

Twenty-Seventh Annual Jo-Anne Hirshfield Memorial Poetry Awards

Sunday, May 1, 2005
2 p.m.
Evanston Public Library
Community Meeting Room

Program

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

Introductory Remarks: **Jonathan L. Fischel**, Library Board President

Remarks by 2005 Poetry Judge **Paulette Roeske**

Presentation of the 2005 Awards and Prize Money

Elementary Age Students
High School Students
Unpublished Adults

Poetry Reading **Paulette Roeske**

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

Elementary Age Students

First Place

Luke Tierno

Nichols Middle School, Seventh grade

Bloody Bat

You're falling
you open your eyes
your best friend is in the middle of the street
something hits you
you fall to the ground you can't see
you're in a closet that your mom puts you in when you win a fight
you feel water
there is a wave coming at you
it's huge
it covers you
you go under
when you come back up you're in a bath tub
you're only three years old
your mom and dad are screaming at each other
then you're falling and then you see
you see that there's no way out
but you don't care
because you're 15
and you're smashing the life out of all your problems
with a bloody bat
or at least you think you are.....

Second Place

Robyn Bastian

Orrington Elementary School, Fifth grade

A City Night

Oh city lights so big and bright, oh please
don't block out the stars tonight.

“Turn out the lights,” I shout and shout, “turn
them out, turn them out!”

They're blocking out the stars you see.
City lights, listen to me!

Just for one night,
make the sky look right.

Respect the stars
and turn out the lights.

Third Place

Daniel Mills

Willard Elementary School, Fourth grade

Alliteration Snakes

Scurvy, slimy, slithering snakes
Super scary, surging snakes
Crazy, venomous, biting friends
Growing stronger longer ends
Simple, string-like scary things
Curling up like giant rings
Gorging down on innocent prey
Growing stronger every day
Spewing apprehension and fear
Whenever they are close or near
Scurvy, slimy, slithering snakes
Growing long as garden rakes
Serious, scratching, slashing teeth
Curling up into a wreath
Sneaking, shiny, strong creatures
Filled with nasty, gross features
Scurvy, slimy, slithering snakes
Some are really just big fakes
Shiny ringlets on their backs
Crammed with tiny dried-up cracks
Scurvy, slimy, slithering snakes
Some can even swim in lakes
Eating squids as big as cakes
Yelling loud when a rattle shakes

Honorable Mention

Caitlin Adamson

Willard Elementary School, Fourth grade

Swallowing Thunder

Rainy and stormy
Heavy and black

The springtime coughing,
Choking and sputtering.
A boom, a flash,
I taste a shock!
Gulping thunder down.
Chewing it.
Biting it.
Thunder just won't
Go away.
I'm angry,
I'm wincing.
A heavy rumble
Then I swallow.
It's over and calm.

Honorable Mention

Emily Cline

Haven Middle School, Sixth grade

the skater

the skater, slender, graceful
long, white fingers
lace up stiff white boots

it is a mutual agreement
unspoken between skater and skates
yet so strong it is present in the air
buzzing around her like gnats on a summer day
filling her
with a nervous determination
today is the day to vanquish her fears and doubts
to banish them to a place far away
now is the time
to fly

her mind is elsewhere
as she stretches
going through the motions
while her heart is already on the ice
flying around the rink
soaking up the applause and cheers
of the roaring crowd
that she can hear faintly from backstage
as she prepares for her routine

energy fills every muscle as she stands
behind the curtain
the lights dim slowly
until all is dark
under this shadowy cover she skates
noiselessly
to her position
someone coughs
her arms go above her head in the dramatic flourish that is her opening pose
a baby lets out a cry and is hushed by a mother
her feet spread apart
one toe pick in the ice behind her
one foot in front

head up
smile
the position she has practiced so many times
the music begins,
the spotlight embraces her as warmly as if they were old friends
her foot flies around
her back arches
her arms are held high
and it all begins

the music swells
her soul riding on the currents of her graceful movements
her arms reach out
she stretches every finger towards the crowd
then snaps her arms together
crossing them on her breast,
she holds her breath
as she soars up into the chilled air
up
up
up
she whips her body around
eyes shut
the sheer thrill of jumping causing her to turn a double
into a triple

she flies across the smooth ice
the frigid air washing over her
her blade
deathly sharp yet somehow fragile
rocks forward
she circles around herself

boot laces whipping about where no one sees them
her toe pick catches a beam of light
reflecting it down on the ice
the spiky metal gleams dangerously
yearning to stab into diamond-like surface
hungry for the bite of the bitter ice

the pick threatens to fulfill its wish
forcing her to check out of her spin early
and skate on the back of her blade for the rest of the performance

she tires slowly
loving the feel of soaring when she leaps from the ice
savoring the sweet caress of the snow
that is scraped up by the vicious blade as she performs
gleefully scratching graceful lines and arcs across the pearly surface of the once-perfect
ice
and so it is with a somewhat sorrowful mood
that she hears the music phasing out
lands her last jump
and assumes her final position

when the applause have died out
she glides towards the exit
breathing deeply
soaking up the smell of the fresh ice
as she silently says goodbye
to her favorite place
in the world

now that it's all over
she rests
reclining peacefully
on the cloth used
to wipe her blades
her emotions somewhere between
sorrow and joy
longing and fulfillment
confidence
that she did her best
and determination
that next time she will do better

High School Students

First Place

Tamar Westphal

Evanston Township High School

Poet's Voice/The Pie Poem

How do I find my poet's voice?

It's like turning a cup upside down
and waiting for a drop of water to slide out,
and it won't come.

There's something there,
but you can't get it.

No matter how hard you try.

You can see it going to the edge
of the cup,

but it won't go far enough.

It keeps stopping.

And you're

really

thirsty,

but you just can't get the water.

It's like trying to tie a piece of string around your wrist,
but it isn't long enough.

Trying to make it go farther,

to pull it a little tighter,

and it just won't go.

It's like wanting to hold an edge
just a second longer while skating.

Knowing you're going to stop.

Knowing you're screwing up,

And that your posture is bad, and that

no doubt you'll hear it from your coach.

And you just want to start again.

But you can't.

So you just keep going.

It's like trying to cover a pie with a piece of cloth,
because you don't want the ants and bees
to get into it,

but the cloth isn't big enough.

Checkered cloth,

trying to cover the lattice top
of a peach pie
sitting in the grass.
But you can still see the crust.
And the bugs will get in.
And you'll take a bite,
And instead of pie,
You'll get ants!
The ants will colonize the pie.
So you have to find a way to
cover
it
up!

It's like trying to write a two-page paper,
and only having one and seven-eighths of a page.
Trying to
drag
it
out
as much as you can.

Like trying to make Noah's hair lie flat,
and it's always sticking up.
It just keeps on growing.
Like the grass,
teeming with ants,
who colonize the pie.

My poet's voice.

Second Place

Merideth Hoppe

Buffalo Grove High School

Shots of Pain

I will eat them like chocolate cake
and vanilla ice cream,
chew them up
until they become irreparable.

I want to swallow hard
and feel the sharp edges

cut through my throat.
I will drink down the tonic
and laugh as it burns my mouth.
I am going to melt the pieces
on the tip of my tongue
until they disappear.
I will take shots of pain,
and drink bottles of confusion,
until I have eaten my words completely.

Third Place

Esther Kim

Buffalo Grove High School

Hidden Moon

My shovel sprays the ice
into my sister's mouth
and the crescent outline of a moon
etches through the snow.
A car speeds by and its mud
seeps into the white like
midnight streaming into the paleness.

I look up to see the house next door
stepping on sorrow only to
be soaked in its vomit.
I remember the painting the old
man showed me with his hands shaking.
The blue sliver of a moon and
the gray fog smothered it.

I wonder if the moon is still alive
in that house as my sister
slams a ball of ice into my back.
Is it covered with red paint or
did the old man add the curves
of his wife's cheekbones, her
small nose and the stars in her
mirrors of the bright sky?

My foot hits the shovel
as I clear the man's sidewalk
and the ice break off in chunks.
When I pull my hair away
I see the blinds shiver and the
flash of wrinkled skin.
I wish he was outside so
he could see my sister
play in the snow
so he could see that the moon
still peeks out with
the bright blue eyes of his wife.

Honorable Mention

Goni Sondak

Evanston Township High School

Untitled

like bubble gum on bottoms of new tennis shoes
you
like the aggravating latest hit you can't get out of your head
like being stranded in an airport during a snowstorm
can't get out
like making a commitment to something you don't really want to do
can't get
like slamming your coat in the car door and getting onto the highway
out
like driving around in circles
seeing the same old thing over and over and over again
can't get
spinning around in circles
you aren't dizzy until you stop
just keep
keep spinning
seeing the same same thing
over over over again
until it all blurs into

darkness
being shut tight in a
little
black box
like not understanding a problem and not being able to move on
not understanding a problem and not being able to move on
not understanding a problem and not being able to move on

not understanding a problem and not being able to move on
not understanding a problem and not being able to move on
not understanding a problem and not being able to move on

Honorable Mention

Ted Gault

Buffalo Grove High School

Background Regret

They're the pitches you hear
in the background;
the frantic clicking of jammed rifles,
that sharp whistle of shrapnel breaking in the air,
and the rattle of dog tags underfoot.
A few steps more
and dust settles in your pupils;
breathing in visions
of smoke pouring
in through boarded windows,
cots reddening in corners,
quivering forms writhing,
trying to find a place where
a leg doesn't burn, or
where an arm lays down its phantoms.
A man in white grabs your eyes
from the graying room,
crisp edges on his clothes,
wooden spectacles tipping off his nose,
a single black pen hanging off his shirt collar.
You can almost hear his glassy rhetoric,
But it isn't him.

White opens his eyes
and speaks words that only ripple off your brow.
The sour taste of gun smoke and blood
almost leaves you as the ground spins.
You're falling,
but you don't feel the hardness of the dirt floor,
only the sound of a mild thud, like
the sound of your cotton suitcase
on the kitchen table
as you told your father,
you would never come back.

Adults

First Place

Judith Valente

Chicago

Body & Soul

“When you enter the world, you come to live on the threshold
between the visible and invisible.” John O’Donohue, “Eternal Echoes”

Imagine those moments
after the soul leaves the body.
Imagine the body’s immense
loneliness: a manse suddenly shorn
of its single boarder. A child
banging its fists against the living room
window, begging for its mother
to *Come back!*
as the car jerks out of the driveway
-- for all the child knows, forever --
and there’s that awful last glimpse:
back of a head growing smaller, smaller
through a rear windshield.
This is why we should stay
close to the body after death,
the way we used to hold wakes, at home
and around the clock, until the body adjusts
to its newly widowed status, noiseless rooms.

The monks of St. Leuddad labored
to pinpoint the seat of the soul.
Day and night, in a dank cellar
they sliced through blackening corpses,
the abbot settling finally on the pineal gland:
cross-section of cranial concavities,
disengaged from the grosser parts of blood.
How does the soul disengage?
Shoot like air from a depressurized cabin?
Drift through a cracked window
like the mold scent of a summer house?
Does it seep like runoff, spurt like blood
from a severed vein, or exit in stages,
an actor drinking in final bows?

John O’Donohue says we should

think of death not as the breath
on the back of the neck,
but a companion with us since birth,
benign doppelganger who knows us
better than we know ourselves.
That's not to say
we're like Schrodinger's cat,
at once dead and alive –
but death we carry with us
close as the fine hairs caressing
our skin. Of course, John is a theologian.
I prefer physics. Julian Barbour's concept:
time, a continuous tableau of many
different nows, each a single frame
passing an all-seeing lens,
so the instant of me in my kitchen
a few minutes from now,
stirring a can of Campbell's tomato soup
for lunch in 2001 Chicago,
rolls in simulcast with
Andy Warhol applying a splotch
of fire-engine red to his soup labels
in 1962 New York.
We are at once fetus and 44 years old,
molting in the Big Bang
and reading this poem.

Where does the soul go?
Meister Eckhart was asked.
Nowhere, the great mystic replied.
He believed an invisible world
lies just beyond the visible,
which would suit me just fine
because there's so much of this world
I'd miss and want to hold on to,
Like Nick at the N&G Grocery,
saying *Artichokes, we have artichokes*
before I even ask, and
Next year we go together to Greece.
Earl Grey tea and cinnamon scones.
This afternoon sun, waving a yellow hand
across my neighbor's balcony,
falling like a spotlight on the roof
of the Chicago Historical Society
where the Stars & Stripes
dance a samba with the wind.

This snow, spread like steamed milk
on the sidewalk beneath my window.
This red terry cloth robe I'm wearing:
spiral note pad, No. 2 pencil
stuck inside its pocket.

Second Place

Daniel Johnson

Chicago

Miniature

Well past midnight,
a man's hands, pink
and writhing with veins,
have become gigantic,
nearly too large to control,
but he closes his eyes
to see the scene more clearly
and continues his work,
one hand steadying
the other, at the kitchen table
in a circle of light.

Onto a grain of white rice,
he has painted a white house
with green shutters.
The house is a pinhead;
the shutters smaller.
Staring through a magnifying glass,
he trims with surgeon's scissors
his sable-hair brush
and adds a chimney,
China-red, to the scene.
He rinses his brush and strokes,
fine as a nerve,
a plume of smoke.
It must be fall or winter.
A giant oak bare of leaves.
A green station wagon parked in the street.
A world, when the man
pulls back and rubs his eyes,
that ceases;
a scene that falls
into a grain of rice.

He mixes whites with reds
and a bit of ochre,
but the color's not right—
a rosy bone-white
that looks nothing like
the skin on the top
of his knuckles.
He adds a tinge of burnt
umber—the sky outside
is beginning to lighten.
In front of the house
under the ancient oak, he dabs
a fleck, then another,
and several more,
until it looks like a man
standing on the brick
steps of his new house.
Beside him is a woman
in a blue dress.
They are small as dust
come to rest
on the edge of a razor.

But the man is not finished—
he snips, again, hairs
from his triple zero brush
and bends so close
that his breath rocks
and overturns
almost, the piece of wet rice.
He backs up, breathes,
and paints what looks
like a package or a bundle
into the woman's arms.
The man pauses—then
paints—then pauses, again,
painting only between
the beats of his heart.

Third Place
Florrie Funk
Highland Park

Personae

In the upstairs room the Housemaid shrugged
and brushed the papers off the table.
The Poet had left the room.
The Mother furrowed her brow:
“I wish you would be more considerate.
You’ve hurt her feelings again.”
The Scientist glanced up from her magazine
and snorted. “It’s not my fault she’s such a dainty dewdrop.
All I said was that we
should direct our energy toward solving real problems
instead of twiddling our onomatopoeias.”
The Visual Artist, who seldom came out
from under the furniture, folded the papers
into insect shapes and pinned them
to the underside of the table.
The Mother said, “She does her best
to address the subject of nature.”
“Crap!” said the Scientist
“Tender bunny rabbit crap!
Our ecosystem is on the verge of collapsing
like a house of cards and *she* spends hours
of our time trying to find
a slant rhyme for ‘decline!’”
“The Scientist said a simile,”
alliterated the Artist under the table.
The Accountant, humming to the checkbook
and counting on her fingers said,
“It is true she has not made any financial contribution.”
“Praise the Lord!” laughed the Housemaid,
fanning her feather duster. “Let she who is
without *that* sin cast the first stone.”
Conversation paused.
The Artist watched a shaft of light
fall in through one of the round blue windows
and set aglow the dust upon the shoes upon the floor.
She wished she had the wherewithal
to capture such a treasure.
“She’ll be back”, sighed the Mother.
“She always comes back.”

Honorable Mention

Wendy Davis

Lake Bluff

Perspective

After Charles Simic's "Prodigy"

I grew up in the garage
watching Dad at the workbench
and, when he wasn't there,
running an ice cream parlor –
the vise dispensing one thing,
the drill press another –
or wondering if crossing my eyes
would really make me cross-eyed,
as I'd been told.

One day I held a finger out.
Yes, it was happening.
In the background, two workbenches;
Dad's tools had multiplied.
When focused on the workbench,
my finger doubled.

I thought of little else
for nearly a week.
During *I Love Lucy*
and *To Tell the Truth*,
I asked myself how
I would explain this
to my children, how
I would lead a normal life.

Sometimes I cried at night
but wouldn't tell my brother.

By the second week
I must have realized
my condition
had not worsened.

Or maybe I asked friends
if they saw
what I saw.

Or just worried

less and less,
and then
not at all.

The worry goes
remembered,
but not its vanishing –
a plodding retrograde
to some forgotten point.

Honorable Mention
Meridel Thomson
Evanston

Barely Used Aestheticism

I thought I saw Oscar Wilde
at the Goodwill on West Main,
his wavy, brown hair tied
back in a thin rubber-band,
a blue plaid shirt knotted low
over his slim, jean-clad hips.

He was walking down the aisle
where they kept the glasses,
champagne flutes of aquamarine
beside large mugs with faded
manatees and chipped
palm trees, and he was so

intent, cleaning
those that he selected, swirling
his long, white fingers
along the dusty insides
of tumblers and wiping the highballs
with his soft sleeve until they sparkled

under the florescent lights.
The look on his face reminded
me of my mother when she polishes
the good china, an expression
of content, like the world
made sense again after

so much betrayal, heartbreak,
and trial, like the simple

chore of glass selection
was wonderful
when the battle between
beauty and soul had calmed.

I had driven myself
there that day to buy
some “retro” earrings,
but when I saw him over
the aisle’s divide, I dropped
the gold-painted clip-ons

I was clutching into the stuffed-
animal bin. While I was
sifting through teddy-bears
in search of my lost treasure,
he must have made his choice
and walked away

because when I stood
again, there was only
the tinkling of door
bells, a tall flash of blue.

Poetry Judge: Paulette Roeske

Paulette Roeske is the author of five books, including *Anvil, Clock & Last* and *Divine Attention*. The latter won the Carl Sandburg Book Award for Poetry and was a finalist for both the Society of Midland Authors’ Poetry Book Award and the Poetry Society of America’s Alice Fay di Castagnola Award. *Bridge of Sighs: A Novella and Stories* received the Three Oaks Prize in Fiction. Her work has appeared in *Poetry*, *The Virginia Quarterly Review*, *The Threepenny Review*, *Poetry Northwest*, *The Georgia Review*, *Glimmer Train*, and many other journals and anthologies. Ms. Roeske has taught creative writing at the University of Southern Indiana and at Harlaxton College in Grantham, England. For many years she served on the board of The Poetry Center of Chicago. Ms. Roeske was first place winner in the adult category at the first Jo-Anne Hirshfield Poetry Awards for her poem “Dream of Trains.”

The prizes in poetry this year are awarded in remembrance of:

**Robert C. Busch
Brian Garrick**

The poetry awards ceremony is dedicated in memory of:

**Alan Dillard
Jim Dimond
Lillian Desow-Fishbein
Leon Golub
Philip Rubin**

Acknowledgements

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Hope Arthur
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Marg and Herm Eisenberg
June Lubin
Philip and Gertrude Rubin

With special thanks to Mrs. Sara Busch and the late Dr. Robert C. Busch for their continuing support and generosity.

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

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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