



# poetrynow

May/June 2007

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

## SPC

proudly presents

# the winners of the 2007 high school poetry contest

### Winners:

Jake Brooks  
Daniel Harris  
Ben Korman  
Faustina Keta  
Stephanie Reis  
Aquillon Hetrick  
Micaella Johnson  
Kenny Lo  
Alexandra Miele  
Heather Murray  
Daniel Gonzales  
Kathy Le  
Ashanti Rudolph  
Stephanie Reis  
Angelica Zarate

### Honorable Mentions:

Janet Garcia  
Kendall Connolly  
Christian Hankin  
Emily leitschuh  
Craig Iorenzen  
Ryan Martinez  
Ashley Friesen  
Annie Dimitras  
Tony Saich  
Trent Smith  
Jessica Nieves  
Josh Ream  
Saeree Chung  
Jessica Nieves  
Josh Ream  
Saeree Chung

### Selections from the winning poems:

#### Broken Sleep

*by Daniel Harris*

Do you ever wake in the night?  
Stand, ready to fight,  
to take on the world?  
But then, the darkness swirls around you, takes you and drowns  
you in it.  
And you fall back,  
feel your pillow against your head.  
You're safe in your own bed.  
And however real it seemed, it was only...  
only...  
only a dream...

#### Dance In The Rain

*by Micaella Johnson*

She watched the entrancing rain fall  
Thoughts running through her mind  
The rain looked so peaceful  
A never ending flow  
She wanted that kind of calm  
That just relaxes the soul  
There seemed nothing but quiet  
Beyond the sound of rain  
Her thoughts drifted again  
She could think of nothing more wondrous  
Than the beauty of the rain  
The darkness surrounded her entirely  
She wanted to be outside  
To dance in the rain

**THANK YOU TO ALL THOSE WHO ENTERED THEIR WORK!**

**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](http://www.sacramentopoetrycenter.org).

Please submit to 1719 25<sup>th</sup> Street, Sacramento CA 95814, or via email to: [poetrynow@sacramentopoetrycenter.org](mailto: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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(916) 979-9706.

**Visit our website:**

[www.sacramentopoetrycenter.org](http://www.sacramentopoetrycenter.org)



## president's message

April 16, 2007. I just got back from SPC's Monday night reading. We had over a hundred people attend to hear the winners of our first ever High School Poetry Contest. I was so impressed with the young people who read, and their families who supported them, I'm still excited. It reminds me that poetry is really everywhere—people are writing, expressing themselves every day. To those who say that poetry isn't "happening," I invite them to come down to 25<sup>th</sup> and R on a Monday night. Tonight was a remarkable event. Thanks to **BRAD BUCHANAN** for designing this event, and all his work on the High School contest. It was a night to remember, and without a doubt, we'll do it next year.

This was just one of a string of great events this April—the fund-raiser for **FRANK ANDRICK** raised over \$3,000—and that evening's reading was varied and exciting. The SPC Contest winners on April 9<sup>th</sup> brought out a large and enthusiastic crowd for an accomplished body of poetry. If you didn't see the March issue of *Poetry Now*, which has the winning poems from that contest, you can get a pdf of it on our website: [www.sacramentopoetrycenter.org](http://www.sacramentopoetrycenter.org). We've had a number of compliments on that issue, thanks to the poets who submitted, and **JULIA CONNOR**, who selected the top pieces.

When she introduced the winning poems, Julia talked about poetry, and art organizations, needing to be "inclusive," and that's what SPC is trying to be. If you have suggestions for SPC—things we should do, projects, readings, workshops—let us know. And come down and see what's going on. Don't miss the college readers that come to HQ for the Arts soon—Sac City on April 30, ARC on May 7, Sac State on May 14. Then come to the **Whitman celebration** on Saturday, June 2, and cross the river to Carmichael Library on June 11<sup>th</sup>. High School Poets, College Poets, dead poets and the rest of us alive ones – writing, reading, still at it. *A force to be reckoned with—one stanza at a time.*

—Bob

**submit poems to poetry editor:**

[grahampoe@aol.com](mailto:grahampoe@aol.com)

**submit calendar items to:**

[Alioso02@aol.com](mailto:Alioso02@aol.com)

# More winners of the SPC High School Contest—2006

## **My Last Grip**

*by Jake Brooks*

Those that live  
Rarely reflect  
On what their lives  
Could be.

But whether blessing or curse  
My wandering mind  
ADHD  
Nothing holds still

Just four letters  
With pages of descriptions

I constantly think  
From one subject to the next  
In a single second  
I break from earthly ties  
And float in the realm of possibility.  
With a mind that flies at warp speed

I've asked myself questions  
And for each answer  
I find three more questions  
So to rest my mind  
and to pass the time  
I focus my erratic thoughts on one book

Wither reading or writing  
It draws my mind  
To one goal of completion  
Some think that drugs are addictive  
But they cannot possible compare  
To a good book unfinished

Drugs and alcohol  
A complete waste of time  
And more importantly of life  
To escape the everyday turmoil

All I need  
Is one good book

Without a book  
Or a basis of focus  
My erratic mind would finally  
Jump free of my control  
And be lost forever  
Never able to concentrate again

If I could live life  
The way I really want  
I would live in a deserted forest  
With a library full of books

## **Nightmare**

*by Heather Murray*

Once upon a dreary night  
Nightmare upon nightmare filled me with fright  
Sitting up within my bed  
Eyes searching for the cause  
Only to have darkness greet me

Turning on the lights  
Being spooked at any noise or sounds  
Not wanting to return to the nightmarish abyss  
I never did return to my bed that night

My body did wish for the blissfulness of awaiting sleep  
But my fear of those hidden horrors did await  
Stumbling around in my lonely house  
Replaying the nightmares over and over  
Reliving the horror again and again

Waiting for the new dawn and day  
Hoping the light will chase my fears away  
I search my house without fail  
Seeking the comfort  
That may never come to me

## **Girl Of My Dreams**

*by Kenny Lo*

You're the first thing I think of when the sun shines bright  
And always there to be my guiding light  
We always cared for one another  
And people always thought that we will end up together

Without you I would have never got ahead in life  
People thought we will someday be husband and wife  
We always loved each other from the very start  
And people knew this love was from the bottom of our hearts

However as life came to an end  
We would lose this love that made us more than friends  
Cause time is what made this story full of sorrow  
And made us move onto tomorrow

But you're the last thing I think of when the day comes to night  
And no matter what you'll always be my guiding light  
Because I can't stop thinking about you so it seems  
And I'm no longer afraid to call you the girl of my dreams

## From the Believer to the Dream

by Angelica Zarate

I fall asleep, on my own destiny  
lately it's been a drag, an unprecedented sleep  
this is what my heart, and not my mind believes.

the air is quickly racing out of my lungs  
scared of running,  
of everything that I have become.

my world is standing incredibly small,  
but smiles with the feeling that  
it cannot feel this awful to fall.

when the tears are dry,  
when the clouds come exploding out of my mind,  
the songs are the only medication that calm my nerves,  
my shallow heart is scared,  
but knows these words,  
they tell a story of surviving,  
of a heart that's slowly striving,  
one thing has never lost its meaning  
the strum of the guitar,  
the sound of metaphors and hearts  
will cure me,  
and my heart will continue beating

they are the only souls that know the truth  
when all doubt consumes my mind,  
my heart resorts to dissect the words they choose

a thank you from heartache to heartache  
a pen and a hope signed away for a dream  
that they have now started

in my world I have always felt terribly small,  
you give me the dream,  
the amazing belief that one day,  
I will stand tall.



## The Book Collector

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Monday to Saturday 10 to 6 ➔ Sunday 11 to 4

*Featuring a large selection of local poetry & small press*

## Untitled

by Aquillon Hetrick

Waves crashing on the seashore  
Making foamy white water color clouds  
I long to live where the seagulls soar  
Where the fish dance underwater forever more.  
Where the water moves like velvet  
Rippling, pooling, unearthing the deep sea rocks.

Moving in unison under the moon  
Reflections on the still water cease  
The waves rock back and forth, until soon,  
The sea becomes one with the moon.  
The dappled starlight fades away  
As the sky turns from calm blue to gray.

I long to live by the seashore  
Where the starfish rest on rocks  
Where the oceans song is a soothing roar  
And the sand falls to close to my door.  
But I'll slide my feet in anyway  
And wish that I might live there someday.

## Nature's Curse

by Daniel Gonzales

She awaits there  
Frozen in place  
Watching time pass by  
How she yearns to be free  
To be fluid once again  
She is taunted by the sky  
It being so free but  
Is trapped by the shadows  
Below her, not wanting  
To let her go free  
She doesn't know who to  
Turn to, both making her  
Feel special yet bringing  
Different meanings of life to her  
They are the reasons she's twisted  
Her vibrant yellow glow is  
Sweetly supported by the sun yet  
Her ability to stay us  
Supported by the abyss below  
Without both she is dead  
This is why she stands like so  
Half of herself up rising to the sky  
And half of her stuck down to darkness  
Feeling the cold sunlight of the sun  
And the darkness enveloping her with warmth  
How she sits sorrowfully surrendering herself  
To her phantom of darkness  
And to her lover of light.

## Ode to Silver

by *Alexandra Miele*

As the silver kin of the sun creeps over the kine pastures of Apollo  
And the emerald Forrest, gleaming to meet her eye, shimmers  
With the smooth feel of the airy breeze,  
And the pelt of natures majesties glimmer as they sound their wolfish call in perfect hymn  
In the forest core, a pond shows off its serpent creatures  
As they feast on flying pest.  
The ebony sky is magnificent, like its only light source,  
It is reflected down upon the glossy, glass-like waters.  
In the distance, a stag creeps to a nearby berry bush,  
Filled with juicy treats that are sour and sweet to the tongue.  
His prongs are a wondrous glow, like that of the sister moon  
That hangs overhead, watching her world.  
Like a woman that is afraid to show her self in the day,  
She creeps in the night, alongside mother earth to do right.  
And to watch over all her creatures.

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## Untitled

by *Ben Korman*

I walk along the boundaries,  
Forgetting what is real.  
Dying by my fantasies,  
Torn by what I feel.  
Lost alone in thoughts of depth,  
Time has passed me by.  
While outwardly steadfast,  
Inwardly I cry.

## Judy Halebsky reports from MacDowell

I'm in my studio at the MacDowell Colony in New Hampshire. Even though it is April, it has snowed ten inches since I've been here with more snow predicted for tomorrow. The other night after dinner a bunch of us went sledding down the hills behind the main house. My studio, Mansfield, is a little old yellow cabin from 1922. It has big windows, a fireplace and three writing desks. Hung on the walls are small wooden plaques known affectionately as *tombstones*. Each artist who works in this studio signs the tombstone when they leave. The names on tombstones in this studio include Mary Jo Salter, Sandra Gilbert, Alicia Ostriker and my old professor, Chana Bloch.

There are about 24 residents here at a time but people come and go on different schedules. We meet the new arrivals and dinner and immediately, people start whispering, guessing and betting, the field of the new person. Are they a painter, a photographer, a non-fiction writer, a filmmaker, a composer? They study their frame, look to see if their shoulders are hunched over, or ink stained to their hands.

The residents here right now are all people that could get away from their usual lives for a stretch of time. A few, such as a composer and some of the non fiction writers are supporting themselves full time on their work, but people here have some kind of side gig. A couple teach in low residency MFA programs. Others teach classes occasionally. Some have full time work through the summer months and freer schedules in the winter. Some people here are *residency rats*, which means they go from residency to residency without living in any particular location.

So far, I haven't found anything similar to a workshop or group feedback on the work we are doing. Each artist has a studio. There are no telephone lines or internet in the studios and visitors are not allowed unless they have a formal invitation. In the evenings, people will take initiative to organize a reading or the composers will share the music they are developing. Visual artists will have an open studio in the afternoon, where people can stop by and see the artwork while the light is good.

We have breakfast in the lodge and then everyone goes off to do their thing. Lunch is delivered in a basket outside of my studio door. We eat dinner together, which is followed by very serious, competitive ping-pong games, less serious games of pool and pretty vicious speed scrabble. But it's the ping pong you don't want to mess with. The competition is fierce and people are always strategizing trying to get you at weak moment. Last weekend the reigning ping-pong champions' wife came to visit. The competition made sure to get him in a game the minute after she left, plotting that he would be tired and distracted. He lost the game and the tables have turned. In the rematch, a doubles game, they were playing to the death. Fighting for the title, a painter, went for the ball, ramming her non fiction writing partner into a wooden pillar. She laid out on the couch icing her wounds and the game continued.

Supposedly, there's all sorts of late night, after hours action going on, but all I've seen so far is ping-pong. I'll keep you posted.

*Dearly missing our Tuesday night workshops  
and the SPC gang—Judy*



# literary calendar

for the Sacramento region & beyond

**MAY/JUNE 2007**

edited by Allison Himelright

**1 Tuesday**

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

*The Moore Time for Poetry TV* series presents Slam poet **Chaz** from Los Angeles. Cablecast on channel 17, Comcast Cable @ 5:00 am.

**3 Thursday**

*Poetry Unplugged* features Sacramento Poet Laureate **Julia Connor** at Luna's Café, 1414 16th Street. Info: 441-3931 or www.lunascafe.com. Free. Festivities begin at 8pm and there will be an open mic as well. Hosted by Mario Ellis Hill.

**4 Friday**

All are invited to *Escritores del Nuevo Sol's Evening of Short Stories*. Presenting writers include **Juan Carrillo, Dr. Fausto Avendano, Minverva Daniel, Graciela B. Ramirez**, and others. At La Raza Galeria Posada, 7:30 pm. Charge: \$5 or as you can afford. 1024 22nd Street, Sacramento. For info call Graciela Ramirez, 456-5323 or joannpen@comcast.net.

**5 Saturday**

All are invited to *Escritores del Nuevo Sol's* writing group workshop and potluck. 11am. at La Raza Galeria Posada. Bring up to 3 pages of your work to read if you wish. 1024 22nd Street, Sacramento. For info call Graciela Ramirez, 456-5323 or joannpen@comcast.net.

**6 Sunday**

*PoemSpirits* featuring guest reader **Rhony Bhopla**, published author and founder of ShiluS Publications. Co-host **Tom Goff** will present the work of **Rabindranath Tagore**, 1913 Nobel Laureate. Free and open to the public; open mic, light refreshments provided. Bring a favorite poem to share, yours or another's. Location: UUSS, 2425 Sierra Blvd., Sacramento, CA 95825: www.uuss.org. Contact: Tom Goff or Nora Staklis: 916-481-3312, or JoAnn Anglin: 916-451-1372.

**7 Monday**

*Sacramento Poetry Center presents writers of American River College* with **David Merson**. 7:30 pm at HQ for the Arts. Bob Stanley hosts.

**8 Tuesday**

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

*Bistro 33 Poetry Series*. 8:30 pm Open Mic after. Bistro 33 in Historic Davis City Hall, 226 "F" Street, 3rd and "F" Streets in Davis.

**9 Wednesday**

Dr. Andy's Poetry and Technology Hour, host Andy Jones, 5pm, KDVS-90.3 FM or subscribe to podcast at www.kdvs.org.

*Rattlesnake Press presents Ron Tranquilla* (see sidebar, page 7.)

**10 Thursday**

Luna's *Poetry Unplugged* features TBA. Open mic before/after. Hosted by Geoffrey Neill. 8pm at Luna's Café, 1414 16th Street. Info: 441-3931 or www.lunascafe.com. Free.

**14 Monday**

SPC Board of Directors meets at HQ for the Arts—1719 25th Street —5:45-7:00pm.

*Sacramento Poetry Center* presents **CSUS creative writing class** with Cheryl Smith. 7:30 pm at HQ for the Arts. Bob Stanley and Indigo Moor host.

**15 Tuesday**

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

*The Moore Time for Poetry TV* series presents comedian Love Lee and poet Marianna Sousa. Cablecast on channel 17, Comcast Cable @ 5:00 am.

**16 Wednesday**

*Leah DenBoer Memorial Peace Poetry Reading*. 7:30pm. The reading will be an informal gathering to honor the memory of peace activist **Leah DenBoer**. You are welcome to share peace poems or reminiscences of Leah DenBoer. The Poets scheduled to read a few of their own and peace-related poems by others include: **James DenBoer, Julia Connor, Dennis Schmitz, Jeff Knorr, Hannah Stein, Mary Zeppa, Susan Kelly-DeWitt, Quinton Duval, Katherine Hohlwein** and others. Hosted by Dennis and Loretta Schmitz. The Book Collector. 1008 24th St. Info: 442-9295.

**17 Thursday**

Luna's *Poetry Unplugged* features TBA. Open mic before/after. Hosted by frank andrick. 8pm at Luna's Café, 1414 16th Street. Info: 441-3931. Free.

**19 Saturday**

Underground Poetry Series. Open mic. 7-9pm, \$3.00. Featuring **Sean Miller, Bill Carr**, and **Layla Holmes**. (Emcee Taylor Williams). Underground Books, 2814 35th Street (35th and Broadway). Hosted by Terry Moore. www.terrymoore.info)

**20 Sunday**

Third Sunday Writing Group. Free creative writing workshop. 10th & U, Sacramento. Contact Nancy Walker for more information @ oolalaparee03@yahoo.com

**21 Monday**

*Sacramento Poetry Center* presents a poetry reading by **Nancy Walker** to celebrate The Third Sunday Writers' Group 13th anniversary. Also includes reading by Rebecca Morrison, Joe and Susan Finkleman, Theresa McCourt, Kimberly White, JoAnn Anglin, Pearl Stein Selinsky and others. 7:30 pm at HQ for the Arts. Rebecca Morrison hosts.

**22 Tuesday**

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

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**23 Wednesday**

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**24 Thursday**

Luna's *Poetry Unplugged* features TBA. Open mic before/after. Hosted by B.L. Kennedy. 8pm at Luna's Café, 1414 16th Street. Info: 441-3931 or www.lunascafe.com. Free.

**26 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.

**29 Tuesday**

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

**31 Thursday**

Luna's *Poetry Unplugged* features TBA. Open mic before/after. Hosted by T.B.A. 8pm at Luna's Café, 1414 16th Street. Info: 441-3931 or www.lunascafe.com. Free.

**JUNE 2007**

**3 Sunday**

*PoemSpirits* featuring guest reader *TBA*. Free and open to the public; open mic, light refreshments provided. Bring a favorite poem to share, yours or another's. Location: UUSS, 2425 Sierra Blvd., Sacramento, CA 95825: www.uuss.org. Contact: Tom Goff or Nora Staklis: 916-481-3312, or JoAnn Anglin: 916-451-1372.

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*The Moore Time for Poetry TV* series presents poet Nikki Skies from Los Angeles. Cablecast on channel 17, Comcast Cable @ 5:00 am.

**7 Thursday**

8pm. *Poetry Unplugged* features Sacramento Poet Laureate, Julia Connor at Luna's Café, 1414 16th Street. Info: 441-3931 or www.lunascafe.com. Free.

**11 Monday**

SPC Board of Directors meets at HQ for the Arts - 1719 25<sup>th</sup> Street - 5:45-7:00pm.

*Sacramento Poetry Center* presents **Jan Haag** and **Sue Staats** (note: reading at Carmichael Library). 7:00 pm at HQ for the Arts. Bob Stanley and Indigo Moor host.

**12 Tuesday**

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

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**16 Saturday**

*Underground Poetry Series*. Open mic. 7-9pm, \$3.00. Featuring **Glen Stovall & The Stovall Singers** and **Black Men Expressing Love** poem tour. Underground Books, 2814 35th Street (35th and Broadway). Hosted by Terry Moore. www.terrymoore.info)

**17 Sunday**

Third Sunday Writing Group. Free creative writing workshop. 10th & U, Sacramento. Contact Nancy Walker for more information @ oolalaparee03@yahoo.com

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*Sacramento Poetry Center* presents TBA. 7:30 pm at HQ for the Arts. Frank Graham hosts.

**19 Tuesday**

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

*The Moore Time for Poetry TV* series presents Pastor Alonzo Morris and choir plus R & B artist Willie Whitl. Cablecast on channel 17, Comcast Cable @ 5:00 am.

**21 Thursday**

Luna's *Poetry Unplugged* features TBA. Open mic before/after. Hosted by frank andrick. 8pm at Luna's Café, 1414 16th Street. Info: 441-3931 or www.lunascafe.com. Free.

**25 Monday**

*Sacramento Poetry Center* presents Hardpan Magazine reading with **debee loyd**, **Gordon Preston**, **Karen Baker** et al. 7:30 pm at HQ for the Arts. Tim Kahl hosts.

**26 Tuesday**

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

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**28 Thursday**

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**30 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.

**Celebrating Himself**

A special Whitman reading sponsored by SPC June 2, 2007 Old City Cemetery hosted by Patrick Grizzell

**WALT WHITMAN** was born on May 31, 1819, and died on March 26, 1892. On Saturday, June 2nd, the Poetry Center will host a celebration of the birth of Walt Whitman by revisiting a tradition it began in the early 90's and gathering at the Old City Cemetery among the graves of Civil War veterans to read his work aloud. We believe he would approve—being celebrated above the dust of those who participated in the defining era of his life. We don't know if any among those interred there might have physically crossed paths with Whitman in life, but the old nurse held them all dear; if not in his arms, then certainly in his heart. Save the date for a noon brown bag lunch and reading.

**Playing Favorites**

Rattlesnake Press will release a new chapbook from Ron Tranquilla: *Playing Favorites: Poems 1971-2006*, on May 9, with a reading at the Book Collector. Ron Tranquilla is a retired professor of English from St. Vincent College, Pennsylvania, who now lives with his wife, Penny, in Grass Valley, California. He is an award-winning short story writer and, has published poems in such journals as *The Marginal Review*, *The Rocky Mountain Review*, and *West Branch*. *Playing Favorites* collects his favorite published poems plus some new work. While a visiting exchange professor in Taiwan (2002-2003), Ron published a collection of poetry, *Loitering at Heaven's Gate; Taiwan Poems*. He also has published a chapbook, *An Ocean-Front Hotel Room* (Rattlesnake Press, 2005).

# Words of Walt:

## A Walt Whitman Birthday Celebration and Open Reading

Saturday, June 2, 2007, Noon  
Oddfellows Lawn (Old City Cemetery)  
Riverside Blvd and Broadway

*Away with themes of war! away with war itself!  
Hence from my shuddering sight to never more return...  
That bell unpent and raid of blood, fit for wild tigers or for  
lop-tongued wolves, not reasoning men,  
And in its stead speed industry's campaigns,  
With thy undaunted armies, engineering,  
Thy pennants labor, loosen'd to the breeze,  
Thy bugles sounding loud and clear.*

—Walt Whitman, from “Song of the Exposition”

This quote appeared in the November 1985 issue of *Poet News* (the predecessor of *Poetry Now*). While Whitman’s vision of industry has certainly not been fulfilled as he likely conceived it, what is most poignant is that another 200 years have not brought the end to the need to say such things.

Tonight, I took a somewhat sentimental journey, searching through my *Poet News* archives to see if I might find the date when the Poetry Center first took the poems of Walt Whitman in among the Civil War veterans’ graves at Oddfellows Lawn to celebrate the man. I couldn’t find the date, but 23 years ago or better is my best guess. The SPC Oddfellows event was held only a couple of times, though it was revived a time or two by other groups later on.

This year, to celebrate Whitman’s 188th birthday (May 31), all are invited to return to the scene and participate in an open reading of Whitman’s work on Saturday, June 2, beginning at noon at the Oddfellows Lawn (Old City Cemetery), located at Riverside Boulevard and Broadway.

Several things struck me while perusing the old journals. In nearly every issue (1983-1991), a small picture of Whitman, taken from an engraving made for the 1855 edition of *Leaves of Grass* (often called “the carpenter”, but certainly his image of himself as “one of the roughs”), appears as envoy, as beacon, as guide, perhaps. Several covers featured Whitman’s face, even when no relevant article accompanied it. Such was the strength of his presence for me in those days, and my co-editors, Mary Zeppa and

Luke Breit, let me get away with it! I read through a handful of articles about Whitman from those issues and found the words inspiring and refreshing, and, as with the quote above, still relevant.

Another thing that struck me was the litany of farewells to writers noted in the pages of *Poet News*, many of them people who were friends and colleagues, or who at least darkened the doorway of the Poetry Center from time to time for readings and conferences. Many of them left us during those early SPC years; some have gone on since. All undoubtedly found themselves, like Pound, having at some point to come to grips with Walt Whitman. There is no way around him. In memoriam to him, and them, I will note this unfortunately incomplete list in gratitude: Robert Duncan, Gene Black, Tennessee Williams, James Baldwin, Paul Oehler, Bob Kaufman, Sterling Brown, Denise Levertov,

Ted Berrigan, Janet Carncross Chandler, Philip Whalen, Victor Wong, Julio Cortazar, Eugene Ruggles, Stan Rice, Hugh Melvin, Stanley Kunitz, William Stafford, Fernando Alegria, Noel Peattie, Gwendolyn Brooks, Phil Goldvarg, Will Perry, Edward Abbey, John Logan, Robert Creeley, Allen Ginsberg, Walter Pavlich, Harold Johnson, Stella Worley, Raymond Carver.

For all of them, and for Whitman, come out, join in. Perhaps some spirit of them will gather with us at Oddfellows to hear us speak the words of Walt Whitman. Bring your favorite Whitman poems and passages and a

sack lunch for an informal open reading of Whitman in the round among the graves of those who shared in the most significant years of Whitman’s life, and whom the old nurse loved so well.

We will meet at the Civil War Monument on the Riverside edge of the cemetery (between the gate and Broadway) and beginning reading at noon. You might also bring a cushion or folding chair if you wish. It’s a beautiful spot, and should be a beautiful day. Let there be commerce between us.

—Patrick Grizzell

**“I know that poetry must do  
one of two things—either own  
this man as equal with her  
highest, completest  
manifestors, or stand aside,  
and admit that this is some  
thing come into the world  
nobler, diviner than herself,  
one that is free of the  
universe and can tell its  
secrets as none before...  
Happy America, that he  
should be her son!”**

—Anne Gilchrist



# Geoff Oelsner

## On Mt. Shasta

At the campfire  
at night,  
a bird tips my head with its wing.

## Hymn to Agni (God of Fire)

Agni  
in the crossed sticks  
on the fire  
Agni  
teach me the small flames'  
warmth  
Agni  
I call you the circle  
of power  
Agni  
with thundercrack  
of primal mind I see:  
  
the stone circle  
and the man before it  
  
the gladness of wood  
releasing sunlight  
  
the pain and joy  
kindling us through ages.

With thanks for dead branches  
I gaze and squat down.

## Big Sur

We sit against the still-warm car,  
watch sea and sunset darken.  
Fox whisks by us,  
silent flame.

## North Fork River, Washington

Sun roves up the valley  
over warm enormous pebbles.

On a hill  
of small bent pines,  
white daisies.

## Pinecone Pagoda

Hold a pinecone  
palm-wise.  
The pilgrim eye  
finds a shrine.

## O Purest of Naked Nights

Wrapped in blankets  
under the great triangle  
roadway of a pine,  
I face the glinting stars  
and see

*all is absolutely awake.*

No matter if I sleep  
or lie restless  
watching godlike torsos  
of cloud shift.  
The pine seethes;  
the stars are seeing hawks.

*Selections from West Coast Scroll  
For Adam Forest Oelsner, Out West*

## All The Circles

*by M.R. Talty*

and half circles of GOODBYE  
give the word a cozy symmetry.

But the E  
at the end

intimates its true meaning.  
Those prongs pierce—stab your heart;

not a metal fork  
but a word

that passes easily through your ribs—  
robs a strong ventricular muscle of its

powerful  
contraction;

disrupts the symmetry—  
the full circles of your days.

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I met with Mario Ellis Hill, a local poet and poetry MC, who co-hosts a featured poet and an open-mike event called Poetry Unplugged, happening every Thursday at 8 pm, at Luna's Restaurant on 16<sup>th</sup> Street. The 36 year-old married father of a five-year old, who moved to Sacramento in 1996, not long after his graduation from UC Davis spoke with me shortly before Poet Laureate Julia Connor's reading at Luna's on April 5, 2007.

—Frank Graham, *SPC Poetry Editor*

**FG: You use three names, is that the way it's always been?**

MEH: I didn't use my full name, given me by my parents, until I moved to Davis for college and I met somebody who did astrological readings "you should use your full name, get your full potential." It also has something to do with numerology. She told me "when you get a name, it's given you before you were born. I don't know—maybe it works differently for different people.

**FG: Tell me about spoken word, about the kind of poetry we hear at Luna's.**

MEH: The term spoken word has different meanings. A lot of folks think of it as a coming off the page—as they are reciting it, it is emotive. When people see reciting poetry they consider that spoken word—at Luna's you get both spoken word and literary (styles)—as opposed to one side.

**FG: What makes a poetry MC do the job right?**

MEH: Awareness; aware of audience, interest of the audience, interest of readers – and timing too—(you must know) when you need to say certain things when not, and flexible—when to be flexible.

**FG: Many feel that poetry is mainly on the page, that performance is secondary. How do you feel about that?**

MEH: What ever floats your boat. If you feel it's more about content – if that's your thing, that's your thing. Poetry stems from a personal form of expression. However you feel like you need to get there—your viewpoint, to get it across, that's what you do. Nobody can tell you how to do that. I try to be versatile—adjust to the situation.

**FG: What was it like growing up in SF? Did you take an interest in poetry early on?**

MEH: No, definitely not – college is when I took an interest. SF was a blast—different ethnic backgrounds, do different stuff. . .not necessarily a city for kids like Sacramento, Sacramento is for kids – we made fun. We made the best of it. Helps to have kids on your block.

**FG: One of the first times I heard you read was at the Poetry Marathon event in Sacramento, you read poetry about family, you had some depth, a sense of humor if I recall. What do you think your poetry is about?**

MEH: Those things are important to me. Political, cultural, family. Music.

**FG: What is your musical background?**

MEH: I'm a singer, percussionist. I was in a band, *Free Association* – we had fun. We did dance music, jazzy funk, world beat.

**FG: And your influences in music and poetry?**

MEH: 60's jazz musicians, John Coltraine, Rahsaan Roland Kirk and John Tchicai —Tchicai came out of Coltraine—and I recorded on one of his albums—collaborated. I'm sort of a groupie—they influenced how I perform and my poetry also. In writing, Quincy Troupe (former Cal Poet Laureate)—"That's what I want to do!" is what I thought when I read Troupe. He's a major influence. Also, (of influence) hip hop music—the bands Hieroglyphics, Freestyle Fellowship and Public Enemy—Public Enemy influences the content, nothing else really.

**FG: I don't always see the same people at SPC readings as at Luna's, why do you think that happens?**

MEH: There are scenes within the scenes. Overall it's like, Sacramento, almost every night of the week, there's a reading going on. . .if you go to different areas there's no crosspollination. There are families, people are busy, they can't go out to whatever they want. With spoken word, you find a place you fit in, you come to that place. I used to go to Carol's Books every Saturday. It felt like home. People really listen. Give you comments. It kept me coming back—it's about feeling really comfortable. If you don't get a response you're not going to keep coming.

**FG: You're young and there are many new young people in poetry today, reading their poems – what's going on that so many young people are coming to poetry events and writing?**

MEH: With Luna's my experience has been—it goes through phases, people spilling out onto the sidewalk and a few years later nobody shows. There are many more young people today than before—maybe because spoken word, slams, young people see it as a form of expression.

**FG: What advice do you have to the person who has never read at an open mike, publicly, who maybe wants to read aloud?**

MEH: Be patient because when the right time comes, you'll know it is time to do it. If you feel scared to death, that's a good sign—that means you're there. If you can block out all the other stuff too—my better reads have always been when scared. Fear is a good thing. It's a natural thing. You can't change it. But you can't let it conquer.

# Joyce Odam

## AN EDGE

4:25 a.m.  
shots and shots and  
no screams.

A dog barks,  
a wind  
rises

and  
something becomes an edge.  
I think it's fear.

## The Moments

It was the little things that broke us, like a dish  
from soapy hands, or the deliberate glass flung

to the floor—or any such urge, regretted or praised  
for its effect upon weeping—like a dam that breaks

and spills water all over your life, and you drown.  
I held a knife against my wrist, or maybe it was you

with a gun against your throat. Or maybe this is only  
metaphor—harsh examples to impress. There was

always the recovery of sense and balance. A few more  
words, a few more deflections. Life was good, we said,

and must be paid for with suffering. Even at its worst,  
there was this need—this terrible need to love.

Twelve time Slam Champion **TERRY MOORE** is the author of fifteen poetry books and seven spoken word CDs. He hosts numerous local events in Sacramento and beyond – for information on these events check out [http://mybmsf.com/bmsf/bmsf\\_peeps/peeps\\_poetry/wordouts\\_moore2.asp](http://mybmsf.com/bmsf/bmsf_peeps/peeps_poetry/wordouts_moore2.asp) Learn more about Terry at [www.terry.moore.info](http://www.terry.moore.info)

**JOHN REIGER** is a potter and peace activist.

# Terry Moore

## Every Day Away from You

You and I  
How did we get here?  
It's so painful  
Memory unclear  
Forever gone right before our eyes  
It was over and done with before we could  
realize  
That we had something too good to let go  
The perfect yes for love, turned into no  
I reach for you  
But you refuse to respond  
I close my eyes tight trying to remain strong  
You and I  
How did we get here?  
On two separate sides of the world  
When I desperately need you near  
You and I  
How I miss the two  
Every day just gets harder and harder  
Every day away from you...

# John C. Reiger

## HALF A LOVE

Is half a love better than none?  
Shouldn't two be happier than one?

I am tired of questions like these.  
Why must cupid be such a tease?

This half a love I've come to share,  
is almost more than I can bear.

Half the time my heart just flies,  
but, oh the other half, when it dies.

Half a love for half the time.  
One quarter of me feels sublime.

But while one forth feels mighty good,  
the rest of of me has turned to wood.

This half a love tears me asunder,  
and I cannot help but wonder.

Which half is this love of mine?  
And where's the rest of love so fine?

## Drawing from the Cave of Memory

I visited with Dr. Stephen Sadler, fifty-one year-old poet, father of six, and native Sacramentan, on a sunny afternoon in the outdoor garden at the Tower Café.

**FG: How does one win the highly competitive Berkeley Poets' Dinner Grand Prize twice in five years?**

SS: Write well. Have a wife who will pick your entries. Get lucky with judges, because it's totally subjective.

**FG: Was the winning poem one we reviewed at the Tuesday Night Workshop meeting at the Hart Center?**

SS: Yes. Last June.

**FG: What have your winners been titled and what was this year's poem about?**

SS: *Regression* was the winner this year. The first was *Egypt*. I used to manage my mother's shop and she said the clock had been running backward and I started to follow... Poetry is drawing things out of the cave of memory. You're conscious of what you put in there. Poetry can be pulled from anything. The things you construct a poem from are already there and what you need from there is some direction.

**FG: I usually ask poets when they began writing, but when would you stop?**

SS: I wouldn't stop. I could see myself—I've had a lot of obsessions and they can take over. I challenged myself to keep writing poetry for the rest of my life, to see what would happen. I've dealt myself similar challenges, with classical guitar for instance, but as years pass I don't put in the time. We'll see.

**FG: How does having a four-year-old change or affect your poetry?**

SS: Having a baby changes your life so your poetry is affected by it. There's infinite material. It limits writing time significantly. Four-year-olds can't be quiet and they shouldn't be. She needs 100% of my attention and there's little time for anything else.

**FG: Your observations about life, in your poems, reveal an extraordinary gift for analysis, for a sense of place in this world—and give us a tour through the sense of belonging—can you tell me what it's like – sitting down with pen in hand, or at the computer, and going deeply into your consciousness to arrive at this sort of poetry?**

SS: Surprised you said a sense of belonging. I suppose I feel like I belong to this world, but differently from most people. But I think most feel different from the rest of the world. And I respect that. I would challenge you to find a normal person anywhere, anytime, in history.

**FG: You're a scientist—you have a science background—and yet you are a creative person. Do these two minds conflict, intersect, or oppose each other? How does science lend itself to poetry and vice versa?**

SS: Good scientists are highly creative. It is extremely valued in the scientific world—if you want a study of creativity, study the biographies of scientists. Creativity links the arts and sciences. The rigors of going from premise to conclusion, or to significance, are similar. But I also think you can be outlandish in a poem—while making sense.

**FG: What do you seek to accomplish when you write?**

SS: In a photography class he was taking, my brother was asked, "What are you trying to accomplish with photography?" Students answered things like, "I want to focus the world's attention on hunger," or "promote peace," or whatever. (My brother) said, "I want to make a picture so that when people see it they say, 'that's a nice picture.'" That's what I want to do with my poetry.

**FG: You have an enormous wit—**

SS: Width? (*taking mock offense*)

**FG: Wit—You have an enormous wit—at the same time there's often, in my interpretation, an undercurrent of irreverence or a note of gentle sarcasm about life's events and happenings—but these emotions also have a sense of acceptance about them.**

SS: My work is extremely reverent, but uncertain of what to be reverent of. I've been a spiritual person, one whose life has taken horrible turns. This doesn't dislodge reverence. Look at how beautiful it is here—this lovely space. But I can't tell you what reverence is in any other context.

**FG: How has your poetry developed over the years? What is there more of, less of?**

SS: It has developed from reading other poets, the more poets I read, the more comfortable I am with my own work. (Today, my work is) more structured. I went on an "I" fast for a while, trying to avoid the confessional solipsism that can slip into my poetry. The reader doesn't care about the poet. The reader cares about the reader. Now I allow myself back into poems. I want the readers to recognize themselves, or potential selves. I don't want the reader to care about me.

**FG: What are you reading lately?**

SS: I'll read many poems in a sitting, maybe hundreds; from a half dozen to forty poets. I'll sit down with four or five books, usually an anthology among them. There are not many poets where I want to read poem after poem after poem. Jorie Graham is on the list. I read thousands of poems. You shouldn't go by what someone else likes. People should walk into a bookstore and choose whatever they like. I read Nemerov, Ashbery, Albert Goldbarth. I read mostly contemporary (poetry) because that's what I'm writing. If I were writing nineteenth century, that's what I'd read.

**A PARTIMEN  
FOR THE PARTISAN**

# Mundialexperimental

A poetic look at the world by Tim Kahl

**Materials and methods:**

The 12<sup>th</sup> century troubadours in France practiced a particular kind of verbal sparring that lent itself as good and honorable sport in that time. This sparring grew into the popular form of that time known as the partimen (also known in langue d'oc as *joc partit* or *jeu partit*). The partimen is a poetic form of exchange/dialogue between two poets. The first poet proposes two hypothetical situations: (eg. is it better to have loved and lost or to have never loved at all; is it better to fight the Saracens on one's own ground or in Spain). The second poet chooses and defends one of the alternatives. The first poet then chooses the other alternative and defends it. After each has had its say in the same number of stanzas (usually 3 and all stanzas are usually identical in number of lines), the poets refer the debate to one or more arbiters for settlement.

**Projects in the Home:** One of the things that is clear from the outset when one begins writing a partimen is that one cannot be in two places at once. Or can one? Faster than one can say "Pessoa" a poetic alter ego could be adopted for the purpose of a partimen. It is really not that hard to do what with all the avatars lurking in cyberspace. Take one down off the shelf. Create one out of whole cloth after a single trip to Jo-Ann Fabrics. The arbiter might be another creation (though this lends one to the charge of living large in a land of make-believe) or it might be a person of real flesh and bone whose name you adopt in order to make a particular point. For instance, if one appeals to William the Conqueror about the issue of the Saracens, then the historical backdrop might serve a useful purpose for the poem. William the Conqueror's views can probably be predicted, but we shouldn't judge too harshly. Several centuries of stony sleep may have tempered his thinking, and an unexpected answer might be forthcoming.

Of course, there any number of poets to be found in the newspapers these days. The unrelenting words of policy experts or cryptic legalese might harbor hidden poetic flourishes within them. It might even be instructive to engage in a partimen with the likes of an entertainer or outfielder whose observations about singing or baseball might be seen as debatable. The difficult aspect of writing a partimen like this is finding enough space between three utterances of such a "found poet" to insert one's own poetic response. But the payoff is in choosing the final arbiter. Who among us would not be interested in hearing what Martha Stewart or Henry Kissinger has to say about playing left field at Fenway?

Perhaps the age-old question of whether good old biodegradable paper is preferable to the immediately practical plastic could be finally put to rest by the final arbiter of a sole bacterium whose charge it is to dispense with all that man has made.

But for those who prefer more serious fare, the partimen serves as an excellent opportunity to pore through old texts of poets and find where he/she has held forth on a particular subject. For instance, one might debate Christianity with William Stafford:

*Mine was a Midwest home—  
you can keep your world.  
Plain black hats rode the thought that made our code  
We sang hymns in the house; the roof was near God.*

*Caught by flint and held forever,  
the quiet pace of God stopped still.  
Anyone who listens walks on  
time that dogs him single file.*

*In front of the courthouse holding the adaptable flag  
Jesus will be here the day the world ends  
looking off there into the sky-bore  
past Socorro over sunset lands.*

continued on page 11

Or one might care to debate the nature of love with St.-John Perse:

*How can one love, love with a woman's love, him for whom no one can do anything?*

*Love is on the sea, where the vineyards are greenest; and the gods run to the green grapes.*

*Loving also is action! I call death to witness, to whom alone love is an offence. And our foreheads are adorned with the red salt of the living!*

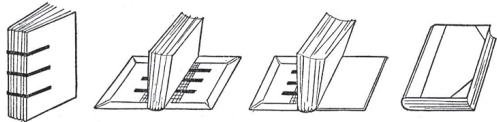
Finally, one might care to mix it up with Robert Creeley on the topic of the passage of time:

*The little children  
grow only to old men.*

*The grass dies,  
the force goes.*

*Of a few years  
come into focus—  
peace and understanding,  
the uneasy virtues.*

*Things  
come and go  
Then  
let them.*



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## Dawn DiBartolo

### the sacrament of metaphor

perfect mess, this  
cacophony or vowels,  
consonants,  
letters all forming  
four-letter words  
for what i really  
want to say,  
as day rests on the tip  
of someone else's tongue, say  
dragon's breath of  
foul-smelling dialect  
with wingspans  
of cracked glass  
refracting light into  
colors that slice  
past the subtleties of sympathy  
and straight to the heart  
of bleeding matters:  
*HELL is a four-letter word*  
for which no one can apologize.

**DAWN DIBARTOLO** lives in Sacramento, California with her three children, and works for the State as an analyst. She has been writing most of her 35 years, and has previously published a collection of poetry entitled "Love and Other Eternities", available at [www.publishamerica.com/orderinginfo.htm](http://www.publishamerica.com/orderinginfo.htm)

**Why Is It That?**

Why is it that we spend money buying bags of weed...  
 While we've got people without homes or food in need  
 Why is it that we go to the liquor store and spend money on beer  
 And make being drunken become our careers  
 Why is it that the president can find time to take the lives of those loved  
 But, can't find the time to help spread the love  
 Why is that somebody always getting shot  
 Life is too short we just living by the clock  
 Why is it that we judge before we judge ourselves  
 Afraid to accept what our lives offer and throw them on shelves  
 Why is it that we pick our friends by how they dress and not by their personality  
 We constantly stereotype, pick and choose according to ones nationality  
 Why is it that we always ask questions and define who people are by their situation  
 Instead of simply asking for an explanation  
 Why is that we don't want to die  
 Yet we continue to put wastes into our body we're just taking time off of our lives  
 Why do we say that we are saved  
 But, you know the way we are acting is not how GOD would want us to behave  
 Why is that we have young women selling their bodies  
 We've got girls ready to give it up, because a boy called her a hottie  
 Why is it that we have drug dealers  
 Only concerned about what they wear and if they're driving 20 inch wheelers  
 Why is it that we talk about people because of their color  
 We have blacks hating blacks, and they practically came from the same mother  
 Why is it that we have blacks against whites  
 You called me a nigger, or you called me a cracker and now we are ready to fight  
 Why is it that we can't learn from our mistakes  
 And don't want to take the patience to just sit and wait  
 Why is it that we are always in a rush, always in a hurry  
 Moving so fast we're all tipsy topsy turvy  
 Why is it that you call your self a friend  
 Then when the trouble starts you're gone before the end  
 Why is it that we confide in others for our needs  
 Instead of striving on our own and trying to succeed  
 Why is it that we are always running  
 Don't want to look back because more trouble is comin'  
 Why is it that we are afraid to look back  
 Hiding in corners from past sins and things we lack  
 Why is it that we want to forget the past  
 Don't you know, that remembering is what made you last  
 Why is it that we have people dying from AIDS  
 Well, that's a possibility when your always getting laid  
 Why is it that we abort so many babies  
 We are taking one's life, and not taking responsibility as a lady  
 Why is it that we always want to know why  
 Yet when we get the answer we flee and hide  
 Why is it that we always want the facts  
 And when the opportunity presents it self we take a step back  
 Why is it that?

may/june 2007

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