

Lorine Grabs The Brass Plaque

On May 12, 2018, thirteen souls braved a raw, overcast Milwaukee day to salute the installation of a plaque on the apartment building at 2042 South Sixth Street. Twenty forty-two was Lorine Niedecker's home, with her husband Al Millen, from 1963 to 1967. Today South Sixth is a street littered with refuse and decorated with garbage bins. And now, final touch, a yellow "Condemned" sign nailed to a porch peeling grey paint.

Milwaukee urban anthropologists Jill Lackey and Rick Petrie sponsored the event as part of a campaign to honor Milwaukee notables. Then I, as Niedecker's biographer, contacted Lackey, saying I wished to purchase a plaque as a farewell gesture on my retirement from the Board of the Friends of Lorine Niedecker.

When FOLN members Nancy Shea, Jane Nicholson and I pulled up across the street from 2042, we saw three people in parkas huddled over a plastic-covered table loaded with packages of buns, drinks bottles, plastic cups, and brats. A tiny chimney grill, tended by Rick, smoked on the sidewalk. Looking in vain for comers, Jill and Rick were glad to see Dot Kent (FOLN); Mauricio, the Milwaukee poet who cruised up on his bicycle and read five Niedecker poems; Janet his wife who arrived in their car; Karl Gartung, co-owner of Milwaukee's famed Woodland Pattern bookstore; Chuck Stebleton (FOLN); and a charming, red-faced chap (whose name I was too cold to catch) who's a poetry lover and friend of Karl. Also present: a toothless man with straggly beard, currently the only resident of condemned 2042. He hovered at the edge of the gathering, munching a brat and wondering what the hell was going on.

The event, on her 115th birthday, was quintessentially Lorine. Cold, rainy, poorly attended. Bottled soft drinks and brats rather than Grasshoppers and caviar. But--as in her life--those who gathered, passionate admirers of her poetry, were reminded: Satisfaction is death to art. Lorine, satisfied, would never have become a great poet. Living on the edge, Lorine transformed deprivation into fine art.

Margot Peters

Save the Dates!
2018 Lorine Niedecker
WI Poetry Festival Events
Sat. July 28 - Wall Words/Poetry Wall
Dedication
Sat. September 29 - Blackhawk Island
Writer's Workshops
Fri., October 19 - Open Mic Poetry
Reading

Details available on Page 11
Schedule has been posted to:



Olsen Mural Detail

for a wing-bone

POETRY

Scarecrow Poetry Reading

Straw mouth speaks dry words
Ragged shirt, gloves hold paper
Black shiny heads nod

Sonogram of the Author

Reveals dark mass
Hidden in imagined words
Fatal prognosis

James P. Roberts



greening

awake slowly
in our soft cocoon
awake slowly to hear
our quiet breathing

turn your face
to the warmth
of my smiling face
turned to yours

thunder grumbles, groans
rain splatters, pummels
our grey world to greening
this early spring morning

Elizabeth Park



When I Say Sanity

Bird's urgency
isn't wasted on me

Loud chirps
caws
squeals
quacks
crack my composure

Suddenly I'm in it —
as cause
bystander
cohabitant
defending my nest

You cannot have
my eggs
disturb my rest
threaten my babies
make a meal
of our flesh

Fierce when
required to be
I fight for my life
sanity
progeny
community —

and when I say
sanity
I mean poetry

Georgia Ressimeyer

From the secret notes

As if Niedecker
were a verb: her chiseled breath,
how it palpitates
the page. To find company
in silence turning a phrase.

*

On the cusp of June
the sun's already August.
Peripheral bees
at the speed of memory
indent the humidity.

*

After how many
days spent in fluorescent light,
a flash of lilacs
scars my vision while I walk
around the chapel garden.

*

How the breath becomes
compass when the mind abides
a wordless current;
the skull's mumbling subsumed
as an inner eyelid lifts.

*

Pond's edge pocked white with
cottonwood fluff. Wind-driven
litter drifts: a spent
condom lost now in pollen—
sluggish current curving green.

*

When morning coheres
even as a dream repeats
behind my open
eyes. Paper blinds leak light, unwrite
the dark that held the room.

Joseph Massey

Near Avellino

Bending to touch
earth again
a fig tree

The slightest breeze
stirs my fig tree
to sign-language

A fig tree
in old age I'm not
the only one

The fig tree bears
and we join
the old gods

The old man's
thin skin bruises
fig-purple

All these cuttings
from a fig tree from
the lost place

Driven to tears
the fig tree roots deeper in
this earthquake soil

John Martone



I must tilt

ANATOMY

Yr back's small
ribbon of spine

*

tongue's heat
math adazzle

myth, mouth, math
"the color"
(lurid)
"of bruises"

Count Adam, Count Eve:
their Majesties
of Vtter.

Add moth
to it -- watch it
flutter.

Steven Manuel



Summer Sketch #2

After work I rush back home
to water plants that refuse to bloom.
Of course they don't turn down the drink
and their thick and lively green is
an affront to what's left of me at this hour.
I pour myself one and we at least
agree, these plants and me, to share
the smell of damp earth in the last light.

Mario Belavel

Blue Ridge

These mountains beacon me
drawing me into where the
air is cool and scented with
the peppery fragrance of
some unknown plant

They refresh me as I glimpse
a clear running stream
tumbling across rocks
made smooth by the flow

They beguile me to touch
the myriad shades of green,
yellow of mountain laurel,
an almost hot pink of red bud
and soft white of dogwood

These mountains comfort me
as I venture amongst their folds
as the quiet therein wraps around me
like a favorite quilt

It is here I rest

Brenda Hansen



upon the pressure

Spring Hunting

The treasure in the woods is the damp.
Morels breathe origin—morning floor
of the forest, dogwood leaf

no bigger than a mouse's ear.

In the golden age, the story goes, acorn mast
sustained the people, who were little more
than animals.

The vernal seeps, one feels
it. The treasure is warm at the edges,
cool and soft inside.

Outwardly animals,
but inwardly sure as the gods in their freedom.

Nothing so close to the earth can last.

The mushroom hunters, girls,
one fair, one dark, one knowing, one not,
how to find the knobs in the leaf mat, enter

a flickering understory.

Diana Lueptow



I Can Imagine, So I Do

While neglected poet Lorine Niedecker
is cleaning the floors of Fort Atkinson
Memorial Hospital for a living, having sent
thus-earned money to Cid Corman to support his magazine,
a woman who has never read or will ever read a poem
is in her last days in a ward bed. I imagine Niedecker,
looking up from her work to this woman's appealing, troubled face
and asking, in a soft even though raspy voice,
"How are you doing there?"

David Curry

The Fisherpeople

In Spring

this place wields timelessness.

Grown men wade in tall rubber boots

and stare into nothing.

Threading their lives through

the tip of a rod,

hoping on a bobber,

reciting prayers to minnows.

They catch solace

and snag peace of mind.

Thinking about their fathers,
Thinking about their mothers

Pining for the one that got away.

This is Blackhawk Island.

This is my home.

For Lorine Niedecker's birthday on May 12
Margaret Schroeder



execute and adjust

Apple Salad

When your *second* mother-in-law dies, you comfort your husband. You feel sad and a little relieved – she *was* 97, and had not known your name for years. You take charge, make calls, pour over photos for the memory boards. The service is sweet with flowers and the people she loved, the family gathering after for food and favorite stories – how she'd painted everything (even the outhouse) pink, how her baked spaghetti and famous banana pudding will be missed. You feel her absence for a while – your Sundays strangely empty without those visits after church. And then, it's just what it is – her presence gone beyond the day to day.

But, when your *first* mother-in-law dies (years after the second, and many years after her son divorced you), you have no role. Your children, her grandchildren, make the calls, console your ex-husband, plan and share *her* sweet service in a distant state. You smile to hear your photo appeared on her memory board, and your own memories surprise you – the sound the train made passing on the tracks behind her house at midnight, her aromatic anise cookies, aged in old Christmas tins, the strength of her rod-straight back at the funerals of her daughter and husband, the day she showed you how to make her apple salad (the day you knew that you belonged) –

and, how you had to learn to let her go, to let her family go, to let her son go. And nothing to do now but send your heartfelt sympathy to the man you used to love, make a batch of apple salad, write a poem.

Jean Preston



Olsen mural details

In us sea-air rhythm

Atmospheric Conditions

stay a small hungry
to be on to

these sweetle
mostly free
daily things

red,
yell Ow,
green, and
blue oh blue

iris,

sky grasses,
theseathe
curl of nautilus with
rhythm of tide

Donna Fleischer

Alternative Medicine

You, who have tended me
like a hothouse plant

willing away drafts that might wilt
or sun that could cause droop,

were beside me on a bench in the marsh
where a woman with a camera lens

as long as her arm told us
she drove to the preserve daily

from a town, what, twenty miles away?
to be renewed, to draw in nature

like a breath, more nourishing
than food, when she spied

a bald eagle flying directly at us
and I saw its white head dip,

signaling that good news comes
in unexpected trajectories.

Mary Rowin



Poetry Wall under development on the southwest corner of the intersection of N. Main Street and Sherman Avenue in Fort Atkinson.

"We live by the urgent"

Storm clouds gather

driving rain against the window
beaded chains collect to thread
a silver warp within the frame

how will I adjust my tension to
weave patterns from the rain

*

Winning

Let her win, my mother'd say
even though she never played

My father and I are playing rummy
drawing, discarding, arranging our cards
matching wits.

My father likes to win. He holds his cards close
plays his hand with an eye to the table
strategies learned in the school yard
or maybe the army.

My mother wants winning to be a gift
given out of love, a take away
My father thinks you need to play your hand
Snap those cards. Winning counts.

My mother knows this
even though she's never played.

Kathleen Serley



This wood duck briefly took up residence in the Niedecker cabin this spring. He did not leave any poetry, only droppings.



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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CONTRIBUTORS

Mario Belaval was born and lives in San Juan, Puerto Rico, where he works as a free lance writer and counseling psychologist.

David Curry has published poems and short stories widely and has new work coming in *The Southern Review*. His second collection of poetry, *Contending to Be the Dream* (New Rivers Press) received Special Distinction in the Elliston Book Awards. A past writing fellow of the National Endowment for the Arts, he edited and published the poetry magazine *Apple* for 10 years.

Donna Fleischer's poems and essays appear in literary anthologies and journals worldwide. < *Periodic Earth* >, is her fourth chapbook. She makes her living by assisting the University of Hartford's departments of biology and chemistry as an office coordinator.

Writer of poetry as well as life stories about family, **Brenda Hansen** resides in southeast Wisconsin. She enjoys gardening - both flowers & vegetables - as well as quilting and is an avid reader of most everything! She participates in Author's Echo writers group receiving much inspiration and encouragement from a unique and diverse group of talented people.

Diana Lueptow was born in Madison, Wisconsin and has always lived in the Great Lakes Midwest. Her work is published in *FIELD*, *Beloit Poetry Journal*, *RHINO*, *The Stinging Fly* and the Wick chapbook *Little Nest* (KSU Press, 2015). She has an Individual Excellence award from the Ohio Arts Council.

Steven Manuel is editor of *from a Compos't*, a poet and lives in Asheville, NC.

John Martone's work can be found (among other places) at his scribd page -- <https://www.scribd.com/john-martone-2968>

Joseph Massey is the author of *Illocality* (Wave Books, 2015) and a trilogy grounded in the landscape of coastal Humboldt County, California: *Areas of Fog* (Shearsman Books, 2009), *At the Point* (Shearsman Books, 2011), and *To Keep Time* (Omnidawn, 2014). He lives in the Pioneer Valley of Massachusetts. For more information, visit his website: www.josephmasseypoet.net.

Elizabeth Harmatys Park is a Wisconsin native, a sociologist, and a peace and prison volunteer. Her poetry has been published in journals and in the *Wisconsin Poetry Calendar*. She is a past recipient of the Jade Ring First Prize in poetry awarded by the Wisconsin Writers Association.

Jean Preston holds an M.F.A. in Creative Writing from the Stonecoast Writing Program. She authored *All the Queen's Horses* and *Sixteen Mothers*, and her poems have been published in various publications. Jean directs the Writing Center at Carthage College.

Georgia Ressmeyer, twice a Pushcart Prize nominee in poetry, received last year's Honorable Mention in the Lorine Niedecker poetry contest sponsored by the Council for Wisconsin Writers. Her third poetry book is *Home/Body*, published in 2017 by Pebblebrook Press, an imprint of Stoneboat Literary Journal. She lives in Sheboygan, Wisconsin. Please see georgiaressmeyer.com for more information.

James P. Roberts has had fiction and poetry recently published in *Rosebud*, *Weirdbook*, *Blue Heron Review* and forthcoming in *Mirror Dance* and *Lonesome October Lit*. He is also coordinating with former Wisconsin Poet Laureate Marilyn L. Taylor on an upcoming poetry anthology called *Love Affairs At The Villa Nelle: 44 Poetic Temptations* to be published in February 2019 by Chelsea Books. He lives in Madison where he hosts a radio poetry show and has been spotted at Little Free Libraries around the area.

Mary C. Rowin's poetry, essays and reviews have appeared in a variety of publications such as *Persimmon Tree*, *Hamline Lit Link*, *Hummingbird*, *Panopoly*, and *Oakwood Literary Magazine*. Recent awards include poetry prizes from The Nebraska Writers Guild and Journal from the Heartland, and an Honorable Mention from Wisconsin People and Ideas. Mary lives with her husband in Middleton, Wisconsin.

Margaret Schroeder is the founder of The Solitary Plovers, a group dedicated to the living legacy and study of the works of Lorine Niedecker. She continues to coordinate the Plovers and is the warmth behind the Poetry Cafe during the Wisconsin Poetry Festival. She writes occasional poetry and also has a psychotherapy practice in Fort Atkinson.

Kathleen Serley, Wausau, WI, enjoys the way retirement has opened her days to poetry.

Lorine Niedecker Wisconsin Poetry Festival Events 2018

The 2018 Poetry Festival is being planned a little differently this year.
Several events are occurring under the "Festival" umbrella.

Saturday, July 28

8:00 a.m. Farmers Market

- Paul Wiegel, street poet, will write poems for you while you wait. Come early!
- Sidewalk chalk Poetry, "What six words describe your life?"

10:00 a.m. Dwight Foster Public Library - Community Room "Wall Words in Fort Atkinson" Program for everyone

Guest poet, Anjie Kokan's energy is infectious! She will help us celebrate the poem on the new Poetry Wall you will be seeing every time you cross Main Street and Sherman Avenue! Find out who wrote it and why it was written. Find out why the Poetry Wall words will mean something to you. We will be fooling with words! Refreshments will be served. Share your poems at the Poetry Wall Dedication at 1:00 p.m.

- Lorine Niedecker Exhibit upstairs in the Jones Gallery Friday, July 27 through Friday, August 3 during library hours.

1:00 Poetry Wall Dedication

- Thank you to funders, building owner, artist. Poetry Readings.

1:15 Community Picture in front of the new Poetry wall

1:20 -2:30 Wall Words Continues at the Poetry Corner and Belmont Bar parking lot

- Picnic Table #1 Blackout Poetry
- Picnic Table #2 Fooling With Words
- * What six words describe your life? * What kind of a Solitary Plover are you?
- Table #3 Additional space for writers to sit
- Table #4 Sidewalk Chalk Poetry Headquarters - Get chalk, find a square.
- Paul Wiegel, Street Poet, creates poems while you wait. He will have his typewriter & card table.

After 3:00 - Island Bar and Grill, Blackhawk Island for anyone who wants to continue the day.

Saturday, September 29, 1 - 4 p.m.

Free but registration required. Registration begins on August 1, 2018.

Two concurrent writing workshops on Blackhawk Island, "Writing in the Style of Lorine."

- Lisa Fishman will lead at Lorine's Cabin near the river. (Max. 20)
- Richard Meier, Andy Gricevich and Chuck Stebelton will lead an observational walk on BHI Road, then poetry. Both groups will come together at 4 p.m. for reading and sharing. We will adjourn to the Island Bar and Grill for Grass-hoppers and dinner.

Friday October 19 at 6 p.m.

Poetry Open Mic at the Café Carpe. Moderator TBA

*More information about the Festival presenters is available on the Web site.
www.lorineniedecker.org or Google Wisconsin Poetry Festival.*

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