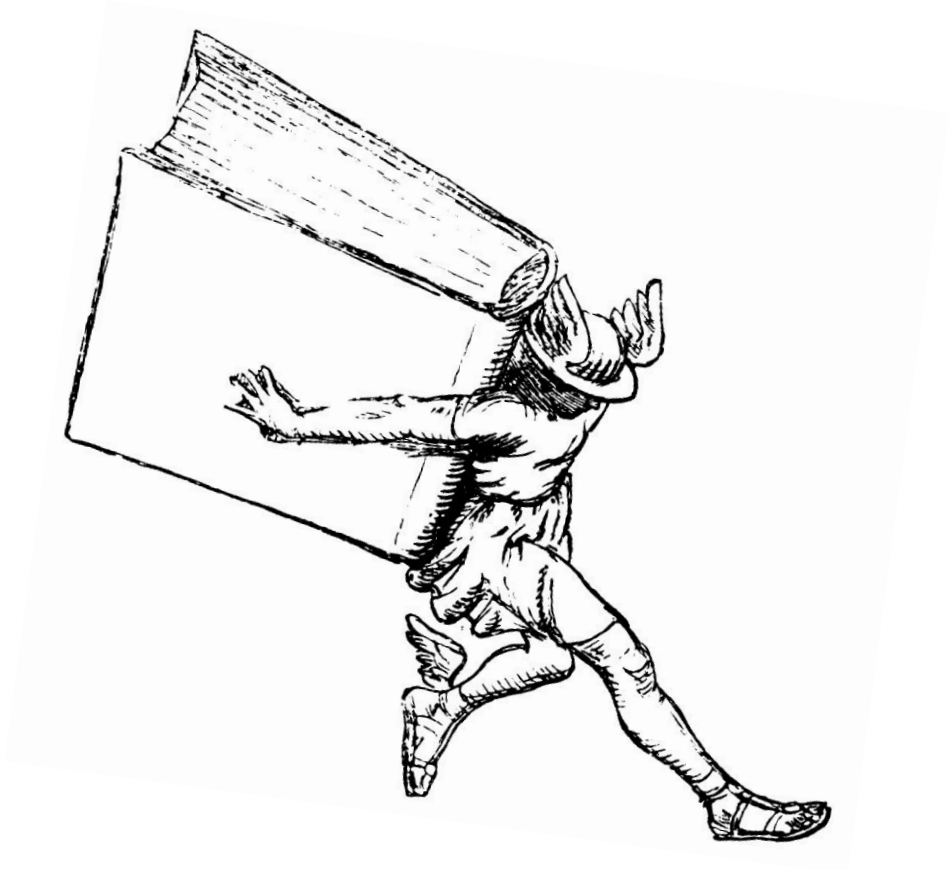


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**Please Leash Your Opinion
It's a Walk in the Park!**

by Stephanie Marshall

We all know that parks are wonderful places
to exercise both humans and opinions.
But with community growth
and park use on the increase,
we are experiencing some problems.

We're getting more complaints
about opinions attacking other opinions,
damaging facilities,
harassing wildlife,
and frightening other visitors.

The problem?

Opinions off their leashes.

Park rules require all opinions to be on a leash
not exceeding four feet in length.
Opinions must not be left unattended.
Opinion owners are also responsible for cleaning up
any fecal deposits left by their opinions.

With your cooperation, we'll work to keep parks open
for everyone, including people with opinions.
And that's what we really want to do.

Without your help, we have to consider stronger enforcement efforts and possibly bans on opinions in our State Parks.

Thank you for your cooperation.

** Moose Point State Park Brochure, July 2013*

FREE VERSE

THE DRIVEWAY

by Jim Ostheimer

They came to do our perfect Maine driveway,
Full of perfect ruts, puddles, and mud.
My boyhood experience was in concrete,
On the Pennsylvania Turnpike and US Route 100.
They never consulted me because they used
Gravel, a grader, and a roller.
They came to do our perfect Maine driveway.

Now we have a highway in comparison.
We will probably post it for 50 mph!
It has withstood torrential rain.
Our snowplow man will be surprised.
We hope he will leave the crown alone.
They came to do our perfect Maine driveway.

Halloween will be the real test.
We have never had a single trick-or-treater.
If no-one comes. It's turn up the heat for winter.
They came to do our perfect Maine driveway.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN, EXACTLY?

by Bob MacLaughlin

How old am I, you ask?
How *old*?

Old as in
how long have I been
roaming the planet?

Or old as in
could I still run a marathon
without lapsing into a coma?

Could I still climb Katahdin
without falling off the Knife Edge?

Still hit the telephone pole
with a snow ball
from sixty feet, six inches?*

Still make love
the way I was designed to?

In a few days
I will have roamed the planet
for three score and nine years.

I'll have to get back to you
about the rest.

*(Sixty feet, six inches is the distance from the
pitcher's mound to home plate in Major League
Baseball)*

April's Food Chain

by Stephanie Marshall

[Scene]

*Slimy mucus glistens on soft pink skin
of an earthworm that floats in an April puddle.
Robin red breast cocks one eye
across the slick surface to investigate the morsel.
No finesse needed here.
The bait and body lie within easy reach.
He hops in the shallow end to slurp up lunch.*

[Prologue]

Ode to an Earthworm

Humble earthworm, a story would have it
that you fear drowning in your burrow as hard rain falls.
That you, digester of every inch of soil on the planet,
are not elegantly designed to withstand simple rain?
Is that why you leave your dark den
to crawl on asphalt and die in the attempt?

Sensing, as some say you do, with your gorgeous body
that the surface is as juicy as the soil below,
do you wriggle your way up and out
to migrate over land rather than in a tunnel?
Is it so much quicker to get where you're going?

Or is it, as others do tell, that you
move up and out because you
have a primal fear of the mole?
The rain's vibration on soil mimics
your nightmare,
so up and out you go, is that it?

Or, is it another base instinct that drives you?
To have wild worm sex with another?
Oh, hermaphrodite!
Did your partner make it back into the ground?
Did she/he survive?
Or is that him/her floating next to you?

Dear earthworm, pity us humans who need
to explain every event
however far fetched the explanation.
We'll repeat it until it becomes the truth
about your journey up and out in the April rain.

Pity us humans, who eat each other for lunch
rather than face our own place and pain
in April's food chain.

MOMMY, WHAT DOES FUCK MEAN?

by Bob MacLaughlin

She was in her twenties then,
slim, attractive wife and mother
full of hugs and love-yous
as afternoon sun danced
around the living room
during that daily game of Parchesi
with her five-year-old,
who had spent the morning playing
with older kids down the street.

She didn't flinch when I asked her
what fuck meant,
just calmly finished her move
on the Parchesi board,
then looked at me and smiled.

She didn't answer exactly, just said
words like that
weren't good enough for me.

Now I sit with her in I-C-U
counting all the tubes and wires
in her arms, nose and throat that keep her
from speaking.

She beckons me to hand her
the slate writing pad I bought
at the toy store,
identical to the ones
she once bought for me.

Maybe she'll write about
how her mother died giving birth
to her, how her sisters never
quite forgave her,
about miscarrying my younger
brother, about my father's leaving,
about the shrinks and shock treatments.

She takes the slate pad and scribbles
a single word in a language
I cannot decipher.
In an hour, she will be dead
and I will go on wondering
what she was trying to tell me.

A Voice for Hugh Ogden

by George Chappell

Did he have a chance to say goodbye
to fishes and turtles before
he drowned falling through thin ice?

It would have been fitting for a poet
who communed with trees and ravens
from his Rangeley Lake island.

The papers said a Trinity professor, 69,
drowned in 2006 while cross-country skiing.
His death startled the world, set

to celebrate his life spent teaching
and writing more than 500 poems.
A January thaw softened the surface

when he went from his island
to the mainland over ice that had
seen many snow sleds and skiers.

For the sylvan hearted, we saw him
when war struck New York's
Trade Towers five years earlier,

a day *the lake was at peace,*
driving to *the land of the hurt,*
to heal with his *timbered valleys.*

His poems are all around us:
fresh water rushes from a spring,
lowing winds deep as his voice

swirl across his *sunlit lake*,
snow drifts in small waves.
His was a gentle sound, not loud.

FINAL INTRODUCTION

Remembering Russell Libby (1955-2011), longtime advocate for healthy food and land and executive director of Maine Organic Farmers & Gardeners Association (MOFGA)

by Bob MacLaughlin

Having introduced the keynote speaker
at MOFGA's fall fair,
he leaned on his new cane,
hobbled down the steps behind
the bandstand,
wrapped his arm around a post
and listened.

If he was in pain, he did not show it.
If he was worried
about not lasting through the holidays,
he did not show it.
If he was thinking *why me?*
he did not show it.

Instead, he stood there looking up
at the speaker
while words about small-scale farming
and a healthy food supply
prompted cheers from the crowd.

He stroked his beard, which
had finally grown back after chemo,
and smiled.

TEARS OF SORROW

by Jim Ostheimer

We sing to you, America,
Though we prefer to be at home.
The Super Bowl was not our choice,
Newtown we hope will recover soon.
We don't expect to see more guns,
Except in our bad dreams.
We sing to you, America,
Though we prefer to be at home.

Our choir did not disappoint.
We were proud to sing before so many.
It was not until the second half
That a flood of tears put out the lights.
So far we have escaped the blame.
Our choir did not disappoint.
We were proud to sing before so many.

KALEIDOSCOPE

by Jon Potter

We meet, befriend. We talk, we laugh. But then
Squeezed, then hauled by tugs and pulls of time
We lose the crags, the quirks, the outside forms,
And so are left with fragments, bits recalled
As color: greens and blues, reds and whites.
We'll hold them all until the light is gone
We'll twist the tube of memory to see
The elegant connections they make.
They shift, they shape, connect in ways
We'd never guess; the mirrors in the tube
Are what we keep the longest in our life
And never tire of patterns they reflect.
They're a part of us; we know the glow
Until the light fades out. Until we go.

The Day I Couldn't Answer

by Marilyn Hotch

A thousand years it takes
to raise my eyes
to stare
across the room
where all belongs
to somewhere else.

Another universe is painted
flat against the wall
with neither light nor life.

Air presses on my skin,
my head, my eyes, my arms;
thick and gray everywhere,
defeating hope and joy.

A thin voice struggles
through the smog
to reach my ear.

"Are you all right?" he asks.

HAVING BOUGHT THE FARM

(Waldoboro, Maine, 1979)

by Bob MacLaughlin

The house was fading white,
the barn peeling red,
the ell that connected them
a little of both.

So, too, the chicken coop,
wood shed and privy.

I hired a guy,
hailed sixty gallons of latex
to the dooryard,
mixed a little red
into the white primer
so the top coat
would cover better.

My Volkswagen Bus
with California plates
and No Nukes bumper sticker
accented the foreground
as a hundred years of history
turned blush pink.

A pall descended,
neighbors no longer waving
as they drove by,
until four days later when
a final coat of solid American red
brightened the mood again.

ACROSTIC

sentinels

by Stephanie Marshall

reverent blossoms in stone urns
erupt.
delicate bud supplicants
gather sun-strength
expanding into confinement.
ripe petals recreate red on red
anthem to summer solstice
narrating a litany of everyday saints.
imbue the heart beat with vigor while
unveiling death shadows
mourners bury
six feet deep.

CLOGYRNACH

The Land of Clogyrnach

by Marilyn Hotch

The rounded summits everywhere,
In all directions as I stare.
Valleys in between
Help the hills to preen,
Be seen, a
Bright affair.

Journeying from the summit though
Down into the valley below
The light doesn't hold
So the coarse sod molds
Dark enfolds
Stumbles grow.

The people who inhabit here
Drink in the nature of their sphere
As they try to bend
It and try to fend
To good end
While spare and sere.

It's a complicated terrain
With a mixture of joy and pain
Deep highs and deep lows,
Emotions don't show
Sometimes foes
Friends again.

Family Gathering:

(At the Library)

by Jon Potter

The pages, chapters, memories,
Bookshelved so carefully, will tease—
“Pull me out, re-read,
Ride again time’s steed.
We’ll not plead...
Look at these!”

Those morphing faces, smiling, tear-wrenched,
Those bodies stretching, then unclenched
Emotions’ spurt and spray
And love, every day.
Read the play—
No-one’s benched.

Read each challenge met and bested
For the smiles each evoked, untested.
(A chapter quite grand
From memory-land
Your mind’s hand
Requested.

Your library: books richly bound
And filled with memories you’ve found
Covers are embossed
All quite safe—none lost.
Leather’s glossed,
Safe, unmossed.

MANTRA

by Jim Ostheimer

He left the cave for sunshine.
Coal dust shone on his hairy body
As the hairy ape-man shouted his mantra:
“Cloh guhr nach! Cloh guhr nach!”

Home a deserted mine, living alone.
His mantra echoed down the mine.
Even at dinner time he was heard
Singing “Cloh gurh nach, cloh guhr nach.”

Following a few days of silence,
They went to search for the ape-man,
Found him dead in his cave.
They carried him out, chanting sadly
“Cloh guhr nach, cloh guhr nach.”

Even now his spirit can be heard
On the anniversary of his death,
Singing his mantra:
“Cloh guhr nach, cloh guhr nach.”

LYRIC

Singing with Spatterdock

by Stephanie Marshall

Early morning oars
propel the bow through
a tangle of green-drift leaves
each tethered in the muck
by a slender stalk.

Wild water lily
in quiet cove hovers.
Radiates yellow love
back to the sun.

Each bud croons,

How beautiful you are today.

Refrain of sun song echoes,

How beautiful you are today.

Lifting both oars,
I join the morning chorus
among the spatterdock in praise,

How beautiful you are today

Weskeag River Lyric

by George Chappell

*We cannot step twice into the same river,
for fresh waters are ever flowing in upon us. — Heraclitus*

The swirling river under the bridge
becomes a fulcrum for the tides,

nothing but tidal waters flow
back and forth, on a given day, new

currents come in and go out
in ever changing constancy.

High tide turns water blue against
a far-off ring of green trees

winds ripple low tides to whitecaps,
turning the sea's hue to blue-grey

over shadows of shoals; boats at moorings
point as if parked by attendants.

Fresh water streams flow only
one way and vanish into the sun.

I speak these lines in awe
because Nature makes an exception

to remind us of her cycles, allowing
us to step twice into the same river.

PANTOUM

BEAST

by Jon Potter

Sprawled in the driveway is a desiccated beast:
Split tree-pieces, huddled there, waiting there
For the grips, the gasps of fall-folk, pieced.
The shape, peaceful, holding fire to share.

Split tree pieces, huddled there, waiting there-
Skin flaky, tight, loose, still, their years gripped in.
The shape, peaceful, holding fire to share
Each split severed, pale insides splintered thin.

Skin flaky, tight, loose, still, their years gripped in
So the future burn releases seasons, the history it holds
Each split severed, pale, insides splintered thin
Forgetting greens, forgetting russets, golds.
So the future burn releases seasons, the history it holds.
It lies insensate, limbs chopped lengths,
Forgetting greens, forgetting russets, golds.
Its body being shifted, its body shrinks.

It lies insensate, limbs chopped lengths,
Its parts tight-stacked beneath a roof
Forgetting greens, forgetting russets, golds,
The dance in sky, the dancer, once aloof.

For the grips, the gasps of fall folk, pieced
Sprawled in the driveway is a desiccated beast.

Postcard

by Stephanie Marshall

Here is a glossy professional print
of my vacation destination:
photoshopped sunset
in colors nature did not intend.

I won't bother to send
the clumsy out-of-focus
photos that never seem to
reflect the mind's eye.

They'll be enshrined in
a *Makin' Memories* album
with coordinating paper
and stickers.

The real vacation
lives between the photos,
wild free experiences
not held in digital captivity.

LIVING IT

by Jon Potter

This life, old yacht of years, should not be wrecked—
A swirl of joys, a jagged rockpile's scratch
The pull of love, its compass holds me rapt,
Despite the furl of failure, forehead clapped—
And tightly-cleated friendships, the worn sail's patch
Gone loose, frayed out, brought down, or decked.
As slowly lines and worn-out sails are decked,
The fight to start the engine's on before I'm wrecked.
A shouted curse! The sail again! Ignore the patch.
Those clustered jagged rocks will more than scratch,
Call up the wind! The sails so still—then clapped—
So, moving once again, and in that slide I'm rapt.

The breeze picks up, the waves spit white—then rapt
Is wrong. The water washes, but the hull is decked
The sails are downed. They shuffled, then they clapped
Until their fittings shifted and were wrecked.
The surface of the deck had scratch on scratch
The threads, which once held strong, released each patch.

The sea was pouncing, smashing with a patch
Of foam-topped waves which like a cat seemed rapt
To grip its prey. Its clawing left no scratch
Its fangs struck hard upon the hull, but decked
They slipped away. The boat was still not wrecked
The sopping sails, alone, forlornly clapped.

Then skies had darkened, lightning split and clapped
The clawing waves retracted in this patch
And rain struck drops like bullets; wind was wrecked,
And seas were pelted hard till they were rapt,
The yacht was shifted to a snaredrum, decked,
The drops nailed loudly on the sail-slides' scratch.

Then, slowly, air came still, the sky a scratch
Of gray and star-stung black. Nothing clapped,
And easy rocking seas, no longer were they decked.
Not far, the crescent moon shone through a patch
And I was still, my being full, and rapt—
The rig, the lines, the fittings seeming wrecked.

A scratch or two, the worn-out sails a patch
Clapped out, and yet survival leaves me rapt.
A well-decked yacht just might survive, not wrecked.

The Fire at Jay Hill

by George Chappell

The sleeper woke and spotted the fire,
called the station to bring the water
pumped through hoses; victims coughed in smoke
and watched trucks drive up hills so steep,
bearing equipment coated in ice and snow.
Those on upper floors considered a jump.

I recalled a time when we made ski jumps
for races after school on fields of glowing fire,
the setting sun reddened against the snow
crystallized in freezing water
and ran back up with breaths steeped
in steam that resembled smoke.

The Fire Auxiliary struggled through smoke,
carried coffee in mittened hands and jump
suits bought at L.L. Bean at too steep
a price for volunteers from the fire
station next door to the watering
trough, buried in a yard of snow.

In cold winter I can smell the sweet snow
despite the choking air from smoke
tightening my chest without water,
recall memories of a saving jump,
by a warming log of fire,
drawing wholeness of life steeper

and deeper into a house with roof so steep,
to let loose to the ground the falling snow,
melted by heat from the fire,
driving us to take comfort out of smoke,
that gave us courage to jump
or wisdom to call the station for water.

Outside, the bearers of water
at 1 a.m. climbed slopes steep
enough to slip, slide or jump
over patches of packed snow;
we inside choked in smoke
and awaited the dread of the fire.

We are thankful for the mix of fire and water,
and blend of smoke used to steep
the snow in the act of jumping.

Rondeau Prime

WHITE CHRISTMAS

By Jim Ostheimer

Even Bing would sing, if he saw our snow.
Santa's sleigh can land on our roof this year.
He would see our TV Dish is not clear.
With Santa's help, Pat's game would be a go.
They are not favored, but you never know.
We will play Bing's song, so Santa can hear.
Even Bing would sing, if he saw our snow.

Forecast is for rain; will our deep snow go?
We will activate Plan B, never you fear.
Perhaps we should invite Santa to stay right here.
He wants it to snow; his schedule says-'Go!'
Even Bing would sing, if he saw our snow.

Mother

by Marilyn Hotch

It
was in
the tiny kitchen
that it happened. You
and I sat alone across the
table, and I wasn't scared. You
were just back from your first lady
group meeting with your large Easter
basket so anxiously decorated for exchange
with another. They all had tiny baskets like nut
favors, you said, and I knew you'd never go back
again. I wanted so to touch your hand while the
shouts, the bitter words, blows for the broken
cup, and the rage in search of a cause
slid away in silence.

II.

It was in the tiny kitchen
that it happened.
You and I sat alone
across the table,
and I wasn't scared.
You were just back from
your first ladies group meeting
with your large Easter basket
so anxiously decorated
for exchange with another.
"They all had tiny baskets
like mixed nut favors," you said,
and I knew you'd never go back again.
I wanted so to touch your hand
as the shouts and bitter words,
the blows for a broken teacup,
slid away in the silence.

SAILING

by Jon Potter

T
he
sail
is slotted
on the mast
and on the boom.
with any wind, it muscles
the boat through the water.
the mast is rigged with stays
to hold it firm despite the pressures
of the air, the flip and dance of surface seas
so we in life depend upon that braced, socketed mast
those stays, the boom, holding us up and tight as we sail safe
through sweeping tides, the drooping slap of waves, wind-whims

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KNUCKLEBALLING

by Bob McLaughlin

My summer morning mind
emerges
slowly
from sleep
fluttering
like a knuckleball
flung by Wilhelm,
Neikro,
Wakefield
or Wood
as random thought-currents
bounce it
back
and forth
between lingering remnants
of dream
(college finals I forgot and
elusive beauties beckoning)
jumbled with panicky
now-feelings
(late for breakfast with a friend, need to
bill a client, gotta get a run in, what if
I outlive my money? why is my hip sore?)
until finally
home plate
eases
into view

along with a menacing
slugger
who
swings wildly
and
misses.

FIRST SNOWFALL

by Marilyn Hotch

Slowly meandering,

Lazily floating,

Barely

Seen

Against

The sky,

Tiny jewels

Make their way

To kiss the earth,

Becoming lost in her embrace,

No longer to be seen,

Until the clouds bemoan their loss

And fill the sky with hordes of jewels

To gather down below.

And mirror that above.

TERZANELLE

On Loan

by Marilyn Hotch

The land and sky and water can be loved
and much admired, are borrowed for a time
but never really owned, no matter what.

An acre with a tiny house and trees,
with air so fresh and paths to be explored
and much admired, are borrowed for a time.

Five acres in a rich suburban town,
tall pines and rocky crags and sandy soil,
with air so fresh and paths to be explored,

the digging and building of a future home,
a feeling that of course this must be yours -
tall pines and rocky crags and sandy soil.

Site splendid on the rocky shore of Maine,
vistas and views and mesmerizing sounds,
a feeling that of course this must be yours -

vistas and views and mesmerizing sounds.
The land and sky and water can be loved
and much admired, held briefly as a loan
but never really owned, no matter what.

FALL HAS DESCENDED

by George Chappell

When dry leaves gather by tree roots in clusters
at church or doctors' parking lots
fall is descending, felled by full-blown blusters.

We look dark, imagining clots,
and abandon our cars to stride inside
from church or doctors' parking lots.

These are our feelings, living in numbness,
voicing air wave tales of wars and bombs,
left with cars at church or doctors' parking lots—

on our legs, clutching our chests, holding
our breath, we long for indoor warmth,
voicing air wave tales of wars and bombs

to buttress our fear. Inside, we wait for an all clear
sending us back to our cars outside—
our breath remains still in the indoor warmth,

knowing we can never go back
to dry leaves gathered at tree roots in clusters
or return to our cars outside.
Fall has descended, felled by full-blown blusters.

TRIOLET

In Our Parking Lot, the Cars Get Jumbled

by George Chappell

In our parking lot, the cars get jumbled,
when the plowmen clear the snow.
They have keys to keep us humbled.
In our parking lot the cars get jumbled,
while we watch inside and grumble
over how much cash we owe.
In our parking lot, the cars get jumbled,
when the plowmen clear the snow.

ALIVE

by Jim Ostheimer

A sadness fills me.
A joy also at being alive.
I kneel on one knee.
A sadness fills me.
I pray for those gone ahead of me,
Who may one day give me a high five.
A sadness fills me.
A joy also at being alive.

A man like Nelson Mandela,
Lived for ninety-five years.
He is remembered as a grand fella.
A man like Nelson Mandela,
May have sung a-cappella,
Dies with very few fears,
A man like Nelson Mandela,
Lived for ninety-five years.

An artist would paint his broad smile.
When times were bad he could seem happy.
He was a great leader all the while.
An artist would paint his broad smile.
He trained as a boxer he was so agile.
He must have been ready for a long nappy!
An artist would paint his broad smile.
When times were bad he could seem happy.

About the poets—

Jim Ostheimer
Founding Member

A Yale graduate, Jim has been a writer for many years; he won the Thoreau Medal as a freshman at the Middlesex School, and won a large number of awards in the Arizona state poetry contest for his free verse. Jim was a pilot in the U.S. Air Force, and has been a long-time competitive one-design racing sailor. Jim has published three books: *Blue Yonder*, *Witness*, and *Harbor Lights*, (available through Barnes and Noble and Amazon.com.)

George Chappell
Founding Member

George Chappell has been involved in writing for most of his adult life as an English teacher and a journalist. A recent recipient of a Master of Fine Arts degree from Goddard College in Vermont, he also has a Master of Arts degree in Folklore from the University of Pennsylvania and a Bachelor of Arts in History from the University of Maine in Orono, Maine. He is a graduate of Moses Brown School, a Society of Friends high school in Providence, R.I. He lives in Rockland, Maine, where he participates in regional poetry workshops. He is the author of *A Fresh Footpath: My New Life in Poetry*, a collection of poems from his master's thesis at Goddard. He is a widower, formerly married to the late Inger (Larsen) Chappell of Baltimore, Md. He has four sons, eight grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

Stephanie Marshall

Stephanie Marshall is a teacher at Camden-Rockport Elementary School and enjoys sharing her love of reading and writing poetry with students. Stephanie is a Mainer whose writing is influenced by a childhood spent roaming the potato fields of Aroostook County. She has been a member of the Poets' Corner Workshop for a little over a year.

Marilyn Hotch

Marilyn Hotch has lived in Maine for over 20 years and currently resides in Camden. She is a graduate of Tufts University with a Bachelor of Arts in English and also holds a Juris Doctorate degree from Northeastern University School of Law. Following a career as a litigator and environmental attorney in Massachusetts, she practiced law in Maine with a specialty in mediation and facilitation. Since retirement, Marilyn has been able to explore her love of creative writing, with a particular interest in poetry and recently won the 2013 Maine Postmark Poetry Contest sponsored by the Belfast Poetry Festival.

Jon Potter

Jon Potter, who lives in Rockport, has been writing for many years, principally for the theatre, and has published over sixteen plays. He has written two textbooks, one for new English teachers, and one for producers of Commedia dell' Arte comedies. He has also published some poetry, in *Maine Stance and Stanza*, (Julie Bragdon, ed.) and in the *Rockland Courier-Gazette*. Jon has found the inspiration of working with other poets at The Poets' Corner remarkable, challenging, and enormous fun.

Bob MacLaughlin

Bob MacLaughlin lives in Warren. He's been a newspaper sportswriter, magazine editor, on-air promo writer for network TV, and an advertising copywriter. His book *FAULTY WIRING: the Alzheimer's poems and other memories* was published in 2011 by Moon Pie Press.