



*Friends of
Lorine Niedecker*

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I was the solitary plover...



My Path To the River, 1948
Photo by Lorine Niedecker, part of the Gail Roub Collection
Hoard Historical Museum

*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”*

The Poetry in Lorine Niedecker's Plants

by Shanley Wells-Rau

In a letter to a friend, Lorine Niedecker once wrote, “I am what I am because of all this—I am what is around me—those woods have made me” (Peters 219). Those woods were in her genes. She inherited the Rock River-front property from her maternal grandparents, the Kunzes. In fact, it was her woods-loving maternal grandfather who said, “Trees are the best things a man can have ...that little while he lives” and would eventually have a “fitting end” when he was found dead with his back against a Wisconsin tree (12).

After Niedecker’s own death some fifty years later, publisher Jonathan

Williams wrote in a letter to the *New York Times* that Niedecker was admired by “...a small audience capable of telling real peony bushes from plastic hydrangea plants” (254). Her use of vegetation resonated.

Niedecker’s poems showed a “constant merging of human with nature” (Peters 220), which wasn’t much different than her own life. Friends and neighbors recalled seeing her walking and enjoying nature, often “stop[ing] to pick wildflowers to press in books” (241). Her “poems include particular natural facts of human and other species” (Willis 42).



The woman herself was often described as birdlike, and perhaps she identified more with birds than plant life. Her poor eyesight caused her to focus on bird song and sound. She wrote: “I’m just a sandpiper in a marshy region’ and, famously, ‘the solitary plover’ ... she could describe herself as experiencing the pain and fear birds feels before migration ... [when] searching for a new poetic form” (Peters 66).

The poet held an affinity for birds, but she also wrote: “I’m a little bunch of marshland violets offered to the crooked lawyer” (Peters 243-4). When she selects specific flora, are the words serving as allusion or were they chosen for their musicality? Perhaps both. In poetry like Niedecker’s where words are sparse, one must assume that each syllable is weighed for meaning.

In “The graves,” Niedecker compares her parents to vegetation. In the first version of the poem written in 1945, her mother is compared to a fragrant flowering bush that originated overseas: “You were my mother, peony bush, / you worried over life’s raw push” (Niedecker and Penberthy 417). Niedecker equates her mother with the blooming peony, considered so special in China at one time it was planted only in the gardens of the imperial palace because the emperor alone was allowed to enjoy the blooms (Choo).

Niedecker’s mother, Theresa “Daisy” Niedecker, was a tall woman—taller than her husband by more than a foot (Peters 10). She lost her hearing after giving birth to her only child and spent the rest of her adult life in “solitude and resentment” (11). An obsessively clean woman living in such proximity to mud, she spent nearly all her time cleaning. “She fought Blawkhawk Island another way, demanding that” her husband clear away brush and trees, so she could plant flower and vegetable gardens. It’s not hard to imagine Daisy planting late blooming peony bulbs among daffodils and tulips to anticipate the peony’s late pinks and reds coloring her landscape after

springtime daffodils and tulips have spent themselves in the warmth of coming summer. Peonies sometimes take up to three years to bloom after planting, but once established, a peony bush can live for a hundred years or more. Perhaps Daisy was grasping for a way to establish herself between the Rock River and Lake Koshkonong.

Landscape aside, Daisy had another reason to desire a foothold. Her husband, Henry, had a long-term lover, a married neighbor named Gertrude Runke, who was twenty years younger but only three years older than his own daughter Lorine (17). Henry set up a nearby home for Gertrude, adding to Daisy’s misery. Gertrude bore a daughter during the years of her physical relationship with Henry, and in a shockingly uncouth move, named the daughter Lorraine, adding an “r” to prevent the name from being identical to Henry’s child with Daisy.

In the 1956 revised and final version of “The graves,” Niedecker likens [her mother] to an armed thorn apple bush” (Peters 117). No longer a soft fragrant peony, Daisy became a plant whose nickname is “stinkweed” for its “unpleasant odor” (Bryson et al. 288). The thornapple, or *Datura stramonium*, is not wholly unpleasant. Its lanky white blossoms can be mistaken for enormous morning glory blooms: “the flowers are large and handsome” (McDonald), perhaps not unlike Daisy herself. As an unusually tall woman, she was not unattractive; from a distance she may have been mistaken for pleasant woman ready for a friendly chat or a quick laugh. It’s only when one came close enough for interaction does the danger present itself.

As a member of the nightshade family, the thornapple is poisonous when ingested, lending itself to other names: “Devil’s Apple, Devil’s Trumpet, Mad Apple, and Jamestown-weed” (McDonald). Under the right circumstances with the right quantity, consumption can be fatal. When death is not the outcome,

for a wing-bone

“giddiness and delirium, sometimes amounting to mania” can be expected, which is what happened to the first settlers in Virginia after they ate leaves from the plant resulting in the nickname “Jamestown-weed” (Grieve).

Another “consequence of the [thornapple] when taken in sufficient quantity are dimness of sight [and] dilation of the pupil” (Grieve). Niedecker herself suffered from poor eyesight. From childhood she wore “thick glasses which required her to tilt her head to bring into focus anything or anybody not on eye level” (Peters 10). Her vision problems caused life-long difficulties. Living on Blackhawk Island surrounded by nature, she could not see birds except when they were in flight; she adapted by attuning to sounds of movement and memorizing their songs (13)—“I knew by their sound what they were” (63).

Her poor eyesight affected her livelihood. Years of clerical jobs requiring typing, proof-reading, and scanning small print contributed to her vision problems (100). She had to resign from a steady office job, and eventually resorted to manual labor as a janitor in a hospital. Near the end of her life, she would read with a magnifying glass, and when on car trips, could only enjoy the blurry scenery if she had researched in advance (195). Her mother suffered deafness upon her birth, and Niedecker suffered poor eyesight throughout her life. If her mother was a thornapple, she would be cause of Niedecker’s “dimness of sight.”

Thornapple is considered by many to be a weed, a nuisance plant springing up where no vegetation is intended, such as “waste places ... dung-heaps, the roadsides and commons, and other places where a rank soil is created by the deposited refuse of towns and villages” (Grieve). Is this what Niedecker thought of her mother? Was Daisy blooming from the muck and slurry of Blackhawk Island? Perhaps

it was the family life Henry had created by abandoning them for the neighbor. She, Daisy, and their home were the left-behind excrement in which her mother continued to grow even though she was unwanted.

Daisy is not the only parent poeticized in “The graves.” The 1945 and 1956 versions both liken “[Niedecker’s] father to a serene catalpa tree” (Peters 117). Henry “was a voluble, energetic man whom people either liked or distrusted.” He co-owned a fish company and developed property previously owned by Daisy’s parents the Kunzes. He “ineptly” managed an inn also owned by the Kunzes and dabbled in tourist trades, such as boat rentals, sightseeing, and guiding hunters and fishermen (10).

The catalpa tree, or *Catalpa speciosa*, is a “handsome ornamental” (Zim and Martin 43) reaching upwards of 120 feet (Maroni). The wood is “coarse but durable, hence valuable for fences, posts, poles, and similar uses” (Zim and Martin 43). Henry, too, was coarse, engaging in an open affair and creating something of a soap opera for his two families. He was unable to manage money, and although he left Lorine some property, he did not provide means for maintenance.

Even through his culpabilities, Henry emanated a steady reliability in Lorine’s life. In 1933 when Lorine needed bus fare for her first trip to New York City, she turned to Henry (Peters 35). In 1946 when she needed to move out from under Daisy’s difficulties and demands, “Henry ordered a do-it-yourself log cabin from a catalogue and built a home for Lorine on an acre lot with 180 feet of river frontage [on] Blackhawk Island” complete with a brick chimney, a cement base to prevent too much damage from seasonal flooding, bookshelves, an indoor water pump, an outhouse, and a picture window facing the lake. He even painted it as she requested: spring

From the secret notes

green (91). Her father's "collaboration in [her] escape deepened [their] already tight bond" (92).

Catalpa tree flowers grow in a "bell-shaped corolla of five unequal rounded, fringed lobes. They are white with two orange stripes and purple spots and lines inside" (Maroni), a visual result of soft white petals accented with strong geometric splashes of orange and purple. Against heart-shaped leaves as large as a toddler's head, the catalpa in spring bloom has a dramatic visual impact, not unlike the charismatic and handsome Henry. Alternate names for the catalpa tie into Henry's lifestyle as a carp seiner: "fish bait tree, fisherman's tree" (USDA). More intriguing are the leaf growth patterns. Catalpa leaves "grow in pairs of threes and are whorled and opposite at a node" (Maroni). The growth patterns of catalpa leaves resemble the family tree created by Henry: on one side Henry, Daisy, and the original Lorine are one trio swirling in opposition to Henry, his lover Gertrude Runke, and the extra-r-named Lorraine.

In the summer of 1967, the British poet Basil Bunting and his two daughters visited Niedecker on Blackhawk Island, after which she seemed to channel a botanist herself for "she regret[ed] not asking him what kinds of wild plants grew in his northeastern part of England – 'how dark / how inconsiderate / of me,'" she poeticized (Peters 217), for she understood the layered meanings to be found inside vegetation. The wild plants growing within Niedecker's poetry have their own vined stories to tell those willing to listen.

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Lorine, the Farm Lady, and the Birdman by Martha Bergland

In early 2015 I was searching for the old dead naturalist whose life I could get lost in so I could write another biography. *Studying Wisconsin*, the life of Increase Lapham I had written with Paul Hayes, had been finished for two years. I was looking through my notes on Lapham at other naturalists from the same era. I toyed with Charles W. Short for a time. He was an intriguing botanist I'd met through Lapham, but I didn't find much and if there was anything it was in and about Kentucky.

Wanted: Dead Wisconsin naturalist, obscure, not a jerk, early 1800s. No one was turning up. Between relationships, I was irritable, doing crossword puzzles.

In this state of mind I went to Lorine Niedecker's 112th birthday celebration at Woodland Pattern Book Center, May 12, 2015. There was cake, but even more important I heard poets Tom Montag and Karl Gartung mention in passing one of Niedecker's poems called "Thure Kumlien." Lorine is my best poet but I hadn't paid attention to that poem.

I knew that Thure Kumlien was a Swedish name so I thought that Thure Kumlien might be that early Swedish naturalist sent out by Carl Linneaus to look over North America. I went home and Googled him. I was wrong. That was Pehr Kalm. Kalm had been here in the late 1740s and he had never come as far west as Wisconsin.

But Thure Kumlien. I read and reread the poems on page 145 of Jenny Penberthy's *Collected Works*:

Thure Kumlien

Bigwigs wrote from Boston: Thure,
we must know about the sandhill crane,
is it ever white with you
and how many eggs can you obtain?

For Thure the solitary tattler
opened a door
to learned birds with their latest books
who walked New England's shore.

One day by the old turnpike still crossing
the marsh, down in the ditch
he found a new aster—to it he gave
his name as tho he were rich.

•

Shut up in woods
he made knives and forks
fumbled English gently:

Now is March gone
and I have much undone

It would be good
to hear the birds
along this shore intently

without song of gun

I knew Lorine worked from research; she didn't make this stuff up. So here was a sharp-eyed man from near Lake Koshkonong who collected birds and their eggs and discovered a new plant, who corresponded with Eastern naturalists, who lived in the woods and fashioned his own forks and knives, whose first language was not English, and who was at least sometimes ambivalent about shooting birds, a man whose gentle voice I began to hear: "Now is March gone and I have much undone."

And the more I read her early versions of these poems in the notes at the back (388-391) of *Collected Works*, the more I liked Thure Kumlien. My heart raced. Kumlien was at Koshkonong in the 1850s when wild swans were still there. There were odd and teasing one-sentence scenes: grandchildren playing horse with his mounted pink flamingo, a botanist at war who couldn't drop out of the

upon the pressure

line of march to look at a plant, a shining-faced family gathered around their first kerosene lamp.

Lorine, at work in her condensery, left delicious scraps on the floor, scraps tantalizing to one who wanted to write long, to write a life.

So Lorine gave me Kumlien's name, the two tight enigmatic poems, the scraps that told me there was much more to know. And she gave me a guide: Angie Kumlien Main, Thure Kumlien's granddaughter.

On May 11, 1941, Lorine and two friends from the Madison Bird Club had a picnic at Lorine's house to meet "Mrs. Main, the local bird woman and granddaughter of Thure Kumlien, the naturalist." Lorine tells the story of this memorable day in a letter to her friend Louis Zukofsky a week later. (Jenny Penberthy, *Niedecker and the Correspondence with Zukofsky 1931-1970*, p. 125) After they ate their picnic lunch, the four women in someone's auto drove across the lake to a spot near where Kumlien settled in 1843 when he came to this country. They drove through a cow pasture on a "clear, spring, blue and yellow-green day." And they came to a spot where the lilacs were in bloom next to "planter's pines." But they saw nothing else in the tall grass to show a home had been there except, Lorine said, some rotting logs that may have been foundation logs.

By the time I saw the cellar hole on a quiet and birdy day in 2016, I knew that Lorine had some things wrong about Kumlien's life in this letter to Zukofsky. In the week after the May 1941 picnic with Kumlien's granddaughter, Lorine was truly interested in Thure Kumlien. She went to Madison to the Wisconsin Historical Society Archives to read up on him in his work journal and some of the letters. She had been doing research there for the WPA but apparently had not been assigned to "look up about Kumlien" (page 128). But she got side-tracked into, again, the Black Hawk War.

Now, my question is, where did Lorine, between May 11 and May 18—the picnic

Sunday with Mrs. Main and the following Sunday writing to Zukofsky—get so much wrong information on Kumlien? For example, she tells Zukofsky that Kumlien came from the aristocracy of Sweden. No, he was upper class, but not aristocracy. She said he was a graduate of Uppsala University. He attended but he didn't graduate. And most wrong: His wife was a woman from a wealthy Swedish family which, because of religious differences, she had been cut off from when she married Kumlien. The fact is that Christine was a maid working in the house of one of Kumlien's friends when they met and fell in love. Lorine would not have made up this high status for Kumlien's wife; she must have heard it from Mrs. Main. Who must have also said that Christine never ventured outside, when the fact is that Christine was a hard worker in and out of the house working at butchering, dairying, haying and so much more. Where would such misinformation come from? It can only have come from Mrs. Main. It can only be family lore which tends to lift the status of ancestors. Families over time make stories prettier.

Angie Kumlien Main was described by Lorine as "a very enjoyable person, hardworking, rather aggressive but in a nice way, a determined manner of speaking" (127). On birds, which Lorine knew more about than she knew about Kumlien, Lorine could tell that Mrs. Main "gave us bits of folklore mixed in with factual knowledge." Lorine said that Mrs. Main had no scientific background. Yet "that farm lady" knows a great deal, said Lorine, and "can manage human relations" as seen in her good marriage and mothering of four children. Lorine is squinting at Main's knowledge. She trusts her in some ways, not in others.

Lorine reports that Mrs. Main told her that when she was a child she and her brothers, not understanding the value of her grandfather's "stuffed birds," used to play horse with his mounted pink flamingo. "Imagine," Lorine

execute and adjust

quotes Mrs. Main, “playing horse with a pink flamingo.” Lorine believed this first-hand account and used it in her poem. I believed it, too, when she also said they played horse with a crane and I used it to close my biography.

It should be noted that all of the information on Kumlien in Niedecker’s two short poems comes from primary documents in the Wisconsin Historical Society Archives, not from Mrs. Main.

When I had a contract to work on a biography of Thure Kumlien, historian Harry Anderson gave me a copy of the three-part biography published in the *Wisconsin Magazine of History* from 1943 to 1944. Harry Anderson and the editor of *Wisconsin Magazine of History* obviously trusted Angie Kumlien Main’s account. Because by that time, even only a year or two after the May 11, 1941 picnic, Mrs. Main was telling her grandfather’s story using the primary documents. By September 1943 when the first of three parts of Angie Kumlien Main’s biography of her grandfather was published, Mrs. Main had, in large part, given up her reliance on family lore. Lorine’s estimate of the birdwoman’s intelligence and character was born out in my years of reading her history of her grandfather, Thure Kumlien, as I was writing *The Birdman of Koshkonong*.

Now, with the writing of the biography almost a year behind me, there’s an odd way that Lorine and Thure and Mrs. Main exist for me simultaneously at a picnic on the cabin site. This is much worse than lore: it’s fantasy. I get to be at the picnic. We have eaten all the ham salad sandwiches. We stay until evening sitting on blankets in the long grass under the trees. The whippoorwills come out. We hear the frogs down in the marsh.



POETRY

Lockdown

I

One night
we danced
cheek-to-cheek,
holding each other
up, really, just
shuffling our feet.

II

What if
we didn’t have
each other,
what if
just one of us,
what if
alone?

III

We have lost no one,
need no excuse
to stay home,
read books, wear
same clothes,
day after day.
Why want
anything else?

IV

Six months since
I touched money,
cashed a check,
forgot my ATM
access code. Now,
it comes back
to me -- living
in a world
with currency.

Ronnie Hess

In us sea-air rhythm

In Praise of the Nap

--after Lorine Niedecker

how every task
steps back
from its frantic call

as you turn your back
and relax your grip,
enter that well

how gravity
can receive you now
and sleep

settle around you
though bright sun
shines at the window

how each limb
can let go
holding you up

as you fall
into soft
and serious

dark

For My Spelunking Love

In an Ozark cave
you rappel down ropes
for three-hundred feet
to the tufa floor
where a dark river flows
and gypsum flowers bloom
in your headlamp's beam--
fragile, deep, true,
seen only by you

Dickinson's Dash

can take the top
of your head off--
make a song
out of stumbling,

a prairie out of dream,
on the flap
of an envelope--
leap

into cosmology,
philosophy,
botany--
a sideways

slant of thought
in a life
we think of
as folded away

with love's
dashed hopes--
or wild night's
memories--

Robin Chapman



Looking At Frederick's "She's in the Wind" Metal Sculpture

flutters down
to the ground
of a stone plinth

wind turned
inside out
into flight

Donna Fleischer

"We live by the urgent wave"

closed amusement park
the wind making snow
drift

*

losing interest
in the day's events
ripe tomatoes spoiling on the vine

*

never
inside the rocks
all day rain

*

comparing
light to light
fireflies

*

lunch stop
a slow place in the river
for clouds

Gary Hotham



patio planter—
the earth warm to my fingers
where your fingers were

Michael Dylan Welch

Hesitation

The answer was James Bay.
It's that body of water on the south end of Hudson's Bay
between Québec and Ontario,
that freezes over in winter.

The final question was to name the largest bay off Hudson's Bay.
My team was in the finals for college bowl
and I knew the answer.
Buzz in, I told myself.

This is not a regret story,
where I tell you I hesitated,
where I froze and failed
to do what I knew I could do.

I did buzz in, amazed
that no one else knew the answer.
Being a canuck in the you-nighted states
was paying off for something.

We won.

Michael Dylan Welch



Sky Report

Last night
I walked on stars
and looked up at frosty
skies

Tonight
the sky is
partly starry

S. L. Oriel

*This piece will also be published in the forthcoming Hummingbird:
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of the verse "

Where Time Slows

back
to the wind
yellow willow

autumn equinox
last year's leaf dust
in my jacket pocket

tethered
to a yellow leaf
one end of the gossamer

end of autumn bittersweet

killer frost
pulling in a stringer
of gourds

knock-kneed
over the hill
rows of corn stubble

where time slows the writhing of shore trees

prairie
silo
a
licked
finger
to
test
the
wind

Julie Schwerin



Looking Up

baby grand-
daughters staring
at the sky
boughs so high
above their round heads

the first in Oz
snug in Dad's arms
her rapt stare
her newborn hair
ruffling in the breeze

the second
in COVID Gotham
stolen hour
a leafy bower
leaves whisper in her dreams

Sheila Sondik



Vacation

Sleep, love. Sleep
until we'll move to some different state
gripping the smooth clam shell slice
you picked up for a worry stone:
half purpled, already bearing
an imprint for your thumb
from years in bruising sea and sand, its
animal long gone

in North Carolina where
you held me against waves
under ribs
how my father once did
to be salt rubbed and foam rocked,
lightweight in your hands and
not drown

Emilia Kandl

The Solitary Plover

Slow Start

Morning yawns
lays long shadows prone
on dew-wet grass
pulls cloud cover over
its good eye
falls back to trills of wrens
like coffee brewing
in the pot

This day is not hopped up
not bunny-frolic
in a cloistered yard
but droops beauty's burden
from a slender neck
a rose with thoughts
in petals
drifting off

Sharp thorns stand ready
for a fray
but day is sluggish
will not stir until wind
blasts the covers
from its bed
Then day will raise
a bleary head
un-lid one fiery eye

Georgia Ressmeyer



Holy Seasons

The wet spaces
to baptize the new beginnings.

The dry spaces
to instruct how to endure the dark nights.

The kaleidoscope spaces
to reflect God's joy in us.

The white spaces
to encounter the holy still voice.

Angela Hoffman

The Gift Given and Taken

The bird
in a stupor
just lies there, not moving
heaviness held in its wings
night stuck in its throat.
It will fly again.
The collision was only an awakening.
We've all become just as stunned
alive without living
speaking without listening
doing without noticing
preoccupied.
I have never wanted to die
I just fear dying without living.
I want a few more sips of this life.
No more slogging through.
As a single spoke
I just want to be moved by The Center
feel the pull forward
be able to lift my wings
sing my song
have the ride of my life
so that I might learn how to die.

Angela Hoffman



March almost April

March almost April hides the bold.
Take down a book, flower within. Flatten--
Hesiod's plot—its toil, if freed, could doom
the world for a year or more and nevermind the bloom.

Nineteen is after us – it's out
with meets not right it hurts the eyes. Face masks,
halos slip blow thru my night riled hands
some object here.

In March almost April a quarantine
to reassure, a plight-bound bet
to move toward June: give me soap and a care
for us going nowhere.

Joel Van Haften

The Solitary Plover

Dear Lorine

In my sad cold charcoal gray days
Went to see your house on the river.
So jealous jealous jealous.

Inside, like your sparse poems, a room
Edited and edited till almost bare.
Outside, a river dense with sun glitter.
Once you must have watched the same trees,
Leaves fluttering, then still.

Sat on your doorstep and wished.
How could I know.

Now the same river flows before my own small house.
I see the Rock as I write this,
Olive green, touches of reflected sepia and cerulean.
What a surprise.

Like to think you had a hand in that.

Donna Kay Kohls



Movement and Light

This is the thing.
Your thing and my thing
are as far apart
as the moon from the sea.
You, happiest with your
strong scarred hands
swinging a hammer
or pushing a saw across
sweet smelling wood,
making some thing
that will last well beyond
you or me. Me, lost
in a book, a collection
of Mary Oliver's poems
perhaps, or at my laptop
writing a new poem,
revising an old one.
Poems that might or

might not last. Construction
of a kind for sure, but
the material words not wood.
Still, in the quiet of night,
the sea takes in the light
of the moon, the moon

Visitations

What do you say when you can't tell the truth?
When you can't say out loud that your brother
has been stopping by to chat, even though he's dead?
How do you explain the last few days – the bright red
cardinal hanging out at your office window when there's
never been one there before, when you've never
believed those tales about found pennies or cardinals
being dead loved ones come to visit? When
the last three times you woke up your Google mini
and asked it to play some 60's and 70's folk music
it played *Rocky Mountain High* and *House of the Rising Sun*?
He always loved mountains and you hope he's somewhere
high (or maybe high, somewhere?) and the only song
he could play on the guitar for years was *House of the Rising Sun*.
He played it incessantly even after he learned to play well,
began every session warming up with it. That song
centered his funeral, a haunting improvised instrumental
that held his love for me, mine for him. What do I say
to his bird-self, to his song-self, to the brother I miss
laughing with most of all? What to do about it at all?
Feed the cardinal, perhaps. Watch for pennies on the ground.
Sing *Mothers, tell your children* full out. Keep it just between us.

Jean Preston



The Solitary Plover

CONTRIBUTORS

Martha Bergland is the coauthor, with Paul Hayes, of *Studying Wisconsin*—a Wisconsin Historical Society Press biography on famed Wisconsin naturalist Increase Lapham, which won the Milwaukee County Historical Society's Gambrian Prize. She taught for many years at Milwaukee Area Technical College. She lives in Glendale, Wisconsin.

Robin Chapman is the author of ten books of poetry, including most recently *The Only Home We Know* (Tebot Bach), poems about our fragile world, and *Six True Things*, poems about growing up in the Manhattan Project town of Oak Ridge, Tennessee. Her book *The Dreamer Who Counted the Dead* received a Wisconsin Library Association Outstanding Poetry Book of the Year Award, and her book *Abundance* received the Cider Press Editors' Book Award. She has also co-edited the anthologies *On Retirement* and *Love Over 60: An Anthology of Women's Poems*, and collaborated with composers, painters, textile artists and scientists in producing work. She is recipient of the Helen Howe Poetry Prize from *Appalachia*.

Donna Fleischer's poetry books include *from beyond my window: the Covid-19 Poems* (Meritage Press, 2020) and *< Periodic Earth >* (Casa de Cinco Hermanas Press, 2016). Her poems appear in *A) Glimpse) Of), A Vast Sky, Autumn Moon, Contemporary Haibun, Kō, Lilliput Review, Marsh Hawk Press Review, Naugatuck River Review, Otoliths, Poets for Living Waters, Solitary Plover, The End of the World Project* and elsewhere. She lives with her spouse and dog friend on a spiny trap rock mountain ridge in northern Connecticut.

Ronnie Hess is an essayist and poet, author of five poetry chapbooks and two culinary travel guides. She lives in Madison, WI. Find her at ronniehess.com

Angela Hoffman has lived in Jefferson, WI her entire life, near Blackhawk Island where Lorine Niedecker lived. Lorine's story has inspired her with possibilities for her own poetry.

Gary Hotham currently lives in Maryland. He has had a number of chapbooks published since his first: *Without the Mountains* in 1976 with his most recent, *23*, in 2019. Two of last year's chapbooks received awards: *23* published by Longhouse received an honorable mention in the Haiku Canada Marianne Bluger Book and Chapbook Awards for 2020 and *Rightsizing the Universe: Haiku Theory* published by Yiqralo Press received an honorable mention in the The Touchstone Distinguished Books Awards for 2019. His latest chapbook is: *Park Bench Memories: Haiku Tailwinds*.

Emilia Kandl lives in Northeast Ohio where she's been a college writing tutor for 12 years. She writes (poems), draws (drawings and tarot spreads), and watches (movies, an excellent local Shakespeare troupe, and her cat).

Donna Kay Kohls lives in Watertown, WI, with five cats. She spends most of her time outside, reading or painting in watercolors.

Sharon L. Oriel is the author of numerous articles and book chapters on intellectual capital management. *Lochan*, her first poetry chapbook, was published in 2020. She lives on the banks of the Crystal River in northwestern Michigan.

Jean Preston holds a B.A. from Carthage College and an M.F.A. in creative writing/poetry from the University of Southern Maine's Stonecoast Writing Program. Recently retired from Carthage College, Jean served there as an Administrative Assistant for 11 years, followed by 14 years directing the Brainard Writing Center and teaching as an adjunct assistant professor of English. Jean was the 2014-2015 Poet Laureate of Kenosha, Wisconsin, and is the author of two poetry collections, *All the Queen's Horses* and *Like a Small Bird Soaring*, a chapbook, *Sixteen Mothers*, a photo journal, *Tete's Story*, and a children's book, *Banner and the Butterfly*.

Georgia Ressimeyer, 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 georgiareessimeyer.com for more information.

Julie Warther Schwerin (she/her - Sun Prairie, Wisconsin) is an associate editor at *The Heron's Nest* (www.theheronsnest.com) and a member of the *Red Moon Anthology* Editorial team. She was instrumental in establishing several haiku installations in the Midwest. The most recent is *Words in Bloom: A Year of Haiku* at the Chicago Botanic Garden which features the work of haiku poets on signs throughout the garden.

Sheila Sondik is a poet and printmaker in Bellingham, WA. She's always admired Niedecker's concision and recently reread all the poetry in her *Collected Works*, edited by Jenny Penberthy. Sheila was particularly intrigued by Niedecker's innovative 5-line form inspired by haiku.

Continued next page.

The Solitary Plover

Joel Van Haaften is a former museum director and educational programmer who currently works as a substitute teacher in the Fort Atkinson School District challenging students from Kindergarten to 12th grade. At times, when his students are finished with their lessons, he will encourage them into an impromptu poetry contest. He enjoys Lorine Niedecker's poetry, has been active with the Solitary Plover study group, and has served as a volunteer with the Friends of Lorine Niedecker Poetry Festival.

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 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.

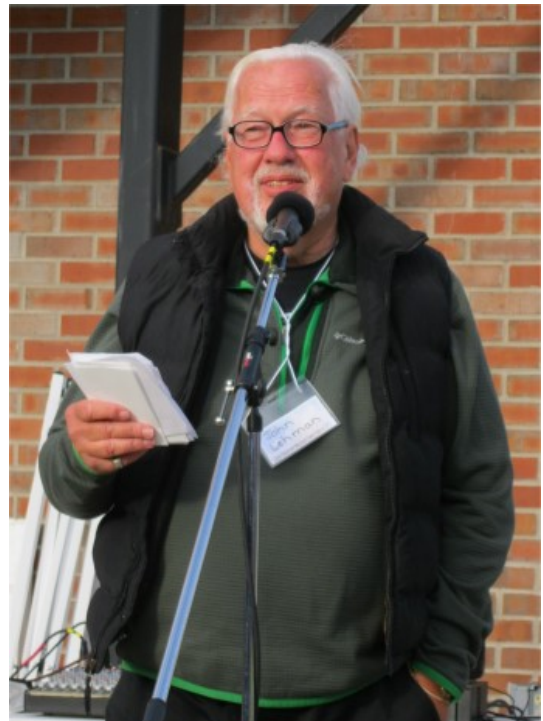
After spending 20 years in the oil industry, **Shanley Wells-Rau** earned her MFA in poetry at Oklahoma State University, where she served as an editorial assistant for *Cimarron Review*. Her poetry has been published or is forthcoming in *The Maine Review*, *Bluestem Magazine*, *Poetry Quarterly*, and *Plants & Poetry*, among others. She currently teaches composition and creative writing at OSU and lives on a hill outside town with her spouse and the dog who adopted them.



IN MEMORIAM

We have recently lost two poets who were ambassadors for Lorine. We miss them both dearly.

John Lehman, (1941 - 2021) Poet Laureate for Cambridge Wisconsin, co-founder of *Rosebud* magazine, poet and author of *Lorine Niedecker, America's Greatest Unknown Poet*. He taught, by invitation, others to find the poems in their lives.



Along County Highway B

Ordinary days are enough
and significant places, not
always on the map. Let us be
like the heron at one with the
woods, the pond and the sky.
Hear whispers of oncoming
snow but remember warmth
and how leaves in Spring
caress the light.

The Solitary Plover

Lorine Niedecker

Picture her, head down,
walking the Rock River.
Married, childless, alone.

She wrote poems simple
as blue chicory clumps
that blossom in a ditch.
Carp thrash, white birch
streak wine-dark water,
honking geese fly home.
Her words have now
become our own. She
no longer walks alone.

When Cars of Two Poets, Backing out of Library Parking Spots, Collide

The sky is cruel - devoid
of simile. Their sense of
discovery, intense. And
what of that relationship between poetry and life?
Suddenly it's condensed.

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Mary Linton, (1954 - 2021) wetland biologist and poet. Her poems were astute observations of her wild places and the elements in them. She wrote with wit, sometimes tragedy. Her words could make you feel whatever she wanted you to feel, her descriptions always full of shared understanding.

Deciduous

Sometimes
you must tuck the fallen leaf into the left cup
of your bra
to record it on your heart.



Wetland Warrior *for Mary Linton*

She was already muddy
when she waded into our midst,
her wellies still slick
with the muck of the Limberlost.
Some say t'was a mission of conscience
drove her north from that fabled swamp
her people helped to ditch and drain.
Or maybe a prayer for wet prairies
still slithering with massasaugas,
for marshes clattering with the calls of cranes.
When she knelt on our soil
and her Levis soaked through at the knees,
she knew she'd arrived.
She'd come to frolic with our frogs
to gander at our salamanders
to dance with our darners and damsels.
But when our wetlands were threatened
this Hoosier became a badger
and bared her teeth
at the forces infernal that would
fill the vernal shallows
and bulldoze the bullrushes.
She wrestled with those
whose foul prestidigitation
upon the practice of mitigation
make a folly of our very hydrology.

Continued next page.

We are richer for her leadership
and her savvy investments
in sedge funds and seed banks.
Few walk taller in the Typha
or have greater standing among the Blanding's.
But what now for this Amazon of the amphibious
who so deserves a rest?
She'll likely strap on her waders and never take them off.
And I hope she'll do what she's always done –
grab a beer and a pen
and find the poem in it all,
the music in the mesic,
the holy in the hydric,
string together her words like freshwater pearls
and wear them like rosaries.
Whatever she does,
I'm pretty sure she'll stay muddy.

Tod Highsmith 10/25/12

Reprinted with permission, poem written in honor of Mary
when she stepped down from her position as Board chair for
Wisconsin Wetlands Association.

The Solitary Plover

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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.

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