

THE 2009 ROBERT CLARK APPRECIATION AWARD



**First Place
Kathryn L. Cox**



**Second Place
Terry Miller**



**Third Place
S.J. Baldock**

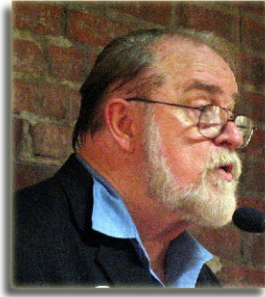


**Honorable Mention
Margo Davis**

With poems by:

**Carol Carpenter * Joseph R. Trombatore
Donny Wankan * Judith Schiele * Jim Barton
June Patricia LaVerney * Nancy Bertoneclj**

The **2009 Robert Clark Appreciation Award** is presented
in honor of Robert Clark's longtime service
to the Houston area community of poets.



COMPETITION JUDGE

Marie Delgado Travis

HOST

Sol Magazine Projects

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First Place

Kathryn L. Cox

Seabrook, Texas

Memorial Day in McPherson Park, Washington, D.C.

A soft breeze cools the cement beneath my feet
as geometric shadows of nearby buildings
grow long across worn patches of green grass.
Making their way slowly, one by one they come.
With walkers, wheel chairs, crutches they come,
come to find that certain bench,
to stake a claim on dream time.
Black plastic bags holding what's left
of a life of hard times and bitter memories
lay near torn and ragged soles.
Darkness will bring nightmares of Nam,
dreams of beds and showers
as sirens wail down K Street.

Ducks and pigeons scurry with flapping wings
circling round the woman in green sweats.
Midst the clamor, her hand, a rusty brown,
reaches into a bag and throws the fowl some crumbs.
She who has so little shares what she can.

Oblivious, suited figures hurry through the park
conversations wrapped around their ears.
Passers-by become intruders in this strange land.
Do they bring anything to the table?
Can they hear their pain?
A dark figure stoops under his mighty load
ranting, raving at sights unseen
as he stumbles from bench to bench.
He looks at me and I become afraid.
He shouts a greeting and I nod.

I take a seat on a fading sun-lit bench
feeling overwhelmed.
Here on Memorial Day near the Wall of honor
gather the forgotten ones
lost in the land of the free and the home of the brave.
How did it come to this?
Fearful and ashamed
I walk away toward my hotel
knowing that my meal tonight will fill my belly
but will it feed my soul?



Second Place

Terry Miller

Richmond, Texas

Purple Hull Peas

The hottest day on earth was August 10, 1966,
declared so by my younger brother and I as
we stood in our family's Texas truck patch
with cartoonish-sized garden hoes in our small and blistered hands.
We observed small gray sparrows perched on barbed wire fences
burst into flames and dinosaurs arose above the power line poles
that loomed above our labors like some great crucifixes
disrespectful giants tied together with string.
"Who likes stupid purple hull peas anyways" my
seven-year-old philosopher questioned as we scraped
clouds of tan dust into the air when our hoes
clawed the ground to cut the thin, tender blades of
St. Augustine that marched toward the tiny bean plants.
To add to our misfortune, we realized that the better we performed our jobs,
the more work we'd have later, when we will stoop over with the sun burning holes
in our backs to harvest the beans, over and over again,
until the bushy plants will offer no more bounty.
Even the evenings offer no respite, when, we, in the glow
of a massive black and white television, whose green-gray eye watched us,
shell bowl after bowl of purple hull peas that Mom collected into clear plastic bags
and placed carefully in the chest freezer
(patting the bags like a mother pats the butt of a newly diapered baby)
that rested like some great white coffin
in the room dubbed the "front room" of our white wood-framed farm house.
Standing there in that dusty field, my brother and I swore an oath that our
children would never have to work this hard.
That oath would soon be forgotten when
my family gathered at our winter supper table
and my brother solved his philosophical query
as he asked dad for "more peas please."
And, centuries later, when my daughters
and I stood in the Arctic of an opened grocery store frozen food freezer,
I recount how my brother and I couldn't
go to the market to buy packages of purple hull peas,
my daughters roll their eyes at yet
another boring story of their dad on that damn farm and think,
"Who likes purple hull peas anyways?"



Third Place

S.J. Baldock

Red Oak, Texas

Beginnings and Endings

I empty the bag less vacuum
At the far end of the backyard
... near the fence ... where I have
Watched two mockingbirds
Squabbling over building a nest.
All week long they have been ferrying twigs
And snippets of this or that to the crooked tree
That first-time visitors use as a landmark
For finding our house.
The vacuum canister is full – as usual –
Of silky, long blonde hairs from Tassi
Our long-haired Chihuahua and
The blob of carpet refuse
That falls onto the ground
Looks a lot like a giant hairball.
The mockingbirds wait
Until I am tucked back inside
The house to investigate.
As the male swoops down to
Pluck a tuft of hairball
They squabble some more and
I wonder if their relationship can
Withstand the strain of
Nest building, egg laying,
Nest sitting, hatching and nurturing.
He seems an arrogant little twit
From where I'm sitting and
I speculate that he hasn't married her
Like he promised – but then what
Do I know of mockingbird character?
Finally the hatchlings arrive.
I see disappointment on his face
For there is no little boy bird to carry on
The string of sons that secures an inheritance.
He begins to spend
More and more time away
Leaving her to care for the fledglings
Through sunshine or rain
Eventually dropping by only occasionally
With a worn-out, token worm
As mandated by the court.



Honorable Mention

Margo Davis

Houston, Texas

Make No Mistake

(After a photo from the Mexican Revolution exhibit)

This is the 1920's, a black-on-white
warehouse of elegant women, hundreds or more, pert ears cocked
not for some winsome young man but for the shrill
starting bell.

One chance!

Manicured hands hover just above the Olivetti's
stiff keys anchored smooth-side-up, the shy vowels surrounded
by the scrambled guttural. Pitch drops with
lower-case keys,

nowisthetime

a subdued headline. Row after row
of tight blindfolds rob each identity. How eagerly they lean in
to the future.

Carol Carpenter

Livonia, Michigan

Continuing View

Pretending is a delicate wing
layered with ebony feathers.
You are crow in air. You see
below, above, beside yourself
all that is and can be. You

become that sage green ribbon,
weave a fluid fence. Your tapestry
sprouts trees that reach toward yellow,
curve toward shades of life. Lavender
hues, all purple and red. A puddle
of children. Call all
crows. Glossy feathers perch in trees,
speckle air, draw close
as children stoop to ground.

Begin the lesson of feathers.
These children open eyes.
Their pupils dilate. They continue
their view through veined leaves
up close, transparent and forever real

until they blink. Dark lashes
skim their cheeks silent as a wing.

Joseph R. Trombatore

Kingsland, Texas

Metamorphosis of Narcissus

~Salvador Dali, 1937

The first poetry reading I attended
was in the 70's
more recently, just the other day

I had more hair back then
eyes brighter
My rich voice fenced off with fewer

crowns. I wrote then, like I do now
one line
to get started, & I'm off & running

I don't get any fuzzy feeling
toe nails that tingle
strange breezes, or familiar voices

from the dead. Good friends are
my muse
& the Sicilian blood that runs

through my veins. A passion
for everything
that ever catches my attention

The palette of color & shape
Fellini films
My fist rammed inside a hornet's

nest. It takes more than applause
to cause flowers
to grow up through my head.

Donny Wankan

Dickinson, Texas

Pidgin

umbrellas speak it
wink innocent tongues
their musky summer
pierced by a stupid death
a droning in the surf
from which winds point down
a fluttering chariot
of fruit trees
white walls in any book
have so distinct a sun
that skies sigh against the shade
where a bloom of irretrievable iris
will undo me
will rattle an old doctor
against his handkerchief
interjections of brine
from the folds of the moon
an old horse who knows
nothing more of flesh than air
my hand is in that cloak
in the pocket edges of bare sea-mouths
turned heavenly upon her sacrament
made visible and tinkling
and in pungent confusion
it makes a bed and leaves the iris in it
makes a constant cedar praise
so the relation of sun and moon
will answer the snow
with green shouts at the quick
beneath the clipped secrecies
of blue summer flakes

Judith Schiele

Brandon, Mississippi

Writing for Life

There may be one hiding
in the closet; worn out shoes
and old maternity clothes
surely have something to say.
One might be sleeping in the bassinet
stored in the attic, or buried
in boxes underneath the bed.
I thought I heard one mumbling
this morning. Startled by the alarm,
it disguised itself in static.
The furnace groaned and a memory
or an almost-understanding
stirred inside me--first flutter
of an embryo. I adjusted
the thermostat and the feeling
sucked into the return vent,
bacon screamed in the skillet.
Someone said lost poems are
poems lost forever; like lightning,
words won't strike the same place
twice--another form of death.
I walked around the block
blank with paper and pen ready.
Smoke rose from chimneys--
misplaced angels
escaping?
Bluish dawn,
frozen earth, leafless trees
speechless,
I shouted show yourself,
keep me alive!

Jim Barton

Huttig, Arkansas

Porch Swing

I'd always meant to hang it,
that old porch swing
that was so much a part of you.
Sunny afternoons sometimes
you'd sit, gently rocking
back and forth like a cornstalk
in the gentle breeze,
chains creaking their arc
through thick summer air.
I remember you'd share your swing,
sometimes with Mama,
sometimes with one of the grandkids,
but most often with your cat,
that great swollen orange moon of a friend,
always ready to touch and be touched,
to soothe like a smooth-running engine
purring and rippling beneath your hand.
For years after you died I kept that old swing,
storing it in closets,
shuffling it between outbuildings,
moving it three times before I realized,
too late, that it was slowly falling apart.
It would never agree to hold me,
to swing, to sway on a summer's day.
At last, I hauled it away
to be burned on a pile of brush
on the land we were clearing off.
That was two years ago.
Tonight, I sit gazing at a faded picture
of you in that swing with your cat,
a smile on your face, and I think once again
I'll go burn that old pile some day soon,
but not just yet, not right now;
outside, the moon has risen,
swollen, low and orange.

June Patricia LaVerney

Mobile, Alabama

Floods

Muddy water fills creek beds and flows through miles of verdant green valleys. Heavy rainfall washes away sand and dirt put down generations ago, or maybe only a week. The creeks grow rapidly; waters eat away at their banks, eventually they become torrents that flow over everything in their paths, democratic rivers sharing their misery with all.

Kudzu, scourge of the South, covers everything in its reach. Like lava flowing over the ground, there is no way to stop its growth, no way to make a dent in the wall created. It smothers trees in the forests, flowering bushes in the Spring, fences dividing land: there is no escape from the green demon speeding along the highways of Dixie.

Despair. A surge of feelings that prevents normal functioning. You stay in bed and hide while pulling up the covers over your head. You want to pay attention to loved ones, but are unable to return from the depths of depression. Life is slowly sucked away like a river filled with muddy waters or kudzu covering the land. Despair floods life.

Nancy Bertoncelj

Angleton, Texas

Billy

A blue-eyed boy, hair the color of wet sand,
lives in a snow white house on a hill
near the state hospital. Primrose-yellow
and pumpkin-orange marigolds splash in window boxes.

Spring mornings, Billy pedals his bike
on cracked, crooked sidewalks
of the hospital grounds. A joyful boy, he hears the robins sing.

He chains his bike near a red-brick building
and calls, Molly Molly, come to the bars and tell
me your tales. Her butterscotch hair tumbles through black bars.

A fiery vampire bat flies and screams at night.
Half bat, half vampire lives at the cemetery.

Seasons of Billy's childhood pass.
Winter days he sleds on Cherry Hill,
ice skates, throws vanilla snowballs.

At the summer cottage, Billy swims out
past the drop-off, hears lake waves chase
to shore all night, awakes to scents of wood smoke.

Outside the window on a wintry night, icicles in pine trees,
white paints the earth, a winter snowscape.
The fiery vampire bat comes for Billy.
Now, Billy wanders on state hospital grounds
wearing state issue clothes.

When he looks at the house on the hill,
faded paint and cracked windows,
he remembers the dazzle of marigolds in the sun.

WINNING POETS

FIRST PLACE: Native Texan, visual artist and poet **Kathryn (Kay) L. Cox**, M.A. is a retired art therapist and professor. Her poems have been published in *Sol Magazine*, *Tapestries*, *an Anthology of Adult Learners Writing* (2008) and in *Crossings: An Anthology of Collaborations* (2000). She is a member of the Gulf Coast Poets, The Poetry Society of Texas, Women in the Visual and Literary Arts of Houston, The Arts Alliance of Clear Lake and the Galveston Art League. "Memorial Day in McPherson Park, Washington, D.C." will also be published in the 2009 edition of *That Thing You Do*, Bay Area Writers League.

SECOND PLACE: Poet and educator, **Terry Miller** began writing poetry in 2008. Terry was inspired by his mother at a young age to read poetry and classic American writers. Although he did not begin writing poetry until he was in his fifties, Terry seeks to find his own voice in the world of poetry by writing about his experiences growing up on a farm and his life as a husband and father. He lives in Fort Bend County with his wife of 23 years, Gloria, and daughters, Amber and Heather, who are students at the University of Texas and Wharton County Junior College, respectively, and is a professor of eMarketing at Kaplan University.

THIRD PLACE: **SJ Baldock** has been published in *Cigar Lifestyles*, *International Toastmistress Magazine*, *Emotions Literary Journal*, *Scribe and Quill*, *SEEDS*, *Amaze: The Cinquain Journal* and *The Fisherman's Guide*. She has also been published in these E-Zines: *A Writer's Choice*, *WritersBlock* and *Sol Magazine*, and has been writing since grammar school as a means of sharing what she is otherwise unable to communicate. In her words: "Writing gives voice to what I am feeling while shielding me from the effects of those words. I can stand outside the situation as an observer instead of inside as a participant. That's a tremendous tool for coping with the inadequacy of my spoken words."

HONORABLE MENTION: The poems of **Margo Davis** have appeared in several Austin International Poetry Fest anthologies, and in the 2008 Spring Edition of *Ampersand Poetry Journal*, and some were awarded prizes by the Gulf Coast Poets Chapter of the Poetry Society of Texas. Poems are forthcoming in *Sol Magazine*. In a past lifetime, she earned an MFA in creative writing from UNO. During that time, poems appeared in *New Orleans Review*, *Ellipsis*, *Maple Leaf Rag*, *Passages North*, and *From a Bend in the River*.

OTHER POETS

Carol Carpenter's poems and stories have appeared in numerous online and print publications, including: *Margie*, *Snake Nation Review*, *Neon*, *Georgetown Review*, *Caveat Lector*, *Orbis*, and various anthologies. Most recently, her poems were published by *Paycock Press*, and *Outrider Press*. Her work has been exhibited by art galleries and produced as podcasts (*Connecticut Review* and *Bound Off*). She received the Hart Crane Memorial Award, Richard Eberhart Prize for Poetry, the Jean Siegel Pearson Poetry Award, Artists Among Us Award and others. Formerly a college writing instructor, journalist and trainer, she now devotes her time to writing in Livonia, Michigan ("Continuing View" was previously published in *The Pedestal Magazine*.)

Joseph R. Trombatore was a member of Houston Poets back in the 70's. Early works appeared in *Travois*, *Sunsprout Magazine*, and in several chapbooks. Recent works have appeared in *JASAT*, *Dead Mule*, *ken*again*, *Sugar Mule*, *offcourse*, *Heavy Bear*, *Burst!*, *The Houston Literary Review*. *Screaming at Adam*, Wings Press, 2007 received a Pushcart nomination. Joseph Trombatore is the Editor/Publisher of the online ezine: Radiant Turnstile.

Donny Wankan's poetry has appeared in *Sol Magazine*, *The Externalist*, *Paradigm*, *Ampersand Poetry Journal*, *Niteblade*, and the *2009 Texas Poetry Calendar*. He is a member of the Gulf Coast Poets, is its anthology editor, and leads its Poetry Reading Group.

Judith Schiele has been published in *The Rose and Thorn*, *Sol Magazine*, *Stirring Magazine*, *Lily* and *Mindfire*. She was a juried poet in the 1999 Houston Poetry Fest and published in the Anthology. Judith was born in Mississippi. In her words: "Poetry found me puttering around the fringes of life suffering from the empty nest syndrome, and derailed my career as a fashion buyer/consultant, leaving me with the freedom to pay attention." "Writing for Life" was previously published in *The Rose and Thorn*.

Award winning poet, **Jim Barton's** poetry has been published in twenty seven states and one foreign country. He has two chapbooks forthcoming, and is the author of *For the Animals Who Missed the Ark*. He has won Sybil Nash Abrams Award in Arkansas and a Jim Stone Grand Prize in Missouri. A member of Poets' Roundtable of Arkansas and the Poetry Society of Virginia, Jim is the Arkansas State Chair for the 2010 National Federation of State Poetry Societies National Convention in Memphis.

June Patricia LaVernway has been actively writing poetry since 2004 when she joined *Sol Magazine*. Many of her poems won prizes and/or were published in its various editions. She was a contributing travel writer and photographer for *Platinum Magazine* in Roswell, NM, and more recently wrote the garden descriptions for the Mobile Botanical Gardens *Galaxy of Gardens* tour guide book. She is a member of Poetry Works Workshops.

Poet and writer, **Nancy Bertoncej** has been previously published in *Sulphur River Literary Review*, *Above the Bridge*, and *State of the Arts*, the publication of TAACCL. She is a member of the Gulf Coast Poets. She was a juried poet at the Houston Poetry Fest in 1999, and placed first for a cash award in Lucidity for her poem, Shalimar. Nancy currently writes articles for *Image Magazine*, a regional publication.

