

***2014 National  
SENIOR POET LAUREATE  
Contest Winners***

***Here are the winners in the 2014 National  
Senior Poet Laureate poetry contest,  
administered by Great Spirit Publishing on  
behalf of the Amy Kitchener's Angels  
Without Wings Fdn. and contest  
co-founder Wanda Sue Parrott.***

*The contest was reorganized in 2014 after  
Wanda Sue's retirement, to feature one  
National Senior Poet Laureate (instead of  
one from each state as in years past), and  
one National Honor Scroll recipient. Due to  
the late influx of entries and quality of  
poems, the Administrator Barbara Quin  
added eight additional winners, two paid  
and six certificated.*

**2014 SENIOR POET LAUREATE CONTEST  
NATIONAL SENIOR POET LAUREATE AWARD - \$500**

**AUTUMN MORNING PRAISE**

by Dena R. Gorrell

The late October morning's crisp and cool.  
I shiver now and pull my thin windbreaker close  
against the chilling wind.  
Inside the weathered barn  
the lumbering cows await their rationed  
chunks of hay, apportioned from the stacks  
of stair-stepped bales  
that line the windowed loft.

In shadowed light  
I climb the rough wood ladder  
nailed against the wall,  
to pitch down pungent provender  
into the stalls below.  
The fodder falls explosively,  
and dusty clouds of musky sweetness rise  
to permeate the warmed and sheltered air.

So, from my bird's-eye vantage point  
I watch the hungry cattle chew  
with calm, deliberate moves.  
The rising sun now sends forth shafts of light  
that pour through windows, filter through the cracks.  
Tranquil now, I sense the peaceful hush;  
and deep within, my heart reverberates  
a soft Amen.

**Dena R. Gorrell, 82, Edmond, Oklahoma, says,**

*"I am a retired secretary, happily married to my husband John for 60 years. We have two children, a son (now deceased) and a daughter. We have six grandchildren. I have been writing poetry since age nine. I am an avid poetry contestant and have won over 1,000 awards. By winning the highest number of awards in our annual contests, I was named Poet Laureate of the Poetry Society of Oklahoma in 2004, 2005, and again in 2010. I serve as the First Vice-Chancellor of the National Federation of State Poetry Societies, where I work as the Poetry Day/Poetry Month Liaison for all the participating state poetry societies."*

**2014 SENIOR POET LAUREATE CONTEST –  
NATIONAL HONOR SCROLL AWARD - \$100  
(Rubaiyat Stanza, Iambic Tetrameter)**

**EQUINOX**

by Caroline Zarlengo Sposto

I wake at dawn to lustrous light.  
A silent blizzard overnight  
has cloaked the town in shining snow  
that sparkles pure, untouched and white.

I gaze out basking in the glow  
with wistfulness because I know  
this splendid scene will be undone  
by people trekking to and fro.

The hill will soon be overrun  
by raucous children having fun.  
Those flawless drifts will meet demise  
and melt begrimed beneath the sun.  
Each brief occurrence lives and dies  
mid shifting winds and changing skies,  
and Life inures us to goodbyes,  
and Life inures us to goodbyes.

**Caroline Sposto, 52, Memphis, Tennessee,**  
*is a semi-retired small business owner and an active community volunteer.*  
*She has two young adult daughters.*

**2014 SENIOR POET LAUREATE CONTEST  
– HONORABLE MENTION AWARD - \$10**

**ON FINDING AN 1884 BOOK OF SERMONS**

by Gail Denham

Every night, Brother Zeke preached  
mighty sermons, stirred hundreds  
in the tent to repent.

Outside, God answered with  
a pansy and a fern; a gentle love  
message near the tabernacle door.

Evangelist Zeke, the orator, tall  
in his mission, thundered, sent  
anxious folks to their knees.

Around the tent, God made the grass  
cool green, and threw in sweet peas  
to soothe tormented souls.

“Repent. Turn your backs on sin, kneel  
in thanks for God’s great sacrifice,”  
the rousing preacher shouted.

And God brought a few rabbits and deer  
to nibble the grass, as people filed  
out of the arena the second night.

The folks quaked, cried, and mourned  
as, each night, Zeke railed against evil,  
and brought God’s Word down on their heads.

The last night God raised a gorgeous moon,  
a bright orb to light deer, grass, and the sweet  
peas. And then the people knew...

...they were loved and forgiven.

**Gail S. Denham, 74, Sunriver, Oregon,** *is a self-employed writer, photographer, bookseller, and antique dealer. She enters many contests, belongs to a dozen State Poetry Associations, and leads a few writing and photography workshops at Northwest writing conferences. She says, “Often I have won prizes from the contests and my work has been published in anthologies. Recent wins include a poem accepted by Highland Park contest; Blanket Stories is using one of my photos online, and Postcard/Prose has accepted a poem and photo. A current project is to convert some of her thousands of transparencies to digital format - a long process. For many years, I sold illustrative transparencies to magazines, book publishers, and newspapers. My husband Dan and I have four sons and fourteen grandchildren, plus some greats. We’re so pleased to be near some of our sons and their families.”*

**2014 SENIOR POET LAUREATE CONTEST  
– HONORABLE MENTION AWARD - \$10**

**HE IS SAFE**

by Marsha Kay Ault

I promised him—never a nursing home.  
That promise stalks me with guilt,  
but he is safe.

An episode scared me  
into this decision I've made—  
his disappearance one cold winter day.

He was found in a large city  
hours away.  
He drove in circles

all day long, into the dark  
lost, discouraged, and distraught.  
He glimpsed the blinking signs

on the freeways of a Silver Alert—  
his name flashing before him.  
He confided in me later,

“I knew you had done that.”  
Finally found,  
we wept with joy, bowed

our heads, thanked the Lord.  
I visit Dad each day, hug  
him, hold him, cry with him.

He packs up his room each night  
for a trip he plans to take . . .  
unpack and re-decorate, my new task.

I promised him—never a nursing home.  
That promise stalks me with guilt,  
but he is safe.

*Marsha Kay Ault, 65, Nacogdoches, Texas, is a retired English and Spanish high school teacher; homemaker, wife, mother of seven, and grandmother to seventing “and counting.” She enjoys being with her family, teaching, and walking. She finds joy in writing for her family and friends. Her most recent poetry winnings have been second place in the 2014 National Poetry Month Poetry Contest with the Judy B. McDonald Public Library and second place in the 2014 Ambassador of Poetry Award of the Massachusetts State Poetry Society. Presently Marsha and her husband Robert serve a local mission for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.*

**2014 SENIOR POET LAUREATE CONTEST  
– JUDGE’S CHOICE AWARD**

**THE PERSISTENCE OF WIND**

*(A salute to Howard Moss)*

by Faye Adams

Although it is not yet winter,  
secretaries de-moth their coats,  
and from the backs of closets, pull forth  
snow-boots, gloves, and woolen scarves.  
Locked inside trunks of automobiles,  
tire chains curl under ice scrapers,  
as if tomorrow the world upturns.

An old man's hat sails past, searching  
for a higher spot on which to rest,  
as though to watch the filles push down  
their skirts with both hands, as purses cling  
on hunched shoulders and hair strands  
blow against their cheeks.

Even children lean with faces scrunched  
as they stomp and wait for yellow busses,  
book bags dwarfing their small frames.

In one wild, feathered upsurging,  
leaves pile into mounds in corners  
of decks where chairs sit upturned  
and stalks wither in dry-dirt pots.

What is the weather doing?  
And who brought the wind that sings  
this mournful song at dawn,  
hounding city streets where the sun hides  
from view and bows to a force  
whose power it cannot erase?

What is this howling, wind-tossed song;  
what is this wild, feathered upsurging,  
as if tomorrow the world upturns  
and secretaries de-moth their coats,  
pull gloves and woolen scarves out  
from backs of closets and into purses,  
while ice scrapers and tire chains share  
space in locked trunks of automobiles?

And though it is not yet winter,  
there is the persistence of wind

**Faye Adams, 79, De Soto, Missouri,** *bookkeeper/tax preparer, Aloette Beauty Consultant, and retired. She writes poetry, children's books, nonfiction, and short fiction. She has published in newspapers, magazines, poetry journals, and anthologies in the US, UK, Korea, and Canada. Faye won Missouri's Senior Poet Laureate in 2010, and again in 2012. She served as co-editor of the On the Edge MSPS annual anthology since 2003 and also holds membership in Writers Society of Jefferson County, St. Louis Writers Guild, and Missouri Writers Guild. Faye has published online in Rogue Poetry Review, Gateway to Jesus, 37 Cents, and others. She has published in print in Ozarks Mountaineer, Mid-America Poetry Review, Art with Words, Wilderness (Korea), Cave Region Review, IDEALS, Mature Living, Birds and Blooms, and others. She has self-published six hardback books of her own, plus three poetry chapbooks. Her current hobbies are reading and gardening.*

**2014 SENIOR POET LAUREATE CONTEST  
– JUDGE’S CHOICE AWARD**

**MY WIFE'S MAMMOGRAM**

by Henrietta F. Sparks

I hold my wife’s hand  
until they call her name,  
she leaves me.

I become a salmon  
swimming upstream,  
breath through my gills.

A deep song calls us upstream,  
icicles and green reeds along the shore.

We swim, climb river ladders,  
until her breast blushes,  
and I feel only smoothness.

I know the lump  
is just a piece of gravel  
from the river bed.

**Henrietta Sparks, 79, Santa Barbara, California, is a retired college and personal counselor.**  
*Her hobbies include reading, aquatics, volunteering at her retirement community,  
and walking on the beach. She has three grown children. Her publications include a dozen  
published poems; “My Wife’s Mammogram” was published in Passager in December 2013.*

**2014 SENIOR POET LAUREATE CONTEST  
– JUDGE’S CHOICE AWARD**

**ALISTAIR, 1925**  
by Francie Fetz Hall

He came the year before my mother was born  
with his hero’s limp  
crossing America to visit his war comrades.  
Why else would he have come  
to frozen Indiana in December?  
He and my grandfather shared condensed war stories  
in uneasy company.  
They didn’t have to retell them complete-  
they had both been there.  
My grandmother, her raven hair escaping its braid,  
set out an abundance of food on flower-rimmed china  
plates rarely brought from the cupboard;  
set food before this fiery-haired stranger  
with his foreign brogue.  
Grandfather, out doing farm chores, while  
Alistair sat at the black-walnut kitchen table  
drinking fresh percolated coffee and  
eating raspberry jam cake the color  
of blood seeped into sand.  
He stayed for five days, sleeping inside the warmth  
of grandmother’s hand stitched quilts  
and heat from the fat black woodstove.  
He was gone as quickly as a winter day  
never to return though he sent a letter or two.  
Grandfather never again revisited the war aloud.  
Grandmother attended to her sewing, cooking, babies,  
never again exhibiting such youthful animation.  
She raised five children all with raven hair,  
save for my mother, whose red hair and freckles  
were fodder for farm wives’ contemplation.

**Francie Fetz Hall, 68, Fort Garland, Colorado**, now retired, previously worked in medical and disability fields. Her hobbies include playing banjo, hiking, reading, writing, riding her bike, and gardening. Francie says, “My poetry has been published in *Messages from the Hidden Lake* and *Willow Creek Journal*, as well as various other poetry collections in the past. I am married to my husband Chuck and have two grown children.”



**2014 SENIOR POET LAUREATE CONTEST  
– JUDGE’S CHOICE AWARD**

**A RAIN IN THE WOODS**  
by Dr. Charles A. Stone

It isn’t just the fading echoes  
or galaxies festooned against  
enameled night skies that  
draws me to the wilderness.

It is the quiet composure of trees  
after a passing storm has shorn  
them of leaves and awakened  
the lichen and mosses at their feet.

It is the way the spongy soil absorbs  
my footfalls and the whispered  
promise of an afterlife in the smell  
of decomposing wood.

It is air so rich in ozone that  
every breath is like shedding skin,  
and sound is muted by ferns  
and grasses cascading over rocks.

When I want to wash away the dust  
of commerce, I find a wilderness  
and travel there without luggage,  
without a watch, waiting for the rain.

**Dr. Charles A. Stone, 72, San Antonio, Texas, is a retired medical geneticist.**  
*His hobbies include archeology, gardening, cooking, travel, and bridge.*  
*His publications include numerous journals and anthologies,*  
*editor of *Preoccupied With Austin* (an anthology of poetry);*  
*he is the author of *Bureaucracy For The Innocent*.*  
*Dr. Stone is married, with two children and seven grandchildren.*

**2014 SENIOR POET LAUREATE CONTEST  
– JUDGE’S CHOICE AWARD**

**WINTER CLEARING**

by Nancy G. Steelman

He patiently sits, small white feather in his beak  
As his sparrow mate cleans soiled spring nesting  
From her red wooden house  
She reflects on the one white feather  
Wipes her beak on the open door  
He waits quiet and still  
In the cool breeze the long white offering quivers

**Nancy G. Steelman, 77, Vineland, New Jersey,**  
*is a retired teacher. She is the co-founder of the poetry society, Poets Vineyard,  
meeting monthly at the Vineland Historical and Antiquarian Society.  
In the past year, she started a cantor for her Catholic parish.  
She is also a quilter, tennis player, wife, mother of four, and grandmother of ten!*

**2014 SENIOR POET LAUREATE CONTEST  
– JUDGE’S CHOICE AWARD**

**THE WOMEN**  
by Beth Staas

Publication withheld at poet’s request.

**BETH STAAS, 84, from La Grange Park, Illinois, is a retired English instructor.** Beth says, “At Christmastime, I completed a memoir that I sent to my extended family, half of whom had come from Germany in the late 1920s. It was 20 years in the making. The book is in novel form, alternating between events in America and Germany, culminating in the early 1950s as the second wave of immigrants arrived in Chicago to begin the process anew. An initial private printing, it will soon be available at Amazon.com.”