were going to steal his scenes  
and trash his "little acre"  
as soon as they could  
stand on their own two feet?

—MARGARET SHERMAN, BEAVER DAM, WI

## Door

We arrive to the sound of water dripping from the eaves  
onto the hostas and the lilies  
and the occasional thin clang of sailboats in the bay.

The seagulls' cries are a blade  
slicing through the veil of apathy we've donned,  
their shrieking, something that wants.

How everything now, since the world  
is so determined to destroy itself,  
seems draped in the clothes of mourning--

the call of geese so painted with nostalgia,  
they themselves are nearly a recollection:

*yes, once there were birds--  
birds that dove to catch fish--  
yes, once there were oceans filled with fish--  
yes once--*

The sun is nearly gone,  
and an outboard motor purrs in,  
buckles down for the night.

A lone gull calls one last time,  
and still the dripping from the eaves.  
Then from a nearby house, an air conditioner's hum.

—HEATHER SWAN, MADISON, WI  
*visit VW Online for more work by this author*

## Where Does Time Go?

Into the mouth of summer  
veins of leaves  
forgiveness building a tree  
from rings.  
What enters into time's path is eaten alive  
though none will admit.  
We like time since we haven't a choice.  
Here's a heart ache, here's some joy  
like weeds and perfect flowers  
arranged in vase.  
It's all very beautiful.  
We have convinced ourselves of that.  
Tell me something different  
and I will follow.

—ANN IVERSON, MINNEAPOLIS, MN

## My Song

Let me light in your  
private melody  
and  
be your twilight  
whippoorwill.

—GERALD D. BAHR, MENOMONIE, WI

## After the Rain

They hardly spoke  
to each other afterwards.

He gave himself over  
to drink and patriarchy  
and writing things down.  
She moved through the hours  
busy with the usual things.  
But, the hours weren't the problem  
for her. It was the minutes  
of remembering and knowing  
exactly what had happened.  
So, she'd hum.

Otherwise, her mind flashed  
with tree trunks and boulders  
riding waves into skulls and abdomens  
and babies whose final babbles  
were drowned by the tardy pleas  
of their now believing parents.  
She used to wonder  
how the fine young man  
they'd hired to help tar the ark  
ended up feeling God's love.  
Was it as quick as God's wrath?  
Or did his smile fade slowly  
in a crush of mud against his chest  
or after a final deep breath  
right before his lungs made room  
for the wet holy cleansing  
of disobedience from earth?

At the beginning, her husband mistook  
the gentle buzz from her chest  
as the acceptance of grace,  
asked her to read his sheepskin account.  
She read it and insisted upon one revision,  
“You take my name out of there.”

—DANNY EARL SIMMONS, LEBANON, OR  
*visit VW Online for audio by this author*

## Constellation Yoga

### I.

Three women  
dressed in leotards  
and sitting on blankets  
begin their forms.

They make a perfect triangle  
with legs crossed  
and hands resting  
on bony knees,  
palms up.

When they lie down  
on their backs  
and raise their legs to kick  
I see  
Orion's belt  
and know  
that an arrow has been  
loosed.

### II

One calls herself  
a "Pescatarian,"  
while stretching forward  
to touch her  
painted toes.

A fish jumps  
and the talk  
turns to tacos,  
hot and heavy  
like Venus  
in transit.

But now  
the women cluster  
thick as the swarm  
of Pleiades  
seen through a telescope.  
I hear  
suppressed grunts  
as they solemnly rise, hands  
thrust to the sky  
following Andromeda's  
wavy lines.

### III

Down once more to Earth,  
on hands and knees  
and with limber back

humped toward Ursa Minor,  
supple thighs crease  
as the stomach  
inhales breath,  
exhales molecules.

The session concludes,  
blankets are folded  
and in the darkening,  
firefly lit night  
a soft voice intones  
"same time, next week."

"Let's do the Big Dipper."

—JAMES P. ROBERTS, MADISON, WI

## What You Are Doing

You reside in some tall office building.  
Spend prime hours of the day locked  
in a padded eight-foot square cell with  
a computer, telephone and e-mail...

searching for clues of where you really  
are. Impulses from one part of your brain  
to another. Flying sparks by day. But at  
night, they flame, become stories.

Each burning. A trash barrel on the corner  
of a street. Fiery blades marking faces  
of curious passersby who at times stop to  
warm their hands. Look into your eyes.

—JOHN LEHMAN, CAMBRIDGE, WI

## Vexed View #234 (in 4 voices)

XIT (1938-54)

we left the train  
station & walked  
the nearly 5 miles  
to our place  
in the country.  
the road, an endless  
black snake, slithered  
thru scattered acres  
of acorn lives,  
weakened me.  
the sun chipped  
my dime face.

char(true)se  
(true)

XOR (1971-86)

tar, as if ink,  
on feathers of raven,  
as i pitch  
to my soul,  
concerning script about  
central park, &  
the night i  
crossed it from west  
to east, lighting up  
all the trash cans.

XON (1955-70)

I was TDY in  
kissengen & as  
a postal clerk was  
often alone, &  
worked under pressure.  
one day the wife  
of a colonel  
snapped at me  
as i hurled  
her package.  
i go without  
stripes into rebirth.

(traum)atic  
(dream)

XUS (1987-2003)

on the skeleton side  
of this day i  
take a chance  
& dance on  
a drum. its  
sound recoils in  
my dark ear,  
& crossed over into  
a field of my  
sleep, hitting all the edges.

—GUY BEINING, GREAT BARRINGTON, MA

#### Set 4:

Xitonorus wipes at the color of life

#### CAST:

Xit: thoughts covering (1938-54) (youth)

Xon: thoughts covering (1955-70) (adulthood)

Xor: thoughts covering (1971-86) (middle years)

Xus: thoughts covering (1987-present) (ripened)

#### Scene:

A paperhanger comes on stage and takes out of a briefcase four different sections of wallpaper. He gathers them up and climbs the ladder that slants over Xit, Xon, Xor, and Xus, who sit on the floor handcuffed. The ladder rests against a billboard mid-stage that holds a brush and a bucket of paste on an extension to the side. As the dialogue continues he slowly pastes to the billboard each of the four different bits of wallpaper, and labels each one in large chalk letters. Sample one is of a yellow design and he marks it Antique Yellow. It covers the area just above Xit. He goes down, adjusts the ladder where it will serve Xon's spot, and continues the process. He covers the section above Xon with a drab olive design and marks it Army Green. Above Xor he pastes on a rude rose pattern which he marks Prostitute Red. Over Xus he inserts a smoky grey strip over which he writes Burnt Chalk.

Xit: (Crisply.) lots of what we do are packed within dreams. from those we peruse when awake and asleep.

Xon: (Carefully.) There were strange markings on that hill, so black in shadows, with one long line of light like chalk marks on a blackboard.

Xus: (Dismissive.) Lame boy having fallen off a log or was it a roof?

Xor: (With passion.) Life isn't very level. The forum of outer weeds in the head is what you must shake well before they have grasped your mind.

Xus: You drunken fool, there are always sinews in sentences that fall from your lips.

Xon: The kitchen of academic life holds rows of glistening knives and a professor is going to grind them further down in order to make deeper cuts.

Xit: (Mocking.) We're no more than crows on a fence, flapping and cawing; perhaps pulling out tufts of hay that could be taken for wigs in the market place.

Xus: See how youth jumps about so quickly with not even time to wet the toes, but (gravely) that look of being in the coffin haunts all of us, and there need not be ginger light spilling from a windowpane. Why not just measure the pain of being a pain-ter!

Xor: You grew into a painter in order to leave the pain of being a poet. Now you wear each day quite well. Each minute is a chime.

Xus: That's an effrontery, for being in verse of square wall takes gravity out of ones digs. Don't tear at my sky quite yet!

Xor: When there's only grease coming out of the poet he falls on himself, swallowing all regrets of the world.

Xon: Martyrdom is the mold created by a drunkard.

Xus: Bravo! It strains me to say, speaking off the top of my skull that shadows now invade my bones. All those dandy days of yours walking through a maze makes my form feel dislocated.

Xon: Words clinging to ribs makes a good anchor.

Xit: Windshield wipers smear prints set by the eye that goes beyond connecting dots of rain, making a code for words.

Xor: (As if alone.) I had a candy eye and the sentence was as long as the back of the woman that stood before me.

Xus: (Frazzled.) Wipe her, wipe out not white out, cutting through a design as it was meant to be, from the furthest corner of the eye, looping over a torn brown hill.

Xon: (Excitedly.) My hill...I see it as I turn my head into something that begins to wear better.

Xit: (Concerned.) Again on the outskirts of a dream, rubbing chalk of sleep from its borders.

Xus: Let's try to escape the words.

Xit: Getting a radio show out of air waves, and unpacking objects and characters in my room; playing in long, staged manners that was worth stuff!

Xor: (Loudly.) Frolic licked clean, frozen pocket watch in vest, florist fudges pretext. We go wee around the corner and smell connections of Needle Park and Lincoln Center.

Xus: (Wearily.) I try to ride the brightness of each day, yet all my sketches don't make one act. The fabric of us grows from our surroundings, and I feel enclosed within a tent.

NET SET.

—GUY BEINING. GREAT BARRINGTON, MA



# Small Press Poetry Publishing: I Ask Myself *What's It All About*— The History of *Free Verse* & Marsh River Editions by Linda Aschbrenner

Q: One hundred issues of *Free Verse* were published from 1998 to 2009 in addition to 17 chapbooks with Marsh River Editions (marshrivereditions.com). How did you start publishing poetry?

A: Innocently. I did not intend to start a poetry journal. The first issue of *Free Verse*, March 1998, featured six poems by four poets from our newly formed regional poetry group, MAPS, Marshfield Area Poetry Society. Our writing group rapidly expanded, and I kept publishing our monthly output of poetry. To my surprise, poets outside our group learned about *Free Verse*, submitted poetry, and asked to subscribe. By May 2001, *Free Verse* was twelve pages, monthly. It expanded over the years to 40 pages. I set out stacks of *Free Verse* at the Wisconsin Fellowship of Poets conferences, at poetry readings, etc. *Free Verse* then had hundreds of subscribers, most from Wisconsin, some from various parts of the country. Submissions even arrived from corners of the world.

Q: What advice do you have for poets who would like to start a small press poetry journal?

A: If you are thinking of starting a poetry journal, think finite—a poetry journal restricted to sonnets about solar flares, for example. Or, how about villanelles about elephants, odes to cats. Restrict the submission period to two weeks out of the year. I am only slightly kidding. What is manageable? Frequently small press poetry journals fold due to heavy time demands.

Vital to the process, at least for me, proofreaders! I acquired two proficient proofreaders, Sherrie Weber and Kris Rued-Clark. They caught my typing errors and other blunders (or as many of my blunders as humanly possible), and they also contributed book reviews and interviews. Serendipitously, Sherrie and Kris were long-time friends before I started *Free Verse*.

While still in high school, our son Nick submitted poetry and wrote book reviews for *Free Verse*. Later, he developed and maintained a website for Marsh River Editions. It was fun to have poetry as a family project.

One also needs adequate space—which probably nobody has, not with a poetry journal published out of a home. I worked mostly with paper, not email submissions. Bins multiplied—bins for incoming poetry, bins for outgoing, bins for contest entries, bins for new subscriptions and renewals. In addition to poetry, *Free Verse* published book reviews, essays, interviews, articles, photographs, news items, letters, cartoons, and ran four contests each issue. I searched for *Free Verse* cover quotes from the many poetry journals and books that filled our house. (Eleven years of the cover quotes provide an excellent poetry education.) We lived with files and bins, stacks of mail, and poetry books. The office had limited walking space, sometimes just a tunnel to the computer.

Q: Are there courses in “The Small Press Poetry Journal: Editing and Publishing”?

A: Perhaps. And no doubt such courses would be helpful. On the other hand, it's liberating to jump in: just publish who you want, when you want, with the design you want. Computer skills help. In 1994, Nick (still in grade school!) and I both learned QuarkXPress for desktop publishing and basic Photoshop skills. (I learned how to use a mouse at this same time.) Nick helped me with our computer crashes and other computer-related problems. We had ancient computers during the early *Free Verse* years—we didn't have high speed internet until after I stopped publishing *Free Verse*. It could have been worse. At least it wasn't the era of publishing poetry journals on a mimeograph machine.

Q: Why did you start publishing chapbooks?

A: Poet Louis McKee (1951 - 2011) of Philadelphia submitted his poetry to *Free Verse*. After I had published several of his poems, he insisted I publish his chapbook, *Loose Change*. He was an editor/publisher himself and talked me through the process. Without his persistence (and because I liked his poetry), I might not have created Marsh River Editions in 2001. Nick volunteered to do the layout and design of the chapbook which became the pattern I followed. Of course, once you publish one chapbook, you will be inundated with manuscript submissions. I found I enjoyed editing and publishing books. (I am working on our family books now and for the foreseeable future.)

Q: What type of temperament or personality seems to coincide with this type of work?

A: If you are going to edit/publish poetry, ask yourself: *Am I a hermit? Could I be a hermit? Do I love to spend time alone with poetry?* It also helps if you can let other things go—like sleeping, or having a perfectly clean house at all times—or at any time.

When I'd walk *Free Verse* letters to our mailbox, I'd sometimes be surprised to notice it was spring or autumn—I'd be oblivious to the seasons. Darn, did I miss summer again? If I'd glimpse a football or baseball game on TV with thousands of people cheering, I'd wonder why these individuals had time to travel to a game and then just sit there for hours—why weren't they at home working on their poetry journals? Had they read all their piles of submissions? Responded to them? But no, we poets are a tiny minority on this planet. We poetry editors/publishers are an infinitesimally smaller group. We're the people not going anywhere—just to our computers. Dust settles on us and on the stacks of papers surrounding us.

Q: What are some of your favorite memories from publishing *Free Verse* and

the chapbooks?

A: I enjoyed *Free Verse* related poetry outings with family. Sometimes my husband and Nick would tend the Marsh River Editions book table at the Wisconsin Book Festival in Madison while I attended programs, or we'd attend events together. My husband and I went to numerous poetry readings throughout the state and delivered boxes of newly printed books to poets. I also enjoyed corresponding with poets over the course of each year. Letters and emails grounded me to the living world.

Great fun: getting an issue of *Free Verse* to the post office! I stuffed *Free Verse* into envelopes on our kitchen table—and sorted and bundled issues by zip code, sometimes with the help of my husband. Outgoing bins filled our living room—all the bins barely fit into our car. I loved driving home from the post office knowing an issue was done and out! The euphoria lasted one night, and then it was back to tackling incoming mail, etc. I also enjoyed driving bins of Marsh River Editions review books to the post office. Books going out into the world.

I also appreciated that I was learning. I learned something with each poem I read, with each issue I published.

I felt grateful to the many poets who submitted poetry, wrote book reviews, essays, did interviews, submitted cartoons (John Lehman, Lee Kisling, and Ed Galing), and to those who entered and judged contests. It's difficult to mention names because I'm sure to miss many, but frequent book reviewers/article writers included: Sarah Busse, Robin Chapman, Karl Elder, Karla Huston, Michael Kriesel,

John Lehman, Charles P. Ries, Lou Roach, Thomas R. Smith, Richard Swanson, and Wendy Vardaman. There were numerous poets who submitted excellent reviews and articles.

And of course, the subscriptions and donations were essential to the entire process. (But one never publishes poetry for financial gain.)

An aside: I love the cartoons in *The New Yorker*. I wish I would have had crates of cartoon submissions. Another ideal occupation: wouldn't it be fun to be a cartoon editor?

Q: Was it easy to select poetry to publish from the submissions?

A: Oddly, yes! Fresh, unique poems stood out, stood up, begging me to publish them. Editors develop their own sense of what they want to publish. It could be a danger, I suppose, to fall into a comfort zone. You have to be open to new voices, styles, forms, ways of thinking. Then again, it's the editor's/publisher's prerogative to select what she likes.

An editor/publisher of a small press poetry journal is unlikely to relinquish poems to a selection committee. Why would one? Reading and selecting poetry is the best part of the publishing process. It's endlessly absorbing. (I wonder why all poets don't rush out and start their own poetry journals for this reason alone.)

Q: What were the time constraints during the publishing years?

A: Time always seemed in short supply. During many of those years, I also published two business newsletters from our home. I subscribed to and continue to subscribe to a number of poetry journals—unread articles, pages of poetry, and entire unread issues haunt me. I'm counting on heaven as a haven for reading. There I'll finally get to read everything I've missed.

I also spent time organizing a monthly poetry reading series in our community that ran for four years—from 1999 through 2002. Poets were invited to be featured readers, and we found grants and funding for those coming from Madison, Milwaukee, etc. Glory! Money to poets!

An unexpected outcome: I was so occupied by publishing deadlines that I stopped attending the meetings of our local poetry group that I had started. Sadly, four members passed away. A few moved to other cities and joined new poetry groups. Alas, our local group that inspired *Free Verse* ceased to exist. (I could always start a new group. I could offer to publish our poetry monthly....)

Q: How did you feel after your decision to relinquish *Free Verse*?

A: After 11 years, I felt ready for a change. I was delighted to find two poets to take over *Free Verse*. I asked Wendy Vardaman and Sarah Busse if they'd be interested. I knew from their poetry, book reviews, academic degrees, and interest in *Free Verse* that they would be ideal candidates. It helped that they lived in Madison, an area receptive to poetry. To my joy and gratitude, they accepted. They have accomplished miracles with the publication now known as *Verse Wisconsin*. They seem to have unlimited energy to do separate

online and print issues, start a book press (Cowfeather Press), edit the 2013 *Wisconsin Poets' Calendar*, and serve as Madison Poets Laureate (2012-2016), along with keeping up with their own writing and busy families. I think of Wendy and Sarah as higher beings from some advanced planet.

Q: What are you doing now?

A: Besides talking to myself in this dialogue? (Typical behavior for a hermit, however.) I'm doing more reading and writing (including writing book reviews for *Verse Wisconsin*), and I'm spending more time with my family and friends. My husband and I travel to visit our adult children and they visit us. My two sisters and I are writing a book in poetry and prose about growing up in a Finnish American home. I'm collecting my poems and writing new ones for chapbooks that I plan to self-publish. I even have time now to exercise and tackle house projects neglected during the *Free Verse* years. I notice the seasons. Wind chills are 30 below tonight. I noticed that.

[Eds. note: This is an interview of Linda Aschbrenner by Linda Aschbrenner.]

CHARLES P. RIES  
New  
full-sized paperback collection  
of brilliant, heartfelt, necessary  
love poems by the  
four-time Pushcart Prize nominee,  
Charles P. Ries.  
Now available  
on  
Propaganda  
Press.  
\$11.99  
Find it at  
alternatingcurrentarts.blogspot.com  
or on Amazon.  
GIRL  
FRIEND  
& OTHER  
MYSTERIES OF LOVE  
NEW AND SELECTED POEMS

The **Wisconsin Fellowship of Poets**, one of the oldest American poetry societies, sponsors local poetry events, semi-annual conferences, contests, and a yearly anthology.

WFOP offers Wisconsin poets opportunities for fellowship and growth.



See **wfop.org** for further information.

FRIENDS OF LORINE NIEDECKER

WWW.LORINENIEDECKER.ORG  
WISCONSIN'S POET OF PLACE

LOG ON FOR NEWSLETTERS,  
NEWS, POETRY AND RESOURCES  
OR CALL 920-563-7790

## Midsummer, 1961

Dostoevsky, Raskolnikov,  
brain fever, write a letter,  
walk barefoot up a dusty  
road to mail it, laze  
in a Guatemalan sling  
strung between two oaks,  
doze with a mildew-scented  
book across my chest,  
dream of writing classic  
novels popular with fungi,  
emerge from the hammock  
as if from a chrysalis,  
pull a damp swimsuit off  
the line, wear it as skin,  
run to the beach, drop  
towel and book next to my  
sisters' things, dive in,  
dive in, the water's clean,  
the chill bracing if I  
keep my limbs churning,  
swim as far as I can, then  
float on my back, let the  
sky show me how large  
the world is, while the sea  
roars with the hum of all  
creatures breathing as one.

—GEORGIA RESSMEYER, SHEBOYGAN, WI

## Poem-Free Since May

No notebook. Phrases on the back  
of gas station receipts. No rhyming  
words that won't let me sleep. Yet  
birds still tweet, people wash cars,  
there are fried onion rings in bars,  
like the one in which a droopy eyed  
girl who looks like Emily Dickinson  
in a tube top asks, "What do you  
do?" "I'm a poet," I lie, "And I think  
you should be one too."

—JOHN LEHMAN, CAMBRIDGE WI

## Saturday, March Roundabout

A week of work,  
working the weak,  
the weak work  
of the working week.  
O for the day of done,  
the done with a day,  
the day for the weak  
done working,  
for the day, yea the day,  
the day of the book,  
the broken book  
and brook breaking  
and the day of the walk  
and the walk breaking  
by the sun baking  
on the brook, the jangling  
of grass like a green guitar,  
the condoning glance  
of lilies and crows,  
all the stops and the gos,  
the pushing of sap, the pop  
and sudge of new leaf,  
while languishing away  
in the mild and the rote  
without even a note  
or nod of explanation.

—JEFF BURT, MOUNT HERMON, CA

## April seventeen-year-olds

are daffodils, intoxicated with rain. It's not always pretty to see. Imagine those yellow headed flowers unable to hold their petals up, flapping around in the thunder and lightning, their pistils and stamens all askew. Just like those pansies, so colorful and innocent, edible too, but watch out—one of them threw up on my lawn. There are days when I am surrounded by tulips talking: It's always *me me me me* all the way home. When they get home they forget how to be human. *What's for dinner? I hate chicken. That's when I dream of those soft, fuzzy chicks protected under heated lights.* I tell you, raising a chick is not difficult—it's a little later on, when it turns into a stubborn rooster that thinks he can fly—he will peck his way out of your chest cavity, thrashing you to the ground with his wings—leaving you with a hole in your heart and a mouthful of feathers.

—KRISTIN LAUREL, WACONIA, MN

## Turtle Amour

Morning in the backwater pond  
around the old railroad trestle footing.  
An archaic armor tilts, tail-  
end up, then slides heavily down  
against some unseen resistance  
in the shallow, mucky water.

We can't take our eyes off  
the snappers rolling slowly sideways  
in their black, turning embrace,  
a head suddenly visible or  
a clawed flipper raised  
dripping in air, as if waving

not drowning, thank you,  
but loving in their splashy manner,  
knocking up against each other with  
a clacking of shells, serrated tails  
whipping, reddish-yellow throats  
glistening, their pleasure such work

to get at each other through that  
bony encumbrance, though managing  
as they've done even in the scummiest  
sloughs for millions of years, that  
there may be turtles in springtime  
tumbling in the waters of the world.

—THOMAS R. SMITH, RIVER FALLS, WI

## Dear Tree,

I stand in your presence  
and confess my own cruel acts:  
sawing and shivering timber  
for books tenting loneliness.

O tree, don't lend to likes of me,  
who once thought you simple,  
moved by wind and rain and bird.

Dog-eared, margin-scribbler,  
I hereby render back to you  
all words, for study *in situ*,  
night moths, my bookmarks.

You, my tome of knotted thought  
etched in inner rings and bark,  
your bower, my reference book.

—ZARA RAAB, BERKELEY, CA

## Rachel Carson

The heart of nature saves nothing in the name  
of sentiment. In the sea, it all comes down to  
eating, one flashing life ingesting another  
and in turn becoming food for some larger life.  
Where many see only the red rule of tooth and claw,  
Rachel Carson recognized a beauty better described  
than defined, and in writing about it conveyed  
the mood of a vast dynamic energy exchange  
more than the sum of its constituent organisms,  
behind that glittering, shifting tapestry, Kali  
both devouring and giving birth to herself.  
From the view of a single, limited mortal life,  
it's as alien as the self-replenishment of the sun,  
phoenix-like life-giver, in its burning. Rachel  
Carson understood, and that understanding  
strengthened her against the relentless, horrific  
attack on her body by the cancerous forces  
she exposed in *Silent Spring*. It must be that  
the bravery with which she faced and named  
her destroyers helped her write with such fearless  
elegance and empathy of the myriad sea-lives,  
of which she was one—and you and me—bright,  
fugitive as reflections of stars in water.

—THOMAS R. SMITH, RIVER FALLS, WI

## St. Francis in April

Ferns came thin this spring,  
spiny aesthetes, almost transparent.  
I'm pulling weeds, an easy answer. Cold  
stains my knees, this wind-stung soil,  
how we choose, how we enter.  
But not you, Francis,  
blind-white and pedestaled,

a pocked stone cowl.  
They say the fire split  
your heart, your palms. Even these  
loose-stitched roots are hunger—  
April relentless in its reckless hope.  
Bless us with fervor, Francis.  
Watch over us with your empty eyes.

—DIANE UNTERWEGER, NASHOTAH, WI



# Center Stillness: Conversations with Phyllis Walsh & CX Dillhunt

PHYLLIS WALSH  
(1928-2012)

in its voice  
a fledgling hummingbird finds  
the hibiscus' depth

from *Hummingbird* September 1992

bringing more rosebuds  
rainstorms that scattered  
wild rose petals

from *Hummingbird* September 1993

before love  
she turns off the teakettle  
about to whistle

from *in the thick* (tel-let, 1995)

dragonflies' wings  
glisten in sunlight  
trails of slugs

from *Hummingbird* June 2000

in the small planters  
sunflowers rise above all—  
the work of squirrels

from *Hummingbird* June 2002

her hair permed and dyed  
graying former hippie  
tells of published poems

from *Hummingbird* March 2007

the old milkweed pod  
loses its last silk  
to the blizzard

from *Hummingbird* Dec. 2006

*Poems selected by CX Dillhunt & Trish Stachelski.*

*Phyllis Walsh was the creator and founding editor of Hummingbird: Magazine of the Short Poem, which is in its twenty-third year. These conversations took place in December 2011 and January 2012 at Phyllis' home in Greendale, Wisconsin. CX Dillhunt is a poet as well as the editor of Hummingbird.*

CX Dillhunt: Phyllis, I remember finding my first *Hummingbird* tucked away on the very bottom shelf in the poetry section of University Book Store on State Street—almost on the floor, flat, and there on the cover was David [Kopitzke]'s hummingbird, wings out, hanging there with its beak in flower, alive as can be...

Phyllis Walsh: A long way down for you!

CX: Yes, I'm surprised I noticed it at all. I didn't know what it was. It was the only thing on the shelf. But I got down there, sat on the floor and read the first two issues cover to cover—I was hooked and sent you a couple haiku the next day.

PW: I guess no one knew where to put it. I'm glad it caught your eye.

CX: Yes, eventually the bookstores began placing it up front near the registers, like candy and gum in other stores—hoping for an impulse buy!

PW: In those early days, it was a real struggle. I was only putting out two a year, March and September. Eventually, I was able to go quarterly, with a June and December issue. You wouldn't think that something so small would be so much work...

CX: Let's start there, with the size. The magazine pages are a quarter of an 8 1/2 by 11 sheet.

PW: Well, that's it. I wanted something I could fold into shape, tear, and roll into my typewriter. Like those [pointing to stack of neatly torn 5 1/2 by 4 1/2 sheets on the kitchen table next to the typewriter].

CX: So, maybe that's a good starting point for my next question, I mean, what makes a poem work for you, for *Hummingbird*?

PW: Well, yes, anything that will fit on that small page—that's a good start...

CX: ...that reminds me—in preparation for this interview I found a letter where you wrote, "I've gone more in the direction of minimalism, as you know."

PW: Well, yes, as I was saying, anything that will fit on that small page—I've always felt if there is not a lot of space, the words chosen will be forced to carry more punch. Also, especially with shorter poems, it's important to see only one on a page—seeing it on a page, surrounded by its own space—that's my meaning of a short poem. And like any poem, the meaning needs to be subtle. Perhaps that's the nature of the short poem, why I prefer it.

CX: There seems to be some confusion,

though, I mean does it bother you when bookstores and even some poets refer to it as "a haiku journal"?

PW: Well, I've given up trying to explain. I suppose those are the ones who never submit their work, unfortunately, never read it. Perhaps they misunderstand the form or intent of the magazine, see a haiku or any short work as too limiting? But, haiku or not, the poem I'm looking for might be more haiku-related than not. I'm not sure we've all decided on what a haiku is...

CX: So, let me rephrase the question: what is it that makes a good short poem, one that works? I mean other than just being short and fitting on the page? What would you say is the nature of the form?

PW: Something not obvious, not spoken of directly, hinted at. That makes a big difference. But like a haiku, just because you have maybe three lines and seventeen syllables, if that's how you try to write them, even if you have a season word if you require one, it still may not work. In any poem, I'm looking for compression—it should carry an implied comparison between different things or perceptions, but not directly so. At times, unexpected.

CX: How do you know this? I mean, when a poem works, when it doesn't?

PW: I was afraid you'd ask that. You mean how do I know if it's a poem for *Hummingbird*? Experience, I guess. It has to have a certain "something" about it. Anything a bit offbeat, unexpected. Short, but everything that needs to be said.

CX: Short and ready.

PW: Yes, ready each time you read it. I guess I learned somewhere along the way that that led to the best poetry. Poetry should be condensed. I didn't have a name for what I was writing, I was just trying to write poems. It's what I preferred. So, as the editor I get to choose. I hope the magazine speaks for itself in the sense that it encourages readers and writers to consider what works.

CX: So it's not just brevity you're looking for?

PW: Actually, that is all I'm looking for. Brevity. It has to hold up on its own, not just look short or fit the page. A certain tightness of expression and emotion that I don't think is really achieved in a longer poem.

CX: When did you start writing?

PW: Probably first grade. Trying to write a poem. I didn't keep any—my mother didn't encourage saving. I had a poem file. I threw them all away. I remember her saying, "You don't read this anymore." So I didn't keep anything for that long. They were mostly short things—something that needed to be expressed. My first grade teacher, I was really close to her—Miss Kahl. I ate lunch with her every day.



**Phyllis Anne Vosburg Walsh**

November 4, 1928, Fort Atkinson, WI  
September 4, 2012, Milwaukee, WI

Phyllis was, in many ways, a role model for me. Despite the exhaustion that comes from a long and challenging work life—and despite the considerable obstacles created by a severe aneurism, Phyllis was determined to make a success of her retirement years. “Success” for her meant poetry—the highest quality, spare, moving, funny and wrenching. And then she decided to involve me in her efforts by way of challenging me to illustrate poems. Long before the printing of each issue of *Hummingbird*, I would get a phone call or a note. She would have chosen a poem to be illustrated—always along with a precise deadline—and always with gentle or quite pointed promptings to produce the best.

So she taught me to make the most of the time given to us, to use our creative juices to their utmost, and to aim high.  
Thank you, Phyllis.

David Kopitzke, Art Editor,  
*Hummingbird: Magazine of the Short Poem*

CX: What did you talk about?

PW: What was going on in our lives. She tried to influence me to be more outgoing. I kept going back through sixth grade. I’d just stop by to visit. Sometimes I’d show her some poems

CX: Were there any other teachers or authors who influenced you?

PW: My sixth grade teacher, Miss Lance. She taught poetry. Before that as I said, I just wrote because I wanted to. She had us read poetry. And I forget his name, but I had a freshman English teacher at Milton who encouraged.

CX: I know you’re a letter writer.

PW: I started that at an early age, too. I like to write.

CX: I know we corresponded for almost twenty years before we met.

PW: And we still write to each other. I think there’s a connection...

CX: How so?

PW: I mean between poetry and letter writing.

CX: Do you think there’s more of a connection to the shorter poem?

PW: I never thought of that; maybe it’s the focus. Paying attention to that person, to what’s going on, knowing you should be succinct, more to the point.

CX: Yes! Your letters, too, are always short, but carry the news,

PW: That’s it. And it’s a pleasure to write, to keep in touch.

CX: Perhaps how a poem keeps us in touch.

PW: Especially that short poem!

CX: I enjoyed the years when Cid Corman

appeared in *Hummingbird*. I hear you corresponded.

PW: Oh yes. For years. I miss hearing from him

CX: He died about seven years ago?

PW: That sounds right. We shared poems. He suggested it—a magazine like *Hummingbird*, I mean. We talked a lot about haiku and short poems.

CX: Did you ever meet?

PW: Yes, at the Lorine Niedecker Centenary in 2003. We were all fortunate to have him there. I think he died shortly after that, in 2004.

CX: And that’s another connection, you and Lorine both being from Fort Atkinson. Did you know her?

PW: We both worked at the Fort Public Library. I was a librarian there for a short time before accepting a position at UW-Richland Center. We were acquaintances, our families knew each other. Everyone did.

CX: Yes, in your small book of essays about her, you comment: “My awareness of Lorine Niedecker began in my childhood when I glimpsed her reclusive figure in our hometown, Fort Atkinson...a town of 8,000 situated in the midst of rich dairy country... townspeople whispered that Niedecker wrote poetry, but I never knew anyone who read it. Since she seemed to avoid interaction with other people, it was generally assumed it was of little consequence.”

PW: That was such lesson for me.

CX: It seems your study of Niedecker influenced your work.

PW: I suppose.

CX: Well, in the introduction to your essays [*Lorine Niedecker: Solitary Plover*, Juniper Book 56, La Crosse, 1992] you say: “Although LN is becoming recognized as a poet who made a major contribution to American literature, her work can reward without benefit of scholarship. Her genius lies in the clarity of vision she brings to the most common objects and experience.”

PW: That’s it. That precision. I felt I got to know her that way, through her poetry.

CX: But also, the comment on “scholarship.” I think your statement about her works as the motto for *Hummingbird*.

PW: Yes, very much so. I finished that collection of essays just as *Hummingbird* was getting under way.

CX: And going back to Fort, You grew up on a farm?

PW: Yes, I was born there. I think that influenced my sense of poetry and love of down-to-earth poetry. My grandfather loved to tell me stories for hours at a time out on the porch. He had a great sense of humor. We also went to the river to fish. It was a great small-town atmosphere. That was my life. After Milton I went to UW-Madison for my degree in Library Science. I worked at the Madison Public Library downtown for a while.

CX: *Hummingbird* is in its 22nd year. Any advice for writers?

PW: Not really, other than to be yourself as much as you can.

CX: What have you learned from editing *Hummingbird*?

PW: Not to make instant judgments about poems or poets.

CX: What do you mean?

PW: First time through on submissions don’t make a major decision to take something or to dismiss it. I think the same goes for the poet, don’t immediately embrace or reject your work. It’s that going through that decision-making process, knowing you’ve eventually achieved something.

CX: What’s the most difficult part of the job?

PW: Turning down someone I know and see regularly. Correspondence is a bit easier. There are some I think of very highly as people, but who write poems I don’t want to accept. That’s very difficult. I try to do something else once in awhile—like lunch or a play or a movie. I try to do something together that has nothing to do with poetry.

CX: What’s been the role of correspondence for *Hummingbird*?

PW: Significant. Some of my best friendships. But even there, it’s up and down. Something works for a while and then it falls apart. I suppose that’s the nature of all relationships, even though the friendship may remain.

CX: Any regrets?

PW: No, not that I can think of. Not with *Hummingbird*. It’s one of the most important things I’ve done in my life, not only for my own pleasure in doing it, but for the feedback from others.

CX: Would you say it’s been “fun”?

PW: Yes, fun for the most part. One of the most positive experiences in my life. And I can’t imagine it ever ending.

CX: I’d like to end by reading you one of your poems from my favorite collection, *Center Stillness* [Phyllis Walsh, Scythe Press, Dakota MN, 1989]. For the sake of our readers, I want to point out that it’s a small, hand-stitched book, about the size of *Hummingbird*, with ten poems, each on its own page.

canoeing closer  
driftwood branch  
e  
r  
o  
n

PW: Yes (chuckling), I can see that to this day.

CX: Thanks!

PW: Oh, how can I thank you?

December 2011 & January 2012, Greendale, WI.



# Humble Inheritance: Reflections on My Internship with Phyllis Walsh by Trish Stachelski

In 1979, I moved from Milwaukee to Richland Center to pursue a degree in education. I was drawn to the farms, the cows grazing in the coulees and an opportunity to attend the friendly, supportive environment of the University of Wisconsin, Richland Center. I remember walks along streams looking for deep pools where trout dwell and labrador tea, the ancient medicinal plant that grows in bogs. I remember a swimming hole accessed by jumping off a train trestle and long walks in the snow to get to school.

At the University of Wisconsin, Richland Center, Phyllis Walsh was my instructor for Library Science and Children's Literature. I knew Phyllis was a poet, as I had seen some of her poems in the local publication *The Ocooch News*. Later when I transferred to the UW-La Crosse, I was delighted that Phyllis enrolled in the same poetry class taught by John Judson, editor of Juniper Press. Years later as an MFA student at Hamline University in St. Paul in 2006, I applied for an internship to work as an editor with Phyllis on *Hummingbird, The Magazine of the Short Poem*. This was a wonderful opportunity to learn more about Phyllis the editor and Phyllis the poet.

My responsibility as an intern was to help with the decision making process for the June issue of the *Hummingbird*. Phyllis published haiku and nontraditional forms. We read 54 poems out loud and evaluated them for sound, imagery and meaning. Most importantly, we considered how each line contributed to the whole. Subjects of poems included animal and human activities with objective, critical, humorous, playful and satirical tones. She believed the short form was the truest form because it captured the moment. Long poems were not poems, she said. They were stories.

Hummingbird Press is considered one of several fine small presses that fills a niche in the publishing world. Publicity is based on word of mouth. "It's a plum to be published in *Hummingbird*," Phyllis said. Dedicated followers include poets living overseas on a shoestring who devote their lives to writing poetry. Phyllis often published H.F. Noyes of Greece, "the barefoot priest." Phyllis was proud of him for not being part of academia or any formal organization in the mainstream literary scene. Hummingbird Press also published chapbook collections such as Charlie Mehrhoff's *A Farewell of Sorts*, a high quality publication using the Heidelberg Windmill at Swamp Press.

Cid Corman (1924-2004) poet, translator of Basho and mentor for Phyllis lived in Japan for many years. He provided advice and encouragement for her as an editor, and he sent many poets her way. The letters between Phyllis and Cid are personable and engaging. On July 6th, 1991, he writes to Phyllis: "[I am] always delighted when one of my people connects with you...I've steered someone in your direction. He is hopelessly bad mannered. Don't take his palaver too seriously. But his shorties, as I call them, have a little jump to them and are worth letting others see." (Letters of Phyllis Walsh) Many poets have praised Phyllis for her sharp editor's eye. She was the kind of editor that would return work with cryptic comments. "Keep writing!" She often told me. Though I sent her many poems, it was years before she published any. I asked Phyllis why she named the magazine *Hummingbird*. She told me it is not that she knew a lot about hummingbirds or particularly liked them. Once while putting out a sugar feeder, one attacked her. "They are feisty!" She said.

Phyllis' love of poetry began when her aunt gave her a small collection of poetry when she was 12. Growing up in Fort Atkinson, Wisconsin, Phyllis would occasionally see the mysterious poet Lorine Niedecker. Phyllis admired Niedecker's work and later became influential in bringing recognition to her work in her chapbook *Lorine Niedecker: Solitary Plover*, published by Juniper Press in 1992. Phyllis recalled her impressions of the poet Niedecker: "Townspople whispered that Niedecker wrote poetry, but I never knew anyone who read any of it" (*Solitary Plover* 1).

In college, Phyllis studied elementary education and library science. She was a librarian at Milton College in Wisconsin in the 1970's when she learned that the librarian was retiring from the University of Wisconsin, Richland Center. In the 1970's Richland Center was known for its counterculture hippy communities.

While living in Richland Center, Phyllis experienced a ruptured cerebral aneurysm. She had to have surgery to have it clamped. The surgery caused a slight stroke which temporarily affected her speech and caused her temporary paralysis of one side. It was a difficult and long recovery. After this life-threatening experience, Phyllis vowed to put poetry first. In her hospital bed, she began writing all kinds of poetry. Emily Osborn, publisher of the *Ocooch News* in Richland Center, was the first to publish Phyllis' poems. Phyllis' work also appeared in *Frogpond, Haiku Quarterly, Inkstone, Ko, Modern Haiku, Northwest Literary Forum, tel-let, White Hero, Windless Orchard, and Woodnotes*. Midwestern Writers' Publishing House published *Like a Dream on Waking* in 1981. Hummingbird Press published the collections *To Find a Rainbow* and *Center Stillness*.

During my internship with Phyllis, she repeatedly admonished me to never tell anyone I was a poet. What an odd thing for an editor of a poetry magazine to tell a poet friend, I thought as I drove up and down the hills and coulees of Richland and Vernon counties journeying from my home to her home. I considered my identity as a poet. I considered the influence of the natural world and the medium of the short poem for expressing this poetic vision which draws from the ancient verse of China, Korea and Japan. There is an understanding that the job of the poet is to discover the inner voice of its subject. Phyllis' *Hummingbird* acts as a medium for this voice. The image of the hummingbird suggests vulnerability and surety, the unselfconscious bird going about its life.



## Fast Tracks

In their cloud haste, they sped across the landscape, unfamiliar horizons where they left neither shadow, glimmer or sound in passing. States reeled by like the clink of slot machines.

Each location gave off, grew out of its own value. The glow from big city lights might've been a jackpot, replete with all the dings, bells, and whistles of a huge win, should they pause to collect.

No time for counting markers. Eighteen states, one foreign country and less than fifty miles from another were stakes nobody lost, a bluff you just couldn't fake.

Luck might be a lady tonight. Or a pair hurtling down the turnpike, she eager to stop, sniff, listen, gawk. He on the other hand content to merely log the miles behind them, cover as much in as little as possible. All this—and at a steady, reliable 35 mpg.

—G. A. SCHEINOH, EDEN, WI

## Everyday is a gift

so says the plaque on the bathroom wall.  
Of course, there should be a space between  
every and day. It is each and every  
day that is the present.

But the everyday is a gift too,  
wrapped in plain paper  
addressed in Papermate blue,  
bound in time and string,  
left on the doorstep  
near the mat, common as dirt and dust,  
ordinary as tap water, easy to miss.

When you return to the table at the restaurant  
it may have taken your seat  
—look before you sit. It rides there  
with you in the car, built in better  
than cup holders. You can see it  
out your windshield—big sky  
country and rainy day commuting,  
broken shoelaces and loose teeth,  
salty as canned soup  
and just as remarkable  
unless you have specific recall of the mundane,  
all happenstance and chicken fingers.

It wouldn't be special  
to get a gift every day—what greedy  
children we'd be. No matter; it hangs around  
with your clothes and tags along after breakfast  
like a balloon from the carnival,  
or the toilet paper flagging your step,  
constant companion, sometimes making you self conscious.

A gift. A prize. A favor  
cheap as the tchotchke in the Cracker Jack box,  
cute as Monopoly's Scottie dog,  
succinct as a vanity plate and vague as a bubblegum fortune.

It's the balled tissue in the toes of new shoes,  
noticeable only when you put your foot in it.

Or it's a bitter process, tough-as-gristle work,  
comforting as an I-told-you-so but iridescent  
like a pearl, and dirty as a root vegetable.  
After all, some gifts we'd like to return.

But whether it is as vexing as catsup,  
frivolous as confetti,  
or hard and gleaming like the cold comfort  
we take from still being alive, it  
will not to be denied but remains  
obvious as the banner  
that boasts "sanitized for your protection."

Sure, everyday is a gift.  
Unwrap it carefully  
and save the paper.

—ELLEN WADE BEALS, GLENVIEW, IL

## Contrast

A white cloud  
drifts thru the blue sky.  
I struggle with my car,  
stuck in a ditch.

—RICHARD MOYER, BERWYN, PA

## yo yo

in the mall  
there is this man  
on a stage  
in center court  
playing with a yo yo  
he makes the yo yo do  
all kinds of tricks  
people watch and applaud  
i do too  
its been a long time  
since i played with a yo yo  
a small round wooden disk  
with a string  
the man says  
here is walking the dog  
he makes the yo yo  
hit the floor and walks it  
across the stage like a dog  
everyone cheers  
once the yo yo was so popular  
now it has vanished  
like the hula hoop  
when the show is over  
i buy a yo yo from the man  
he thanks me and says  
hope you enjoy it  
you are very good i say  
he says  
well, i am disabled  
i see for the first time  
he has no fingers  
only some kind of imitation  
he nods  
yeah, he says,  
i was in iraq, got blown up  
thanks for your help, sir  
as i walk away  
with the yo yo  
i feel like crying

—ED GALING, HATBORO, PA

## travels with esther

the old ford knows  
the way  
summer time  
the woods beckon  
the air is invigorating  
my wife beside me  
we follow a languid  
stream a few ducks cross the road  
the trees sparkle  
my wife says  
too many trees  
yes, there are a  
lot of trees, i say  
too many of them, she frowns  
don't you like trees, i ask  
she shrugs,  
the doctor said it  
will get worse,  
she will have flashes  
in and out of reality  
but not yet  
i love you, she murmurs,  
and pats my hand,  
i love you too, i say  
we are two old eighty  
year old people  
travelling to eternity  
the ford keeps  
chugging along  
want a pizza i ask her  
she smiles and says yes  
we head for the pizza parlor  
the ford knows the way  
still time left

—ED GALING, HATBORO, PA



# Contributors' Notes

**Paula D. Anderson** writes while gazing into the Rooky Woods which is part of the Kettle Moraine and her back yard. She also publishes *Echoes*, a poetry journal. p. 9

**Stephen Anderson** was the First Place winner of the Kay Saunders Memorial New Poet Award in 2005. His work has appeared in *Southwest Review*, *Verse Wisconsin*, *Tipton Poetry Journal*, and numerous other print and online publications. His poems appear in the anthology *Portals and Piers* (Sunday Morning Press, 2012). p. 24

**Linda Aschbrenner** is presently lost in the 1950s as she works on a book of family memories with her two sisters, Elda Lepak and Mavis Flegle. pp. 12, 30-1

**Sharon Auberle** wonders how to sum up her life in three lines: writer, image maker, seeker. Blessed to live across from the Big Water. Latest book is *EVERYwoman*. Find her online at her website, Mimi's Golightly Cafe. pp. 8, 19

**Gerald Bahr**, Vietnam veteran and U.S. Marine, earned his Masters of Arts degree from UW-LaCrosse in 1974. He taught English in Naha Koza, Shogakuin, Japan, New South Wales, Australia, and Boyceville, WI. He passed away in 2009, but left these poems for his wife, Jane, who has kindly shared them with *Verse Wisconsin*. pp. 25, 27

**Mary Jo Balistreri** writes poetry as an expression of gratefulness. It provides a means of giving witness, of praising, and of understanding the world and her place within it. Visit [maryjobalistreripoet.com](http://maryjobalistreripoet.com). p. 14

**Ellen Wade Beals** writes poetry and prose. In 1999, her story "Picking" was awarded Willow Springs fiction prize. Her poem "Between the sheets" appears in *Everything's a Text* (Pearson 2010). She is the editor and publisher of *Solace in So Many Words* (Weighed Words LLC, an imprint of Hourglass Books). [www.solaceinabook.com](http://www.solaceinabook.com). p. 37

**Guy R. Beining** has had six poetry books and 25 chapbooks published over the years, and appeared in seven anthologies. Recent publications include *chain*, *epiphany*, *perspective* (Germany), *New Orleans Review*, *The New Review of Literature*. pp. 28-9

**Linda Benninghoff** has most recently published in *Canary*, a journal of the environmental crisis, and *Poets and Artists*. She has an MA in English with an emphasis on creative writing from Stony Brook. Her book, *Whose Cries Are Not Music*, was reviewed in *VW*. p. 19

**David Blackey** is a retired attorney whose professional career involved working for civil rights. He recently sat on the board of ACLU-WI. p. 24

**Jan Bosman** is a UW-Madison graduate and retired English teacher whose poetry has improved because of encouragement from Wisconsin poets, beginning with Ellen Kort. p. 10

**Jeff Burt** works in manufacturing in Santa Cruz County, California, was raised from Lake Superior down to the lead mines of southwestern Wisconsin, and several points in-between. p. 37

**John L. Campbell** started free-lance writing for business and trade magazines in 1995. His book, *Writing in Retirement*, explains his evolution into fiction and poetry along with the profiles of thirteen other writers. His latest poetry chapbook is entitled *Backstreet Voyager*. p. 25

**Kosrof Chantikian** is the author of two collections of poetry, and the editor of *Octavio Paz: Homage to the Poet*, and *The Other Shore: 100 Poems by Rafael Alberti*. He was the editor of *KOSMOS: A Journal of Poetry*, and was general editor of the *KOSMOS Modern Poets in Translation Series*. p. 11

**Kelly Cherry's** newest collection, *The Life and Death of Poetry*, will be published by L.S.U. Press in spring 2013. She was formerly the Poet Laureate of the Commonwealth of Virginia and a member of the Electorate of Poets Corner at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City. p. 23

**Lenore McComas Coberly**, former president of WFOP, is at work on both fiction and poetry in Madison. Ellen Kort and Lenore taught together at Green Lake Conference Center for many years. p. 5

**Cathryn Cofell** serves on the Advisory Board of *Verse Wisconsin*. She has published six chapbooks and a CD that combines her work with the music of Obvious Dog. Her full-length collection of poems, *Sister Satellite*, is forthcoming from Cowfeather Press. p. 20

**Barbara Cranford** was born in Chicago, where she was an encyclopedia editor, poet, sculptor and gallery owner. In her Central Wisconsin woods where she has lived since 1971, she conducts an occasional poem-making workshop and writes when she feels like it. p. 13

**Rachel Dacus's** books include *Femme au chapeau*, *Earth Lessons* and *Another Circle of Delight*. Her poetry has been anthologized and she regularly contributes interviews to *Fringe Magazine* ([www.fringemagazine.org](http://www.fringemagazine.org)). "Writing a Poem with Monet" will appear in her collection, *Gods of Water and Air* (forthcoming). p. 18

**Kathleen Dale** is the recipient of several prizes and best-in-issue awards for her poems, which have appeared in over thirty journals. Her chapbooks, including *Rescue Mission*, 2011, are available on her website at [kathleenanddale.squarespace.com](http://kathleenanddale.squarespace.com). *Baubo Speaks* is forthcoming this year from Green Fuse Press. p. 7

**Alice D'Alessio** was winner of the 2005 Posner Prize for her book *A Blessing of Trees*. Her book *Days We Are Given* was a chapbook winner from Earth's Daughters. *Conversations with Thoreau*, was published in August of 2012 by the UW Parallel Press. p. 13

**Bruce Dethlefsen** plays bass and sings in the musical (he hopes) duo Obvious Dog, the name taken from Wisconsin Poet Laureate Marilyn Taylor's description of a poem "beyond resuscitation." His most recent collection is *Unexpected Shiny Things* (Cowfeather Press, 2011). p. 6

**CX Dillhunt** is editor for *Hummingbird: Magazine of the Short Poem*. His poem "Window - Window, Our Lady, from The Incomplete Glass Man's Glossary" won first place in the 2012 Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts, and Letters poetry contest. pp. 12, 34-5

**Susan Elbe's** forthcoming collection, *The Map of What Happened*, won the 2012 Backwaters Press Prize. Her most recent chapbook is *Where Good Swimmers Drown* (2011 Concrete Wolf Press Chapbook Prize). You can learn more about her at [www.susanelbe.com](http://www.susanelbe.com). p. 18

As a young poet attending her first WFOP conference, **Sherry Elmer** was amazed that Ellen Kort loved her poem. Sherry has since had many occasions to be amazed by Ellen, and she is forever grateful for Ellen's encouragement, inspiration, and friendship. p. 14

**Fabu** is Madison's third Poet Laureate. She has two new publications: *In Our Own Tongues*, published by the University of Nairobi Press and *African American Life in Haiku* published by Parallel Press. Her website is [www.artistsfabu.com](http://www.artistsfabu.com). p. 4

**William Ford** has two books, *The Graveyard Picnic* (Mid-America Press, 2002), and *Past Present Imperfect* (Turning Point, 2006). Two chapbooks, *Allen & Ellen*, and *Descending with Miles* were published by Pudding House in 2010. p. 24

**ed galing** is 95 years old, born in New York in 1917, and often writes about this era, but not always. He has won many literary awards, two Pushcart nominations, written 70 chapbooks, become Poet Laureate of Hatboro. He was published in *Verse Wisconsin's* first issue. p. 37

**Kathie Giorgio** is the author of *Enlarged Hearts* (2012) and *The Home For Wayward Clocks* (2011), winner of the Outstanding Achievement Award from the Wisconsin Library Association. The sequel is due out in 2013. She is the director and founder of AllWriters' Workplace & Workshop, an international creative writing studio located in Waukesha, Wisconsin. p. 8

**Jessica Gleason** writes because Bukowski no longer can. She occasionally likes to sleep in a Star Trek uniform and has mastered The Song of Time on her ocarina. p. 13

**Karen Haley** has lived in Wisconsin most of her adult life, and raised five children here. p. 5

**K.S. Hardy** lives above a dormant oil field in Ohio. His poetry has appeared in *Off the Coast*, *Old Red Kimono*, *Illumenum*, and many other places. He has been nominated for a Rhysling Award. pp. 18, 19

**Ronnie Hess's** poetry has appeared in several publications, including *Alimentum*, *Arbor Vitae*, and *Wisconsin People & Ideas*. She is the author of a chapbook, *Whole Cloth: A Poem Cycle* (Little Eagle Press, 2009), and a culinary travel guide, *Eat Smart in France* (Ginkgo Press, 2010). p. 9

In the summer of 2012, **Maryann Hurtt** studied poetry at Charles University on a John Woods Scholarship. Learning Czech and finding new ways to hear and use English keep her fascinated. p. 8

**Ann Iverson** is the author of *Come Now to the Window* (Laurel Collective), *Definite Space* (Holy Cow! Press), and *Art Lessons* (Holy Cow! Press). Her work was featured on Writers' Almanac. She received her MALS and MFA from Hamline University. p. 27

**Joan Wiese Johannes** was born near Horicon Marsh. Her poems have been widely published and won numerous awards. Her chapbook *Sensible Shoes* was the 2009 winner of the John and Miriam Morris Memorial Chapbook Contest sponsored by the Alabama Poetry Society. p. 9

Poet and essayist, **Judy Kolosso's** work has been published in *Verse Wisconsin*, *Fox Cry Review*, *WI People and Ideas*, *WI Poets Calendars*, and several anthologies. She recently won the WI Writers' 2012 Jade Ring for Poetry. p. 14

**Ellen Kort** has authored 14 books and has been featured in a wide variety of anthologies. She was named a 2004 Fellow of Letters by the Wisconsin Academy of Science, Arts and Letters, has received the Pablo Neruda prize for Poetry, the Council for Wisconsin Writers' Award for Outstanding Encouragement of Wisconsin Writers, and the Robert E. Gard Wisconsin Idea Foundation Award for Excellence. pp. 4, 5

**Len Krisak's** latest book is *Virgil's Eclogues* (UPenn Press). With work in the *Antioch*, *Hudson*, *PN*, and *Sewanee Reviews*, he is a Robert Frost and Richard Wilbur prize winner and a four-time champion on *Jeopardy!* pp. 16, 24

**Jackie Langetieg** has three books, *White Shoulders* (Cross+Roads Press), *Just What in Hell is a Stage of Grief and Confetti in a Silent City* (Ghost Horse Press). A fourth book, *A Terrible Tenderness*, awaits publication. p. 11

**Kristin Laurel** completed a two-year immersion program in poetry at The Loft Literary Center (MPLS) with Thomas R. Smith as advisor. Publications can be seen in *CALYX*, *Grey Sparrow Review*, *The Main Street Rag* and others. Her first book, *Giving Them All Away* was recently published by Evening Street Press. p. 32

Former teacher, textbook author and entrepreneur, **Linda Lee (Konichek)**, lives on a 114 acre horse farm in Eagle, Wisconsin. Her 2009 book, *Celebrating the Heart-Land*, contains 71 poems and photos that pay tribute to the life and values of the Midwest. p. 5

**John (Jack) Lehman** is the founder and original publisher of *Rosebud*. He is the literary editor of *Wisconsin People & Ideas* as well as managing partner of Zelda Wilde Publishing and editor/publisher of *Lit Noir* magazine. pp. 25, 28, 32

**MaryEllen Letarte** developed and directs the Louise Bogan Chapter of the Massachusetts State Poetry Society. Visit [versealive.wordpress.com](http://versealive.wordpress.com). p. 16

**Kristi Ley** currently lives and teaches along the border of Thailand and Myanmar. She was born and raised in Wisconsin, thus she prefers her Old Fashioned with brandy and her cheese curds battered and fried. p. 26

**Charles Liedl** recently returned from teaching English and traveling in Peru. He is currently studying English education at the University of Wisconsin - Eau Claire. p. 16

**Sandra Lindow's** most recent chap book, *The Hedge Witch's Upgrade*, was published in 2012. She lives on a hilltop where she teaches, writes, and edits. Her last chemo was Jan. 8, 2012 and her recovery goes well. p. 6

**Ellaraine Lockie's** recent chapbook, *Wild as in Familiar*, was a finalist in the Finishing Line Press Chapbook Contest and after publication there, received The Aureorean's Editor's Choice Award for Spring, 2012. p. 17

**Beth Mathison** has had work published in *The Foliate Oak* (including the 2008 and 2009 annual "best of" print editions), [365tomorrows.com](http://365tomorrows.com), [mysteryauthors.com](http://mysteryauthors.com). Short stories published with Untreed Reads include her Mobster comedy/mystery series and the Young at Heart romance series. Visit [www.bethmathison.com](http://www.bethmathison.com). p. 10

**Mary Mercier's** poetry has appeared in *Free Verse*, *Fuse*, *Connotations*, and *Wild Earth*. She is the author of one chapbook, *Small Acts* (Parallel Press). p. 26

**Patty Milner** has been writing since she could hold something in her hand. Most recently she was published in *Fox Cry Review*. p. 11

**Wilda Morris** has participated in numerous workshops led by Ellen Kort. Wilda is past president of the Illinois State Poetry Society and current workshop chair of Poets & Patrons of Chicago. Her blog at [www.wildamorris.blogspot.com](http://www.wildamorris.blogspot.com) provides a monthly contest for other poets. p. 10

**Richard Moyer** is 82, his poems have been published widely in the small press and he is really happy to be alive and see them in print. pp. 25, 37

**Elmae Passineau** has published three chapbooks, *On Edge*, *Beloved Somebodies*, and *Things That Go Bump in the Night*. She is currently a thinker, reader, friend, helper, feminist, and writer. p. 6

**Simon Perchik** is an attorney whose poems have appeared in *Partisan Review*, *The New Yorker*, and elsewhere. For more information, including his essay "Magic, Illusion and Other Realities" and a complete bibliography, please visit his website at [www.simonperchik.com](http://www.simonperchik.com). p. 23

**Nancy Petulla** lives on a 150-year-old farm. She began writing poetry at age 65. She is a retired minister to the elderly, ill and dying. Her poems have been published in *Free Verse*, *Verse Wisconsin*, and the *Wisconsin Poets Calendar 2013*. p. 5

**Kathleen Phillips**, Milwaukee, has been published in *Free Verse*, *WFOP Poet's Calendar*, *Siftings from the Clearing*, *Hummingbird* and *Echoes*. Poems can also be found in the anthologies, *Empty Shoes*, *Cradle Songs*, *Love Over Sixty*, and *Voice and Vision from Gallery Q*. p. 9

**Tara Pohlkotte** learned the power of the spoken and written word from her daddy the preacher, and brother the musician, Cory Chisel. You can find more of Tara's writings at her personal blog, <http://www.pohlkottepress.com>. p. 10

**Zara Raab** is the author of *Swimming the Eel*. Her work appears in *West Branch, Arts & Letters, The Dark Horse, River Styx* and elsewhere. Her reviews and essays appear in *Redwood Coast Review, Poetry Flash, The Review Review, Colorado Review* and elsewhere. p. 33

**Fran Rall** is coauthor of *Common Joy II*, a book of ekphrastic poems about outdoor sculpture in Madison, has won a prize for haiku in Japan, and organized the statewide poetry reading at Olbrich Gardens for 20 years. p. 6

Twice a winner of grants in creative writing from the Wisconsin Arts Board, **Georgia Ressimyer** has published two short novels, numerous poems, and a poetry chapbook, *Today I Threw My Watch Away* (Finishing Line Press, 2010). p. 22

**Harlan Richards** grew up in Madison, and earned a BS in business administration from UW-Platteville. He has had numerous poems published in print journals and online in various venues. He is currently working on his first book of poems. [betweenthebars.org/blogs/637](http://betweenthebars.org/blogs/637). p. 23

**Jenna Rindo** teaches English to Vietnamese, Hmong, Spanish and Kurdish students. Her poems and essays have been widely published in journals and anthologies. She lives with her husband, kids, sheep, chickens and other less domesticated creatures. p. 15

**James P. Roberts** currently co-hosts the monthly Writers Read Open Mike at the DeForest Public Library and is still the South-Central Region Vice-President for the WFOP. His latest poetry collection, *Dancing With Poltergeists*, is 'sold out' but a new printing by Popcorn Press is in the near future. pp. 17, 28

**Mary Rodriguez's** short stories have appeared in *Wisconsin People & Ideas, Country Woman*, and *Wisconsin Review*. Two earlier poems have been included in Wisconsin Poets' calendars. p. 11

**Meg Rothstein's** work has been included in *Wisconsin Woman Magazine, Feminist Collections, The Madison Review*, and *Blood and Tears: Poems for Matthew Shepard* (an anthology). p. 15

**G. A. Scheinoha** never imagined he'd follow in his father's tracks; a series of blue collar jobs. Where their lives differed was instead of marriage and family, he wrote a million words over thirty years, some of which have recently appeared in *Avocet, Bellowing Ark, Bracelet Charm, Echoes, Floyd County Moonshine* and *Verse Wisconsin*. p. 36

**Robert Schuler** has been writing for fifty years. His fifteenth collection of poems, *The Book of Jeweled Visions*, has recently been published by Tom Montag's MWPB Books, PO Box 8, Fairwater, WI 53931. Price: \$12.50 plus \$1.50 postage. p. 22

A lifelong resident of Wisconsin, **Kathleen Serley** enjoys all of our seasons: spring gardening, summer beach combing, fall hiking and winter snow shoeing. She teaches English. p. 17

**Margaret Sherman** is a retired teacher. She's lived and worked in Wisconsin all her life. Her poetry has appeared in a few publications including the 2012 edition of the *Wisconsin Poets' Calendar*. p. 26

**Danny Earl Simmons's** work has appeared or is forthcoming in various journals such as *Naugatuck River Review, Avatar Review, Summerset Review, The Smoking Poet, Burningword*, and *Pirene's Fountain*. [dannyearlsimmons.blogspot.com](http://dannyearlsimmons.blogspot.com). pp. 26, 27

**Thomas R. Smith** is a Master Track instructor in poetry at the Loft Literary Center in Minneapolis. His most recent collections are *Kinnickinnic* (Parallel Press), and *The Foot of the Rainbow* from Red Dragonfly Press. [www.thomasrsmithpoet.com](http://www.thomasrsmithpoet.com). p. 33

**J.R. Solonche** is coauthor of *Peach Girl: Poems for a Chinese Daughter* (Grayson Books). His work has been appearing in magazines and journals since the 1970s. He teaches at SUNY Orange in Middletown, New York. p. 16

"Hola, Tortuga," is **Trish Stachelski's** CD of original songs in English and Spanish. Her poems have appeared in *Hummingbird* and *Exposure: Words from Images at The Pump House in La Crosse, WI*. Visit [longfellowfarmer.com](http://longfellowfarmer.com). p. 36

Born in central Wisconsin, **Robin Stuebbe** moved to the eastern side of Lake Winnebago when she got her first teaching job. In 2006, she first heard Ellen Kort read her work at an art studio in Hilbert, Wisconsin. p. 13

**Heather Swan** is a Ph.D. candidate in Literary and Environmental Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Her short collection, *The Edge of Damage* won first prize from the Wisconsin Fellowship of Poets Chapbook Competition in 2009. p. 27

**Marilyn L. Taylor**, former Poet Laureate of the state of Wisconsin and the city of Milwaukee, is the author of six collections of poetry. Marilyn serves on the Board of Directors for the Council for Wisconsin Writers and the Advisory Board for the Low-Residency MFA Program in Creative Writing at Western State College, Gunnison, CO. p. 15

**Elizabeth Tornes's** *Snowbound* won the First Prize in the 2012 WFOP Chapbook Contest. Her second chapbook, *New Moon*, an Honorable Mention Winner in the New Women's Voices contest, will be published by Finishing Line Press in 2013. p. 15

**Charles Trimberger** takes advanced poetry courses at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and is an assistant editor for the *Cream City Review*, the UWM literary magazine. p. 7

**Diane Unterweger's** poems have appeared in *Sugar House Review, Luna Creciente, Verse Wisconsin*, and the 2012 *Wisconsin Poets Calendar*. p. 33

**Carolyn Vargo** is a Regional Vice President for WFOP, a substitute teacher in West Allis-West Milwaukee, a retired teacher from Milwaukee Public Schools, an organizer of readings at People's Book Cooperative, teacher of the Urban Echo Poets at the Urban Ecology Center, a bird watcher and a grandmother. p. 7

**Lisa Vihos** has two chapbooks, *A Brief History of Mail* (Pebblebrook Press, 2011) and *The Accidental Present* (Finishing Line Press, 2012). She is an associate editor of *Stoneboat literary journal* and an occasional guest blogger for *The Best American Poetry*. p. 14

**Moisés Villavicencio Barras**, Mexican poet, fiction writer and co-founder of *Cantera Verde*, one of the most significant literary publications in Mexico for the last twenty years. His first book of poetry *May among Voices* was published 2001. *Luz de Todos los Tiempos / Light of All Times* (bilingual edition) will be published June 2013 by Cowfeather Press. p. 21

**Phyllis Walsh** was the creator and founding editor of *Hummingbird: Magazine of the Short Poem*, which is in its twenty-third year. pp. 34-35

**Ed Werstein** spent 22 years in manufacturing and union activity before his muse awoke and dragged herself out of bed. His sympathies lie with poor and working people. He advocates for peace and against corporate power. His poetry has appeared in *Verse Wisconsin, Blue Collar Review, Mobius Magazine* and a few other publications. p. 10

**Marilyn Zelke-Windau** recently retired from teaching art to elementary school children. Her poems have appeared in several literary journals. p. 7

Also featuring "Pass Words"—a roadside poetry sign contest!

➤ Mark Your Calendars For ➤

# FERMENTATION FEST



A Live Culture CONVERGENCE



OCTOBER 4 - 13 • REEDSBURG, WISCONSIN



10 DAYS of FOOD, FARMING  
and FERMENTATION in all its FORMS

~ featuring ~



where ARTISTS explore the  
TIMELESS CONNECTION between land & people

a WORMFARM INSTITUTE initiative ~ visit [WORMFARMINSTITUTE.ORG](http://WORMFARMINSTITUTE.ORG) & [FERMENTATIONFEST.COM](http://FERMENTATIONFEST.COM)



Is this  
your last issue of *Verse  
Wisconsin*? Check your mailing  
label! If it says "111," you need to  
renew with the subscriber form on  
page 2.

# VERSE WISCONSIN

APRIL 2013

For the Fall 2013 online issue of *Verse Wisconsin*, we seek poems that explore "parents & children" from a variety of viewpoints. We are all someone's child. Many of us are also someone's parent. How do these identities feed our poetry? How do they fight our poetry? We are also open to verse drama, essay and more experimental or hybrid forms.

READING APRIL 1-MAY 15

MORE DETAILS & GUIDELINES ONLINE

## MORE *Verse Wisconsin* Online [versewisconsin.org](http://versewisconsin.org)

Selected poems, 1990-95, from *Hummingbird: Magazine of the Short Poem*, Guest Ed., CX Dillhunt | Poems in response to "Ellsworth Kelly Prints" at Madison Museum of Contemporary Art | *To Be Someone Who Would Impress You*, Verse Drama by Lynley ShimatLys | "EveryMom: How and *Why* to Support Wisconsin Writers" by Wendy Vardaman & Sarah Busse | "A Means to Open to the World: A Conversation Around Blogging" | *Contemporary Haiku: Where Do We Go From Here?* (Haiku Society of America in Chicago) | plus book reviews, audio/video by print & online contributors, & WI Poetry News

Join *VW* at the Society for the Study of  
Midwestern Literature (May 9-11, East  
Lansing, MI) & at the Olbrich Gardens  
Poetry Marathon (June 23, Madison)!

## from Cowfeather Press Summer 2013

Pre-Order Form (online order at [cowfeatherpress.org](http://cowfeatherpress.org))

\_\_\_\_\_ *Luz de Todos los Tiempos/ Light of All Times*,  
by Moisés Villavicencio Barras (available June)

\_\_\_\_\_ *Sister Satellite*, by Cathryn Cofell (available August)

Checks payable to *Verse Wisconsin*.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

email \_\_\_\_\_

# \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$15/copy \_\_\_\_\_

S&H @ \$3/copy, or pre-order  
both titles & get free shipping! \_\_\_\_\_

Total enclosed \_\_\_\_\_

Mail to

Cowfeather Press  
PO Box 620216  
Middleton, WI 53562

