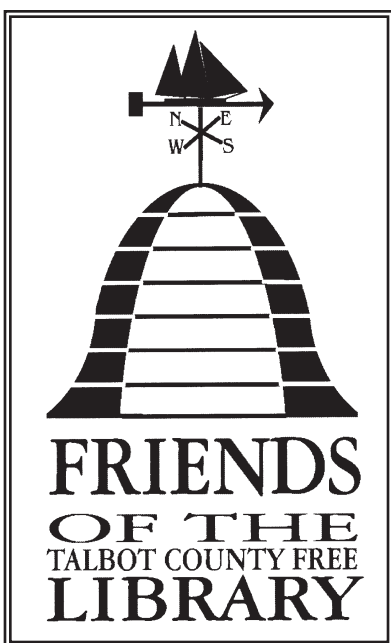


18th Annual
Poetry Contest
2008

Sponsored by



With
THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY
OF TALBOT COUNTY

This annual Poetry contest
is dedicated to...
Gilbert Valliant Byron
July 23, 2903 - June 25, 1991
"The Voice of the Chesapeake"

Through his simple but moving
style of writing, Gilbert Byron,
a native of Maryland's Eastern
Shore, celebrated and chronicled
the Chesapeake Bay region and
its people for more than fifty years.
He was among the earliest to
recognize the impact of
development upon the Bay's
ecology.

Eventually, his essays, short
stories, novels and poems
became as much a part of
the region's culture and heritage
as his subject matter. His writing,
lifestyle and birth date earned
him the reputation as the
"Chesapeake Thoreau."

His affinity with nature and
the environment is reflected
in his favorite short poem:

Evening Marshes

Marsh grass is golden
Under a late sun,
and wild ducks' wings
Whistle with the wind.
We are one.
Wild duck and setting sun,
Marsh grass around the pond,
Earth smells and shadows,
Coming cold and early night.
Evening star and this
Great emptiness
Within me.

The FRIENDS are pleased to present
during National Poetry Month the awards
and honorable mention winners in the...

18th Annual Poetry Contest 2008

April 5, 2008

Over 300 entries were received from
students and adult citizens of Talbot County.

The Friends sincerely thank all who
submitted poems and hope they will continue
their interest in poetry.

Special Thanks to...

Poetry Contest Judges

Ted Cutler, Retired
Staff, St. Michaels, Tilghman Branches
Talbot County Free Library

Robert Forloney
Director of Education
Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum

Bonna Nelson
Writer, Columnist, Photographer

Friends of the
Talbot County Free Library

Talbot County Free Library

Winner

John Smith

When Smith sailed the Atlantic Sea,
Looking for the wonders of freedom
He came across the new land,
The dear sweet Americas.

He sailed into that famous bay,
That everyone in Maryland knows,
The one that goes as Chesapeake,
The one that we are proud to show.

He proudly declared,
Of the land he called his country,
The waters were clear blue,
And the oysters were piled out of their home.

We all know that's not the bay today,
For our's is brown and murky,
The oysters are all at the bottom,
And some are dead before they are
harvested.

But although we cannot bring the bay to its
greatest stage,
We can help bring it back alive like many,
many years ago,
How, you may ask,
Why it is very simple.

We can save all the oysters by not buying so
many,
We can bring back the plants by not
dumping all the chemicals.
Lots of other things can fix the bay,
Can you think of any, and can you follow
them,

Can you save the bay,
Will you put in the time,
Can you stop the killing of the important bay,
Will you?

**Bethany Dixon
Easton Middle School**

Honorable Mention

Underground Railroad

Dark, safe
Running away, hiding,
going north
Scared following the
Drinking gourd
Freedom

Sarah Wilburt

Winner

Blue Skies in Unionville

I plant the crop, and till the soil.
I pick tobacco, black man's toil.
Miles River Neck, I call my home.
Slave child's soul is all I own.
I catch the crab at dawn's first light.
I shoot the turkey at edge of night.
I feel the lash of Mastah's fury,
I dig potato, hurry, hurry.
One day sweet, next day sorrow,
It's Mastah's whim on the morrow.

I hunt the deer in silent wood.
Venison stew taste mighty good.
I sop the gravy with ma's corn pone.
Then buff Big Man's boots till they shone.
I fish for perch at end of dock,
Catch big ole string by 6 o'clock.
They fry up fine in Granny's meal,
Ground from corn in yonder field.

Crack the whip, get on your knees.
No talking back, it's yes sir please.
I sing "Swing Low" with my kin.
I hum a tune at day's end.
I go to bed with fingers weary,
Rise up early, bright and cheery.
I praise the Lord for each day.
Boss man say, "Boy, bail up that hay!"

Big storm's coming, and trouble ahead.
Mastah's worried, and many are dead.
Brother and cousin are choosing sides.
Freedom's coming on rising tide.
Mr. Lincoln's gonna make it right.
Me and Pappy going off to fight.
Union soldiers, Black and proud,
We blow away slave man's cloud.

My Baby Girl, she own the earth.
She never know slave man's dearth
Sky of blue and river still,
Growing free in Unionville.

Bobbie Wells

Honorable Mention

"pure" sparkling gold

there were brogans
& big eyes
& skipjacks galore
sailing Chesapeake Bay
days of yore.

in warm autumn breezes
in cold winter storms
from sunup to sundown
boats long ago gone.

chosen freedom
to slavery
in factories on land
be their own bosses
answer to no man.

they worshiped
the currents
winds in their sails
calm warm
& still mornings
brisk winter
wrought gales.

they piled up a mountain
of Bay bottom shells
'till boats, sails and oysters
were one with themselves.

overflowing with catches
no limit yet set
heading for buy boats
in Chesapeake's inlets.

to empty their take
from November to May
reap the big profits
the very same day

they fought with the pirates
for beds that were thick
with muddy bivalves
they'd make lick after lick.

they battled the law
with cannons and guns
warfare on the Bay
set sails high to run.

shanghii their crewmen
from Bal'more saloons
work them all season
give them the boom.

winches tore fingers
they froze
& they drowned
the Bay hid them deeply
they never were found.

Winner

Untitled

The stillness of the water
on this windless day
like a fine velvet cloth
shiny
but gray
not a trace of disturbance
in this lifeless
bay
like a fine velvet cloth
shiny
yet gray

Lucy Bond
The Country School

Winner

Intelligence

I have some intelligence, well not much you
see.
My teacher says I'm really smart, but most
would disagree.
Even though I prance around like I am quite
proud,
Most of the time my shaggy head is in the
clouds.
My books are always missing or a scrappy
mess,
When Mrs. Leve walks by she sighs at my
desk.
My homework is always late, and my clothes
are always muddy,
Recess is a dirty time for me and all my
buddies.
Even though I'm spacey my life is filled with
joy,
I guess all the other things are just part of
being a boy.

William Griffin
Saints Peter and Paul

Winner

The Eliza Ker

The Eliza Ker is a version of my soul,
My wooden heart
Floating on the Bay.
Hours of work
And play float with her.
My grandfather's first boat,
Fixed up to my soul.

Stewart Spurry
The Country School

Honorable Mention

Untitled

Fish shoot like bullets
in the afternoon sun
across the rough stream
to get to the ocean.

Matt Schroeder
The Country School

Honorable Mention

The poem guide

Poems can be funny poems can be sad,
the funny ones are an easy pass the sad
ones always win. You can have them long
you can have them short, but the good
ones always get to your heart. General or
History? Which one to be the nominee?
People read poems because they are
artwork in letters people make them
because you can forget the period and
no one will care. Do whatever you want with
your poems and the best part is that you
tried. And this has been the poem guide.

William Singelstad
Saints Peter and Paul School

Winner

Treasure Island

Living on the smooth sand piled high in the dunes, I wait for the earth to once more see the stars glitter and dance to the music of the waves on the cool sand then cascade back into the depths of the sea.

As I watch the people wandering along the shoreline leaving to go home, I am left with the sounds of seagulls winging their way from the slowly darkening beach to find their nesting place so they can feed their young with fish from the calm waters near the ocean's shore.

The breeze strengthens, and I hear the sea oats delicately beating a piece of driftwood and almost sounding like a horse galloping on a distant dirt road.

Those gentle winds shift to come from the ocean, and I can taste and smell the salt carried along its seemingly endless journey across the sea.

In the west, the sun meets the horizon, and I feel as if it is dropping off the earth, because as it sets farther and farther, I am reminded of a round, upright seashell sinking beneath the smooth sand.

As the brilliant light from the sky reflected onto the sea leaves the earth all is dark, but slowly stars begin to appear like moonflowers blooming as if to look at the remarkable night reappearing again to this place on earth.

Now, on these high dunes, I suddenly knew I had long waited for this moment when I could hear the ebb and flow of the waves and the rustling of the sea oats, feel the cool breeze, smell and taste the salt air, and see the stars so very far and wide in the night sky.

Treasure Island continued on next page

Category: General Students, Grades 6-8

I have reached it.

The treasure is all around me.

The treasure to see it.

The treasure to hear it.

The treasure to touch it.

The treasure to smell it.

The treasure to taste it.

The treasure to be surrounded by paradise.

I have reached it.

Treasure Island.

**Lynn Hatcher
Saints Peter and Paul School**

Winner

The Land Beyond

The constant noise spinning in every child's
head.

The favored game of the young; toy guns
sounding.

No one seems to see the damage.

Changing kids as a butterfly changes in a
cocoon.

Turning kids feral and violent; bloodthirsty
killers.

Does anyone see this?

Losing everything we have for something not
important.

The violence causing silence at the very worst
of times.

Letters coming home, causing tears to fall
endlessly.

Yet, we ignore all of this and continue this
raging war.

Trying to defeat the enemy; celebrating when
we do.

But, are we any better than they are?

Will we ever see that the same thing is
happening?

I wonder when we will see with unseeing
eyes.

See people for not what they look like, but
for whom they are.

We will see that we are causing the same
pain to them as they are to us.

Maybe the war will end and little heads can
have sweet dreams.

No more empty chairs at the dinner table; no
more empty beds.

No more unnecessary tears shall fall and pain
will diminish.

We will be able to rise and fly with the Fallen.

We will be able to fly to a place of peace and
happiness.

A place that is beyond our imagination.

Miranda Schnakenberg
Saints Peter and Paul School

Winner

The City of Color

The dances of lights
The red, white, and blue street poles
The song a bird sings
When it's becoming old
The music notes shatter
As a taxi cab calls
A loud siren screaming,
Unforgettably blaring,
Some walk on street
And each touch, a new color
Waves onto the street
Like the ocean in summer
The sky is Magenta
The grass is blue
The clouds are glowing
Like candles usually do
And here comes the wind
Blowing swiftly as can be
Then a rush of gray clouds
And rain, I see.
The raindrops, so different
Like each one a new culture
About to be born
And the chill of the water
Upon my skin
Rolls down me
Like a ball on mountain.
And as I twirl around in the rain
Barefooted, with no other
I admire my city
My city of color

Abi Ward
The Country School

Honorable Mention

Kid's Best Friend

He lies on your bed,
Face up, resting on your pillow
Waiting for your five-year-old self
To come rushing in
Needing comfort and love
Only he can provide.

You hold him close
Feeling his soft brown fur
And glassy black eyes
Against your skin.

Your friends tease
As you grow older
And still cherish that old bear
Which is now dirty and torn
But still holds as much love as ever.

Years later,
He will lie quietly under your bed
Forgotten
Until the time comes
When it's late and night and you can't sleep
You'll reach down and feel
His soft body
And as you look fondly into
His hard marble eyes
Maybe you'll see a tiny spark
A glimpse of the life that used to be
Inside him.

Grace Kearney
The Country School

Honorable Mention

Ode to a Tire Swing

The park is empty
It's the middle of spring
You sit alone
On a round, dark swing.

It looks out of place
Among the swings of plastic
But who said an old tire
Couldn't be fantastic?

One big push
And you're up in the air.
Your shoes fly off
But you don't care

Because all round you is wind and sky
Your stomach lurches as you fly
So you close your eyes and feel the breeze
And you never want to leave.

With eyes open you can see for miles
Trees, water, and everywhere smiles.
Now you are the queen, and this is your
 queendom
You think to yourself
This is freedom.

Grace Kearney
The Country School

Winner

Lessons Learned

Here we are at the end
The finish line, round the bend
We are done, we are through,
Tired and weary, tried and true

Going back, through our minds
Remembering another time
Seeing all the things we learned
By the light of bridges burned

Looking back, do we see
Something different, what could be
Would there be so many changes
If we could turn back the pages

If we could go back in time
Change a sentence, tweak a line
Edit, rewrite, or erase
Or would it just be a waste

We can't go back and change the book
But we can stop and take a look
And learn our lessons from our pasts
Lessons learned that will last

So here we are at the end
The finish line, round the bend
Standing here with pages turned
Ink on paper, lessons learned

Jessica Berman
Chesapeake Christian School

Winner

The Bay

Boats about on a wonderful day,
All to enjoy their good times on the water.
Crabbers and fishermen together,
Depend on that great sight.
Many a tankers have passed,
Through those shining waters...the Bay.

Using that amazing water,
For our own gain.
Building homes, factories,
And farms along its shore.
We pollute the deep,
Blue waters of ...the Bay.

Wind whipping across the water,
Waves crashing on the shore.
Trees falling in the night,
Without a soul to share their pain.
Slowly the land submits,
To the great power...the Bay.

Casey Hiers
Saints Peter and Paul School

Winner

Spirit Week

This Spirit Week was coming fast.
We knew not what to do;
Our class this year just had to win
Most spirit of the blue.

"What should we do? What can we do?"
We asked each other then.
"Let's decorate the school!" we said,
"But where do we begin?"

All weekend long we were around,
Draped red through all the halls.
The lockers too were hung with red,
And red signs on the walls.

On Monday when the classes came,
Bright red was all they saw.
They shouted out with their surprise,
"Is all this red by law?"

On Crazy Day our class prevailed,
Decked out in all we owned.
You had to doubt our sanity,
Don't worry, much was loaned.

This Decade Day we also won;
A great blast from the past!
The senior class was spirit filled,
We were so glad at last.

The Spirit Cup was ours this year!
The Class of Oh Oh Eight
Had finally won the grand prize,
To always be called great.

We celebrated in great style
At Homecoming next night.
In Central Park we could be found;
The stars lit up the night.

"This dance is great; I love the theme!"
Said one girl to a friend.
"How perfect for our final dance,
Too bad this is the end."

Alexandra Schultz
Saints Peter and Paul School

Honorable Mention

My Favorite Thing

The living room,
My bedroom,
In the car,
I bring my favorite thing along.
A gentle snap,
It opens up.
A scrape as I remove the mark.
"Ccchhh"
I move the mark,
It rests in another place.
A calming silence,
A minute, maybe two.
A little hiss, as it flips,
I move on to what comes next.
Minutes, maybe hours, go by,
Till I hear a call.
Sigh... "Ahhh."
I close it with another snap,
Careful to put the marker back.
I follow the call,
As I bring my favorite thing along.

Paige Dillon
Saints Peter and Paul School

Honorable Mention

RollerCoaster

Slowly it starts,
Going up at first.
The irritating click,
Of that high lift.

Nearing the top,
The anticipation rising.
Everyone's stomachs churning,
Their hearts thumping.

Over the edge,
Gaining speed.
Plummeting down,
Incredibly fast.

The wind roaring past,
As they zoom by.
Coming up,
Quicker than ever.

The flip,
Right side up.
Up side down,
And back again.

Screaming so loud,
It's heard from a mile away.
Everything rushing by so fast,
Nobody can see what is happening.

Then without warning,
It ends.
And everyone,
Is right back where they started.

Casey Hiers
Saints Peter and Paul School

Winner

Those Thrilling Days

The Duke and Hoppy, Gene and Roy,
I rode with them often when I was a boy.

The Duke showed me gunnin' and when to
fight,
Hoppy to ride and Gene wrong from right.

Roy with Trigger and even Dale,
We'd sing about the west and ride Happy
Trails.

Gabby was funny and Nellie Bell swell,
The Lone Ranger and I galloped to William
Tell.

The Masked Man, Tonto, Silver and Scout,
side kicks so true, knew what friendship was
about.

There was shoot'n, ridin' and Indians all
around,
Rustlers, bank robbers and killers to be
found.

The bad guys were many and the saloons
everywhere,
With dance hall girls and their long flowing
hair.

Not that it mattered or that they'd have been
missed,
Cause us rough tough cowboys never got
kissed.

It was our horses, saddles and guns that we
loved,
Also the mountains and the stars up above.

There were the streets of Lorado and the jail
in Dead Wood.

Those slowest on the draw would die where
they stood.

Never stay'n long in any cowtown,
We'd soon move on cause we wouldn't be
bound.

Travel'n and wander'n like tumbleweeds,
We lived very simple, had very few needs.

At the end of the day after righting some
wrongs,
We'd sit by the campfire and sing cowboy
songs.

We had beef steaks on the spit and coffee in
the pot,
Plenty baked beans, bread and the lot.

Tired from riding over the range I roamed,
I turned off the TV and was instantly home.

I rode with 'em all. I rode with the best.
It was they who taught me the **Code of the
West.**

I think back on it now and think how I feel.
Didn't it happen? Wasn't it real?

I'll see them again through my mind's eye
and tear,
When I return once again, to **Those Thrilling
Days of Yesteryear.**

Rick Covell

Winner

Questions for a Snake

when the snake's sight dims
(opaque scales like cloudy lenses)
does she sense an end
or a beginning
or are each day's
changes as nothing

a lifetime of slithering
uncurling from the humid
curved world of the egg
slipping to the hot pine
floor brittle oak leaves
the first flicker of the tongue
knowing the air

the slow slide of first prey
can she sense the
peristalsis
pulling the meal along
does she notice
when the hunger subsides

when her sight dims to haze
and the skin pulls away
is there an inborn desire
to leave the old
how can she know just
when to rub her hard
face to loosen and undo the skin
overlapping ovals
pulling away left behind
then the clear air
the skin that glistens
a beautiful slide fresh
and the mating
simple glidings
limblessness
easing the way
the winding hold
the living skin
twining with living skin
the curve of thin bodies
acting out the
imperative

Questions for a Snake continued on next page

when eggs form
does she sense the
stir within the subtle
mix albumin and yolk
encased in the shell
each perfect
in form and purpose
unmarked by intention
does she labor to
expel the wet eggs
or is their birth
as simple as a swallow
or the leaving of a skin?

Paula Vlahovich

Winner

Shore Dog

At dawn's first light, near water's edge,
With frosty breath by corn stalk hedge,
Ducks skim low, I'm all aquiver,
I hold my bark, while Master shivers.
Boom and bang, the feathers fly.
Beneath a grey, but brightening sky.
I plunge into the river's chill,
Both Man and Beast share the thrill.
With dripping jowls and bloody snout,
I mouth the feathers and turn about,
Release the prize to Master's hand,
Good boy, well done, life is grand!

The children play on river beach,
They fling long sticks beyond my reach.
I lunge right in, it's such a lark,
Retrieving branch with grin and bark.
I shake a cloud of silver spray,
Young ones shriek, and run away.
We roll about in summer's green,
I streak through meadow, a quick black
sheen.
Cool in dirt beneath the porch,
I snap at flies as they encroach.

I lie at feet beneath the table,
Little one slips a treat when able,
Lick wee fingers of meat and tater
I'll guard her bed, as she sleeps later,
Rest head on paws and snooze the while,
Whine, and twitch, whimper, growl.
I dream of rabbits, squirrel, and quail,
Till morning comes with Master's hail,
I bound up eagerly, new day to greet.
Out to field, and farm, and creek,
Sniff each thicket, bush and tree,
Fulfilling shore dog's pedigree

Bobbie Wells

Honorable Mention

The Patient Fisherman

Waiting, waiting, waiting,
Waiting and anticipating,
The heron stood his watch.

His legs, like reeds, stood still and straight,
As for his meal he stood in wait.
The heron stood his watch.

Beneath calm water passed a fish,
Which to the heron was a dish.
The heron stood his watch.

Then suddenly his long neck darted
Toward the water which his long bill parted
The heron broke his vigil.

The heron in the pond stood high,
With long bill pointed toward the sky.
The heron's captive fish did wiggle.

The heron ate it with a thrill,
Then locked himself in reed-like still,
And, once again...

The heron stood his watch.

James W. B. Church, Jr.

Honorable Mention

The Two Old Biddies

Once there were two old biddies
Who were friends a long, long, time.
They know each other backwards,
For they confided all the time.

Some times they were like school girls
Giggling at the silliest things.
Sharing memories of some past event
That a good friendship brings.

They were each others shoulder
On the few days they were blue.
And each one had a daughter
Who was loving, caring, true.

They'd talk for hours on the telephone,
Never hurting anyone during the course.
Talk about all of the old times,
And confide tid-bits, of course.

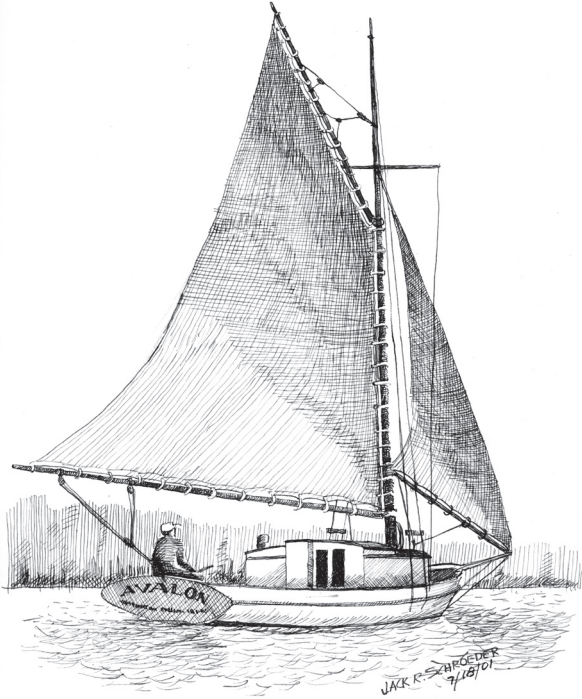
Each one dreaded seeing the other go
To join their husbands up there.
They decided it would be nice if
Together they'd climb those golden stairs.

Can you imagine St. Peter's face;
It would turn from saintly bliss.
"Dear God! Here come the old biddies.
What did I do to deserve this!"

Being in our nineties can be nice,
If God would be so kind
To let us have our mentality
And that special friend of mine.

We are the two old biddies,
And in our long life span,
Our spirits are forever young;
We are like Peter Pan.

Marie Sitzenkopf



I'm going to wander away, away
Where there are islands
All green with delight.
I'm going to sail on down the Bay
Without a thought for the night.

Gilbert Byron, 1920

FRIENDS OF THE TALBOT COUNTY FREE LIBRARY

Established in 1974 to assist in improving facilities and services and has been responsible for upgrading and helping the Library become a community cultural center.

THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF TALBOT COUNTY

was founded in 1954 to collect, preserve and interpret the history and culture of Talbot County.

Its mission is to promote public interest, knowledge, understanding and appreciation of our rich heritage as it relates to the history of the Chesapeake region and the Nation.

The society is a private, nonprofit educational organization.

All contributions are tax deductible.