



Friends of
Lorine Niedecker

Issue #29
Winter 2019

I was the solitary plover



Gowanus Dredgers Canoe Club in Brooklyn, NY Reads Niedecker Poetry

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"

Watery Words: Reading Niedecker on the Gowanus at Dawn

As part of the Brooklyn Book Festival, one of America's premier book festivals and the largest free literary event in New York City, the Gowanus Dredgers Canoe Club invited participants for a dawn reading of poetry from several books by Lorine Niedecker.

Readers in canoes gathered in the Gowanus Canal off the Carroll Street Bridge to recite some of Niedecker's water-centric poems. Other participants came to listen from the bridge.

Brad Vogel, Wisconsin native now relocated to Brooklyn, was the organizer behind this special program of the

Brooklyn Book Festival. He explained "Storms threatened as people went to bed on Tuesday night, so our turnout (for both readers and listeners) was down. But in the end...all we faced was a perfect backdrop of mist as we paddled out to read in three canoes.

"We read a total of 14 Niedecker poems, with *Paeon to Place* receiving special treatment in the middle, as it was read by three voices that occasionally overlapped in chorus."



NEWS

Fort Atkinson Chamber Recognition

In October the FOLN were honored to receive the Tourism Counts award from the Chamber of Commerce. The Tourism Counts Award is presented to an individual, business or organization that, through their leadership and efforts, have made a difference in the development of tourism in the Fort Atkinson area. The name of the award reflects the chamber's desire to impress upon the community that tourism does count in the bigger economic picture, and that it does impact the vitality of Fort Atkinson.

Chamber tourism manager Olivia Ault stated "This year's recipients have raised the profile of Fort Atkinson's most famous poet with the creation of an annual festival, a permanent exhibit at the Hoard Historical Museum, art installations at each public school building and a poetry corner in downtown Fort Atkinson, all of which draw visitors to our community."

Poetry Wall Dedication

Over fifty fans of Lorine Niedecker attended the newest poetry wall dedication on Saturday, July 28 in Fort Atkinson. Angie Kokan led a poetry workshop in the morning. At 1 pm the crowd gathered at the wall on the southwest corner of Sherman Avenue and Main Street to



Olivia Ault, Amy Lutzke and Ann Engelman at the Chamber Award Dinner

hear from artist Jeremy Pinc and FOLN president Ann Engelman about the process of creating the wall. Then the group photo below was taken and everyone enjoyed snacks. The Friends of Lorine Niedecker would like to thank the following organizations for their financial support of this project: The Fort Atkinson Community Foundation, The WI Humanities Council (with funding from the State of Wisconsin and the National Endowment for the Humanities), Fort Arts Council and the Fort Atkinson Tourism Council.

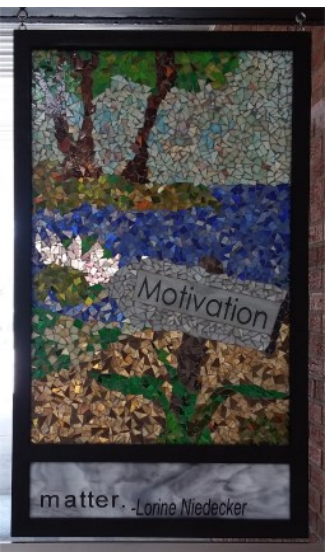


Dedication of the 2019 poetry wall on the southwest corner of Sherman Avenue and Main Street in Fort Atkinson

for a wing-bone

Purdy Elementary School Creates Poetry/Art

Students from Kindergarten through 5th grade worked with artist-in-residence Denny Berkery to complete a 4-panel glass mosaic that includes the line from Wintergreen Ridge “Where the arrows of the road signs lead us: Life is natural in the evolution of matter.” Images from Lorine’s poetry are captured in the mosaics. This project was planned and executed by Principal Leigh Ann Scheuerell, art teacher Jessica Zuniga, kindergarten teacher Andrea Kratz and music teacher Heidi Kosak. Funding for this project was provided by the Purdy PTO.



Former Niedecker Cabin on National Registry

The Blackhawk Island cabin that acclaimed Fort Atkinson poet Lorine Niedecker called home is now listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The Wisconsin Historical Society announced that the Blackhawk Island residence in the Town of Sumner attained the national status on Feb. 23, 2018.

The National Register of Historic Places, the official list of historic properties in America deemed worthy of preservation, is maintained by the National Park Service in the U.S. Department of the Interior. The Wisconsin Historical Society administers the program within Wisconsin.

From the secret notes

2019 LN Wisconsin Poetry Festival

This year's festival will include several separate events. The first will celebrate Lorine's 116th birthday and is called *Writing the Walk*.

On Saturday, May 11 from 1pm - 4pm Richard Meier and Chuck Stebelton will lead a writing excursion on Blackhawk Island. Following a discussion of walking and a poetics of presence in the place Lorine Niedecker inhabited, we'll walk the Niedecker property and Blackhawk Island road. We'll practice allowing language to emerge with the rhythm of walking. The workshop concludes with a chance to share our work in an intimate, conversational setting.

Additional events will be added to the website and posted to Facebook as they are scheduled. The fall Writer's Workshop on Blackhawk Island at Lorine's cabin on the Rock River, is tentatively scheduled for Saturday, September 28. Please check the website for confirmation in March.

The Open Mic poetry reading at the Café Carpe will be scheduled for a Friday in October. The date will be announced in the summer issue of Solitary Plover.

New FOLN Website

The Friends launched a new version of lorineniedecker.org in early January 2019. The site has improved features and functionality and an updated design. You may wish to take a look at these features:

- [Poetry Wall photo gallery](#)
- [Timeline slideshow](#)
- [Comprehensive list of LN archive material with finding aids](#)

You can also view the list of 2018 FOLN activities by clicking on Past Activities under the Friends of Lorine Niedecker menu. We are always looking to improve navigation and information presentation so we welcome any feedback that you have.



Penberthy in Wawa, Ontario

Jenny Penberthy Wisconsin Visit

Penberthy is the editor of *Lorine Niedecker: Collected Works* and a longtime Niedecker scholar. She made the trip to Wisconsin in September to review the collection of lost materials that had been recovered in 2017. She also traveled to Beloit College where she spoke to an enthusiastic group of students and described the Niedecker research that is still waiting to be done. This presentation was recorded. The link is available at lorineniedecker.org under Current News.

She then joined Karl Gartung and Anne Kingsbury for a Lake Superior circle trip. Jenny says about the above photo: "We stopped in Wawa where she [Lorine] and Al stopped in July 1966. She wrote about the big public art piece representing a goose. That goose has since been replaced by the new goose in the attached photos. We laughed about this 'New Goose'."

POETRY

Preparation

"In every part of every living thing / is stuff that once was rock" from *Lake Superior* by Wisconsin poet, Lorine Nie-decker, 2013, Wave Books. Niedecker lived along the Rock River on Blackhawk Island.

In the low field
I lift and winnow river rock
from thick black soil
Reveal a garden spot
beneath its gravelly coat
One stone stops me
imprint of mollusk shell
fallen into time

Lorine says we were all stone once
before ice meteors broke us apart
before we drifted into continents
settled into islands
before language and love separated us
built cultures, drew factions

Now we try to connect
bits of rock melted to steel
or spun out to copper wire
letting us travel and text
to nearly any corner
of our still round planet
These rocks, though, are stable
They're hard and don't crack
except for ice
Don't lose shape
except for water
and wind
Maintain value
or have none

Stone, soil, fossil
Scraps of the ages
I lie down dreary on the earth
Dead bones make fossils in stone
How long

Virginia Scholtz



Winter Guests Wait for Spring

Fog obscures the marsh
pond ice mush.
Water flows from melting snow.

Maple twigs litter the yard
near branches
felled in a windstorm.

Snowfall too deep, too icy,
too muddy now
to gather fragments for kindling.

They sit like visitors on the couch,
at odd angles
too tired to move.

Mary Rowin



execute and adjust

Perfection: An Ars Poetica

The archer fish knows refraction.
As it spits from its tropical mire
to shoot down crickets for dinner,
it adjusts for the kink in light—
the light that shifts direction
from water to air,
from the imposition of its world
to the world above, of heaven.
Is this a marvel of creation,
a piece of the grand design,
or an accident of evolution?
Or is this miracle simply gained
from the need to feed—
trial and error that perfects the poem?

Michael Dylan Welch



black
 river
 murmuration
 circling

the fire
 a congregation

of plovers

Miguel Sanchez

Lorine

Wind and rain move on

Scanning the river I feel calm
 though sinking
 in mud

Abandoned by wind and
 momentum
 I'm passive
relenting
 a hoarder of secrets
in waterlogged vaults

But I crack!

Lightning shoots down my spine
 chars my bark
scorches my heart

I'm tired of being praised
 and pitied
 for my nature —
rooted in water in air

Don't you know I've been
 stung
 by fire?

Georgia Ressmeyer



Daily Liturgy

Stand at the kitchen sink
with a round, white bowl in your soapy
hands and watch the moon.

Kortney Garrison

In us sea-air rhythm

Sourdough Rising

white and cold
the first page
of her journal

*sourdough rising
on the woodstove*

he brings kindling
and their elm
takes the fire

*corn popping
in a copper kettle
that twinkle in your eye*

tap tapping
snow fall at the window

*slow-burning candles
our shadows
become one*

**Daniel Schwerin
Julie Warther**



Newspaper Report

Curve of cold air
passing over state lines –
a prophet of fractions

below
a two-day sale starting tomorrow –
larger than
the nation.

Ben Prostine

Poet's Life

Lorine Niedecker

For mold and mildew after flood:
one half cup bleach per gallon;
mop, rinse, squeeze, scrape, scrub, repeat;
open doors and windows; use a fan
-a life on water.

Proofreader with tired eyes,
stenographer, hospital cleaner,
mortgage keeper those years as no one's wife
bothered away from poetry, no career
but *an urgent wave of life*.

A tough game art:
syllables to be tamed,
meanings sewn like coins in fleece;
Marcus Aurelius read at night
for release- her stove's meager heat.

You, *solitary plover*,
I visited your grave once
on a leafy cold October;
you, your parents together on a stone,
white pine, oak, a lovely woods.

I missed your rustic cottage though,
the island flooded,
no way in to Blackhawk;
found your home in town instead;
found the owner liked to talk.

Names from your life remain:
street signs on the island;
your words on walls in town;
river slate grey and silent;
same corn fields, same bird sounds.

Cattails, lilies, tall reed stems,
leaf fall, deep freeze, ice floes released
to spring excess; her father's daughter
memorizing all of it
-a life on water.

John Krumberger

"We live by the urgent"

Plumber

My dad was one. A union man as far back as I remember.
He once watched a fellow worker fall to his death
from a high-rise in downtown Cincinnati. He once
dug a ditch, dug it deep to lay some pipe, and the ditch
caved in. He got out, his left leg never the same, but alive.
Lucky. It was brutal dirty work. Body contorted under a sink
work. Wrestling out filthy toilets work. Sparks hot
from the solder iron burning his hands work. Smells
of pipe dope, plumber's putty, sweat through his shirt work.

He came home at night and went straight to the shower.
He scrubbed away the dirt of that day with a bar of Lava soap.
Scrubbed away the black dirt from underneath his nails.
Scrubbed the film of dirt off his teeth with a hard-bristled brush.
He came home at night to supper at six. Came home to kiss his wife,
toss a ball with his kids, share a beer with the neighbors. Came
home every night to the 60's suburban brick Cape Cod his labor
provided. Hit the sack early. Got up before dawn. Went back to work.

Jean Preston



Alphabet

The menagerie on a name card,
its threatened wildness. The frog
about to jump into the pond,
the oceanic O like a vortex,
a black hole in space where one just might
disappear. There is a bird or perhaps
a butterfly, a lily pad, an I strong-footed
like lumber, a plank to be set upright on earth.
And the final letter E looking forward, almost
unbalanced, the top rung heading furthest out,
traveling faster than two feet.

Ronnie Hess

hurt land

natural laws
limit

self-regulate, know
being becomes

dendrites stretch forth
explore through feeling
for

interre-
late, sustain

nothing
does not exist

Donna Fleischer



CONTRIBUTORS

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.

Kortney Garrison lives with her family in the Pacific Northwest where she homeschools her children. Her days are filled with books, nature walks, and many cups of tea.

Ronnie Hess is a journalist and poet. She is the author of three poetry chapbooks: *Whole Cloth*, *Ribbon of Sand*, and *A Woman in Vegetable*; as well as two culinary travel guides: *Eat Smart in France* (2010) and *Eat Smart in Portugal* (2017). She lives in Madison, WI.

John Krumberger has published a volume of poems entitled *The Language of Rain and Wind* (Backwaters Press in 2008), and a chapbook, *In A Jar Somewhere* through Black Dirt Press in 1999. His latest collection of poems *Because Autumn* was published by Main Street Rag Press in 2016. He has a PhD in psychology from the University of Minnesota and works as a psychologist in private practice in St. Paul, MN and lives with his wife in Minneapolis.

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.

Ben Prostine lives near Soldiers Grove in southwest Wisconsin where he works as a herdsman, farm hand, and writer. His poetry has previously appeared in *Blue Collar Review*.

Georgia Ressmeyer, twice nominated for a Pushcart Prize in poetry, has published three books, the most recent of which is *Home/Body*. Her poetry has received awards from the Council for Wisconsin Writers, Wisconsin People & Ideas, the Wisconsin Fellowship of Poets, The Washington Island Literary Festival, Peninsula Pulse and others. Please see www.giressmeyer@sbcglobal.net for more information.

Mary C. Rowin's poetry has appeared in publications such as *Panopoly*, *Stoneboat*, *Hummingbird* and *Oakwood Literary Magazine*. Recent awards include poetry prizes from The

Nebraska Writers Guild, and *Journal from the Heartland*. Mary's poem *Centering*, published in the Winter 2018 issue of *Blue Heron Review*, was nominated for the *Pushcart Anthology*. Mary lives with her husband in Middleton, WI.

Miguel Sanchez says: "i wrote a manifesto "whats rong (sic) about hippies" when i was 7. then came a song called "shut up, grandma" which was immediately banned. i started consistently writing poetry starting at 15, most of which was dedicated to my girlfriend. i have jumped out of a moving car, seen the aurora borealis while laying on the flight deck of an icebreaker in the chuckchi sea, i have plead against the death penalty for the murderer of my friend, survived two plane crashes, seen the green flash, and have fallen in love with a tree. i write mostly for myself. i have been deeply moved by lorine niedecker's poetry, her life, and her home. i have tried growing up in los angeles, berkeley, sonoma, puerto rico, new orleans, and madison. my education is mostly non academic."

Retired from nursing, **Virginia Scholtz** enjoys biking, walking, cookies, tea and poetry. She has the privilege of tutoring middle school students one morning a week in a Madison area middle school. A few of her poems have been published in the Wisconsin Poet's Calendar and in Wisconsin Trails.

Dan Schwerin (Waukesha, WI) and **Julie Warther** (Dover, OH) met at a haiku conference in Evanston, Illinois in 2013 and have been spanning time zones by writing collaborative poetry ever since. Both Dan and Julie lead haiku study groups in their respective regions.

Nancy Shea is a member of The Friends of Lorine Niedecker. She is grateful to Jenny Penberthy for pointing her in all the right directions to research this article.

Michael Dylan Welch has had his poetry performed for the Empress of Japan and at the Baseball Hall of Fame, printed on balloons and chiseled into stone. He is poet-in-residence for VALA Art Center in Kirkland, WA, is president of the Redmond Association of Spokenword, curates SoulFood Poetry Night, and is founder of National Haiku Writing Month (www.nahaiwrimo.com). You can learn about his many books, and read his poems, essays, and reviews (published in hundreds of journals and anthologies in at least twenty languages) at his website, www.graceguts.com.

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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