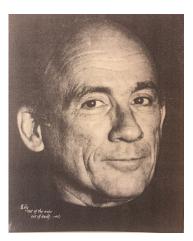
From the Lily Pad

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE NICK VIRGILIO HAIKU ASSOCIATION

Spring / Summer 2017

### The NVHA Spring Newsletter: We have a Home!



The City of Camden is currently experiencing a renaissance in groundbreaking new development, rebuilding, and commerce which has not been seen in several decades. The boom extends from the downtown Delaware River Waterfront with its panoramic view of

the City of Philadelphia, to neighborhoods like Waterfront South where the Nick Virgilio Writers House will soon become the latest of the cornerstone achievements in the amazing history of the Heart of Camden Building Organization. The Heart of Camden has rehabilitated and found homes for more than 350 deserving families since 1986 and has renovated several previously vacant buildings resulting in a thriving community with non-profit organizations in Waterfront South. Those buildings and the organizations they represent have collectively created a budding arts and cultural district in places where neighborhood children and adults now have a new sense of community through special events and programming designed to provide educational opportunities and enrichment to their lives. For more than a year, the Nick Virgilio Haiku Association's Board of Directors has been meeting and making preparations to take possession of the beautifully rebuilt, three story structure, formerly known as the Donges House, at 1801 Broadway. The Nick Virgilio Writers House is just weeks away from completion!

We Gratefully and Lovingly Remember: Anthony Nicholas Virgilio Born 10/29/1929 Died 3/30/2015

Tony, Nick's brother, worked passionately and tirelessly, dedicated to perpetuating the memory of his brother Nick and his body of work. Tony, also a fine poet, was largely responsible for the creation of the NVHA. An exceptional baseball player and coach with an engaging sense of humor, who wrote the poem below which is memorialized on his gravestone:

> old timer's game seventh inning stretch the creaking of knees

### **NVHA Board of Directors**

Our team is exploding with new talent joining. We are very pleased to introduce three recently elected and very distinguished members of the NVHA Board of Directors:

BONNIE SQUIRES is president of Squires Consulting, a woman-owned communications and fundraising firm, specializing in universities and non-profit organizations. She is a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of the University of Pennsylvania with a BS in Education and a master's degree in English Literature. She was an adjunct faculty member teaching public relations at Arcadia University and remains an active PR professional. She writes poetry and her work is included in the Doubleday anthology, Haiku.

- RICHARD STEIN, is an entrepreneur and experienced executive. An expert policy and economics systems thinker, he loves a challenge and his specialties include high tech, public health, sustainability, growth and innovation, impact analysis, performance, urban and economic development. Richard is a hands-on team player, problem solver, and an excellent public speaker.
- GEOFF SILL, Emeritus Professor of English and a long-time supporter of the aims and the efforts of the NVHA, recently joined our Board of Directors. Dr. Sill was Chairman of the English Department, and taught English Literature at Rutgers from 1976 to 2016. He has published books and articles on Daniel Defoe, Walt Whitman, and Frances Burney.

We have just published the new NVHA website to keep members and visitors informed as to our progress and all upcoming events, happenings and programming! We encourage all of you to join with us on what promises to be an exciting journey. Keep in touch at <u>www.NickVirgilioHaiku.org</u> and while you're there, sign up for our email list. To save money to put toward our mission, we want to move to email distribution of our newsletter. Please update your email address at the website to stay on the list. (If you must receive a paper copy, send a postcard to NVHA, c/o George Vallianos, 16 Sandringham Terrace, Cherry Hill, NJ 08003.

#### NVHA National Haiku/Senryu Poetry Contest Sponsored by Haiku Society of America

We will soon be announcing the winners of our National Haiku Senyru Contest and posting the winning haiku/senryu on our website. The contest just ended on March 25<sup>th</sup> with more than 6,000 poems entered from students across the US and around the world.

#### **Books of Nick Virgilio's Poetry**

Those of you who may be interested in finding out more about Nick and his poetry can purchase Nick's book: *SELECTED HAIKU* Nicholas A.Virgilio \$15.95 postage included. To purchase, send us an email to <u>nickvirgiliohaiku@gmail.com</u> and we will direct you to a PayPal link. (We will soon have it available on our website too).

*NICK VIRGILIO: A LIFE IN HAIKU*, \$15.95 postage included. Turtle Light Press, Rick Black, Publisher

This book contains many of Nick's previously unpublished poems (currently being stored in the archives of the Paul Robeson Library at Rutgers University, Camden, NJ) and interviews and essays on haiku. There is a link to purchase the book from our website.

#### Annual Gravesite Gathering at the Podium

This year's event at Harleigh Cemetery, 1640 Haddon Ave, Camden, NJ starts at 2:00 PM on Sunday, June 25<sup>th</sup>. Bring your haiku to share. This annual event commemorates Nick Virgilio's birthday and his legacy. (Nick's actual date of birth was 6/28/1928.) ALL ARE INVITED.

#### **NVHA Supports the Rutgers Writers House**

A group of NVHA Board members and Advisors recently attended a memorable workshop and live presentation on March 1, 2017 at the Rutgers University Writers House, titled: Celebrate the Past and Future of Haiku, presented by two time competitive World Haiku Champion: Tazuo Yamaguchi; a truly amazing and gifted poet and performer. All of us were delighted with the experience and fortunate to have attended and had the opportunity to engage and interview Tazuo. We greatly appreciate Programming Director Leah Falk for extending us the invitation to attend. The NVHA looks forward to working with Leah and the Rutgers Writers House to collaborate and expand programming in the near future. We filmed the interview with the poet and will publish it in a future blog on our website.

#### **Volunteers** Needed

Would you like to work on a NVHA committee to help organizational planning projects in the near future? Do you have ideas, time or skills that you may be able to share with the NVHA?

Our committee chairpersons are recruiting participants to help with future tasks and meetings.

(You need not be on the Board of Directors to serve on a committee!) E-mail us at nickvirgiliohaiku@ gmail.com!

## Remember April 13<sup>th</sup> is National Haiku Poetry Day! Write a haiku!

#### **Our Latest Project**

Last year Haiku North America posted a request for proposals to present at their biennial conference for poets, publishers, educators and haiku societies to be held in Santa Fe this September. Encouraged by our friend Al Pizzarelli, the savant of senryu, we submitted a proposal to present a film of the play previously commissioned and staged, "Nick of Time. . . Nick of Time" by award-winning playwright, Joe Paprzycki along with the documentary, "remembering Nick Virgilio" by Sean Dougherty. Our proposal has been accepted!

We have since engaged actors, conducted rehearsals, recorded several staged run-throughs, and are now editing hours of digital footage down to 25 minutes or so. The play is a dramatic retelling of the last hour of Nick's life as imagined by the playwright.

Nick is played by Bob Weick with appearances by the spirits of both Walt Whitman (Rocky Wilson), and Nick's brother, Larry, and Nightline production assistant, Lawrence are portrayed by the same actor (Ned Pryce). The director is John Doyle, the founder of the Iron Age Theater Company, and the original play and this film was produced by Henry Brann and the NVHA. Watch the South Jersey Courier Post for an upcoming article about the project. The film will become an element of programming for Writers at the NVHA Writers House.

#### A Little Bit About Haiku and Senryu

--by Henry Brann, NVHA Board

From the Haiku Society of America: Haiku Definition:

> "A haiku is a short poem that uses imagistic language to convey the essence of an experience of nature or the season intuitively linked to the human condition."

Also, from a previous definition by the HSA that Nick Virgilio was known to use;

> 'An unrhymed poem recording the essence of a moment, keenly perceived, in which nature is linked to human nature'.

Haiku is usually composed of three lines totaling seventeen or fewer syllables containing two juxtaposed or contrasting parts which may be distinguished using a 'cutting word' or break. Further, haiku frequently contain a kigo (season-word: a word or phrase indicating one of the four seasons), and usually do not include metaphor, simile, or a title. (The plural of haiku is haiku.)

Haiku were originally called "hokku", the first three lines of a linked verse poem (renku). Matsuo Basho, Yosa Buson, and Kobayashi Issa were the first three masters of the haiku genre. Masaoka Shiki rounds out the masters known as 'the four pillars of modern haiku'.

From Basho, one translation of the earliest recorded 'modern' haiku,

ancient pond a frog jumps in the sound of water

Definition of a Senryu:

"A senryu is a poem, structurally similar to haiku, that highlights the foibles of human nature, usually in a humorous or satirical way." Definition from Haiku Society of America: "A senryu may or may not contain a season word, may avoid humor, and may be open to interpretation as to whether it's haiku or senryu." Using the example of Nick Virgilio's famous 'lily' poem, as a haiku,

lily:

out of the water... out of itself

A parody of the 'lily' poem as a senryu by poet Alan Pizzarelli,

Lily:

out of the water... out of her suit

There is a haiku tradition called a ginko walk, an excursion into nature, urban environments, relationships and even humorous topics to find inspiration for writing haiku/senryu.

Remember; haiku is more than a poem, it is a way of looking into the very nature of existence.

#### Haiku by members of our Board

global warming January with fruit flies Robin Palley

churchyard Firethorn struck by lightning Cancer diagnosis Henry Brann

after the ultrasound my daughter's text good news: "It's a baby" Theresa Branford

Korean dog farm shut down K9's shipped to Pennsylvania Sanctuary Bonnie Squires

salt stings the dog's feet on this morning's walk my hand hurt while cleaning them Richard Stein

the perched scarecrow drops some inspiration on the old bald poet Nick Virgilio (from the Rutgers digital archivecourtesy Geoff Sill)

#### Seven reasons why every poet should practice haiku (...and why we believe so strongly in teaching haiku to youth) --by Walt Howat, NVHA Board

#### 1. Helps you learn better visualization skills.

A central part of haiku is being able to look at our world with a more expansive eye. To see what is really there. But then, to see how the elements of the world interconnect: the ironies, the realities, the contradictions, the symbiosis, and the things that can be expanded, mimicked or transferred from nature to our own lives. Every item has numerous or sometimes even seemingly endless ways of looking at it and expressing these. Haiku forces us to see so many more ways, and with greater clarity.

# 2. Improves your understanding and command of how words fit together.

Finding the right word is one of the basic keys to good haiku. Nick Virgilio, the famous American haiku pioneer, would go for years because he had a haiku he loved, but there was one word that did not quite do it. Hunting for the right word again and again feeds your knowledge as to why one word works and another does not. Virgilio gave haiku credit for teaching him how to look for, find, and know the right word.

#### 3. Teaches you how to sharpen your meaning

Almost every long poem can be edited down to a mere fraction of what it is, down to its basic core, its essence, its true meaning. Writing haiku helps a poet to see what this core really is and how to tighten and sharpen it so its impact is unmistakable. Often when a longer standard format poem seems to be wandering, it helps to condense that poetry to a haiku or two... and then realize what its core really is. It can be a great help in cleaning up that much longer poem.

# 4. Shows you how to eliminate "waste words" and useless jabber.

So often the poet feels the need to explain or detail haiku makes you realize that many things can explain themselves and that many adverbs and adjectives are often just cumbersome nuisances.

#### 5. Helps build better communication skills.

In haiku the bridge between the poet and his readers is very small. Not much wiggle room. The haiku writer is forced to write and rewrite, to choose and try different combinations, different approaches -- again and again. This makes the poet aware of the readers and what methods can reach them. The poet, who struggles with perfecting haiku, builds an intuition and a better sense of what his or her readers need and how to quickly reach them. Nick Virgilio would take months or years to find that perfect combination, he told others to be proud of their patience.

#### 6. Helps you in creating a sharper scenario.

You do not have much stage space to work with when you write a haiku, so you work diligently, studying each small factor, knowing how each phrase and word adds greater understanding--the sounds, sights and smells of the moment.

#### 7. Teaches you how to avoid the sins of overwriting.

An editor of a poetry journal once noted that the most

common sin in the submissions sent to her publication was overwriting. "Many poets do not know when to stop and make it a poem." The editor also complained about the pomposity of some poetic endeavors. "They have a message to give... so give it." Writing haiku teaches the poet to get to the point. Make words count. And it helps the poet eliminate the "look-atme, I-am-a-great-poet" phrases.

#### Haiku mindfulness

That is the so-called "haiku mindset"? People often speak of the clarity it gives your mind and how you see so much more of the world around you. But what is it? In reading about other mindsets, we took statements about one other very trendy philosophy. We wrote down these statements, but replaced the name of this hot philosophy with the term "haiku mindset". We were amazed how well it worked.

"Having a haiku mindset is a way to be in the present, which is a simple process of noticing new things and new angles of old things."

"The haiku mindset is not a practice; it is way of thinking and a way of being. It is the way you are when you are relaxed or at play."

"As you notice new things through the haiku mindset, things that you thought you knew, you will realize that you did not know these as well as your thought, and they will become interesting again."

"The more of a haiku mindset you have, the more respect and understanding you have for the uncertainties of life."

"In the haiku mindset you realize how everything is changing and how things look different from different perspectives."

*"With the haiku mindset you see the actual world, not the chaos or fabricated order of your mind."* 

With the "haiku mindset: inserted, every one of these statements is true. Can you guess what the trendy philosophy was that created the original statements? It was "mindfulness", whose advocates make great claims in many directions. Is the haiku mindset that powerful? Try it the next time you feel all tied up and even when you feel as if you could not possibly write a creative poem. Try when in states like this to relax your mind and focus on the simpler things in the world around you. Get your mind into the haiku mindset and see how changed your mind, your senses, your mood, your vision, or your attitude can become. And, perhaps, write a few haiku while you are at it.

#### Who We Are

The Nick Virgilio Haiku Association is a small nonprofit organization dedicated to fostering literacy among students from grammar school through high school and to furthering the legacy of Nick Virgilio, Camden's world famous haiku poet.

To those ends we host haiku workshops for teachers, participate in regional and national haiku societies, administer an annual national haiku/senryu competition for seventh through twelfth grades, judged by two poets from the Haiku Society of America. We promote the publishing and distribution of Nick's haiku, produce documentaries, films, and plays about Nick, and collaborate with Rutgers University in creating a digital archive of Nick's prodigious unpublished oeuvre. And now, through the aegis of the Heart of Camden Housing Project, we are building the Nick Virgilio Writers House to further realize the mission of the NVHA.

#### Membership in the Nick Virgilio Haiku Association is \$10.<sup>00</sup>, with Nick's book \$20<sup>00</sup>. Join today!

This will be the final full print edition of the NVHA newsletter. Please sign up to receive our newsletter by email at <u>www.nickvirgiliohaiku.org</u> and while you're there make a tax-deductible contribution and personally assist the Writers House to open its doors and continue our work. Thank you.



'NIck Virgilio Writers' House

From the Lily Dad

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE NICKVIRGILIO HAIKU ASSOCIATION 16 SANDRINGHAM TERRACE CHERRY HILL, NEW JERSEY 08003