



Some Bits and Pieces of Our History

The group of thirty or forty poets that would later form the California State Poetry Society (CSPS) first gathered for roasted hotdogs and marshmallows on the beach near the San Luis Obispo campus of the California Polytechnic State University (Cal Poly SLO) in 1972. Both students and faculty from the University and many from the California Federation of Chaparral Poets (CFCP) in southern California (the oldest organization of poets in the state) had responded to Gordon Curzon's invitation to meet for fellowship and poetry readings. The meeting lasted throughout the day and, with the aid of a flashlight passed from reader to reader, well into the night!

The members of the CFCP contingent in particular were interested in supporting an effort to form a larger California State Poetry Association (CSPA). Two of them—Nelle Fertig, their leader, a teacher and prize-winning poet, and Vivian Way Bonine, another fine poet and educator—were also members of the Poetry Society of Texas, which was a member society of the National Federation of State Poetry Societies (NFSPS). They urged all present to establish a new state-wide organization that would be eligible for membership in the NFSPS, with all the benefits and privileges the larger group could provide. By the time the beach picnic ended, plans had been made to meet again and to set up the CSPA. With the publication of Volume 1 Number 1 of the *CQ* later in 1972, the name of the group was changed from the CSPA to the California State Poetry Society (CSPS), which moniker it has retained since then. On November 20th, 1976, the Constitution Study Committee (Sally Herres, Lorrie Hodges, Ruth Iodice, Robert Knighton, Miriam Maloy, Jerry Rose, Anna Mae Johnson Terrell, Dorothy Tournour, and chair Nelle Fertig) submitted its findings for consideration by the general membership. Their recommendations were approved and the formal organization was established that would later be incorporated as a 501(c)(3) California nonprofit corporation on August 14th, 1985.

A poetry magazine with the title *California Quarterly* had already been (or was intended to be—remember, this was 45 years ago and this is all *at least* second-hand information ☺) published by the University of California at Davis (UCD). The original name for our journal was therefore shortened to *CQ* with the subtitle *California State Poetry Quarterly*. The name stayed the same from 1972 until 1999, when UCD ceased publication of its journal. In any case, Dr. Curzon was fond of pointing out that *CQ* also meant *query*, *calling you* or *seeking you* in Morse Code, or *canto quest* (*bird song*)—a veritable menagerie of meanings. The magazine, frankly, has lived up to all of them! The masthead of the journal has been *California Quarterly* since 1999.

The objective first stated by the CSPS was to produce a journal “reflecting the highest quality of poetry, editing and publishing” and it has remained the mission of the *CQ* Editorial Board ever since. The original concept was to have a single *CQ* Editor overall, and generally an Associate Editor in northern California and another in southern California to cull the many hundreds of submissions down to a more manageable number for the Editor's final review. The editorial operation was changed in 1991 to establish an Editorial Board with at least six members and a Chair to coordinate the selection of rotating Editors for each issue of the *CQ*. The Chairs of the Editorial Board over the decades since 1991 have been Julian Palley, Kate Ozbirn, John Forrest Harrell, and Pearl Karrer. The presidents and treasurers of the CSPS, as well as the various—Managing, Primary, Associate, and Issue—editors of the *CQ*, are listed in the table below.

It was originally the intention of the *CQ* editors to publish only California poets, but the ranks from which submissions were accepted grew by 1976 to include a few from other states, as well. Over the decades, high-quality submissions from other countries have increased to the point where there is

usually at least one foreign poem (and a translation if it is not in English) in each issue. Membership was originally only from California residents, but this too has changed to include poets in other states and in other countries.

The archives of the CQ reside in the California State Library in Sacramento. The issues of the CQ are 64 pages, perfect bound and with a glossy cover that includes artwork on the front (usually in color). It is a poetry quarterly that is actually published four times a year. ☺ We mail it with a *Poetry Letter* of previously published or award-winning poems, the *Strophes*, our publication guidelines, a membership form, and our *Newsbriefs*.

The CSPA has conducted an annual contest and monthly contests for several decades, as well as occasional conferences in different parts of the state.

What appears above has been constructed from records provided by Keith Van Vliet (notes from the late Anna Mae Johnson Terrell and the late James MacWhinney) and information in the various issues of the CQ and Newsbriefs over the past four decades or so.

— John Forrest Harrell, May 2017

CSPS Presidents		CSPS Treasurers		CQ Associate Editors 1972-1991		CQ Issue Editors 1991-Pres
Phillip Padelford Ventura	1972-1973	Jane Wolgemuth Ventura	1972-1973	Kenneth John Atchity Los Angeles	Mary Ellen Barnes Huntington Beach	Claire J. Baker San Pablo
Romayne Dowd Los Angeles	1973-1974	Piche McBee Ventura	1973-1973	Eugene G. E. Botelho Leucadia	Norma Calderone Baldwin Park	John Morran Brander Long Beach
Joyce Odam Sacramento	1974-1975	Robert Knighton Stockton	1973-1975	Louise Derby Los Angeles	David Doorn Campbell	Nancy Cavers Dougherty Sebastopol
Ellis Oveson Los Altos Hills	1975-1976	Elaine Jenkins Pasadena	1975-1976	Ernestine Hoff Emrick La Verne	Esther Erford San Francisco	Terry Ehret Petaluma
John F. Kerr Grover City	1976-1977	Lawrence Jaffa Modesto	1976-1977	Nelle Fertig Glendora	Lois Atchley Hyatt San Bernardino	Jack Fulbeck Covina
Gary Lagier Sunnyvale	1977-1980	Margaret Cortes Berkeley	1977-1978	Terri Brint Joseph Santa Ana	John F. Kerr Grover City	John Forrest Harrell Yorba Linda
Ward Fulcher Bakersfield	1980-1982	Lawrence Jaffa Modesto	1978-1978	B. Jo Kinnick Piedmont	Clara J. Koziolk Long Beach	Maura Harvey Rancho Santa Fe
Jack Fulbeck Covina	1982-1983	Raymond Rose Santa Cruz	1978-1985	Howard Lachtman Stockton	Arthur Lane Northridge	Torre Houlgate-West San Luis Obispo
Helen Shanley Bakersfield	1983-1991	Marine Robert Warden Riverside	1985-1987	Tom Massey Orange	Martin Nakell Santa Monica	Terri Brint Joseph Santa Ana
Torre Houlgate-West San Luis Obispo	1991-2000	Clara J. Koziolk Long Beach	1987-1989	Julian Palley Irvine	Ben Pleasants Beverly Hills	Pearl Karrer Palo Alto
Kate Ozbirn Orange	2000-2012	Jo-Ann Allee Fullerton	1989-1991	Ward Fulcher Bakersfield	Sylvia Rosen Sherman Oaks	Elaine Lazzeroni West Covina
John Forrest Harrell Yorba Linda	2012-Pres (Acting)	John Forrest Harrell Yorba Linda	1991-Pres	Marine Robert Warden Riverside	Marcia Van Wyck Laguna Beach	Mona Locke Paradise
CQ Managing Editors		CQ Primary Editors 1972-1991		Charles Webb Los Angeles	Gardner Wheeler Porterville	James E. MacWhinney Riverside
Gordon Curzon Shell Beach	1972-1992	Gordon Curzon Shell Beach		Harold Witt Orinda	Heidi Ziolkowski Long Beach	Maggi H. Meyer Berkeley
Torre Houlgate-West San Luis Obispo	1992-2000	Kenneth John Atchity Los Angeles		Joyce Odam Sacramento	Kate Ozbirn Yorba Linda	Julian Palley Irvine
Kate Ozbirn Orange	2000-2012	Ruth G. Iodice Kensington		Sherman Pearl Santa Monica	Dianne Riffle Santa Barbara	Margaret Saine Orange
Pearl Karrer Palo Alto	2013-2017	Thomas Piekarski Sunnyvale		Russell Salamon North Hollywood	Lani Steele San Luis Obispo	Maja Trochimczyk Sunland
John Forrest Harrell Yorba Linda	2012-Pres	Ward Fulcher Bakersfield		Keith Van Vliet Glendora	Jeanne Wagner Kensington	
		James E. MacWhinney Riverside				
		John Morran Brander Santa Ana				