



# poetrynow

September 2007

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

## An evening of poetry and dance

September 28<sup>th</sup> at 5:30 pm  
Sacramento Ballet Studios

Local poets will read excerpts from **Ruth Whitman's** fictional journal: *A Woman's Journey: The Tamsen Donner Story*. Sacramento Ballet dancers will improvise to the readings, as Ron Cunningham creates the choreography for a ballet inspired by the book. A question and answer session with Cunningham, the dancers, and Julia Connor will follow.

RSVP to 916-552-5800, extension 101.

### Tell Me/Tell You

*Collette Jonopulos*

*Be still when you have nothing to say: when genuine passion  
Moves you, say what you've got to say, and say it hot.*

—D.H. Lawrence

Even window blinds reflect the red pillow, red picked up from pens, book spines. I am looking now for red on labels, half-empty bottles of Syrah, foil chocolate wrappers. Fresh loss can be red, as can anger. You tell me passion is always red, like a tongue, a nipple; you aren't holding back your thoughts, assume the bulk of them will convince me that immense feeling is enough to carry us beyond this tiredness of being. I will allow ten beats, there is no other way. On the count of ten, I'll take in one breath, then tell you that red is the color of my hands after a long walk, the taste of berries, what a neighbor painted her door; but passion is gray like the folded newspaper laid gently aside, the robe washed too many times, threadbare and right, like doves gathered before dusk, waiting.

### Coming to Terms With Loneliness

*Joyce Odam*

Picture this:

rain falling on the sea—three vague occupants in a small boat rowing an impossible distance, self-absorbed and straining against their own endurance.

Or maybe

they are only figments of the distant eye of time, scanning this desolate reach across any impossible theme—the sun low enough to reach if one could reach the horizon in time or calculate the distance to some unseen shore—just as far—the sun not having moved from its position.

Which

choice will prove worthy of the dream? Surely this is a dream: the soundless air . . . the curious blue lapping of the waves . . . the everlasting breathing motion.

### Autumn Leaves

*Tyler Swinney*

The light breaks at her collar as she breathes,  
It falls dancing down the curve of her chest,  
Then back up her arm to her shoulder it weaves.  
All this, courtesy of the wind through the leaves  
Of the tree outside the window, pushing West,  
The light breaks at her collar as she breathes.  
The golden shade of days end hangs from the eaves.  
We, the tree, the light, and myself, sit possessed.  
The tree, like the smallest of three young boys weaves,  
Back and forth around the light and me. He plea's  
And whispers to see. She quietly gets undressed.  
The light breaks at her collar as she breathes.  
She sits near the bed, her hand runs up her knees  
And trembles like a branch, smaller than the rest,  
Holding against the wind, sometimes slowly weaves.  
The tree sways in approval, the light agrees,  
I sit in a chair near the window, impressed.  
The light breaks at her collar as she breathes,  
She moves a bit closer, the room slowly weaves.

**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.

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**Poetry Editor:** Frank Graham



**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

Summer rolls by once again. Thanks to all the people who are helping poets and poetry around town. Underground Poetry and The Show continue on a regular basis, two Saturdays every month, thanks to Terry Moore's love of the art. Luna's is always filled with readers and listeners on Thursday nights, thanks to Frank, BL, Mario and Geoffrey. Escritores del Nuevo Sol has events on a regular basis once again. But it's hard to keep venues going all the time. Tom Goff reports that the PoemSpirits readings at UUSS are temporarily on hold. Khiry Malik is looking for a new venue for his events. Be sure to support the venue of your choice—it takes volunteers *and* financial resources to keep the literary arts scene happening in this town.

SPC's annual General Meeting will be September 10<sup>th</sup> - 6pm at HQ for the Arts. Please come if you have questions, suggestions, or just want to see what's going on. Then stick around for Laverne Frith's reading at 7:30, and check out his new chapbook, *Drinking the Light*, from Finishing Line Press.

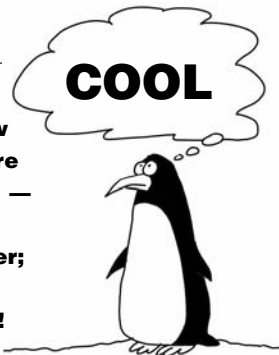
Mark your calendar—long term—for the first weekend in April—our 2008 Poetry Conference will feature *Ellen Bass*, *Carl Phillips*, *Camille Norton* and more. Indigo Moor is heading up the conference for 2008, and it promises to be bigger and better than ever.

After Labor Day, (no reading Sept 3), we'll have a full schedule at HQ for the Arts in September – a reading every Monday on 25<sup>th</sup> Street in midtown. There will be no readings in September at Carmichael library, but there's a free writing workshop on the first Wednesday of the month at 6:30. SPC will hold readings at the Carmichael Library in October and November—but the Monday night events will always remain at HQ.

The Sacramento poetry community lost two good friends – poets who've enriched many of us with their life and work. Both Clyde Enroth and Ben Hiatt recently passed away—I want to thank Victoria Dalkey and Annie Menebroker for sharing their thoughts about these two memorable men. At times of parting, it seems words flow in a different way. Why wait?—there's always a reason to write, to share, to remember. Get up and go to that reading you've been thinking about going to. And leave a quarter or two in the collection plate.

—Bob Stanley  
President

**SPC is now  
temperature  
controlled! —  
Cool in  
the Summer;  
Hot in  
the Winter!**



poetry submissions

**Submit poems to poetry  
editor Frank Graham at:**  
[grahampoet@aol.com](mailto:grahampoet@aol.com)

## 2 poems by Geoff Olesner

### **The Traveler**

Everywhere I look  
I see the faces  
of pilgrims.  
In the darkness  
I barely feel  
this body wrapped  
around me.  
Wind stirs the dust.  
I carry in my sack  
a brightening moon.

### **Ghost Cabin (Sutter's Mill, CA)**

This empty, human filled room  
with the wind in its mouth  
is thirsting for the night  
(that blue-black ink) to tumble  
over every scaffold dark & every  
rafter beam.  
Its wallboards hold  
its lonely air within.  
Its four walls cannot drink  
their fill until the brown hills  
eat the sun.

### **Night Watch**

*Yukie (Nakashima)*

All around is dark.  
I sit in the car and stare  
through the cold glass.  
A tree white in the night glow  
stretches great curved fingers  
through the negative spaces.  
Its leaves have mostly left for another place.  
No matter, darkness is full enough.

I think of you. I sense  
You don't fit easily here or there  
as most.  
What I know of you is framed  
in a small window  
that may never open.

I watch, I wonder.  
Outside—the naked, white hand  
reaches gracefully up from its roots  
to grasp all the night shapes.



### **Thompson Peak Retreat**

Reasonably priced writers' cabin in rural Northeastern California. Ponderosa pines, deer, and a view of the mountains. Cabin with loft, yard, porch, and flower garden. \$700 per month (two week minimum)—6% discount to Northern California writers. Utilities, amenities included. No pets, non-smoking. Owner/writer. If interested, email Diana: [dmackinnon@citolink.net](mailto:dmackinnon@citolink.net). Thompson Peak website with photos—click photos to enlarge: [thompsonpeakretreat.com](http://thompsonpeakretreat.com).

### **Elegy for Twenty-One Million Women**

*Laura LeHen*

he leaves no bruises no  
shattered bones  
only  
fists of words  
pounding over and over  
echoing like the incubus;  
luminous  
she waits  
for that concrete  
thwack â€œ  
his assault  
integral to her  
leaving  
this slow  
internal  
hemorrhage  
of the soul

### **Sandra Day, Genus Supreme**

*Cleo Fellers Kocol*

A bloom in the shadow  
of giant sequoias.  
A violet flowering among  
strangling poison ivy.  
A flower in the wild  
undergrowth.

At first, people wondered, would her seed be stunted, filled with thistles, or be an ersatz tree? A single bloom among large foliage demands hardly stock and single-minded persistence.

Now, years of full-flowering over, centered and well-scented, she's replaced by an ordinary tree. Flower lovers mourn.

### **My Therapist**

*Marie Rippenboff-Talty*

I ration our phone sessions—  
every two weeks,

I swallow all the layers  
of her voice like candy:

when it fills with tears;  
quiets with disapproval;  
swells with laughter or

rounds out with advice—  
like when she told me what  
Thich Nhat Hanh said,

*Take your anger out;  
hold it in your arms;  
rock it like a baby.*

## Wordsworth — the mouse who loves poetry



*Books by Frances H. Kakugawa*

**Wordsworth the Poet** Wordsworth writes poetry — about rainbows made of butterflies and castles in the clouds. But all the other mice make fun of Wordsworth and his “silly” poems, until the day the sun disappears, and the sky rumbles, and the rain begins to fall and fall. That’s when Wordsworth takes pen in hand and shows the others how poetry can save the day.

**Wordsworth Dances the Waltz** Wordsworth doesn’t understand why Grandma has changed so much since she came to live with his family. She doesn’t even remember his name. He finds comfort in writing poems, which also help his family understand what’s going on with Grandma.

Frances Kakugawa is also the author of **Mosaic Moon: Caregiving Through Poetry**, a unique resource for anyone with a loved one suffering from Alzheimer’s disease or other long-term illness. Created from poetry workshops conducted by the Alzheimer’s Association Aloha Chapter, this writing tool for non-writers is brimming with ideas and techniques for finding solace in journaling and poetry.

*All titles available from Watermark Publishing [www.bookshawaii.net](http://www.bookshawaii.net) or (toll-free) 866-900-BOOK*



# literary calendar

for the Sacramento region & beyond

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2007

**1 Saturday**

All are invited to *Escritores del Nuevo Sol's* writing workshop and potluck. 11am. at La Raza Galeria Posada, 1024 22nd Street, Sacramento. For info call Graciela Ramirez, 456-5323 or joanpen@comcast.net.

**3 Monday**

No reading at HQ for the Arts

**4 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

**5 Wednesday**

Luna's Café presents a celebration of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the publication of Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*. An evening of readings from Kerouac by **Matt Amott, Todd Cirillo, Josh Fernandez, Patrick Grizzell, Robert Grossklaus, Megan, Jackie Schaffer, D.R. Wagner and Terry Wheat**. Doors open at 7pm - Reading from 7:30 to 11:00.

**6 Thursday**

*Poetry Unplugged* features TBA at Luna's Café. Hosted by Mario Ellis Hill. Festivities begin at 8pm and there will be an open mic as well.

**10 Monday**

General meeting SPC Board of Directors meets at HQ for the Arts - 1719 25<sup>th</sup> Street - 5:45pm. All members or interested parties are invited to attend.

Sacramento Poetry Center presents **Laverne Frith** reading from his work. His new chapbook, *Drinking the Light*, is now available from Finishing Line Press. HQ for the Arts - 1719 25<sup>th</sup> Street. 7:30pm

**11 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

**12 Wednesday**

Rattlesnake Press presents **Susan Kelly-Dewitt** at The Book Collector, 1008 24th St., Sacramento, from 7:30-9 PM to celebrate the release of her new chapbook, *Cassiopeia Above the Banyan Tree*. Also released: a littlesnake broadside, "Blush," from **Dawn Dibartolo** and **B.L. Kennedy's** interview of **Frank Andrick**. Refreshments and a read-around will follow; bring your own poems or somebody else's. More info: kathykieth@hotmail.com

Dr. Andy's Poetry and Technology Hour, host Andy Jones, 5pm, KDVS-90.3 FM or subscribe to podcast at [www.kdvs.org](http://www.kdvs.org).

**13 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](http://www.lunascafe.com). Free.

**14 Friday**

Annual all-Spanish poetry reading, featuring the work of the controversial Spanish poet **Rafael Alberti**, and the students of the Sac State Foreign Languages Dept. Emcee is Dr. Fausto Avendaño, Contributing to the evening will be Graciela Ramirez, Jim Michael, and musician/composer Alfredo González. Open mic to follow. 7:30 pm. Cost: \$5 or as you can afford.

**15 Saturday**

*Underground Poetry Series* plus open mic. 7-9pm, \$3.00. Underground Books, 2814 35th Street (35th and Broadway). Hosted by La-Rue'

**17 Monday**

Sacramento Poetry Center presents **Crawdad Nelson** and **Lori Blair**. hosted by Rebecca Morrison at HQ for the Arts - 1719 25<sup>th</sup> Street.

**18 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.

**19 Wednesday**

*Moore time for Poetry*. Terry Moore's Access Television Show, 9pm, co-host Tyra Moore. Access Sacramento, Channel 17

**20 Thursday**

*Poetry Unplugged* at Luna's Café. 8pm. hosted by Frank Andrick. Free.

**22 Saturday**

*9 Muses plus One* - An evening of Poetry, Story, Prose, Drama, Film, Celebration and the Impossible - featuring 9 women - **Michelle Tea, Beth Lisick, Tara Jepsen, Barbara Noble, Rachel Leibrock, Rachel Gregg, Rachel Savage, Terryll Wheat, and Tessa** - plus **Gilberto Rodriguez**. Hosted by Frank Andrick at Luna's Café. \$10 at the door.

**24 Monday**

*Sacramento Poetry Center* presents **Jeff Knorr** and **David Alpaugh**. Tim Kahl hosts. at HQ for the Arts - 1719 25<sup>th</sup> Street.

**25 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

**26 Wednesday**

Dr. Andy's Poetry and Technology Hour, 5pm, KDVS-90.3 FM or [www.kdvs.org](http://www.kdvs.org).

**27 Thursday**

*Poetry Unplugged* at Luna's.

**Friday 28**

**Poetry and Ballet** - 5:30 pm at the Sacramento Ballet (17<sup>th</sup> and K Streets) Local poets will read pieces from Ruth Whitman's book *Tamsen Donner: A Woman's Journey*, while Ron Cunningham and the Sacramento Ballet works out choreography for their upcoming ballet. A night to remember! RSVP to Janee Jacobs at 916-552-5800 x101.

**29 Saturday**

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

**October**

**1 Monday**

at HQ for the Arts, 7:30 PM. **Six Sierra Poets** will read from *Yuba Flows*, a new collection from Hip Pocket Press. Readings by Iven Lourie, Kirsten Casey, and Scott V. Young. Hosted by Art Mantecon.

**8 Monday**

**Nina Lindsey** and **Helen Wickes** at HQ for the Arts - 1719 25<sup>th</sup> Street.

**12 Friday**

6 pm Join The Escritores del Nuevo Sol and the Zapatista Coalition for the *annual remembrance of Chicano poet Phil Goldvarg* on el Dia de la Raza.

**15 Monday**

SPC presents **Viola Weinberg** at The Space

**26 Friday**

7:30 pm. The Escritores del Nuevo Sol/Writers of the New Sun offer poetry and music for Dia de los Muertos/Day of the Dead. This is one of a week's full of activities coordinated by La Raza Galeria Posada.

# Clyde Enroth 1926-2007

When we heard about Clyde Enroth's death, my husband and I held a private wake for him, drinking martinis and reading Yeats poems aloud. We read favorites — "Easter 1916" and "Sailing to Byzantium" — and some poems I hadn't read again since I took Clyde's Yeats seminar in the 1960s - "the Dolls" and "Upon a Dying Lady" and "The Lake Isle of Innesfree," for starters.

Clyde, who taught English at CSUS for 41 years until retiring in 1997, was the most perceptive reader of poetry that I have ever known, with a brilliant and sensitive mind that opened the door to poetry for me and many other students, among them my fellow poet Mary Zeppa, who noted, "Clyde was a reserved man of enormous erudition. When he was deeply moved (in my experience a rare occasion), his blue eyes turned silver. He was a kind man who let most of us come so close and no closer."

When I was his student, he was always Dr. Enroth and I was Miss Sellick. But one day I asked him if he would look at some of my poems. "No," he said, "absolutely not." But I left them on his desk anyway and a few days later, he

invited me to come to his house and gave me a critique that was probably much more gentle than the poems deserved.

He was always very modest about his contributions as a teacher. Once I visited him years after I got my B.A. to tell him how much he meant to me and what a wonderful teacher he was. He coolly told me a story about how one of his other former students had written to him to tell him what a powerful influence he had been on his life. Clyde said he was touched but noticed after he looked at the envelope that the student was writing from a state prison.

But he was a great teacher, the kind who can change the course of your life. Because of him, I switched my undergraduate major from Drama to English and have never regretted it. In every sense of the word he was a true mentor, as well as a great wit and marvelous raconteur. When I sit down to write, his voice is always the first I hear in my inner ear, egging me on, reigning me in, asking me to look deeper. I shall miss him terribly.

*Victoria Dalkey*  
August 25, 2007

## **On a Postcard of a Painting of a Woman Reading in a Garden by an Artist of the English School, c. 1920**

*for C.A.E.*

The page outshines her face. Impossible  
to know what she reads, "The Wild Swans  
at Coole" or "The Cold Heaven" on a warm day?

She paces as she reads, keeping time  
with the lines, passiflora vines gone wild in the garden, where the painter's hand darts from  
blossom to shawl, winding around shoulders, cascading down to chair cushion in quick strokes  
jotted like a note to a friend who needs comforting after losing a soul mate who scanned the  
swans among the brimming stones, parsed the blackbirds reeling in their icy rook-delighting  
heaven.

At twilight trees catch fire before crows fly home to their river-front digs. Impossible to stop  
them on their way from feeding life to resting life.

When they go, they go as quickly as they can, as if blown by the wind.

*Victoria Dalkey*

# Ben L. Hiatt 1942-2007

Ben L. Hiatt was a legend up in the mountains of Mt. Aukum. He will remain their wordslinger, friend, a father and husband, and a granddad. The young, upcoming poets today had not known much of Ben or his poetry. Those who did read some of his work before their own, after hearing of his death, in the many poetry venues around Sacramento. Others looked him up on the Internet and liked what was there. One poet from Australia, after hearing about Ben from me, looked him up and said he really liked the poetry of this man. Ben would have liked that. You sometimes had to take Ben in pieces and parts; the man, the poet, editor, printer, the political person. He had many sides and even invented an altar-ego he called Elmer Thudpucker, who could say and do anything because, as Ben told us, he couldn't control what came out of Elmer's mouth. Some of Ben's buddies up in the mountains didn't give a crap about poetry, but they liked Ben's because he was their good old boy and what he wrote had to be ok. They allowed him who he was and cared about him.

A tribute reading for Ben in summer of 2005 in Placerville was crowded with those who wanted to pay him honor. He was touched by this and I heard him say, "Damn! People were really listening to me!" He came to this tribute a sick man, with his wife Juliene and his son Benny, and his oxygen tank. No one expected he'd be with us until June, 2007. I knew Ben for nearly forty years. He was a dear friend and I loved him.

— *Annie Menebroker*

## **WORDS & such**

these days shine  
at us  
in a way  
that we find  
difficult  
to comprehend

there are ways  
to move  
against  
defined reality  
but  
they never work

unless the words  
are true

*Ben L. Hiatt*

Data For A Windy Day 1977

## Something in the Voice

**Julia, Is there time to write with all your activities and responsibilities associated with the Poet Laureate title?**

That's a two-part answer: No one was more surprised than I. From April 2005 to February 2007, I wrote *more* because of being Poet Laureate. I think the reason for that is because it grounds you. You're not the Poet Laureate of the world, but of Sacramento. So it keeps you here and at your desk. And since you are the Laureate of Poetry and not something else, you tend to go to your desk. It reaffirms the identity of being a poet. That all changed for me in March; I knew that March and April of 07 would be busy because of extra occasions. April was National Poetry Month and so I had 5 or 6 different appearances then, so that was as expected. But for the first time my poetry really fell off. And that I can't really blame on the Poet Laureate program.

A heavy reading period is ahead, however, and that should get me back on the horse. A lot of people think that the tendency is that the Poet Laureate thing gets in the way of the writing and it could, but there are so many variables depending on the type of person the Poet Laureate is. But in my case, and though I feared that might happen, until now, it didn't. I guess what I'm saying is I don't think people should make assumptions one way or another. People are individual in this respect.

**What would you say it is in the minds of poets that leads us to writing in the first place? I know you can't speak for every individual, but for yourself and others you know in the process...**

Interesting. This morning, sitting at the river with my dog, working on a piece, it has a line in it, something like, "to write as they once did, poems scrawled across the backs of discarded tax statements".

**What brought that about, I was thinking of the Greek anthology that was actually discovered on an Egyptian papyrus. And that's what those papyruses were. They were old tax statements, with poems on the backs of them. So whatever it is that motivates us to do this strange thing called poetry — You know, you see someone sitting in a café, writing on a napkin — you realize they are part of this long hallowed tradition.**

And the motivation I'm sure — there are as many motivations as there are poets. But to try and say something general about it,

there seems to be a drive in the human being to want to sift or filter our experience. And language allows us to do that.

The event of whatever it might be in life, a tremendous loss, spiritual awakening, an emotional crisis of some kind, I don't necessarily mean that. Those experiences are gone. Nothing can bring them back. Except they can be triggered by certain things; a

smell, a sound, a color, and then with language, memory, can bring that forth again. That's the worth of a word really — and there seems to be a drive in the human being — and more acute in some of us, to do that. It's a kind of magic really.

If I'm able in any given poem, to recapture an experience of mine in language so that you feel it, it is a magical transition. It happens to be the basis for literature also.

**The postcard project seems to have gone better than anybody could have expected. — Are there more of its kind in the future?**

We are close to the final stages of preparing a deck of cards, one size playing cards for adoption that we hope will be ready in time for Christmas, and these cards are intended to

celebrate fifty-two poets in Sacramento who played a prominent role in the years that lead up to and slightly beyond the creation of the Sacramento Poetry Center and the solidification of the scene that the second move to density and take it further.

The committee and I have chosen them and we are in the process of choosing work that will appear on the cards. [There will be] a hand-drawn portrait of each poet by Suzanne Johnson — who has been drawing since the beginning — and a quote by that poet. We have a list of 35 retailers who want to take the cards. Suzanne is busily drawing everybody. Packaging is the real issue — two-thirds of your cost.

The final project, one in the South Natomas Park — with any luck we're in the final stretch of this one. The Poet Laureate project has been appended, for the sake of this project, to the Arts in Public Places project. This is a commission of (approximately) a \$100,000 project. Their guidelines are that it needs to fit in the park we're talking about, it must represent the work of the four Poet Laureates so far and it has to last at least 25-30 years. My intention is to create an environment where, it stands on its own as a piece of art, but also includes text of the poet laureates. It depends on what the artist proposes. It is not intended to be one of those civic things with the guy's picture and some lines. Nor is this a "busts of the poet laureates"



Julia Connor (R) with Ann Menebroker (L) and Mary Zeppa.



“If I can create a ‘well of stillness’ ... it creates a sort of envelope around me in which I’m totally at ease and the minor interruptions, internal and external, are silenced. I can tame the demons, so to speak.”

project. It must include the writing of past Poet Laureates. I’m talking about pieces of art that incorporate poems that catch the attention of those passing by.

It is a really interesting project because of all the people involved – engineers, librarians, gardeners, the committee is made up of visual artists and poets. People from the art in public places committee, so it is a miracle actually.

**Are there conditions under which you find yourself writing better?**

I write my best, and with my fullest participation, with ease and fluidity, a kind of abandon, when I have managed to create enough stillness in myself and my surroundings – a *surround*, I call it, around me.. That doesn’t mean a café with a lot of noise. It’s a different kind. When younger I needed a café, but as I grow older I need more silence.

If I can create a “well of stillness” – a voice comes up in me – if I then do writing from that voice and continue it over a period of time – it needs a reciprocity so that I write, have stillness, write, etc... it creates a sort of envelope around me in which I’m totally at ease and the minor interruptions, internal and external, are silenced. I can tame the demons, so to speak.

If I complain to myself I’m not writing enough, I know myself enough to know there is too much extrovert-energy and I’m going to have to give something up to create that well of silence, but like anyone else, I want to go to the party. Getting it going is the hard part. Each time you must trust it is going to be there.

When I’m writing a talk or a paper I can start/stop, start/stop and not necessarily feel those interruptions. In fact, they can even be helpful. But if I’m writing a poem, and try to do that, the train of thought is so fragile, so tentative. It is much more like having a dream and saying I’ll write it down in the morning, but in the morning you can’t remember anything about it except that it was important. (laughter)

**You’ve judged a number of contests, including SPC’s poetry contest in 2007 — can you tell me what goes into the process?**

Each time I’ve been asked to do it, the sponsoring organization has done the preliminary screening and so I’ve been given a mercifully small number (to judge). Judging is an uncanny process anyway. It implies “this is good, this is not good”. And that can become totally confusing and dangerous because it puts us in the territory of commodity.

When we start talking about the expressions of human artistic endeavor as if they are commodities the revolution is lost. The war is lost, for good. So you have to find some way to wrestle

with this because you are being asked to apply your discretion to the work before you, and that means that the bias of whoever you are, whoever the judge is, will come forward. If you sent the same poems to three different judges, you might very well get at least two different selections if not three.

In the contest this year, I was interested in a number of things. The winning poem this year impressed me with concision. How she had been able to whittle that poem down to its very essentials without sacrificing its musicality at the same time she packed a little surprise. All three of those things together to me told me, wow, this person has a kind of facility with the kind of tropes a poem can perform.

So it isn’t for me a question of what is good and what is not good. It is more a question of something that works as a kind of totality. The reason we do this is because we are limited as human beings to finding some depth of a better way of recognizing somebody’s work except of a contest where someone wins. That is the best we can do for where we are at. In some ways it sends the wrong message, particularly to young poets, because when you find yourself writing to win, instead of to write, that war is lost too.

**Is there a time you felt you wrote your best poem? A time when you feel you were writing your best poetry?**

No. I don’t think so. I remember several times, when I was in my - it’s not exactly what you are asking—but close, my word for it is, “it’s more than a poem, it’s a book”. And that’s a great feeling. There’s something in the voice—I can suddenly tell it’s not a short voice, it’s a long voice. I like that. It’s pretty easy to believe in yourself when you’re feeling that. When you can’t hear any voice at all.

## 2 poems by Taylor Graham

### LOVE SONG FOR A DOG

Yes, even when you smell  
of skunk. I love your raw  
rank wildness under a full moon  
searching out the night's  
shadows. What do I  
the poet know, praising a moon's  
reflected light, when you  
untutored dog  
know the dens of creatures  
innocent and pungent  
as an untamed world we humans  
think we've left behind.

### POETS ON STRIKE

Around the world they're picketing  
The Powers That Be. TAXATION WITHOUT  
IMAGINATION, they chant. How  
could you impose a use-tax  
on words? A quarter for consultation  
of just one category in the book of synonyms,  
or three for fifty cents, if the thought-  
to-syllable ratio becomes complex.  
A dollar for a sonnet's worth of rhyme.  
Royalties for each word transplanted  
from reference into the body of a poem.  
No wonder the bards are marching,  
their epigrams written large with magic  
marker on cardboard torn from a box  
of bond. No wonder they roar  
their Hudibrastics against  
unimaginable corporate greed.  
Could metaphor be next?

### PICKING HOPS

*Janine Stephens*

a photo—Native American Woman  
at Snoqualmie Hop Ranch

Harvest time, near dusk  
she removes remaining blossoms,

fills the reed basket, thinks  
about the evening meal

perhaps dried salmon and rice  
from the company store.

She studies patterns, dark trunks,  
shiny beetle tracks, wonders

if there will be time to finish  
her baby's cradleboard?

A gauze scarf holds thick, black,  
plaited braids. On high cheekbones,

sunlight forms bright triangles,  
a white patina, or, is it the glowing

snow covered mountain to the west,  
joining her in reverie?



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## 2 poems by Jennifer Pickering

### Lines From A Zen Poem

Eve posed the question to the universe:  
“How can I think-non-thinking?”  
The silence answered, “Speak with a broad tongue.”  
and the wind will bring the waters voice to your pillow  
or the moon the shadow of the oak through an open window  
or the mind the dream that explains  
the relationships of the truth of grass, trees and pebbles  
between wind, rain water and fire.  
If first the meaning is unclear  
quench your thirst for knowledge at the well of sunshine.  
and splash in rain of the stars’ light.  
You will wear clothes fashioned from heaven and earth  
and dwell in a place of constant summer.

### Human Nature

We live in the sky, not under it.  
But our logic stunts our wings  
forever bound to the nests of mediocrity.  
Unable to take flight, we dig in  
even when it is not in our interest.  
Crying to be fed, to be cared for  
like the first born  
crested sparrow  
cradled in the Cedar each spring  
hopping on twig of legs  
toward the mother’s swollen beak  
to be the first to glean  
the fat worm  
never fulfilled.

### POETRY CONTEST AT THE TOWE AUTO MUSEUM

*Deadline is November 10, 2007*

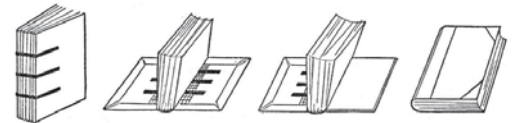
The Towe Auto Museum is pleased to announce its Fourth Annual Automotive Poetry Contest for poems related in some way to the automobile or some form of personal land transportation.

First prize winner receives \$200, second prize gets \$100 and third prize wins \$50. All three winners will receive a Museum membership for one year. Entrance fee is \$10 for up to three (3) poems submitted. The length of each poem is limited to 40 lines, any form, and any style (line-length in Museum poetry publications is 4 inches, so consider how your poem will look in that space). Chap books of past years submissions are available in the Museum’s Gift Shop, or post-paid for \$7.00. Contact the Museum or see the web site for details.

Rules: Send an electronic version in MS Word or Notepad to [PoetryContest@Towe.AutoMuseum.org](mailto:PoetryContest@Towe.AutoMuseum.org) with your name, address and phone number in the document or the body of the email; OR send three **typed** copies of each poem, one copy with your name, address and phone number in the upper left-hand corner. The other two copies of each poem must be without identifying information. Previously published work is allowed if you hold the rights to the poem. The judges’ decision is final. Keep a copy of your work as it will not be returned.

Postmarked deadline is November 10, 2007. Send entries and make check payable to Towe Auto Museum, Poetry Contest, 2200 Front Street, Sacramento, CA 95818. For more information call (916) 442-6802. The winning poems will be posted on the Towe website at [www.toweautomuseum.org](http://www.toweautomuseum.org) by February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2008.

The Towe Auto Museum, located at 2200 Front Street in Sacramento, CA (open daily from 10 am to 6 pm) just south of Old Sacramento and just north of Broadway. Please call the Museum for more information at (916) 442-6802.



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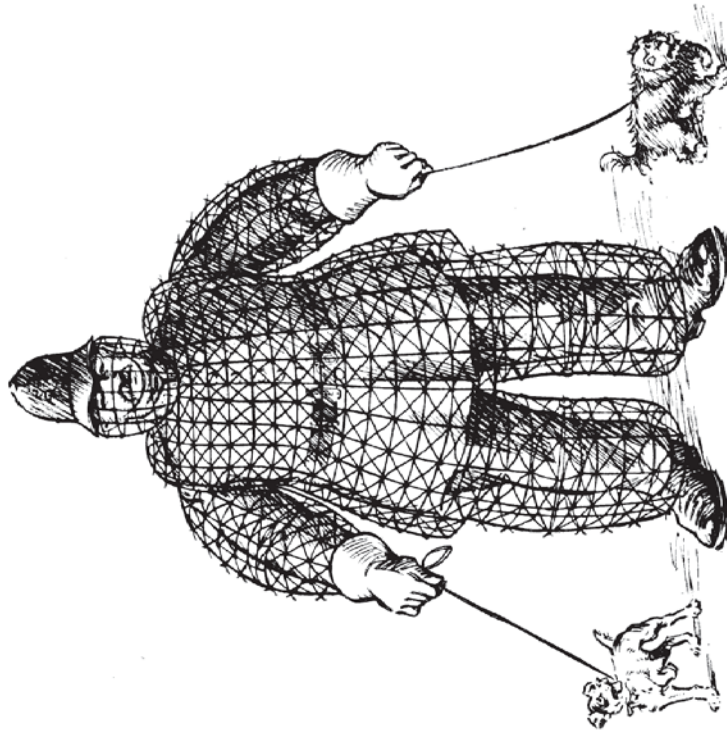
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CLYDE ENROTH & BEN HIATT REMEMBERED

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