

From the Lily Pad



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE NICK VIRGILIO HAIKU ASSOCIATION

Spring / Summer 2008

COMMEMORATE NICK VIRGILIO'S 80TH BIRTHDAY

ANNUAL BIRTHDAY GATHERING
Sunday, June 29th, Harleigh Cemetery, 2 PM

PLEASE ATTEND the annual gathering at Nick's grave, which is particularly special this year, as Nick would have turned 80! Nick's grave is located down the path from Walt Whitman's tomb in Camden's Harleigh Cemetery and is marked with a beautiful lectern etched with his famous lily poem, lauded in the United States and Japan. Please bring a chair (if you have one) and any haiku you wish to share. This **FREE** event will be filled with joy as we recite haiku, share memories, eat birthday cake, drink a toast of soda to Nick, and celebrate his legacy by reading haiku written by school children — the winning entries from the national Nick Virgilio haiku contest and some of the haiku by students at Camden's Sacred Heart School, written during the NVHA-sponsored workshop taught by acclaimed local poet Therese Halscheid.

NICHOLAS A. VIRGILIO MEMORIAL HAIKU CONTEST ***2008 WINNERS***

winter stars
my father paints over
the old white walls

Asha Bishi, Grade 12
School of the Arts, Rochester, NY

scent of spring
my sister paints
the rising sun

Asha Bishi, Grade 12
School of the Arts, Rochester, NY

autumn night
one brick
darker than the rest

Gracie Elliot, Grade 7
School of the Arts, Rochester, NY

silent graveyard
one tombstone
with a crow

Alexa Navarez, Grade 7
School of the Arts, Rochester, NY

light footsteps
across the snow
his alcohol breath

Desire Collier, Grade 7
School of the Arts, Rochester, NY

first kiss –
the tingle of coke
down her throat

Lauren Fresch, Grade 12
Perkins High School, Sandusky, OH

NVHA extends thanks to this year's judges, Tony Pupello and Pamela Miller Ness, who considered each entry with great care and chose the six poems they consider "most exemplary of fine haiku." For the judges' commentary on each winning haiku, please read the posting on the Haiku Society of America's website at <http://www.hsa-haiku.org/virgilioawards/virgilio.htm>. NVHA would also like to thank each student for their dedication to haiku poetry, and we welcome and encourage even wider participation in next year's contest. Entering the contest is free, so entrants have everything to gain and nothing to lose. Please heed Nick Virgilio's encouragement to his audience during his last reading: "I want you people to write haiku after this, 'cause you might have a great poem in ya. You never know."

Haiku Hints: The Playful in Haiku

By Raffael de Gruttola

A Japanese friend of mine once defined for me the meaning of haiku in English as seen in the their calligraphy. He said haiku means: **wind flow**. I took this to mean that as we breathe and experience Nature we gasp at some of the most fascinating and beautiful living objects out there.

Whenever I'm doing workshops in the elementary schools, I always refer to this meaning and then show the children pictures from stories of insects, flowers, and other natural phenomena like the ocean and rivers, mountains and streams, as well as the trees and all things that grow and move.

Often I will have the students close their eyes and listen to the sounds all around them and then I say to them, "open your eyes" and write down on paper whatever you think and feel you just heard. I then ask them questions about how they determined what they just experienced. Depending on the age

of the students, the answers are varied and always thoughtful.

I explain to them that the haiku is a form of poetry that allows them to capture those very beautiful moments from nature that will open up new worlds for them. I then will place a few haiku on the blackboard and ask them if they have ever experienced nature just as these other poets have.

At this, all the hands go up and there's a bustle of chatter from the students because they have had similar types of experiences, maybe not in just the same way as the haiku I've placed before them, but something close to it.

For the young students, this interaction makes them stop and use their imaginations to capture those special personal moments which, before the class, they never thought they could do. I then tell them to keep a small notebook with them wherever they go and to record some of these special moments in their lives and to jot down the essential joys they had in the experience.

I never explain to them that a haiku should have a "nature word" in the statement or that they need to juxtapose one image against another, but rather, I explain to them that the joy of writing haiku is in the action of doing it. I even don't have to tell them that the experience should be in the present or present tense.

Here are a few of the examples I was able to gather on different occasions from my teaching workshops:

Christmas night
wrapping presents
pine scent all around

a little boy
sleeping
in the dark street

do not kiss me soft wind
I am tired of so many
kisses

and one in Spanish which this young student
translated herself.

la tortuga verde
con su caparazón
cruza el profundo rio

the green turtle
in its shell
crossing the deep river

In Memoriam

It is with sadness that the NVHA heard about the passing of two lifetime members, both of whom knew Nick Virgilio for many years.

Vera Easling, M.D., a pediatrician from Merchantville, NJ passed away in January at age 82. NVHA would like to recognize Dr. Easling and her family for their support of NVHA since the organization's inception in 1989.

L. A. Davidson, a fine haiku poet and one of the founders of the Haiku Society of America (in 1968) died in New York City shortly before her 90th birthday. One of her best known haiku (from her book The Shape of the Tree) is:

beyond
stars beyond
star

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. 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.

There's still time to:

- **Renew you 2008 membership!**
(\$10 annual, \$50 lifetime)
- **Buy a CD featuring Nick Virgilio reading and discussing his haiku**
(\$15 + \$2 s&h, \$10 with membership)
- **Buy Nick's book, Selected Haiku**
(\$15 + \$2 s&h, \$10 with membership)

NVHA CALENDAR

We welcome and encourage everyone interested to attend!

Please mark these events on your calendar

Graveside Birthday Celebration

Sunday, June 29th, 2:00pm
Harleigh Cemetery, Camden

General Membership (Annual Meeting)

Sunday, September 21st, 1:00pm
Sacred Heart Church, Camden

Board Meeting (with haiku supper)

Tuesday, December 9th, 6:30pm
Crystal Lake Diner,
Haddon Township

Visit our Web Sites

www.nickvirgilio.rutgers.edu

www.nickvirgiliohaikuassociation.org

(submit your photos and haiku through this site)

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

**Contributors to this newsletter include
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and Tony Virgilio.**