

# Georgia Poetry Society



## Congratulations Georgia Poetry Society Contest Winners!

2019  
BYRON HERBERT REECE  
POETRY COMPETITION

Greg Emilio  
“For Everything in Paradise”  
Final Judge: Jericho Brown

2019  
CHARLES DICKSON CHAPBOOK COMPETITION

James Green  
*Long Journey Home*  
Judge: Barry Marks

2019  
MEMBER EXCELLENCE  
POETRY COMPETITION

First prize: “Elvis Never Left My Mother’s Bathroom”  
Kimberly Wright  
Second prize: “Once upon a Time in Georgia”  
Lou Jones  
Third prize: “North Georgia”  
Ann Willis  
Final Judge: Dan Veach



### In This Issue

2019 GPS Contest Winners	1
From the President	2
GPS Member News	3
Poetry Online	4
Remembering Ira Harrison	5
Call for Board Nominations	6
Q&A with James Green	7
Enlivening Force of Poetry	8

### Contact Information

[www.georgiapoetrysociety.org](http://www.georgiapoetrysociety.org)  
[president@georgiapoetrysociety.org](mailto:president@georgiapoetrysociety.org)  
[newsletter@georgiapoetrysociety.org](mailto:newsletter@georgiapoetrysociety.org)

### 2020 Officers

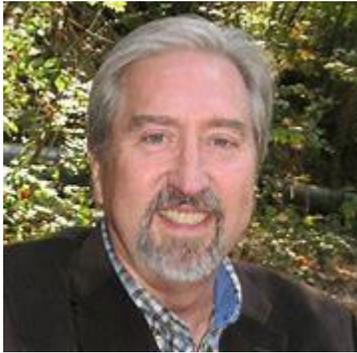
Steven Shields, President  
Alyson Shields, V. President  
Ann Gillespie, Secretary  
Lyn Hopper, Treasurer

### 2020 Board

Kristin Gorell  
Edward Hall  
Andrea Jurjevic  
John Ottley  
Ann Willis

## From the President

As I compose this, I have half an eye on the TV set in my den, which shows split-screen images of citizen protests against the recent tragic death of George Floyd combined with information on an uptick in coronavirus cases on the other side of the screen. In a way, it's a perfect visual to remind me just how surreal, jarring, and dislocating these past few weeks have proven to be. It's a lot to take in all at once, and I am still processing much of it. Perhaps that is also true for you. But



because of the extraordinary outpouring of condemnation against cases like George Floyd's, it is my fervent hope that past and present injustices will finally now be addressed and redressed in meaningful ways. I also have my fingers crossed that one of the several vaccines under development against this coronavirus pans out as quickly as experts have suggested. We will see.

This brings me to a sad announcement that, because of the ongoing uncertainty surrounding this pandemic, the Board and I do not think it wise to hold a physical meeting in July. Even if we were to want to, very few (read: none) of our usual venues would be open to hold such a meeting, and with so many public health precautions still advised, the Board and I are doubtful that many members would attend anyway.

Therefore, instead of a physical meeting, we will host a live webcast Saturday morning, July 25, at 10:00. It should be viewable on Facebook Live and on YouTube. Our plan is also to record the presentation and uplink it to YouTube or to our own website later on, in case people miss it or want to see it again.

During this presentation, we hope to include a reading from the winner of our Charles Dickson Chapbook Competition, as well as from the winner(s) of our recent contest cycle. I'm also hoping to have Editor Michael Diebert join us to talk about *The Reach of Song 2020* and to read a few selections from it. More details on the program will be on our website as we finalize this.

Speaking of our website, if you haven't visited lately, you may not have noticed that we have added our own virtual bookstore. This is for books published by GPS members only. The "buy" buttons lead you either to Amazon or to a publisher or even to the author. This is a new member benefit, and I hope you will make use of it. GPS is not receiving any commission for listing these works, by the way. We simply want to give member works another distribution opportunity. If you have a book and it can be ordered, contact me at [President@georgiapoetrysociety.org](mailto:President@georgiapoetrysociety.org). We will be happy to add it. We need a usable picture of the cover, whatever ISBN information there may be, and some indication of how to buy the book (or chapbook).

This bookstore, by the way, is where you will be able to order your own copy of our chapbook winner's work as well as *The Reach of Song 2020*, both of which will be made live soon. Keep an eye on the website for the launch dates, which I anticipate will be right after the July 4<sup>th</sup> holiday!

Here's hoping you and yours are well and safe, and that you continue to be so.

Steven Shields  
President, Georgia Poetry Society

## GPS Member News

It is with sadness that we note the passing of **GPS Past President Dr. Ira E. Harrison**. Thank you to Henrietta Andrews, who has written a tribute for our newsletter, featured on page 4. Most of us knew Ira as a poet and lover of poetry. Many may not be aware of the impressive scope of his achievements in life. On May 6, 2020, University of Illinois Press featured in its blog an enlightening excerpt from Alisha R. Winn's chapter "Ira E. Harrison: Activist, Scholar, and Visionary Pioneer" in *The Second Generation of African American Pioneers in Anthropology*.

<https://www.press.uillinois.edu/wordpress/remembering-ira-e-harrison/>

**Michael Diebert, Liz Garcia, and Steven Shields** were featured May 29<sup>th</sup> in Poetry Night, a virtual reading hosted by Read it Again Books in Suwanee, Georgia. The one-hour event was live on Facebook and YouTube and can still be viewed at the following link:

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=oZjzMkrHWFc>

**Randy Mazie's** poem "Nuts" was published online April 16<sup>th</sup> on Your Daily Poem, and "I Make Silence of the Lambs Look Foolish" <https://online.fliphtml5.com/kguhp/bitv/#p=34> and "Gnarled Trees" <https://online.fliphtml5.com/kguhp/bitv/#p=78> appeared in April online in Necro Magazine. "A Poet's a French Pirate" is being published in the *DASH* literary journal of the California State University of Fullerton (CSUF). His poems "If Subtlety Is Worth Its Weight in Gold" and "The Buck Stops Here" have been accepted for upcoming Issue 36.3 of *MacGuffin*. Randy also had a short story, *A Snake in the Garden of Campus Life*, published in *Defenestration Literary Magazine*. <http://www.defenestrationmag.net/2020/05/a-snake-in-the-garden-of-campus-life-by-randy-mazie/>

**Maren O. Mitchell** will have two poems in the summer issue of *The Orchards Poetry Journal*: "Most visible," and "My Friend Janice Said She Wouldn't Write a Poem about the Prison across the Meadows within View of Her House, but Suggested I Could." UK contemporary poetry webzine *The Lake* will publish her poem "All the way home" in their July issue.

**Steven Owen Shields** has a new chapbook, *Random Acts of Childhood*, now available: [https://www.amazon.com/gp/aw/d/1089682212/ref=tmm\\_pap\\_title\\_o?ie=UTF8&qid=1591978338&sr=1-3](https://www.amazon.com/gp/aw/d/1089682212/ref=tmm_pap_title_o?ie=UTF8&qid=1591978338&sr=1-3)

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## Georgia Author of the Year 2020 Awards for Poetry Congratulations!

### Poetry Chapbook

**Winner:** (GPS Member) Clela Reed, *Silk*

**Finalist:** (GPS Member) Diana Anhalt, *Walking Backward*

### Poetry Full-Length

**Winner:** Malcolm Tariq, *Heed the Hollow*

**Finalist:** Edward Wilson, *In a Rich Country*

## 2020 Pulitzer Prize for Poetry

We are delighted to note that Georgia poet **Jericho Brown**, who spoke at our January 2020 GPS meeting and was judge for the 2019 Byron Herbert Reese Poetry Competition, has won the 2020 Pulitzer Prize for Poetry for *The Tradition*.  
“A collection of masterful lyrics that combine delicacy with historical urgency in their loving evocation of bodies vulnerable to hostility and violence.”  
<https://www.pulitzer.org/winners/jericho-brown>

## Poetry Online or In Your Inbox

Events continue to be canceled due to assembly restrictions during the current Covid-19 precautions, so we are again not including an event list this issue. Here are some of our favorite ways to enjoy poetry online or across the e-waves:

**A Few Words** is a few daily lines composed by GPS member Lyn Hopper that she sends out to subscribers most days of the week. Lyn used to call it “Daily Haiku,” but she has now expanded to include other short forms. It’s free and a great way to start your day. You subscribe through this link: <http://eepurl.com/cvXSmX>.

**Poetry Night** is an enjoyable virtual reading and poetry discussion on Friday evenings hosted by Read it Again Books in Suwanee, Georgia. <https://www.read-it-again.com/friday-night-poetry>

**The Slowdown:** <https://www.slowdownshow.org>. “This is a wonderful 5-minute daily podcast by Tracy K Smith, which is free and available via email.” KPH

**Garrison Keillor’s The Writer’s Almanac:** <http://www.garrisonkeillor.com/radio/> and select TWA. A poem a day, “plus some of the best biographical snippets to be found. Indispensable, and you can subscribe to it.” EAH

**American Life in Poetry:** [www.americanlifeinpoetry.org](http://www.americanlifeinpoetry.org). “My favorite. Ted Kooser introduces a poem and its author every week.” AG

**Your Daily Poem.** <http://www.yourdailypoem.com/>. “This site exists for one purpose only: to help dispel the ugly myth that poetry is boring.”

### GOT NEWS?

**Submission Deadline for Fall Newsletter is August 30<sup>th</sup>**

**Share your poetry news with fellow members!**

**Send to Ann at [newsletter@georgiapoetrysociety.org](mailto:newsletter@georgiapoetrysociety.org)**



Dr. Ira Harrison died Sunday, April 26, 2020 in Las Vegas, Nevada.

He was a retired cultural anthropologist, a member of First Congregational Church Atlanta, United Church of Christ; the Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity; the National Audubon Society (he was an avid bird watcher) and he quietly supported many charitable organizations.

Ira was educated at: (BA) Morehouse College, (MA) Atlanta University, (PhD) Syracuse University, and (MPH) John Hopkins University.

He was one of the original organizers of The Southwest Poetry Group, founded in 1999. This group was a program of the Southwest Branch Library that has recently been renamed Evelyn G. Lowery Library. Ira loved ceremony and to that end always began poetry gatherings by offering as his opening comment that he was an anthropologist by profession, but his passion was poetry. He would then change hats from what he entered the space wearing to the kufi cap. He was fondly referred to as Dr. Poet.

He was a member of the Academy of American Poets, Atlanta University Center Robert W. Woodruff Library Friends' Council, and Georgia Poetry Society. Ira was a faithful member of GPS and served as treasurer, historian, member of the Board of Directors, and President (2014-2016). It is remembered that he was presented with a wooden mallet when he first served as President. His poems were printed in *The Reach of Song* 1999, 2000-2001, 2006-2007, 2008.

He published the following books: *The Mothers: The Nine Black Mothers* (1998); *They / M: Beautiful Black Women* (2002); *Acts of Joy: The Poetry of a Relationship* (2002); *B.A.A.D. Beautiful African American Daughters Poems: of Tribute* (2005); *Poetry and Prevention A Little Ounce Is Worth* (2006); *POP: Poems on Parenting* (2006); *SOS: Sounds of the Sizzling Sixties* (2008); *Poems and Reflections* (2014); *The Spirit of First Church - Poetic Inspiration* (2017). Also, *A Potpourri of Poetic Expression* (2019), which is a collection of poems written by members of the Southwest Poetry Group that Ira led for nearly twenty years.

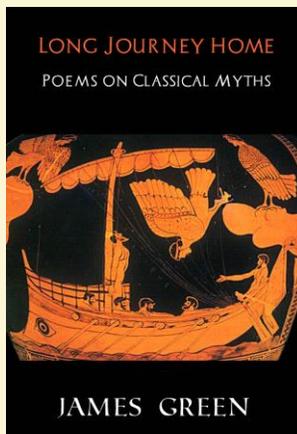
Ira shared that his poems were birthed in Pennsylvania, bloomed in New York, and blossomed in Ohio, Tennessee, and Georgia.

*Henrietta Andrews, June 2020*

**NEW GPS PUBLICATIONS WILL BE AVAILABLE JULY 2020**

Order Your Copies on the GPS Website Bookstore Page:

<https://georgiapoetrysociety.org/book-table/>



**CALL FOR NOMINATIONS**  
**Georgia Poetry Society Needs You!**

Please consider stepping up and volunteering with our great organization.

Several members of the Board and Officer Group of GPS are set to conclude their term of office at the end of this calendar year. These include the **President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer and two positions on the Board of Directors.**

We want to express appreciation to those dedicated and public-spirited members who have given their time to fill these positions through the end of this year: Steven Shields, Alyson Shields, Ann Gillespie, Lyn Hopper, Ed Hall, and Kristin Gorell. GPS is a volunteer organization, and we are most grateful for their contributions.

In normal times, a Nominating Committee would undertake the task of locating a slate of officers to present at the July meeting (traditionally, when we hold our annual Business Meeting), at which time nominations also are accepted from the floor. Once approved by those present, the slate is put to a vote by the membership to conclude by the fall meeting. This allows time for the new officers and Board members to move smoothly into position when they are initiated at the January meeting to begin their term(s).

Because these are not normal times, and because the July meeting will not be held physically this year owing to the pandemic, **we are asking for members to self-nominate for the positions noted above. If you are interested, please contact any one of the Officer group below.**

[President@georgiapoetrysociety.org](mailto:President@georgiapoetrysociety.org)

[VP@georgiapoetrysociety.org](mailto:VP@georgiapoetrysociety.org)

[Treasurer@georgiapoetrysociety.org](mailto:Treasurer@georgiapoetrysociety.org)

[Secy@georgiapoetrysociety.org](mailto:Secy@georgiapoetrysociety.org)

Steven Shields, GPS President

Alyson Shields, GPS Vice President

Lyn Hopper, GPS Treasurer

Ann Gillespie, GPS Secretary

*A Q&A with Charles Dickson Chapbook Winner James Green*

**How many chapbooks have you written and on what topics?**

I have published three other chapbooks. *Stations of the Cross* (Finishing Line Books, 2008) is a series of sonnets that are modern reflections on the Catholic tradition of prayer on scenes from the Passion. *The Color of Prayer: Poems on Rembrandt Painting the Bible* (Shanti Arts Books, 2019) is a series of ekphrastic poems. Each poem corresponds to one of Rembrandt's paintings. Rembrandt was not religious in any conventional sense, but his art depicts a lifelong spiritual journey. *Barely Still Barely Stirring* (Finishing Line Books, 2020) is a collection of poems that describe encounters with nature.

**What appeals to you about the chapbook format?**

I like it for several reasons. First, that it is a cheap, efficient way to make a collection of poems available to a broad readership. Second, its brevity allows the book to be read in one sitting, which adds strength to the motif holding the collection together. The Internet can serve these purposes, and online publishing does have a place, but most of us still prefer to hold the book, to feel the pages as we read, and to keep it nearby so we can turn to it again and again. Another thing I like is that the format lends itself to book art. Chapbooks are ideally suited to being published on handmade paper, printed with letterpress, and individually decorated, letting the poetic and visual art forms work together.

**How and why did you decide on your theme for *Long Journey Home*?**

I have always had an interest in Greek mythology. My father was a scholar of the classics, and I grew up knowing the names and stories of gods and goddesses much as I knew names of the ball players on the baseball cards I collected. Later in life, I began to appreciate how these stories speak to us about our humanity—our human nature and how we embrace it, as well as how we sometimes want to escape it.

**What was your process for writing this collection of poems and how long did it take? Do you always use the same approach in creating a chapbook?**

I wrote a couple of the poems about twenty years ago. However, it was only two or three years ago that I began to write new poems with the intention of creating a chapbook. It was a case of recognizing that I had begun a chapbook without knowing it. The opposite occurred with *Stations of the Cross* and *The Color of Prayer*. With those two, I decided on the concepts that would hold the manuscripts together, then wrote the poems. *Barely Still Barely Stirring* was different again: I selected from poems that I had written over the past twenty-five or so years and which related to a particular aspect of nature.

**What were any challenges or struggles as you were working on *Long Journey Home*?**

One of the challenges in writing the poems in *Long Journey Home* was what to expect of the reader's knowledge of Greek mythology. Poets often are advised to keep their poems accessible—to avoid esoteric allusions or academic vocabulary that cause the reader or listener to disengage from the poem. After drafting the first two or three of these poems, I realized that I was not going to be able to tap into the psychological depths of the myths without expecting the reader to know more than merely the subjects' names. The ubiquitous smartphone and Google made the decision easy for me. So, with these poems I am assuming readers will be willing to do some of the work on their own, even if it is merely googling a couple of names—although I really recommend Edith Hamilton's *Mythology: Timeless Tales of Gods and Heroes*. The other issue particular to this type of series was whether to remain consistent with form. While I am fond of formal verse, especially the sonnet, some of the poems took on their own form. So, the manuscript is a mixture: a few sonnets, a villanelle, some blank verse, and some free verse.

**Which poem in this winning chapbook is your favorite, and why?**

Several come to mind. "Daedalus Laments Icarus" is a poem that underwent very little revision from start to finish. Also, the poem is an example of what I was trying to do throughout the series—to give the subjects different voices than found in traditional interpretations. "Demeter Tries Again to Pray" is another example—to make the subjects more human than archetypal. I also enjoyed writing the closing poem, a sonnet that attempts to show that the conclusion of the hero journey is never tidy.

**Do you have a new poetry project in the works?**

I do. I am working on a new series that uses midrash to frame the poems. Midrash is the Jewish tradition of interpreting scripture using the imagination, in addition to the usual analytics. For example, one of the poems I have so far pictures Isaac as an old man revisiting the site where his father almost sacrificed him when he was a boy. In another, I have Eve giving us her rejoinder.

**Jim's winning chapbook, *Long Journey Home*, will be available July 2020.**

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### The Enlivening Force of Poetry

A few months after her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday, Nancy Kollock attended her first Georgia Poetry Society quarterly meeting and became a member.



She found out about GPS from friends in a local poetry group she had joined the year before. “Joining that group inspired me,” she says. Nancy would take a favorite poem to share at group meetings, and this led her to start seeking out new poems on the internet. Poetry-themed podcasts have opened “windows into the real world” for Nancy. “At this stage in my life I don’t get out as much, and I also have vision problems. Being able to listen to poetry online is very helpful; it’s so easy.”

She listens to a couple of different podcasts every single morning. Garrison Keillor’s *Writer’s Almanac* is a particular favorite: “He is so cheerful—a wonderful way to start the day.” She also enjoys David Kern’s *The Daily Poem* and the Poetry Foundation’s *Poetry off the Shelf*. Her longtime favorite poets are Mary Oliver and Robert Frost, whose poems about the natural world speak powerfully to her, but now she looks forward to discovering less

familiar poetry. After hearing Robert Hayden’s poem “Frederick Douglass,” she right away ordered an audio book to learn more about Douglass. She also looked up Hayden online and came across him reading “Those Winter Sundays,” which has become a new favorite poem. Seeing Hayden and hearing him talk about his work are an example of what she finds most exciting about poetry online: how insights from the host or the poet help you think more deeply about a poem. “Poetry opens your eyes, extends your vision,” she observes. “It’s so vital and life-giving.”

Poetry has been around her all her life but never as meaningfully as now. Discovering all this at age 90 has made Nancy an enthusiastic ambassador for the positive benefits of poetry. She encourages friends who are homebound, and in need of a new interest, to read or to listen to poems, even to try writing a haiku and to send it to her. “I don’t know if any of them have done anything about it,” she laughs, “but I haven’t given up on trying to persuade them.”

“Now it’s so meaningful in my life because it really is a major part of how I am able to feel connected to the world.” And sheltering in place for the last few months during the COVID-19 outbreak has made this connection even more important for Nancy. “There is a book called *Poetry Will Save Your Life*,” she says. “I don’t know if it can quite save your life, but it is such a positive force, an enlivening force. For me, it’s a joy.”

### SUMMER 2020 “VIRTUAL” QUARTERLY MEETING

SATURDAY, JULY 25

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, we will not be holding an in-person meeting. Details on how to view or take part in our online meeting will be posted on the GPS website.

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