The
Thirty-Third Annual
Jo-Anne Hirshfield
Memorial Poetry
Awards

Evanston Public Library Community Meeting Room
Sunday, May 1, 2011, 2:00pm
In loving memory of

Dr. Hyman Hirshfield

1921-2010
The prizes in poetry are awarded in memory of:

Margaret Abar
Aaron Adler
Marilyn Lewis
Billy Lustgarten
Paul Plotkin
Mitzie Robinson
Gertrude Rubin

The Middle School Awards are endowed by:

*Sara and Robert C. Busch*
Program

Welcome
Mary Johns,
Library Director

Introductory Remarks
Christopher Stewart,
Library Board President

Remarks by 2011 Poetry Judge
Janet S. Wong

Presentation of 2011 Awards and Prize Money

Elementary Age Students
Middle School Students
High School Students
Unpublished Adults

Poetry Readings
Janet S. Wong

Meet the Award Winners

Refreshments Immediately Following the Program

Past Judges

1979 - Eloise Fink
Lisel Mueller
1995 - Martha Modena Vertreace
1996 - Effie Mihopoulos
1980 - Mark Perlberg
1987 - Mark Turcotte
1981 - Mark Perlberg
1998 - Mark Turcotte
1982 - Daryl Hine
1999 - Allison Joseph
1983 - Eleanor Gordon
2000 - Sterling Plumpp
1984 - Mark Perlberg
2001 - Richard Jones
1985 - Dennis Brutus
2002 - Susan Hahn
1986 - Lisel Mueller
2003 - Julie Parson-Nesbitt
1987 - John Dickson
2004 - Dr. Haki R. Madhubuti
1988 - Eloise Fink
2005 - Paulette Roeske
1989 - Gertrude Rubin
2006 - Jared Smith
1990 - Reginald Gibbons
2007 - Averill Curdy
1991 - Angela Jackson
2008 - Janice N. Harrington
1992 - Richard W. Calish
2009 - Janet S. Wong
1993 - Beatriz Badikian
2010 - Bobbi Katz
1994 - Maxine Chernoff

We regret any errors that may have occurred in this publication.
I have always wanted to fly and soar in the calm blue sky, but if I open my imagination, the greater I can become.

Snap, crack, snap, crack, the sound of my footsteps slapping the gravel path on my way out to recess with my friend Cam, we look at each other and smile.

There are two swings open. We race to them before anyone else does and jump on the thick rubber swing that is as black as my Mom’s swizzle chair at work.

Beginning slow we start to pump, swinging our legs back and forth, back and forth, getting faster by the second, and suddenly I’m fly’in, fly’in like a bird with the wind in my hair and face.

My heart is thumping, bulging, and breaking through my chest. I am swallowing huge, fast gulps of air with my mouth open.
The fragrance of flowers and fresh grass lingers in the air.  
I try to imagine myself flying over a giant building like the Empire State Building.  
When I look up, I see birds flying high like me.  
I spread my wings and fly.  
There is only one word to describe what I feel, FREE!
Second Place: Zinnia Schwartz
Baker Demonstration School, Grade 5

Window
A poem in two parts

Tamed

Locked behind never ending bars I am restless.
Under the harsh control of the whipping wind I am forced to pace
my imagination.
Dreaming of the lions inside of me
I disagree, but I’m taught to agree
Words I learn are casting a spell on me, taming me
Holding me back from the open plains of my mind

Free

A dove escapes from a foxes’ watchful eye and spirals upward.
Letting go of every past moment,
going where her heart sends her
Soaring higher and higher toward the blank sky,
where something will be written by
a white feather
Alex Johnson
Dawes Elementary School, Grade 5

Alone

Alone,
sittin
wonderin what to do

waitin’ for someone to show me the
way I want the right path

But no one will
So what should I do?

Alone in a way
That I can’t explain to anyone
Not even myself.
Rememberings

I remember when I lost my first tooth on a playground with my sister.
I remember when I was watching the sunset on a beach and we spelled out the word ‘Give’ with five people.
I remember the first time I met my best friend. I was helping my mother clean a bench.
I remember I used to have dreams, of me flying through the sky.
I remember the first time I went out of the country to Ireland.
I remember I used to think my dad’s drum was a monster.
I remember when I was little every day all summer long I would come home with dirty nails and boysenberry-stained feet.
Elementary Age Students

Honorable Mention: Bridget Hickey
St. Joan of Arc, Grade 4

Basketball

Dribbling down the court,
It’s so much fun.
Uh-Oh, the guy you’re guarding
Weighs a ton!
Elementary Age Students

Honorable Mention: Ella Neurohr
Chiaravalle Montessori School, Grade 5

Tired Eyes

A rustle in the
Bushes

And an old mutt
Limps out

He climbs into my
Arms and he looks

At me with tired
Eyes and I cradle
Him closer

There is a howl
And he darts away
In fear

I look down at the
Rust stained porch
And sigh
Fight

Round 2

I was so scared
to hit my buddy in the face
But to get the title
I had to

CRACK

I was stunned
Mike was winning
BOB
Right hand
Punch by mike

Ding

Round 9
Tyrese has a swollen eye

BOOM
BOOM
BOOM
BOOM
1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9

Mike is up
he looks dizzy
duh-doom
TKO
I won
But we’re still friends
One Mississippi

Lightning flashes, slicing the inky night as if God dropped his fountain pen.

One Mississippi.

A pig-tailed girl peeks out her window, veiled behind the curtain, frosting lingering on her lips.

Two Mississippi.

Black seeps out in all directions, the moon, a lone rubber duck, bobbing in the darkness.

Three Mississippi.

The rain pours down, a toddler’s angry tears, crushing, gushing, washing away, replenishing, the ground, submissive below the torrents.

Four Mississippi.

Clouds linger, sagging under seemingly weightless pressure, burdened with unforeseen rainfall, pouring down when they finally burst, like over filled water balloons.
Five Mississippi.

Drips
ping off the gutters and the storm moves close to home
with a hammering gush
off leaf-clogged downspouts and shining shingles.

Six Mississippi.

The boom resonates.
Trees tremble from their roots up.
The Never-Land of dark refuses to yield now.

The little girl allows herself a triumphant grin,
the distance safely gauged
between her and light.

The rain pitter-patters to a slow drizzle,
like a young child’s feet,
footsteps tiring after a jittery sugar buzz.
Second Place: Charlie Maxwell
Nichols Middle School, Grade 7

Seldom Failure

I have hit
Homeruns
Crack!

Cleared fences
and
rounded bases.
Thud
Thud
Thud

Slid into home,
collecting a bouquet
of Diamond Dry,
lodging it deep
under my
polyester pants

But
in this instance
As my teammates,
like feeble,
dependent
Newborns,

Watched
Arm in Arm,
chanting,
the hundreds of hours
of preparation
put into this season
rested
Watched
Arm in Arm,
chanting,
the hundreds of hours
of preparation
put into this season
rested
on my back,
in three strikes

Unfortunately
Running full haste
through First Base
still doesn’t beat out
a ground ball
to the second baseman

And every hour
endeavored
at 110%
Packed into
A nine-inch ball
Wound with 108
Double stitches
Doesn’t quite match up with

a 4-3
fielder’s choice.
Wretchedly.
Middle School Students

Third Place: Isabella Pace Green
Chute Middle School, Grade 6

Moving

A long time ago
Redwood city, California
A small home in the suburbs
A lemon tree in the front yard
The neighbor’s dog, Abbie
Yipping and barking in welcome
A perfect life
Almost like a dream

I didn’t realize how wonderful it was until we left
Dad got a better job in Chicago
It happened so fast

All of a sudden
We lived in an apartment in Chicago
No lemon trees
No Abbie

Our cat got sick and had to be put down
The weather was cold and cloudy
Our neighbor was grouchy and mean

Eventually, we move to Evanston
Made friends and went to school
My memories of California started to blur and fade
But I had found light in the darkness

Sometimes, I wish we still lived in California
But for now
I’m happy where I am
I am barefoot
as I walk across the field,
wrapped in a
velvety cloak of
night,
embroidered with
those diamond pinpricks
we call stars.
I sink to my knees as
I watch the
dark green sea around me
rippling
in the gentle breeze.
It’s almost as if I’m surrounded by
water.
I breathe in sweet air,
but my heart lets out a deep sigh.
I close my eyes
and the rustling grass
sounds for all the
world like ocean waves,
mimicking
the rhythm of
my heartbeat.
My eyelids droop,
and I drift away...
and then I sink
under the surface.
I see a trace
of moonlight glint
above me, then
spread my arms and legs
and begin to swim.
Down, down
plunging into
the depths of
that mysterious dream land
we call the
ocean.
I breathe in water
and it doesn’t choke me.
Somehow
I knew it wouldn’t.
It is so much softer on my throat
that air,
so much gentler...
and I let the current carry me
into the darkness that
awaits me, that will lead me back to land
back to my warm bed
when sunlight once more
touches the earth.
But until then, I float through my dreamland,
my deep
blue
fantasy.
Grandpa’s Favorite Story

A

start over... looong time ago,

Here, lemme just before all yer fancy

just gettin’ good. ee-lec-tronics,

stinks,” Be quiet, it’s I lived in a

“Grandpa, this story town named...

TO, YA OLD BAT! uhhh... Well that

YOU WERE S’POSED ain’t important.

“I HEARD THAT!” So, I used to have

yer grandma a chicken, who

I loved more than
Middle School Students

Honorable Mention: Maggie Ruswick
Nichols Middle School, Grade 7

Grace’s Last Stand

Nimbly she glides,
perched atop slender legs,
holding out her arms, in embrace
with the intoxicating
smell of iris.

An aerialist-
the fragile figure
barely skims the floor
as she tangos with her
echoing shadow.

Delicately her toes
caress the naked tiles
and her arms,
draped in lavender,
kiss the grey moonlight.

Even as elegant
when she rests
a still figure on the floor,
shallow ruffles pooling up
beneath faded flesh.

A dove has been shot.
Middle School Students

Honorable Mention: Tomasa Lane
Roycemore School, Grade 7

riding=thinking

As I sit here,
I watch the world go by.
Riding in a car it seems the time is flying by
and I think, could people in other cars be thinking what I am?
A little girl smiles from the tinted windows,
I smile back.
She waves.
I wave.
The light turns green and she speeds away.
Crusade

The shoes I wore to my Bat Mitzvah
sink into the carpet of my grandfather’s church.
The soles are burning
into the red carpet, and my body is pointed
towards his casket where
eight other priests swirl to an unseen beat.
Robes absorb candlelight, spewing waxy words
that muffle my ears.
I can hear my mother melting, dripping: a repenting
candle with a curly flame.
She hasn’t been in her childhood church since she converted.
Icons painted Hanukah gelt-gold embrace the walls;
their eyes stare more than his former congregation.
Dressed in uniform misery, we should not stand out but we do:
as plain as Passover, clashing more than a klezmer band.
Whispers pass through the incense
and bounce off the Jewish star my father
wears around his neck.

Their words weave a fence of crude crosses
around the coffin of the man
who had married gypsies,
gave kite string as birthday presents,
loved me a bit more than my brothers.
Religion should not be division:
heaven and hell, saints and sinners.
I know these barriers between us never truly existed. When I was five years old I spilled holy water and horrified: I cried, turning the sacred puddle saltier than the Dead Sea. My grandfather, the priest, stroked his beard and said:

*It's just water.*
One night mom pours me a bowl of homemade chicken noodles. My sister declines my mother’s offer and decides instead to spoon in words about her favorite birds ruffled from the pages of a picture book. She is an encyclopedia of pets she’ll never have.

-“Can I have a Macaw?”
—“I don’t think you’re ready for such a big responsibility.”

-“Can I have a Canary?”
—“I think they’re endangered.”

-“Can I have a Parakeet?”
—“Do you have Parakeet money?”

Though mom’s answers varied, they were always synonymous with “NO!” Until one day little sis asked a question that could not be found alphabetically in my mother’s thesaurus.

-“Can I be with my father?”
My mom’s reply fluttered from her eyes and nested in my sisters folded arms.
Aspirations — clipped wings tears perched on the branches of her eyelids.
I stared down at my bowl—my mother and I couldn’t give her the soup she needed. I could only offer her the broth of an older brother’s affection. When she was two, I sat with her in the back seat and made strange faces to distract her mind from the long car ride. When she was seven I taught her how to ride her bike without training wheels in one day. Now I help her with exponential equations and ways to adjust to middle school. Yet I lack the nourishment that can only come from a father. Not everyone is given the same amount of soup.

Mom pours me another bowl of her chicken noodle. I try to digest why my half sister wasn’t given half a chance to be with her father. I ladle guilt for being able to drive 15 minutes down Lake Street to see my dad while she has to cope with reasons why her father was deported back to Ghana.

My sister flips through pages of unattainable things. I hope one day she finds a bird that migrates to Africa, so she can cross the ocean and hold the man that left.
A Love Poem to My Mother

I.
I never told my father I have always thought love was lesbian. I swallowed guilt each time he apologized for his signature on carbon copies of divorce papers.

I should’ve told him, they weren’t supposed to get married in the first place.

II.
I watch my mother annihilate every stereotype of a male and female into ashes. With eyes the color of frozen fog, she sits in the front seat with her girlfriend, a woman who uses laughter to stitch over the cuts of what it took for her to get here. When they kiss I witness their love, rebellious. The sky envies their affection and throws firebombs, burning the world near them. Mimicking two airplanes, their engine lips collide in flight. Their bodies compress like a rib cage in the throat of a crash.
III.
People like my mother are killing themselves in order to live freely. 13 year olds open their flesh with bullets after school. Jump off bridges. Hang themselves in dorm rooms and from barn rafters. Twitch from tree branches. These are martyrs with hope boring into the bare palm of their hands like spoiled acid. Surrendering to a battle they never had control over anyway.

When I hear these stories, I wonder, *what if that had been my mother?* What if I leave this stage and find a note kissing the cheek of my front door, saying, “Don’t enter. Get help.”

IV.
After dropping off her girlfriend, she won’t see her for twenty-eight days, my mother remains in the car, wrecked. I look at the stars and how they tuck under the sky’s skin and how the arms of the moon can grab the body of a cloud. It mocks their relationship. This is the love that people kill themselves for. If anything, I have learned not to ever question the validity of vows that two women have to offer.

I wonder, if they have not legalized gay, does that make the love taught in my household illegal?
Folds folds folds

I hate the folds
I hate the folds in my stomach
I hate the folds in my back
they’re like book folds
I hate feeling so fat

I love the folds
I love the folds in my brain
in my cerebellum
they’re enfolding knowledge or
experiences or memories
even the ones I don’t want to keep

I hate the folds
I hate the folds in my shirts
I hate folding clothes
I hate wrinkles
enfolding the beautiful embroidery
on the neckline

I love the folds
I love the folds in my skirt
they swish around me
the folds they make
as I play my orchestral harp
part wrinkling to quarter-equals-60

I hate the folds
I hate the lack of folds
in this landscape
I wish there were mountains here
or rivers here or terraces here
or valleys here or black sand beaches
but this is the Midwest
and the only folds here
are sheepfolds down south

I love the folds
I love the folds in his forehead
as he raises his eyebrows
to emphasize a point
why are all my friends so eccentric
maybe it’s because I am too
or I’m the only one
who can fold paper from memory
I hate the folds  
I hate the folds in her fat it’s killing her slowly like Dad did before or he’s still doing it with every phone call every email every single time he contacts her or me I hate that sonuvabitch I wish he’d die

I love the folds  
I love the folds in books they’re like a brain aren’t they holding so much knowledge and lore or aren’t they such beautiful things

Folds folds folds
As victims of the circumstance that we are related, 
My brother and I are best friends (although he won’t admit it) 
Because since we were little kids in our side-by-side stroller, 
Through our years together as we’ve grown older, 
My brother and I have had a friendship that’s stronger than the arm muscles that he 
thinks he has 
We share a bond that more than ionic 
(not that I know what that means, he’s the science guy) 
And I have no interest in chemistry unless it’s the kind that makes 
two people love each other, but not in the romantic way, obviously

And I know nothing about formula units 
So when I have chem homework I try to make him do it 
And in exchange I annotate Othello for him 
Not to be cheesy, but we work like yang and yin

We complement each other though we don’t have much in common 
Some say opposites attract, which is true in our case 
But it helps that we are siblings and live in the same place 
In fact our differences are why we so enjoy our time together 
Because we would get too annoyed if we were too much like each other
We both joke about how we disdain the other’s life
That doesn’t get in our way though so we rarely even fight
He thinks I’m lame, I think he’s reckless, which are both probably true
He’s the butt of all my jokes and he mocks everything I do

The other night I started thinking about how he’s leaving for college in the fall.
And my eyes filled with tears that were even more salty
Than the water he gave me one day to try to trick me,
and saltier than I was today when he ate all my sushi
And as much as I love the rest of my family,
no one else can give me advice on how to ditch class without getting in trouble
Or seem funny when he proudly brags about his facial stubble
Or even when he walks into my room so late at night
To tell me that he loves me or do something impolite

He’s the Arthur to my D.W.
Except I’m the one with glasses and he’s the sassy one who gets in trouble but everyone loves
Because no matter what he does, we’re a team.
Even when he makes mistakes big enough to land him in the hospital and break my heart,

He’s still the best thing in my life.
My next poem

My next poem will be a child.
A smiling little toddler in a pink dress and bouncing curls.
I will get compliments on how
she looks just like me, but different.

The next poem will be the sunshine,
but not the sun,
for its shine is far more friendly.

The next poem will have hearts
and swear words and vines and ‘love’
doodled at the edges.

The next poem will be a
celebratory tattoo on my ankle,
or perhaps on my wrist?
Or my finger…. my cheek?

Nothing will be able to stifle it.

The next poem will be naked.
It’ll streak across a packed stadium
wearing one of those freedom smiles.

The next poem will leap over a “do not cross”
to satisfy its own curiosity

The next poem is going through that dark, wooden door.
It’s gripping that worn ticket from the concert.
The next poem is presently lying in the garden, accepting a kiss.
Or jumping out of a plane, scared shitless.

The next poem is somewhere now, yelling at the top of her lungs, “Courage!!”

The next poem’s a tiger.
This poem’s her rusty cage.
High School Age Students

Honorable Mention: Kelly Mahoney
Buffalo Grove High School

The Dotted Line

I’d find my father in the Glenview House,
in the back corner of the bar
with the lone fluorescent light flickering
amongst the stench of burnt onion rings
combined with day old beer spills.
He’d be impatiently waiting at the abandoned wooden table,
his right foot propped up on his toes,
bobbing up and down in a quick repetitive motion,
sending the vibration through his bony leg.
His deep green eyes,
although hidden behind his bushy eyebrows,
would be blankly staring at the empty chair
that rested next to him.
He’d glance up at the neon-trimmed clock,
then bow his head and raise his pointer finger
as he chugged the last drop of his Pepsi.
I would place the grease-stained check on the table,
plop his empty glass onto my tray,
and watch the veins in his hand bulge through his skin
as he signed his name on the dotted line.
Salt Music

My dad used to salt his beer.

Salt transformed it into a yeasty, amber champagne, with tight strings of bubbles floating up to form a fresh, hoppy head.

He learned this exotic trick before children, when he did things I never knew about, but wondered. The old-timers, who had swallowed flat and flavorless Prohibition beer, probably taught him how, but only dad could finesse the ritual like a dancer with perfect, jitterbug timing: shake, shake, wait-a-while, sip—shake, shake, wait-a-while, sip.

The lines on his face would smooth as he jingled a beer down, tongue flapping with sweetened stories like how he lucked upon my mom at a dance and escorted a ring of girls home through a snowstorm on the chance to steal a kiss from her.

After the door closed on him, without the kiss, he slapped his hands together and said, “I’m gonna marry that girl!”

Later, he lived in the gathered crystals at the bottom of his memory because fresh thoughts popped up and quickly dissolved like froth.
He would lie on the living room floor and pretend to conduct big band music that played from an old cassette tape recorder, one he used to dictate correspondence for his secretary to transcribe.

Moving his hand like a fleshy baton, he marked the beat through Dipsey Doodle and Candyman, Sing Sing Sing and Little Brown Jug, scripted jazzy blasts from Glenn Miller’s orchestra that heartened us to keep fighting Hitler when all our fight had drained out.

When I saw my dad in his coffin, I thought his hand might rise up to conduct an invisible band, but no.

I thought maybe we should have buried him with his shoebox of cassettes not because he loved them, but he might need them wherever he was going, rising up to meet the music like a bubble made by mixing salt and ale.
Tequileros of Jalisco

Tequila, old-timers of the region will admit, gets its bitter taste from the sweat of naked men—

dark, stocky men
  with limbs like trunks of huanacaxtle trees,
slow old men,
  their wrinkled hides tanned
  by the acid pulp,
defeated men
  who stomp the futility of tethered years
  against the cold stone bottom of the pit,
supple young men,
  creases of firm cheeks submerged,
  neglected sex dangling, day after day,
  in moist, warm depths of nectar.

This is the way it is done
in the old stone tequilierias
where the juice of mature cactus hearts
flows from the press into pits
hewn centuries ago from the same arid earth
that grows agave. Tequileros, knowing the process in their bones,
strip naked, lower their backsides into vats in the floor,
work the pulp with their hands, feet, knees, toes,
pull fibers from the juice, mash thick liquid,
refine the mash with their muscle,
spice it with their skin.
Order a shot to celebrate what’s forgotten.
Savor the taste of man-labor
in the spirits with a hint of expectation
dictated by the gods of destiny and place,
by our lady of machete harvest,
the Virgin of Zapopan.

Tongue salt into the sabor of reliable process
the picosa of necessity’s lack
that bites the mouth and cleans
the whole digestive tract.

Squeeze limon into fermentation
of traditions 9000 years rooted in Jalisco soil.
Sip the distillation of histories
layered like agave spikes in spirals of reaching.
Safe in the Dark

as I wander through
the narrow white concrete
streets of Kyoto at night
I find a small shrine
nestled between a garden wall and
a light post
someone has left an offering
for the spirit who
still guards these
crossroads

I get lost in Tokyo
dark metal structures loom above
as I pass the dingy street level train
crossing
I hold my bag close and watch out of
the
corner of my eye
until I see
a small shrine
stuck between a storefront
and a parking garage
there someone has left flowers for the
spirit who lives guards this place
my Japanese friend tells me
it is dangerous to be alone
at night
I remind her that I am from a city
in a country where people
are allowed to own
guns
and the only place offerings
and flowers
are left on the side of the road
is where someone has been
killed
Rattler

Near Las Vegas, New Mexico, a diamondback rattler coils and uncoils on the highway’s center line. The snake sprays speeding tires with lightening venom once, twice, a dozen times. Venom sacs surely empty, it still strikes mid-air at phantom cars. The snake slows, a swirling, dying top.

On family vacations, my father used to veer to the side of the road, race, even to the middle of turnpikes, to rescue turtles. He would groan and shake his head at each dead animal we passed.

As I pass the rattler, my knuckles whiten on the steering wheel, my chest tightens. An hour down the road I still see it striking at nothing. Even today, I wish I had just pulled over, and with gloves and blanket, had moved that innocent to safety.

I have much to live up to.
We drove past the building three times before we realized that this dilapidated old house was the building; refurbished into a church for some who have no home to go to, anymore. The porch rotted; we ducked our heads; and I feared the roof would collapse in on its own beer belly; but everyone else was chatting near the fans. Friends. Tables, chairs, door frames, ledges. All carved from the same cheap wood, reeking of pine, and gasoline. A dry, censored version of Cheers.

She sat apart from the other ones. I liked her instantly; black watery eyes, and her doughy body wobbled; she shook upon her turn.

“Hi, I’m Pat, and I’m an alcoholic. This is my first meeting.”

I thought it strange that she would describe herself as such; Her voice a fragile music box as she struggled to tell of her two daughters, who refused to speak to her now; and of her husband, who had left her just yesterday.

Afterwards, I collected myself in the little bathroom with the pine countertop. I was moved speechless; I went right up to Pat and put my arms around her. I tried to tell her that she wasn’t an “alcoholic”; that she should not settle for such a definition. That she looked to be about “forty-seven”; that her flesh seemed to me the malleable kind only a “mother” has; and that if she wanted to, I’d like for her to be my aunt.
I longed to say, *this is not any of you.*  
*You are more than this ... disease.*  
None of it came out. I cried for her bravery instead;  
and for the fact that I’d never hugged a stranger;  
nor felt such a burst of love for anyone.  
I simply told her my name.

She dried my tears.  
She asked for my phone number.  
“*I’m really lonely,*” she told me, broken too.

I panicked. I couldn’t admit to her  
that I wasn’t ... one of *them.*  
I just came to support a friend.  
I couldn’t be her friend.  
A stranger.  
An ... alcoholic.  
So I wrote down 0-2-4-9 instead of 0-4-2-9;  
and that night I begged God to give her back  
the moment where she had lost her way;  
so that her children would come back to her.  
I prayed for Him to find her another friend,  
more friends, all the friends she could ever need.

*Pat,* I’m so sorry.  
I never forgot you; I never forgave myself.  
I will try to remember where the House is, this summer;  
and I hope to meet you again.  
To hear of all the ways you’ve gotten well.  
And I hope every day that you found a friend  
in someone braver than me.
my mother was there

I watch my father bone perch at the dinner table
    he edges a table knife between the flesh and spine

lifts the body away from the skeleton
    and pulls up the frail ladder of bones that gave

shape and structure to the fish
    a ladder of years separates me from my parents

but they stream back to me in the scent of alewives
    on the lake shore sands

where my father holds my hand
    on long Sunday afternoon strolls

or in the heady fragrance of duck blood soup simmering
    crusty bread baking, waiting

for a slathering of butter spread by my mother’s knife
    and a chat at the kitchen table

even in childbirth my belly splayed open
    to deliver my son

the ghost of a memory arises
    I imagine the scent of chicken

but am told “No, no cafeteria near here” by the nurse
    as he continues to stitch and clean me

only weeks later when I visit a live poultry shop
    where I went with my mother does the smell hit me and I know

my mother was there at the birth of her grandson
    neatly folded into my unconscious with her Polish blood soup
Adults

Honorable Mention: John C. Dick
Evanston

Reba Place

newcomers arrive
in glistening cars,
park behind
a beat-up old truck,
built to gather
alley scraps.

church people
sing-up everywhere;
you don’t have to believe;
they’ll just pray harder
for you, anyway.

poor people
envy in the shade
of condo people,
just close enough
to be dangerous.

kid on skateboard
every day
comes clacking
past my window
over the concrete cracks.

short line hangs
in the alley
begging boxes
of church
macaroni and cheese.
same folks
descending for old clothes
beneath the back steps
on two church Saturdays
a month.

sweet stench of fabric softener
seeps under my back door;
keep the laundry locked,
clean clothes
are best to steal.

pounding of round ball
on black tar courts
down the alleyway;
condo neighbors
seal their windows.

i’m in the middle
flush with food stamps
give away some clothes
get books, sometimes;
sit and write through the neighborhood.
Janet has received numerous awards and honors for her 22 books, such as the International Reading Association’s “Celebrate Literacy Award” for exemplary service in the promotion of literacy, and the prestigious Stone Center Recognition of Merit, given by the Claremont Graduate School. Her recently published eBook, *Once Upon A Tiger* features poems about endangered animals. Janet also has been appointed to two terms on the Commission on Literature of the National Council of Teachers of English. In April 2003, Janet was one of five children’s authors invited to read at The White House Easter Egg Roll. Ms. Wong judged the Hirshfield Poetry Awards in 2009 and is happy to return this year. www.janetwong.com
Acknowledgments

Grateful acknowledgment is made to contributors of this year’s awards

Karen Anderson  Sarah Larson
Hope Arthur  Irene Landau & Family
Carole Atkinson  Janice Nakao
Linda & Randy Balla  Ernest Le Von &
Bonnie & Lawrence Baron  Elizabeth Stegner
Elaine & Bernard Bell  Ann Mallow
Veronica Cook  Jo McMahon
Barbara Davis  Neal and Marie Ney
Jim & Beverly Des Jardins  Drs. Rosita & Bob Pildes
Claire Foreman  Forrest Priddy
Karen Granda  Ann Coe Pugliese
Ann Harrington  Julie Rice
Sharon & Ed Hochman  Ed Reinfranck & Family
Jim Jacobs  Billie Rosman & Family
Joanne Kalnitz  Ann Schmidt
Mary & Robert Korajczyk  Jo Schneider
Jane S. La Rue  Abraham & Arlene Stokman
Laurel Lawson  David and Deety Zbaraz

Contributions

Contributions to the Jo-Anne Hirshfield Memorial Poetry Fund are welcomed, and will enable this program to continue.

Gifts may be forwarded to:

Library Director
Evanston Public Library
1703 Orrington Avenue
Evanston, IL 60201

Award Program by Rivera Design & Communications
847/869-7708

Videography by C.J. Nielsen
In loving memory of

Jo-Anne Hirshfield
who found pleasure and delight in poetry

Her family has dedicated funds entrusted
to the Evanston Public Library
to award prizes for outstanding new poetry writing.

It is our hope that poets of all ages
will be inspired and encouraged,
and that the funds will serve
to reward excellence in poetry writing
as a memorial to Jo-Anne.

–Dr. and Mrs. Hyman Hirshfield

daughters, Laura, Leslie, and Deborah, and
grandson Justin Garrick

with special remembrance of

Brian Garrick