



poetrynow

March 2007

"Relax / I tell them / you're inside / poetry now" —Julia Connor

Congratulations
to the winners
of the 2006 SPC
poetry contest
selected by Julia Connor

First Prize

Cathleen Williams

Sacramento, for her poem "Ferry"

Second Prize

Marie Reynolds

Sacramento, for her poem "Off-Season"

Third Prize

Timothy Russell

Toronto, Ohio, for his poem "Selected Poems"

Honorable Mentions

Dewell H. Byrd Eureka, for "Sparrows on Barbed Wire"

J. Patricia Connolly New York City, for "Exile is it?"

Do Gentry Sacramento, for "The Auction"

Thomas Goff Carmichael (2 awards) for "To An Afflicted One" and "Watercolors at Negro Bar"

Lara Gularte Magalia, CA, for "A River Story"

Dianna Henning Janesville, CA, for "Tremor"

Barbara Jennings-Link, Sacramento, for "Montana Wheat Field"

Theresa McCourt, Sacramento, for "Along the Canal"

Cathleen Williams, Sacramento, for "I drove past"

Finalists

J. Patricia Connolly, Do Gentry, Thomas Goff, Lisa Falls Hall, Dianna Henning, Frances Kakugawa, Nancy Ling, Ellaraine Lockie, Elena Minor, Marie Reynolds, Barbara Schweitzer, Craig Strauss, Jean Tupper, Christopher Watkins, Cathleen Williams, and Megan Willis.

Thanks to everyone who submitted their work, and also to assistant judges Brad Buchanan, Indigo Moor, Frank Graham, and Allison Himelright.

First Prize

Cathleen Williams

Ferry

soiled sequined burden, unbelievable Manhattan
heap on a granite sliver under stainless April steel –

this day, the day, this nation visits Fallujah
a second, ruinous time.

you feel the tremor of the engine, crossing
the filthy channel, churning past liberty,

fabric of her sleeve collapsing around the shoulder
of her raised copper arm.

you pour off with everyone, beckoned by the streets—
near Gowanus canal, in Brooklyn, satin-tight streetwalkers

crowd the doorways, brave as red geraniums.
a man on the sidewalk, knitted cap over his hair

wrings his fingers in front of his face.
Tree raises young branch, bare.

What can you do?
What, what?

Hold your hands
over the cities

cover them, cover them
if you can.

winner's reading

Mark your calendar for Monday April 9th
when many of these poets will read
their winning poems at SPC.

Poetry Now, Sacramento's literary review and calendar, is published at least ten times a year by the Sacramento Poetry Center, and is funded in part with grants from the Sacramento Metropolitan Arts Commission.

Submissions of poems, artwork, reviews, and other work of interest to the Sacramento poetry community are welcome. Work must be accompanied by a SASE for return. Note that work submitted to SPC's publications may appear on SPC's website as well: www.sacramentopoetrycenter.org.

Please submit to 1719 25th Street, Sacramento CA 95814, or via email to: poetrynow@sacramentopoetrycenter.org.

Poetry Now is distributed in area bookshops, Sacramento County libraries, and by mail to SPC member-subscribers. If you are interested in receiving *Poetry Now*, or want multiple copies to share with others, please contact us at the above address.

Editor: Bob Stanley
Design: Richard Hansen
Contributing Editor: Tim Kahl
Poetry Editor: Frank Graham
Calendar Editor: Allison Himelright



The Poet Tree, Inc., also known as **The Sacramento Poetry Center**, is a non-profit corporation dedicated to providing forums for local poets—including publications, workshops, and a reading series. SPC is entirely run by a volunteer board of directors.

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poetrynow@sacramentopoetrycenter.org
(916) 979-9706.

Visit our website:

www.sacramentopoetrycenter.org



president's message

Thanks to **Julia Connor** for her work in selecting the winning poems from our 2006 contest that grace this issue of *Poetry Now*. As I type them in to this document, late in February, I marvel at the quality and range of the work. Be sure to read them all — I feel these poems make a remarkable collection.

SPC was happy to host a very full house in February for **Judy Halebsky** and **Theresa McCourt**, and our other February readings were well-attended as well. Thanks to all our featured readers, hosts, and everyone who attended and helped out. March will be another full month with excellent events every Monday. On March 5 we offer our first story-telling night with the multi-talented **Angela J. James**. On March 12, **Indigo Moor** celebrates his new book, *Tap-Root*, with a reading at California Stage. **Jennifer Sweeney** is coming up from the bay area to read that night as well. **Ricardo Sternberg** from Toronto and **Stephen Yenser** from Los Angeles will be here on March 19th — Stephen has a new book, *Blue Guide*, from University of Chicago Press, and Ricardo's 2003 collection *Bamboo Church* was reprinted in 2006. Stephen heads the UCLA creative writing program, and he was my first poetry teacher, in 1975. Hmm, maybe I'll bring a few old pieces from the archives. **Tim Bellows**, who reads on March 26, is a poet, writer and teacher devoted to wildland, the simplicity of inner travel, and Mozart's notion about "love, love, love as the soul of genius." Sound like a full month of poetry? Save room for April—be there for "Poetic Justice"—a fundraiser for **frank andrick** on April 2, The SPC Contest winners' reading will be on April 9, followed by SPC's High School poets on April 16, and our Writers' Workshop on the weekend of April 20-21. Stay tuned for more verse.

"It takes a village," continued. We welcome **Frank Graham** to the SPC board. A regular at the Tuesday night workshop, Frank will become Poetry Editor for *Poetry Now*, and looks forward to reading the work that comes from you, our readers! Send us your poetry now. We also welcome CSUS intern **Allison Himelright**, who is now Calendar Editor. Allison will keep track of all the venues and readings that go on in the Sacramento region. I thank both of them for their assistance, and thank you for your readership.

Send your information — readings, poems, reviews, announcements, new memberships, questions, and oh, did I mention donations — ? — to SPC, at 1719 25th Street, Sacramento, 95814, or emails to poetrynow@sacramentopoetrycenter.org. We're here for you, but we need your help. Thanks as always.

—Bob

Second Prize Marie Reynolds

Off-Season

Morning, we linger in the Red Moose Café with the Caltrans crew, and Nate & Tami, who own the place, a cup of coffee and mid-week news. In the afternoon rain begins. We listen to Mozart, Rutter, Faure. I watch you doze on the iron bed, toss and sigh, try to slow your shallow breathing. It's quiet here. The phone in the lodge seldom rings. A red sign blinks *VACANCY*. We like it, though – the sky is low and no one comes. A river runs through the canyon below, pummels and sprays unsettled rock. Friction. Resistance. We're restless. I listen. I watch you breathe. You prod the embers in the Franklin stove, swallow your pills with a Diet Coke. We don't say *hope*, we wait and see. The innkeeper rummages outside our door. Your hand is warm. *We're lucky*, you say, and I agree. We come to lodge in solid rooms. We leave the windows open at night. We let the sound of the river in.

“Poetry—distinguished poetry—can be made out of anything at all, as long as that thing is lovingly, intensely attended to and the product is written in lines.”

—STEPHEN YENSER (who reads at SPC on March 19th)
from his letter to the editor of *Poetry* magazine,
published in the November issue.

Third Place Timothy Russell

Selected Poems

They whirled and flurried from the sky.
They came to me in the middle of the night,
some silently, some clumsily bumping into things.
They stuck their tongues in my mouth.
Some slunk along the edge of the river bank
like feral cats. Some ran ahead of me
like those bumpkins in Pamplona.
They flicked their beautiful tail feathers.
They took things personally and sulked or pouted.
They undressed and got dressed.
They spoke to strangers and took up with them.
Some recovered from one trauma or another.
Some did not. One saved somebody's life.
They fed me. They traveled with me.
They ventured out of the woods
and nibbled dead meat beside the highway.
They whispered in my good ear.
They scuttled down the street
behind cars and muscular pickups.
They got taken in by shysters.
Some went off somewhere to find themselves.
They danced around in skimpy outfits.
Some slowly became themselves
as if they didn't know what else to do.

Poetry



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for six days of writing**

ONLINE, MARCH 18-23, 2007
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Honorable Mention Lara Gularte

A River Story

My young years,
long days to catch minnows.
Baptisms of dunk-my-head-under
for as long as I could,
then breathe out bubbles.
A walk under cottonwoods
along moist banks
to hunt treasures –
oak galls,
the lizard's tail.
I threw a penny into bright waters,
made a wish,
Copper shone back at me.

Forty years gone,
my days shorter.
The river dark and cold,
filled with mud and stink,
dead crayfish.
The spongy bank
does not spring back.
I trip over a buzzard's bones,
stare into the third eye
of a mutant frog.
In my mouth the taste of metal.
If you lick my heart
it will poison you.



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Honorable Mention Barbara Jennings-Link

Montana Wheat Field

1.
I stand
in wheat,
half a yardstick high,
grasshoppers spring into my cupped hands,
Dad counts heads of hail-damaged stalks.

Suddenly,
rattler, rattler, rattler,
clicks like tap shoes on a car roof,
flat head,
polished agate eyes,
a coiled hemp hose braided with diamonds,
tail like Salome's hips.

An angel of a snake.

2.
I think of frogs moving through the snake's belly,
dissolving like bar soap in wet fingers,
first the leaf-green skin,
then flaky white flesh that tastes like chicken,
then putrid yellow lungs, burping air,
then tiny pounding rosebud heart,
last the white lace bones.

3.
Dad grabs a broken shovel,
strikes,
slicing head from eight-foot body,
brown and yellow kaleidoscope:
the hard earth,
Dad's khaki pants and yellow straw hat,
the linen colored wheat and dust on my shoes,
the broken handle of the shovel,
the dried mud on
the rusty blade.

Honorable Mention Dianna Henning

Tremor

The night your father came to your bedside,
your feet stopped growing.
Farfetched as this sounds,
it's the truth.
Toes crimped their knobby stumps,
soles went flat. Soon, even feet
get high-jacked by *bush* and *tell no one*,
and you want to disappear
into your *Walt Disney* nightclothes,
an irritable scream ransacking
the entire globe of your body,
a scream you'll wear
for the rest of your life,
its tremor making it difficult to hold ground,
to fasten the difficult;
—that someone you loved
did this, the unthinkable,
that night's no longer trustworthy,
nor will you seek cover
again in anything.
This means that you're conscripted
to live on the dead,
who, after all, like Atlas
hold the quaking world.

Call for submissions

Suisun Valley Review is looking for poetry,
prose and short fiction (not to exceed 2500 words).
Their deadline is March 31st and they ask for a
brief bio and an SASE with submissions.
Please help pass the word to interested friends.

send to:

SUISUN VALLEY REVIEW
Humanities Division
Solano Community College
4000 Suisun Valley Road
Fairfield, CA 94534-3197

Honorable Mention Dewell H. Byrd

Sparrows on Barbed Wire

them vacant eyes
stare right through us
an' our black-and-white
like we're not drivin' by
not even here

look over there, Joe
two in a doorway
one on the curb
three at the dumpster
two on the dock
shoes off
warmin' feet
dryin' old clothes

shoppin' carts line up
place holders
at St. Vinnie's
eight for soup and bread

when there's a bunch of 'em
shopkeepers'll
call the station
our radio'll crackle

we'll cruise back
swing our night sticks
bust some skulls
whack knees

scram
scatter
move on

you know, Joe, I keep spectin' to find
my momma down here some day...
her bein ah alkie an' all

MARCH 2007

www.sacramentopoetrycenter.org

1 Thursday

Poetry Unplugged

TBA. 8pm. Luna's Café. 1414 16th St. Hosted by Mario Ellis Hill. Open mic before/after. Free. Info: 441-3931. www.lunascafe.com

3 Saturday

Escritores del Nuevo Sol

Writing workshop & potluck. 11am. La Raza Galeria Posada, 1024 22nd St. Info: Graciela Ramirez, 456-5323 or joannpen@comcast.net

4 Sunday

PoemSpirits

Kathy Kieth. 6pm. Unitarian Universalist Society of Sacramento. 2425 Sierra Blvd, between Howe & Fulton. Co-Host Nora Staklis will offer a brief presentation on late poet Gwendolyn Brooks. Free. Open mic follows. Info: Tom Goff, 481-3312. www.uuss.org.

5 Monday

Sacramento Poetry Center

Angela James and friends. 7:30pm. HQ. 1719 25th. Hosted by Bob Stanley.

6 Tuesday

Sacramento Poetry Center

Poetry Workshop. 7:30pm. Hart Senior Center, 27th & J. Facilitated by Danyen Powell. Bring 15-20 copies of your one-page poem. Info: Danyen (530) 756-6228

Moore time for Poetry

Terry Moore. Access Television Show. 9pm. Co-host Tyra Moore. Access Sacramento, Channel 17.

8 Thursday

Poetry Unplugged

TBA. 8pm. Luna's Café. 1414 16th St. Hosted by Geoffrey Neill. Open mic before/after. Free. Info: 441-3931. www.lunascafe.com

Vibe Sessions

8-11pm. Cobbler Inn. 3520 Stockton Blvd (next to Colonial Theater.) Hosted by Flo Real. All ages. \$5. Open Mic.

—March 19th at the Poetry Center—

English 133 Reunion

Stephen Yenser & Ricardo Sternberg

Poet, UCLA professor and critic Stephen Yenser comes to Sacramento to read for the first time at the behest of former student Bob Stanley (class of '75). Joining Yenser will be another member of that long-ago poetry workshop, Ricardo Sternberg, who now teaches at the University of Toronto. Bob Stanley will host, and provide dim memories of what poetry students might have looked like in the days before MFA programs!

9 Friday

Poets & Writers Magazine

Literary Roundtable. 10-12pm. SPC/HQ, 1719 25th St. An opportunity to connect with others involved in promoting the literary arts (presenters, publisher's event organizers, lit groups, etc.)

12 Monday

Sacramento Poetry Center

Board of Directors meeting. 5:45pm. HQ. 1719 25th St. All are welcome to attend.

Sacramento Poetry Center

Indigo Moor's Book Release Party. With **Jennifer Sweeney.** 7:30pm (doors open at 7pm.) *Note location change:* "The Space", 2509 R Street (around the corner from HQ.) Hosted by Art Mantecon. Moor's new book, *Tap-Root*, was selected by Main Street Rag for their Editor's Select Poetry Series. Jennifer Sweeney's book, *Salt Memory*, won the 2006 Main Street Rag Poetry Award. Refreshments, Limited edition broadsides, and Poems-For-All chaplettes provided.

13 Tuesday

Sacramento Poetry Center

Poetry Workshop. 7:30pm. Hart Senior Center, 27th & J. Facilitated by Danyen Powell. Bring 15-20 copies of your one-page poem. Info: Danyen (530) 756-6228

Bistro 33 Poetry Series

8:30 pm. Bistro 33 in Historic Davis City Hall. 226 F Street (3rd & F Sts.), Davis. Open Mic after.

14 Wednesday

Rattlesnake Press Reading

Steve Williams. 7:30pm. The Book Collector. 1008 24th St. Hosted by Kathy Kieth. Read-around follows.

Radio show

Dr. Andy's Poetry & Technology Hour. 5pm.

Host: Andy Jones. KDVS—90.3 FM or subscribe to podcast at www.kdvs.org.

15 Thursday

Poetry Unplugged

TBA. 8pm. Luna's Café. 1414 16th St. Hosted by Frank Andrick. Open mic before/after. Free. Info: 441-3931. www.lunascafe.com

16 Friday

La Noche de los Viejitos/

Night of the Elders

CoMadres Artistas Tribute

in the form of music, poems, and verbal tributes to honor artists who have depicted, expressed, promoted, and preserved the images of the lives and ideals of the Chicano/Latino community. La Raza Galeria Posada. 1024 22nd St. Hosted by Juan Carillo. \$5 (Suggested, but no one turned away for lack of funds. Info: 456-5323.

17 Saturday

Underground Poetry Series

Terry Moore CD & book release party. 7-9pm. Underground Books. 2814 35th St. (35th and Broadway.) \$3. Open mic. Terry's new spoken word CD, *Validated*, also features: Poet He Spit Fire, vocalists Yardley Griffin, Mae Gee, Calvin Lymos and rapper Izreal.

Poetry in Placerville

Red Fox Underground

members will read, following the Third Saturday Art Walk Reception for a photographic exhibit by **Irene Lipshin.** Art Walk 5:30pm. Reading 7pm. Cozmic Café, Placerville. The poets will focus on the theme of Lipshin's photographs—*A Courage of Words*—focusing on the power of non-violence to create change in our world. Red Fox Underground includes poets **Taylor Graham, Irene Lipshin, Moira Magneson, Brigit Truex, Kate Wells, and Wendy Patrice Williams.**

Friends of the Center for

Contemporary Art, Sacramento (CCAS) honors Victoria Dalkey. 5-8pm. Through the publication of numerous articles Victoria, An art correspondent for the *Sacramento Bee*, has raised awareness and interest in the arts in the Sacramento region and beyond. The event includes appetizers and will be held at the home of Burnett and Mimi Miller. \$50/members, \$70/non-members. Info: 498-9811.

19 Monday

Sacramento Poetry Center

Stephen Yenser and Ricardo Sternberg. 7:30pm. HQ. 1719 25th. Hosted by Bob Stanley. *See box for details.*

20 Tuesday

Sacramento Poetry Center

Poetry Workshop. 7:30pm. Hart Senior Center, 27th & J. Facilitated by Danyen Powell. Bring 15-20 copies of your one-page poem. Info: Danyen (530) 756-6228

calendar continued

22 Thursday

Poetry at Sac City College
Gerald Haslam. Noon. Sacramento City College, small auditorium (Room A6). Free. Haslam was born in Bakersfield and raised in Oildale, the setting of most of his books. Much of his writing has sought to bring his native state's image more into line with its reality. He has particularly celebrated California's rural and small town areas, its poor and working class people of all colors, to explore the human condition. His most recent book *Grace Period*, was published in 2006.

Moore time for Poetry
Terry Moore. Access Television Show. 9pm. Co-host Tyra Moore. Access Sacramento, Ch. 17.

Poetry Unplugged
Phil Weidman and **Laura Hohlwein.** 8pm. Luna's Café. 1414 16th St. Hosted by B.L. Kennedy. Open mic before/after. Free. Info: 441-3931. www.lunascafe.com

Venue Notes:

February 10 was Patricity's last show in Sacramento, before she moved to Texas. Here's her e-mail farewell and thank you to her fans, and members of the Sacramento poetry community:

"Just a note to say thank you to you all for the continued support throughout the years. It has helped me be successful at getting a message out in poetry. God bless you all and keep you. I truly appreciated all the help you have given to get the word out, I mean that from the depths of my heart."

26 Monday

Sacramento Poetry Center
Tim Bellows. 7:30pm. HQ. 1719 25th. Hosted by Tim Kahl. Bellows teaches writing at Sierra College. His *Huts Under Smooth Hills* was nominated for the 23rd Annual Pushcart Prize. *Sunlight From Another Day—Poems In & Out of the Body* has just been published by AuthorHouse Press. He is the editor of the monthly e-newsletter *Lightship News*, and runs a blog—golden.timbellows.com—for travelers and radical mystics.

27 Tuesday

Sacramento Poetry Center
Poetry Workshop. 7:30pm. Hart Senior Center, 27th & J. Facilitated by Danyen Powell. Bring 15-20 copies of your one-page poem. Info: Danyen (530) 756-6228

Radio show
Dr. Andy's Poetry & Technology Hour. 5pm. Host: Andy Jones. KDVS—90.3 FM or subscribe to podcast at www.kdvs.org.

29 Thursday

Poetry Unplugged
Kathy Kieth. 8pm. Luna's Café. 1414 16th St. Hosted by Frank Andrick. Open mic before/after. Free. Info: 441-3931. www.lunascafe.com

31 Saturday

"The Show" Poetry Series. 9 pm at Wo'se Community Center (Off 35th and Broadway), 2863 35th Street, Sacramento. \$5.00. Info: T.Mo at (916) 455-POET.

SPC Writers' Workshop

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Brad Henderson
Tim Kahl

Friday April 20

Reading from 7:30pm to 9pm

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Workshops from 9am to 4pm

Send registration to:

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SPC Writers' Workshop Registration

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CHECK ENCLOSED PAY AT THE DOOR

Any questions?

email us at poetrynow@sacramentopoetrycnet.org or call at 979-9706

Two Honorable Mentions

Tom Goff

To An Afflicted One

Odd how the dulling diseases
lightly cats-paw, then claw down, the aged
yet take name from the brilliant revealers,
healers—Alzheimer, Parkinson:
science-men greenleaf in prime,
wizards gifted as life itself
at chafing or flensing down
through accident into essence
to that denser flesh that is bone.
But these ones can't unriddle your ills.
My mother the more demented
the more drolly interpreted
Dr. Seuss out loud for us all.
The plate stays with the people
—your quip when lately admonished,
Don't toss dinner plates in the garbage—
seems of weight for the state or the steeple.
Proof of your ironies, even the small,
mere lame puns and homely jests,
hold a gnomonic significance;
you confront now the specialist's implement
—steel edge kissing mind into ice.

Watercolors at Negro Bar

Some names must keep an indelible disgrace.
Negro Bar retains that troubling odor
Argonauts gave off, dubbing the others *colored*,
demarcating—baiting—rival miners by race.

My parents and I did nothing to cleanse this trace
that skulks in our nostrils like catbox scent. Well...over
long disquiet, superimpose a layer
of intent. My task: to savor the quiet expanse,

paint the long river, limn the wide wind that spreads
big folds in the air, sails of invisible weave
and colorless color. (There it is again: color.) Wave
a warlock wand, change air into wet on wet.

Now Courtney tutors Sandy C. and Nora,
Sandy D. and me, revealing the sinuosities
riverbanks model in sand around velocity
and volume. The sky goes gray, and blue the shore,

so long do we gaze. More than appearance alters;
the straight-backed bluff turns cloud. I don't feel faint,
just forget my me. Take brush. Dip in. Now paint.
Does the river have liquid skin? Am I a color?

finalist

When He Stared into the Lake He Saw Nothing but Himself, and Wept

by Craig J. Strauss

I dreamt of roaming a Bukowski poem
terrified, drunk, surrounded by hipsters
speaking but not saying anything at all.
I stroll sardonic streets without names
and return hollow, black and blue
to my black and white snow filled screen.
Crooks crowd the city at night
and gamble futures for pennies and paramours.
Cynicism stains the walls of my bedroom
as I hum Dylan dirges
through wine soaked cigar plumes.
A pen is my heart, his hands my hands,
and every mark on the page a piece of me.
If I were Ginsberg's I'd be far more critical
fueled by dissent, angry at The American Empire
cursing them Russians them Russians and them Russians.

But I was born into this
from the lonesome rambling mind of Charles' insanity
yearning for affection, devotion, lust, and love
so I may finally set down the bottle
and realize my own demonless dreams of complacency.

Honorable Mention Do Gentry

The Auction

You close your eyes and the rooms
begin to empty: trunks and featherbeds
and ladderback chairs. All the awkward
paraphernalia of the living:
chandeliers and sofas, a parlor grand
long out of tune. An oval cheval glass
in a cherry wood frame, forgotten
by the movers, stands bereft
as a black-veiled widow in a corner
of the rose garden, surrounded
by wilting Voodooos and Pristines.
The emptiness the mirror reflects
was here all the time,
disguised by carpets and curio cabinets,
a grandfather clock that always struck the hour
a little too soon.

Honorable Mention Theresa McCourt

Along the Canal

Unmooring behind the backs
of coal-darkened warehouses,
small window after small window
smashed or cracked,

we saw the spoilage
the rusty pipes crisscrossed
over and under,
leaking corrosives.

But the murky water seemed
to renew in a meadowy place,
with coots and moorhens calling.

The twilight returned starlings,
thousands swirling,
pouring themselves into the reeds.

That night, head against the stern,
I dreamt my first living creature,
a slate-eyed wolf, staring.

Thirty years later, I am parked
in a new, mostly empty lot:

And birds, just past dawn, ruse and
fall on ground they cannot enter,
splintering the air into bits of black ash.

Honorable Mention Cathleen Williams

I drove past

I drove past the stairs where you wrenched your body
upwards each night. The door's red. I'd forgotten.

You worked at the welfare department then
that sand colored fortress on Mission Street.

They don't call it "Welfare" any more.
Just "Temporary Assistance" now.

We're worn down – the very survival you scorned,
telling me I was crazy not to be mad.

All my life you brushed away my hair
both of your hands around my face.

All of my life the sly, slanted glance
of my child-like eyes watched you.

On that last night when I went home to sleep,
restlessly, your breath rose up and up

until it blew away, far, far,
against the fury of the stars.

Mother, gone today five years: a Tuesday.
Your sycamore blowing rust and gold.

Honorable Mention J. Patricia Connolly

Exile is it?

Setting yourself to rights, you put the bright days in boxes,
and left the gardens you'd made to rework themselves with weeds.
When you got back, the bright days had turned into frail clippings—
texts, dates a mystery, all touch of warm air, skin were gone.
After the first box, your texture brittle, you were gone too,
scattering balls of dust and hair along the interstates.
You were leaving a trail so someone could track you, find you,
or decide against finding you, whoever you are now.

You learned to walk on those same pre-Roman roads I learned on,
followed those intimate instructions of the ancestors,
became their descendant one step at a time, as I did,
stumbling along their instinctive ruts—see where it's got us,
the gardens you made muddled in the wild, and you long gone.

**A Boy to His Girl
(In Front of Her Front Door)**

by Tim Bellows

Here is a nothing I can say to you
in less than a whisper and mean it

on the blue-paint porch.
I stumble just

standing in front of you.
Your blond colors,

long woven ropes
like the meat of a living tree.

Your eyes, gray ocean light.
Here. Here is an embarrassed flower.

I care, but can say so little.
It's no matter. I only plead with you

to be awake as the great No Thing
steps near in a grand maroon robe and hands us

nothing less than the essence of love,
and the terror leaves my legs.

Welcome in, Doors Slam

by Tim Bellows

Little sticks of us, laughing, screeching.
Snowy wetness melts into our clothes.

There's company so they run us up
to a squeaky tub. They're
so quick about it,
our toes and noses

still feel freezy; they rub us dry
so fast we stagger. Here's a tuck in
and prayers — now our beds
fill with warmth and breathing.

So much talk – loudness we can't make out —
swirls up from the first floor. Relatives
roar and clink glasses and silver.

Candles

swim in their wine. What's in
wine? What's in their fun, their eating, hugging,
knocking a chair over? We grip
dark green blankets around us and feel
sounds through wood and pipes and plaster.

We can't sleep.

But we turn over and everything rolls
into daylight — we spin
down a hill of sun-filled snow.

finalist

Sansei Woman

by Frances H. Kakugawa

I am generations of women
Looking in at layers of silk kimonos,
Muffled giggles, koto movements,
Knowing they can only be
Mere images of desire.

I am generations of women
Waiting to be dragonfly wings,
A maple leaf, spiraling snowflake,
A cherry blossom,
Released and detached from
Generations of cultural clasps.

I am generations of women,
Suppressed in thin yukata
Stuck ankle deep in rice fields,
Scarecrows on wooden stakes.
Denied, yet desiring wantonness
Beneath layers of silk.

I am woman,
Suppressed,
Dying.

TIM BELLOWS, with a graduate degree from the Iowa Writers' Workshop, teaches writing at Sierra College in Northern California and is devoted to wildland and inner travels His *Huts Under Smooth Hills* was nominated for the 23rd Annual Puschart Prize. His book *Sunlight From Another Day* has just been published by AuthorHouse Press. He is the editor of a monthly e-newsletter called *Lightship News* and is the administrator of the blog *writer 999* at <http://sky999.blogspot.com/>.

Leah Zeff DenBoer

June 20, 1932 – January 21, 2007

Gone, gone,
gone beyond,
gone altogether beyond.
O what an awakening!

from The Heart Sutra

The Murderer Next Door

by Steve Williams

1.

In dark infancy are rooms of infra-red,
blankets of sound-proofing that hide
an infant's cry.

Inside asbestos skin, I hear blood
pulse through my temples like heated air
through stainless ductwork,
the whirl of advancing film inside
my camera skull.

I dig blood-rusted nails into my ear canal,
scrape the grit of scabs, try to free myself
from the deep noise—like ants in their burrows.

2.

I follow him to Idaho, find another job cutting hair.
He takes me out into the wilderness, a place
at the end of gravel, lies me on the hood of the car.

Afterwards, all I remember is the river hiss,
the rush of blood between wooded banks.
It was a long walk back.

3.

It doesn't take this one long
before a lean of the shoulder into my breast,
the shift of an elbow grazes my crotch.
They all think they can hide under the cape
as I snip away at their hair.

Close below his very clean ear (some ears are like old snot
rags),
I concentrate on the slight movement of the artery,
a tube of spit,
sausage of sewage,
exhaust fumes trapped in a wine bottle,
tornado of voices screaming to get out.

I want to take these scissors,
and dig out the sound, the ear wax,
break it free of the darkroom,
expose the negative,
become the photograph.

He leaves me
a twenty dollar tip.

Steve Williams reads at the Book Collector on March 14th. His new chapbook, *Skin Stretched around the Hollow* is now available from Rattlesnake Press.

Announcing Sacramento Poetry Center's first ever High School Poetry Contest

No cost to enter!

Deadline March 31, 2007

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Send your poems to:

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Sacramento Poetry Center

1719 25th Street

Sacramento, CA 95814

Be sure to include an SASE (Self-addressed, stamped envelope) if you want notification of winners.

Poems should not have your name on them—include a **separate cover letter** with your name, address, phone and email address, and the titles of your poems.

Also indicate the name of your school.

Prizes include:

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CATHLEEN WILLIAMS I DROVE PAST

The Poet Tree, Inc.
1719 25th Street
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March 2007
Readings at SPC/
HQ for the Arts
(7:30pm start time)

March 5
Angela J. James
and friends

March 12
Indigo Moor
book release party
with special guest:
Kathleen Sweeney

March 19
Stephen Yenser and
Ricardo Sternberg

March 26
Tim Bellows

spc blog: www.sacramentopoetrycenter.blogspot.com

looking ahead:

April 2
"Poetic Justice"
benefit for **frank andrick**

April 9
A reading by the winning SPC Contest poets,
finalists and honorable mentions

March 12
Book release party for
INDIGO MOOR'S TAP-ROOT
Featuring readings by
INDIGO & JENNIFER SWEENEY
Hosted by Art Mantecon.
At "The Space" 2509 R Street
Doors open at 7pm.

The Poet Tree, Inc., also known as **The Sacramento Poetry Center**, is a non-profit corporation dedicated to providing forums for local poets—including publications, workshops, and a reading series.