

Minutes of the Wisconsin Fellowship of Poets General Membership Meeting April 27, 2024

The meeting was called to order at 8:40 AM by Co-president Cathryn Cofell.

Old Business

1. Approval of Consent Agenda — Cathryn Cofell *
 - a. 2023 General Membership Meeting Minutes
 - b. Treasurer's Report
 - c. Calendar Managers' Report
 - d. Membership Report
 - e. Archives Report
 - f. Muse Contest Report
 - g. Chapbook Contest Report
 - h. Triad Contest Report
 - i. Bramble Report
 - j. Webmaster Report
 - k. Regional VP Reports
 - l. Student Contest Report

* Indicates here and below that written reports are available

Motion by Kim Blanchette, seconded by Ann Steinbach to approve the consent agenda.
Motion carried.

2. 2025 Calendar Report — Cathryn Cofell reported that Jeanie Tomasko, Linda Voit and Beth Ann Workmaster, the editors for next year's calendar, reviewed 258 entries, and 215 poems will appear. Sharon Auberle will provide the art for the calendar, and Wendy Vardaman will do the layout.

3. Communications Discussion — Sophie Bebeau is creating a more cohesive presence for the Fellowship's electronic presentations. She reported 51 new followers for the Facebook page and 47 new Instagram followers. Usage for both these social media is up dramatically. Sophie said she is always looking for feedback on and information and suggestions for the new monthly email. Persons submitting entries to the new online calendar need not send the information to her as well since she is checking that for social media posts. She asked persons submitting to the calendar to include the region in which their event is located.

4. Brain Mill Press Chapbook Contest Reminder — Christina Kubasta reported that the deadline for contest submissions is May 15. Information on the contest judge, Tracy Mishkin, can be found on Brain Mill's submittable portal, which can be accessed from the WFOP website.

5. Open Positions / Fall Election — Christina Kubasta said elections for officers will be held via email, or postal mail for members without email, in the fall. As vice president, she will be nominated to serve as president and would like someone to join her as co-president, since Cathryn Cofell and Ronnie Hess found that the co-president model worked well. Colleen Frentzel is willing to serve as treasurer again, but a new vice president and secretary are needed.

In addition, Naomi Cochran will step down as Membership Chair, and Jeff Anderson as Student Contest Coordinator, though the board is considering changes in that contest.

Persons interested in serving in these roles were invited to talk to incumbents about the work involved.

6. Richard Swanson Donation — Shake Rag Fellowship & Other Potential Uses — Christina Kubasta said Richard wanted his donation to be used to encourage emerging poets, and the board has determined that a fellowship provided in partnership with Shake Rag Alley in Mineral Point was one use for his gift. The board is considering other uses connected with the WFOP's annual conference and other programming. Ronnie Hess thanked Kathrine Yets and Jeff Anderson for working on the task force determining how to use the donation.

New Business

1. 2024-25 Budget Review & Approval — Colleen Frentzel presented the budget and noted that the WFOP is in good shape financially. In particular, she said the Swanson donation, since it is not being used yet, is earning interest which will allow its benefits to be extended. Motion by Kim Blanchett, seconded by Yvette Flaten, to approve the budget. Motion carried. Colleen reminded conference attendees that WFOP swag was available for sale at the conference and could also be purchased online. She asked members to let her know if there were any additional items they want to be offered.

2. Possible Changes to Student Contest — Ronnie Hess reported that contest chair Jeff Anderson has found that the number of schools, teachers and students participating continues to decline. Because of this the WFOP board voted to discontinue the contest, but look for new ways to reach student poets. The ekphrastic contest for students in partnership with the Leigh Yawkey Woodson in Wausau last year was a wonderful success, and will be continued. The board will look to partner with other organizations that have programs for younger poets.

3. Other New Business — Ronnie Hess invited new members and first-time attendees to stand and be recognized. These poets were invited to read a poem at the conclusion of the meeting.

Ronnie also reported that next year's conference will mark the WFOP's 75th anniversary will be held in June 2025 in Madison, with Ross Gay as the keynote poet.

4. Honoring Deceased Members — Ronnie Hess named members who died, or whose death we learned of, in past year:

Esther Tank, November 18, 2021

Elayne Clipper Hanson, March 9, 2023

Norma Gay Davidson-Zielske (née Prewett), August 21, 2023

Richard Swanson, August 31, 2023

Janine Arsenau, October 13, 2023

Sara Burr, November 27, 2023

She also read Richard Swanson's poem, "Men in the Nude in Socks":

Hey, lookit!

These men in the nude in their socks—
all pinko torso and hatchling-haired legs.
Are those bald spots on the backside
or rumps on top?

Gawd, get a snapshot
get a guffawish gawk
at the gluteus maximus,
the muscle minima.
Remember the member-
ous droop and its stoop-
endous testicular particulars.
Come, let us gaa-gaa this fold-out,
slather our ardor at this
bare-boned dualped
planted in argyles.

Observe, observe:

Herr Fashionable Fuzzy Foot,
dimples, moles, flabulous contours,
a haunch to shame the showcase tapestries
of a meat market, oh there's more. . . .

No nothing more than the image
of men in the nude in their socks
and the point the image is for:

Men in the nude in socks do not make war.

Motion by Ronnie Hess seconded by Christina Kubasta to adjourn. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 9:17 AM.