

Rhyme and PUNishment
Comedic Verse

Long Island Edition, 2019

Edited by
James P. Wagner (Ishwa)

Rhyme and PUNishment, Comedic Verse

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Lloyd Abrams

finding bliss in nasal exploration

let's face it ...

there's gotta be a massive neural pathway
from the inside of your nose
to the pleasure center of your brain

otherwise ...

why *else* would you repeatedly
dig into each nostril
with your index finger or your pinkie
– though most of you have
your favorite combination –
and in a state of rapture and exhilaration
brought on by a rush of dopamine
so thoroughly probe and excavate ...
even though droplets of blood
might trickle forth

you might once in a while
slip a q-tip into your ear canal
shmoosh it around a bit
– gently of course –
then check what goodies
have been exhumed

but like lay's potato chips claims
betcha can't eat just one
you can't perform *just one*
rhinal passage in-and-out
– a so-called *one-and-done* –
but rather dig *you* must
like con edison used to insist
and dig and dig
... and dig some more

Lloyd Abrams is a retired high school teacher and administrator and is an avid recumbent bicycle rider and long-distance walker. Lloyd has been writing short stories for over thirty years and poems for almost a dozen years. His works have been published in more than three dozen anthologies and publications. www.lbavha.com/write

Monica A. Anderman

The Garden Threat

Oh, slithering snail so at home in your shell,
Why must you also in my garden dwell?
You're really a pain if the truth can be told
For eating away at my prized marigolds.
You gnaw and you nibble by light of the moon--
I'm warning you, snail, to get out of here soon.
For at the first glimmer of morning's bright light,
My dear friend, the snail, you'll be in for a fight.
So, stop eating the plants from the seeds that I sow,
Or tomorrow you'll find you've become escargot.

Monica A. Andermann is a published writer of poetry, fiction and non-fiction as well as a woman of many interests including gardening, music, good books and shoe shopping.

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Sharon Anderson

Easy Peasy

First things first, so number one,
settle down to have some fun.
Plan ahead and think it through
and then progress to stanza two.
Stanza three's the problem here.
Think I'll go and have a beer.
Just relax, and plan ahead.
It's simple rhyme, what's there to dread?

I'm done with one, I've finished two,
Three has me bugged, I need a brew.
Let some time pass, sit back and think,
but first, I need another drink.
A simple thing, a piece of cake,
why am I stuck, for goodness sake?
It's time to take myself to task...
but first, a slug from my hip flask.

I've worked so hard my mind's a blur.
Where is my muse? I must confer.
"Hey muse, come have a drink with me,
and help me out with stanza three.

What I've got done so far is good,
'cuz one and two read as they should,
but all my work on three has stunk.
What's that you say? You think I'm drunk?

I beg to differ. I decline
to face the fact the fault was mine.
I nailed both stanzas one and two,
without a bit of help from you.
That stanza three sure was a trip!
Hand me that glass, I need a sip,
And then I'll hit the liquor store
before I edit stanza four.

Grace Beniquez

My Chips

I leave a few chips in the bag
to saver for later.
Get your hands off my chips!
I know you lifted a few because when I passed
the kitchen table, the bag snitched;
it dropped a dime on you.
In your defense, you claim
I left them imprisoned in the gallows of staleness.
You sought to set them free so they
Could follow their brother to Crunchdom.
Get your hands off my chips!
I peer into the depths to find
A few survivors; some with broken
Points like birds with injured beaks - rejects
To scoop up later for a salty fix.
I roll the bag closed and smother them even more.
Thank God they are made of maize.

Grace Beniquez is a published poet, artist, and educator.
Author of "Lazarus Bread," her first published collection of
poetry.

Erin Biener

Laundry Lady

I'm drowning in laundry, don't you know?
I'm drowning in laundry from head to toe!
I'm drowning in laundry, can't you see?
I'm drowning in laundry and it's not just me!
My husband's, the kids', and mine, it's insane,
tumbling down all over me like rain.
In the washer, the dryer, underfoot and on chair.
People who come to my house just stop and stare!
I've tried to take the approach of a Zen Monk Buddhist,
but
I've come to the conclusion we should all just be nudist!

Erin Biener is a life-long Long Islander who writes poetry, contributes her time to community theatre, and enthusiastically enjoys karaoke. Her laundry predicament has improved since her oldest has left for college.

Peter Bové

My American Dream

I would like perfectly smooth hands and bright white teeth
Two girlfriends that don't know each other and a hat that
looks right
None of these things do I currently possess
A lonely moment of realization told me so just the
other day
But I'm working real hard to obtain them as we speak

Come to think of it, a dozen sunny days in a row
A white Cadillac, from the nineteen fifties or sixties
Whichever one is right
A Hi Def Entertainment Center
Some Native American stuff to be cool with, like
moccasins or something
A big swimming pool behind my big Stanford
White house

Several Armani suits, a third girlfriend in another State
Wyoming maybe or L.A. and uh... some money to
play with
...And a career in the movies
Yes, like Bogart or Ted Turner or Sly Stallone

Or even a new guy like Ben Affleck...

Somehow, I've got to get some of this stuff
I mean, things are not looking that great at the moment

Sometimes I think about my American Dream
Maybe soon... Maybe sometime real soon
It will all make sense.

NYC Native Peter Bové currently splits his time between Montauk, NY & Dallas, Texas where he is making his documentary; *Peyote Road* about the Peyote religion of the Native American. Although a writer/director/producer of film television and documentary, including 2003 Sundance Grand Jury Prize Winner: *Capturing The Friedmans*, he admits he is actually a raconteur poet adventurer.

Anne Coen

Coffee Drinker's Lament

Though I lay me down to sleep,
My coffee cup was much too deep.
I cannot doze – no chance to dream
Despite an extra splash of cream.
Next time a waitress brings me cake,
Decaf's the better choice to make.

Anne Coen is a special education teacher who has been writing poetry since the 1970's. Publishing credits include the PPA Literary Review, Bards Annual, Thirteen Days of Halloween, and Poets4Paris. Her most recent accomplishment was placing first in the 23rd Annual PPA Contest.

Linda Trott Dickman

A Brief Elegy

(for three "Jockeys")

You lie there, in gentle folds,
faded, frayed, funky.

You rode up, rolled down
at all the right moments,

never seeing a hospital
when you were new, untried.

Your band is old, exposed
stretched to its limits.

You unraveled, ran,
shredded by a holey life.

Many rides taken, some merely
observed from the stands.

You pounded more
than a trail, you absorbed love's perfume,

only to be washed out, hung out to dry,
pulling at strings. You cannot be donated

to science. The organs you once held
now with someone new, and you?

Fit for rags, nothing more.

Rags that will polish that frame you once viewed
from the floor.

Linda Dickman is the author of *Robes, The Air That I Breathe and Road Trip*. She was Bards Laureate from 2017 - 2019. She is the current coordinator of poetry for the Northport Arts Coalition (Northport, NY.) Linda has been teaching poetry to children for over 35 years and co-leads a poetry workshop for adults at Samantha's Li'l Bit O' Heaven coffee house in East Northport, NY.

Sharon Dockweiler

The Leprechaun's Favorite Request

Oh, sometimes they ask for money,
And sometimes they ask for love,
And one little boy from Kilarney
Asked for a new baseball glove.

But my bestest, most favorite request of them all,
The one I most chuckled to hear,
Was the one when young Sally McGipper McGee
Asked to deck Sam McGipper Mcgreer.

He'd been pullin' her pigtails and stealin' her gum
And makin' her cry every day.
Every time that young Sam came a-skippin' to her
She wished she could wish him away.

So I granted her wish, filled her up with a rage
And a fist weighted up like a train.
She laid him out flat in the mud by the lake
And left him to squelch in the rain.

Sharon Dockweiler is moderator of the Brentwood Public Library Creative Writing Workshop. She writes about depression, victory, and space-travelling slugs.

Alex Edwards-Bourdrez

Forever Young

I swear someone sprayed Pam
On the ganglions in my brain.
My hippocampus is fried;
Nothing sticks as it did way back when.

I don't remember much
The days when my lobes were fresh,
Under its cranial lid
My cortex is stewed to confusion.

The amygdala, though, and the stem
Stay solid throughout,
Instinct and emotion intact,
Hearts still beat their age-old dance of love.

Alex Edwards-Bourdrez's poetry has been published in several anthologies and has won prizes in competitions on Long Island. He is a longtime resident of Northport, NY.

Tina Lechner Gibbons

Losing Things

I lost my glasses -

I had them right here in my hand

Perhaps I put them on my nightstand

I know I put them in a safe place

Oh damn, they're right here on my face!

I lost my keys -

I thought I put them on the table.

I should put them on a retractable cable

Perhaps I dropped them on the floor

Oh damn, they're right here in the door!

I lost my phone -

Told my friend I can't find it in my purse.

Panicking only makes it worse.

My life is empty, I'm having a fit!

What's this Oh damn, I'm talking on it!

I'm losing things -
Always losing this or losing that.
Why am I rhyming like the Cat in The Hat?
You see of all the things I've ever lost,
My mind's the thing I miss the most!

Tina Lechner Gibbons has been writing for more than 50 years and was recently published in "The Suffolk County Poetry Review", "Walt Whitman's Bicentennial Poets to Come: A Poetry Anthology", and the "Bards Annual 2019". She is currently working on her collection of poems and hopes to be publishing a chapbook in the near future.

George Held

A thinning farmer in Center Moriches
Eschewed a belt to hold up his britches,
But when they fell down
He put on a frown
And cursed them as sons of a britches.

George Held often thinks it's funny to be a poet. His new chapbook is *Second Sight* (2019).

Arnold Hollander

Dante

I wonder if Dante was on this level
If so, he was just another devil.

He knew of all the human frailties
exhibiting some; Beatrice was his deity.

He marked out levels that fit his times
for people he judged for various crimes.

And when it was his turn for passing
the tier he entered was everlasting.

Arnold Hollander publishes a quarterly magazine, **Grassroot Reflections**. He has poems in various anthologies. His poem, **A Penny For Your Thoughts**, nominated for a Pushcart award. His poems and short stories are in the online magazine, **Bewildering Stories** and he keeps a blog at www.arnieh.webs.com.

Daniel Kerr

O- Blood Privilege

Every 8 weeks the Blood Banks calls,
they appeal to ego and my sense of inclusion.

*“You are the universal donor,
everybody can use your O-blood.”*

It’s always nice to be wanted,
and help other people at the same time.

Before I see the vampire in a white suit,
I must be screened.

My medical history, sex life, and lifestyle must be probed,
to I determine if I am worthy to donate blood.

I often wonder how my life would be changed,
If I had different answers to the questions they ask.

In the past year, have you gotten a tattoo?
the nuns taught me my body was a temple of the
holy ghost.

Have you had a body piercing?

I think of Christ of the cross.

Have you been in jail or prison?

thank God my father convinced the cop that hash pipe
wasn’t mine.

Have you ever had cancer or leukemia?
Does my recent skin cancer count?

Have you had sex with a prostitute?
a woman from Africa?
another male?
someone with hepatitis?
someone HIV positive?
a hemophiliac?

Are you on antibiotics?
Do you have syphilis?
Have you ever had malaria?
Have you ever exchanged sex for drugs, or money?
Did you live in the UK;
from 1980 to 1996.

Have you ever had Chagas disease or Babesiosis?
Who the hell ever hear of these two conditions!
I found out both are parasitic diseases,
Babesiosis is spread by ticks, and Chagas by insects.
The Chagas-spreading insect is a triatomine,
otherwise known as the kissing bug.
If I am going to be deemed not worthy to give blood,
I'd rather be disqualified by a kissing bug than a tick.

As I reflect on all these questions,
My mind goes back to Arlo Guthrie's *Alice's Restaurant*

song of my youth.

How would my life be different today,
if I had tattoos, had sex with men, spent time in jail, or
slept with women from Africa?
Would I lose my O-Blood privilege?
and find myself sitting on the Group W bench at the
Blood bank?

Daniel Basil Kerr, CPA, Ph.D. is a cross-cultural consultant focused on helping people and organizations work across borders; his work has been recognized by the UN (Doing Business in a Multicultural World) and the Steinhardt School of Education at NYU (2009 Business Education Alumni of Year). He teaches accounting at St. Joseph's College and Suffolk County Community College. Dan is also a licensed lay minister in the Episcopal church.

Lois Kipnis

GoldenOldenitis

I do not like this growing olden
Who declared this age is golden?
I do not like this final chapter
Where's the happily ever after?

Isabella has arthritis
Susie's kvetching 'bout gastritis
Al suspects appendicitis
Stevie's icing tendonitis
Sagging this and sagging that
Is there an *itis* for my fat?

Gracie claims she had glossitis
Mabel says it's gossipitis
Philip's pain is from phlebitis
Flo's eyes ooze conjunctivitis
Jack gave Jill some water pills
Now Jill's complaining 'bout her spills

I do not like this growing olden
Who declared this age is golden?
I do not like this final chapter

Where are wiggles, giggles, laughter?

Freddie dreads folliculitis
Allegra's leery of laryngitis
Nettie's nemesis is neuritis
Kellie's curse is cellulitis
Wrinkles here and wrinkles there
I do not like them anywhere

Wilma whines 'bout widowitis
And her fear of hepatitis
Sadie suffers from bursitis
Prays for golden touch from Midas
Bernie's burning from the shingles
Tillie's foot is numb and tingles

I do not like this growing olden
Who declared this age is golden?
I do not like this final chapter
Is this the new forever after?

Sollie Grundy's lost his list
Of checkups with his *ologists*
Is Monday his urologist
Or is it his neurologist?
It might be his oncologist
Or is it his proctologist?

Is there a toxicologist
For all the pills I now ingest?
And maybe a psychologist
Or is it anthropologist?
I hope not odontologist
Or elegist or eulogist

I do not like this growing olden
Who declared this age is golden?
Please bring me back to Dr. Seuss,
Nursery rhymes and Mother Goose

Lois Kipnis is a creative arts consultant with forty years of experience as a drama teacher and arts administrator. Her publications include *Without a Script: A Caregiver's Journey*; *Together We Can Improvise*; and a one-act play "Things Can Always Be Worse!" Her stories and award-winning poems are included in anthologies and magazines. www.loiskipnis.com

Mindy Kronenberg

Plasticos Vos Liberabit

Hunger drove me to the Paradise diner,
its doors were brightly grinning up the street;
I sought a meal, hardly a vice
when you think of the trouble
that a fella could meet,
his face full of stubble and
no gravity at his feet.

I'd take whatever grub they'd have:
watery soup, rubbery eggs,
rusty beef on day-old bread.
The waitress tightened her apron
and said: "What's your pleasure, Mister?"
I lifted my head. Her eyes glittered
at me, one of the dregs,

and I replied, "Sister,
I've traveled a worn and weary road,
my shoes a wafer under my soles.
I've carried a load of guilt and no money,
a broken compass of questionable goals.
What can a man get who has little cash

and even less hope?

Her blue eyes widened—two languid pools—
her apron sagged, her smile fell.

There was a terrible silence
and I could see through the window
that the skies had darkened. I thought
I heard thunder in the distance.
Her lips slowly parted,

Then she spoke—
(was she touched by my ragged duds,
my humble existence?)— her voice a faint
melody upon the air. “You dope,” she twittered,
“You silly fool....” I was held in the spell
of her glowing countenance. Then she grew hard:
“Doncha know, we *only* take credit cards.”

Mindy Kronenberg is a poet, writer and professor of writing and the arts at SUNY Empire State College. Her work has appeared in hundreds of print and online publications around the world. She is the author of *Dismantling the Playground*, a poetry chapbook, *Images of America: Miller Place*, a pictorial history, and an illustrated book of poems, *Open*. She edits *Oberon* poetry magazine.

Bruce Levine

Summer – Winter

I was recently asked
If grasshoppers
Blow their nose
In winter
I immediately answered
No
They have to hold it
'Til next summer
But in winter
Millipedes ski

Bruce Levine, a 2019 *Pushcart Prize* Poetry Nominee, has spent his life as a writer of fiction and poetry and as a music and theatre professional and is published on and in numerous internet and print journals. His work is dedicated to the loving memory of his late wife, Lydia Franklin.

Martin H. Levinson

There are bombings in Iraq

explosions in Afghanistan too,
a tsunami is hitting Japan,
a lion just escaped from the zoo.

Twelve murders in the Bronx,
a couple of killings in Queens,
a riot is raging in Brooklyn,
they're calling in the marines.

The Democrats say they were wronged,
the Republicans say they feel tricked,
the President says his hands are tied,
the Congress does not contradict.

The climate is getting real hot,
the gun debate getting real cold,
student test scores are falling real fast,
the Supreme Court is out of control.

My walk is covered with snow,
loads of dishes lie in the sink,

haven't done laundry in weeks,
haven't had much time to think.

There is so much in the news,
don't want to miss a darn thing,
the chores will just have to wait,
I'll get to them in the spring.

Martin H. Levinson is a member of the Authors Guild, National Book Critics Circle, PEN America, and the book review editor for *ETC: A Review of General Semantics*.
Website: martinlevinson.com.

Paul Lojeski

Last Jones for an Old Junkie

I've quit almost every poison made that could've
killed me:
bleeding decades of burning blackouts and foul hangovers,

heaving death hacks of first mornings' Marlboro Reds
blackening sweetly wheezing lungs and mumbling,
shaking,

shivering doped up and doped down frenetic
hallucinations,
slamming down a ton of smoldering, steaming
double cheeseburgers,

mountains of red-hot greasy fries drowning in catsup, slabs
of bloody steaks, roast beefs, a million rashers of crispy

carcinogenic bacon, endless sagging piles of fried chicken,
fields of heart-clogging grilled cheese sandwiches and on

and on the list moans and marches towards my onrushing
demise but even so, there's still one beast left scratching

at my fire-breathing need; this stoned junkie just can't
silence:

that evil Sugar's temptations singing their slow,
sweet treachery

24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 52 weeks a year,
igniting wild,
pulsating desires for a universe of chocolates, thousands
of gooey,

slippery doughnuts and stacks of brownies, cakes,
pies, cookies
and everything else imaginable sailing the rusty ship Sugar
into my open port. Junkie to the end, friend. Junkie to
the end.

Paul Lojeski's poems have appeared online and in print. He
lives in Port Jefferson, NY.

Sheri Lynn

the mani

Daydreaming while driving on Ocean Parkway
Ah yes an umbrella drink under the sun on a 40 footer
The radio interrupts, "Free Mani with every oil change".
Wait, what did "That's right ladies, a free mani!

Book your spot at lubesyurway.com today!"
My imagination soars, a spa, palms, ceiling fans,
nature music,
lavender peppermint scents, relaxing in a massage chair-
oil change and free mani, what could be better?

Been to a lube shop? Lubesurway is no Porche!
Ultra-bright LED's emphasize the dark dusty film on the
floor and chairs
are deeply creased, gum embedded with sticky broken
arm rests.
Well, thank goodness I won't be sitting in here!

I look around, there is a guy skyping a
rodeo of a business meeting. Between cowboy and
a stroller
is an overwhelmed elderly couple as a mom juggles

three kids under 5 scattering about like mice.

One kid smashes crackers on the window's edge,
"Kaboom Kaboom!" he yells while in the corner a guy
is dozing in
a tie-dyed bandana, floral trunks, flip flops, high as a kite.
Time to bring on the mani and spa! I think.

"I'm here for the oil change and mani special"
I say to a clerk but Scruffy comes from behind "yo hun,
come with me"
Smoke exhales from his mouth, goes straight into mine, I
cough and say
"Is my car parked in the wrong spot or something?"

"Huh? have a seat here little missy" as he
opens a 1960's tray table, sets down red nail polish in
an old oil can as a pink watercolor paint brush peeks out.
"Yo" the clerk says "its \$39.99"

Scruffy interrupts the clerk "Hun, ya done yet?
Let's get a move on, quick like a bunny, I aint got all
day ya know."
As spittle from the butt stuck to his lips hits my face.
*Where's the
spa, the palms?* I think - as my head snaps to see

A kid ramming the stroller into cowboy,

the laptop pops, the elderly couple jump, the mom lets out
a scream-
Grabbing my keys, I look at Margaritaville, run and think
"Yep, time to find Captain Jack and Sail Away!"

Once an executive shaping technology product innovation with business insight store-telling, award recipient Sheri Lynn is now focused on creative insights expressed through published stories, photography, prose and poems. Sheri published her first poetry & photography Chapbook "Nature's Breath", accompanying postcards and website BreatheInsights.com in 2019. Her works were published in multiple editions of the LIWG's magazine *The Odyssey* and Poetry anthologies (NCPLS #6, #7 and PPA #23). Sheri is deeply grateful to LIWG, NCPLS, PPA, PIN, LILA, DBP and Bard's for support, encouragement and generous writing opportunities.

Joan Magiet

Losing It

The foods I swallow every day
fly to my arms and thighs.
Can I reroute the cheese and fruit
So I can drop a size?

I taste them all, the sweet, the sour
the tangy and the tart.
To hesitate to clean my plate
would surely break my heart.

Each morning brings a new resolve
to curb my appetite.
But I pick and crunch until lunch.
How can my buns stay tight?

If there were some illegal way,
as crazy as it sounds,
I'd do the crime, I'd serve the time,
if I could lose ten pounds.

Maria Manobianco

Almost Made It

I don't know how she did it, but she did--
I'm at the bar drinking whiskey
feeling happy and finally free
when she sat next to me.

Looking into my eyes, she whispered
“Is it alright Mister?”
I answered, “It's fine with me, “
then much to my surprise, my heart
beat with possibilities.

I don't know what she did, but she did it.
I don't know how, but she did.

She told me that I was special
it was our destiny.
I swallowed my drink as my resistance
began to shrink
forgetting, I wanted to be free.

I don't know what she did, but she did it
I don't know how, but she did.

She insists, “We'll be happily married!”
stating, what I should believe
but with babies, one and two
it's too late to escape
what is my duty and my fate.

I don't know what she did but she did it
I don't know how, but she did.

Maria Manobianco's poetry books, *Between Ashes and Flame*, *The Pondering Self*, and her first Young Adult Fable, *The Golden Orb*. She was the Archivist for NCLS 2007-2015 and served NCPL committee. In 2015, Maria received a pushcart nomination for her Sonnet, “On Meditation.” She received a BS from NYU and a MA from Adelphi U.

Gene McParland

Smart This!

Smart Phone!
Smart TV!
Smart Car!
Smart Watch even!
Today everything
is so bloody smart!

I'm nowhere nearly
as smart as these devices.
With these wonderful devices
I can watch TV shows from Mars;
take pictures of my surroundings.
Heck, I can take a selfie picture
of my eyeball if I want.
I can order Chinese food
from anywhere,
and a drone will drop it off.

I can have my car parallel park
itself.
I can calculate how many steps
I've taken or I've climbed.

I now know the weather in China
by a simple voice command.
I understand that I can even make a phone call
if I can figure out which buttons to push.
I can see the other person
on my phone screen.
(that can be a scary thing at times though!)

I can email,
text,
Twitter
Message,
if I had a clue
how to do any of these things.

Still awaiting my Smart
Person 2.0 update revisions.
But, you know what I do realize
without being updated yet?

Is that I can go walk into a field
and smell the flowers!

Gene McParland (North Babylon, NY): is a graduate from Queens College and possesses graduate degrees from other institutions. He has always had a passion for poetry and the messages it can convey. His works have appeared in numerous poetry publications. He is also the author of Baby Boomer Ramblings, a collection of essays and poetry, and Adult Without, Child Within, a collection on poetry celebrating the child within. In addition, he also acts in local theater and in videos, and has written several plays.

Dean C. Nataro

fast lane

n. a conduit for vehicular traffic that becomes a lie whenever I get into it.

O Why O Why O Why O Why
are all those lanes a-whizzin' by?
While the one I occupy
moves like a swatted fly?

So I engage my blinker light
to slither left or slither right.
This done, my lane of recent past
within a moment's moving fast.

My newest lane, where now I crawl,
contends with fit and start and stall,
while all the others zoom and zip,
proceeding at a pleasant clip.

What to do? Well, can't you guess?
(Hint: repeat the same old mess.)
Back and forth and back in vain
while searching for the fastest lane.

Futility like this is seen
in golf – when hunting for the green

the fairway is the way to go.
I've never been there. How'd they know?

And while you're working on the job,
the boss is King. You're just a slob.
And when he says, "You're fired!" your loss
at best leads to another boss.

Investments are a bag of tricks.
Every time I change my "mix"
in any way, I'm proved a clown.
My picks know one direction. Down.

In politics, they loud proclaim,
"democracy" describes the game.
But voting spans the thinnest range –
change your party, get no Change.

So shifting lanes and switching jobs,
investment losses yielding sobs,
voting for the other guy,
and all the diff'rent clubs you'd try

Tend to keep you where you were.
But please do not Despair infer.
Frustration's tears may dog your drive -
yet they prove you're still alive!

Dean C. Nataro is an obscure math professor at Nassau Community College. He is an even more obscure scribbler of doggerel. All aspects of the human existence are subject to his treatment. Some of them deserve it.

Mary C. M. Phillips

Birthday Wish

Dear Friend,

Happy Birthday!

Actually, Happy Belated Birthday.

I apologize for missing it as I have been working long hours.

Next year, please remind me when your birthday is approaching so that I am not late.

Or don't.

See if I care.

Who the hell are you to remind me of your birthday anyway?

As IF I need to be reminded of your freakin' birthday! You DO realize I have other things to think about besides your birthday, right?

I have to get up early.

Have a good night.

Or don't.

See it I care.

Good night, Bad night...Hey, it's not my problem!!!

Mary C. M. Phillips is a caffeinated wife, mother, and writer. Her work can read in numerous national bestselling anthologies. She blogs about writing and books at CaffeineEpiphanies.com.

Follow her on twitter @marycmphil.

Diana R. Richman

From Greens to Ice Cream

Emotional eating or physical hunger
Mindful choices make me wonder
Just let me eat and enjoy my food
Ice cream soothingly improves my mood.

They say a healthy eating routine
Contributes to long life and feeling serene -
Eat greens and fruits of colors galore,
Drink natural tea and water that's pure.

Avoid preservatives and pesticides,
Wash produce thoroughly, each piece on all sides.
Purchase organics and non-GMOs,
Return when ingredients contain words you don't know.

Watch out for corn syrup and trans fats fillers,
Food should be nutritious, not a health killer.
Eliminate food with cane sugar on the label,
But check if artificial sweeteners are on your table.

They say don't eat when experiencing stress,
Maintain a daily balance to feel your best.
To find the way to make a healthy eating choice
I had better listen to my inner voice.

I will seek the balance that soothes my soul,
Health for mind and body is my true goal.
The solution is simple, holistic - my dream-
To balance fruits and veggies with chocolate and
ice cream.

Diana R. Richman, Ph.D., licensed psychologist, has been in private practice for over 30 years. Listening to souls' stories, playing the cello in community orchestras, and writing rhymes for special occasions since childhood has evoked her desire to express her voice through the musical language of poetry.

Marc Rosen

"You got the good stuff?"

"Sure do! They're bendy with stripes!"

Back alley straw deal

Marc Rosen is the Lead Editor for *Stonewall's Legacy* and the *Stonewall Bards* anthologies. He knows that when push comes to shove, he's gotta do what he loves, even if it's not a good idea.

A. A. Rubin

Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf Now?

Virginia Woolf spends eternity
At the bottom of a
"Cadaverous, awful, Grey puddle"
Staring up at the world.

No one is afraid of her now except
Legions of Advanced Placement
English Literature students
Who can't even make meaning
Out of a simple story
Like "A Haunted House."

A. A. Rubin's poetry has appeared in publications such as The Bards Annual (2019) and Organic Ink. He can be reached on facebook and twitter as @TheSurrealAri and on his web site aarubin.wordpress.com.

Robert Savino

Ode to the Death of My Computer

My computer lost consciousness.
As fast as one could blink
the screen went pitch black.
Somewhere the first two stanzas
of my envisioned poem float
beyond the dead eye of a restart button
with little hope for retention.
I make haste for a legal pad and pen.
The lined page opens brightly.
The ball point begins to roll
like cosmic energy, electrified
by ferocious demands on the brain.
Ink flows rapidly like storm tides
from stanza three onto stanza four,
unable to connect to one and two.
My computer died last night
when I hung it by the power cord
and released it from the second floor window.

Robert Savino, Suffolk County Poet Laureate 2015-2017 & Bards Laureate 2019-2021, is a native Long Island poet, Board Member at the Walt Whitman Birthplace and winner of the 2008 Oberon Poetry Prize. Robert is the co-editor of a bilingual collection of Long Island Italian Americans Poets (*No Distance Between Us*). His books include *fireballs of an illuminated scarecrow* and *Inside a Turtle Shell*.

Lee Marc Stein

What happens after the Zen Buddhist tells the hot dog vendor *Make me one with everything*

Food in hand, the robe-clad Buddhist
forks over a twenty-dollar bill
which the vendor stuffs into his shirt pocket.
Minutes pass, the Now is later.
The Buddhist asks *Where's my change?*
The vendor smiles and says with relish
Change comes from within.

The Buddhist walks away wondering *Does it really?*
Maybe there has to be a stimulus,
some irritation ala oysters forming pearls.
Maybe to change I need lessons
and now I've learned that Zen
is a zany way to live in America.

Hours later, he returns to the crime scene
wearing a motorcycle helmet, ripped jeans,
a Hell's Angels leather jacket.
The hot dog man doesn't recognize him.
Our lapsed Buddhist reaches up,

grabs the vendor by the throat,
extracts the twenty from his pocket.
See, I've changed, he says. Thank you.

The vendor changes too -- removes his apron
and mustard-stained shirt, dons a white shirt
and power-tie, puts on a blue blazer.
He steps down from his food truck
and speeds away in a red Maserati.

Two who become something else
make a better story than
than one with everything.

Lee Marc Stein lives in East Setauket. His poems have appeared in numerous online and print literary journals. He hopes his poems are much better than his golf game.

J R Turek

Poetically Speaking

If you drive two hours each way
in pelting rain, blizzard winds,
or hades heat to get to a poetry reading,
you might be a poet.

If you endure coffee shop chatter,
blenders grinding ice through every nerve
in your molars, milk steam, the evil hiss and
gurgle of brewing just to read one short poem
at the open, you might be a poet.

If you stay awake nights writing lists
of creative excuses for avoiding parties
and dinners and family get-togethers
because you are going to a reading instead,
you just might be a poet.

If you leave voice mail messages for people
in rhyme, *Hi Ben, calling again, not to be a nagging hen
but we'll get together when?, until then, your friend Ken,*
and your friend's name isn't Ben and you're not Ken,
then, oh yes, then, you might be a poet.

If your emails are in iambic pentameter,
if you've used the word skeltonics five times
in your three-line poem,
if you write your shopping list in like simile fashion,
then like you might be a poet.

If you rewrite the Chinese food menu using alliteration –
beef, broccoli, bean sprouts, and brown rice
or *sweet and sour shrimp and scallops swimming*
in succulent szechuan sauce, you might be a poet.

If you know the birth date of Whitman, Bryant, Wilde,
Dickinson, Poe, Cummings, Shakespeare, Yeats, Eliot,
Nash, Ashbery, Plath, Hughes, Neruda, Sexton, Ginsberg,
Kerouac, Collins, Angelou, and Dr Seuss,
you might be a poet.

If you rationalize going to a library or coffee shop
or tattoo parlor because you know and love the feature,
have heard them read a thousand times, and still
want to hear more, you might be a poet.

If you hear about a poet you've never met before,
never heard of, never mind staying home –
you find that poet, stalk that poet, find where that poet
is reading next and you go...
oh yeah, you might be a poet.

If you've memorized the formula for haiku, tanka, limerick, dizain, ghazal, triolet, madrigal, pantoum, rondeau, shadorma, and yes, sestina, there's a strong possibility you might be a poet.

If you've got journals and spare pens stashed on your coffee table, kitchen counter, bathroom vanity, night table, tucked under your pillow... and telltale ink marks on your sheets, one under the front seat of your car, one under the back seat and two in the trunk, a slim one in your pocket or purse, and another with a dazzling cover in your tote bag, just in case, and that's not revealing the special ones *so pretty so new* that you're secreting in closets and under the bed, I suspect you might be a poet.

If the same reader who read last night outdoors, in the rain, is reading again tonight in the next state with the same new book that you bought the night before, and even though you caught a nasty cold standing in the downpour, and can't wait to go, you might be a poet.

If you fill time at the break between poet features and open mic by renaming coffee house drinks as metaphors – *funky as a monkey writing haiku* or *half sonnet, half villanelle, with a shot of dactylic beat*,

or *one-word-per-line sestinas high on caffeine*,
hmmm, yeah, you might be a poet.

If you stay up late, rise early, are late for work
or church or dinner with your in-laws because
you had to get those pulitzer-winning lines out,
get them written down before they fly away,
you might be a poet.

If you shook your head yes at any or all of these,
stand up, raise your hand, say it with me, Amen –

Yes, I am a poet!

J R (Judy) Turek, Walt Whitman Birthplace 2019 Long Island Poet of the Year, Superintendent of Poetry for the LI Fair, Bards Laureate 2013-2015, is an internationally published poet, editor, workshop leader, and 22 years as Moderator of the Farmingdale Creative Writing Group; she has 2 Pushcart Prize nominations. She was named a 2017 NYS Woman of Distinction. She is the author of *B is for Betwixt and Between*, *A is for Almost Anything*, *Imagistics*, and *They Come And They Go*. J R, The Purple Poet, lives on Long Island with her soul-mate husband, Paul, her dogs, and her extraordinarily extensive shoe collection. msjevus@optonline.net

James P. Wagner (Ishwa)

Ode to Paper Towels

The quilted quicker picker upper
of the mess that I make.

One square folded,
one quick motion
saves me so much time
and anguish.

Easily accessible off the spinner,
in an instant, efficient.

As I get on my knees
to wipe the floor of my
chili-cheese-steak sin
I thank you Lord
for thy, bounty.

James P. Wagner (Ishwa) is an editor, publisher, award-winning fiction writer, essayist, performance poet, and alum twice over (BA & MALS) of Dowling College. He is the publisher for Local Gems Poetry Press and the Senior Founder and President of the Bards Initiative, a Long Island, NY based non-profit dedicated to using poetry for social improvement. He has been on the advisory boards for the Nassau County Poet Laureate Society and the Walt Whitman Birthplace Association. James also helped with the Dowling College Writing Conference. His most recent collection of poetry is *Ten Year Reunion*. He is the Long Island, NY National Beat Poet Laureate from 2017-2019. James has edited over 50 poetry anthologies.

Margarette Wahl

Beatles and Poetry Form

It's a Bard's day and night,
I've been writing like a dog.

Narrative, when you have so much to say
I need a place to write today.
Oh narrative from yesterday.

All you need is Prose
All you need is Prose
Prose is all you need.

Eight limericks a week
I o-o-o-owe you.

Quatrains are hell
when you don't know how to rhyme so well
Quatrain hell.

Here comes a rhyme
do do do
Here comes a rhyme
and I say it's alright.

Lady of Sonnets
hope you write them well
Shakespeare and Bards are ones
able to tell.

Sustina writer...
Oh,
Sustina writer...

Concrete together right now
show pictures well.

The long and winding poem never ends.

Let me take you down
cause I'm going to Freeverse appeal,
no words to steal.
Freeverse appeal forever.

Haiku, don't need to rhyme
seventeen syllables brought all together
Remember always include some nature
then we enter contests together
enter enter enter...
Na na na ne na na....na ne na na
Haiku.

Donna Zephrine

Weapon Accountability

While I was in Iraq serving the U.S. Army, I got into a little bit of trouble... I lost my 16-rifle, not once, but twice. As you can imagine this caused a pretty big problem being that I was in a combat zone and I was a sharp shooter in the infantry.

I was going to my unit for a platoon meeting and afterwards I was hanging out in the area. When I got to my tent I realized my weapon was missing. I went to my platoon section, my heart was racing. My squad leader told me a soldier in my unit picked it up for me. I was embarrassed because I knew the other soldiers would talk. I could feel their stares.

The second time I lost my weapon I think it was no more than 3 months from the 1st time had lost it. I was by my unit, getting ready to pick up my clean clothing from the handmade wooden cart one of the handy men in my unit made. I rest my weapon down and went on my way but forgot to pick it up. About 30 minutes later I had realized what I had done. I was in horror. Luckily they recovered my weapon. If my weapon was not recovered the entire unit on would have been on lock down. It would have been even more embarrassing.

My Sergeant really got pissed at me because of that and said "Zephrine, let's see if you can build a female latrine all

you have to do is dig a hole in the ground and put two pieces of wood across the top”. But he did not tell me I had to leave a space between the boards. So of course I didn’t leave a space.

Once again he was ticked off. That seemed to be a common occurrence with him. He would give me instructions that weren’t exactly clear, I would run around like a chicken without a head trying to do my best, but in the end I would mess up and he would end up yelling.

So now he was really upset with me. He said “you see that truck over there, I want you to unload the tools boxes of the truck.” Of course he didn’t realize I didn’t know a set of pliers from a wrench. So of course I didn’t do it right. Not only did I mess up the task but I stubbed a few of my toes and tired out my arms in the process.

My last form of punishment for losing my weapon was writing a 500 word essay of the importance of weapon accountability. But the joke was on him because he forgot that due to my handy dandy disabilities I had my own secret weapon of a stenographer to type that essay out for me.

Finally, I completed a task the right way.

Donna was born in Harlem New York and grew up in Bay Shore, Long island. Donna has participated in various veteran writing workshops throughout NYC. Recently Donna was featured USA Warrior stories took part in Warrior Chorus and Decruit which encourage self-expression through looking as classical literature and performing it while relating it to your own life with war and trauma. Currently Donna is studying for her licensing in social work. In her spare time Donna plays sled hockey for the Long Island Rough Riders.



Local Gems Poetry Press is a small Long Island, NY based poetry press dedicated to spreading poetry through performance and the written word. Local Gems believes that poetry is the voice of the people, and as the sister organization of the Bards Initiative, believes that poetry can be used to make a difference.

Local Gems Press has published over 200 titles.

www.localgemspoetrypress.com

