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Kentucky State Poetry Society
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“…born of cadence and rhythm/I attended your foaling/and called you Pegasus/ for I knew you would fly…”

If you do not know what to do
Stand still
Cannot say no
Say you will
Try not to think
Look at a blink
Nature will show reason
When it is the right season

Kelly

D. J. Scully
Fort Thomas, KY
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Many thanks to Mark Payne, who served as Assistant Editor of *Pegasus* in 2019 and was a great help in choosing the poems presented in this issue.
Editor's Note: Remembering Christine Stravinsky and Miriam Woolfolk

It is with sadness that we remember two of our active and loved KSPS members who left us in 2019.

Christine Stravinsky

Christine Marie (Szambelan) Stravinsky was born in Poland and grew up under the Nazi occupation. She immigrated to the USA at age eighteen; she spoke no English at the time.

After raising a family, she became a freshman at the age of forty-five at the University of New Orleans where she ultimately obtained a master’s degree in English. She taught composition and creative writing at the Delgado Community College, also in New Orleans. When Hurricane Katrina chased her out of New Orleans, she came to live in Kentucky. She was the author of two novels, two chapbooks, and had poetry published in various literary journals and two anthologies. She was a member of KSPS for many years and attended the annual conference even when her health was failing.

And so, during her life, she was a child soldier, Polish patriot, immigrant, a punch press operator, a welder, a sausage stuffer, a college professor, mother, poet, and friend. She died on March 14, 2019 at age 87. We will miss her dark humor and her amazing mind.

Miriam Woolfolk

Miriam Ruth (Lamy) Woolfolk was a member of KSPS for over 40 years. She served as president of the society in 1985 and was editor of Pegasus for twenty-one years. She was prepared to supply, whenever needed, historical information that she had collected on KSPS. Her presence at the annual meetings was always a joy.

Miriam was an artist as well as a poet. She was a member of the Lexington Art League, the Kentucky Watercolor Society, and Miniature Painters, Sculptors, and Gravers Society of Washington DC. She loved to paint miniature watercolor pictures of natural scenes in Kentucky. She crafted tiny gift boxes from scraps of tissue boxes, paper, and ribbon and gave them away to friends. She was interested in the preservation of covered bridges and became a member of the National Society for the Preservation of Covered Bridges. In 1987 she published “Kentucky’s Covered Bridges,” a booklet with descriptions of the design and history of the remaining covered bridges in Kentucky, accompanied by her sketches of the bridges in their natural settings. The booklet was reprinted seven times.

Miriam died on November 20, 2019, at the age of 93. She will be greatly missed by those in KSPS who had the good fortune to know her.
Sundays at Wolf Creek Dam

Every Sunday afternoon
my grandparents would take a drive
across the rolling hills and winding roads
of Kentucky to see the engineering marvel
known as Wolf Creek Dam.
Promoted as an educational trip where a child could
learn about flood control and hydroelectric power,
the truth was that my grandparents’
concept of babysitting was to drive—
knowing their charge was safely confined in the
back seat and they could enjoy the scenery.
Perfectly content, they admired and discussed
the repeating green and brown parcels of land
the blue haze floating above grassland pastures
the heavy white fog rolling through shadowy valleys
the nut-brown and pea-green leaves cloaking trees
and the sunlight transforming rivers into
golden apple cider. Trapped in the back seat,
I neither saw nor appreciated such sights. I was
always carsick as my eyes and stomach insisted on
going their separate ways on those twisting and
curling ribbons they call roads. Their afternoon
treat was pure torture for me as my mind linked
peas, nuts, blueberries, white cotton candy
and apple cider in a convulsive mixture.
By the time we reached the gigantic dam,
my stomach was churning faster than the huge turbines—
and I often contaminated their seemingly sterile
environment. Even after multiple visits, I never
learned much about the dam and my grandparents never
seemed to worry that my volcanic-type eruptions
might be repeated the following week.
If it was Sunday, we took a drive—
usually to Wolf Creek Dam.

Billie Holladay Skelley
Joplin, MO
Favorite Meals

Dark feathers the shape of butter knife blades, gray scraggly feathers and feathers with rust-colored fluff, and gray fluff (just fluff), strewn out back by the fence belie blue sky and a green sunny scene so cheery from my bay window. This closer stroll reveals a favorite perching wire for doves just above, where harmony turned cacophony.

I recall recently sighting a red-shouldered hawk perched high in a cottonwood tree, and not another bird stirred. Pear-stealing squirrels even stayed scarce, sparking hope the hawk might acquire a taste for squirrel. Pear-stealing meaning taking them green, and every last one, just to be clear.

Once I might have begrudged the hawk such an easy meal as a harmless dove. But today I drove into an intersection near home and suddenly a hawk struck something on pavement amid swerving traffic and escaped bearing prey—a squirrel! I'll credit him with a daring strike among cars; or maybe bold retrieval of his fresh kill dropped racing skyward. But even if simply snatching roadkill, my wish is squirrel will become my red-shoulder's favorite meal, as a heaping dish of fresh tree-ripened pears is mine.

Don Fleming
Crescent Springs, KY
Five

I sleep in a brown sleeping bag lined in red flannel. Why do I remember that I wake to morning with camp stove hiss, tug at brass zippers on the tent’s screened flap, pull them closed behind me, always mindful of snakes, brush dewed cobwebs from tent ropes?

A red checkered oilcloth covers the table, my breakfast is ready: bacon, eggs, toast with plum jam on a paper plate. Why do I remember the teakettle whistle as it heats water for washing in the scarred yellow tub?

Why does only the image remain?—the rub of bicycle tires on the gravel path, my skinned knees, painted iodine orange. Why do I remember the crack of the campfire at night, the embers’ glow and collapse into ash,

sparks rising to the dippers, the chill misting in from the lake, laughter and the snap of a deck of cards? Why do I remember the shadows, the charred log, the snag of wild grapevines?

Pamela Hirschler
Frankfort, KY
Abandoned

The old plantation sits alone
Far away from the road
And mainly forgotten
Among the passing cars.

Its stoic columns stand
Tall like statues of stone
Colors yellowed from age
And stained by the weather.

Fat limbed, ancient oak trees line
The overgrown carriage road.
Gray Spanish moss hangs loosely
Like an old man’s stately beard.

A remnant from so long ago,
Reminders of another time.
A period of opulence
Born from the backs of the oppressed.

Once home to a prosperous family
Now only a haven for scavengers.
A deserted shell standing testament
To legacies no longer relevant.

Shuttered doors and windows keep in the past,
Locking in its secrets and mysteries,
That stay hidden from the world of today,
Standing forlorn in its abandonment.

Tanya Whitney
Sorrento, LA
It’s a Slow Night for Poetry

for Ted

On sidewalks in Terre Haute, I scuff along
in my brother’s too-big chucks, moss-bubbled cracks,
sycamore roots and mom’s broken back.
At the market, I wait awhile for a long,

white beard to triangulate the notion
of an onion, the tongue suck on a lemon,
the snap of green beans. I wait for any poet
to comb out the hair of the eager night.

No one shows, so on to St. Catherine Street,
where the girl with a spiked wheel and ring is raised
to the sky, and a dark playground swing’s creak
nicks the corner’s streetlight-quiet bouquet.

This moonless night, I’m in a swinging mood,
fabricating images to a Gerschwin tune.

Mick Kennedy
Cecilia, KY
Catiary

We estimate that free-ranging domestic cats kill 1.3–4.0 billion birds and 6.3–22.3 billion mammals annually, and that un-owned cats cause the majority of this mortality.
—Nature Communications, Jan 29, 2013

In this neighborhood of cars and chop-shops, Glock and ammo, a hundred garages and fly-by-night oil change joints, cats the color of rust or dumped engine oil lurk and dart through alleys of city wilderness, hell's menagerie. Everywhere, song sparrows die the slow death, mauled and flung by tabbies, calicos, seal points gone feral as ocelots. On porches, food arrayed in pet bowls beside the bannisters, Maine Coon-scarred possums ascend to burgle kibbles and bits and moldy flakes of tuna; slugs thick as fingers clench coughed-up hairballs; nighthawks beep madly across a Cheshire frown of moon.

Richard Hague
Cincinnati, OH
The Albatross in Flight

For Haley Marie

Without warning or grace
the albatross turns to the sky
a growing need beating
against the walls of her chest.
Her body craves the atmosphere
and the dangers it holds
as a dancer loves the floor
the kiss of bruises on her knees.
She sets free a bleeding sorrow,
seeking the voice of god
in the silent breathing of the sea.
A song for her mother escapes her
as her feet leave the perch.
If she falls, it will be beautifully
wings burning with the triumph of the sun.

Matthew Hutchins
Campbellsville, KY
Second Marriage

If happiness eludes despite first rite, do not be dismayed, and do not write off rice. Turn again to that seed for nourishment, find comfort in puddings, cakes, and fleeting sushi affairs. Use sake as nepenthe, but be ever on alert to pursue perfection through another sustaining ritual: creating a fried rice from what’s left over, from yours and mine, our few young sprouts and broccoli florets, your splash of soy, my spring onion, shrimp and egg, and always newly grated ginger.

Mary L. Allen
Lexington, KY
**Snapping Turtle**

We capture an old snapping turtle lumbering across the road, take it to safety, release it into a boggy ditch near a pond, it trying to bite us at every turn.

A child, I saw a snapping turtle squatted astride a large pit, pliable white eggs dropping faster than I could count.

She covered them with sand and left, the young protected only by instinct and chance, like Galapagos turtles, just-hatched tortoises racing to the sea, gulls snatching and gobbling.

Turtles almost as old as time, older than dinosaurs, surviving ice and meteorite, giving way to trawlers and whalers.

Elizabeth Howard
Arlington, TN
Loss and Legacy:
*for Mary Carson Breckinridge*

The Plea
Poor Polly came too early,
as beautiful as a china doll,  
and just as fragile.  
You could not save her, but you can save us.

Kind hearted little Clifford,  
whose laugh was like angel song,  
died from what seemed at first like only a belly ache.  
You could not save him, but you can save us.

These mountains do not have  
good roads, hospitals, or nurses.  
They are all train tracks above,  
coal mines below,  
and babies.  
You can save our babies.

You can save our babies.  
You can save our mommies and our daddies.  
Help us Mary B.

The Answer
Come up to the big house.  
It is made of thick hewn logs and wrought nails.  
It is as strong as me and can weather the coming storms.

Come up to the big house and I will birth your babies  
and treat your wounds.  
If you cannot come to me, I will come to you.  
I will cross the mountains day or night on horseback.  
I will come to you and save your babies.
The Legacy
Are you still here, Mary B?
Are you still taking care of these mountain babies?
You could not save your dear ones, but you saved us.
Generations of children are here
because of the work of your hands.

Cordelleya Smith Posivenko
Carrollton, GA

Mary Carson Breckinridge

Mary Carson Breckinridge was an aristocratic and well-educated woman who turned tragedy in her own life into service for others. The deaths of both of her young children led her to dedicate herself as a nurse to making life better for other children. She studied midwifery in the United Kingdom and then brought her training to Appalachian Kentucky where she established the Frontier Nursing Service. Nurse-midwives, traveling by horseback to widely scattered homes in rural Kentucky, helped to bring the maternal and neonatal death rates well below the national average. In 1982, Mary Carson Breckinridge was elected to the American Nurses Association Hall of Fame.
Here’s to the Boys

He ain’t proud of this place that life’s brought him
Or the roads that he’s chosen to roam.
And the only thing life’s ever taught him
Is that some men aren’t made to come home.

Two kids and a wife that don’t know him.
He’s that daddy that’s never around.
Deep down there’s a love he can’t show them.
Cause it’s lost in a long lonesome sound.

So he’s one of the boys in the barroom
Drinking together alone
Painting a portrait of sorrow
Trading this bar for a home

Burning the bridge to tomorrow
Scratching an itch to roam
Trying to beg, steal or borrow
A moment he might call his own.

Duane Dean
Ludlow, KY
Starts Over Again

Milk, butter, eggs, 
pick up something for the kids. 
I got my shopping list in my pocket. 
But that drink sits right before me, 
and the jukebox is playing loud, 
my wedding ring’ll buy more drinks if I hock it.

Don’t talk to me 
of honky-tonk bars 
and lonely nights, unless you’ve fought it. 
The preacher warns of rocky roads, 
sinners on the lost highway, 
but what does he know if he ain’t walked it?

Dead-broke tomorrow morning, 
I’ll tell her I’m sorry, 
then it’ll start all over again.

When the neon light goes on 
and I get paid, 
my thirst takes off like a rocket. 
I may not be high-class, 
but I’ll be tipping my glass, 
as long as I find ten dollars in my pocket.

Dead-broke tomorrow morning, 
I’ll tell her I’m sorry.

Charles Firmage 
Eagle Pass, TX
Status Quo

While Notre Dame burns, firefighters battle the blaze, mountain climbers rush up the towers and cover the vaulted ceiling to the pealing of church bells. Parisians break into song. People pledge billions to rebuild.

At border facilities, detainees stand on toilets for breathing room, while at $40,000 each, a single file of trekkers perched on Everest’s jagged ridge steps over fallen hikers.

On Sunday, we walk down the aisle carrying a man on a stick. We wait to be clothed with power from on high.

Gaby Bedetti
Lexington, KY
Starry-Eyed

Crinkles radiate
from her eyes,
cat whiskers fading into gray.
*
Sun-mirrored luster
casts shadows on the moon.
Celestial rhythms flow, ebb.
*
Mercury glows January mornings
but Jupiter hides
in December dusk.
*
She fears the dark, speed,
spice, water and ice—
she who once laughed at night.
*
The mower walks
scythe in hand.
How sweet the new-made hay.

E. Gail Chandler
Shelbyville, KY
Ruse de Cezanne

Our first date was a gallery show
“The Fruits of Paul Cezanne”
Though more than 40 years have passed
The memory lives on

I knew Art was her major
Since I knew nearly nothing
I researched the artist’s work
To try to slide by bluffing

The first one was the painting
“Peaches, Pears and Grapes”
I spoke of Cubist influence
Cast of light and shape

She found the pears enchanting
Called them “naked gems”
“Diamonds in the buff?” I asked
She laughed and took my hand

Eventually I knew she’d find
My expertise baloney
Would I get “A” for effort
Or dismissed as a phony?

Thank God she chose the former
And as I climbed the ladder
Of art appreciation
She taught me beauty mattered

Even more than box scores
Of which I was so fond
Since then I’ve shared her loveliness
Merci, Monsieur Cezanne

Nick Sweet
Shepherd, TX
Let Him Not Remember

Can’t you just forget it man, he is asked
by one who doesn’t even know
in which continent Afghanistan lies
neither has that social worker
ever tasted the mineral dust of grit stirred up by stomping
   boots
and giant wheels of a Humvee caravan
can’t you just forget it man, he is asked
by a nurse who has never seen the glint of moonlight
on a machine gun mount pointed at his head
while sprinting with a 90-pound pack
hot sweat drenching his thighs in a 100-degree night
wondering if that next bullet will find its mark claiming him
or another American life on foreign soil
how can he describe to a young civilian doctor
who has never held a gun in hand
who has never smelled the stench of fear
who has never held a dying brother
bleeding his life force into marooning sand
that a seed of tortuous memory has been implanted
but no technique has yet been crafted
for an explant of its metastasized glioblast roots
how can he explain that the horrifying experience
sticks with him cockle-burred like dog to master
and man
how he wishes
that it was so easy
to just forget it

Crystal E. Barker
Los Angeles, CA
2019 GRAND PRIX AWARD – THIRD PLACE

Sleep, Son, Sleep

On that autumn
    campout that    Dad and my
two older    brothers and    I went on,
the two sleeping    bags went to    the older two,
leaving me, next    to the fire,    with only a blanket.

Dad had his
    own blanket, but,    seeing me shiver,
covered me with
    his arms and    chest,
till the shivering
    stopped and    I slept.
Nearly forty
    years later,    I’m cuddling with
my eleven-
    year-old son,    warming him against
the artificial cold
    of the    hotel air
conditioning.
    His doctor last
week found a lump on his right testicle requiring a sonogram as soon as our vacation ends. It’s five in the morning and, despite four fingers of whiskey, I can’t sleep. I want my own father to hold me in his arms and assure me that everything will be okay, to go to sleep, son, sleep.

Matt Birkenhauer
Ludlow, KY
I’m asking simple questions, ma’am, but your wiggle words passing through my flour-sifter turn up some grainy answers. This carpet?

You bought it on sale three years ago to match the white sofa but in retrospect you wish you’d bought the brown because of the Merlot stain, your husband’s handiwork, there, beside his recliner under the left-on lamp that burned out but you replaced the bruised bulb with a new one yesterday I know because it’s not dusty.

Even Granny lied sometimes, and her gingerbread is still the best, but she never fooled me so don’t think you’re getting away with murder or whatever you did because everyone does something and the penal code is a template in my mind and my third eye sees each scene necklaced with yellow tape, yesterday’s or tomorrow’s, until you snip the ankle bracelet and skip town on the arm of death, your life-long paramour and the only stone-cold alibi you’ll ever have.

Mike Wilson
Lexington, KY
**2019 CHAFFIN/KASH AWARD – SECOND PLACE**

**Hell’s Kitchen**

Dice a handful of howls and fold into a batter of pre-mixed metaphor, beat until your arm gets tired; pour into a pan that rhymes; bake at 325 for twenty lines or until it browns; cool before cutting.

Really pressed for time? twist-tie two groans to a sigh and call it haiku.

But when the alarm blares and your first thought is *Can I stay in bed?* or the Sheriff knocks with divorce papers or cocktail hour syncs with lunch because too much nothing makes you chew nails – **that** you’ll have to write from scratch.

Mike Wilson  
Lexington, KY
Puzzling it Out

I must have early onset Alzheimer’s –
    why else do I stand outside
    naked as a jaybird
    cell in one hand
    beer in the other

I must have lost my keys –
    why else do I pound on
    the front door of my own house
    as dog-walking neighbors
    aim phones at me

You must be asleep –
    why else do my calls
    circle unanswered until
    voicemail swallows them
    like an indifferent catfish

There must be some mistake –
    why else am I seated
    inside a blue-and-white
    handcuffed
    and where’s my fucking beer

Mike Wilson
Lexington, KY

Former KSPS president Sherry Chandler keeps her artistic eye on Kentucky’s history. Weaving a New Eden (2013), for example, gives voice to women of the Kentucky frontier and beyond, from Rebecca Boone to her own kin. But as she has often explained, “Born and raised in rural northern Kentucky, I first learned to speak poetry from the lips of my farmer grandfathers. Good talk and laughter were as important as hard work during long days in the tobacco fields.” In her latest collection, it’s time to hear about those men and the conflicted legacy of growing up in a tobacco-growing family.

The first section, “Factor in the Debt,” concerns the heavy price tobacco exacts at all levels of society. “Cigarettes” rings up the price paid by the author. The confessional drumbeat “I smoked them” marches us through addiction: “. . . because I was married at 17 and divorced at 23 . . . on the city sidewalk . . . on campus . . . when I married again . . . on Chicago’s South Side . . . pregnant . . . when my mother-in-law died of lung cancer . . .” until, finally, when “I quit them . . . I hugged myself and I rocked myself and I screamed.” The story of tobacco is not pretty, from “Founding Principles,” about the tobacco-slave connection so useful to the early American economy, through “Pellagra,” the disease of malnutrition visited upon America’s working poor even in the 20th century, to “The Night Rider,” who “Cut eye holes in worn out sheets” to terrorize farmers unwilling to “Pledge their tobacco to the pool.” But tobacco also built schools and hospitals, supported Chandler’s family, and taught important life lessons.
Section two, “Talking Burley,” gets us into the fields among the cicadas, horseflies, grasshoppers, and Tobacco Worm

Oh but touch one—
soft as baby hair,
vulnerable
as exposed gut.

The work is detailed in precise language, as in “To Set Tobacco with the Season,” when Chandler was “a nine-year-old/granddaughter/willing to drop/the seedlings along/the laid-off rows.”

The “Border State” section goes back to 17th century family roots and plays with revealing dichotomies, starting with a quote from Kenneth Chandler: “the stripping window faces the north/the banjo player’s window faces the south.” The final section, “Daddy Said He Said,” presents an album of family portraits—the difficult father (“the work of loving him as hard as chopping/weeds in July tobacco”); the author, a “fat baby, /bow-legged, plump-jowled;” her siblings, Papaw Tim, and on to the “little man,” her grandson. These deeply lived poems, nicotine stained and creek wet, are sweet as Karo syrup on biscuits—forgiving and elegiac yet clear-eyed. In the final poem, “The Monster Opens its Eyes While the Closing Credits Roll,” the demands of the failing industry rise again, like a corpse out of the earth, looking for cheap labor. This poem alone could serve as a textbook on the economics of modern farming. As always, in everything Chandler writes, there is the chiming, rhythmic, subtle attention to language that sings like intricate picking and bowing.

* * *

KSPS members may send their poetry books for review to Elaine Palencia, 3006 Valleybrook Drive, Champaign IL 61822
Send inquiries to efpalenci@gmail.com

The narrative thread of McCartt-Jackson’s first full-length collection, winner of the Airlie Prize, is familiar. A poor family struggles to keep going while the father is off at the mines, five days away “by shoe leather.” But this says less than nothing about the originality of the poems, or the sensation of wonder that comes over the reader at the beauty, quiet horror, and emotional depth of the collection. Perhaps, I thought as I read, this is how Keats felt upon first looking into Chapman’s Homer.

Ora, the controlling consciousness, speaks through quilt patterns (several poems are titled for them—e.g., Kentucky Rose, Log Cabin, Broken Dishes), through letters she sends to her absent husband Eli, through her interaction with a natural world often experienced through a veil of folk beliefs, through her daily tasks, and through memory. Eli and the children, Sweet Lily and Flood, speak as well.

This is constructed language, supercharged with specificity to deliver not what a woman like Ora, for example, would say if you met her face to face, but what she would express of her inner self had she this language. In this way she and her family remind us of Faulkner’s Addie Bundren, whose eloquence surmounts her own limits. Mulling a persistent, doomful echo she’s heard since Eli went to the mines, Ora says, “Something in it/has unhinged our home like the jaw/of a rat snake sneaking to eat us from behind.” Her metaphors are based on living things, in juxtaposition to the stone world which becomes Eli’s mode of expression. “Our love tunneled into stony silt loam, /a rhizome sapling difficult to uproot,” she remembers.
Meanwhile, Eli digs himself farther and farther away, embracing the terrible joy of the job: “Cool smell/of wet clay/grit of sand/stone under my boot doing/down, down/down.” In “Chain and Square,” he tries to link the two worlds: “He likes to think he farms stone. Every coalroom is a planted row,” but the metaphor can’t hold. The children look to underground openings for their father, Lily saying, “I heard you in the well your watery voice dripped from the mossy edges of limestone.” The language of coal falls like a black shadow: black damp, siltstone, slickensides, fractureslip, spalling, umbragemen, tipplesmen, breakermen. Some of the most affecting poems deal with Sweet Lily’s illness and death. Though the cause is not given, her death is collateral damage from the mines. Finally the blue heron stone of the region becomes a mythic heron bringing Eli’s fate: “When the earth opened, she crawled into the hole of its mouth, /and flew away with seventeen men on each wing/and left a rock that sank on their tongues, /their hands in the limestone soil heavy as wellwater,/ their voices grain between two millstones.”

This is a sobering portrait of endurance in the face of terrible odds. “We lose count of which of us are dead or living,” says Flood, contending with ghosts who must be laid to rest if one is to have any peace. End notes explain folk beliefs and coalmining terms.

* * *

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2019 STUDENT CONTEST: CATEGORY #1 (3rd & 4th Grades)

FIRST PLACE

My Dad died (a Haiku)

Dad died on New Year’s.
I cried so bad I fell down.
I never saw him.

Damien Baker
Pima Butte Elementary School
STUDENT CONTEST: Category #2  (5th & 6th Grades)

FIRST PLACE

Bronze and Steel

“The world is quiet here.” – Lemony Snicket

If I told you there was a world
built of cogs and gears
you’d probably look at me
with an odd, reviling sneer

I’d ask what it is that you fear
of a world founded on bronze and steel
Then you’d inquire of me
about the sky of teal
You might ask about
the oceans below
and the flow of the winds
and the sand undertow

I think it’s quite amusing you know
to be unaware of the mysteries below
If you’d just listen close
then you would hear
all of the hinges
and all of the gears
continually running
as they should
never stopping
though they could

But whether I’m right
or whether I’m wrong
your heart cannot deny
the unfailing rhythm of their song

Keygan Story
Story Homeschool
STUDENT CONTEST: Category #3  (7th & 8th Grades)

FIRST PLACE

The Truth

The soft subtle sound of the wind blowing through the kitchen window pleased you in the mornings.

From the time I wake up to the time I go to sleep I can still smell the sweet tea with honey you used to make.

Kaitlyn Wilson
Olmstead School
STUDENT CONTEST: Category #4 (9th & 10th Grades)

FIRST PLACE

Smells like Family

Grandpa Howard -
Gasoline fumes from old Chevys he repairs
And stores in his garage without starting one
Grandma Mamie -
Once, apparently, fresh cookie batter
Now, disinfectant and gloom
Uncle Charles -
The choking, smoky odor
From the pipe that never leaves his hand
Aunt Sandra -
Whatever candles and oils scent her home
Today: Peppermint and cinnamon
Cousin Sam -
Jasmine or pine needles, depending on if
They wear their mother’s cologne or father’s body spray
Father - Depends on the day, too
Either pork on the grill or wine on his breath
Mother - Sweat unhidden by her perfume
The fragrance of a teacher, an athlete, a working woman
Me -
Perhaps the faintest hint
Of butterscotch or lavender balm
 Unscented, for the most part
To be determined

Abigail Adams-Smith
Bowling Green High School
In a Name

The origin of his name is Irish. Meaning:

“Spirited; Broad.”

I write him love letters in French that neither of us can fully understand, because he doesn’t speak French and I am not fluent in love.

I tell myself that he is turquoise; he is a poem without proper punctuation, he is the late conversations that keep my nightmares from returning;

He convinces me that the noises outside of my window can be beautiful. Cicadas churning, he says, and stars being born, and the many faces of the moon, these are worthy enough to write about. Missing the night would be to miss the world.

He only asks to finish his novel, and I pray to God that he does. (I cried during chapter 13, though he’d never believe me if I told him.)

The origin of my name is Greek. Meaning:

“Warrior.”

Maybe meanings don’t matter as much as we think they do.

Andria Spring
Brown School
2019 KSPS Student Poetry Contest Prize Winners

Category 1 (Grades 3 and 4)

2nd – Maranda Ruiz-Jones, “Moving Happy,” Pima Butte Elementary School
3rd – Andrew Geshi, “Holiday Times,” Pima Butte Elementary School

Category 2 (Grades 5 and 6)

1st – Keygan Story, “Bronze and Steel,” Story Homeschool
2nd – Iris Bailey, “I Am From,” Berea Community Elementary
3rd – Whitney Rivard, “Goodbye, 2018,” Leestown Middle School

Category 3 (Grades 7 and 8)

1st – Kaitlyn Wilson, “The Truth,” Olmstead School
2nd – Jillian Klauser, “The Last Pile of Leaves,” Lake Center Christian School
3rd – Marco Garcia, “The Truth,” Leestown Middle School

Category 4 (Grades 9 and 10)

1st – Abigail Adams-Smith, “Smells Like Family,” Bowling Green High School
2nd – Emma Eleson, “Girl to Woman,” Assumption High School
3rd – Badon Sydney, “sweet lies,” Assumption High School

Category 5 (Grades 11 and 12)

1st – Andria Spring, “In a Name,” Brown School
3rd – Mya Wade-Harper, “No,” Homeschool
Bio-Bits

Mary L. Allen (p. 12), who lives in Lexington, writes poetry, works puzzles and reads a lot. She wishes she’d chosen a career as chef or geologist. She is membership chair for KSPS.

Crystal E. Barker (p. 21) grew up on a farm in the hills of Grayson, KY. She earned a bachelor’s in nursing from Berea College and a master’s in nursing from California State University, Los Angeles. She now serves veterans as a case manager in Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation in the VA Medical Center in Los Angeles. She has begun to share her poetry publically, having been encouraged and inspired by her sister and KSPS member, Angela Barker Thomas.

Gaby Bedetti (p. 18) teaches at Eastern Kentucky University. She married a guy she met at a literature conference in Louisville, Kentucky, and together they raised a couple of kids. In June for the last six years, you can find her blogging on LexPoMo, where her poems are first published. She received an Artistic Enrichment Grant from the Kentucky Foundation for Women to work on a poetry collection exploring issues of aging and ageism.

Matt Birkenhauer (p. 22 - 23) teaches English at Northern Kentucky University’s Grant County Center with an emphasis on Composition and Rhetoric. In addition to Pegasus, Matt’s poetry has appeared in The Licking River Review, Trajectory: Writing That Illuminates, Tobacco: A Literary Anthology, For a Better World: Poems and Drawings on Peace and Justice, and other publications. In his free time, Matt likes to read, write poetry, and spend time with his family.

E. Gail Chandler’s (p. 19) poems have appeared in a number of journals including Appalachian Heritage, Verse Wisconsin, Passager, and several anthologies. Finishing Line published her chapbooks of poetry, Where the Red Road Meets the Sky (2009) and He Read to Us (2016).

Duane Dean (p. 16) is a graduate of Miami University. A lifelong songwriter, he has used song as a way of capturing meaningful moments in his life. Over the past fifty years he has owned a bar, managed a Red Lobster, hauled steel from Cleveland to Nashville, and planted pine trees all over the southern states. He is a member of The Monday Morning Writers Group and is working on a memoir, Explaining Myself To Me, which includes some of his songs.
Bio-Bits (Continued)

Charles Firmage (p. 17) has spent time in the South. His poems often have a country or blues flavor. He is a member of ASCAP, Poetry Society of Tennessee and poetry groups in several other states.

Don Fleming (p. 6) writes poetry in retirement and resides in Crescent Springs, KY. His poetry has been exhibited at Centre College in EAT: A Literature + Photo Installation at the Norton Center for the Arts. His poems have been published in: For a Better World 2019; Parody Poetry; Pegasus; and the anthology These Summer Months: Stories from The Late Orphan Project.

Richard Hague (p.10) is a Northern Appalachian from Steubenville, Ohio, who has lived for the past fifty years in Cincinnati. He is author and editor of 20 collections, most recently co-editing with Sherry Cook Stanforth the anthology Riparian: Poems, Short Prose, and Photographs Inspired by the Ohio River. Since 2015 he has been a Writer-in-residence and Artist-in-residence at Thomas More University in Crestview Hills, Kentucky, and one the leaders of their Spring and Fall River Writing Retreats.


Elizabeth Howard (p. 13) lives in Arlington, Tennessee. Her work has appeared in Comstock Review, Big Muddy, Appalachian Heritage, Cold Mountain Review, Green Hills Literary Lantern, Still, Now & Then, Slant, and other journals.

Matthew Hutchins (p. 11) began writing poetry under the tutelage of George Eklund while a student at Morehead State University. He resides in Campbellsville, KY, with his fiancé, Haley Marie. They are both avid artists and animal lovers.

Bio-Bits (Continued)

Cordelleya Smith Posivenko (p. 14-15) was born and raised in the mountains of southeastern Kentucky. She taught reading and writing for seven years for KCTCS (Kentucky Community and Technical College System) before transitioning into administration. She now lives and works in Georgia, but is forever thankful that she can call Kentucky home.

D. J. Scully (p. 1) lives in Fort Thomas, KY. He is an environmental educator and a certified arborist. He prefers to put the title to his poems below the poems rather than above.

Billie Holladay Skelley (p. 5) grew up in Kentucky, went to college in Wisconsin, and currently lives in Missouri. Her writing has appeared in various journals, magazines, and anthologies—ranging from the American Journal of Nursing to Chicken Soup for the Soul. Billie has written five books for children and teens. Her biographical text, Ruth Law: The Queen of the Air, received the 2017 Missouri Writers’ Guild First Place Award for Best Juvenile Book.

Since 1977, Nick Sweet (p. 20) has been a freelance stage director for theatres in Oklahoma, Texas, Alaska and Georgia. Included in his 146 productions is the outdoor historical drama "Trail of Tears" at Oklahoma's Cherokee Heritage Center. Though he's now a Texan, he was raised in Kentucky, graduating from Lexington Catholic H.S. and EKU. Nick was named Senior Poet Laureate for Oklahoma (2010) and for Texas (2013) by the Amy Kitchener Foundation.

Tanya Whitney (p. 8) retired from the Army in 2010 as a Master Sergeant after serving over 27 years on active duty and in the Louisiana National Guard as a mechanic and supervisor on both Army fixed wing and rotary wing aircraft. She began writing poetry several years ago as part of her PTSD therapy. In 2018 she was selected as a Gold Medal winner for the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival in the Creative Writing poetry category.

Kentucky State Poetry Society Membership

KSPS members benefit from being part of a network of poets who encourage and support each other. KSPS is a member of the National Federation of State Poetry Societies (NFSPS), so our members not only receive our poetry journal, *Pegasus*, and any KSPS newsletters, but also have access online to the NFSPS newsletter, *Strophes*.

KSPS conducts three poetry contests per year: the Adult Contest, the Annual Conference Contest, and the Student Contest. Rules for the Adult Contest (open March 1 – June 30) can be found on the KSPS website. The Annual Conference Contest is open at no cost to participants at the annual poetry conference in October. The Student Contest reaches out to public, parochial, and home-schooled students statewide and nationally. Members can also enter poems in the NFSPS annual contests at reduced rates.

KSPS publishes two issues of its poetry journal, *Pegasus*, per year. All issues are posted in electronic form on the KSPS website, www.kystatepoetrysociety.org, and members receive an email notice when a new issue is available. Members can receive one paper copy of each journal at no extra cost if they request it on the membership form.

**Membership:** The Kentucky State Poetry Society welcomes new and renewing members. Membership, based on the calendar year, is $35 for adults and $15 for students. “Student” includes those enrolled in levels elementary through graduate school. To join or renew your membership, copy and fill out the form below. Mail with your check, made out to KSPS, to Mary Allen, KSPS Membership Chair, 1092 Chinoe Road, Lexington, KY 40502-3098.

Name ____________________________________________________________

Address __________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Phone(s) ___________________ Email ________________________________

Adult _____ Student _____ (Grade Level _______) Fee _____________

New Member_______Renewal ________ Year fee covers ________

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