

HSA 2010 Second Quarterly Meeting Seattle, Washington, June 25–27, 2010

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The second national quarterly Haiku Society of America meeting of 2010 took place at the Seattle Asian Art Museum June 25 to 27, 2010, in conjunction with the museum's "Fleeting Beauty" exhibit of Japanese woodblock prints. Organized by Michael Dylan Welch and Tanya McDonald, the weekend featured a variety of readings, presentations, performances, and more, as well as walks in surrounding Volunteer Park, including its water tower, gardens, and conservatory. Compared with previous HSA meetings in Seattle, attendance was relatively low (about 30 to 35 people), but participants enjoyed much stimulating haiku discussion and camaraderie.

Immediately prior to the HSA weekend, Haiku Northwest poets were featured in two radio shows on KSER public radio (90.7 FM in Everett, Washington). These halfhour prerecorded readings were broadcast on the weekly PoetsWest poetry show on June 16 and 23, and promoted the HSA weekend and Haiku Northwest.

The HSA weekend itself began at 3:00 p.m. on Friday, June 25, with a productive HSA executive committee meeting held at Hugo House literary center. Present were Ce Rosenow, Michael Dylan Welch, Angela Terry, and Susan Antolin. Numerous other haiku poets joined for dinner at 6:00 p.m. at nearby Boom Noodle restaurant.

The next day began with a haiku walk at 10:00 a.m. starting on the steps in front of the Seattle Asian Art Museum. We enjoyed views of the Space Needle from the top of the water tower, where an exhibit explained the influence of the Olmstead brothers who designed much of the Seattle park system. We also walked to the conservatory, where exotic plants and flowers inspired many haiku. Instead of going on the walk, some poets paid to see the museum's Japanese woodblock exhibit, which included such famous prints as Hokusai's "Great Wave" and "Red Fuji." Shortly after noon, we enjoyed boxed lunches from Volunteer Park Café (thanks to Tanya for keeping track of orders). We gathered at an overview of Lake Washington to share our lunches outdoors.

At 2:00 p.m., we convened at the main auditorium in the Asian Art Museum, commencing with a round of introductions and the sharing of one haiku each. After that, Michael Dylan Welch gave a half-hour PowerPoint presentation on the American Haiku Archives, showing photographs of the facilities and covering details such as the web site, archival process, how to donate, and poems and photos of each honorary curator appointed since the archives began in 1996.

A highlight during the break that followed was to view the exquisite large-format framed zenga and haiga by Jeb Barton on display in the large meeting room next to the auditorium. Jeb's paintings, many with haiku and Japanese calligraphy, were professionally presented, complete with informative descriptions of his work and each piece in particular. Jeb also had a copy of

his recent handmade art book of haiku, valued at \$125, a copy of which was made available as a door prize for those in attendance (everyone got one free entry, or could pay \$3 for each additional entry—Tanya McDonald won the book). Also during the break, we were able to see many haiku books available for sale or to tinker with the “Haiku Journey” computer game displayed on a laptop computer.

The next feature was a multimedia presentation by Llyn De Danaan titled “Oyster Bay Japanese American Senryu.” As a cultural anthropologist, Llyn had extensively researched the senryu tradition among the Japanese-American population over the last century in the location of Oyster Bay, near the state capitol of Olympia, interviewing many family members, pouring over historical photographs, and collecting numerous examples of senryu and occasionally haiku poems. She outlined the history of senryu in the region (going back to the 1930s), and presented translations of several poems. The presentation reminded many of those present how the Haiku Society of America is sometimes disconnected from the long and very rich history of haiku written by Japanese Americans in this country.

Immediately after Llyn’s presentation, we enjoyed a performance of haiku and senryu written by Haiku Northwest poets, selected and arranged by Tanya McDonald from poems appearing on the Haiku Northwest website (see the group’s online haiku gallery at <http://sites.google.com/site/haikunorthwest/poems-by-members>). Tanya read the poems with William Scott Galasso, with guitar accompaniment by Dejah Léger. We concluded the afternoon with a few announcements, and then migrated to Chinoise Restaurant at 6:00 p.m. where we enjoyed the evening sunshine over Asian food and much socializing.

On Sunday, June 27, we had a very full day of activities, starting at 10:00 a.m., this time meeting in the large meeting room where Jeb Barton’s zenga paintings were on display. Michael Dylan Welch again welcomed everyone and we began with a round of introductions and poems from the previous day’s haiku walk. After that, Ce Rosenow chaired a brief HSA business meeting in which she read a summary of ongoing activities (see her president’s message on page 1 of this newsletter). She also announced the 2010 winners of the HSA’s Virgilio student haiku contest and the Einbond renku contest. We were then treated to a reading of haiku by Oregon poet Jeb Barton, together with a brief talk about his approach to zenga and haiga. You can see Jeb’s exquisite work online at <http://zengastudios.com/>.

Next up was a stimulating presentation by Ce Rosenow, titled “Resisting the Status Quo: Notes Against a Single Definition for English-Language Haiku.” She made a case for the openness of haiku, and showed how there’s a much greater variety of haiku, and definitions of haiku, than is commonly believed. She underscored the point that too narrow a definition stifles the potential of this art. A lively discussion followed.

We again enjoyed boxed lunches from Volunteer Park Café, starting just before noon, and then gathered at the museum at 1:00 p.m., where the number of attendees had swelled to its highest numbers of the weekend. Our first afternoon presentation was by Margaret McGee, a sharing workshop titled “What’s the Story Behind Your Haiku?” As an extension of the stories in her recent book, *Haiku—The Sacred Art*, she encouraged everyone present to share the

events behind one of their haiku. She said that these stories are there to be discovered in the poems, and also in our relationships with each other as we share our poems. This segment of the program engaged many attendees as we learned a few unexpected details behind poems we've known by others.

After another break, we were joined by Teruko Chin, Kiyomi Erickson, Lily McMahan, Mitsuko Nakata, and Kyoko Tokuno of the Rainier Haiku Ginsha, a Japanese-language haiku group formed in 1934. They had a handout of two dozen haiku by their group members, which they read in Japanese and English translation (you can read these poems online at <http://sites.google.com/site/haikunorthwest/meetings-1/hsa-national-meeting-2010/rainier-haiku-ginsha-poems>). Lily McMahan also talked briefly about this Seattle group, which composes haiku just in Japanese. A couple of their members expressed interest in coming to future Haiku Northwest meetings.

Next up, at 2:15 p.m., was Richard Tice. His presentation was titled "Subtexts in Japanese Haiku," and he gave examples of allusions and contexts in a variety of Japanese haiku, suggesting that Western readers may often be unaware of literary, cultural, biographical, geographical, and even political references that deepen haiku, references that are too often diminished or lost in translation.

After another break to enjoy Jeb's paintings, buy haiku books, or exchange haiku handouts, we then enjoyed a special tribute to 100-year-old Haiku Northwest member Helen Russell. Ann Spiers and Connie Hutchison read selections of haiku by Helen from her recent chapbook (which won an HSA Merit Book Award), and Helen chimed in occasionally with details of the stories behind some of the poems, and also read one poem herself at the end. She was also presented with a card signed by everyone present, as well as a bouquet of wildflowers. Helen celebrated her 100th birthday in November of 2009 and continues to be one of Haiku Northwest's most avid members.

Our last presentation of the afternoon, at 3:30 p.m., was a survey by Ruth Yarrow of poems related to the recent economic downturn, primarily quoted from Frogpond. Her presentation, titled "World Economy in Word Economy," emphasized how current events creep into our haiku. And then, after a brief discussion, Tanya McDonald introduced a concluding reading by three poets with recent haiku books: William Scott Galasso, Peggy Heinrich, and Ce Rosenow, followed by another round of poems by everyone present. Most attendees headed home at this point, but half a dozen diehards headed to nearby Palermo Pizza for more socializing—and the writing of two rengay. Thanks to all for making the weekend a pleasure.

—Michael Dylan Welch