

First 2001 HSA Quarterly Meeting

[as reported in the *HSA Newsletter*, Vol. XVI, No. 2, spring 2001]

Executive Committee Meeting was scheduled for 12:00–1:30 p.m., Saturday, March 17, at the International Delight Restaurant, Las Cruces, N.M. Since President Jerry Ball and First Vice President Pamela Ness were the only Executive Committee members present, Ball declared no quorum present, no business was conducted, and the meeting was adjourned.

General Meeting. HSA Southwest Region members were delighted to have President Ball and First Vice President Ness join us in our first HSA Southwestern Region get-together.

Tom Lynch started planning the event in September 2000 to coincide with the annual Border Book Festival held in Las Cruces. Some activities of our gathering overlapped with events of the Border Book Festival, but it broadened our exposure to many unfamiliar with the HSA and haiku in general. The success of this endeavor was made possible by the dedication and hard work of Tom Lynch, for which we all are grateful.

William J. Higginson and Penny Harter from Santa Fe, N.M., arrived early and gave a workshop on Friday, March 16, at the Good Samaritan Village library. “A Way With Words” was the subject. Bill and Penny took turns reading poetry and haiku from their books and discussed writing with 14 seniors.

A workshop on a Southwestern *sajiki* was held at the historic Double Eagle restaurant on the Old Mesilla plaza on Friday evening from 6:00 to 9:00. Thirteen members attended. Before the meal we introduced ourselves; for many this was a first-time meeting. After dinner, Tom Lynch opened the workshop.

The Southwest Region has a very rich Spanish heritage, so most of the *kigo* selected had a Hispanic flavor. Each members were asked to suggest a *kigo* representative of the Southwest and read a haiku using it. These efforts were collected and discussed with an eye to a Southwestern *sajiki*. Here are a few:

night irrigation
the ditch slowly fills
with stars

Dennis Dutton

sunshine yucca
white blossoms scent empty air
mustang runs free

Jim Applegate

pueblo dog
sniffing the footprints

of tourists

Penny Harter

heavy air
I awaken from a nap
expecting thunder

Jerry Ball

I come to town
early in the morning
roasting chilies

Bill Higginson

roadside stall
the ristras clatter
behind the farmer

Tom Lynch

one by one
faralitos flicker out —
Christmas Eve

Marian Olson

siesta
even the air
not moving

Naomi Y. Brown

On Saturday at 9:00 a.m. Marian Olson gave a haiku-writing workshop “The Tiniest Poem,” at the Munson Senior Center. She worked with 22 professional and nonprofessional writers, most of whom had never before penned a haiku. First, she distributed printed instructions, examples, pencils and writing pads. Marian used “Ancestral Voices,” the Border Book Festival theme this year, to present a chronology of haiku voices from the 17th century to the end of the 20th century. After the group discussed the depth and nuances in several poems, Marian talked about the general characteristics found in most fine haiku. Following this initial work with model poems, she led the participants through an exercise that used a particular emotion attached to an experience from their lives and from that into the writing of their own haiku. Feedback indicated the success of the method. Those new to the form left with a clear idea of the power of haiku.

Marian’s technique led to some excellent work, which was published in a finely printed booklet and mailed to each participant. Among the many fresh voices were these (picked randomly):

Leaving Paris
the midnight train
enters a tunnel

Laura Lomas

Back in the city
Lights shine
Stars dim

Carol Brey

practicing in the park
our swords
know each other also

Dennis H. Dutton

During this same time period, William J. Higginson and Penny Harter were conducting separate workshops. Bill's topic was "Remembering Our Ancestors," and he helped more than a dozen participants learn methods of recovering lost information about past events. Later in a public reading, Bill read poems about his grandmother's life as well as haiku and translations from recent books.

Penny led a workshop, "Reaching Back: A Letter to the Unknown," in which she encouraged some 15 participants to connect with ancestors they know little or nothing about. Later she read poems from her books *Grandmother's Milk* and *Lizard Light: Poems from the Earth*.

From 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. about 25 participants enjoyed herbal tea and leisurely paced haiku readings the Haiku Tardeada (*tardeada* is Spanish for afternoon tea) at the Lemongrass Restaurant. Earlier Tom Lynch had instructed us to bring a handful of "ancestral voice haiku" as well as 5–10 of our own verses to read. Tom opened the readings, followed by Jerry Ball, Dennis Dutton, Noor Singh Khalsa, Marian Olson, Marlene Egger, Jim Applegate, Bill Higginson and Penny Harter. Then Pamela Ness read some of her tanka. After reading "ancestral voice haiku" and some of her haiku, Naomi Y. Brown recited Kakinamoto Hitomara's *chôka* from the *Man'yôshu* in Japanese and then Bill Higginson read its translation by Donald Keene. All together 11 haiku poets participated in this event.

On Saturday evening several members got together at the Tatsu Japanese Restaurant. Over hot sake and Japanese cuisine they relaxed and visited until it was closing time.

The final get-together was a ginkô Sunday morning. at the Dripping Spring Natural Area in the Organ Mountains east of Las Cruces. Mark Brooks, Pamela Ness, Marian Olson, and Gloria Cano had departed early so 11 took part in the ginko: Jerry Ball (who left early to catch his flight), Tom Lynch, Dennis Dutton, Noor Khalsa, Penny Harter, Bill Higginson, Jim and Beth Ann Applegate, Marlene Egger, and Clayton and Naomi Brown. We were blessed with a gentle breeze and a warm sun. We chose the four-mile

trail to La Cueva, the hermit's cave. It was a gentle climb at start but became a bit steeper near the cave. Along the path, we identified prickly pear, desert sage, greasewood, banana yucca, and Mormon tea. Some of the smooth rocks had a slippery moss-like growth, probably lichen. At La Cueva Tom pointed out petroglyphs near the entrance. The cave was dry and roomy. Returning to the trailhead, we gathered around the picnic table, ate our sack lunches, and concentrated on writing haiku. Each took turns reading two or three haiku (Penny wrote eight!). Here are some of the group's creations:

my shadow
on the tiny white primroses
a stinkbug moves

Bill Higginson

desert catch basin
the iridescent flash
of Phainopepla

Marlene Egger

Spring ginko
Noor takes a nap
on a hackberry branch

Dennis Dutton

two ravens spiral
above the hermit's cave —
their fading call

Penny Harter

hermit's cave
abandoned now
except for the wasps

Tom Lynch

La Cueva Trail
the hikers' footsteps
break the silence

Naomi Y. Brown

By 2:00 p.m., we were back at the parking lot but reluctant to leave. We all took with us memories of the beautiful Organ Mountains and the ginkô.

— Naomi Y. Brown,
Southwest Region Coordinator

