

Georgia Poetry Society

Featured Readers for July's Meeting



Ed Nichols, Southern Writers' Association Cappy Hall award winner (*The General*), will read from his latest collection of poems, titled *I Wish I Could Laugh*. For more on Ed, see page 5.



Kathy Ellis, M.Ed. will read from her latest collection, *Wings from Roots*. Kathy seriously started writing poetry seven years ago but always had poetry dancing in her head. Writing poetry is therapy and a creative endeavor for her and a platform when there are important things to say. You will find Kathy's poetry in *Peninsula Poets*, *Reach of Song*, *Ohio Poetry Day Association*, *Setu International Journal*, *Poetry in Nature*, *Dissent Voice*, *Poetry Society of Michigan Poetry Five-Year Anthology 2021*, and *Oracle Magazine*. To her delight (and surprise), works have received several awards and honorable mentions. She self-published her first book of poems in 2017, *Primer*, and recently self-published her second book found on Amazon, *Wings from Roots*. Kathy has spent two years writing an adventure story in poetry form, which has been accepted by a publisher and scheduled to be on the shelf by next year. Kathy co-leads Johns Creek Poets and a writing group from the Spiritual Living Center of Atlanta. Kathy Ellis is an English as a Second Language Coach/Instructor and Cross-cultural Communication Trainer. Kathy holds a Master's in Education with additional graduate studies in Spanish, linguistics, culture, and conflict management. Kathy hosts an international homestay and two multilingual cats.

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2021 Officers

Steven Shields, President
Alyson Shields, Vice President
Michael Diebert, Secretary
Donna Rose Mulcahy,
Treasurer

2021 Board

John Ottley, Jr.
Ann Willis
Ashley Rainge
Angela Washington



From the President

Like many of you, I, too, have finally discarded my mask and begun circulating more freely these past few weeks. After more than a year of virtual lock-up, it feels odd in some ways, very familiar in others. Almost...normal, whatever that is these days.

As I have noted in my past columns, the Georgia Poetry Society has come through this event more or less unscathed, although attendance at our Zoom quarterly meetings has not always been what I hope for. It has been a time of stewardship rather than leadership for me. We have kept the lights on at least, maintaining our usual activities, producing our usual publications, maintaining and even improving our contests, and adding greater functionality to our website.

I'm pleased to report that as of this writing we are closing in on the final author page proofs for the 2021 *Reach of Song*, very much on time for the July meeting delivery date. I'm also pleased to report that the Board and I believe we will be able to meet in person for the October quarterly meeting and have begun discussions with at least a couple of venues that expect to be open then.

Now that my editorship of *Reach of Song* is complete, the remaining tasks for Fall are to oversee both the annual contest cycle and the recruitment of members to become the next generation of GPS leadership. The Board and I continue our search for the next President, Vice-President and one additional Board member.

As always, my hope and expectation is that we will find able and interested folks to step forward in a spirit of volunteer service. Please say yes when we call or email you to help move us forward.

With thanks—
Steven Shields
President, Georgia Poetry Society

GPS Member News

Lucinda Clark sponsored the first ever Columbia County poetry contest, “CC Kids Speak”, in conjunction with Baker Place Elementary. She served as competition judge alongside Geza Tetrallyay for the Charlie Norwood VA. The event resulted in the development of a new anthology for MST survivors. Lucinda read during the New Orleans Poetry Festival, virtual session.

Karen Paul Holmes read “Road Stories” from her collection *No Such Thing as Distance* in April’s poetry month video for Douglas County Library. She had three poems published in *Gyroscope Review*, April 1 issue; one poem in Phi Kappa Phi’s *Forum Magazine*, June issue; two poems in *American Journal of Poetry*; one poem in the new craft book *The Strategic Poet*, Terrapin Books.

Laura Anella Johnson signed a contract with Kelsay Books for her second poetry collection, *The Color of Truth*. Her poem “Ash Wednesday” was published in *Heart of Flesh*, May issue. “Cropped” was published in *The Writers’ Club*, May issue. “Twenty-two Vents in a Polycarbonate Shell” was published in *Tipton*, latest issue. “Ebenezer” will be published in *The Other Journal*, upcoming issue.

Randy Mazie’s poem “Chattahoochee Renewal: the Ordination of Spring” was published in *The Orchards Poetry Journal*, June 2021. His poem “visions of potpourri dance in my head” will be published in *Gyroscope Review*, summer 2021.

Kit Schmeiser’s poem “Face Mask”, published in the June issue of *The Fairview Town Crier*, won First Place in the Friends of Fairview Library poetry contest in celebration of National Poetry Month. Her poem “Memorial Day” was published in *The Crier’s* May issue.

Joy Sheridan’s dissertation on Rupert Brooke, *Twilight on the River*, is available on Amazon.

Robert Simon’s collection *Ode to Friendship* was published this year, as well as three poems: “The Future”, “Trio” and “Pocos” Accomp. Trans. “Wells” in the upcoming *Last Stanza Poetry Journal* Vol. 4, Sept. 2021.

Memye Curtis Tucker’s chapbook *A Net to Hold the Wind* was published in 2019 (in case you haven’t heard). Poet and playwright Nick Flynn, 2014 Writers’ Festival Guest, described her work as “. . . poems—strong, wild poems—about a past that is fading away, paintings that are full of shadows, objects that contain whole lifetimes, and yet, yes—somehow, still—a world that is worth all our attempts to honor it.” Also, Memye’s 1993 archival recording was aired at the 50th anniversary Writers’ Festival at Agnes Scott College. Notably, the festival is the oldest continuous literary event in Georgia.

Angela Washington, founder of Angel of Words is working to fulfill the organization’s mission statement: “Changing the World One Word at a Time”. She spoke at the Gwinnett County School Board meeting to introduce herself as Program Chair for Poetry in Schools. The local 11Alive News channel reported on the event. Angela has a role in her second movie with actor/producer Brittany Goodwin from Nashville, Tennessee-- “Most Wonderful Time” scheduled for release this Christmas.

Just a reminder. . .
Deadline for Fall Newsletter is September 10th.
Send your good news to newsletter@georgiapoetrysociety.org

Looking Back at 2020

by Ann Willis

The first Georgia Poetry Society meeting of 2020 was held at the Decatur-Dekalb County Library on Saturday, January 25th. It opened with the installation of new board members: Steven Shields as president, Alyson Shields as vice president, John Ottley and Ann Willis as new members. Continuing were Lyn Hopper as treasurer, Ann Gillespie as secretary, members Kristin Gorrell, Ed Hall and Andrea Jurjevic.

Multi-award winning poet Jericho Brown was the featured reader for the morning part of the January program. In addition to reading, he shared inspiring stories, including his library experience as a child. Brown's presentation was enthusiastically received by a larger than usual gathering of attendees and a number of non-members. Afterwards, he signed copies of his latest collection, *The Tradition* (longlisted for the National Book Award).

Six members of The Side Door Poets writing-and-critique group graced the stage in the afternoon to present an eclectic and entertaining selection of poems. Reading were Karen Paul Holmes, Ricks Carson, Dan Veach, Rupert Fike, Trish Percival and Jim Langford. GPS launched a group membership initiative late in 2019, and The Side Door Poets group was the first to take advantage of this.

In March 2020, COVID-19 emerged as a significant and life-changing global health threat. In Georgia, a Public Health State of Emergency was declared on March 14th. Schools were ordered to close a few days later. On March 24th, in addition to many other restrictions, a shelter-in-place for certain categories of people was decreed, and a limit was set for all public gatherings. The Spring meeting scheduled for April 25th was cancelled.

In late Spring, Jericho Brown, our January meeting reader, was announced as 2020 Pulitzer Prize Poetry winner for *The Tradition*. GPS members took both prizes in the Georgia Author of the Year Award for Poetry, chapbook category: Clela Reed in first place with *Silk* and Diana Anhalt as finalist with *Walking Backward*.

When it became clear in early Summer the pandemic was worsening, GPS President Steven Shields organized a virtual Quarterly Meeting held on July 25th. James Green, winner of the 2019 Charles Dickson Chapbook Contest, was featured poet, reading from his winning chapbook, *Long Journey Home*. The theme is a revision and revisiting of ancient myths. Greg Emilio, winner of the coveted \$1,000 single prize for the Byron Herbert Reese Competition, the only general competition offered in the most recent cycle, read his poem "For Everything in Paradise". The three members who placed in the Member

Excellence Contest also read their poems.

A survey was distributed to members during late Summer to gauge their preference as to how the upcoming Fall contest cycle should be structured. Based on feedback, the number of contests for Fall 2020 was reset at four, with more modest prizes. One of the new contests added was on the topic of social issues, named for former GPS president Ira E. Harrison. A new chapbook contest named for former president Ron Self, funded by donations in his memory, was established to run in alternate years from the Charles Dickson Chapbook Contest.

Julie Bloemeke was guest poet at the Fall Quarterly Meeting, held via Zoom, on October 24th. She read from her newly published collection *Slide to Unlock*. Member reader Laura Johnson read from her 2019 poetry book, *Not Yet*.

The Georgia Poetry Society remembers two past presidents who passed away in 2020: Ira E. Harrison and Ron Self. We also remember Bob Lynn, a dedicated and active volunteer with GPS, who served as editor of *Reach of Song*. Mildred White Greear, former longtime Georgia Poetry Society member, celebrated her 100th birthday in Helen, Georgia, on October 19, 2020.

Ed Nichols: Simply Southern

At the Summer Quarterly Meeting, Ed Nichols will be reading from his first chapbook, *I Wish I Could Laugh*. Ed is a native of Georgia and a journalism graduate from the University of Georgia. He is an award-winning short story writer. He had a thirty-year career in Human Resources and as a management consultant. He was also a county Chamber of Commerce President and twice-elected county commissioner. Ed is now a full-time writer of prose poems and short stories. He is starting work this summer on a novella. Ed graciously agreed to an interview.

Laurie: What was your inspiration for *I Wish I Could Laugh*?

Ed: I have been writing short stories for a long time. After I retired from full-time work, I started reading more prose poems, and I liked them. It is a quicker way to produce something than a short story or a novel. And it is very gratifying. It gives me a particular pleasure to craft a poem. After I wrote a lot of prose poems, I got the idea of publishing a book of them. The inspiration, I suppose, came from several friends and family members who read some of my work and asked me to publish a book.

Laurie: Why do you choose to write in prose poetry form?

Ed: Let me start at the beginning of my prose poem career. I had stopped writing short stories for a while, and I had written several short, short pieces-- like maybe short flash fiction stories. At the same time I was reading a lot of prose poems. So I emailed several published poets some examples of my work and asked if they thought the pieces were considered prose poems. They all responded in a positive way. That encouraged me, so I incorporated more poetry devices in my writing and worked to develop the craft. I have read thousands of prose poems by many writers, and I have studied in detail Charles Simic, James Tate and Russell Edson.

Laurie: Readers have compared your writing to that of Rimbaud and Jim Morrison; what do you think of the comparison?

Ed: I don't think my work can be compared to Rimbaud or Morrison or any of the great well-known writers. I view myself as a simple writer of stories—some long, some short, in prose and in poetry. There are many other great prose poets, but Charles Simic and James Tate are Pulitzer Prize winners and are very special to me. Tate is my favorite. I have read all of his work. The first time I read his final book, *The Government Lake*, my eyes watered over. How his poems look on the page, the small story encapsulated in each poem, how the normal can become strange, even mysterious, has had a profound and lasting influence on me and my work. I wish I had known him.

Laurie: Do you have any advice for poets seeking publication?

Ed: Read work that you like-- poems or stories that move you, that perhaps seem special. If possible, find writers who really appeal to you. Read their bios and much of their work. Write as often as you can. Rewrite and work at the process. I rewrite each of my prose poems around 30 to 40 times. When you get a few finished, send them out to online literary reviews. Once you get several successfully published, consider putting 20 to 30 together for a chapbook.

Laurie: What's next for you?

Ed: I have another collection of 60 prose poems ready for publication. Also, I plan to publish a collection of my best short stories: *21 Southern Short Stories*. I also have plans, a rough outline, to write a novella. The setting will be in North Georgia, just like the majority of my short stories and prose poems.

JOIN US AT THE SUMMER QUARTERLY MEETING



Saturday, July 24th via Zoom

(Members, check your inbox for a link.)

- ✎ **Ed Nichols**, featured reader, selections from *I Wish I Could Laugh*
- ✎ **Kathy Ellis, M.Ed.**, featured reader, selections from *Wings from Roots*
- ✎ Member Excellence Contest winners announced
- ✎ Unveiling of the 2021 *Reach of Song*
- ✎ Open mic for GPS members

Book your spot for open mic!

Email Alyson at vp@georgiapoetrysociety.org
Open to GPS members only.

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Steven Shields, GPS President
Alyson Shields, GPS Vice President
Donna Rose Mulcahy, GPS Treasurer
Michael Diebert, GPS Secretary

Congratulations!

Member Excellence Winners for 2021

1st place: **Michael Diebert**, “Three-Mushroom Tart, Dayton, Oregon”

2nd place: **Lynn Farmer**, “The Hours and the God”

3rd place: **Dianna Eden**, “The Scent of a Man”

Honorable Mention: **Jill Jennings**, “Pity the Children”

Honorable Mention: **Randy Mazie**, “Draining Lake Nottely”

*All entries will be published in the 2021 *Reach of Song*, available for purchase through the online bookstore.

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What you’ll find:

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Award-winning chapbooks

GPS member publications

Books by featured guest speakers and readers

Meet Your New GPS Newsletter Editor

By way of introduction, Laurie Jones will serve as editor of the quarterly newsletter. She identifies as a musical poet in scrubs with a fascination for bears and the cosmos. Her internal radar leads to the woods or the nearest planetarium.

Though a GPS member for only a few years, Laurie has been a poet for as long as she could form words with a #2 pencil. At a young age she would sit quietly on the floor of her parents' bedroom studying her father's well-worn copy of Robert Frost. In junior and senior high school literary classes, Laurie was enchanted by the cadences of the classics. Robert Burns was a particular favorite, mainly for the connection to her Celtic ancestry. Later, at university, she tackled Kerouac and Rimbaud, equally repulsed and intrigued by their frankness and freedom.

Poetry, for Laurie, is like music put into words. In her childhood home, music was a constant presence, with everyone singing and playing instruments. When she was just eight years old, Laurie discovered her greatest musical passion; it was then she first held a flute and formed a proper *embouchure*. Many years and a few flutes later, Laurie continues to perform either solo or in ensemble.

While growing up in a tiny hamlet of eastern Pennsylvania, Laurie was inspired by the sights, sounds and scents of Nature. When asked of her childhood, Laurie admits, "Pennsylvania is as close as you'll ever get to Heaven on Earth-- idyllic". Her love of Nature is evident in her poetry; word images stir the feelings and inform the senses. Laurie would like to see her work in print, sharing her unique rhythm and perspective with the world.

As a firm believer in personal missions, Laurie is committed to serving joyfully where she is needed most. For this reason, she has worked for many decades as a Registered Veterinary Technician (RVT), tending to the healthcare needs of our animal companions. Prior to entering the veterinary medical field, Laurie earned a Bachelor of Arts in Spanish with a minor in Communications. Always in pursuit of a writing challenge, Laurie served as beat reporter, copy editor and performing arts critic during her days at university. Her poetry was published in the university's literary magazine. From her early days in music to her love of language arts, Laurie has sought to connect on an artistic level. And her mission remains-- joyfully serving where her abilities are needed most.

SUMMER 2021 QUARTERLY MEETING

July 24, 2021

via Zoom

Check your inbox for a link and join us!

www.georgiapoetrysociety.org