

Minutes of the First 1996 HSA National Meeting,
Washington, D.C., Saturday, April 20, 1996

[as reported in the *HSA Newsletter*, Vol. XI, No. 2, May 1996]

The meeting was held at the Japan Information and Cultural Center in Washington, D.C.

Executive Committee Meeting. Officers present were Lee Gurga, First Vice President; Dee Evetts, Acting Secretary; and Kenneth Leibman, *frogpond* Editor. Officers not present had previously been notified by President Barbara Ressler of the agenda for the meeting and invited to send their comments. The meeting was chaired by Lee Gurga, and business was addressed as follows.

Lee formally proposed that a new HSA office be created, that of Newsletter Editor. Because this requires an amendment to the bylaws of the Society, it was agreed that this proposal be placed on the annual ballot of the membership later this year, along with the election of HSA officers and regional coordinators.

Meanwhile, to meet the immediate need caused by Doris Heitmeyer's illness and resignation, President Ressler appointed Charles Trumbull as *Newsletter* Editor and Dee Evetts as Acting Secretary.

Lee also proposed drawing up a set of guidelines for judges of the Merit Book Awards. It was agreed that he should proceed with this and present a draft for consideration.

A suggestion that the HSA might set up a home page on the World Wide Web was briefly discussed. It was agreed that the President should appoint a person or group to research this possibility and report back, ideally with a draft resolution for approval by the Executive Committee.

A substantial part of the meeting was then devoted to Ken Leibman's report, as circulated to all officers. In this he described his editorial philosophy and practice as *frogpond* Editor, along with some of the joys and woes of editorship. He proceeded to outline ways in which the burden of this very demanding job could be eased. In response, the Committee affirmed that the Editor has complete discretion with regard to page layout, the grouping of haiku by theme or seasonal reference, the number of poems chosen for publication, and so forth.

The idea of appointing an assistant editor was discussed and identified as a strong possibility for the future of *frogpond*. Subject to the Treasurer's approval, it was agreed that a mailing service could be used for sending out the journal. A similar policy had already been adopted for the HSA Newsletter, beginning with this issue. The change will save the officers concerned at least a week of extra work each year.

More controversially, and with mixed feelings, the Executive Committee voted to allow the number of issues of *frogpond* to be reduced from four to three annually. The size of each issue of the journal would increase accordingly. Reactions to this change are invited from members.

The following proposals were also raised, and tabled for further discussion:

- create an HSA Service Award to recognize outstanding service by members of the Society
- establish a category of lifetime HSA membership
- hold another joint meeting with the Haiku International Association, this time in Japan.

General Meeting. The following members and others attended: Stephen Addiss, Carmen Sarah Alejandro, Roberta Beary, Alexius J. Burgess, Tom Clausen, Maureen Collins, Ellen Compton, Jocelyn Conway, Maryalice Cregg, Carol Dagenhardt, Bill Dennis, Dee Evetts, Nelson Fitton, Lee Giesecke, Lee Gurga, Jim Kacian, Eleanor Kerkham, Kenneth C. Leibman, Jean Leyman, Jeanne Lupton, Betty Manchester, Dorothy McLaughlin, Dave Morrison, Marian Olson, Joan Sauer, Cor van den Heuvel, Anita Sadler Weiss, Dick Williams, Jeff Witkin, and John Yagerline.

The meeting was opened about 2:30 p.m. by Regional Coordinator Jim Kacian, who outlined the afternoon's program.

First Vice President Lee Gurga then extended a warm welcome to all present and led a round reading. Acting Secretary Dee Evetts began the business part of the meeting by forgetting to submit the Minutes of the previous meeting in Boston. (This omission will be rectified at the next meeting, in San Francisco on July 13.)

Dee gave an account of Doris Heitmeyer's progress and the recent developments regarding the HSA secretaryship. This was followed by a report on the main items deliberated by the Executive Committee and a summary of the Treasurer's report.

The program continued with a talk by Eleanor Kerkham, Assistant Professor of Japanese Language and Literature at the University of Maryland. One of her special interests is Bashô's haibun. She traced for us the development of his attitude and style and spoke illuminatingly of Bashô's haiku in the context of his prose writings. She revealed a far more complex relationship than most of those listening were previously aware of, referring to his "eccentric and whimsical way of presenting the traditional forms of poetic preoccupation."

Prof. Stephen Addiss of the University of Richmond, Virginia, followed with a presentation, using slides, on the subject of haiga, or "haiku painting." He delighted us with many examples of this form, showing the various ways—ranging from the most obvious to the exceedingly subtle—in which image and poem can be combined or juxtaposed.

Lee Gurga concluded the first session with a brief and pithy summary of his ideas regarding the form and presentation of haiku. He urged us not to work to a formula (even one of our own devising) but to evaluate each poem individually. He also reminded us of the role humor can play in dispelling hypocrisy and pretension while yet conveying the fullness of human experience.

After a break, which allowed for general mingling and conversation as well as enjoyment of the lavish refreshments, the meeting resumed with a traditional workshop

led by Ken Leibman. Using poems submitted anonymously from the floor, he provoked lively exchanges with (and among) his listeners, focusing particularly on the richness available in haiku that permit more than one interpretation. One example was discussed at length:

piano practice
in the room above me
my father shouting

The meeting dispersed about 6:30 P.M., with a number of those not unduly pressed by travel arrangements adjourning to the nearby Kawasaki Japanese restaurant.

Special thanks are due to the Japan Information and Cultural Center, the HSA Southeast Region, Regional Coordinator Jim Kacian, the Washington-area's towpath Haiku Society, and Ellen Compton (Hospitality Committee Chairperson) for hosting and organizing this event, as well as to guest speakers Eleanor Kerkham and Stephen Addiss.

— *Dee Evetts, Acting Secretary*