Minutes of the Fourth 1994 Haiku Society of America Meeting, December 10, 1994

The fourth 1994 meeting of the Haiku Society of America was held at 1:00 P.M. on December 10, 1994 at the Public Library in Bellevue, Washington. Officers present were Francine Porad, President, and Doris Heitmeyer, Secretary. The featured reader was Margaret Chula of Portland, Oregon. Visiting members were Jim Kacian, Berryville, VA, and Miriam Weintraub, New York City. Members from Washington State: Carol Edson, Les Farkas, Connie Hutchison, Randal Johnson, Bob Major, Mary Fran Meer, Mas Odoi, David Ritchie, Marilyn Sandali, Elizabeth Sayre, Jean Campbell Simmonds, and Joan Stamm. Wini Jaeger joined the HSA at the meeting. Guests: Alexis Lyga, Sarah Singer, Patricia Swords.

President Francine Porad opened the meeting by inviting those present to introduce themselves and read a haiku.

Vice President Bruce Ross sent the following haiku:

step by step up
to the old wooden porch
baby pumpkins

Secretary Dons Heitmeyer submitted the Minutes of the Third (Annual) HSA Meeting in New York City, September 17, 1994 as published in the *Newsletter,* with the following corrections to Minutes and Regional News: During Minna Lerman's haiku workshop, the member who said that he liked 5–7–5 because it had become a magical form for him, allowing a haiku to develop, was David Bloch, not Bruce Ross. (Sorry! On tape, voices can sound similar.) In the report on the reception at Liz Fenn's Haiku Conservatory, Liz has pointed out that one of her specially honored guests, Joette Giorgis of Liverpool, New York, was left out. Apologies to David and Joette. The Minutes were approved by members present.

Another correction: President Francine Porad was honored with an interview in the *1995 Poets Market* not *Writers Digest. Frogpond* Editor Elizabeth Searle Lamb was honored in a previous yearbook.

Membership at the end of the year was 612; last year 526; 1992, 477; a 16% increase over last year alone. In addition, there are several new members beginning in 1995.

Francine read Treasurer Raffael DeGruttola's Fourth Quarterly Report, submitted by mail. The balance in the HSA General Fund was $7,233.80 on 9/16/94 and $7,411 on 11/30/94, with the 3rd issue of *Frogpond* and all Secretarial mailings paid for.

Membership dues in the amount of $2,897 had been received (much of this representing early renewals and new memberships). $2,488.29 had been received from sales of *A Haiku Path*, offset by $1,683.21 in postage expenses and previous deficit, for a gain of $805.08.

Secretary Dons Heitmeyer then read the results of the HSA Elections of Officers for 1995:

1995 HSA Officers

611 ballots were mailed. 153 were returned as of December 6, 1994 (a 25% return). Officers are elected by a simple majority of ballots returned.

HSA OFFICERS

President	
Bruce Ross	144
The following each got 1 write-in vote: Tom Clausen, Francine Porad, Michael Welch, Christopher Herold, Ruth Yarrow	
Abstentions	4
1st Vice-President	
Lee Gurga	149
Abstentions	4
2nd Vice-President	
Barbara Ressler	149
Abstentions	4
Secretary	
Doris Heitmeyer	152
Abstention	1
Treasurer	
Raffael DeGruttola	148
Abstentions	5
Frogpond Editor	
Kenneth C. Leibman	146
Elizabeth Lamb got 3 write-in votes.	
The following each got 1 write-in vote: Ken Tanemura, Alexis Rotella.	
Abstentions	2

REGIONAL COORDINATORS

Northeast (New England)

Lawrence Rungen Andover, MA	10 of 10 ballots
East Coast (Metropolitan Area)	
John Stevenson Nassau, NY	42 of 45 ballots
Write-in: Dee Evetts	1
Abstentions	2
Southeast	
David Hood Mebane, NC	21 of 24 ballots
Write-in: Ken Leibman	1
Abstentions	2
Midwest	
Harvey Hess Waterloo, IA	9 of 13 ballots
Abstentions	4
Southwest	
Michael McNierney Boulder, CO	13 of 14 ballots
Write-in: Nik Bernath	1
California	
Michael Dylan Welch, Foster City, CA	12 of 14 ballots
Write-in: Kay Anderson	1
Abstention	1
Northwest	
Robert Major Poulsbo, WA	11 of 12 ballots
Abstention	1
Hawaii	
Darold D. Braida Honolulu, HI	4 of 4 ballots

Though all ballots were mailed by October 11, we have received several complaints from members in some areas of late delivery (one as late as December 21). Other areas received them within two weeks. Bulk mail is supposed to be delivered within 3 weeks. We are thinking of complaining to the Post Office. We received a few ballots after December 6. If these had been included, there would have been no change in any majority vote.

We apologize to all Michigan members for leaving their state out of the listing for the Midwestern Region. This was not political! It was a secretarial oversight as the region was added at the last minute. A correction was published in the Newsletter that followed.

The Secretary had been requested by Jane Reichhold to read a statement published in the Summer 1994 issue of *Mirrors* and to include it in the Minutes. This was done:

> Friends, writers and readers of haiku books! As happy as I am for the winners in this [the Merit Book Awards] contest and my comments should not diminish their honor, yet I ask everyone to stop and think, Why is the haiku anthology, *The Haiku Moment,* edited by Bruce Ross and published by Charles Tuttle Company; the book that contains the work of so many HSA members, the book that is THE book of the year, not on this list? I hope that at the next HSA meeting this situation either be investigated and righted or that a special category be created so that *The Haiku Moment* receives the credit the editor, publisher and book deserve and to correct this grievous error which smells like petty politics.

In reply to Jane's letter, the Secretary had stated that she did not think politics entered into it; the reason was that the book had not been submitted for consideration by the judges. The Secretary read an additional statement at the request of several members (which was published in the *Newsletter* of October 18, 1994) on behalf of *Haiku Moment* the signers now wished to add two 1993 translations to the statement. The three books, on display at the meeting, were:

> *Haiku Moment: An Anthology of Contemporary North American Haiku.* Edited by Bruce Ross. Charles E. Tuttle Company, Inc., 1993.
>
> *The Essence of Modern Haiku 300 Poems by Seishi Yainaguchi.* Translated by Takashi Kodaira and Alfred H. Marks. Mangajin, Inc., 1993.
>
> *Right under the big sky I don't wear a hat the haiku and prose of Hosai Ozaki.* Translated by Hiroaki Sato. Stone Bridge Press, Berkeley, CA, 1993.

Secretary Doris Heitmeyer announced that she was donating the three books to the HSA Library.

President Francine Porad said that the translations also had not been received by the judges. A total of 30 books were received. She read her statement, to be published in *Frogpond*, that though the books in question had not been received, they were worthy of special mention and recommendation. "Not known by the judges was the fact that in the past, books other than those submitted could be contemplated for awards, and have been in the past. However, since it is impossible to be aware of all the books that might be eligible, it is best to send your work if you wish it to be considered." She added if she had known of George Knox's book, *Tendrils of the Eye* also published in 1993, she would not have asked him to be a judge, since that made him ineligible. His book was also on display.

A proposal for changes in the guidelines for the Merit Book Awards has since been received from Jane Reichhold. Since quite extensive changes are proposed, not limited to methods of bringing books to the judges' attention, the Executive Committee must give them thorough consideration.

Meanwhile, we are urging members to be aware of the problem revealed this year—that not all authors remember to send a copy of their book, particularly if they are not HSA members. Books by non-members are eligible and have been given awards in past years. However, we know of substantial anthologies, translations and books of essays not considered in the past, perhaps because not widely distributed. If you like a book published in 1994 and have reason to think it has not been sent, please remind the author to send a copy, or contact Bruce Ross about it well before the deadline. 1f you find a book worthy of consideration and cannot contact the author, you might consider donating a copy. We feel that it is too much to ask of the judges, who give so much of their time, that they also purchase copies of books. Book prices are rising, especially those from university and other mainstream presses. The HSA Treasury cannot be expected to support the expense. All books received are donated to the HSA Library. We are still actively pursuing means of housing our growing collection, with the aim of eventually making it accessible.

We would like to express our sympathy and concern for the people of Kobe, Japan, and nearby areas affected by the earthquake. We would be grateful for news of any Haiku Society members living there.

Program

Talk and Reading by Margaret Chula:
Margaret (Maggie) Chula, first prize winner in the Merit Book Awards (1993) for *Grinding My Ink* spoke informally about her 12 years in Japan, sharing domestic and neighborhood experiences not included in her book or tape. She interspersed her talk with haiku from her book. She began by explaining the title. Grinding the charcoal ink-block on the inkstone with water preparatory to sumi-e painting is a "meditative process to prepare yourself for the work that follows.… When you begin scraping the ink against the inkstone, at first there is that screeching sound; as it dissolves, the sound becomes very smooth and watery. This is also true of the mind of the artist."

The book is dedicated to her husband John and to their traditional Japanese house in Kyoto on "Gaijin-Mura." Cab drivers called the street "Foreigners' Village" because the row of houses was rented mainly to foreigners, with only two elderly Japanese couples remaining (at very low rents). Since foreigners moved in and out, the rent could be raised each time! Living in a Japanese house was "a very esthetic experience, but also a labor-intensive way of life." There was a tiny kitchen, an "in-house outhouse" and a

separate bathroom with an 0-fudo, a one square meter bathtub in which water was heated. In winter they used a *kotatsu*—an electric heater under a table draped with a blanket. Twenty minutes from downtown, their back door opened on a rice field where they could watch all the stages of rice growing. During the summer rains, moisture pervaded the house, shoes got moldy, the futon was damp, and insects and animals came in to escape the rain:

sound of a moth
trapped in a paper lantern
    summer rain

Japanese are fond of persimmons. But they always leave one on the tree—to insure a good harvest next year, or for birds or travelers.

the sun sets
behind winter trees
    last persimmon

Her reading ended with a sequence, “Dead Sparrow,” played from the tape with musical accompaniment She explained that as women get older in Japan, their kimono become more and more sedate; old women wear dark gray and brown “sparrow” colors. The sequence is about Matsumura-san, who lost her husband at 75. She calmly observed all the New Year customs as if nothing were going to happen, visiting neighbors with traditional gifts of eggs and soba noodles for long life:

our cheerful neighbor
brings us eggs and soba
before she dies

Shortly afterward, Matsumura-san committed a kind of ritual suicide in her home. The sequence evokes the old Shinto funeral customs and a haunting but tranquil sadness.

Maggie got interested in haiku through her friendship with Edith Schiffert (author of several books of original haiku and translation). Preferring to be a friend, not a teacher, her continued comment on Maggie’s haiku was, “you’re coming right along.”

“Because I lived in Japan,” says Margaret Chula, “I lived a haiku life.”

Ordering correction: To order discount package-book, *Grinding My Ink* and taped reading (55 min; Ken Ulansey, woodwinds), send $22.95 plus $2 shipping & handling to Katsura Press P.O. Box 275, Lake Oswego OR 97034 or call 1-800-858-9055 (MasterCard/Visa accepted) Tape only, $9.95; book only, $14.95; $2 shipping & handling.

Reading by Doris Heitmeyer, HSA Secretary, New York:
Doris Heitmeyer read a selection of haiku about New York called “Gritty City”:

public library
each marble stair
worn down in the middle

and a short sequence, “X-Rated Haiku of a Birdwatcher”:

a last fling
before migration
the drake ducks his mate

Reading by Jim Kacian, Berryville, VA:
Jim Kacian read haiku from his book-in-manuscript, Presence of Mind. He prefaced his reading by saying, “What is the relationship of a haiku writer to the reader? 1f the haiku is the pearl that forms in the mind of the reader, the haiku writer is the grit.”

frosty morning—
the lifeless tracery
of the lacewing

(Honorable Mention, Haiku, San Francisco 1994)

winter seclusion
tending all day
the small fire

After intermission, Mary Fran Meer, speaking for Northwest Regional members, presented Francine Porad with a supporting membership in the Bellevue Botanical Garden Society and a scrapbook of photos taken at the dedication of the Tao Garden, on which occasion Francine read haiku written by Northwest poets. Then, on behalf of the Northwest Region, Connie Hutchison thanked Mary Fran for her two years’ as Regional Coordinator, during which the Northwest Regional Anthology, *Echoes Across the Cascades,* was published and there was a dramatic increase in membership.

Reading by Carol Edson:
Carol Edson read excerpts from her “Sacred Garden” to a pre-recorded music track. A high point was her haiku-like sequence, “Runes of Change,” with the passionate autumnal music of flamenco guitarist Omar Torres. Meditation throughout a day under a

cherry tree in “petal-falling time” resulted in the poem “Petalfall,” accompanied by New Age harpist Marty Jones. Complete tape available from Blackbird Studios 1804 NE 50th Seattle WA 98105 $10.98 ppd.

Haiku Workshop by Jim Kacian:

The discussion of this haiku was particularly interesting:

By the river
from the top of the pine
the eagle swoops

Jim’s first impression was that it was a nature sketch and lacked tension, which might be obtained through comparison or contrast. Les Farkas asked why it had to have tension—”it’s a moment for me.” Jim said he had no argument with that. “I’m seeing this picture very clearly—that’s good.” But he felt that, to make it something more than a moment jotted down, it needed to resonate, to expand into some other dimension. “I have this picture—tell me more about it.” There
was a discussion of what this other dimension could be: perhaps the time element-day, night, season. Francine Porad said, “You have movement in the eagle. You could have movement in the river flowing, rushing. “ Or, Jim suggested, the contrast could be that the river was not moving—he had seen many frozen rivers on his drive to Seattle. Carol Edson said that one of the problems with the line “by the river” is that it is “too simple and goes by too fast; it doesn’t stop you, so it turns into prose and prose is read for information, not emotion .... You don’t get a frame around it, you just whiz right through it.” Another member thought the idea of framing a good point and suggested “ice-packed river” as a contrasting with “swooping.” Jim said, “the picture in the haijin’s mind may not be that contrast at all; we’ve just changed what it’s doing.” Les Farkas suggested naming the river. Jim said that named places in America were a problem; people from other states might not recognize it as Japanese recognize their landmarks. Bob Major suggested “the eagle swoops into his own reflection.” Jim said, “We don’t know that. The poet is not telling us that.” The poet (Jean Simmonds) came forward and said, “What you, being from Virginia, don’t realize is that the eagles at Mount Vernon are diving for salmon. Jim said, “I don’t know that. It needs to be said in some fashion.” Someone suggested “salmon run” as a season word which would provide the added dimension; others said that the different kinds of salmon—Coho, Chinook, etc.—ran at different times and perhaps should be named. However, readers outside the area wouldn’t know that. “Early salmon run,” for instance, might be used. The interesting thing was that in the haijin’s original “moment” the eagle was diving for salmon, and the discussion had brought the experience back to the poet’s mind. A new (suggested) version:

an eagle swoops
from the top of the pine—

early salmon run

Jean said that she had been working and working on the haiku. She thanked us for giving her a lot of good ideas.

Afterwards, the group celebrated at a Japanese restaurant.

[I would like to thank the Northwest Regional members for their friendship and hospitality, particularly Francine Porad who took me and Jim Kacian on a tour of the Capitol Hill historic district (where she grew up) and the older parts of the city such as Pioneer Square and the Smith Tower; and Connie Hutchison for the birdwatching tour. The weather was great, the rain held off, and the Cascades Mountains were visible in all their splendor almost every day.

—Doris Heitmeyer