

WPA

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Check out the website for
 their photos and bios.

In This Issue

President's message
Calls for nominations
Letters to the editor
Ostrum on Langston
Hughes
Tim Kelly's universe
Gift suggestions
What do editors
want?
Review of Late Wife
Luna on Naropa
Announcements
Contests
Cascade
Group profiles
Coming events and
general information
Final Word

**The President's message**

Dear fellow WPA members,

This year the WPA has made good progress as the board and membership worked together to expand and fine-tune our statewide programs and offerings. Events such as the Poetry Roadshow and *Burning Word* are now getting their legs well under them, and we are making some good changes towards improving our contests, annual journal and awards ceremonies.

One thing we are planning to do is create more chances for members to get

(continued on the next page)

Two calls for nominations

Nominations for Washington Poets Association's 2007 . . .

. . . *Faith Beamer Cooke Award*

If there is an individual, a couple, group, or organization you would like recognized for "service to the poetry community of Washington State," send a nomination (a paragraph or two) to Lorri Lambert-Smith, Awards Chair, lambertsmith@yahoo.com **by December 31, 2006.**

A complete listing of recipients of this award, from 1974-2006, can be found on the following page.

. . . *Lifetime Achievement Award*

If there is an individual whose lifetime body of work you think merits this award that was established in 2004, send your nomination (a paragraph or two) by **December 31, 2006** to Lorri Lambert-Smith, Awards Chair, lambertsmith@yahoo.com. See the list below for previous recipients:

Tess Gallagher, 2004
 Sam Hamill, 2005
 Carolyn Kizer, 2006

Now Being Accepted

WORD!, the newsletter of the Washington Poets Association, is published four times each year. The next issue will be published in March. The deadline for submitting material for consideration in that issue is February 28, 2007. Please read the submission guidelines that are on the web site and if you have any questions, contact the editor at newseditor@washingtonpoets.org.



Past recipients of the Faith Beamer Cooke

1974 *The Wallula Poets*
1975 *Pierce County Poets*
with Folly Press

1977 *Longview-Kelso Poetry Community*

1981 *Poetry Exchange, Seattle*

1982 *The Daily Olympian,*
"Totem" Poetry

1984 *Readers Theatre, Vancouver*

1985 *Centrum Writers' Conference,*
Port Townsend

1986 *Tacoma Writers Club*

1988 *Nelson Bentley, Castalia Series*

1989 *Northwest Renaissance*

1991 *Mead High School Creative Writing*
Program, Spokane

1992 *Red Sky Poetry Theatre, Seattle*

1998 *Jim and Karen Bodeen,*
Blue Begonia Press, Yakima

1999 *J. Glenn and Barbara Evans,*
PoetsWest, Seattle

2000 *Paul and Joyce Gillie, Olympia*

2001 *Christine Deavel and John Marshall,*
Open Books, Seattle

Judith Irwin, Longview

2002 *Pieter Zilinsky, Seattle*

2003 *Connie Walle, Tacoma*

2004 *Karen Bonaudi, Moses Lake*

2005 *Bart Baxter, Bellevue*


2006 *Judith Roche, Seattle*

Letters to the Editor


Editor,
WORD looks terrific and is a terrific read. Thanks for all the good and timely information and the reports on poets Hulett and DeFrees from Ed Stover and poet Donald Hall from Hecker. I also found really interesting Lyn Coffin's scary and poignant story about her "killer poet." His work is, of course, stunning aside from all the problems and questions it raised for Lyn. Hopefully, he'll find his place at his desk.

Karen Havnaer (via email)

(Editor's note: Several folks commented also on how useful Chris Dahl's punctuation article was.)



MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR
BURNING WORD 2007,
A FESTIVAL OF POETRY,
ON SATURDAY, APRIL 28TH, AT
GREENBANK FARM



(President's message continued)

together. We hope to sponsor and co-sponsor readings and workshops, which will give us a chance to become acquainted and to share our passion for poetry.

I'd like to see 2007 as the year the WPA becomes widely discovered as the great resource it is and see our modest membership soar. So, please help us spread the word. You probably know poets and poetry lovers in Washington State who are not yet members of the WPA. Invite them to join the Washington Poets Association. As a friend, you owe it to them! With a dirt-cheap \$15 fee for a year-long membership, who could say no? You can send interested poets to the WPA's website <http://washingtonpoets.org/> to learn more about us. Or send them straight to http://washingtonpoets.org/join_wpa.php/ to join right away.

Suggest that while they are at the website they also check out <http://burningword.org/> for the early news on which poets will be performing and presenting at the *Burning Word '07* festival. We'll keep you posted as more poets sign on! Saturday, April 28th is the date to mark on your calendar now. Come help us celebrate the power of poetry! More Burning Word news coming soon!

In the meantime, I wish you all a beautiful and poetry-filled winter. May the season bring us peace and joy as we celebrate Chanukah, the Solstice, Christmas, Kwanzaa, Eid-al-Adha, and the coming new year.

With warm regards,

Victory



Langston Hughes

by Hans Ostrom

Langston Hughes (1902-1967) is well known to most of us now because of a few poems that find their way into anthologies: “Theme for English B,” “The Negro

Speaks of Rivers,” and “Harlem.” The latter poem famously asks, “What happens to a dream deferred?” It also provided the title to Lorraine Hansberry’s classic American play, *Raisin in the Sun*.

Beyond these famous poems, however, lies a vast opus, which includes over 800 poems, plays, novels, essays, opera libretti, autobiographies, books for children, volumes of short stories, and even a screenplay. Hughes burst upon the scene with the volume of poetry, *The Weary Blues* (Alfred Knopf, 1926), a prime text from the Harlem Renaissance. But he never stopped writing, never ceased to be interested in the lives of ordinary Americans, never withdrew from his quarrelsome relationship with the nation he had reason to love and hate.

The University of Missouri Press recently published Hughes’s complete works, and they filled 18 volumes. One of many inviting aspects of his work is that there are numerous doors by which readers may choose to enter. There are early poems influenced by the blues, by jazz, and by the work of Sandburg and Whitman. There are the politically alert, edgy stories of *The Ways of White Folks*, still in print after over 70 years and still, in my opinion, one of the under-rated volumes of American short fiction. Superb stories from that collection include “Cora Unashamed,”

which PBS has adapted to the screen, and “The Blues I’m Playing.” There’s the warm, lucid coming of age novel, *Not Without Laughter*.

There are the collections of comic sketches featuring Jesse B. Simple, who is, like Huckleberry Finn, wiser than he seems and funnier than he knows. There is also *Black Nativity*, a gospel song-play produced annually at Christmas-time at Seattle Intiman Theatre—a production not to be missed.

For poets, however, the 800-plus poems constitute a remarkable treasure. Hughes’s poetry is a great inspiration for poets who aren’t especially looking for inspiration. For Hughes’s poetry isn’t especially fashionable, ornate, soaringly passionate, or pretentiously learned. It is simple—but deceptively so. It is written in many voices, but all of the voices speak directly. It covers everything from love to politics, religion to work, Harlem to China, but it looks at the world through clear eyes, hears American English with keen ears, and feels the lives of people who go to work, fall into despair, get up and go on, and walk the path between absurdity and hope. Hughes’s people are often “laughing to keep from crying,” as he put it in the title of one of his books. Langston Hughes’s poetry inspires by validating what poets do whether they are famous or not: they live, and they write. Hughes loved to write about people who work. For poets who love the work of writing, he is there waiting to be read and implicitly to bless what you write, whatever you write. He’s the working poet’s poet.

Hans Ostrom is author of *A Langston Hughes Encyclopedia* and *Langston Hughes: A Study of the Short Fiction*. He is also author of *The Coast Starlight: Collected Poems 1976-2006* (Dog Ear Publishing, 2006). He teaches at the University of Puget Sound, Tacoma, WA.

Voices from the past . . .

“Tribes and nations turn finally to poetry and so do individuals when they find the poet within.”

Carlin Aden, President of the Washington Poets Association as found in the Jan. ‘83 issue of YIPE, the Association’s newsletter



Tim Kelly's universe

Note: At a workshop he recently led, Tim Kelly often referred to his "universe" and when pressed, agreed to share with us the elements in that universe.

Here are some characteristics necessary for a poem to pass muster in my universe:

1. **The poem must surprise.** It must contain some element that upsets my expectations, and does so in a way that makes me feel like I've understood something new. This quality is what makes the poem memorable.

2. **The language must be alive.** The poem must be void of clichés, and must have some element which allows me to hear some words or combinations of words in a way that is new and pleasurable. At the same time the poem's language can't feel "forced," as if the new usage is there just to be radical or clever.

3. **The poem must convince.** It must be believable and authentic. In most poems this is done by the use of skillfully chosen sensory images and closely observed details which successfully "create" the world the poem moves in. In some ways, this characteristic is the most subjective of these generally subjective demands, and one person's

convincing detail may be another's false note. It's about scene-setting even when the poem is abstract or highly internal.

4. **The poem must be concentrated.** Laddling on adjectives, adverbs or images is often a distraction and a mistake. The poem must feel like there is "no wasted motion" in the way that a swimmer's stroke is best when it is most compact and efficient.

5. **The poem must bear repeated readings.** It must be generous in all senses of the word. When all is said and done, we read poetry because it is rewarding and pleasurable. Good poems continue to offer up small surprises on re-readings; it's often on second or third readings that you begin to understand how skillfully constructed the poem is, how the language and images resonate and interact, and see the possibility of subtly different (and sometimes competing) intentions/interpretations.

Any poem which meets these standards is a poem I welcome in my universe.

Tim Kelly, MFA, Boston U. and MA Physical Therapy, UW, has two award-winning books: Stronger won the 1999 Field Poetry Prize and Toccata and Fugue was the 2005 Floating Bridge Press chapbook winner. Look for him also in Crab Creek Review, Seattle Review and Image.



News from southwest Washington

New to Longview and Cowlitz County is the FIRST TUESDAY *Wordfest* at Frank's European Cellar, 1338 Commerce Avenue in downtown Longview. This is a monthly gathering of local writers and readers, celebrating the joy and magic of words, with public readings, discussions, and networking opportunities from 6-8 p.m. The event is free and open to the public. If you have any questions or want more information, call Alan Rose 360.425.3430 ext. 280.

Gift suggestions

'tis the season of gifts for many reasons . . .

- For a mere \$15 you can give a year-long gift— a WPA membership for the friend or relative who has everything.
- Choose a just-right chapbook that you heard a WPA member read from and purchase it for someone special. (Remember, you can contact that poet because each of us now has a membership directory.)
- Write a little verse that tells a friend that you will be purchasing a day-pass for *Burning Word* as this year's present.

What do editors want?

by Lana Hechtman Ayers

There is no sure-fire method for getting published. The sage advice you've heard umpteen times is good advice: read the journal before submitting, follow the submission guidelines to the letter, send your best work.

Even if you've read the journal for a dozen years, went to school with the editor's sister, and have written poems that in every way fulfill the stated mission of that journal, your work might still be rejected. Editors are human and, therefore, unpredictable. At many journals the opening of submission envelopes is done by screeners, undergraduate students who can't relate to the work of anyone older than twenty (*Milk man? Perry Como? 8-track?*).

Perhaps, then, the real question is how to deal with rejection. If your work is rejected, look it over before you send it out again. Are there typos? Does it need additional tweaking, pruning, or freshening of language? When you are satisfied with them, send them out again somewhere else. If they come back, review and perhaps revise the poems again, and keep sending until every possible venue for your work has been tried. Some of my poems have been rejected more than a dozen times before they found their way into print; rarely have I ever had a poem accepted its first time out. It's a numbers game. Many journals report

they accept 1% or fewer of what they receive, so it is a tough game to win.

In my experience rude or unkind editors are rare. One time, I received a rejection in which the editor noted with painstaking detail how awful my poems were. Since I disagreed with that evaluation, I kept submitting those poems and all have since been published. For every rude editor, I like to think there are at least a dozen kind ones who will write encouraging notes on the rejection letters or at least sign them with a human hand. When this happens, send thank you's and more work. Most editors are volunteers and a simple thank you can go a long way.

As creator, it behooves you to treat your own work with the utmost respect even if the literary world seems indifferent or hostile. Ultimately, editors want to put together issues of their journals readers want to read. They cannot do this without submissions from poets exactly like you. I have a theory that every poem has its ideal reader and it is just a matter of getting the poem into that ideal reader's hands. My best advice—don't lose heart. You're a poet because you can't not be. If your goal is to get into print, be as dedicated to submitting as you are to your art and you will get published.

Lana Hechtman Ayers runs a poetry manuscript service, is publisher of the Concrete Wolf Chapbook Series, and co-hosts the SoulFood Poetry Reading Series at SoulFood books in Redmond.

SoulFood Poetry Reading Series

The SoulFood Poetry Night Reading Series in Redmond is a relatively new venue to nurture and stimulate the poetry community on the Eastside and the greater Seattle area. Every month in the SoulFood Books café, typically on the third Thursday, we have an evening of poetry with two featured guest readers followed by an open-mic. Readings are from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. SoulFood Poetry Night is unique because one featured guest has the opportunity to invite a person he or she would like to read with. This gives the readings an added sense of community in keeping with the spirit of SoulFood Books. Also, readings highlight special "soul food" poems—poems that each featured guest selects to read as an interpretation of the concept of "soul food." All of the "soul food" poems will be collected in a binder you can peruse any time at the store (look for it!).

Hope to see you at our next reading, and do bring some of your own work to read. You can sign up for open mic when you arrive. Don't worry about arriving early just to sign up, as we'll do everything we can to include everyone.

"To have great poets there must be great audiences too." —Walt Whitman

For directions go to <http://SoulFoodBooks.com>. For more info, contact curators, Michael Dylan Welch welchm@aol.com or Lana Hechtman Ayers moonlit.cloud@yahoo.com.

Voice from Appalachia wins 2006 Pulitzer Prize

Late Wife

by Claudia Emerson

Louisiana State University Press, 54 pp.,
\$16.95

reviewed by Marianne Mersereau

Although I have lived in the Northwest for almost twenty years, I still define myself as a Southerner (American by birth, Northwestern by luck, Southern by The Grace of God). I pay close attention to literary voices coming from the South, especially the female voices and those from the Appalachian region where I grew up. For these reasons, I was intrigued to find that one of these voices had captured the 2006 Pulitzer Prize for Poetry, awarded this past May.

Claudia Emerson's collection, *Late Wife*, reads like a novel. In 54 pages, she tells the story of her divorce ("Part I: Divorce Epistles"), the events leading up to it ("Part II: Breaking up the House"), and her remarriage to a man who lost his wife to cancer ("Part III: Late Wife, Letters to Kent").

Emerson relies strongly on images from the Southern Highlands of her native rural Virginia to paint the word pictures that tell her story. It is a story full of intruders. In the prologue poem "Natural History Exhibits," she describes the black rat snake she found coiled in the cutlery drawer in her kitchen, causing me to remember the snake we once found stretched out along the ceiling rafter in my grandmother's laundry room. Life in the rural South is similar to life in the Northwest in that the surrounding natural environment is one hard to ignore. Emerson's writing reflects the way this environment works its way into our homes and hearts and shapes the way we process the events of our lives.

In the poem, "Metaphor," she writes about a bat flying into the bedroom she shared with her former husband. "I screamed for you to do something," she writes, "So you killed it

with the broom, cursing, sweeping the air. I wanted you to do it, until you did." There are cedar waxwings and swallows in the chimney, bumblebees in the walls, spiders and termites, old artifacts dug from plowed fields, a lover who turned out to be too close to his mother, and a fire that destroyed the tobacco barn. These images allow us to see the biggest unwelcome intruder—the emptiness that flooded her first marriage.

Emerson's poems are pieced together like the quilt she shows the reader in the poem titled "Artifact." In this letter to her second husband, she describes the quilt that was made by his late wife, as "her shadow, moving with us, that dark, that soft." *Late Wife*, like the artifact poem, is filled with the darkness of loss and the softness of grace.

In addition to reading and writing poetry, Marianne Mersereau enjoys performing Appalachian clog dance routines around the Northwest with The Eclectic Cloggers, a performance group based in Shoreline, WA.

(Editor's note: An audio of the poet reading selections from each of the book's three sections can be found at <http://www.profcast.org/>.)

Jewel Box Series reaches one-year mark

On the third Sunday of each month, the Jewel Box Poets Sunday Reading Series focuses on contemporary poetry and features two regional poets each month. Featured, among many great readers, have been poets Kevin Miller, Holly Hughes and Madeline DeFrees.

The upbeat and energetic program begins at 3 p.m. at the Jewel Box Theatre, 225 Iverson, Poulsbo. An open mic session follows the featured readers. Admission is free, but donations are welcome.

Jenifer Browne Lawrence, the host, says she is happy to hear from poets interested in participating in the series. They may contact her at jewelboxpoets@comcast.net or call 360-779-9688.

New beginnings at Naropa: one student's viewpoint

by Christopher Luna

My time as a student at the Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics at Naropa University in Boulder, CO completely changed my approach to writing. I was introduced to so many different poets, methods, and concepts that I left with a sense of the limitless possibilities in poetry. As I learned who my spiritual and aesthetic elders are, I also learned that any concept of literary "schools" is only useful for students and critics to organize their thoughts. The work of each so-called Beat poet, for example, is so different from every other that the term is largely meaningless except as a general way to talk about people with certain historical and cultural affinities.

I began to see that there are many ways to organize one's poems in the preparation of a manuscript: by time, or place, or theme. I learned about the great tradition of long, narrative poems from Olson's "Maximus" poems, Williams's "Paterson," and Anne Waldman's "Iovis." Once one realizes that "form is never more than an extension of content," to quote Olson's seminal essay, "Projective Verse," there is never a question about what a poem is supposed to look like. The poem tells you what it is supposed to look like, and the page becomes as open as a blank canvas or an untilled field.

I received brief but life-altering words of encouragement from great teachers and friends including Steven Taylor, Bobbie Louise Hawkins, and Randy Roark. I became part of an international community of writers and artists. Several of my friends became lifelong partners-in-crime: David Madgalene, Vishal Khanna, Lisa Jarnot, Michael Smoler, Derek Fenner, and Jeff Carmack, to name just a few. Ed Sanders became a mentor, and his method of investigative poetry blew my mind. Finally, I

had found a way to integrate all of my interests—poetry, journalism, history, documentary film—into the creation of new poetry.

I collaborated with two terrific musicians: trombonist Rob Ewing and drummer Jason Levis, both of whom now have successful careers in California. We attended a weekly workshop with fellow poets, dancers, and musicians, based in part on Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche's ideas about Dharma Art. Collaboration allows one to set the ego aside in favor of contributing to the whole; furthermore, working with musicians teaches a poet listening skills, a talent which can be sorely lacking.

One of the great ideas I encountered is from a letter by John Keats, in which he describes "Negative Capability, that is, when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason." Although we may sometimes resist this truth, it is evident that negative capability is a crucial element of creativity. Learning to nurture this skill, and make peace with its implications, is imperative.

When I left Naropa, everything about my process accelerated. I am convinced that, left to my own devices, it would have taken me five to ten years to achieve what I learned in my two years at the Kerouac School. The attentive Kerouac School student leaves with what Olson called a "saturation job;" that is, a lifelong homework project, and a framework to guide one's work in the coming decades.

Christopher Luna's poems appear in several anthologies, he reads at several venues and hosts a monthly poetry reading in Vancouver.

WPA Chooses Elizabeth Austen for Its Roadshow

Poet, media personality, teacher and workshop presenter Elizabeth Austen has been chosen by Washington Poets Association to take poetry on the road around the state to specific, underserved communities. For more information about the program, WPA's collaborators, and goals for the future, visit our web site at washingtonpoets.org.



Washington Poets Association

announces its

2007 Annual Poetry Contest



Four categories to enter:

	1st	2nd	3rd
WILLIAM STAFFORD AWARD (Any form)	\$150	\$100	\$75
CARLIN ADEN AWARD (Traditional rhyme/meter)	\$125	\$75	\$50
CHARLIE PROCTOR AWARD (Humorous—any form)	\$125	\$75	\$50
FRANCINE PORAD AWARD (Haiku)	\$125	\$75	\$50

Honorable Mentions will be awarded at the discretion of the judges.

- **Submission period: January 1, 2007—March 15, 2007**
- **Winning entries will be published in the new WPA journal, Cascade.**
- **A special awards event will recognize the winners who will read their work.**
- **Open to all poets (except WPA Board members) who are at least 18 years old.**
- **Winning poems from any previous WPA contest are not eligible.**
- **Entry fee is \$5.**
- **The fee for each poem entered, regardless of category, is \$1.**

Additional information and entry form will be posted on the web site, www.washingtonpoets.org.

ANNOUNCEMENT

CASCADE: Journal of the Washington Poets Association, an annual, juried selection of poems, will soon be accepting submissions for its first issue that will be published in the fall of 2007. Winning poems from the annual poetry contests will be automatically included each year. More information and submission details will be sent to WPA members and appear on the website, www.washingtonpoets.org.

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Maureen McQuerry's chapbook, *Relentless Light*, will be released with Finishing Line Press April 20, 2007. Many of the poems are from her collection, *Wingward*, which won the 2006 New Eden chapbook competition.

The Paul Gillie workshop series continues at the Timberland Library (313 8th Ave., Olympia) from 7 pm to 8:30 pm. with the following:
December 14 — Paul Nelson
January 11 — Carolyn Maddux
February 8 — Derek Sheffield
March 8 — Jeanne Lohmann & Don Freas
April 12 — Chris Dahl
May 10 — Allen Braden

There is still time to submit to *Switched-on Gutenberg*, an on-line poetry journal, for its next issue: *Poems of Place and Displacement*. Poems will be taken by e-mail until **December 20, 2006**. Please visit the website for further guidelines: www.switched-ongutenberg.org.

Jenifer Browne Lawrence is the author of newly published *One Hundred Steps from Shore*, Blue Begonia Press, 2006.

Roger Hancock, member of Striped Water Poets (an Auburn workshop group) pointed out a most interesting website that identifies various forms of chicanery in the world of poetry. Names are named and you might be surprised at some of the names you see there. Go to Foetry: American Poetry Watchdog at www.foetry.com.

The Distinguished Writer Series continues in Tacoma on the second Friday of each month at the Blu Wolfe, across from Tully's on Broadway. The coming lineup includes:

January 12 - Tod Marshall of Gonzaga
February 9 - Paul Nelson, SPLAB
March 9 - Aaron Abeyta of Denver CO
April 13 - Christine Swanberg
May 11 - Patricia Clark

SoulFood Poetry Night, Thursday December 14, 7 to 9 pm at SoulFood Books, 15748 Redmond Way, Redmond, WA. Featured readers Kelli Russell Agodon and Ann Batchelor Hursey. Open mic follows. Free. For directions, visit www.soulfoodbooks.com or call the store at 425-881-5309. For info contact welchm@aol.com or moonlitcloud@yahoo.com.

The Olympia Poetry Network and Friends will have seasonal poetry readings from 6:30 to 8:00 p.m., Wednesday, **December 21, 2006**, at Traditions Fair Trade and Café, 5th and Water St., Olympia. The OPN Board will read poems with a winter or seasonal theme. The audience is invited to read their own poetry, a poem they like, or a poem chosen from our poetry stocking.

The Final Word

by Maggie Kelly, Editor

The next issue of this newsletter will be published in March and will focus on the upcoming April poetry festival, *Burning Word 2007*. Prior to that, there will be considerable information on the WPA website—who will be reading, special events, etc. What I am hoping for here is to have a collection of statements written by you, the members, about your experience(s) at the first three festivals. Write a sentence or a paragraph. If you need something to get you started, I've listed a few prompting questions that you can choose from:

- How many *Burning Words* have you attended?
- If you have attended more than one, is there some way you would compare them?
- Did you participate in any way such as attending the membership meeting at the first one, or read at an open mic?
- Did you find love? or declare love? at *Burning Word*?
- What books did you buy and why?
- What food did you eat?
- What was the highlight for you?
- Did you experience some sort of epiphany?
- Was there a particular workshop that "made all the difference" in your writing life?

Send your responses to me at newseditor@washingtonpoets.org by Feb. 28, 2007.

And finally, *Burning Word* can use a large number of volunteers, so even if it is for only an hour at the book table, please consider lending a hand. (Or better yet, also sign on for one of the already-formed WPA committees.)