

Minutes of the Fourth HSA National Meeting

[as reported in the *HSA Newsletter*, Vol. XII, No. 1, winter 1997]

Executive Committee Meeting. The meeting was held at the Kaji Aso Studio in Boston, Mass., on Saturday, December 7, 1996. Officers present were Dee Evetts, Acting Secretary, and Raffael de Gruttola, Treasurer, who chaired the meeting. Only two of the seven HSA officers being present, issues for decision were referred back to President Barbara Ressler, for consultation with other officers.

Kenneth Leibman's announcement of his retirement as *frogpond* editor, at the end of 1997, was noted. It was proposed that the search for his successor should begin as early as possible. The respective domains of *frogpond* and the HSA Newsletter were then discussed. Raffael de Gruttola requested it be put on record that as Treasurer he feels strongly that the Annual Treasurer's Report belongs in *frogpond*, where it has always appeared.

A proposal that Howard Kilby be appointed Acting Regional Coordinator for the HSA South Region was approved, and referred to the President for implementation.

Morning Program. The General Meeting was preceded in the morning by a discussion, led by Dee Evetts, of the potential for memory and empathy as sources of inspiration for haiku. Members shared examples of work where they had drawn upon their own memories, or upon the reported experiences of others, as viable and valuable alternatives to immediate experience. It was agreed that "authenticity" in such cases must depend on how genuinely or intensely the poet relives such an experience.

This was followed by a visit to the Museum of Fine Arts, 10 minutes walk from the Aso Studio, to view the Japanese print collection.

General Meeting. The meeting began after lunch, and was attended (all or in part) by: Raffael de Gruttola, Michelina de Gruttola, Hayat Abuza, Judson Evans, Lawrence Rungren, Dee Evetts, Zeke Vayman, Robert Zukowski, Ann Snodgrass, Richard St. Clair, John Bergstrom, Frederick Goodwin, and others.

A double round reading yielded these offerings:

naval yard--
two swans nipping the nose
of the sub

— Hayat Abuza

torso of marble
archaeologists argue—
male or female

— Zeke Vayman

Dee Evetts then presented the Minutes of the previous National Meeting, as published in the *HSA Newsletter*, and these were approved. He reported the substance of the Executive Committee meeting, and gave a brief summary of the HSA election results (published in full below). Raffael de Gruttola read the quarterly Treasurer's Report.

Afternoon Program. The program began with a fascinating talk by the composer T. Allen LeVines. He described how he had long wished to compose a musical parallel to Bashô's *Oku no hosomichi* ("The Narrow Road to the Deep North"), but had felt compelled to prepare himself by first retracing the master's steps. Being an experienced hiker as well as a musician, he was well equipped for such an enterprise. Once in Japan, however he discovered that the route of Bashô's celebrated journey is not only partly obliterated, as one might expect, but also incompletely or inaccurately recorded.

With the aid of local residents, regional planners, and others, he undertook to walk some sections of the path in an attempt to verify its location. Using slides taken along the way, LeVines shared with us something of this personal odyssey.

He concluded by outlining his proposal for nothing less than the preservation of the *Oku no hosomichi* for posterity. In his own words: "Along this path are some of the most extraordinary mountain vistas in the world. Along this path walked some of Japan's greatest philosophers, artists and writers—including the poet Matsuo Bashô, whose pilgrimage produced a literary masterpiece bearing the name of the road he walked. The goal of this proposal is to link as yet to be restored original pathways with currently preserved trails... as an unbroken chain which interconnects a vast array of Japan's scenic wonders, historic monuments, and architectural treasures."

For more information about this project, and to offer support, please contact: T. Allen LeVines, 31 Squannacock Road, Shirley, MA 01464.

The afternoon ended with a musical presentation by the Row Twelve Contemporary Music Ensemble. Carey Blyton's *After Hokusai* (settings of classical haiku) was followed by Judson Evans's reading of his haibun "Snake Dream," to "Pavane" by composer Jean Françaix. The performers were Katherine Kleitz and Jennifer Chiapella on flute and Karen Henry as reader. Richard St. Clair performed his "Moon Flowers: Album of Haiku-Moments for Solo Piano." This hypnotic string of phrases was reminiscent (for this listener) of the shakuhachi tradition, "beads threaded on silence."

— Dee Evetts, Secretary

Evening program. Kaji Aso presented a haiga workshop using members' haiku from the afternoon go-around session. He gave a brief introduction to haiga, its origins, and practitioners. He also explained the different size, shape, and ink consistency of each brush and what they are made of. He described how good inkstones are made and why it is so important to have the right brushes and ink for sumi-e paintings.

In a well executed haiga the haiku and sumi-e image complement each other so that deeper meaning is derived from the union. The best haiga do not present elaborate

images, but suggest shapes and forms to be completed in the viewer's imagination. Aso approaches the art of haiga with ritual similar to the Japanese tea ceremony.

Above is one of the haiga Mr. Aso completed during the evening with Raffael de Gruttola.

After the haiga workshop, Robert Zukowski of Panama City, Fla., the featured reader for the evening, delighted us with his haunting haiku. Robert is also a gifted storyteller, and the group of HSA members present were fascinated by his concise and interesting commentaries. Among the poems that he read were the following haiku ...

a moorhen's cry
from the moss-hung cypress shore
the drifting hyacinths

tidepool
a crab with ponderous claw
touches its reflection.

tar smell
from the railroad ties
waking copperhead

two crabs
grappling with locked claws
taken by a wave

low clouds flaming red
a cottonmouth's ripple
among cypress knees

meteor shower
the cockle shell wind chimes

... and tanka:

with nacreous combstrokes
through the waves of her hair
she watches the lightning
as distant clouds collide
above the warm sea

— Raffael de Gruttola