

# SPARE MULE NEWSLETTER



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## President's Report



For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land. Song of Songs 2:11-12

Welcome spring. Flowers are blooming and birds are singing.

The Lebanon Poets Society will coordinate with our library and sponsor a Nightingale Reading. Poets and poetry lovers are encouraged to attend and read their own poems or poems from beloved poets. We will serve light refreshments and have an evening of fun.

April is National Poetry Month. What will you do to celebrate? How about reading poems at your local coffee bar? Or publish a poem in your local newspaper. There's always Facebook to print your poem.

Happy writing.

Have you thought about attending the National Poetry convention in Des Moines, Iowa June 21 to 26? Go to the NFSPS website for more details.

--Nancy LaChance

Chapter Reports



## **On the Edge Reporting:**

As the school bus rumbles down my street, I reflect on our meetings of On the Edge. Together the 6-8 of us read and discuss our various poems. Many time the discussions are about the essence of what has been written and not the poem's form or structure of the poem. But we have time in our two hours to do that. Sometimes there is a reminder to work on the poem and we get back to that. Usually, our wording and structure is correct.

Today, we were joking over some groups we have all been in and how our work has been received. Maybe we were criticized for using over worked words, or the writing rhymed, or what we wrote was a greeting card message and not good poetry. We sort of decided there is a place for all types and forms of poems, even the greeting card verses.

Then we got back to reviewing our work and just having fun.

\*\*\*\*\*

our monthly meeting

today

our poetry meeting

turned to history

purple prose

rhyming

parental behavior

and punctuation

when we left

we all knew

what a comma

was used for

one writer

admitted he never used

any punctuation      just spacing when he wanted a pause

## **The Merry Bombadils**

The Merry Bombadils chapter of MSPS is busy creating beautiful poems for our next Round Robin anthology. We are writing sonnettes for this project. The sonnette is a 7-line form with ABBACBC as the rhyme scheme in iambic pentameter. Our last anthology, produced by Patricia S. Laster, was of triolets and rondelets. We have 6 poets participating in this project.

Harold Asner, who tutors math on a regular basis, in February won first place in a limerick contest sponsored by the Winnetka Northfield (IL) Public Library District.

Marie Asner, was guest speaker, via Zoom, in January 2023 for the Rockford Writers Guild on the topic of Film Reviewing.

Teresa H. Klepac is busy writing a poem a week, which includes sonnetts, a form that is new to her. She is happy to have received 3rd honorable mention in the MSPS Winter Contest 2023 free verse category for her poem Cut the too Tight String. She is currently working on a poetry chapbook and writing a fantasy adventure novel. She's a member of the Columbia Writers Group.

Pat Laster has written a hundred short poems so far this year and submitted 70. She spent a week at the Writers Colony at Dairy Hollow and attended the annual Lucidity Poetry Retreat while there.

Carol Louise Moon is enjoying a sabbatical leave from readings and judging contests as well as working with Medusa's Kitchen and Poetry Soup. She is leading the quiet writing life and focusing on working with her colleagues in The Merry Bombadils Chapter.

## Winter Contest Winners

Missouri State Poets' Society Winter Contest Winners

### Category 1: Rhymed / Blank verse

- |                       |                         |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. George Herz        | health report           |
| 2. Jerri Hardesty     | Exfoliating             |
| 3. Troy Reeves        | Kids at the Lake        |
| HM 1. Carolyn Silvers | Too Much Stuff          |
| HM 2. Nick Sweet      | Turning the Cornerstone |
| HM 3. Janice Canerdy  | Go Out and Play         |

### Category 2: Free Verse

- |                       |                          |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Becky Alexander    | Gargoyle Daze            |
| 2. Bill Lower         | Weighting on Rain        |
| 3. Jonathan Bennett   | Redolence                |
| HM 1. Jerri Hardesty  | Whitewalls               |
| HM 2. Becky Alexander | A Comma in Time          |
| HM 3. Teresa Klepac   | Cut the too Tight String |

### Category 3: Humorous

- |                       |                          |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Carolyn Silvers    | The Day After Christmas  |
| 2. Jonathan Bennett   | Uncracked                |
| 3. Jerri Hardesty     | Wild Party               |
| HM 1. Bill Lower      | Dog Training             |
| HM 2. Nick Sweet      | 10 Minutes to Showtime!! |
| HM 3. Carolyn Silvers | The Purple Dress         |

### Category 4: Seasonal

- |                       |                       |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Daniel Moreschi    | Monarch March         |
| 2. Lorraine Jeffrey   | Malevolent March      |
| 3. Paul Wilkerson     | Empty Nest Christmas  |
| HM 1. Tanya Whitney   | Wintertide            |
| HM 2. Patricia Laster | Fun Times in the Cold |
| HM 3. Terri Jacks     | Pool Time             |



## Category 5: Members Only

- |                      |                      |
|----------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Nick Sweet        | Moore, Oklahoma 2013 |
| 2. Nick Sweet        | May's Café           |
| 3. Carolyn Silver    | New Year's Holiday   |
| HM 1. George Herz    | no remote control    |
| HM 2. Nick Sweet     | Rain on the Porch    |
| HM 3. Carolyn Silver | Restless Spirit      |

**Monthly Prompts**

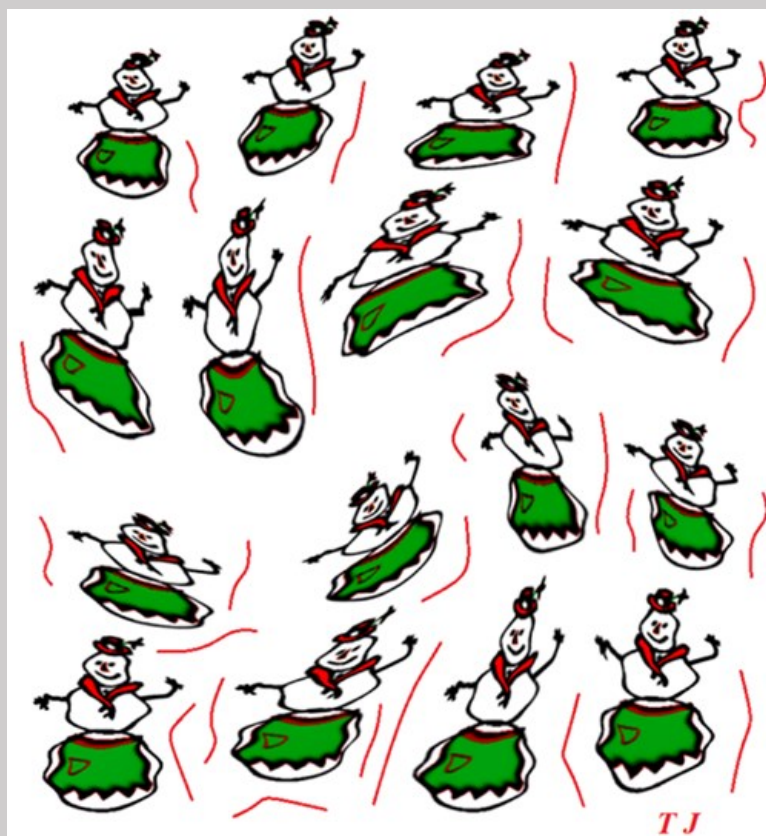


President Nancy has been dropping prompts to our email each month. Below are our responses. Please check your email for more prompting goodness!

## **December 2022**

(What is special to you about the holidays? Write a poem about it.)

## Fa-la-la-la-la - Terrie Jacks



Fa-la-la-la-la  
Dancin' snow girls  
Ho-Ho-Ho.  
whirl and swirl

Come on Baby!  
Slip and slide  
after all it is  
Christmastide

## **ONE-LEGGED JESUS - Wanda Sue Parrott**

Neighbors in Coconino Beach knew old man Johnson was mad. Not mad like angry. Mad like crazy. I never understood why my orthodox parents let me--their only kid--even speak to our huge goyish neighbor, whom they addressed politely as sir. His one-bedroom "Studio" was sandwiched between the Lowenstein family's two-story "Villa" model and our one-story "Mediterranean Bungalow." The only thing we had in common was whitewashed stucco walls, red Spanish-tile rooves and a coconut palm in each yard.

I called the old vet Henry. He put up a papier mâché sculpture of Jesus in his front yard every Friday after Thanksgiving and left it until Easter Sunday. Jesus towered like a scarecrow through the Festival of Lights and usually through Passover. I never saw any dog dirt on Henry's grass until the statue was stashed in his Florida room during the off-season, then passing poodles pooped periodically and pissed on the palm with perfunctory pride and pleasure.

Jesus stood slightly taller than Henry, at least seven feet high, amidst fake snowflakes shredded from The Miami Herald's colored Sunday comic-strip columns. When I was nine, a hurricane failed to dislodge Christ, but it blew the confetti all over the Kosher Korner strip mall and out to sea toward Cuba. Jesus looked like a bearded young John Wayne in drag, holding a shotgun in one hand and shepherd's staff in the other.

When my father lit the first Hanukkah candle on the brass menorah in our picture window, Henry turned on his first string of Christmas lights that permanently hung from his eaves. By the eighth night, our window and his yard were ablaze with glossy glittering gleams. My parents played Hanukkah hymns they bought when the Israeli Children's Choir performed at our synagogue the year I was born. On balmy nights, they opened all the windows and turned up the volume, so the old marine next door could hear, but if Hanukkah coincided with Christmas, our home was silent on December 24th. On Christmas Eve, Henry broadcast Willie Nelson Christmas carols at top volume, non-stop, from a loud speaker on his roof.

Channel 10 interviewed Henry the December I was eleven, which is how I learned Henry carried heavy-shit shrapnel under his skull, was spurned by his sweetheart who sent a dear john so he stayed single by choice by God. He was again interviewed when I was twelve. I learned he was an artist instead of a Baptist preacher like his daddy thanks to Uncle Sam's G.I. Bill with which he was the first person to buy a place in the new development after World War Two. Henry

demonstrated how to soak stacked newspapers into soggy shreds, mix in all-purpose baking flour, and use such homemade clay to patch ceilings, plug leaks, create casements for closets and windows, and even make ear plugs. He used it to sculpt his fake-marble masterpiece, whose gimpy left leg listed toward Leonard Lowenstein's laundry room a little more each year.

By the time I was sixteen, Jesus slanted like the Leaning Tower of Pisa. Every holiday someone stole the shotgun from Jesus' hand, but it would mysteriously reappear in Henry's yard on Christmas morning, probably because its procurer discovered it to be a cheap Red Ryder pellet gun from the back page of a World War Two comic book, so rusty it was good for nothing. I knew that fact, since I purloined the pellet gun myself when I was thirteen, hid it in my mother's camellia bush, then nearly knocked Jesus over when I tried to replace it in his hand. I left it lying on the lawn. Next day, the gun was back where it belonged, pointed at anyone who dared appear before Christ's image.

The last Christmas morning Jesus remained standing, someone placed a ripe dead deer at the statue's feet, then called the cops and the media. The nine-point buck had been shot through the heart with a real shotgun. It was posed on buckled forelegs as if in prayer at the feet of the Lord. That warm winter morning, the old man appeared on camera squeezed into his marine uniform, carrying his Semper Fidelis hat under his arm, and wearing a Santa Claus cap on his bald head. He shouldered a chain saw as if it were a weapon, and he marched to the beat of a drum only he and I could hear. Dum--drrrrrrum. Dum--drrrrum. Dum--drrrrum.

He marched around Jesus, stopped, smiled, saluted me and said, "War is hell, Sarah Hirshberg.

Merry Christmas." He removed the red fur-trimmed cap, placed it over my forehead, donned his marine hat, and turned on the power saw. Whirrrrrrrr. Whirrrrrr. Whirrrrrr. Henry severed Christ's gimpy leg at the hip, but the one-legged Jesus continued standing.

Henry gazed up into Jesus' face with tears in his eyes, then knelt beside the buck, and I swear I heard the papier mache Jesus murmur, "Forgive them, Father, for madmen know not what they do." I turned toward my parents, whose arms were outstretched in anticipation, waiting to catch whichever giant fell first.

## **Christmas Blessings - Teresa H. Klepac**

Fairy lights twinkle again  
too many treats and sweets  
sloppy kisses on the chin  
Grandma smiles and repeats  
carols of the holidays  
she dances in bare feet  
with glistening eyes she prays  
happy blessings are reaped.

## **Snow - Stella Cunningham**

(Haiku Sequence)

silent flaky snow  
    falls lazily from the sky  
a pristine snow globe

slushy gloppy snow  
    dirty and gray underfoot  
melting and squishing

squeaky crunchy snow  
    ice crystals under your feet  
firm yet slippery



## **My Snowman - Stella Cunningham**

The snow fell heavy on this day  
a fluffy blanket covered the ground.

If I were younger, I would have rolled and  
shaped a monstrous snowman.

But I was older and less ambitious  
so I shaped together a tiny little fellow.

I put a scarf around his neck and  
put a hat upon his head.

When nighttime came  
I placed him beside me on the bed, then fell asleep.

When I awoke the next morning  
my little friend was not in sight.

The scarf and hat lay near my head  
but he was gone without a word.

Then I saw that, before he left  
he had wet the bed.

## **"Jingle Jingle" - Todd Sukany**

Two soldiers, dressed to the nines--  
bow ties, plaid vests, cuffed trousers,  
slicked-back hair--have graduated,

respectively, four and two years  
of life itself, and a couple weeks  
of Mom's Boot Camp.

They march through the crowd  
to the stage where they will belt-out  
their Christmas preparation.

Seconds before reaching the stage stairs,  
General Grampa simplifies the objective  
to a single word.

## **Tis the Season - Frank Adams**

There was no Santa Claus in Bethlehem  
no reindeer and no sleigh -  
no presents wrapped  
by jolly elves to celebrate Christmas day.

There was no sale at Macy's  
no fruitcake -  
no stuffing to make  
no holiday hams.

There were no toys to hide  
from prying eyes -  
no ugly sweater contests  
or unwanted fluffy house shoes.

There were no holiday parties -  
no cookies shaped like snowflakes -  
no eggnog  
and no gifts.

There was a man and a woman  
alone in a barn  
on a dark night  
with a baby newly born.

## **Before Thanksgiving Day - Pat Durmon**

On porches, rooftops, shrubs,  
lights flash on  
shattering the darkness.  
We do not know those  
who live in these houses,  
but they cannot wait to put up  
Christmas decor.

So like our excited pups.  
They compete to be first  
and wildly dart out the door,  
barking their way  
through a year  
of leaves.

Soon, I see more.  
No need to cling to grief,  
deep dark tones  
or the Russian war on Ukraine.  
In the middle of this unstable world,  
there really is light. Awesome.  
Dancing, blinking hope.

## **Lone Rock Church - Pat Durmon**

Tonight a light rain fell in snatches  
as Baptists came together  
to offer burdens.

Suddenly  
a boy's legs raced down the hall  
like a train streamlining past houses.  
The child, wide-eyed, put on the brakes  
and asked why his room was dark.  
An answer. A nod, then a grin and a question.  
*Is it okay if I stay and play in the nursery?*

Lincoln Logs mended any gloom.  
With low, slow motions,  
he made engine noises and laid track  
from zenith to horizon.

A song in the distance—  
*Amazing grace, how sweet the sound...*

Later the boy tore out the door,  
speeding toward his mother—  
his other world.

A drumming of an urgent prayer  
from another room.

Like a tree, a tall man stood steady and fixed  
as he asked God to heal, teach and forgive.  
A distant sound of rain.

## Trimming the Tree - Nancy La Chance

The  
lights,  
the blasted lights  
must go on first then you  
decide on your theme for this year's  
decorations. Shall I use only reds and golds or put  
on a mishmash and call it eclectic. The last step for me is putting  
on the garland and plugging in the lights. The magic happens as I step  
back and remember little boys placing ornaments haphazardly, beautifully on  
our  
family  
tree

**January 2023**

(To make or not to make a resolution.)

## **New Year's Resolutions: Senryu - John J. Han**

resolved to walk more...  
a snowstorm  
pardons me

resolved to eat  
grain-based foods...  
popcorn

resolved to save money  
but egg prices  
keep soaring

only two weeks  
to break it  
new year's resolution

new year's resolution  
abandoned  
finally, finally free!



**WANDA'S WALNUT - Wanda Sue Parrott, 87**

I think that I shall never make  
a resolution--real or fake—  
that promises that I must be  
a walnut falling from a tree . . .

By this I mean my outer shell  
protects my nut-brain very well.  
The shell has cracked; my nut's still whole.  
Intelligence remains my goal.

I do resolve, although I'm old,  
my Muse be ageless; now, behold  
(as poems flourish on my tree)  
this baby walnut cracked by me.

## **A Breakthrough - Pat Durmon**

The couple makes a promise to each other,  
I will love and cherish you forever.

Tomorrow is New Year's Day.  
Surely, I can resolve to do something  
for 365 days in a row.  
After all, others take flying leaps.  
It's *not* an impossible goal.  
The crow caws,  
Not you! Not this year! NOT ANY YEAR!  
My lips suddenly feel chapped.  
I just need a little plan  
before I make any kind of promise.

I put hog jowl and black-eyed peas on burners. It's part of the tradition  
we southerners get stuck with. Certainly, we want  
the new year to be luckier than any left behind.  
But resolutions, that's harder to figure.  
Reckon I'll wait 'til tomorrow to put on the collards—  
that'll be the green for money. Lots of folks  
think I'm looney tunes to bother with this cooking thing,  
but if my brother and I don't put on pots of peas,  
Mama will surely be shaking her head and rage may be pulsing  
through her veins. No matter that she lives in heaven now,  
I don't want to risk her thinking  
I'm disrespecting her just 'cause  
she changed her address.

That's when I look straight into the cold sun's face and resolve  
to read the Good Book every day of the new year.  
It's a way of life, and I really don't want  
to upset my mama.

## **Resolution - Terrie Jacks**

new year decision  
relocate couch potato  
move it, move it, move..

creep out of bed  
don the attire, workout sweats  
bed looks cozy

join mall walkers  
round and round and round and round  
some fast, some slothful

a lady walker  
dressed in proper workout clothes  
sashays, swish, swish

workout is over  
it's early, shops are padlocked  
wallet stays fat

## **New Year's Resolutions - Terrie Jacks**

Resolution? What's a resolution?

On New Year's Day  
it's a tradition  
to make resolutions  
to transform yourself  
into something new and different

so, go ahead  
resolve to resolve  
take the resolution bull by the horns  
make up your mind,  
be steadfast  
determined

show some pluck  
fortitude  
strength of character  
true grit  
go all out  
see it through  
write down  
where you need to improve  
post them on the refrigerator  
don't hesitate  
make some resolutions  
resolve to —

What should I write down?

## **resolution – Todd Sukany**

We crammed a whole year's meetings into four days. The fourteenth rising and honoring pushed many to the limit. One can stand for others

only so many times before the knees buckle, the groans amplify, and House civility returns to normal chills. Perhaps one can grab a head and twist it off. No one would note a distinction.

## **February 2023**

("Is Love in the air? What do you love ? (not a person) . . . like ice cream or rainy days, etc.")

## **How I Love Spring (Rondelet) - Nancy LaChance**

How I love spring  
Weather forecast can be teases  
how I love spring  
birds make a chorus, time to sing  
sunshine and rain how it pleases  
winter is done, no more freezes  
how I love spring

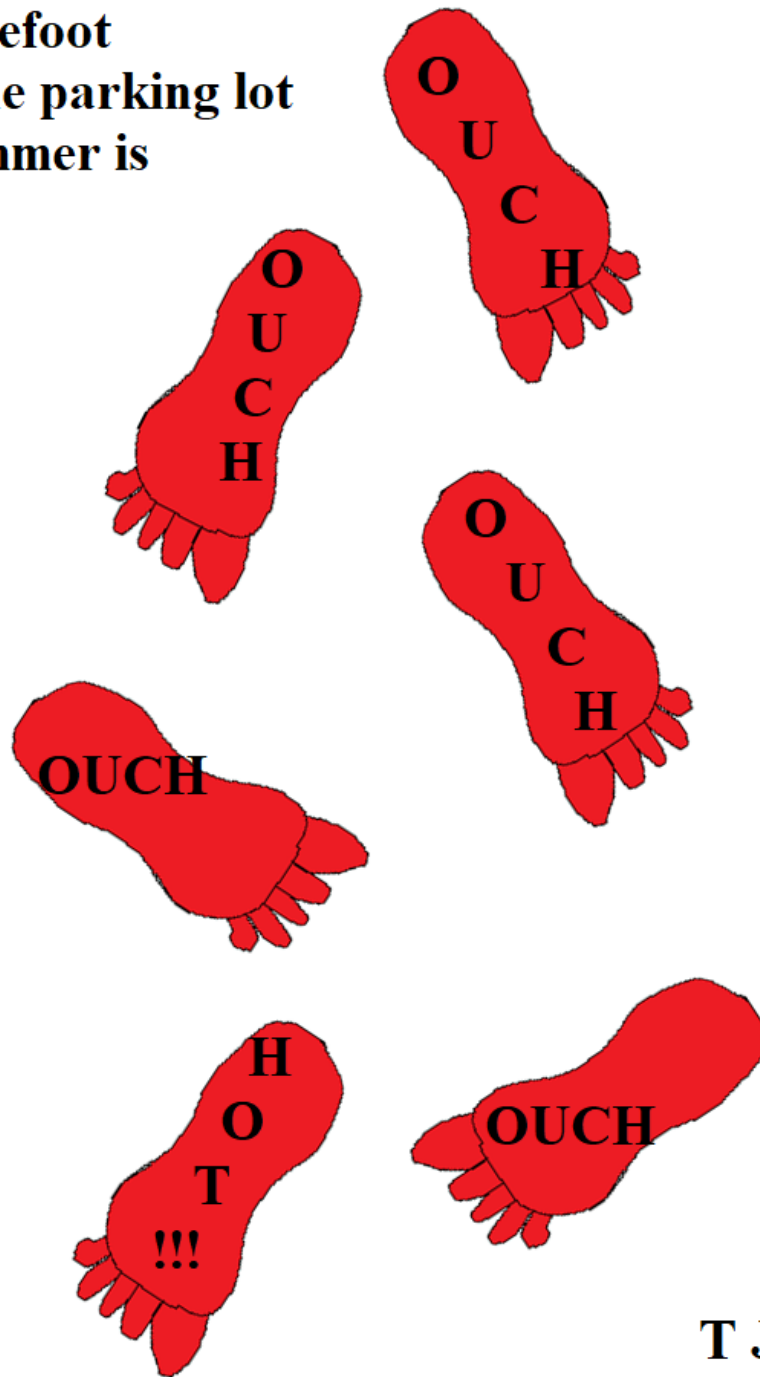
## **Rambling Feet – Yes Yes Yes - Terrie Jacks**

One – two  
oh what to do?  
Three – four  
travel out the door  
Five – six  
snapping up my walking stick  
Seven – eight  
set the pace – a rapid gait  
Nine – ten  
Noisily – arrrrgh – about the bend  
Eleven – twelve's  
ever vigilant for tiny elves  
Thirteen – fourteen  
today – my luck – they've gone green  
Fifteen – sixteen  
fitting into any woodland scene  
Seventeen – eighteen  
possibly in this ravine  
Nineteen – twenty  
rapidly raising rambling to rapture – aplenty



**Walking Barefoot – Terrie Jacks**

**walking barefoot  
across the parking lot  
in summer is**



**T J**

## **Invitation (E-I-E-I-O style) - Marie Asner**

Each season invites a special kiss  
into hearts that hope one finally says  
enter and find a peaceful bliss  
inside this place with moonlit rays.  
Oh, stay no more in hours, but days.

## **Love - Marie Asner**

can fight for existence during cold winter months.  
Cracking ice from the lake at 3 a.m. in February,  
then, murmurs of affection become whispers  
when snow begins to hide window ledges  
and large paw prints are seen by the outdoor swings  
when the midnight moon is high.

### **Hymn 352 - Todd Sukany**

"...merits my soul's best songs."

As the intro turns to verse,  
the melody I strum stays close  
to the page-chord names,

laser printed, directly above  
the lyrics. Those words,  
familiar enough, suddenly

combine in a string of meaning.  
They lift off the page, turn  
to face me, incarnate

in the moment, and translate  
themselves into presence.  
I am no longer alone.

## **Ode to Breakfast - Janice Canerdy**

There you sit, my Love,  
holding nectar from above,  
strong and sweet and hot.  
More awaits me in the pot!

Your serum lures me;  
from my ennui, it cures me.  
I clutch you and sup  
from your bounty, coffee cup.

Buttered toast and jam,  
your crunchy sweetness thrills me.  
You're heaven with ham.  
O how this breakfast fills me.

Cup, I hold you still  
after every bite is gone.  
Just one more refill--  
then I will no longer yawn.

## **ODE TO A SUN - Wanda Sue Parrott**

I doff my hats to thee, fair knaves at play,  
for thou hast written poems beyond the ken  
of kings and queens and ordinary men  
who feed their minds with oatmeal through the day.

Yea, falter though they do, whilst poets dream,  
their eyes are on their chicks, not golden eggs,  
and taste is not for poets' mead, but dregs,  
with small respect for meter, verse or scheme.

Ah, is it true, as history doth attest,  
both noblemen and beggars see through dew  
that obscures vision in but very few,  
including poets who scrawl poor anapest?

I fool the world, declaring I'm a fraud,  
yet recognize true poets as suns of God.

## **It's Here - Janice Canerdy**

It's here—sweet, long-awaited spring.  
Earth has awakened; life is new.  
The breeze exudes a unique zing.

Let's have a big outdoors wing-ding.  
Who could resist the springtime view?  
It's here—sweet, long-awaited spring.

The trilling birds are on the wing.  
New blooms are lovely; skies are blue.  
The breeze exudes a unique zing.

Cool rain is Queen; the sun is King.  
The season's fun, kids now pursue.  
It's here—sweet, long-awaited spring.

Bright kites float high on lengthy string  
when springtime makes its grand debut.  
The breeze exudes a unique zing.

The young and young-at-heart will sing  
of love, and some will say "I do."  
It's here—sweet, long-awaited spring.  
The breeze exudes a unique zing.

## **Spring Break at the Florida Gulf – Todd Sukany**

beach mirrors the northern clime  
we left three days ago. Madness  
in March. Piles of red algae

transform into the slippery snow  
that outlined our driveway. Unblinking  
fish form a new school, a clique

of silent solidarity. We ferry our swim-  
wear as an innermost layer, hoping  
to stay dry while weathering this latest storm.



## **SPRINGTIME POLITICS - Wanda Sue Parrott**

Preemptive strikes bear consequence when sanctity of homes  
is threatened with invasion from an outside force that roams.  
To illustrate in metaphor this truth that's plain to me,  
I've opined here in essay form through homespun poetry.

When Grandpa bumped his wooden leg against the outhouse door,  
the Queen of Wasps fell from her hive and bounced upon the floor.  
With legs a-flail, the paper wasp trod air while on her back,  
as Grandpa stumbled on a loose dry corn cob from the stack  
that stood beside torn catalogs from Sears and old Buck Roe,  
which—after they'd been read--served folks like Gramps, who had to go.  
To beat the heat, he hit the seat so hard his peg fell off,  
and as it passed the queen she gasped so hard it made her cough.  
She moaned; Gramps groaned. The now-dethroned queen wasp then slowly rose,  
and latching tight to knots and gnarls, resumed her regal pose.  
While Grandpa did what people do, the bug did waspish things,  
like fluttering her shear-sharp flaps to activate for stings.  
When Gramps reached for his wooden leg, the wasp lit on his shirt  
in readiness to pierce her foe, but Gramps let out a blurt:  
"Git off'n me, dang hateful thang!" and with a cob of corn,  
he swung and swore "Git out the door!" Then young wasps, newly born,  
emerged tail-first from holey hive, like spring babes sent to save  
the sacred matron of their tribe from almost-certain grave.  
With stingers bared, they dived as one mass swarm in platoon style.  
Retreating then, they reconnoitered, forming single file.  
One by one, they struck, then died. Their valor saved their queen.  
My grandpa swore it was the "dangdest miracle I've seen!"  
For as he watched, his stung stump swelled; it formed a foot with toes,  
and Gramps strode home on his two feet--or so his story goes.

But there's my Grandma's version, too: "Retreating on his stump,  
with britches dragging on the ground, the wasps stung Grandpa's rump."  
The moral of this essay is: Be careful whom you've cursed,  
or you might get your own butt stung by those who lived there first.

## **What's That Sound? - Terrie Jacks**

It's coming, it's coming  
The Joy of Spring  
can't you hear it  
when the birds sing  
The Joy of Spring  
The Joy of Spring

The crocus bloom  
little snowdrops too  
folks emerge  
for a hike or two  
The Joy of Spring  
The Joy of Spring

Daffodils push forth  
the buzzards return  
there's a baby boom  
for many animals and birds

Yes it's time  
The Joy of Spring  
come on out  
and loudly sing  
The Joy of Spring  
The Joy of Spring

## **Springtime's Promise (Haibun) - Carol Louise Moon**

Cool showers gather on the side yard graced by tiny weeds and Swallowtails. March brings hope to dormant soil in an open field. Seeds now comforted settle in to begin their germination. This old, old story is retold as birds repeat the joy of knowing it—they, believers of the rite and ritual here. Chattering Creek still runs beyond the home-fence—"And along we go," reply the gliding fish. Their white skins aglow with sunlit sequin-scales arise from fading shadows, their bodies move in rhythm of the goal ahead. "We're on our way," -- they skim the water's rocks Farther out browned hills lie in hope, as well the dark soil primed for planting, a season of promise soon to be fulfilled. The evening sky sighs, then yields to greening mists—the wind dies down.

among the shadows  
fish scales, bubbles and fish  
not so easily fooled

## **The Rain - Frank Adams**

I sit in my den  
safe and warm  
on a cold winter evening  
as rain falls outside  
tapping my windows  
occasionally pounding  
on my roof.

I realize  
that someday -  
not so far away -  
rain will be falling  
on my grave  
working its way  
into the soil  
enveloping me  
in its embrace  
welcoming me back  
to the earth  
from which I came.  
Again - I will be home  
and alone - one  
with that which is.

Frank Adams, Member at Large, has three poems published in an anthology, *Cotard*, out from Between Shadows Press, Denville, New Jersey.

**Member Poems**



## **Interesting Missouri Place Names - John J. Han**

(A tanka prose)

Having crisscrossed Missouri many times, I have encountered some interesting place names. The town name of Udall, in Ozark County, comes from a farmer's command to a horse: "You doll, get up!" There is the town of Hale in Carroll County. In Southern accent, the name refers to a place that should be avoided at all costs. Finally, there is the town of Bourbon in Crawford County. Its water tower proudly displays "Bourbon," and Bourbon Free Will Baptist Church stands along Interstate 44. Whenever I travel through the town, I cannot help but think of bourbon whiskey.

getting sleepy  
behind the wheel  
a sheriff's car  
hides behind a bush  
on Route ZZ

## **Martyrs of Japan Catholic Church - John J. Han**

(A haibun)

As a native of East Asia, I wanted to visit this historic church in Japan, Missouri, for many years. Although located in Franklin County less than 8 miles north of an interstate highway, I didn't have a chance to see it until mid-February 2023. On the way back from a business trip, I started navigation in the Google Maps app. It took only 11 minutes from the highway to the destination. The church, which looked more Protestant than Catholic, came across as a house of worship for a rural middle-class community. Next to the empty road was farmland flanked by woods, which perhaps contributed to the church's motto: "God's Grace in a Country Place." The church was established in 1879 to commemorate the 26 Japanese, Spanish, and Portuguese Catholics executed in Nagasaki in 1597. After Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor, some patriotic Americans tried in vain to destroy the building only because its name included the word Japan. Upon leaving, I wondered how many Japanese have visited this intriguing place. However, my bigger question was why this remote location in the Ozark Hills had been chosen for the church.

mountain pilgrimage  
driving the car  
in low gear

## **The Final Sunset - John J. Han**

(A tanka prose)

Dozens of YouTube videos on terminal patients have taught me what happens to a dying person. A common symptom is the blurred line between reality and fantasy. In one video, someone mentions the singer Johnny Cash, who died in 2003, and the patient asks, "Is he here?" In another video, a dying person saw hell fire in her dream, wakes up, points to a wall, and says the fire is there. Another symptom is incoherent utterance. Some patients mumble things that are unintelligible to others. Yet, dying patients are often intuitive—like young children who grasp the situation when something grave happens. When relatives and friends suddenly show up, terminal patients realize that their death is imminent. Finally, all the videos I have watched reinforce the importance of supporting and comforting a dying person. In a Christian culture, playing or singing hymns may soothe a departing soul. In Vietnam, family and friends repeatedly recite a Buddhist chant—and encourage a dying person to do the same.

the way home  
at sunset...  
the eyes  
of a dead deer  
wide open



## **monkey business – Terrie Jacks**

yesterday  
skullduggery  
today  
poppycock  
tomorrow  
hoop-de-dodde  
what's life without  
tomfoolery

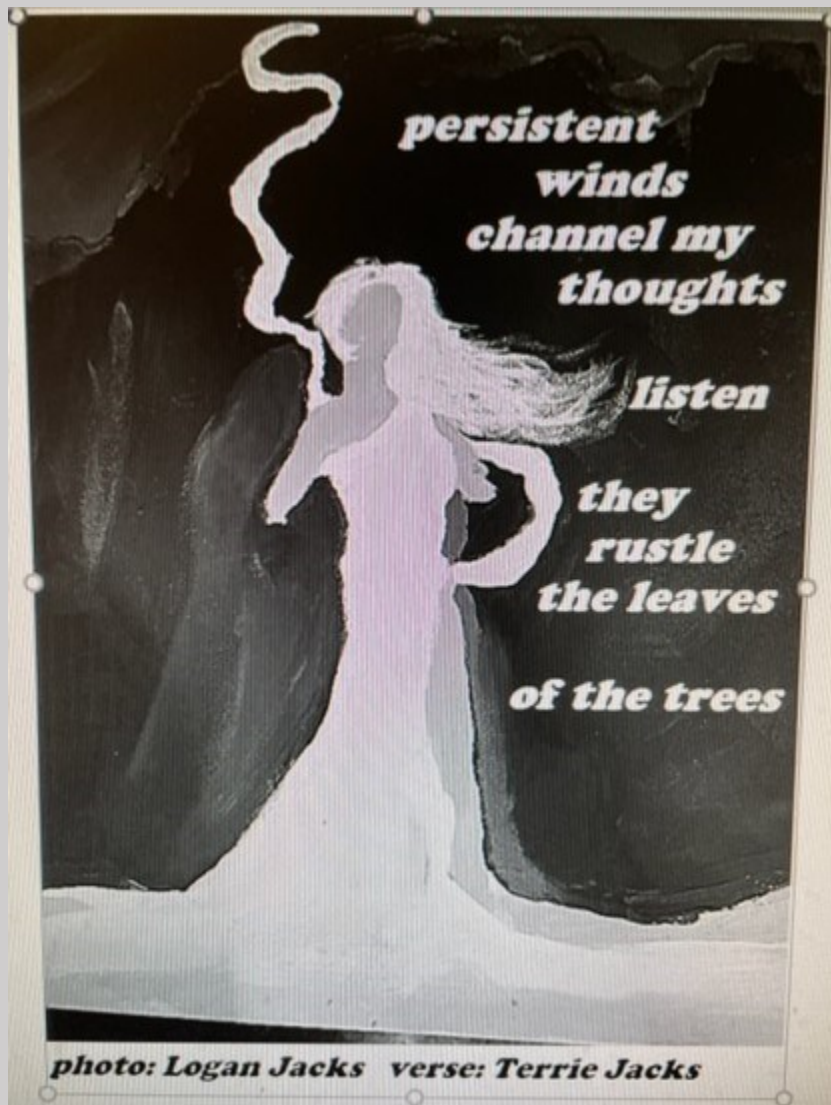
## **the meandering road - Terrie Jacks**

is a crooked road  
to nowhere  
gravel-lined  
shoeless we trek  
that spikey throughfare – ouch

## **Morning Check - Terrie Jacks**

morning check  
out the front door  
clover  
covered in snow  
spring equinox

**Persistent - Terrie Jacks**



## **Beautiful Scars of the Resurrected Lord - Janice Canerdy**

I love to don my jewelry--  
those bracelets, necklaces, and rings--  
eye-catching, nice accessories  
from my small box of pretty things.

The birthstones, butterflies, and hearts  
don't give me pause, but when I wear  
a necklace with a cross, I think  
of love for man beyond compare.

That dainty emblem represents  
The Cross of Christ on Calvary.  
He sacrificed His life for all.  
That Cross means Christianity.

His nail scars, essence of the love  
extended to the entire world,  
are lovely to believers' hearts.  
The blood He shed is grace unfurled.

## **Salutations, Spring - Janice Canerdy**

We sing your praises long before you're due  
and after you've departed—all year long!  
You bring green grass and flowers into view—  
plus bugs, torrential rains, and winds so strong.

You come with warmth to woo the Earth to life.  
Sweet fragrances come wafting on the breeze.  
With allergens, the springtime air is rife.  
My faucet-nostrils drip; I wheeze and sneeze.

But allergies and rashes can't negate  
your glory. Nor can pollen steal the praise  
you've earned. Now I'll just take my meds and wait  
till I can relish your more winning ways.

I've sneezed on this creation seven times.  
My dripping nose baptized the latter rhymes.

Recent Publishing Credits:

*Sparks of Calliope*, online, two poems on March 26, 2023

*Westward Quarterly*, print, one poem in spring issue Your Daily Poem, featured poem on March 9, 2023

Missouri State Poetry Society Winter 2023 Contest, Rhymed Verse HM

## **The Aunts - Marie Asner**

My mother gave birth'  
but the aunts nurtured.

Manners as gentle as fine lace,  
they speak of me  
from the other side of the door,  
voices soft and smooth  
like honey-cream.

Parasols prime and proper  
are a language of etiquette and crystal.

Minutes over tea  
can be as long as years  
but, each with gloved hand  
and gentle caress.

Memories now wait their turn,  
reluctant...  
to step into time's passage.

## **TANKA - Pat Laster**

five clones of Full Flush  
the celebrity sire of  
30,000 calves

can you imagine working  
as a bull-semen broker?



**ONCE SEEN YOU CAN'T UNSEE - Pat Laster**  
(Rondelet)

A true nightmare:

D. Trump appeared in boxer shorts!

A true nightmare.

He only stayed a sec. I swear  
that image's worth a thousand snorts—  
not mine alone, but my cohorts.

A true nightmare.

## **Wilmore, Kentucky (circa 1952) – Todd Sukany**

I gather the family for the evening--  
the fireplace stoked and the rest  
of the room immeasurably warmed by candlelight.

The wind, a private outpouring, a stark purity,  
observes us circle in front of the speaker.  
As the music fades, the message begins

but drifts into the white noise of static.  
I coax the antenna, wiggle some foil  
hats, stand, frozen, with one leg hiked,

pray. Pray that the signal will remain  
strong. That our reception will not  
be hindered. That we too will not faint.



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