Minutes of the Second 1995 Haiku Society of America Meeting
San Francisco, Calif., June 24, 1995

The HSA meeting was part of a weekend of readings, United Haiku Nations," arranged by Regional Coordinator Michael Dylan Welch. The meeting itself was held at Nichi Bei Kai, 1-5 pm on Saturday June 24. Unfortunately, arrangements with Robert Hass did not work out for this date. A new date was set for 7 pm, Tuesday, July 1 1 ("Robert Hass: In Conversation on Haiku")at Fort Mason (Room C-215), San Francisco. The discussion will include American haiku. The poet, an English professor at the University of California at Berkeley, had suddenly become much in demand, having been appointed Poet Laureate of the United States on May 8, 1995. Members may have seen him interviewed by Bill Moyers on the Public Television series, "The Language of Life." In addition to publishing many books of his own poetry, Robert Hass is editor of an anthology, The *Essential Haiku* (1994), the 20th volume of a series, The Essential Poets, published by The Ecco Press (available in many bookstores). These volumes on historic poets are edited by well-known modern poets. Galway Kinnell edited j

Essential Whitman Philip Levine *The Essential Kca* and

Carolyn Kizer *The Essential (John) Clare*

It was Robert Hass's translation of a Bashô haiku that President Clinton quoted in a speech last fall:

Deep autumn-

my neighbor, how does he live, I wonder?

The meeting was preceded by an Executive Committee Meeting (Bruce Ross, President, Lee Gurga, First Vice President, and Doris Heitineyer, Secretary; other Officers had been contacted by letter and by phone). They met with Jerry Kilbride, Michael Dylan Welch, and Garry Gay for lunch at Pizza Inferno [don't ask!] for a discussion on possibilities for housing the Haiku Society Library and a possible proposal by the California State Library System. The Executive Committee concluded that a new HSA Library Committee should be appointed to advise on opportunities to house the present library and any historic collections that may be left to us in the wills of long-time members. [Some, including the Secretary, have been considering this.] Other topics, discussed by the Executive Committee only, were the need to appoint a new Haiku Path Committee, plans for the 1995 Joint Conference in Chicago of the Haiku Society of America and Haiku International Association, and guidelines/minimum number of entries for the HSA's Renku Contest. Discussion of these topics is ongoing. A letter

from Bruce Ross to the Haiku Community of Croatia (anti-war, nonpolitical) was approved by the Executive Committee.

The General Meeting at Nichi Bei Kai was attended by at least 30 people in addition to Officers present Maggie Chula came from Portland, Oregon to attend, and Randal Johnson came from Olympia, Washington. California members and visitors included Fay Aoyagi, Esther Bankoff, Jocelyn Conway, Helen K. Davie, Ken DelPonte, James Ferris, Donna and Pat Gallagher, Garry Gay, Christopher Herold, Jerry Kilbride, Tom Lynch, Patricia Machmiller, Marilyn Marques, Elisabeth Marshall, George Olczak, Zane Parks, Pat Shelley, Gail Sher, Laurie Stoelting, John Thompson, Kiyoko Tokutomi, Lequita

Vance-Watkins, Desi Vasquez, Eugenie and Emile Waldteufel, Paul Waisky, and Michael Dylan Welch.

Regional Coordinator Michael Dylan Welch began with introductions and a haiku round reading. He then introduced President Bruce Ross, who chaired the HSA business meeting.

Bruce called on the Secretary for her report. Secretary Doris Heitmeyer reported that membership just before the meeting was 571, 10% more than on June 26, 1994 (521). Our membership is better for this time of year than in any previous year in our history. She submitted the Minutes of the first 1995 meeting of March 11- in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, as written cooperatively by Bruce Ross and Lee Gurga. The Minutes were approved by members present

Bruce presented the Second Quarter Treasurer's Report as submitted by Treasurer Raffael DeGruttola. On March 1, 1995, the balance was $13,903.90, and as of June 1, $13,388.15. Income for the quarter was 3210.49,$1,064 of which was from sales of HAIKU PATH; expenses were $3,726.24, mainly from the first issue of FROOPONI) and the Information Sheet/first Newsletter mailing. The Treasurer invested $11,000 of the balance in 4 CDs at an average rate of 5% over 3, 6, 12, and 15 months, allowing enough cash to pay each quarter's expenses when due.

Bruce announced the upcoming Haiku North America Conference in Toronto July 13-16 and the Joint Conference, Chicago, October 20-21, 1995, of the Haiku Society of America and Haiku International—an extraordinary event with many visiting poets from Japan, including leading representatives of the three major schools of haiku.

He then read the letter to Marijan Cekolj, editor of *Vrabac/Spanow* as approved by the Executive Committee:

"Dear Marijan Cekolj,

"Your sister organization, the Haiku Society of America, would like to commend your enormous work within the international haiku community. We admire your editorship of *Vrabac/Sparrow* haiku magazine and your promotion of Croatian and international haiku. We would also like to offer, a bit belatedly, our solidarity with you and the Croatian Haiku Association and the Croatian haiku community at large, as you have all endured under the madness of war.

"We are moved by your anthology, *Haiku from War/Haiku iz rata* we are moved by Vladimir Devidé's comments in his essay, "Haiku in a Time of Crisis," that the "horrors of this war must be written about, lest they be forgotten," and that *"with* Croatian haiku about war, a new genre of non-detached haiku poetry has been introduced, elaborated and developed, namely, haiku about war, haiku against war, anti-war haiku." We are moved by the challenge war brings to the haiku poet. We are moved by the challenge to bear witness and yet to remain somehow detached from the haiku poets experience in the time of war. We share with you those moments in Croatian haiku that bear witness to this condition, and we are moved greatly by them.

"With respectful wishes,

"Brace Ross, President,
Haiku Society of America.'

Bruce followed *with* the announcement of the Merit Book Awards, 1995 (see Summer FROOPOND). He thanked all entrants for their contributions to the HSA Library.

A Chairperson for the Nominating Committee was still to be appointed (see p. 1).

William J. Higginson's "Guidelines on Children's Haiku,"

written when he was a coordinator of the JAL contest for children's haiku, were available for distribution. For a copy, send request with SASE to William J. Higginson, PO Box 2740, Santa Fe, NM 87504-2740.

Bruce read excerpts from Marlene Mountain's "Sexhist

Sighence," 4 sequences panning the sexist language in bird guides. She is sending a copy to Roger Tory Peterson.

Michael followed with local news and announcements (see Regional News, below). He mentioned several "haiku" in lieu of Letters to the Editor recently published in the *San Francisco Chronicle* These were the result of three 'Parley" comic strips by Phil Frank,

complaining that letters to the editor were too long and suggesting that they be submitted in the fonn of haiku.

A Reading by Lee Gurga:

Lee's reading was from his work in *The Midwest Anthology.* his two books, *A Mouse Pours Out* (High/Coo Press) and *The Measure of Emrtiness* (Press Here, and some new poems.

He began by paying tribute to three people who made him a haiku poet RH. Blyth, Robert Bly, and Wendell Berry. It was Bly's translations and criticism especially that turned him toward haiku. He recommended *Form in Society and in the Poem,* and "Where Have All the Critics Gone." Robert Bly's translations of Issa are again available—see Japanese bookstores. Wendell Berry, in addition to his poetry, wrote on the community (of rural America), and his thoughts might be applied to the community of poetry and poets as well. Lee recommended *What Are People For* (Nxtbpoint Press, San Francisco). Lee said that his own haiku are ajournai about his family and his town, and about the Amish community to whom he sells the Austrian draft horses that he raises (in addition to his profession of dentistry). He spoke a little about his home, near one of the spiritual centers of America associated with Abraham Lincoln, and began his reading.

Some new light was shed on this unsettling haiku:

old pond *...*
out of the watersnake's mouth
the toad's eyes

The story had a happy ending. "The look on the toad's face was somewhere between resignation and surprise and amusement—the snake had swallowed him the wrong wayfeet first" The snake spit him out, and he hopped away.

A personal favorite of the Secretary's: I read she reads winter evening

Lee's haiku about his children are among the best of such

haiku, but I leave readers to discover them for themselves.

Finally Lee introduced a book by another haiku writer

who wrote haiku for 20 years in isolation-Lee himself did not

know of other haiku writers in North America for a similarly long time. The book is Bill Albert's *Haiku* 500 poems selected by his friends after he died in 1988. Albert refused to publish during his lifetime. His friends considered this his death poem: Through this Autumn night

listening to the
cold-
the dead radio

Albert's haiku, too, are a journal of his small-town life in Rockville, Connecticut. He speaks of "a seed breeze," "strings of snow" falling through a streetlight, spring torrents, and bats that "squeak darkly." (To order, see Books on Display).

A Talk, "Parallels to Haiku in Native American Poetry," by Tom Lynch:

Tom Lynch wrote his PhD dissertation on haiku and has published a book of haibun. He began by saying that he did not want to suggest some overarching similarity between haiku and Native American songs, but just some points of intersection.

The waterbug is drawing the shadows of the evening toward hum on the water.

—Uma song

The songs are not esthetic objects like Western poetry, but are used for personal access to power—a spiritual vehicle. According to Frances Densmore, an early translator, the dream songs of the Chippewa/Ojibway were not composed, but "came to the Indian in a dream or trance; by singing a song he can recall the condition under which it came to him, a condition of direct communication with the supernatural." Gerald Vizenor, a native American of Chippewa origin and a writer of haiku, says that his haiku are like dream songs in trying to recreate the original experience-what we call the haiku moment, when "the relationship between the subject and the object is for- gotten" (Kenneth Yasuda), a moment of becoming one with nature. In a book of haiku, Matsushima (1984), he says that through meditation on a haiku you enter a dreamscape. His haiku do not deal with fixed ideas of Indian life, like tepees, sundances, or peacepipes but with life in rhythm with the sea- sons. During his stay in Japan, where he discovered haiku, he recognized the same feeling there. A waterbug haiku by Vìzenor

calm in the storm
Master Bashô soaks his feet-water striders.

A Haiku Workshop by Tom Lynch:

The workshop was short due to time restrictions. Comments and haiku are presented anonymously. One haiku provoked an interesting discussion and has considerable potential. The violent colors suggested a hellish vision:

red and yellow scales

rockfish panting on wet sand the sky glows crimson

The first comment was that the second line was too telegraphic; “a rockfish” would be better. Tom Lynch, in an attempt to shorten the line, wrote “rockfish pants.” The sound of laughter clued him that he had inadvertently created a new article of clothing. Someone substituted, “a rockfish gasps.”

Tom asked whether anyone thought there was too much color. Comments: The crimson sky suggests a hot, bright sun. The event is a stranded rockfish at sunset; the colors are necessary. Some thought the mention of scales/color of scales was unnecessary, but another felt it became a different poem if read as follows: a rockfish gasps

on wet sand
the sky glows crimson

Other comments: It needs the specificity of scales. You lose the comparison of the sky with the colors of the scales. Tom thought the last line was too long and might be better as:

red and yellow scales

a rockfish gasps on wet sand crimson sky

Thus also helps unify the poem, which was somewhat broken

up when the third line was an independent sentence.

[We hope the discussion was helpful to the poet in creating a definitive version of the poem.]

A Reading by Lequtta Vance-Watkins:

Lequita Vance-Watkins read from her new book, *White*

Hash Black Rain Women of Japan Relive the Bomb pub

lished in the 50th anniversary year of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It was the first reading from the book itself. She brought some of the first copies, not in bookstores yet. Lequita prefaced her reading by saying that this is not simply a translation of a pre-existing Japanese collection. She and Manko Aratani, who helped with the translations, spent three years collecting material from many sources, all published in some form but not necessarily in books. It contains haiku, tanka, longer poems, chiIdrens stories, and recollections of survivors. Works are by poets and by "common people," i.e., not poets. Biographies of the writers, where available, are printed at the end of the book. A Lanka by Sbinoe Shoda Since so many skulls

are gathered here, those large bones must be the teacher's. fApologies for any ermrs in lineation-DH] Published by Milkweed Editions, 1995, paperback, $12.95. Ask for it at your bookstore! LeqUita is planning a tour of readings in other cities, including Boston and New York.

Workshop on the Rengay, by Garry Gay and John Thompson:

A sheet of rengay definitions and guidelines by John

Thompson was distributed. If you are interested, please write to John at 4607 Burlington Race, Santa Rosa, CA 95405 oremail JERZ88APRODIGY. A gift copy of *Hammerhorn Lake,* a small book of rengay by Garry Gay, John Thompson, and Michael Dylan Welch, was also distributed.

Garry and John explained the rengay in an introduction with a question and answer period. Garry invented the rengay in the summer of 1992 and practiced writing them with John and others. It is a thematic form in which you can stay in one season and on

one topic. More intimate than longer forms like reniai, it can be written by 2 or 3 people in one session of an hour and a half (though this varies). It is in the spirit of haiku, a celebration of a time and a place. The form, for 2 people, is 3-2-3-3-2-3, each taking alternate verses; each verse is a standalone haiku (the 2-liners are 2-line haiku). Linking and shifting are used (though there is no set policy on that) but disjunctive linking, as in renku is not characteristic of the rengay. Verses can refer back to those before the previous one, or all of them can link to the first verse; the final verse can link back to the first in a circular fashion.

Garry originally conceived it as an in-person conversation or dialogue that did not lend itself to writing by mail, but it is still evolving and "now everybody is writing them through the mail. " He and John wrote one on a meteor shower by e-mail.

John said that he was surprised to find how it makes him write more. He had thought he could only write when inspired, or in nature, but finds he is inspired by other writers. He feels it works particularly well in our culture and life style.

Other advantages of rengay are that editors are open to it because it is not too long (like a renku) and is written by more than one poet (unlike a solo sequence). It can have a title. You can stay in the mood that you started in.

Garry said that it's good for a rengay to have some sort of theme. An example was "graveyards in spring." Sometimes a rengay can begin with one theme and change to another during the course of the rengay. As yet there am few rules about form, but inherent in the form is the possibility of a dramatic change

of direction halfway through. During the first half, the poet who begins the rengay has control over its course; during the second half, the second poet controls it.

On actual methods of writing rengay, he said that one of the poets begins by proposing a first verse. For the following verses, each poet presents 2 or 3 choices to his partner and one is chosen, sometimes with criticism (as each poet takes turns at playing "Master.") The excess haiku are often good enough to keep—and publish. The title may be decided upon afterwards, perhaps a line from one of the haiku.

Garry had brought a collection of objects as props to provide inspiration to the participants, among them a bear skull, a small bust of Mozart, a chess knight, sea horses and starfish. Those who wished to participate worked in pairs. At least one rengay was completed in the limited time available and was put on the blackboard for a critique. [The Secretary regrets not being able to participate due to an en-and back to her hotel before dinner.]

We got together again for an excellent vegetarian dinner at the Lotus Garden in Chinatown before going to Borders for the second reading of the weekend.

Books on Display at San Francisco:

The following books are available from Michael D. Welch,

Press Here, PO Bo, 4014, Foster City, CA 94404; make out

all checks and money orderes to *Michael D*. Welch:
On My Mind (Anita Viro, Vincent Tripi) $5
Raking Sand (Virginia Brady Young, Vincent Tripi) $5
Starship Earth (Adele Kenny) $5
Met on the Road (Higginson/Harter) $6
The Hailin's Tweed Coat (Michael Dylan Welch) $4
Tremors (Michael Dylan Welch) $4
Fig Newtons (Seniyu by seven SF poets) $6
Footsteps in the Fo (Tanka by seven SF poets) $7
The Measure of Emptiness (Lee Gurga) $7.50
Harvest (1991 Haiku North America Anthology) $5
The Shortest Distance (1993 Haiku North America Anthology) $5
A Vote for Alice (Michael Dylan Welch) $6

Please add shipping & handling (US & Canada) $1.00 for 1 book, 750 for each additional book. International, outside North America: $2.75 for first book, $1.50 for each additions! book—international postal money order in US funds please.

Haiku by Bill Albert. Grilled Cheese Publishing, 1991,

$10.95. Published posthumously by friends of Bill Albert in Rockville, CT, where he died in 1988 at the age of 37. Orders: Ken DelPonte, 1506 Tenth Avenue, Sau Francisco, CA 94122 or call (415) 661-7931.

Hammerhorn Lake Garry Gay, John Thompson, Michael Dylan Welch, authors and publishers. 1994. A collection of rengay written over the 1994 Labor Day weekend at Hammerhorn Lake. Presented as a gift to attendees at the national meeting of the Haiku Society of America, Saturday, June 24, 1995, San Francisco, CA. (if for sale, no price given)