

HSA 2004 Annual Meeting (Third Quarterly Meeting) New York, N.Y., September 17–18, 2004

[as reported in the *HSA Newsletter*, Vol. XIX, No. 4, November 2004]

The Annual Meeting of the HSA took place on Saturday, September 18, at the Tenri Cultural Institute on West 13th Street in Greenwich Village. Hosted by the Northeast Metro group and organized by regional coordinator Efren Estevez, the meeting featured a writing workshop and *kukai* by Tom Painting, a renku workshop led by William J. Higginson and Penny Harter, a talk by Michael Dylan Welch on “The Four Stages of Haiku Mastery,” and a discussion by Charles Trumbull of his Haiku Database Project. After the meeting, participants enjoyed a party hosted by Hiroaki Sato and dinner at local restaurants.

Secretary's Report of the Annual Meeting

I. The Annual Meeting of the Haiku Society of America was held on Saturday, September 18, 2004 at the Tenri Cultural Institute in New York City; 35 persons attended. Efren Estevez, the Regional Coordinator for Northeast Metro, called the meeting to order at 2:40 P.M. The meeting opened with a round of self-introductions and haiku recitations. The reading of the Minutes of the June Quarterly Meeting in Boston was waived, and they were accepted as published in the August HSA Newsletter.

II. President Charles Trumbull took the chair and thanked Estevez and Pamela Miller Ness for organizing the meeting and for Ness hosting a party the evening before. Appreciation was expressed to the Tertri Cultural Institute for making their beautiful facility available for the meeting. All were invited to a post-meeting party at Hiro Sato's.

III. Stanford Forrester and Charles Trumbull (*ex officio*) constituted the Nominating Committee for 2005 officers. The President presented the slate of officers for 2005 and officially entered their names into nomination: President, Charles Trumbull; First Vice President, Michael Dylan Welch; Second Vice President, Marlene Egger; Secretary, Carmen Sterba; Treasurer, Paul Miller; *Frogpond* Editor, John Stevenson; *Newsletter* Editor, Johnye Strickland; and Electronic Media Officer, Gary Warner. There were no nominations from the floor. The ballot must go out one month before the meeting on December 4, 2004. If willing, the current Regional Coordinators will continue to serve. If not, replacements will be found. The Executive Committee is deciding on the locations of quarterly meetings, which will be in as many different areas of the country as possible, encouraging all members to be able to attend at least one of them.

IV. The President noted several recent deaths: Prof. Earl Miner, Cid Corran, Bill Lerz, Anita Sadler Weiss, and Mildred Kanterman, a charter member of the HSA. We are saddened by these losses.

V. Michael Dylan Welch announced the Merit Book Awards for books published in 2003 for which Kirsty Karkow and Edward Rielly were the judges. First Place: Carolyn Thomas, *Puddle on the Ink Stone*; Second Place: an'ya, *Haiku for a Moonless Night, Vol. I* Third Place, Fay Aoyagi, *Chrysanthemum Love*. He reported on the changes to the Merit Book Award process, effective for books published in 2004. There will be no entry fee and no prize money. All relevant books published in 2004 can be nominated or submitted by members or publishers. Books should be submitted to or procured by the HSA by the end of April 2005.

VI. Tom Painting reported on the contests. The entry fee for the Einbond is now \$10.00. Although entries to the Einbond were low, entries to the Henderson and Brady contests increased by 30% from 701 the previous year to 1124 this year. Judges for the Henderson were Bill Cullen and Brenda Gannam; for the Brady, Claudia Coutu and Terry Ann Carter. The winners for the Henderson are: 1st, W.F. Owen; 2nd, Becky Barnhart, 3rd, Michael Fessler; Honorable Mentions: George Swede and Marjorie Buettner. The winners for the Brady are John Stevenson, 2nd, Emily Romano, 3rd, Jay Daniel Baudry; Honorable Mentions: Robert Bauer, Marilyn Walker, Jeanne Harrington, Frank Walsh, Bill Pauly, Carl Patrick. Tom noted that sales of the education packet have dwindled to next to nothing; the packet is now available on our website.

VII. The Secretary reported that the membership total now stands at 803 (Canada 23, Japan 26, Other Overseas 47, USA 707), so we have reached our goal of 800 members in 2004. She encouraged the members to send in their renewals for 2005 before December 31, 2004.

VIII. The Treasurer reported that the organization is in good shape. Dues normally cover our expenses, but if we are to build a financial cushion, we need more. He encouraged us to make an additional contribution. If we have a consistent level of assets throughout the year and can pay our bills, he can safely invest some of the monies.

IX. The President introduced the Report of the Definitions Committee by reminding the members that the current ad hoc committee was appointed by the previous HSA President Stanford Forrester 18 months ago, that the Committee has labored diligently for a year, provided ample opportunity for members to comment on the evolving text, and delivered its report to the HSA in March 2004. According to our By-Laws, members can only accept or reject reports at a quarterly or annual meeting and then the ad hoc committee is disbanded.

Speaking for the Definitions Committee of Lee Gurga, Naomi Y. Brown, and himself, Bill Higginson moved: "that the foregoing Report be accepted, and that the Report and the included new Official Definitions be adopted by the Haiku Society of America and be widely disseminated as the official definitions of the Society." [See the insert in the Newsletter of the final Report of the Definitions Committee.] He noted that the new definitions are not prescriptions of how to write a haiku, but definitions which will stand in the world haiku community. Michael Dylan Welch seconded the motion. Discussion on this item was lively and intense.

President Trumbull read into the minutes Tom Tico's statement, which had been sent to him by snail-mail, against the proposed definitions of haiku and senryu. The bulk of his text follows:

The currently proposed definition of the senryu says that it's "a poem, structurally similar to haiku, that highlights the foibles of human nature, usually in a humorous or satiric way." This definition completely neglects the ongoing trend ... of the senryu as a poem that considers human nature in a serious way. If you pick up any issue of *Frogpond* published in the last few years and look through the senryu section, you will find about half the poems to be serious takes on the human condition. Poems of this type are also frequently seen in the results of the Brady Senryu Contests. At this point, to define senryu only in terms of human foibles, seen humorously or satirically, is not only restrictive but reactionary. The creative expression of senryu poets has already gone far beyond that proposed definition.

With just a few small changes I think the 1973 senryu definition is still appropriate: "A senryu is a poem, structurally similar to haiku, that is primarily concerned with human nature. It is often humorous or satiric."

The proposed definition of haiku begins with "A haiku is a short poem that uses imagistic language...." But to say that, is to suggest that anything other than "imagistic" language is inappropriate for haiku. Yet a number of old Japanese haiku contain little or imagistic language and yet are wonderful poems. And in English, haiku poets sometimes write quality poems that include very little imagistic language. Why should we approve of a definition that restricts a mode of haiku expression that has already proven itself to be successful?

Furthermore, with but a slight update, I still prefer the language and idea of the 1973 definition: "A haiku is a short poem recording the essence of a moment keenly perceived, in which Nature is linked to human nature. It is usually written in three lines and is rarely less than seven syllables or more than seventeen."

Cor van den Heuvel read his statement against adoption of the new definitions. His text follows:

The new definition of "haiku" is not an improvement over the original HSA definition and should be rejected with a NO vote.

By saying "a haiku is a short poem that uses imagistic language to convey the essence of an experience of nature, etc.," the new definition simply describes any short nature poem and does not indicate the unique aspects of haiku. It also implies too much of a debt to the Imagists for the development of haiku in English. Haiku is not a continuation of Imagism; it is something new in our language and we should not suggest otherwise.

Other poetry, including imagist, surrealistic, and symbolist poetry, presents images—haiku presents the thing itself in the immediacy of the “moment.” That is why the creators of the original definition used the word “perception” instead of “image.”

Haiku is more about the perception, and thus the awareness, of what is, not about what we imagine.

Though we, and all who write poetry in English, are indebted to the Imagists for helping us acquire the tools of language to make it precise and concise, the haiku movement has done something more with the English language—something more than just continue the Imagist tradition. American haiku is a brand new genre of poetry in English. John Wills, Nick Virgilio, Anita Virgil, and Bill Higginson helped create something in English that had never been there before, a genre of literature which recorded and presented “the essence of a moment keenly perceived in which Nature is linked to human nature.” Please vote NO to the new definition!

Alan Pizzarelli also spoke against the revised definition. He took particular exception to the phrase, “human condition,” in the haiku section, feeling that this wording is more appropriate to a definition of senryu. Marilyn Hazelton questioned the use of the word “foibles” in the senryu definition and urged a vote against. Jaxon Teck asked for a clarification of the word “imagistic.” Michael Dylan Welch reminded us that both our knowledge and the practice of haiku worldwide have grown since 1973 and it is time the Society’s definitions were updated. Though he might have done the definitions somewhat differently, he expressed respect for the committee members’ expertise. Jim Kacian noted that this report is not aimed at the publishers of dictionaries, as much as the first report in 1973 was, but comes from a specialist organization and reaches out to a global audience.

Higginson pointed out that the committee took into account the haiku practice of contemporary poets in Japan and elsewhere, as well as in English, adding that during the 30 years since the earlier definitions, our knowledge of haiku has much increased through scholarship and international contact among poets. Speaking of the process the committee went through, he reminded us that members were invited to communicate regarding the draft definitions that were posted on the Internet and available by mail. Several members did so. Their letters and emails were circulated to the entire committee, and they received specific replies to their concerns. He also noted that some features that various members wanted to appear in the core definitions were felt by the committee to be outside the range of the core and were included in the notes which he encouraged us to read.

Pizzarelli asked that the complete definitions report be mailed to the entire membership for a vote. Higginson responded that according to the By-Laws, this meeting is the place for a vote accepting or rejecting committee reports.

Although many persons claimed not to have seen the definitions report prior to this meeting, President Trumbull noted the many opportunities provided through notices in *Newsletter* issues directing members to view the report on the Internet or to request hard copy from the Secretary. Several persons agreed that established haiku poets will be unlikely to change the way they write haiku in response to the new definitions.

The motion was put to a vote and carried on a show of hands. The committee was disbanded.

X. Travel entitlements for HSA officers were proposed as follows: \$250 per meeting for the President to attend the annual and quarterly meetings and \$100 to each other EC member to attend the annual meeting. It was felt that the President should be present at all meetings and that the Executive Committee needed at least one face-to-face meeting during the year. Scott Mason moved that we accept the proposed travel entitlements and Jim Paulson seconded. The motion carried.

XI. Bill Higginson moved that “the President of the Society be directed to negotiate and execute on behalf of the Society an agreement donating the twenty-four *shikishi* to the American Haiku Archive at the California State Library as part of the Haiku Society of America archive, with such conditions as he shall deem appropriate to protect the *shikishi*, allow for their exhibition, and retain reasonable rights of access for scholars and authorized members of the Society. Michael Dylan Welch seconded the motion. Jim Kacian noted that the *shikishi* are the prime asset HSA owns and that donating them might not be in our best interest. Cor van den Heuvel thought that the American Haiku Archive temporarily houses the HSA collection and that the HSA retains ownership. Because there are several questions about the ownership of the *shikishi* and the relation of HSA to the American Haiku Archive, members felt more information should be available before a vote is taken. Jim Kacian moved to table Bill Higginson’s motion until further information is available; Cor van den Heuvel seconded. The motion to table carried. This item may be taken up under old business at a later quarterly meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:10 P.M. and members socialized. The gathering was enlivened by a generous gift from Kuniharu Shimizu of two excellent bottles of sake. Many thanks from all.

Respectfully submitted,

—Karen Klein, HSA Secretary

Secretary’s Note

As of October 17, 2004, our membership total stands at 820. It’s exciting to see so many new members coming in as well as the returning members who are the mainstay of our organization. The Annual Mailing will go out toward the end of October. In it you will find an updated Membership List, the Ballot for Officers and Regional Coordinators, their biographies /statements and the Renewal Form. I urge you to renew your membership for 2005 by

December 31, 2004. It is a great help to the Secretary to have all the renewals come in by the beginning of the new year or shortly after.

This will be my last message to you as your Secretary. I have enjoyed my two year stint. Probably the best part was communicating with so many of you. I am most grateful for all the kind words and encouraging notes you have sent me and look forward to seeing many of you at meetings in the years to come.

With best wishes for a happy holiday season and of course rewarding haiku moments.

—Karen Klein, HSA Secretary

