



Friends of  
Lorine Niedecker

Issue #23  
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# *I was the solitary plover*



Lorine Niedecker Sculpture by Fort Atkinson artist Sally Koehler  
Photo by Ann Engelman

*I was the solitary plover*

*a pencil*

*for a wing-bone*

*From the secret notes*

*I must tilt*

*upon the pressure*

*execute and adjust*

*In us sea-air rhythm*

*"We live by the urgent*

*wave of the verse"*

## **Poets Turn Out for Lorine Niedecker Wisconsin Poetry Festival**

The seventh annual Lorine Niedecker Wisconsin Poetry Festival was held October 16 and 17 at the Dwight Foster Public Library in Fort Atkinson. The Festival hosted over 100 visitors, 75% of them from out of town. "Festival visitors enjoyed downtown Fort Atkinson and our Farmers Market," said Dot Kent. Nancy Shae noted, "The Poetry Festival partnered with the Farmer's Market and Café Carpe this year. Poetry seemed to be everywhere." Dot Kent and Nancy Shae were the co-coordinators for the Poetry Festival this year.

Forty five years after her death, the influence of Fort Atkinson poet Lorine Niedecker continues to grow. Scholars, poets laureate, writers, publishers, booksellers, librarians and poetry lov-

ers from across the state gathered to share their appreciation for one of America's finest poets.

David Wilk of Connecticut presented new information about how Lorine's legacy began to be documented. He first encountered Niedecker's poetry as an undergraduate at Yale University and published a volume of poetry and literary criticism pertaining to Lorine in 1975. Five years following her death it was the first publication about her and her work. There was little known about her at that time. His foresight at capturing what was known helped document what was available at the time and provided the start for other researchers to follow. At that time she had published seven books, three in the U.S. and four in Britain.



“There are very few poets whose work I have come back to over and over again. Her poetry meant so much to me then, and still does today,” said Wilk. In his Festival remarks, Wilk described the relationships Niedecker developed through correspondence with publishers and fellow poets: “Her correspondence reads like poetry.”

Karl Gartung, whose Woodland Pattern Book Center in Milwaukee co-sponsored Wilk’s appearance at the Festival, stated “David made me aware of Lorine Niedecker’s work, and I shared my enthusiasm with Tom Montag.” Wisconsin poet Montag went on to write a book of poetry titled *That Woman* inspired by Niedecker. Along with others, Gartung and Montag produced a Centenary Celebration in 2003, one hundred years after Niedecker’s birth. Study groups and scholarly monographs, and a growing interest in Niedecker’s poetry followed.

In 2011, noted biographer Margot Peters researched and wrote a full length book *Lorine Niedecker, A Poet’s Life*. For this year’s Festival, Peters spoke about Lorine Niedecker’s mother Daisy, the few known facts of her life, and the incorporation of her language and point of view in many of her daughter’s poems. Although she became deaf, due to unknown causes while Lorine was still a child, “she was forthright and poetic in her speech.” Lorine Niedecker’s longtime associate, the poet Louis Zukofsky, reinforced Lorine’s practice of writing down, word for word, her mother’s utterances and incorporating them into her poems.

Ann Engelman, Chair of the Board of the Friends of Lorine Niedecker and co-creator of the Festival said “We are connecting the dots. By coming together and sharing what we know about Lorine’s life and work, we come to greater and greater appreciation of her poetry.”

In Fort Atkinson, a group named the Solitary

Plovers (from a line in one of Niedecker’s poems) meets regularly to read and discuss Lorine’s poems. For the Festival, Door County poet Nancy Rafal lead a lively rendition of one of Niedecker’s best known longer poems, *Wintergreen Ridge*. UW Madison scholar Steel Wagstaff was quick to point out the literary and botanical references in the poem, and the still timely ecological and feminist perspectives. According to Wagstaff, “although she lived in almost total obscurity -- nearly blind, on the brink of poverty, working a series of anonymous, largely menial jobs – she produced a body of rich, highly condensed, extraordinarily perceptive poetry.”

The Festival also included two sessions of Wisconsin poets reading their own work. According to Tom Montag, “The Saturday open mic reading was the best I have ever attended. The poems were all publication quality.” Four award winning Wisconsin poets, Fabu of Madison, Cathryn Cofell of Appleton, Lisa Vihos of Sheboygan, and Nick Demske of Racine lead discussions of the poetry writing process with groups of interested poets and readers.

The Festival concluded with a packed audience for Wisconsin Poet Laureate Kimberly Blaeser’s talk *Gesture and Silence in the Poetry of Place*. Surrounded by an exhibit of her photography and picto-poems, Blaeser eloquently addressed the transcendent experiences available in the natural world, the human imagination, and the poetic connection between artist and audience. The exhibit, entitled “Ancient Light” was displayed in the Jones Family Gallery on the second floor of the Dwight Foster Library.

Dwight Foster Public Library librarian and Festival co-creator Amy Lutzke reported, “people came from 28 different locations in Wisconsin” to attend this year’s Festival “the best one yet”. The Festival is hosted annually by the Friends

# *for a wing-bone*

of Lorine Niedecker, and sponsors included the Wisconsin Humanities Council, Dwight Foster Public Library, Hoard Historical Museum, Café Carpe, Velveteen Rabbit Bookstore, Wisconsin Fellowship of Poets, Woodland Pattern Book Center and Daily Jefferson County Union.



## **Meet the Friends of Lorine Niedecker Intern**

Last summer the FOLN met Bethany Kanter, a recent graduate of Carthage College. She has been working with us on a variety of projects. We asked her if she would let us know a little about herself and the work she is doing.

I have lived in Fort Atkinson for most of my life. I remember when the Niedecker wall was painted and being confused as to why something like that would go up on a wall in my hometown, having never heard of Lorine Niedecker. Years later, when I got to college, I was assigned to read a poem called Paeon to Place and was suddenly made aware of the knowledge that my poetic roots were not alone.

I graduated from Carthage College in Spring of 2015 where I studied writing and books and making art and developed a love for writing poetry. I hope to go to grad school in the fall for an MFA in poetry so that I can one day work as a professor of creative writing while writing and publishing my own work.

For the Friends of Lorine Niedecker, I do various smaller tasks that need doing, but I mainly work with the marginalia of Lorine's personal library. Tom Montag had recorded the majority of it years ago, but I go through to catch any typos and make the notes more detailed. As a poet and an avid reader, it's fascinating to see the things that she was reading and the things that she was drawn to mark. I am constantly surprised at what stands out to her. Her interests were broad and dynamic and that shows through in what

she underlines and writes in the margins. Commonly, she writes math problems in the margins, figuring out how long someone lived, but occasionally figuring out the cost of something unrelated to the book. This math makes her feel very real to me, reminding me that she was not just the poet, but also a living person, operating in a world not so different from our own.



## **Literary Landmark Designation**

The Dwight Foster Public Library is applying for a Literary Landmark designation from United for Libraries which is part of the American Library Association. 2016 is the 100th anniversary of the first dedicated library building in Fort (as opposed to using already existing spaces). The literary landmark would note Lorine Niedecker worked here.

As biographer Margot Peters noted, Lorine worked at the Dwight Foster Library two different times: first from May of 1928 through August of 1930 and then later in the early 1950s.

The library will be hosting a dedication program in April or May. Information about the program will be posted to the [lorineniedecker.org](http://lorineniedecker.org) website as soon as the details are complete.

# *From the secret notes*

## **POETRY**

### **The Recovered**

moon's a  
flexed muscle,

over-shoulder.  
Planet under,

off to the side.

Venus down,  
moon solid:

stoic,  
like I look:

stuck.

Phillip T. Egelston



### **a bird**

on the sill  
at the window  
of the house  
where we live  
in the country  
still at war  
shakes its wings  
and the world  
the whole world  
changes

Michael Dylan Welch



## **Photo- syn- thesis**

light  
in  
air

air  
in  
rain

rain  
in  
leaves

leaves  
in  
trees

*trees  
breathe*

Donna Fleischer



### **Lorine Was (A Memory from 1964-1966)**

I knew her at a distance  
Wondering why:  
Was she terribly shy?  
Or did she retreat  
For a reason?

Janice Redford



### **Petroglyphs at Piney Creek**

Something pulls us to this place,  
where stacks of stratified oolitic  
limestone cantilever into rock  
shelters in a ravine carved by wind  
and water's persistent persuasion.

Twelve hundred years ago  
Woodland Indians tapped their  
totems into this bluff: earth-signs,  
wolves, wavy snakes, mystery dogs,  
buffalo skulls, white-tail deer, ducks.

But we always end here,  
in front of this elegantly rendered  
dragonfly, tinted by creek reflections,  
the delicate beads of its body  
hovering on wings of riddles.

### **Night Fishing**

We dug bait  
behind the sewer plant,  
nail holes perforating tar-paper sky.

After filling a Folgers' coffee can  
with a gnarly knot of night crawlers  
my uncle swung his shovel over his shoulder,  
accidentally splitting my father's forehead wide open.

Sputtering apologies,  
stuttering about hospitals,  
uncle Ted ran toward the truck.

Wiping blood on his shirt sleeve, the old man  
winked at me, said "Let's go fishin' "  
and we did.

David Gross



### **December Thirty First**

**in memory of Lorine Niedecker**

**May 12, 1903 – December 31, 1970**

i don't know what's the matter

the Rock is frozen  
white with snow  
normal  
this time of year

through the kitchen window  
i can see  
the feeder hanging  
from the mulberry

there are flashes  
of cardinal red  
jay blue

cheeky chickadees  
woodpeckers  
of several species

but someone is missing

that rara avis  
with the precise, clear song  
is gone

Dan Grego



# *upon the pressure*

## **The Quarry Jumpers**

Jumpers released,  
  
as if they were  
swallows  
  
mining gravity  
from the air.

Thoughts,  
  
not wanting to be seen,  
  
are recorded  
as sound

*splash*

(synaptic  
transmission)

Gavin Halm



## **Wicked Tease**

Winter, a cold  
withholding lover  
  
caresses my lashes with frost  
whispers, cold breath in my ear,  
  
will you miss me when I'm gone?

## **One-Thousand One...**

When I cannot sleep I count.  
When I start to think, I begin again.

The stillness of repetition.

The silence of one and one and one  
like rain pushing against a windshield.

Mary Rowin



## **Citizen Mystery**

in city two-for ty-seven  
on the stereotypical planet of New England ice puzzles  
the ten super highways  
all lead to the same mysterious  
crystal fields  
of divine progress  
on the wrong day  
of the wrong year  
offending the irreproachable mistress of positivity  
where one imbalance  
is the precise image of another  
where beneficial goods are subject to deadlines of disaster  
where once upon a time  
amidst the fragrance of apple blossoms  
I discovered the idea of new love

Tom Hibbard

# *execute and adjust*

## **1. From Canoeing a River with no Name**

I once met a woman who insisted  
on canoeing upstream.

She spent the day pushing against the current  
to explore the folds and graces of a lake,

while the rest of our party struggled downriver,  
hacking a way through the bush.

Who doesn't want to return to the source,  
go back to the beginning?

Who doesn't search out the unknown?  
Which of us then drew the fool's errand,

beating our oars, heading  
the wrong way?

## **2. From "States of the River," after Ellsworth Kelly's prints**

East River  
is no river. Call it  
what it is river,  
tidal strait, imposter.  
Uptown Hell's Gate  
swirling and scary  
with its rocks and tides,  
its muddy colors, paint box mix.

Rhine River  
rhymes with wine river,  
borders planted with vines river,  
reminds me of Berlin's Spree river  
the one my grandfather fished  
before he was rounded up,  
allowed one suitcase.

## **3. From Canoeing the Douro, Canto 3**

Just yesterday  
a man walked through the village  
carrying branches of a lemon tree  
in his arms, blessed bitterness.  
He stopped to please me  
in front of the church,  
my camera's shutter ready,  
posed with his left hand  
on his breast,  
reminding me of Christ.

Ronnie Hess



snowy winter night...  
the granite pail  
glitters with constellations

\*

my life by water...  
a slant of winter sunlight  
is my only solace

Ali Znaidi

# *In us sea-air rhythm*

## **Dear Lorine/Dear Jean— *selected excerpts***

*Lorine Niedecker (1903-1970) and Jean Garrigue (1912-1972) shared a century of enormous tumult and transition. One ventured rarely from her home in rural Wisconsin (except for brief travels to Manhattan). The other made her home in Manhattan for many decades, but traveled extensively across Europe. They were, in equal measure, captivated by major American geographical landmarks. Both worked as copy editors for trade journals. One spent middle age cleaning hospital floors. The other taught college creative writing workshops. They would have been enormously uncomfortable in each other's company. They were both, as they were right to be, disappointed in our country's lost potential, about which they wrote. Neither is now as widely read as she should be, despite her unique contribution to American letters.*

## **Our Geologies**

*Geology has done so much for me (LN)  
...through the great cake of geologic time (JG)*

How to measure the erosion  
of an ordinary day  
against the mineral history  
of rock upon rock  
the *driven angles*  
and *unsinging pause*:  
west—and West.  
You recorded the eras  
in notes and letters  
from the Super Chief  
and a mid-sized sedan.  
You reveled in the colors:  
this *chromatic world*.  
The glorious Northwest  
corrupt and unrecognizable.  
The pink mystery of the Canyon  
*our relic bones*.  
The miles you traveled  
the lifetimes at home.

## **Our Recipes**

*Wide and glittering scope. And cabbage. (JG)  
Cabbage, yes! (LN)*

We all ate cabbage, that sour flower,  
more memorable  
than molded salads and chicken loaf.  
Do not discount the noodles  
or hard sauce—*metaphysical dinners*  
—that feed  
our wine-flown blood.

## **Our Inventions**

*Enschooling reality (JG)  
Unbooked revelry (LN)*

One of us invented a name  
One a son  
One (two, three) a lover

We, all of us,  
imagined one book—or another

*the vivid posturing*  
which is *nevertheless a poem*.

Sima Rabinowitz





# "We live by the urgent"

## CONTRIBUTORS

**Phillip Egelston** writes both poetry and short fiction. He is Advisor on Creative Writing And Visual Arts to the Shawnee Hills Arts Council in Southern Illinois. He has authored a book and a chapbook of poems and his new poetry volume, *LIGHT STALKING THE DARK*, will appear in the February or March of this year.

**Donna Fleischer's** poems appear in literary journals and anthologies worldwide, including *A Glimpse Of* (Athens, GR), *A Vast Sky*, *Bones* (England), *Contemporary Haibun*, *Esque*, *Exit Strata*, *Fiera Lingue* (Bolzano, IT), *Kō* (Nagoya, JP), *moongarlic* (England), *Naugatuck River Review*, *Otoliths*, *Poets for Living Waters*, *Presence* (England), *Spiral Orb*, and *The Marsh Hawk Press Review*. Her fourth chapbook, *< Periodic Earth >*, is forthcoming from Casa de Cinco Hermanas Press, Colorado, 2016.

Fleischer holds a BA degree in English from the University of Hartford, West Hartford, CT. She was a master pre-press four-color process stripper, and now assists the University of Hartford's departments of biology and chemistry as an office coordinator. She is a poet, writer, and independent copy editor.

**Daniel Grego** is the author of several books of poetry and essays, most recently *The Gate of Heaven is Everywhere: New and Selected Poems*, *One Winter Night: Collected Poems 1966-1996*, *Rock River Reflections*, and *Schools for Conviviality*. His poems and essays have appeared in numerous periodicals and anthologies including *Gathering Place of the Waters: Thirty Milwaukee Poets*, *Everywhere All the Time*, *Life Learning*, *You Are Still Being Lied To*, *Stay Solid: A Radical Handbook for Youth*, and *A Whole Which is Greater: Why the Wisconsin "Uprising" Failed*.

Daniel Grego has worked for TransCenter for Youth, Inc., a nonprofit agency that operates small, innovative high schools in Milwaukee. He became TransCenter's

Executive Director in 2002. Since 1986, he and his wife, Debra Loewen, the founder and Artistic Director of Wild Space Dance Company, have lived on fifty-five acres along the Rock River in Dodge County, Wisconsin.

**David Gross** lives with his wife on a small farm in southern Illinois near the Shawnee National Forest where they hike and bird daily. He is the author of four chapbooks, *Cup of Moon* (Bull Thistle, 2000), *What We Never Had* (tel-let, 2004), *Because It Is* (tel-let online, 2005) and *Pilgrimage* (Finishing Line Press, 2009). Recent poems are included in *Big Muddy*, *Blue Collar Review*, *Cape Rock*, *Common Ground Review*, *Hummingbird*, *Kentucky Review*, *Lilliput Review*, *Naugatuck River Review* and *Solitary Plover*.

**Gavin Halm** first became acquainted with the work of Lorine Niedecker through poet Rae Armantrout while taking a creative writing course at UCSD in 2010. Since then, he has also attended workshops in the English Department at UCLA, as well as at the Sewanee Writers' Conference in 2013. He lives in San Diego.

**Ronnie Hess** is a journalist and poet, the author of three chapbooks — *Whole Cloth* (Little Eagle Press, 2009), *Ribbon of Sand* (Willet Press Prize, 2014) and *A Woman in Vegetable* (Kattywompus Press, 2015) — and a culinary travel guide, *Eat Smart in France*. Born and raised along the Atlantic Ocean, she now lives in Madison, WI.

**Tom Hibbard's** writing has appeared in many places both off- and on-line. Recently he has published poems in *Truck* and *Cricket Online Review*. His reviews and essays on such subjects as "visual writing," Jack Kerouac's poetry and the work of Michael Rothenberg, Luc Fierens and Eileen Tabios are easily accessible online. His poetry collection *Sacred River of Consciousness* is available at Moon Willow Press in Vancouver.

# wave of the verse "

**Dixon J. Jones** lives in Fairbanks, Alaska with his wife Marion Avrilyn Jones and cat Bug. Born in the Territory of Alaska, he has been a graphic designer for the University of Alaska Fairbanks since 1989. His poems have appeared in *Windfall*, *FIELD*, *Ice Floe III*, and *Cirque*.

**Sima Rabinowitz** lives in the Bronx, NY. Recent and forthcoming publications include poems and essays in *St. Ann's Review*, *Trivia*, *AMP*, *Hamilton Arts & Letter*, and *Slag Glass City*.

**Janice Redford** is a former Spanish teacher at Cambridge High School and James F. Luther Junior High in Fort Atkinson, now retired from Sun Prairie Schools and living on a farm along the Koshkonong Creek near Rockdale, WI. She is a freelance journalist and environmental volunteer.

**Mary C. Rowin's** poems have been published by the Wisconsin Fellowship of Poetry, *Stoneboat*, *Solitary Plover*, *Mariposa*, *Zo Magazine*, *Blue Heron* and by the Science Fiction Poetry Association. Mary's work has appeared in several anthologies, including *The Ariel Project*, *Anthology of Poetry and Art*. Mary lives in Middleton, WI and blogs at <https://wordpress.com/post/poeticpossibilities.wordpress.com>.

**Michael Dylan Welch** runs National Haiku Writing Month ([www.nahaiwrimo.com](http://www.nahaiwrimo.com)) and served two terms as poet laureate for Redmond, Washington. His poems have appeared in hundreds of journals and anthologies in twenty languages. Recent books include *Fire in the Treetops* and *Becoming a Haiku Poet*, with *Seven Suns / Seven Moon* forthcoming from NeoPoiesis Press. His website is [www.graceguts.com](http://www.graceguts.com).

**Ali Znaidi** lives in Redeyef, Tunisia. He is the author of several chapbooks, including *Experimental Ruminations*, *Moon's Cloth Embroidered with Poems*, *Bye, Donna Summer!*, *Taste of the Edge*, and *Mathemaku x5*. For more, visit [aliznaidi.blogspot.com](http://aliznaidi.blogspot.com)



## Photos from the 2015 Lorine Niedecker Wisconsin Poetry Festival



Fabu at the Friday night open mic at the Café Carpe



Ron Czerwien served as Friday night open mic moderator and he read poetry!



John Lehman performs “Stand-up Poetry” at the Fort Farmer’s Market



Margot Peters presents a nuanced portrait of Lorine’s mother, Theresa “Daisy” Kunz Niedecker



Our festival organizers Nancy Shea and Dot Kent



Wisconsin Poet Laureate Kimberly Blaeser closed the festival with an enthusiastic call to celebrate poetry & art

## ABOUT US

The Friends of Lorine Niedecker is a non-profit corporation. There are no staff, just devoted volunteers. Our goals include preserving and expanding the legacy of Lorine Niedecker, as well as, offering educational materials, access to archives, a semiannual newsletter and events as time and resources are available. We are supported through donations and grants.

Donations are always welcome and are fully tax-deductible.

The Solitary Plover is issued twice yearly, in winter and in summer. Sign up for the email version on our website.

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Find Lorine on Facebook

## Save the Dates!

2016 Lorine Niedecker  
WI Poetry Festival will be  
October 14 and 15.

Details available in the  
Summer Solitary Plover  
and online as information becomes  
available this spring.