



A grain of poetry serves to season a century – José Luis Martí

Language of Enchantment

News from the New Mexico State Poetry Society (NMSPS) July/August 2023

Welcome to the newsletter of the New Mexico State Poetry Society (NMSPS). To keep information flowing at a manageable rate, we have reinvented our newsletter to an email format. Look for it in your inbox every other month.

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A Word from the President

Bernadette Perez, NMSPS President

Dear Members,

“Full Steam Ahead” was the theme for the Society’s annual convention held on May 25 at the National Hispanic Cultural Center. It was a beautiful way to celebrate Earth Day with poetry and friends. Thank you to JC Wayne for leading an enthusiastic group that included children who came for the NHCC activities, then joined JC’s poetry walk in the Bosque, and later hung their poetry/art pieces in the catalpa Poet Tree Grove for us and future visitors to the Center to enjoy.

Gratitude to Kuan Tikkun for her wonderful ekphrasis workshop on NM Keystone Species (wolves, bees, saguaro cacti, beavers, and prairie dogs), with its spectacular photos and informative facts. Finally, muchas gracias to Emcee Marcial (Mars) Delgado for wrapping up this gift of a great day in a big, Haiku Slam ribbon.

We are grateful to Manuel Gonzalez and his poetry prodigy daughter Sarita for not only doing the jobs they were originally asked to do, but for stepping in at the last minute when our keynote speaker, Albuquerque Poet Laureate Anna Martinez, couldn’t come because of a death in her family. We were delighted by Manny and Sarita’s poetic duet and their insights into the value of poetry in both their lives. Apart from the insightful presentations, I also loved being able to connect with others in our various fields.

A special word of thanks, Manny, for showcasing the 8th grader accompanied by her parents who stayed all day but was the only young poet who showed up for our youth competition. You turned what could have been a big disappointment for her into an opportunity to shine, and shine she did! We didn’t get her name, but if anyone can get us in contact with her, we’d love to let folks know how special she is.

Massive thanks to Convention Chair Shirley Blackwell and the NHCC Director of Literary Arts Carson Morris, who organized the event. Everything was perfect, indoors

and outdoors. Carson, thanks again for your kind hospitality. We're looking forward to a long-term relationship with you.

It was a great honor for me to receive a special award for Grace in Leadership. I'm grateful to all of you who believe in me and have joined me on this unforgettable journey. I consider myself lucky to be surrounded by remarkable individuals who support the poetry community.

You make it happen!!

Bernadette



What Happens in Des Moines Won't Stay There

NMSPS President Bernadette Perez and Chancellor Shirley Blackwell (pictured below) traveled to Des Moines, Iowa, for the June 21-26 NFSPS Convention and BlackBerryPeach (BBP) National Slam Championship (finalists pictured above with champion Dove Dupree in the center in the orange shirt). The trips out and back were the sort of things that make the news (bad weather, cancellations, and other snafus) but either woman would do it again for the joy of experiencing a magical moment in time.

Des Moines was the first gathering at the national level of both Stage and Page poets. The NFSPS, or Federation, has taken bold steps to recognize slam as a powerful influence on and draw for young poets. I encourage you to read NFSPS President Paul Ford's front-page letter in the April issue of *Strophes* [here](#) for a more extensive explanation of its evolution within the NMSPS than I can provide here.

In fact, for those who keep asking about the relationship between the Federation and its affiliates, the NFSPS newsletter *Strophes* is your best source for answers. The April issue covers what was on tap at the convention/slam, as well as info in a front-page

article on the new NFSPS Learning Center. The next issue of *Strophes* will be out in early August and will contain a wrap-up of the Des Moines event, plus news from other state societies and a full list of this year's Annual Contest winners (look for our own Janet Ruth's wins.) Or, check out below in this issue for the article "Collaboration: Fourth of the Four Cs."

National Youth Slam Champion Vincent Ali.



Sacrificial Poet Shirley Blackwell at the after-hours slam.





Poetic Laurels (and Hardy)

Congrats to Janet Ruth, chair of our Albuquerque Chapter, for her three wins in the Annual NFSPS Contests. Within the Federation, Honorable Mentions are considered wins, although they don't receive cash prizes. So, Janet's Fifth HMs in Contest 13 (theme: Magical Connections) and Contest 49 (form: Rubaiyat, a kind of linked verse) certainly earned her bragging rights. Then, she actually hooked a cash Second Prize in Contest 6, the Winners Circle Award, for her poem "A Fine Kettle of Poem-Fish." When *Encore* is available on Amazon, probably in August, you'll want to order a copy and read this delightful, creative poem.

Have you heard of Haiku Slam? We have two winners in that arena as well. First, a description: In Haiku Slam, two opponents deliver their original haiku, which are usually judged by an odd number of victims – I mean judges – picked for their lack of acquaintance with the contestants. They are often given two objects (e.g., handkerchiefs or flags) that are dissimilar in some way (e.g., color or shape) to signal their vote. Judges sit in the audience, preferably near the exit in case the audience disagrees vehemently with their decisions. After each contestant pair has presented their haiku, the judges rule and the winner goes on to the next level.

At the NMSPS State Convention in May, Mars Delgado presided as slam master. Numerous members participated in the sudden-death elimination rounds (one haiku apiece, and it better be good), until only two were left standing. Finally, the champion was announced: All hail Jesse Ehrenberg! Jesse (pictured above) offered some classy examples that would have passed muster in any haiku contest.

The story was a bit different for Shirley Blackwell in Des Moines. Before the Finals for the 2023 BBP National Slam Championship, seven contestants showed up for the icebreaker Haiku Slam. When slam master Kevin Campbell (aka Noir Jente) asked for an eighth contestant, Shirley volunteered, thinking she could remember enough of her

haiku (not having brought any written poems with her) to get the contest rolling (and fully expecting to be eliminated in another sudden-death first or second round).

Shirley was quickly disabused of that notion. When Noir Jente explained that it would be the best 2 out of 3 for each matchup, she realized that she could remember only three haiku total and the rest had fled her brain. To her chagrin, she won the first round. The rest of the contest was a blur of haiku improv, in which she plagiarized from her opponents' poems, revealed family secrets, and told corny jokes in 17 syllables or less. The weird thing is that she won the slam, probably on the basis of sheer bravado and because no money was involved. On the bright side, it did the job of icebreaker and people were still laughing the next day.



Collaboration: Fourth of the Four Cs

This is the last of four articles on why NMSPS benefits by its affiliation with the NFSPS. Today, let's talk about collaboration between State Societies and our parent Federation. The NFSPS assists Societies in ways seldom seen by the rank and file, but ask a State president and you will learn how crucial that help can be.

For decades, State presidents met only once a year, in person, at the Federation's Annual Convention. Now, State presidents meet quarterly on Zoom to exchange ideas and best practices as well as to find solutions to common problems. State affiliates have more direct discourse with the NFSPS Board and more input into policies that affect their Societies. Zoom has also allowed NFSPS to reach out to states where we had no member Societies. Since the beginning of the pandemic, North Dakota, Nebraska, and Kansas have joined the Federation, the most growth we have seen in some years.

The Federation has invested in technology to support inter-Society communication. For

example, Federation and Societies' websites are linked so that Societies can advertise contests and events nationally and make themselves known to poets in their area looking for a group to join. The NFSPS webmaster even built two small websites for Societies who could not afford or lacked the expertise to do their own. Indeed, the Federation hosts them on its own platform. The most recent addition to the site is Learning Central.

NFSPS invests in a robust Submittable.com plan that allows us to submit, receive, and judge thousands of poem entries electronically. This greatly streamlines the publication process for five annual NFSPS publications: *Encore*, the *Barbara Stevens MS*, two college chapbooks, and the BlackBerry Peach Prizes chapbook. All of them are now done in the space of a few months, whereas it used to take a year to publish *Encore*. It is now typical to announce contest winners in June and have *Encore* available by August. Entrants are saved the postage and hassle that go with submitting paper copies, and discounted member entry fees are still yours with the click of a mouse.

Some NFSP affiliates run monthly or occasional poetry contests, and they turn to members of other Societies to find judges. Because volunteerism is key in the Federation, judges are not paid. If you judge a contest that results in a publication, you generally get a complimentary copy. By autumn of this year, I will have judged two state contests and one of the 50+ national annual contests. I'm not the only person in NMSPS – or other State Societies – who does this fairly often.

This article concludes the series in which I've tried to answer the perpetual question, "What's in it for me to join NMSPS and, by default, the National Federation?" To me, that's akin to asking, "What's in it for me to be a volunteer firefighter, or a Little League coach, or a museum docent?" The answer is **not** lots of cash in your pocket. If, however, you are into psychic income, the pleasure of sharing ideas with like-minded creatives, honing your poetic skills, and being part of a community that supports your growth as a poet, then welcome to NMSPS and to the NFSPS.



Squish that Phish

NMSPS takes care to keep our members' contact information confidential. Only selected officers have access to the Society's membership contact information, but anyone holding an office in the organization (Executive Board, Appointed Board and Chapter Chairs) can be contacted by the public through their NMSPS email addresses.

Officeholders, if you get unwanted ads, solicitations or inquiries *not* related to your job (marketing or bookkeeping services, charity appeals, arts happenings, etc.), disregard them; or, if they look germane, forward them to President Bernadette Perez at president@nmpoetry.com.

If you don't hold an NMSPS office, but suspect your contact information has been obtained through our website, please alert both Bernadette and our website manager at webmaster@nmpoetry.com. You can also contact them by going to our website and clicking on the **Contact Us** tab at the top of the home page.



Meet New Membership Chair Jan Baca

For the first time in recent memory, we have a designated Membership Chair! This crucial job has, in the past, fallen on the shoulders of our treasurers and/or webmaster, because keeping track of our members consists largely of knowing how our software systems for online member registration, dues, and renewals function together.

Fortunately, Jan Baca (Albuquerque Chapter) is familiar with such electronic systems, having worked for more than a decade in educational and community institutions where such gadgets flourish. We were so pleased to welcome Jan aboard last month, and she actually volunteered – no arm twisting required. Jan has already gone to work with our webmaster, Debbi, to learn the ropes (or is it wires?) of our setup. To read Jan's

author bio, go to our website at www.nmpoetry.com and click the tab that says **Who We Are**, and under that click **Meet Our Board**.



It's 2023. Do You Know Where Your Website Is?

A world of information about NMSPS is at your fingertips – the ones that operate your computer mouse. We redesigned our [website](#), and if you visit it and look around, you will see that it contains all kinds of information. The website is equipped to serve as Information Central for NMSPS, but few of our members go there first.

To get you better acquainted with what the website contains, I offer this challenge: I'll publish the name of and kudos for the first person who can tell me how to find the suggestion box that resides on our website. Write me using the email address (another thing for you to find) provided on our website.

Your Friendly Newsletter Editor



JC Takes a Turn From the Verse

JC Wayne served a short but powerful stint as our Youth Chair, introducing us to the concept of Poetry and Art in Nature walks, a rethinking of how to do Poetry in the Classroom, and other concepts for intergenerational programs.

However, in life as in a sonnet, there are sometimes sudden turns, and that happened for JC in June. She decided that, for the foreseeable future, she needs to concentrate solely on her work as a visual artist. Therefore, she has resigned her positions as Youth Chair for both NMSPS and the Federation.

JC, we thank you for your contributions to poetry and wish you good fortune in your art career. We will miss you and hope to see you soon back in the Land of Enchantment.



Job Vacancies. We Want You!

Yes, life happens and folks come and go. Unfortunately, two of our NMSPS officers, JC Wayne and Treasurer Liz Steppe, are leaving their positions on the Board to handle more pressing life and career issues.

So, both the Youth chairmanship and the Treasurer's jobs are now vacant. We have more youth members than ever and would like to see even more in NMSPS. If you are interested in helping us build a youth chapter, contact president@nmpoetry.com.

The Treasurer's job needs someone who knows or will learn how to work with Excel, has bookkeeping experience, and can attend quarterly Board meetings and NMSPS activities involving financial transactions, such as fundraisers or state conventions. The Treasurer is also responsible for annual online filing of three official forms with IRS and NM agencies regarding our nonprofit status. NMSPS has an established process and software system to manage much of the work, but the job requires someone who can be available day-to-day.

The Treasurer is essential to the smooth running of our Society. If you can do this job, please consider volunteering; contact Bernadette at the address given above.



Argos MacCallum and Teatro Paraguas: A Home for Poetry in Santa Fe

Argos MacCallum is all things to Teatro Paraguas, the Santa Fe, NM, theater he co-founded 18 years ago with his father. At Teatro Paraguas, or “umbrella theater,” Argos is artistic director, as well as actor, poet, playwright, director, set builder, set designer, sound and light technician, webmaster, box office manager and grant writer.

“Without poetry, there is no theatre,” says Argos. “So it’s important to provide a stage for poetry to encourage the many fabulous poets in our community to write and share their work.”

Recently, Argos was honored as one of the [10 Who Made a Difference for 2022](#) by the Santa Fe New Mexican. The Santa Fe Poetry Trails chapter of NMSPS owes a special debt to Argos because, for the past nine years, Teatro Paraguas has graciously hosted the first Monday evening of the month poetry readings for Santa Fe Poetry Trails. Congratulations, Argos! We’ll see you next month.

MEETINGS & EVENTS

Upcoming poetry meetings and events are listed below. For complete details on these and future events, click the **NM Poetry Calendar** button below, or go to [this link](#).

[NM Poetry Calendar](#)

The NMSPS Board of Directors

Contact Our Board

To contact any of the leaders listed below, go to our website, www.nmpoetry.com, and click on the “Contact Us” tab. Click on the person’s name, and a simple form will pop up on which you can comment, and your message will be sent directly to that person in a way that notifies them it concerns NMSPS. Or, you can send it to the email addresses listed below. Although personnel may change, the assigned emails will persist for future holders of the respective offices. The chapter affiliations of current individual board members are in parentheses.

Executive Board

President: Bernadette Perez (RGV) president@nmpoetry.com

Vice President: Edward Pittman (SFPT) vicepresident@nmpoetry.com

Secretary: Stan Crawford (ABQ) secretary@nmpoetry.com

Treasurer: *position vacant* treasurer@nmpoetry.com

Chapter Chairs

Albuquerque: Janet Ruth (ABQ) abq_chair@nmpoetry.com

Rio Grande Valencia: Kuan Tikkun (RGV) rgv_chair@nmpoetry.com

River Poets (Silver City): Lynne Zotalis (RP) rp_chair@nmpoetry.com

Santa Fe Poetry Trails: Edward Pittman (SFPT) sfpt_chair@nmpoetry.com

Appointive Board (Directors)

Chancellor: Shirley Blackwell (RGV) chancellor@nmpoetry.com

Newsletter Editor: Shirley Blackwell (RGV) newsletter@nmpoetry.com

Membership: Jan Baca membership@nmpoetry.com
Youth: *position vacant* youth@nmpoetry.com

Website questions or comments? Contact webmaster@nmpoetry.com

Have a question, comment, or suggestion? We want to hear from you!

Contact us!

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