

THE GEORGIA POETRY SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 26, NUMBER 4 WINTER 2004-2005

COLLIN KELLEY NOMINATED FOR PUSHCART

Collin Kelley, Vice-President of the Georgia Poetry Society, has been nominated for the prestigious Pushcart Prize for his poem "Credentials."

Collin's poem was nominated by David Herrle, editor of *Subtle Tea* (you can read Collin's poem on their site: www.subtletea.com/collinkelleypoetry.htm).

The Pushcart Prize—Best of the Small Presses has been published annually since 1976. The series has featured hundreds of small presses and thousands of writers, including John Irving, Philip Levine, Raymond Carver and others. It is "the most honored literary project in America."

Collin also is the author of *Better to Travel*, his debut volume of poems, and has recently released a spoken-word CD, *Half-Life Crisis*.

The *Crisis* CD features new work, as well as readings from *Better to Travel*. Details are on his website at www.collinkelley.com.

Collin also hosts a weekly program, "The Business of Words," on the Leisure Talk Radio Network. You can hear Collin as he interviews local poets and authors at www.magespell.com/ltrn/index.html.

Collin is touring Southern California from January 17-19, in San Diego, Redondo Beach and "the OC."



Collin Kelley

Plan to Attend

104th Quarterly Meeting

Saturday 1/22/2005

Georgia State University

Details on Page 8

NOTES OF SPECIAL INTEREST:

- *The 2005 GPS Contest Schedule is included in this issue.*
- *If you haven't paid your annual dues, which were due in July, this is your last newsletter. Contact John Ottley, Membership Chair, for payment info.*
- *"The Reach of Song" is still available for \$15. Contact Terry Hensel for your copy. Please support GPS by buying one.*
- *GPS still needs VOLUNTEERS. Contact Steven Shields at PresidentGPS@comcast.net if you can help with our various committees.*

BETH GYLYS TO READ AT 104TH GPS MEETING

Beth Gylys, Assistant Professor of Creative Writing at Georgia State University in Atlanta, is the featured presenter at the Georgia Poetry Society's 104th quarterly meeting, to be held Saturday, January 22.

Gylys' debut volume, *Bodies That Hum*, won the

1997 Gerald Cable Book Award. Her second collection, *Spot in the Dark*, was recently published by The Ohio State University Press.

Spot in the Dark continues Gylys' award-winning career, selected by Andrew Hudgins and finalist judge David Citino for OSU's *The*

Journal Award in Poetry.

Spot is "a collection of poetry exploring the nuances of human relationships." Themes include "new love to extramarital affairs to dating to solitude."

See a review of *Spot in the Dark* on page 10 of this newsletter.

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GPS MEMBER NEWS

Terry Hensel has agreed to serve as the GPS Librarian.

Dustin Brookshire has agreed to serve on the Program Planning Committee and serve as the GPS Parliamentarian. Thanks to both!

Emery Campbell's poem "Epiphany" has appeared in *Manifold, A Magazine of New Poetry*. Emery also placed fourth in *Manifold's* French Connection poetry contest for his poem "Hors de combat." Emery's poem "Tiger, Tiger,

Burning Bite" appears on the *Hypertexts* website, www.thehypertexts.com.

Poets in the Schools: **Jean Mahavier, Thomas Haynes, Mary Frances, Steven Shields**, and apprentice **La-Ronda Zachery** visited Queen of Angels School in Roswell October 26.

Thomas Haynes, Emily Vail, Will Kenyon, Jean Mahavier, Lisa Allender and apprentice **Anne Bucey** worked with groups of Col-

lege Park home schoolers on November 4.

Steven Shields placed second in the 2004 Helen Schaible Sonnet Contest, of the Poets Club of Chicago, for "La Belle Angèle." It's posted at StevenOwen-Shields.com.

GPS is co-sponsoring a writer's workshop March 24-27 at the Spruill Center for the Arts. **Collin Kelley** instructs, among others. Cost is \$195 for three days.

See the website for more info or contact **Cherryl Floyd-Miller** at cfloydmiller@yahoo.com.

Cleo Creech, editor of GPS' *The Reach of Song*, is accepting submissions for the next volume (2003-04) until February 1, 2005. See submission details on page 10. This volume will be produced using print-on-demand technology and should be available in late spring 2005.

THE PREZ SEZ...

If you want to start an argument among poets sometime, just ask them what they think constitutes a poem.

Greater minds than mine have wrestled with that issue and spilled more ink than I have to expend here.

But a while back, I came across the review of *Poetry Report* by Indiana authors Jim Walker and Mark Shaw. One



Steven Owen Shields

of their points, made in their book by poet Li-Young Lee, caught my eye and has stayed with me for months now:

"...poetry is a dialogue between the poet and the poet's inspiration or obsession, with the audience as a witness. When one of the three elements is missing, then the poem is incomplete."

I think it was that word *obsession* that most drew me in, and got me to thinking, for the umpteenth time, about the difference between what is truly a poem and what is a piece of competently written verse, however clever it might be.

Obsessions. *Obsessions...* hmmm...is that what people really are saying when they say things like, "you shouldn't write poems that aren't authentic." Or maybe: "no

poems about the moon or chickens" (thanks to Cecilia Woloch for that one)?

Certainly, I have been guilty of confusing the buffing of highly polished surfaces with the writing of a true poem. As my apprenticeship wanes, I see more and more clearly what may already be obvious to you: A poem has emotional depth, is something worth having composed in the first place, and (while it may not assure anyone immortality) manages to say something memorable.

In other words, a true poem deals with your *obsessions*.

What do you obsess about?

More importantly, what do you obsess about that you have finally dared to put into words, to share with that witnessing audience?

The idea of witness is a very

powerful one, for it implies that the words were truly spoken, that they were truly heard and, perhaps most dangerously of all, that they were remembered, never to be taken back again.

And that is an enormous emotional risk for many writers. For poets, it's supposed to be stock in trade.

Yet for many poets, the powerful voice of the internal censor challenges the effort to obsess. I know. Mine also accuses. Scolds. Sneers. Mocks.

I have found only one remedy for this: One must be heard, *somehow*. That's why we have our GPS open mic readings, our competitions, our publications.

Come and be heard. Come and obsess.

We will be your witnesses.

THE GPS 2005 CONTEST SCHEDULE

THE MARGERY CARLSON PRIZE FOR YOUTH POETRY

- Description:** The Margery Carlson Prize is awarded annually by the Georgia Poetry Society for poetic achievement by students in grades 1-5. Open to Georgia students enrolled in public or private schools, or who are home-schooled.
- Prizes (1st/2nd/3rd):** \$15/ \$10/ \$5
- Entry fees:** There are no entry fees for this contest.
- Restrictions:** Poems must be accompanied by entry form. 32-line maximum. Other restrictions apply.
- Contest Chair:** John Bush, North Gwinnett High School
- Entry deadline:** January 1, 2005

THE MAREL BROWN PRIZE FOR YOUTH POETRY

- Description:** The Marel Brown Prize is a two-tier contest with prizes awarded annually by the Georgia Poetry Society for poetic achievement by students grades 6-8 and grades 9-12. Open to Georgia students enrolled in public or private schools, or who are home-schooled.
- Prizes (1st/2nd/3rd):** \$20/ \$15/ \$10 (grades 6-8)
\$25/ \$20/ \$15 (grades 9-12)
- Entry fees:** There are no entry fees for this contest.
- Restrictions:** Poems must be accompanied by entry form. 32-line maximum. Other restrictions apply.
- Contest Chair:** John Bush, North Gwinnett High School
- Entry deadline:** January 1, 2005

THE LANGSTON HUGHES PRIZE

- Description:** Celebrating the life and poetic achievements of Langston Hughes. His early work, "The Weary Blues" earned him acclaim as an important contributor to the Harlem Renaissance arts movement of the 1920s. Hughes was affiliated with the Atlanta University Center.
- Requirements:** One poem, at least 20 lines and no more than 60 lines. Any subject, any form. Written in the spirit of Hughes' poetry.
- Prizes (1st/2nd/3rd):** \$100/ \$50/ \$25
- Entry fees:** \$4 non-members / \$2 GPS members
- Restrictions:** GPS general contest rules apply.
- Contest Chair:** Herbert W. Denmark
- Entry Deadline:** February 1, 2005 (poet's birthday)

THE GEORGIA POETRY SOCIETY AWARD

- Description:** Awarded for poetic excellence through the annual competitions held by the National Federation of State Poetry Societies, of which GPS is a member.
- Requirements:** Any subject. Form: Blank verse, in strict iambic pentameter. See NFSPS contest circular for further requirements (GPS is contest #22).
- Prizes (1st/2nd/3rd):** \$50/ \$35/ \$15
- Entry fees:** \$8 for up to 8 poems
- Restrictions:** GPS / NFSPS members only in good standing.
- Contest Chair:** Kathleen Pederzani, NFSPS Contest Chair
- Entry deadline:** No earlier than January 1, 2005. Deadline is March 15, 2005.

BYRON HERBERT REECE INTERNATIONAL PRIZE

- Description:** Honoring Georgia's beloved and renowned poet, Byron Herbert Reece (1917-1958), whose "finely-crafted ballads and lyrics celebrate the life and heritage of the north Georgia mountains" (courtesy, *New Georgia Encyclopedia*). Reece won two Guggenheims, and was nominated for a Pulitzer prize during his relatively brief career.
- Requirements:** Any subject, any form. A 40-line maximum length.
- Prizes (1st/.../6th):** \$250 / \$100 / \$50 / \$25 / \$15 / \$10
- Entry fees:** \$5 for first poem, \$1 for each additional poem.
- Restrictions:** Open to all but the 2004 winners. GPS general contest rules apply.
- Contest Chair:** Dr. Alan Jackson
- Entry deadline:** April 15, 2005.

EDWIN DAVIN VICKERS PRIZE

- Description:** The 15th annual memorial competition honoring GPS founding President Edwin D. Vickers.
- Requirements:** Any subject, any form. An 80-line maximum length.
- Prizes (1st/2nd/3rd):** \$250 / \$100 / \$50
- Entry fees:** \$5 for first poem, \$1 each additional poem
- Restrictions:** Open to all but 2004 winners. GPS general contest rules apply.
- Contest Chair:** Collin Kelley
- Entry deadline:** June 15, 2005

THE EDGAR BOWERS PRIZE

- Description:** Poetic achievement in the spirit of Georgia poet Edgar Bowers (1924-2000), whose compact and rigorous formalism defined the spirit of his work. His themes were themes of loss—of the past, of friends, of family, of humanity.
- Requirements:** One poem, using rhyme and/or meter in generally recognized and accepted poetic forms (e.g., sonnets, sestinas, villanelles, etc.). Form must be identified on poem. Written in the spirit of Bowers' verse. 40-line maximum length.
- Prizes (1st/2nd/3rd):** \$100 / \$50 / \$25
- Entry fees:** \$ 4 non-members / \$2 GPS members
- Restrictions:** GPS general contest rules apply.
- Contest Chair:** Steven Shields
- Entry deadline:** September 15, 2005

THE CHARLES DICKSON CHAPBOOK COMPETITION

- Description:** Poetic achievement in a chapbook-length work, honoring Charles Dickson, internationally respected poet of the haiku. Dickson was the author of *A Touch of Wholeness*, *Taste of Summer*, *Fragrance of Frost Grapes*, and *Out of Casseopeia*. Sponsored by the estate of John K. and Mary Harvey Ottley and a gift from Virginia Dickson.
- Requirements:** One chapbook-length manuscript of not more than 20 pages of poetry, not including title page and preliminary pages (such as table of contents, acknowledgements, etc.). Please select a conventional serif-style 12-point font and do not include illustrations. Submit two copies, author identification on one copy only. Any subject, any form.
- Prizes (1st/2nd/3rd):** One prize of 250 printed copies to the winning author.
- Entry fees:** \$ 10
- Restrictions:** Open to GPS members in good standing only. Non-members may enter by joining GPS. GPS reserves copies for sale, determines printing and binding specifications. GPS general contest rules apply.
- Contest Chair:** John Ottley
- Entry deadline:** October 15, 2005

LAUREATES OF THE FUTURE AWARD

- Description:** A competition reserved for those who have not previously won any competition for poetry.
- Requirements:** One poem. Any subject, any form. A 30-line length limit.
- Prizes (1st/2nd/3rd):** \$25 / \$15 / \$10
- Entry fees:** There are no entry fees for this competition.
- Restrictions:** GPS members only, who have not won more than honorable mention in any poetry competition. GPS general contest rules apply.
- Contest Chair:** Robert Lynn
- Entry deadline:** November 15, 2005

GEORGIA POETRY SOCIETY AWARDS IN MEMORIAM

The following prizes are awarded to poets whose works appear in *The Reach of Song*. The awards are made by the Editorial Committee without application.

Thelma Ruth Hall Award

Thelma Ruth Hall was a long-time member of GPS, and professor of English at Shorter College. She won many awards for her work, which included a chapbook about her teaching experiences in China.

Annette Rumph Peery Award

Peery was a writer who encouraged and inspired others.

Katherine Ward Award

Katherine Ward was editor of *The Reach of Song* and served GPS as Vice President.

Charles J. Bruehler Award

With Edward Davin Vickers, a co-founder of the Georgia Poetry Society.

R. Riherd Greene Award

Greene was a long-time member of GPS and author of the chapbook *Prickly Pear Gold*.

GPS RULES OF COMPETITION (REVISED 10/23/2004)

Please observe these rules of competition to avoid the disappointment of disqualification.

Rights: By submitting entries to any GPS poetry contest, entrants affirm that the poetry is their own original, unpublished work to which they own all rights. Entrants attest that the work submitted is not simultaneously entered in any other contest or submitted elsewhere for publication. Entrants attest that the poem submitted has not won a monetary award of more than \$10 in any previous competition.

Eligibility: Anyone who has won higher than "honorable mention" in either the Byron Herbert Reece or the Edward Davin Vickers competitions *may not* enter those respective contests during the following year. With the exception of the Vickers and the Reece competitions, only one entry may be made per poet per contest (note change). Only members in good standing may enter contests designated for GPS members only.

Subject matter of poems submitted: must be consistent with the publication aims of *The Reach of Song*, the Society's annual anthology. Because this annual anthology is forwarded to school and public libraries where children are readers, and because winning poems may be published in it, poems submitted must avoid language or themes inappropriate for a child readership. Accordingly, poems will be disqualified if they are deemed by the contest coordinator(s) or judge(s) to violate this standard. In general, poems will be disqualified if found to contain indecencies, obscenities, defamations, or hateful expressions.

General rules: Each entry must be typed in English on only one side of 8 ½ x 11-inch paper, one poem per page. Submit two copies. The name of the contest must appear in the upper right-hand corner of both copies. The name and address of the poet should appear under the name of the contest on one copy of the poem only. The name of the contest also *must* appear on the front of the mailing envelope.

Fees: All GPS competition fees are to be paid in U.S. funds by check or money order. Poems accompanied by cash will be disqualified and returned to the submitter. Checks or money orders must be made payable *only* to the Georgia Poetry Society. Do not make checks or money order payable to individual contest chairs. The name of the contest *must* appear on the check or money order in the "memo" line.

Supplementary guidelines: for individual contests establish prize amounts, entry fees, eligibility, length restrictions, postmark deadlines, and any other pertinent matter.

Cancellations: Any contest receiving fewer than ten entries may be cancelled. If so, entry fees will be refunded.

Judging: Each contest chairperson will secure judges who are not GPS members (with the exception of the youth contests). Entries are judged anonymously. Decisions of the judges are final. A list of winners will contain the name(s) of the judge(s).

Announcement of winners: The winners of competitions are announced at the GPS quarterly meeting following the conclusion of judging. Winners not present at that meeting will be notified and receive their award by mail. A list of winners will be sent to all entrants who include a SASE with submissions.

Publication: The GPS reserves first anthology rights to all prize-winning poems for possible inclusion in *The Reach of Song*.

Non-winning poems: will be destroyed. No poems are returned.

All competition entries must be mailed to: Georgia Poetry Society, PO Box 28337, Atlanta, GA 30358.

104TH QUARTERLY MEETING AGENDA

Saturday, January 22, 2005 * Troy Moore Library

Georgia State University, Atlanta

- | | |
|------------------|---|
| 09:30 - 10:00 AM | Registration, coffee, pastries, and sign up for member readings |
| 10:00 - 10:05 | Welcome by President Steven Shields |
| 10:05 - 10:45 | Member readings |
| 10:45 - 11:00 | BREAK |
| 11:00 - 11:30 | FEATURED POET BETH GYLYS |
| 11:30 - 11:45 | Book signing and reception |
| 11:45 - 01:00 PM | Lunch (on your own) |
| 01:00 - 02:00 | WORKSHOP WITH TRAVIS DENTON , <i>Terminus</i> Editor |
| 02:00 - 02:15 | Announcements, contest results |
| 02:15 - 02:30 | Closing thoughts from President and adjournment. |
|
 | |
| 02:30 - 04:00 | BOARD MEETING |

FOR DIRECTIONS TO TROY MOORE LIBRARY, GEORGIA STATE UNIVERSITY,
USE MAPQUEST.COM TO LOCATE: 38 Peachtree Center Avenue NE, Atlanta, GA 30303

Otherwise, take I-85 into Atlanta, north or south (depending on your departure location) and take the COURTLAND STREET exit (249D) toward GSU. From Courtland Street NE, take a slight right onto Edgewood Avenue SE. Turn right onto Peachtree Center Avenue NE. The General Classroom Building is on the corner of Peachtree Center and Decatur. The Troy Moore Library is on the ninth floor (Suite 939) of the GSU General Classroom Building.

A map of the campus, showing available parking, can be seen at www.gsu.edu/gastate_map.htm. The MARTA Five Points stop is also close by.

GPS MEMBER SURVEY RESULTS

BY STEVEN SHIELDS

A survey of GPS members was conducted recently to discover how well our Society was functioning. I wanted to thank you for responding to the survey and give you some idea of the results.

The survey, developed by me in consultation with the Board, was mailed to the 175 members of record as of June 30, 2004. The eventual response rate was about 55%, consisting of 95 completed surveys, and two undeliverables. While that's not as high as I wished, poets are a unique population, as the marginal comments made clear again and again. While social science practice usually presumes response rates of 70% or higher, this is accomplished through second mailings and follow-up phone contacts, neither of which were undertaken due to time and monetary constraints. The point is simply that these data should be interpreted with care, as general guidelines only.

There are many data to be shared with you, some of which were preliminarily made public at the October 2004 quarterly meeting. Rather than inundate you with a lengthy report, though, I thought I would share specific pieces as we proceed throughout the year. A final report will be posted on the website as soon as analysis is complete. In this summary, I want to discuss GPS contests with you.

As you've probably noticed, we've already made some changes to the 2005 GPS contest schedule. The Board and I considered the following rankings as evidence that some revision to our contest calendar was probably needed:

Our most highly average-ranked competition was the Byron Herbert REECE contest (3.66; if you want the standard deviation information, please consult the website). This was followed, in order of their relative average rankings, by the Katherine WARD contest (3.41), the DICKSON chapbook competition (3.39), the VICKERS contest (3.33), the TRADITIONAL POETS contest (3.29), Thelma Ruth HALL (3.13), Mikki Griffis MORRIS (3.04), Countee CULLEN (2.89), Annette Rumph PEERY (2.88), Margery CARLSON (2.87), Marel BROWN (2.84), the LIMERICK (2.35), and the PABLO NERUDA (1.90) contests.

These rankings tell us simply whether our membership, as a group, finds these contests IMPORTANT somehow to them or to others. It isn't necessarily a comment on the artistic merits of the contest, the reputation of the poet honored, or anything else. Interpreting these requires caution: It would be easy to assume, for example, that the Marel Brown and Margery Carlson contests were of low importance due to their ranking. But I suspect that the ranking has a personal motivation attached to it: If the poet doesn't qualify to enter (the Brown and Carlson contests are for young students only), it may be harder to get excited about a given contest. That might also explain the low ranking given the Neruda contest: Many members simply do not *habla español* and therefore may have little regard for contests that require it.

Having said all that, and having looked at the marginal comments made to the question "what can GPS do to improve its contests," our declining membership numbers necessarily cause us to make our contests more broadly based, and probably better publicized. While there was no clear pattern to the comments people made about contest improvements, many comments were made that could be interpreted as a request for contests that were more meaningful (or important) by making them more *prestigious*, with *bigger prizes*, *better focus*, or which *aimed more at the members of GPS* (or Georgia poets only) instead of the wider world of poetry. Some wanted more contests; others wanted fewer.

The 2005 contest schedule in this newsletter is a first attempt to address some of these data and comments. We have retitled some, and added new ones here and there: the "Laureates of the Future" prize has been added to encourage our newcomers. Because former NFSPS President Lyn Eastlund has moved the "Honoring Traditional Poets" contest to her publication, *Poet's Forum*, we have established a new contest aimed at the traditional poet by honoring Georgia's Edgar Bowers. I also felt strongly that while GPS does not directly coordinate the annual NFSPS contest in our name, we should do more to encourage our membership to enter it; hence the "Georgia Poetry Society Award." Finally, we have moved our awards *in memoriam* to become part of *The Reach of Song*, largely to make room for many of these changes.

I suspect the schedule will evolve as we receive responses, pro and con, to some of these changes. Your comments are always welcome at the email address listed on the back cover, or by snail-mail to our PO box.

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

THE REACH OF SONG, 2003-04

Cleo Creech, Editor, is accepting submissions from members of the Georgia Poetry Society for the next volume of *The Reach of Song*, GPS' annual anthology. The volume, featuring contest winners from the 2003 and 2004 years, is expected to be available in late spring 2005. Members are encouraged to submit their work for the portion of the volume reserved for open submissions by GPS members in good standing.

Please submit three poems for consideration. Include two clean typed copies of each work, one copy with your name and contact information, and a second copy with no identifying information for judging by the anthology committee. The anthology committee will choose the top 25 works based on an average of committee scores of works submitted. Those receiving highest marks qualify for awards given by GPS *in memoriam*.

Though the Georgia Poetry Society strongly encourages all members to submit works for inclusion into *The Reach of Song*, please remember that membership does not guarantee inclusion.

Send manuscripts no later than February 1, 2005 to ensure consideration. Address your envelope:

The Reach of Song
Cleo Creech, Editor
Georgia Poetry Society
PO Box 28337
Atlanta, GA 30358

SPOT IN THE DARK — A REVIEW BY STEVEN SHIELDS

Spot in the Dark leads with the book's title poem, a wonderful sestina which elegantly sets the mood for the book's interior themes of love's many faces and phases.

Leading with the title poem is unifying in the sense of continuing Gylys' previous formalism from *Bodies That Hum*, while at the same time drawing a line under that same formalism and daring the reader to follow her into what is largely a volume of free verse.

This expansion of formalism into open form is not unique to Gylys (Mark Jarman, one of the principal

exponents of New Formalism, has become increasingly "freer" of late), but it is engaging in this book: Gylys' dare to the reader is rewarded with the discovery that she writes as strongly in open forms as she does in closed forms.

Spot continues many themes of post-feminism through its examination of the arc of human relationships.

The book's four sections use "a series of narrators who wrestle through the beginning and middle stages of love, the complications of an affair, and the challenges of

single life," all to ultimately present a complex and powerful statement of self vis-à-vis the author's external world. What Gylys offers us is the assurance that one's self is durable—and necessary—in that external world.

Poems not to be missed in this collection include "Alone, Open Road," with its hilarious imagery. "Ars Poetica" makes a breath-taking, poignant statement. "If Only," "The Distance of Motion" and "Her Power" also dazzle.

Forget the "sophomore jinx." Gylys triumphs here.



Beth Gylys

A FEW CONTEST TIPS

BY EMERY CAMPBELL

My serious attempts at writing the Great American Poem only began about ten years ago. I now have maybe five hundred poems under my belt, of which quite a number have been published here and there. I also get a great deal of enjoyment and satisfaction from entering my work in poetry competitions, in addition to which I served as Georgia Poetry Society's general contests chairman for eight years and have been asked to judge quite a number of contests sponsored by other entities. In the course of these activities I have learned a few useful facts about contests which I'd like to pass along. I would hope that in so doing I can induce many more GPS members to overcome their reluctance and to participate in our society's contests.

First, pay close attention to and heed the guidelines of any contest you are going to enter. They will tell you how many copies to submit and whether previously published pieces may be tendered. They will specify the required form in which entries must be cast, the maximum number of lines that are allowed, what the theme of the competition is, if any, who is eligible to participate, what the entry fees may be, and so on. I can't tell you how many times I have had to disqualify entries which were submitted without the required fee, or in only one copy when two were needed, or which exceeded the line limit. Some did not even name the contest for which they were intended. This kind of carelessness can eliminate your poem before it ever reaches the judge's hands.

You may be tempted to enter contests which offer very large money prizes, sometimes thousands of dollars. Don't bother unless you are a real pro. The *Atlanta Review*, for example, sponsors an annual contest with a large prize, but it draws as many as five or six thousand entries. In such cases you can well imagine that the chances of winning are very slim. Also there may be a substantial entry fee.

A rhyming dictionary, a thesaurus, and a regular dictionary are essential tools for any poet, perhaps especially for those who write traditional rhymed and metered forms. The latter will invariably need words with exactly the right meaning, the right number of syllables, with the accents on the right syllables, and with the correct rhyme to fit in a particular place in a line. If you are not totally sure of the meaning of a word you want to use, look it up. Misuse of words will get your poem put aside by the judge.

Some other dos and don'ts, in no particular order: don't let typos, visible erasures, or misspellings get by your eagle eye, as they won't get by the judge's; avoid awkward or tortured syntax to make rhymes or to conform to specified forms. This latter is a fault which requires great diligence to avoid, especially in complicated forms like villanelles, pantoums, or chant royals. Strive for clarity in the poems you submit. The great English poet Robert Graves has said that the only good poem is one that is completely clear.

Try not to use slant rhymes or near rhymes if you can help it. Know your forms, and don't submit a sonnet with only thirteen lines or a villanelle with only seventeen. *The Poetry Handbook, A Dictionary of Forms* by Babette Deutsch is a most valuable reference in this regard. Do not invert normal word order to make rhymes; shun archaic words like o'er, ne'er, midst, morn; don't use nouns as verbs or vice versa; try not to use the same rhyme word more than once in a poem unless some useful purpose is served; don't use exotic fonts, colored paper, or paper incorporating designs or drawings; don't submit handwritten work; if humor is called for, be sure your entry is funny ha-ha, not funny peculiar.

Most contest organizers do not announce in advance the names of the judges they will use, but if you know who the judges for certain contests will be, then by all means find out if you can what their preferences are and cater to them. Sometimes their poetry may be found on the Internet; many poets have their own web site on which they post samples of their work.

The GPS offers around several contests every year, some of which pay up to a \$250 first prize and for which entry fees are minimal. Patronize your local poetry contests. Virtually every state poetry society offers contests which are usually announced on their web pages. If you search for "poetry contests" on Google, you will be overwhelmed by the opportunities.

Above all, do not be discouraged or intimidated. I have submitted poems over and over again without their garnering even an honorable mention, and then all at once they will win a prize. So if your poems don't triumph in one contest, turn right around and enter them in another. Revise and revise and revise your work. When you are satisfied that it is the very best you can do, submit it in a contest of your choosing and hope for the best. Good luck!

THE GEORGIA POETRY
SOCIETY

SERVING GEORGIA'S POETS SINCE
1979

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Vice President **Collin Kelley**
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Georgia Poetry Society Newsletter

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JOIN THE GEORGIA POETRY SOCIETY!

GPS membership dues are currently \$20 annually, payable in July (\$35 for families, \$10 for students with ID). Life memberships are \$300, and include a copy of the annual anthology *The Reach of Song*. Detach this form, mail check or money order to The Georgia Poetry Society, PO Box 28337, Atlanta GA 30358.

Please check: This is a **New Membership** **Renewal**

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____ CITY _____ STATE _____

PHONE _____ (home) _____ (work)

EMAIL _____

WEBSITE _____

OCCUPATION _____

WE NEED YOUR HELP! PLEASE CHECK ACTIVITIES FOR YOUR VOLUNTEER SUPPORT:

- | | | |
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THE GEORGIA POETRY
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