

The Twenty-Ninth Annual Jo-Anne Hirshfield Memorial Poetry Awards

Sunday, May 6, 2007
2 p.m.
Evanston Public Library
Community Meeting Room

Program

Welcome: **Neal J. Ney**, Library Director

Introductory Remarks: **Christopher Stewart**, Library Board Vice-President

Remarks by 2007 Poetry Judge **Averill Curdy**

Presentation of the 2007 Awards and Prize Money

Elementary Age Students
High School Students
Unpublished Adults

Poetry Reading **Averill Curdy**

Meet the Award Winners
Refreshments Immediately Following the Program

Past Judges

1979 Eloise Fink

Lisel Mueller

1980 Mark Perlberg

1981 Mark Perlberg

1982 Daryl Hine

1983 Eleanor Gordon

1984 Mark Perlberg

1985 Dennis Brutus

1986 Lisel Mueller

1987 John Dickson

1988 Eloise Fink

1989 Gertrude Rubin

1990 Reginald Gibbons

1991 Angela Jackson

1992 Richard W. Calish

1993 Beatriz Badikian

1994 Maxine Chernoff

1995 Martha Modena Vertreace

1996 Effie Mihopoulos
1997 Mark Turcotte
1998 Mark Turcotte
1999 Allison Joseph
2000 Sterling Plumpp
2001 Richard Jones

2002 Susan Hahn
2003 Julie Parson-Nesbitt
2004 Dr. Haki R. Madhubuti
2005 Paulette Roeske
2006 Jared Smith

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL WINNERS

First Place

Linnea Garcia
Nichols Middle School, 8th Grade

Winter Rose

She hangs there, frozen by the cold,
Her cherry bloom sprinkled in icy sugar.
She waits for summer, but when it comes,
Winter will have taken her beauty.
She will not be a summer rose,
But a hollow shell abandoned by the cold.

Second Place

Gracie Flowers
Oakton Elementary School, 4th Grade

A Heart's Dream

My hands are feeling sore,
but my heart wants even more.
So I lean into the saddle
til my horse is at full throttle.
Then the earth begins to shake
and the rocks will start to break.
We run at top speed
running through the weeds.
The sky is turning blue
at last my heart came through.

Third Place

Linnea Garcia
Nichols Middle School, 8th Grade

Piano Keys

White keys shadow black
On the old piano.
They whisper a note,
Or shout it in pain
Or frustration.

Ivory tusks glisten in African sun.
The great beast wears them proudly.
But others long to steal his beauty.
He falls, this great beast,
To the powerful hands of his destroyer.
They take his tusks away,
Stealing his beauty,
To make the shouting keys
Of the piano.

Pearls sleep in the
Mouth of their creator.
Once a pitiful piece of sand
Matured into
Stunning beauty.
Her home is suddenly wrenched open,
Tearing the pearl from
Her home,
So they can
String her on
A silver chain
To be worn while
Listening to the whispers
Of the ivory
Piano keys.

Honorable Mention

Elizabeth Michael
Dewey School, 3rd Grade

The Mysterious Sounds of the Night

At night I brush my teeth, wash my face, and say good night to
my mom and dad.

Then I read until I'm so tired I collapse onto my bed and drop my book...
SMASH, on the floor.

At night I hear my dog yelping in the backyard, my dad snoring.
I hear leaves rustling, sirens buzzing in the distance.

At night I see trees outside my window, car headlights shimmering outside.
I see my cat's glowing eyes, the trees whispering mysteriously outside my window.

I close my eyes and shout to my sleek, beautiful dream stallion, and ride away to my dreams.

Honorable Mention

Annie Bouchet
Dewey School, 3rd Grade

My Changes

I used to be as tiny as plankton, getting swallowed by a whale.
Now, I am as enormous as the whale that gulped me down.

I used to be as weak as a baby bird, tumbling from the nest.
Now, I am as strong as the python zipping out to catch the bird.

I used to be shy, so shy all the people around me were moving blurs.
Now I am as curious as a baby mongoose, creeping quietly into a wood cabin.

Honorable Mention

Lukas Debeljak
Dewey School, 2nd Grade

I Used to Be

I used to be as fat as a big red balloon,
But now I am as skinny as a piece of purple thread.

I used to be as loud as an opera singer,
But now I am as silent as a great mime with a white face on the big stage.

I used to be as lovely as an angel,
But now I am as mean as a burning, hot fiery monster hitting other people.

HIGH SCHOOL WINNERS

First Place

Emma Zbiral-Teller
Evanston Township High School

Leaves

There were leaves on my stove
yesterday afternoon.
They weren't falling or
changing colors or
anything.
They were simply cascaded through the kitchen,
casting silhouettes of lovely,
partially seasoned on the spice rack,
partially waiting on the timer atop
heat.
They moved when I moved.
They sat when I sat.
It's almost odd how
My kitchen appliances go through seasons,
how ladles
drizzle
And butterknives
snow.
Sometimes,
if I'm lucky,
I can watch the champagne glasses
throw lightening bolts through
steam.
And on good days,
the fine china will resonate
tones of thunder
among
fallen leaves.

Second Place

Amelia-Jane Levchenko
Buffalo Grove High School

Holy Thursday

the gold of the onion dome
defies the pale blue sky
and glitters like a Christmas card
the tiny orthodox church, a time machine beckoning
to a place lost, but remembered in dreams

a genetic gift
as tangible as eyes the color of the Baltic Sea

American Idol is on
and I should be watching it
but instead I find myself
lighting a candle
breathing in incense so pungent
it makes my nose bleed

instead I find myself
in the remnant of a world
that smells of boiled cabbage
and feels like velvet
because it is Lent
even in New York
and bits of Russia cling to me
like soot on a humid city morning

born Yemelia Nikolayevna
i am now Mel
just Mel
Mel who wears birthday-cake lipgloss and lavender flipflops
who takes hip-hop on Monday nights
and knows that deep-dish pizza is far superior
to paper-thin pancakes filled with amber-colored fish eggs

so I would like to tell you that I feel out of place
surrounded by old women dressed in black
whose prayers sound like chickens cackling softly
my ears not attuned to a choir singing in Old Church Slavonic
a language nobody seems to understand

but somehow the deep, bronze smell of the incense
the glow of fragile white candles
and the walls filled with sad, dark saints
tell me otherwise

for when the Fates were weaving my future
they used a memory yarn
that keeps stretching back
to its original shape

Third Place

Beth R. Miller
Evanston Township High School

The Poetry Shop

Would you like to buy a poem?
We sell such nonsense here.
Couplets, haiku, and modern verse,
Sweet sounds to please the ear.

A sonnet for your lady-love
Or, after a short wait
An epic—or an epigram
For all the ones you hate.

We've got a sale on rondeaux.
And the foreign section's free.
(We can translate into English
For a very minor fee.)

We will write on any subject,
Whether roundabout or plain.
Does your girl have shapely shoulders,
Or your horse a lovely mane?

Do you need to say you're sorry,
Or just say, "Well, so it goes,"?
Do you want to pen a death-threat?
Are you looking to propose?

Why not come and buy a poem?
We sell all such nonsense here?
Couplets, haiku, and modern verse—
And none of it sincere.

Honorable Mention

Veronica Allen
Buffalo Grove High School

I Read

Late at night, when there aren't any wedding cakes.
No wedding plans, no wedding gifts.
I don't even like wedding cake,
Ever since it my mother's face resembled
The ink I am writing with now,
After she **had** to have the first slice
Of Aunt Suzie's wedding cake.

The first slice of Aunt Suzie's wedding cake,
the same aunt who told me that
When my mom was a little girl,
Much younger than me,
She would whine and throw fits if she
Were not the first to get a piece of cake.
Any cake and many more cakes
Than her birthday cake alone.

I realized why my mom was whining about
Cake, at Aunt Suzie's wedding.
She still had some ounce of "child" left in her.

You just don't do that,
My father shook his head before he
Tried to spare my mother the next week and a half,
She spent in bed, from that first slice.

She never liked to read.

The long hours I spend with wedding cakes aren't as merry,
As she wants to think, because her after-school job
Wasn't like this when she went to school, when
She was *young, and calm*, or so she tells me.
Layering blue frosting atop pink frosting,
With little yellow petal roses that have
Easter-egg purple centers,
Circle centers, diamond centers, 12-carat centers,
Isn't calming when I eyeball "Of Mice & Men",
Every 11 minutes or so.

Bologna and cheese lay quietly
On top of the upside garbage tin I use for my lunch table.
I cover it with that brown paper bag mother insists on stuffing.
When the wedding cake order rushes in by the minute,
And when the wedding cakes need to not rot over night,
Or pray to God, be picked apart by the mice who live in the walls,
She fills the paper bag to the rim... if it had one anyway.

You'd think I know.
If the bag had a rim or not.
"Of Mice and Men" occupies me from noticing though.
Or at least it did.
Sometimes my mother tells me how wedding cakes aren't something
That should occupy my time from 3:30-9:00 on weekdays.

*Or at least the ones with yellow roses, my mother says.
And those purple centers...what on earth wa--.*
When she mutters, I stop listing before she tries to
Make sense of the letters she calls words,
Which every so often stumble into sentences.

I finished "Of Mice and Men."

Maybe tomorrow night, I'll find out if the brown paper does have a rim,
When there aren't any wedding cakes,
When I go home to meet the brown paper bag filler.

Honorable Mention

Natalie Myers
Buffalo Grove High School

The Window

Ease the window open, just enough for your eyes
to see through and to feel the whisper play across your
cheek and listen for neighbors
on their back porch.

The day lurks behind you and warn it to stay behind.
Then open it all the way, curtain, glass, and screen.
Slide your feet out first, your painted toenails ankles
calves and knees. Hold back the day,
caution it that there isn't room for two.

Slide out completely, with your hands smoothing out gravel
and your shorts catching the ridges between.
Fix your shorts and shut the day inside.
Let the wind wash you completely now. Run your
finger through the hair tie around your wrist.

Drop the dirt between your toes
watch gravity defeat it.
Move your hands to your kneecaps and circle one fingernail
around the bruise there. Watch it grow as your
eyes adjust and fade as a cloud passes over it.
Rub your hands down the sides of your legs, grab your ankles.

Feel your lungs search for wind and fill
with the moon. Release and turn back to the window.
The day waits behind the glass, sitting silently on your bed,
watching as you open the window again, and

go in, painted toenails ankles calves and knees.

Honorable Mention

Janice Belen
Buffalo Grove High School

Silence

Paper leaves crunch beneath my feet as
silence fogs the trail of black licorice,
meandering through peanut brittle trees.

It danced past the park bench,
once painted by strawberry sorbet
on a satin summer day,
whistling “When I Fall in Love,”
as her skirt whipped through the buttery air.

It floats beneath clouds that marshmallow
around a thermos of sweet cocoa,
as the turn of each page flutter
like the wings of a pigeon.

ADULT WINNERS

First Place

Robyn Kocher
Evanston

Trio

Bach

measured
in black, crawling
like Japanese beetles
tinny on hard steel – awake in
winter

Mendelssohn

then, warm
as cat gut strings
the vibration opens
like a fat wing, blooming into
poppies.

Prokofiev

this math
impeccable, a pocket square perfect
in its creases, woven of glass,
now, sing?

Second Place

Charles Reynard
Chicago

Saturday Morning, Colfax

Three hearts, partner, though no table
talk allowed. Junior Rhymes came round
last night, down by the picture show.
He looked half-broken, half-ticked off,
said don't remember him as captive
of his daddy Bobby Rhymes drink.
Junior regaled his Grandma May's
wit, its helpless wisdom: *she told
my Daddy* "It ain't brain surgery,
son, you stop the villain poison
or you die." Of course Bobby went
on, chose to die. After he left
the tap that night, come round the curve
blind at the Colfax Y, tangled
metal of his pickled heart you
couldna' tell it from the Mustang's
shattered part, just plain profane
abstract art. Grandma May remembered
him to Junior at the wake: how he poked
Junior's ma, she, his first sweet-faced
girlfriend, got her all knocked up.
"He was smiling like a possum
eatin' peaches." Proud Grandma May--
her daddy came from Bellflower,
at the east edge of the county--
needle-stitched a square of history,
gave it to the community
quilt, showed the coal mine her daddy
worked when he come to our big town.
Grandma May Rhymes, always funny
as a crutch, ornery as cat dirt.
She caught Junior in her cookie
jar, she said he might as well a
been a doe chewing thistles.

Third Place

Wendy Anderson
Highland Park

After the Hurricane

Dessa rattles
in the wind
from all
her small skeletons:

-- Dangled in the dried blood
along Dessa's lips
are the noisy bones
of Mrs. Hendricks,
her elderly neighbor
with the best pies
but a bad hip
who yelled
from her window
till the water
covered it.

-- Tangled in Dessa's hair
is the lanky frame
of the boy Galen,
who shot hoops
in his driveway,
while his Gramps
stooped to flowers
along the parkway;
Gramps wore a wild pink
hat most days.
Both gone now,
after their roof gave.

-- Angled in Dessa's strap
rising like the neck
of a dead swan
from the rip
of the dress she has on
are the clattering
young woman and her kids
who played kickball
when they gathered in

the yard
before nightfall.

Dessa is clothed,
head to toes,
in her neighbors.
Their skeletons
took hold of her
like holy water.
And she feels them.
When all is lost
she feels *them*,
and that is all.

She rests a ghostly hand
against the spot
where her heart beats.
The other falls from
the window of her
once-home.
Dessa waits
for salvation,
holding on
to bones.

Honorable Mention

Carol Kanter
Evanston

Emergence

Unnoticed
an alphabet soup
pools
beneath its translucent lid

which traps the light,
a quiet flame
that sets the broth simmering
so long

the carrot dice break down
thickening the liquid
to a chowder, more and more robust
until one magic eon when

its colloidal noodles unfold
tangle and fuse
to mimic slow and simple syllables
but with a secret code

that strings them
into words too long for ordinary mouths
to chew on
into sentences too complex

for etymologists to tuck away
in flaccid theories when—
News Flash!—
emergence erupts

into the unwitting air
changing both air and wits
wits now able to reiterate,
creating

an emergency
each time the pot boils over, a shock
unprecedented as a quantum leap
sloshing on the floor

the question,
“Who will be left
to flourish in such heat?”
A fine kettle of fish.

Meanwhile, anybody’s guess
whether the *chef de cuisine*
bothers even to stir
in her sleep.

Honorable Mention

Lauren Stenzel
Chicago

In May

She saw herself naked for the first time
just her staring past planned curves
from Italy’s southern tip
the cliffs lowering into black rock sipping up salt water
next to a cafe in Sorrento on an early evening mist gathering up

laughter for a sweet roasted tomato sauce
that may wake him up on Saturday
wanting to slip his fingers through
holes in a nun's afghan
in May
stretching peach yarn across her lap
dust turning over
above her head
while black currant tea and honey
cools leaving a steam she wants to poke a hole thru
while someone sleeps in the bed they bought
four autumns ago on clearance
door closed
cat whining outside and the TV turned down low
because he sleeps with his ears covered in down for as long as he can on Saturday.
He's running over the cracks and divots in his head
pushing down on a heartbeat
he hears at the kitchen table
setting down a bowl of mango curry and white rice
for someone's birthday in November.

People will hold their hand up to his wife's ear
so they can tell her about the tempo in his chest they can hear
when her footstep is closer to the story
whispered in someone else's kitchen
where chutney, saffron, and sesame
draw the shades
fingers an even distance apart
over the freckle on her hip bone
settled like the black rock beaches
of Italy.

Honorable Mention

Hugh Stevens
Evanston

Pantoum

Lake-water washes at the water's edge –
pebbles roll in like jewels under glass.
A crying girl hangs signs on trees –
the signs say *Lost Dog – Big Reward*.

Pebbles roll in like jewels under glass,
pebbles roll back under clouds of sand.
The signs say *Lost Dog – Big Reward* –

a two ear old male, answers to Charlie.

Pebbles roll back under clouds of sand,
what was almost in hand is lost in a cloud;
a two year old male, answers to Charlie,
hot on the trail of a white-tailed deer.

What was almost in hand is lost in a cloud –
the water reshuffles and deals a new hand.
Hot on the trail of a white-tailed deer,
a hunter raises his gun to kill.

The water reshuffles and deals a new hand –
hearts and diamonds, clubs and spades.
A hunter raises his gun to kill –
a deer outrunning a dog is still.

Hearts and diamonds, clubs and spades,
the water sparkles with reds and blacks.
A deer outrunning a dog is still,
the dog runs home to its owner a girl.

The water sparkles with reds and blacks –
the red of life and the black of fate –
the dog runs home to its owner a girl –
lake-water washes at the water's edge.

Poetry Judge: Averill Curdy

Averill Curdy worked for a dozen years in the software industry before beginning to write poetry. She has an MFA from the University of Houston and a PhD from the University of Missouri. Her poems have appeared in a number of journals, including *Poetry*, *The Paris Review*, *Slate*, and others. She teaches poetry at Northwestern University, and was the 2005 recipient of the Rona Jaffe Foundation fellowship for emerging women writers. In 2007 she received literature fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Illinois Arts Council.

Dedication

This year's Poetry Awards is dedicated to the memory of my sister Sara Busch who, together with her husband Robert, helped establish the annual Jo-Anne Hirshfield Memorial Poetry Awards.

Sara and Bob supported the idea of an annual competition to encourage young poets to write and appreciate poetry as a tribute to the memory of our daughter Jo-Anne.

They participated in every phase of the planning process and with their help the First Jo-Anne Hirshfield Memorial Poetry Awards was realized at the Evanston Public Library in 1979.

Throughout the ensuing years Sara and Bob came to each Library meeting with us to discuss logistics for that year's award ceremony.

After moving to Florida and after her husband's death, Sara continued to attend the Awards programs despite the distance and her own deteriorating health.

My sister's love, devotion, generosity and continued emotional support sustained our family through the worst of times and the best of times.

She will be sorely missed and will always be with us in spirit.

Pearl Hirshfield
April 2007

This year's poetry awards are in memory of:

Sara Busch
Robert C. Busch
Brian Garrick

The prizes in poetry are awarded in remembrance of:

Renee Jans Dimond
Marion Ferber Gault
Kenneth Green

Acknowledgements

Grateful acknowledgement is made to contributors to this year's awards.

Aaron and Alice Adler
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Dorothy Gans
Ilse and Milton Herst
Hyman Hirshfield Family
Marlene and Rose Huttner
Ethel Liten

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, Illinois 60201

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

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Copies of the photographs can be purchased from:
Rich Foreman Photography
936 Sherman Avenue, Evanston, IL 60202
847-864-4549

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