

# From the Lily Pad



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE NICK VIRGILIO HAIKU ASSOCIATION

Fall 2008 / Winter 2009

## **ANNOUNCING A VERY SPECIAL EVENT!!**

### **I REMEMBER NICK – CELEBRATING THE POET AND HIS LIFE**

**Sunday, January 25<sup>th</sup> — Rutgers University  
Campus Center, Camden — 2-5 pm**

January marks the twentieth anniversary of Nick Virgilio's death. Please join us for a creative celebration – in personal stories and poetry, critical reflections and artists' interpretations – of Nick's life and work. Tickets are \$10 each and space is limited, so please don't delay reserving your space for this special event by calling Tony after 6pm (856-365-0136) or by emailing [Nick.Virgilio.Haiku@gmail.com](mailto:Nick.Virgilio.Haiku@gmail.com). **Please see the enclosed invitation for further details!**

### **COLLINGSWOOD BOOK FESTIVAL**

Thanks to the invitation of Walt Howat and Stacy Shannon, co-chairs of the Poetry Tent, NVHA participated in the Collingswood Book Festival on October 4<sup>th</sup>. Tony Virgilio, Henry Brann, Sue Hitchcock, Mary Heron, and Michele Robinson enjoyed talking about haiku and Nick Virgilio's work with the people who stopped by our table, and Tony and Henry gave a well-received presentation and reading at noon. We thank the participants who entered our haiku writing contest and are pleased to announce the winners. . .

#### **First Place: Coral Rudnick**

sakura blossoms  
gently blowing in the wind  
it's spring in Japan

#### **Second Place: J. C. Todd**

that rush of air in  
your head – heron, opening  
wings of cloudless blue

#### **Third Place: Carol Alutius**

autumn leaves can show  
that sometimes even endings  
can be beautiful

#### **Honorable Mention: B. J. Swartz**

up in the attic  
standing his watch by the door  
the old tin soldier

#### **Honorable Mention: Michele E. Lester**

Montana remains  
shadows on the mountainside  
and you. . . forever.

## **COMMEMORATING NICK'S 80TH BIRTHDAY**

Nick Virgilio would certainly have been proud of the group of over 40 people from five states who gathered together at his gravesite on June 29<sup>th</sup> to honor him and his work while commemorating his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday. As Msgr. Michael Doyle observed, we gather for "this simple man who wore dead man's clothes, while the graves of Camden's wealthy gather no one." We gather, he pointed out, to celebrate Nick's wealth, which is "the inspiration that never dies."

Numerous people stepped behind the lectern to talk of how Nick has inspired them and people they know. From their stories, it quickly became evident that Camden's haiku poet has literally inspired legions of people all over the world – from Camden's poets Rocky Wilson and Charles Bechtel (Executive Director of the Walt Whitman Arts Center) who both write haiku because of Nick; to Tokyo's Professor Tadashi Kondo, who invited Kathleen O'Toole to speak to his students about Nick Virgilio; to Bologna's poets, who received enthusiastically Raffael de Gruttola's Italian translations of Nick's haiku (see article below); to London's haiku poet David Cobb, who told Robin Palley he is working to have Nick Virgilio's work incorporated into university classes; to Washington D.C.'s attorney and haiku poet Roberta Beary, who said Nick Virgilio's storytelling and evocation of personal feeling helped inspire her critically acclaimed book The Unworn Necklace.

For a man who rarely left Camden, Nick Virgilio is traveling around the world now through his haiku. From his gritty urban American reality, Nick Virgilio is spreading humanity across the globe.

#### **Virgilio in Italy by Raffael de Gruttola**

There is an interest in Italy today not only of Italian-American poets and writers but in haiku as well. This presented an opportunity for me to collaborate with an Italian poet, Walter Valeri, to begin a bilingual translation of the haiku of Nick Virgilio. We were invited to Cesenatico, Italy this past June for an International Poetry Festival sponsored by the University of Bologna and the Reggio Emilia Region.

Cesenatico is a small fishing village on the Adriatic Coast that has a rich tradition for poetry. The town's greatest poet, Marino Moretti who died in 1979, left his house as a memorial to the people of this ancient Roman town. Casa Moretti

- Continued -

is where many functions are held throughout the year. Each June an International Poetry Festival is held and poets throughout Europe are invited to read and discuss their work. One of the interests this year by the organizers was the Japanese poetic forms including haiku.

Dr. Valeri and I met throughout the months of April and May at his home in Quincy, MA. to select haiku from the *Selected Haiku of Nick Virgilio*. We were invited to do a bilingual reading in Italian and English of Nick's haiku to the poets and writers in attendance at the conference.

The art of translation is difficult for many reasons. For example, how does one translate words from one language that do not exist in the other language or the many differences in idiomatic expressions from one language to another? In addition with poetry and haiku where so few words are used, it's important to choose the right words and expressions so that the meaning is clear for the new reader. The ultimate criteria for a good translation are that **meaning and not just words are translated**. This is easier said than done.

Since Dr. Valeri is a native speaker of Italian and a fine poet, we were able to discuss each rendering of Nick's haiku so that there would be less ambiguity with Nick's intended meaning. In many instances we left an expression in English that we felt had an international usage. In other examples we introduced different words in Italian that corresponded to a similar meaning and feeling in the original. All this was done with the expectations of reading the haiku in both English and Italian for the occasion of the Conference whose theme was: *Porto dei Poet*, Port of the Poets.

Below is a small sample of both the English and Italian of Nick Virgilio's haiku. The reading was held in the small theatre of the Casa Moretti. The bilingual reading was received with repeated applause and was videotaped by the town for future reference.

heat before the storm:  
a fly disturbs the quiet  
of the empty store

l'afa anticipa la tempesta:  
una mosca rompe la quiete  
del negozio vuoto

lily:  
out of the water...  
out of itself

la ninfea:  
fuori dall'acqua  
fuori di sé

Easter morning...  
the sermon is taking the shape  
of her neighbor's hat

Pasqua di mattina...  
prende forma la predica  
col cappello della vicina

The dramatic effect of these haiku was felt and appreciated by the poets, writers and townspeople in attendance. Walter Valeri and Raffael de Gruttola will continue to translate more of Nick Virgilio's haiku, and there are prospects that an Italian publisher will agree to a bilingual book in Italian and English to be published in Italy.

### **Send Your Email Address, Please!!**

As a cost-saving measure, NVHA would like to send the biannual newsletter to members electronically via email. If you haven't already done so, please send your email address to Michele Robinson at [robinson.m.l@comcast.net](mailto:robinson.m.l@comcast.net). If you do not have email, you will continue to receive the newsletter through the postal service. Thank you for your cooperation!

### **Membership, Books, Etc. –**

**Please Note Price Changes!**

**There's still time to:**

- **Renew your 2009 membership! \$15 annual (\$10 for senior citizens, students, and those on fixed incomes); \$50 lifetime**
- **Buy a CD featuring Nick Virgilio reading and discussing his haiku (\$15 plus \$2 s&h, \$13 with membership)**
- **Buy Nick's book, Selected Haiku (\$20 plus \$2 s&h, \$18 with membership)**

### **2009 NVHA Calendar:**

**MEETINGS AND EVENTS OPEN TO ALL!  
PLEASE COME! GET INVOLVED!**

- I Remember Nick – Celebrating the poet and his life  
**Sunday, January 25, 2009, 2-5pm,  
Rutgers University Campus Center,  
Camden**
- Board Meeting  
**Tuesday, April 7, 2009, 6:30pm,  
Crystal Lake Diner,  
Haddon Township**
- Annual Graveside Birthday Commemoration  
**Sunday, June 28, 2009, 2:00pm,  
Harleigh Cemetery, Camden**
- General Membership (Annual Meeting)  
**Sunday, September 20, 2009,  
1:00pm, Sacred Heart Church,  
Camden**

Visit our Web Sites

[www.nickvirgilio.rutgers.edu](http://www.nickvirgilio.rutgers.edu)

[www.nickvirgiliohaikuassociation.org](http://www.nickvirgiliohaikuassociation.org)

(submit your photos and haiku through this site)

<http://nvha.blogspot.com/>

*Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays!*

**Contributors to this newsletter include  
Raffael de Gruttola, Michele Robinson,  
and Tony Virgilio.**