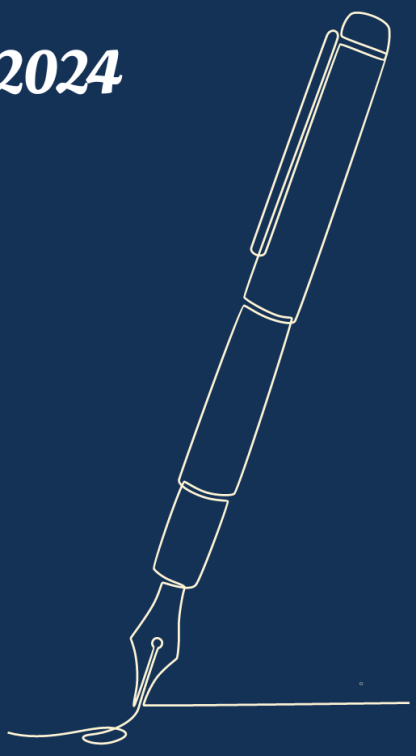
COMMUNITY POETRY SUBMISSIONS

LAKE OSWEGO PUBLIC LIBRARY

2024



This April, in honor of National Poetry Month 2024, the Lake Oswego Public Library invited local poets ages 18 and older to submit 1-2 of their original poems to share with the community. We've compiled them here and invite you to explore the Library's third annual installment of Community Poetry Submissions.

Thank you, local poets!

The points of view that may be expressed in these poems, or by the poets, are not necessarily endorsed by the Lake Oswego Public Library or the City of Lake Oswego.

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“The Crewman” by Frank Damiani

The crewman came on deck
To see the morning sun
His shift was down below
But now that shift was done

The sunshine warmed his body
The sea air cleared his head
But soon he turned and went inside
To make his way to bed

For this man was no tourist
He had a job to do
And knew he had no time to waste
His next shift was at two

But as he climbed into his bunk
And got as comfy as one can
He had a smile upon his face
For he was a happy man

“Tillamook Head (August)” by Stephanie M. Davis

A squall blew in from the ocean
And the wind whipped us up to wild things
The school year’s plaid exchanged
For a beach towel cape.

Small feet, tanned and strong
Landing hard on the wet sand
We were ponies with manes full of beachgrass
And last night’s bonfire smoke.

Such dark clouds, fat with weather
The rain drops fell
One, then two, then three
Whole worlds of water on the tongue.

The thunder came and rumbled us home
Past the dunes, up the stairs
Where our mothers waited with soap and steam
And a promise that the storm would pass.

“The Colonel and The Kid” by J Fenner

After WWII, Colonel Norm helped Japan build again:
Spurred the Japanese Economic Miracle: Resize.
Regenerate. Revitalize. Reinvigorate. Modernize.
Prioritize quality, inner market. Leapfrog. Play to win.

Our Uncle Norm we revered, now in his twilight years.
War hero, his fading memory brought us all to tears.
He from West; from East came sister, our Auntie, Bea.
They'd come to visit grandma, Mom & Dad, sister Lee and me.

She came alone; he with unknown child in tow.
Name and relation he forgot, we never did know.
The colonel was bad with names, this we knew.
Called the child, he or she, and just The Kid, too.

On back porch he sat, smiling, towards setting sun gazing,
Telling tales of feats awe inspiring to Lee and me,
Of spy-*vs*-spy, or how to clean a Glock or Uzi. Amazing!
With the kid upon his knee.

Now of wind tunnel tests, and how planes flew,
And some test planes that broke in two.
How aircraft systems work, or design a plane brand new.
With the kid now in his lap.

When asked, told how he earned his medals: many.
One: recruiting Blacks and women to fly planes,
Helped the Air Force make big diversity gains.
Fixed plane for 'Nam; didn't lose any.

And the kid around his shoulders.

Wrote plans Escape & Evasion if flight went askew,
So crew could dodge and elude until their rescue.
He knew all aircraft systems nose to tail,
Commanded maintainers so planes wouldn't fail.
Now the kid was on his back.

What's a wing's flap, slat, slot, or strake?
And how to fix them when they break.
On, similar stories went, each time he came,
With the kid and us raptly listening all the same.

We watched his inner wounds worsen every stay;
We wanted to care for him 'til his last day,
Not see him fade in a Vet's home far away.

Last Christmas he called, said he'd come no more.
After so many visits—perhaps a score.
We'll miss his tales told with great care.
Through them all, we never said—we didn't dare!—
That **The Kid** was never there.

“A Photograph” by J Fenner

They slept, gnarled hands together, Father, Mother.
They sat, hands clutching each other.
Seventy-Seven years married life together,
Their hands, Father, Mother, the constant tether.

Decades long, I failed to take [*never took*] that photograph.
Opportunity? Always be another time.
Few family photos: Some old, some bring a laugh.
Their wedding, 1930, Mom's flapper dress a shade of lime.

Dad on his horse. Beside their first car. Yellowstone.
Several together. Vacations. Dad at the big six-oh.
Fiftieth Anniversary. A few of each alone.
On the TV, last photo display—three in a row.

Dad's heart now failing. [I am there.] Sleep is sound.
Three days, three nights. We hold watch, stand guard.
Breathing rhythmically, now snorts; we gather 'round.
Breathing stops, starts—stops again. To watch is hard.

It stops for good. Momma sobs. Staff mobs.
Commotion, commotion. Mom cries and cries.
She mourns, cries, weeps—sobs. Gobs and gobs of sobs.
We all wept and mourned when a loved one dies.

Fingers that once rubbed his hands now rub a photograph.
Gnarly, age spotted, delicate, precious hands.
She sobs. Night and day thumb rubs his photo face.
Rubs and rubs the face away—one after another.

Called away, niece is there to comfort Mom.
A month comes and goes. Mom passes. Broken heart?
Clutched in pale, gnarled dead hand:
A creased and crumpled, well-rubbed, faceless photograph.

“NO NO NO” by Linda Healy

I don’t want to wake up.
I don’t want to excel.
I have visions of
Busible busyness leading to hell.

Rushing breathlessly on
Through clamor and gales,
Jigging right, jagging left
In pursuit of odd grails.

While Exhaustion creeps in
And steals the prize,
And stiffens the limbs,
And fogs up the eyes.

Stand in Quiet, my friend,
For the Stillness is Live.
Breathe your breath deeply in,
At Center, you thrive.

“WISTERIOUS CHANGE” by Linda Healy

WORTHY, M’ LOVE,
HOW CAME WE HERE?

WHAT NYMPH, WHAT ORYX SMILES
TO NOTE HER HANDY MISCHIEF,
WHO, LONG SINCE, ALL QUIET,
STOLE OUR SOLITARY ESSENCES
AND
MIXED, CONFUSED OUR
CLEARLY VARIED PURPOSES AND STYLES,

AT NIGHT,
AS WE SLEPT, THEN, SO SURE,
AND SEPARATE,
IN SEVERE
AND DREAMLESS BEDS.

WHAT NYMPH, THEN ROARING AT OUR SO DIFFERENTNESS,,
WRAPPED,
ENTWINED
OUR BRANCHES,
CHORTLING TO SEE US
PUSH AND PULL AND STRAIN
TO STAY THE SELF-SAME
NARROW STEMS THAT SINGLY
WAXED BEFORE,

TANGLED TOGETHER,
OVERLAPPING,
ENMESHED,
ENSCONCED,
COMBINED,

TRANSFORMED, AT LENGTH, BY YEARS OF RUBS,
OF JOYOUS SPURTS,
OF SPARKS AND FLOODS,
OF TOUCHING FINGERS,
TOES AND BOOTS,

INTO A WOOD OF ORCHID ROOTS
--NOR STEMS, BUT ROOTS,--
ALIVE,
M' LOVE.

“Snoring Next Door” by Scout Heiser

the snoring next door reminds me of home.
it reminds me of sleeping in my parents bed after a nightmare.
muffled, and rhythmic, like a metronome,
a bodily lullaby bidding me goodnight.
reminding me i’m not alone.
and it lulls me to sleep. and someone is there.
alive, living and breathing and dreaming.
soft, small comfort of knowing.
we breathe together.
it reminds me of home.

“September, Too Late” by Jillian Jackson

A woman clenches rusting keys
between her knuckles tight,
soprano oiled with a *Please,*
you shadow, pass tonight.

The wraith replies: *The moonshine dear,*
with perfumed breeze so sweet,
meant not to rustle up your fear
on these leaf-scattered streets.

“Mrs. Wilson” by Jillian Jackson

Mimi died dreaming of Honolulu,
her shriveled sunspot hand askew
— not toward crowded Waikiki’s
sheeny tanning oil body —
instead tracing her barnacle finger
across the slick grease seeping
from the USS Arizona.

She had met him in San Francisco.
He fiddled with the Philco radio,
loved the rum and coke finesse
of her wrist, how she pitched
at the World’s Fair.

Hey batta batta swing!

Milo loads the bases. Navy boys
talk antenna straight – no static,
just that rude scoot of his
stool toward hers.

On bartop, she loops in liquor sop
her someday signature:

Mrs. Ray Milo Wilson, and mother
to his children, the heirs to his spark
coil arms, and that 9-volt battery kiss
between his full lips. Girlish schemes
drip easy from agile fingers.

The Philco radio was playing Crosby
on December’s Sunday broadcast.
How long would it take me to be near
if you beckon? Throaty, low-pitched
brass and bel canto soaked
the FM waves —

Then, the dry report. Someone drops
the bombs scorching Battleship Row.
How fast a glass can overflow!

Mimi cracked open the battery

in her belly. Hurtling shrapnel
scraped her womb with rust.

Doctors did the rest.
Razed navy boys don't raise babies.

Mimi braved the navy, topped off
somebody else's morphine, flicked
needles to pop air pockets.

That nimble wrist brought
the bottle to her gnashing lips,
thinned to the scowl of the enlisted
woman pharmacist. Ship the boys out
with their pills and Philco radios.

In the bar, twist a charred antenna
for one last incinerated song:

How long would it take me
to be near if you beckon?
Offhand I would figure
less than a second.

Much, much later, she sputters out
the verse, pausing for a duet partner
to exhale from his wet lungs
and sing.

“You are a shell…” by Holly Manno

I started thinking about shells. What constitutes a shell? A shell is comprised of calcium carbonate. A shell holds everything together. It protects the life inside. A shell is home. It withstands crashing waves and shifting tides. A shell fortifies in spite of all that. And while a shell is only a shell, there would be no life without it, no life at all. It’s not that bad being a shell.

“E X T R E M I S T” by Holly Manno

A tree
never looked
so vulnerable
so narrow
so easy
to fall
until the grip
of bitterness
cold
of winter’s
tangled winds
the arctic blast
of rage
pummel barren limbs
tall
narrow
weakened from chill
of empty youth
vacuumed vigor
beyond the flowers of spring
seeds frozen
hope for tomorrow
a fantasy or derision
below zero
what if I can’t endure?
abandoned to frost
cracked
empty heart
cracked like
the writer
with her pen
and the ground
she walks
for her dog
or humanity
without vibrance
like the smile

cruelly erased
penetrated center
flames explode
roll down
scorch fertile hills
sweep away life
spew

“Earth Day 1: On the Salish Sea” by Penny Mc Donald

don't forget
the moon will rise it will set
the sun will set it will rise
the tide will come and it will go and it will come
the silver sky will become blackorange will become blue
the otters will rush through dusk, dive into their home
the porpoise will break the water in morning
the birds will skitter soar float flight call
the trees will stand together and alone
the islands will be land since glaciers
the mountains will glow with sun
don’t forget

Do not forget this great beauty is in peril
    Like other great beauty elsewhere, it is in peril
Do not forget our beautiful world is in peril

“Earth Day 2: Hope” by Penny Mc Donald

There is hope in every day that dawns, turns light

There is hope in our love for beautiful places

Our backyards and far away

There is hope in little daily things together grown big

Recycling composting Walking biking

There is hope when we plant

A tree native seeds green roof milkweed sunflowers community garden a lovely swale

There is hope in a Blue Flag beach a monkey bridge Museo de la Biodiversidad

There's hope in the minds of inventors

There is hope when we acknowledge responsibility show respect

Lights off for turtles Sound down for orcas

There is hope when we Google ask a question seek facts to

Identify a bird

Understand an eclipse

Learn of a “living sea wall”

There is hope in bans policies laws international agreements,

things we cannot do but can expect, demand, abide by

There is hope in the sign in a march for climate justice

and in a yes vote for a difficult but necessary change

There is hope in slow progress

More charging stations, solar panels

An animal's rising numbers

Another organization taking on one piece of the problem

There is hope in those more daring, more bold than me

Women in Switzerland Greenpeace Greta

There is hope in young people period. They often lead the way.

There is hope in our love for our grandchildren

Who follow us Who live with what we do and don't do

There is hope in this year's focus on plastic

Plastic EVERYWHERE containing filling amassing choking

There is hope when I simply take gloves and bucket, volunteer to join others, recruit others in a cleanup

A beach A block The City

Add to this list. Magnify Hope.

“Bathroom Me” by Maaren Park

They don't see,
The bathroom me
Soaked up skin
Every pore scrubbed
The me that licks in between the tiles
To get every crack and scrape glistening,
Every corner picked to its prime
Just to push the plaster in,
The dirt,
And discarded.

They see me clean, yes
But covered in a thin cellophane
To reflect all my curves in a dazzling light show
Dressed in drapes and roses,
Tossed with glitter and bondaged in lace,
Fragments of glass stuck to my rouged cheeks.

No feathers today,
Or hangnails on my sore feet,
Or jitters in my hands,
Or cowlicks in my blown out hair
I am a table set for guests
Waiting to hold up your meals
And allow you to rest your forearms
Or even your broken in soles
That missed their check in at the door.

And every ache of my muscles
Or churn of my stomach at the smell of your feast
Reminds me of my restraint
My obedience to routine,
And clocks,
And numbers,
And sounds,
And words

And for one moment,
I relish in the hilarity
The irony in my longing to eat,
And drink,
And lounge,
And rest my feet
And then I resume the cycle,
And begin to scrub the oil off my tender body.

“Nuptial Occasion” by Alex Andy Phuong

Matrimonial celebration
Memorable night and day
Understanding how
To share a life
After the exchange
Of wedding vows,
And the declaration
Of love and admiration
Can bring joy and peace
To the world as a whole
As beautifully profound
As the human soul,
And let hearts soar
Like the wings of a dove
By never underestimating
The power of love
So that the bond
That a couple will share
Will inspire a husband and a wife
To live a wonderful and meaningful life

“Vortex Cordis” by Molly Ponkevitch

Door, there’s going to be one.
Sometimes imbued with a code system,
a double lock,
sometimes janky and off the hinge.

I’ve seen a door so quiet and forgotten
in the middle of some high
way land, golden and bare
maybe three splintering boards left
to collapse inward—
you couldn’t tell it
apart from a hole
except for the frame around it

which made for a warmer body
once, or a place to spoon
buttered mush,
gave a child’s holler
a certain boundary —where at night

I could see a coyote cheek pressed against
the wall, but a door

was imagined there, embedded there,
drew my hand around its knob
the whorl of my heart.

“We Walk—A poem” by LeeAnn Rooney

Iambic Pentameter sort of…

We walk among the rainy skies.
The clouds burst forth with essential water.
Yet, do we appreciate the nourishment,
the H_2O?
No.

Soon we will destroy this planet.
It cannot recover from our ugly ways.
The trash and plastic; the toxins and vile,
It all has a cost that we cannot pay.

Why is our planet warming?
What have we done?
Why are the glaciers melting?
What will become of our race,
our children, the future, the orb, the sun?

Corals are bleaching,
Fires are burning,
Impacting health, humanity, and all things.
What future have we?

I implore you to watch, to listen, to dream.
Walk among nature, follow a stream.
Relish in the magic of natural things.
Take a moment to listen, to touch, and to dream.

Take it all in, be present, be reflective, be mindful.
Then take a step toward progress and good things.
Influence your friends and your neighbors, and then,
a wave of change will take place—you will see!

It might not be too late after all,
to take this tiny blue-green ball,
forward in time and history,
toward wonderful, fantastical, futures;
you’ll see,

It’s up to you and me.

“Is It You?” by Adele Santina

Is it you who will hold the key
That truly captures my heart?
It seems that it's been so long
Since someone's caused that "spark."

Is it you who will cause me to smile
Whenever your eyes meet mine?
From the minute you enter the room
Till you regretfully leave my side.

Is it you who will make me laugh
With more joy than I've ever known?
Will our playfulness create such a bond
That we'll never want to roam?

Is it you who will take my hand
and never let it go?
Will the love we feel be strong enough
To withstand the ebb and flow?

Is it you who will make me believe
That I really can have it all?
I'm certain we'll both know soon enough
To see if "in love" we will fall.

Tomorrow's a secret... enjoy the surprise.

“I Am Welcome Here” by Margo Strength

Welcome to my oasis
That spreads out in my backyard.
You’d never guess how often I come here.

Up, up high in the canopy of trees
Is where I hear the birds sing
And laugh at the happy squirrels chasing along the branches.

They see all who enter this beautiful space
And each welcomes me!

I adore seeing the leaves changing colors
Their blossoms to bloom
And their branches intertwining.

“Come, come and stand beneath our boughs and gaze up
All of our arms are lifted upwards pointing to Heaven above.”

Here I can close my eyes and imagine their protection of the fortress
I pause to picture them smiling down on me
Encouraging me to sing and dance.

“And When I Die” by Patty Waalkes

And When I Die

Who Will Mourn?

And When I Pass

From Here To There

Who Will See Me Go?

I Would Rather Fall

As A Spent Ash Does,

Feather

Petal

Down-

Quelled Between

Two Hands Of Wind,

A Broken Space,

A Sway Of Time,

No Footprints Or Apology.

I Would Rather Fall

As A Star Does,

Without Slip Of Sound-

A Free-Fall Way

To Somewhere Else-

Leaving Behind A Thin

Trail Of Light

That Wasn’t Mine

To Begin With.

“Crazy Quilt Sounds” by Claudine Werner

Play with words, I had read
Learn to revel in sounds.

Arabesque and elegiac,
Ebullient and bombastic,
Tossing favorites around.
Propitious and lethargic,
Hodgepodge and hubbub,
Fribble, dribble, and triple,
Syllabic music abounds.

Scarlet, saffron, shamrock,
Cobalt, ebony, and blonde,
Skitter hither and yon.
Fetid, cloying, flagrant fragrance,
Acidic, pungent, and noxious,
Coil through the environs.

Palatable, ambrosial, tantalizing,
Or sapless, vapid, insipid,
Such gustatorial extremes!
Veloured, barbed, vitreous,
Dimpled, wimpled, and unctuous,
Endless word play, it seems.

“Fawn’s First Storm” by Jim Wolper

The fawns had yet to see a night like this.
Their whole lives night meant
Curling up on some soft lawn,
The wind calm,
Sky clear, the Milky Way above.
And mother's milk nearby.

But tonight the wind is hot.
But tonight the wind is gusty.
But tonight it smells of smoke.

Unable to relax
They bleat at the noise,
Not knowing what it is
Or why it is
Or what smoke means.

They bleat all night.

“Neda” by LO Resident

Neda, you are a pretty girl; they’ll target you
Neda, put on your veil
Neda, please obey the Evening Prayer
Avoid the protest in the square
Of Basiji beware

Protest: the votes were counted in the Ministry
Protest: inks disappeared
Protest. With true Islamic purity
They crush kid’s skulls and fracture knees
“Iran cannot breathe”

Listen: a bullet whistles through the Tehran air
See it: blood from her nose
Watch it on screens across the seven seas
Observe the death of liberty
Neda you are me

Quiet, on the tree-lined street where Neda died
Silence. No right to mourn
Blackout. No news on censored state TV
No right to speak; no place to flee
Faith-based tyranny

Islam: a faith of black and white intolerance
Islam: prostrate yourself
Islam: the man who bows to Allah’s will
And in God’s name feels free to kill
He’s the infidel.

Evil: it’s not unique to just one faith
Evil is the belief
Evil - that you, that you are good and they are bad
So what you do to them is good
Ahmadinejad

Neda. You were as lovely as a Persian moon
Neda. Just twenty-six
Neda. Dreamed of travel; in love with life
Condemned injustice; hated strife
God is no alibi.

“Hephaestus to Aphrodite (in the Vocative)” by Anonymous

O, Aphrodite,
what am I to do?
should you yearn
for a beast
like me?
unworthy?

O, Aphrodite,
how can it be true?
could you learn
to be more
than just
unhappy?

O, Aphrodite,
why must it be you?
would you spurn
your Ares
for how
we could be?

For I can forge amour.
I can make art.
But I know little of amore
and less of the heart.
That is your war;
this is your part:

O, my Hephaestus,
do not doubt my view.
I should have
confessed this
many
times to you

For you *can* forge amore!
you can take heart
because your little melody
has broken me apart