



### From the President...

It's with regret that I must announce the cancellation of the Georgia Poetry Society's April 25 meeting, which was to have been held at the Athens-Clarke County Library.



As I compose this, our nation is still in semi-quarantine, socially distant from one another and subjected to a daily back-and-forth between a government eager to resume American commerce and a medical community that is undersupplied and overwhelmed. No one is certain of the outcome or even of what the next steps are in facing and overcoming the worst

public health crisis in our lifetime.

These are dark days. No one knows how much longer they will last or how much patience a frightened public is willing to extend.

Those who remember the 9/11 catastrophe, however, may recall how people awoke in the aftermath to the comfort of their religious faith, and to the solace of the literary arts. Suddenly, everyone was a poet.

Poetry has always served to bring light into such dark moments. It's what poetry does best. Poets ask the tough questions and then listen reflectively for true answers, answers expressed elegantly and eloquently. Out of great tragedy, out of darkness, comes great art and necessary light.

Your contribution is not only needed, it is vital. Your poetry can and must rise up now to comfort and to sustain. This is your moment. Seize it.

As to how: in this newsletter you will find a workshop I constructed as a way of helping those around us, and perhaps yourself, find comfort in the spoken or written word. It presents a path that is technically simple, very affordable (free), and takes only your time, talent, and willingness to make happen. I hope you will join me in using this workshop to make a difference with your poems. I hope in some small way it lights the way forward for us all.

Steven Shields

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#### Contact Information

[www.georgiapoetrysociety.org](http://www.georgiapoetrysociety.org)

GPS contact emails are on page 8

#### 2020 Officers

- Steven Shields, President
- Alyson Shields, V. President
- Ann Gillespie, Secretary
- Lyn Hopper, Treasurer

#### 2020 Board

- Kristin Gorell
- Edward Hall
- Andrea Jurjevic
- John Ottley
- Ann Willis

## Protecting Poetry During COVID-19

Dear GPS members,

I hope this letter finds you well during this harrowing time of the COVID-19 pandemic and that you are able to shelter in place, self-quarantine or social distance at a level that is both comfortable and safe.

As many of our members are the “wisest” of the population, we felt it was in your best interest, as well as our own, to stay separated. We had hoped that a virtual meeting could be held as an alternative to our face-to-face event, that it would be a fun and simple way to make a cancelled physical event still go on. Unfortunately, events are moving so unpredictably for us all that we have had to set that aside this time.

Some of you have known me almost 20 years, since I was a girl, attending with my father GPS meetings of 5 people or less in the back rooms of tiny bookstores. You have watched me grow up and take my love of writing with me into a career as a reporter, news anchor and journalist. But I wonder how many of you realize that working in the media is considered an essential profession. Yes, just like hospital workers and first responders, I have still been going to work every single day.

In the current climate, I know it is my responsibility to do two things.

The first is to stay away from the people I love and care about in case I become a carrier or asymptomatic.

I made the difficult choice to separate myself from my newly retired mother and from my father, Steven Shields—my fellow poet, the “tree” to my “apple,” my biggest supporter and my bi-weekly lunch date—until this pandemic subsides.

I have also separated myself from a new boyfriend whose mother has an autoimmune disorder. I have separated myself from all of my friends. And naturally, I have separated myself from my civic groups, including this one.

The second responsibility I feel is to make sure the things I love do not die as we worry and wait.

It is in that spirit that I urge you to take advantage of the enclosed workshop on virtual poetry and accept the challenge to record your poetry in this challenging time.

The only one who can silence us is ourselves. Take a chance, record yourself, and be heard.

Stay safe,



Alyson C. Shields, Vice President, Georgia Poetry Society

## GPS Member News

**Karen Paul Holmes.** Tracy K Smith (former US Poet Laureate) read and discussed Karen's poem "Making Zelnik at the Sibling Reunion" on her podcast *The Slowdown*, <https://www.slowdownshow.org/episode/2020/01/13/296-making-zelnik-at-the-sibling-reunion>

**Randy Mazie's** poem "To E.E. and Billy, My Two Best Friends" was featured March 26, 2020 on *Your Daily Poem*. <http://www.yourdailypoem.com/>

**Maren O. Mitchell** has had poems accepted for publication in several journals: "Growing in Place" in *San Pedro River Review*, American South issue; "Ways of Water" in *POEM*, Spring 2020 issue; "Hands" in *Slant, A Journal of Poetry*, May/June 2020 issue; "W" in a forthcoming issue of *Chiron Review*; "V," "Tree Talk" and "Vanishing Act" to appear online in *Still: The Journal*, late June 2020.

**Alyson Shields'** poem "A Blue Collar Baby's Evening Prayer" appeared in the Winter 2020 *Tipton Poetry Journal*. <https://issuu.com/tiptonpoetryjournal/docs/tpj43>

**Steven Owen Shields'** newest collection of poetry, *Creation Story*, was reviewed in the Winter 2020 *Tipton Poetry Journal*. <https://issuu.com/tiptonpoetryjournal/docs/tpj43>

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## Georgia Author of the Year 2020: Nominated Works of Poetry



Congratulations to all nominees, especially our **GPS members!**

### POETRY FULL-LENGTH

Richard Allen Anderson, *Winter Weeds*  
Ezekiel Black, *Letters from the Junta*  
Jericho Brown, *The Tradition*  
Alice Friman, *Blood Weather*  
Karen Head, *Lost on Purpose*  
**Peter Junker**, *Things Will Get Worse*  
Ilya Kaminsky, *Deaf Republic*  
Julia Caroline Knowlton, *One Clean Feather*  
Nick Norwood, *Eagle & Phenix*  
**David Oates**, *The Deer's Bandanna*  
Stephen Roger Powers, *All Seats Fifty Cents*  
Chelsea Rathburn, *Still Life with Mother and Knife*  
**Clela Reed**, *Or Current Resident*  
**Steven Owen Shields**, *Creation Story*  
Malcolm Tariq, *Heed the Hollow*

### **Dan Veach**, *Lunchboxes*

Dana Wildsmith, *One Light*  
Edward Wilson, *In a Rich Country*  
Andrew Zawacki, *Unsun: f/11*

### POETRY CHAPBOOK

**Diana Anhalt**, *Walking Backward*  
F.S. Blake, *Above the Gold Fields*  
**Memye Curtis Tucker**, *A Net to Hold the Wind*  
J. Delayne Rymy, *Before Dragonflies*  
Anna Harris-Parker, *Dress*  
Kara Krewer, *Born-Again Anything*  
**Amy Pence**, *Your Posthumous Dress: Remnants from the Alexander McQueen Collection, circa 1992-20xx*  
**Clela Reed**, *Silk*  
**Ron Self**, *Art of War*

## Poetry Events Around Georgia

So many events have had to be canceled due to assembly restrictions during the current Covid-19 precautions that we are not including an event list this issue.

Note, when things return to “normal,” that **Writers’ Night Out** has a new location: The Ridges Resort on Lake Chatuge, Young Harris, GA. Readings followed by open mic on second Friday of the month through November. Updates at <https://netwestwriters.blogspot.com/>.

### Can’t Get Out?



### Try some of our favorite online and audio poetry resources!

**TOP PICK: The Slowdown:** <https://www.slowdownshow.org>. “This is a wonderful 5-minute daily podcast by Tracy K Smith, which is free and available via email.” KPH.

**Garrison Keillor’s The Writer’s Almanac:** <http://www.garrisonkeillor.com/radio/> and select TWA. A poem a day, “plus some of the best biographical snippets to be found. Indispensable, and you can subscribe to it.” EAH.

**American Life in Poetry:** [www.americanlifeinpoetry.org](http://www.americanlifeinpoetry.org). “My favorite. Ted Kooser introduces a poem and its author every week.” AG

**Your Daily Poem.** <http://www.yourdaily-poem.com/>. “This site exists for one purpose only: to help dispel the ugly myth that poetry is boring.”

**Billy Collins** on video online in *Great Conversations* on PBS (May 2011) interviewed by Garrison Keillor. <https://www.pbs.org/video/great-conversations-billy-collins/> and, on Audible (or you can buy the CD), enjoy *Billy Collins Live: A Performance at the Peter Norton Symphony Space, April 20, 2005*. Two-time US poet laureate shares insight and humor in these engaging, thoughtful public performances.

**FORGOT TO RENEW YOUR GPS MEMBERSHIP FOR 2020?**

NOW’S THE PERFECT TIME TO GO ON LINE AND RENEW!

THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING POETRY IN GEORGIA

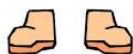
<http://georgiapoetrysociety.org/membership/>

## A Workshop on Becoming a Virtual Poet by *Steven Shields*



### What is a “virtual” poet?

The Internet has led to a bewildering variety of new forms of expression, among them the ability to present one’s “texts” or works in some manner other than real-time face-to-face (F2F) fashion. Often this is done by video or audio of the event in question. While the first generation of the Internet was like traditional broadcasting (one sender, many watchers), the second version brought interactivity and social media. It also brought video conferencing, voice-over-internet telephone service and other features. In the latest iteration (the “internet of things”) practically every device in our houses has a chip implanted that allows us to access it from the Internet via the iPhone or Android device in our pockets.



Poetry subsequently has moved along with these technological changes, ending paper-and-SASE submissions in favor of electronic submissions using Submittable. Many journals have migrated entirely online. Many poets use social media today or make videos of themselves reading their works to supplement or even replace their F2F readings. Often, these videos are posted or uploaded to YouTube, an Internet site devoted to the free posting of videos on all subjects—including poetry.

One of the easiest ways to become a part of the world of Internet or “virtual” video poetry, then, is to become a YouTube user. If you already have a YouTube channel of your own, you can skip this next part on getting started. For those of you who don’t have much acquaintance with YouTube, let’s have a look at how it works.

### Starting a YouTube Channel of Your Own

1. To create your own YouTube channel, you first need a Google account and the email address that goes with it. If you’ve never done this, see this helpful video about signing up with Google: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oHBM5rwUUwo>

2. Once you have a Gmail (Google-mail) address, go to YouTube.com and sign up for your account with it. It’s free, by the way. You’ll be asked to name your channel. Do so. Now you have a place to store your video clips, the production of which we’ll talk about in a moment. See this video for YouTube account start-up: <https://support.google.com/youtube/answer/1646861?hl=en>

3. Once you have your YouTube channel set up, you need to put some content on it, which means “uploading” a video. Uploading means nothing more than transferring your video from wherever you have it stored (on your iPhone or laptop drive, probably) to the YouTube channel you just created. Pardon the robotic voice (and skip the commercials on all these) but here’s a final video to consult if uploading is new territory: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H8yrblAj-V4>

## How Do You Produce a Video “Clip” That Can Be Uploaded to YouTube?

To create your video “clip,” all you need is some kind of video recording device. Most folks have one already: their iPhone or Android device. To use it, find the camera app on your phone and open it as if you were going to take a picture of something. Look at the bottom of the screen and deselect “photo.” Select “video” this time instead. There’ll be a record button at the bottom. Push it to start recording your video. When finished, push it again to stop the recording. The video is saved automatically in your picture files. It’s that simple.



### What Do I Say, Though?

Answer: You read your poem(s). Let me suggest a couple of things to help you look your very best in doing so.

1. First, you need to tell us who you are. Yes, we know the name of the channel is on the screen, but you might be interested to know that sometimes people really like your work and can copy it over to THEIR channel in a form known as a “playlist.” Much as people used to record their favorite music to play at a party or in the car (remember the “mix tape”?), people do that now with videos they become fond of. So you need to introduce yourself by name to avoid being forgotten.
2. It’s ok to set up the poem as long as you keep it very short and very simple. I recommend a single sentence. “Hi, my name is Steven Shields, and this is a poem from my latest book, *Creation Story*, entitled “Shades of Blue.”” And...go. That’s enough. “Less is more” in this environment.
3. Read your poem as you would want others to read it. Recall that one reason people go to hear poets read their works live is because the emphasis shift, even to individual words, can sometimes be revealing or change a poem’s meanings.
4. When you’re finished reading, just stop. Let the video end with the last line of your poem. Don’t thank the audience, don’t wave goodbye, don’t blow kisses, just look up and let it close.

### Some Pointers to Help Your Video Stand Out

In my day-job as a professor of mass communication, I teach classes on radio- and television-announcing, and also public speaking. Here are a few practical pointers my students and I have learned, often the hard way:

- Nothing is more distracting than a shaky handheld video, or, worse, a selfie video. Use a tripod or, if you don’t have one, some stable object to rest the phone on while you record. Set the camera at eye level so we’re not looking up your nose.
- You might want to enlist a friend to start and stop the recording for you so that we don’t have to watch you walk away from and back to the phone as you begin and end.
- Don’t stand too far away from the camera or you’ll have faint, low-volume audio and any background noise (dogs barking, children screaming, or jets overhead) will be a distraction. Many indoor rooms also have very poor acoustics—too carpeted, too reflective from hard wall or floor surfaces, too large, too small, ventilation that sounds like a Cape Canaveral lift-off. Consider where else might make a more pleasant-sounding

- audio recording environment. You'll have to experiment to find a good acoustic location.
- Avoid recording in the bathroom thinking it somehow enhances your voice. It doesn't (not even in the shower, which is where you probably came up with that idea). Instead, it sounds hollow and unattractive.
  - Pro tip: If you have access to a wireless or Bluetooth-enabled clip-on mic, use it. Try not to use a hand-held mic; you already have one hand occupied with your book, remember.
  - You want mostly a head-and-shoulders video of yourself. That promotes more intimacy than a full-body video (and avoids making you look tiny).
  - Don't show us just your face in some extreme close-up way. Most folks don't have the fancy filters and such that Hollywood uses to enhance their close-ups; we wind up seeing every pore, wrinkle and stray hair. And it's aggressive. You are literally *in our faces*.
  - Use the landscape mode—that is, turn the camera sideways to avoid those black bars that go alongside portrait-mode videos.
  - Think about body movement. You're not a statue but don't mindlessly wander around either (like you do when you're on the phone, for example). Watch for fidgets, odd head movements, don't make weird faces, straighten up—all that stuff Mom told you.
  - Stand up, if you're able. If not and you must sit, sit at the front of the chair and lean forward a little. That avoids the "library story time" look.
  - Think about your facial expression. "Match it to your poem" is my best advice. If it's a heavy or dark piece, you can and should look serious (but don't scowl). If it's a more light-hearted piece, feel free to smile (but don't grin like a hyena). You get the idea.
  - Consider your apparel. A classic look will keep your video from looking dated later on.
  - Consider your background. The outdoors may be a lot more interesting than a corner of your living room. But your living room may be interesting. A wall of books behind you may be a predictable notion, but it still works for something literary.
  - If you hate what you hear when you review your video (and I hope you will review it before posting), **try again**, and this time SLOW DOWN. Most people speak very quickly, and it gets worse when they're nervous. Second, e-nun-ci-ate. Many don't. Third, consider your volume. Poetry is an intimate medium but be sure we can hear you. Unless you're in a professional studio with a good microphone and engineer, don't whisper. Finally, try to read without stumbling. It's your own material, after all, so you know best how it should be read. Practice beforehand sometimes helps here. If you continually stumble over a section, maybe that's a hint to recast the poem while you're at it.
  - Stay under 2–3 minutes. Longer starts to drag; you can always post more than one clip.

### Closing Thoughts

1. An important consideration is the issue of rights. Be sure you have them if what you read in your clip already has been published (rights generally revert to poets upon publication but not always). If you're planning to submit your piece later on for publication, be aware that some journals consider YouTube videos to be evidence of "publication." Many don't. Just be careful.

2. As an example of a YouTube video clip and playlist, I've created the "Georgia Poetry Society Video Channel." The playlist I created is entitled "Georgia Poets" and begins with GPS vice president, Alyson Shields, and her debut GPS reading, followed by other poets with some Georgia connection. These play automatically one after another, but of course you can stop, fast forward or rewind at any time.



Members of the Side Door Poets at the GPS January Meeting (from left): Karen Paul Holmes; Ricks Carson; Dan Veach; Rupert Fike (at podium); Trish Percival; Jim Langford.

The January 25, 2020 winter quarterly meeting of the Georgia Poetry Society at Decatur-DeKalb County Library drew an enthusiastic crowd for **Jericho Brown's** compelling stories and poetry reading, with a line out the door afterwards as he signed copies of his latest book, *The Tradition*. Those who stayed for the afternoon session were treated to a delightful, eclectic, and often witty selection of readings by members of the talented **Side Door Poets** group. Many thanks to all the poets who took part, to the Decatur Library and the Georgia Center for the Book, who helped host the meeting, and to those who came along to support poetry in Georgia.

**Got News??  
DEADLINE FOR CONTRIBUTIONS  
FOR THE GPS SUMMER  
NEWSLETTER**

**Thursday, June 11, 2020**

**Send to:  
Newsletter@georgiapoetrysociety.org**



**2020 QUARTERLY MEETINGS**

**SATURDAY, APRIL 25**  
Meeting in Athens, Georgia, canceled  
due to current health emergency  
restrictions.

**SATURDAY, JULY 25**  
Alpharetta Public Library.

**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 24**  
Agnes Scott College, Decatur.

Please check our GPS website closer to  
each date for more information.  
[www.georgiapoetrysociety.org](http://www.georgiapoetrysociety.org)

**NEW CONTACT EMAILS FOR THE GEORGIA POETRY SOCIETY**

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Lyn Hopper, GPS Treasurer  
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