



Worcester County Poetry Association

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Announcing the 2019 Recipient of the Fifth Annual Stanley Kunitz Medal

“Some poets are buried on
the highest hill in town.
While others walk around
spilling
light and language
right on the regular earth
where we spend
our bit of lucky time,”

said Guggenheim Fellow and poet Naomi Shihab Nye of her poem “Basket Gathering Light” dedicated to Francis C. (Fran) Quinn, 2019 winner of The Worcester County Poetry Association’s fifth annual Stanley Kunitz Medal.

Quinn, formerly of Clinton, Massachusetts, is the recipient of the 2019 Stanley Kunitz Medal created through a bequest from two-time Poet Laureate of The United States and Pulitzer Prize-winning poet and Worcester native Stanley Kunitz.

The medal, awarded annually since 2015 by the WCPA, is awarded to a person with a robust Worcester County (Massachusetts) connection who best exemplifies Stanley Kunitz’s (born in Worcester in 1905) life-long commitment to poetry and poets. The award recognizes the total commitment to poetry as Kunitz lived it: teaching poetry, mentoring poets, speaking poetry, publishing poetry, and supporting organizations which nurture poetry.

Poet and teacher Fran Quinn was born in Easthampton, Massachusetts in 1942. He was one of the founders of the Worcester County Poetry Association in 1971 and established, with Etheridge Knight, Worcester’s Free Peoples Poetry Workshop which still flourishes. He was an early editor of the WCPA’s nationally-recognized journal, *The Worcester Review*, and taught poetry at almost every college in Worcester.

Though he moved to Indianapolis, Indiana, at the end of the twentieth century, and established an internationally known center for poetry at Butler University, he continued to promote Worcester as a center of poetry. Retired scholar B. Eugene McCarthy of Holy Cross wrote, “For the program at Butler University, Fran brought in Wole Soyinka, the first African Nobel Prize winner; he phoned to ask if I wanted Soyinka to read at Holy Cross. I said yes. Always alert to maximizing exposure to poets, Fran

knew it would be affordable for us to invite him already in this country—only one example of Fran’s consistent dedication.”

Galway Kinnell said, “Fran played a large part role in the flourishing of poetry in Worcester. I always missed him when I left [Worcester], and on returning, I always looked forward to seeing him. I was like that friend of Lorca’s who, in anticipation of seeing Lorca wrote (in Carol Conroy’s translation), ‘Frederico’s here! Now we’re going on a poetry bender.’”

WCPA President Rodger Martin said, “Fran Quinn poetry stories are legendary as if they were handed down to us from the poetry gods.”

McCarthy also noted Quinn’s dedication to poetry “is attested by his role as literary executor for the works of Etheridge Knight and Robert Francis; he has been designated executor for Mari Evans (who died in March 2017, a leader in the Black Arts movement), and Myra Shapiro.”

Quinn is the author of four books of poetry including *Milk of the Lioness* (Bachrach, Coleman & McCrea: 1982), *At The Edge of The Worlds* with poet Janice Forberg, and *The Goblet Crying for Wine* and *A Horse of Blue Ink* (Blue Sofa Press: 1995 and 2005). Quinn won the Hopewell Prize for poetry in 1992.

An award ceremony and reception, free and open to the public, to coincide with Kunitz’s birthday celebration, will be held at the Worcester Historical Museum at 30 Elm Street, Worcester, Massachusetts, on Thursday, July 25, 2019, 6:30-8:30 p.m. It will begin with a 30-minute open reading celebrating Stanley Kunitz.

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About the Worcester County Poetry Association

The Worcester County Poetry Association (WCPA) was founded in 1971 with a threefold mission: celebrate the rich literary history and creative energy of Central Massachusetts through public readings, workshops, festivals, scholarly conferences and other programs; support the publication of the literary journal, *The Worcester Review*; and collaborate with libraries, bookstores, colleges and universities, museums, churches, schools, community centers, businesses and a variety of cultural organizations to promote poetry events. The WCPA is an all-volunteer 501(c)(3) nonprofit.

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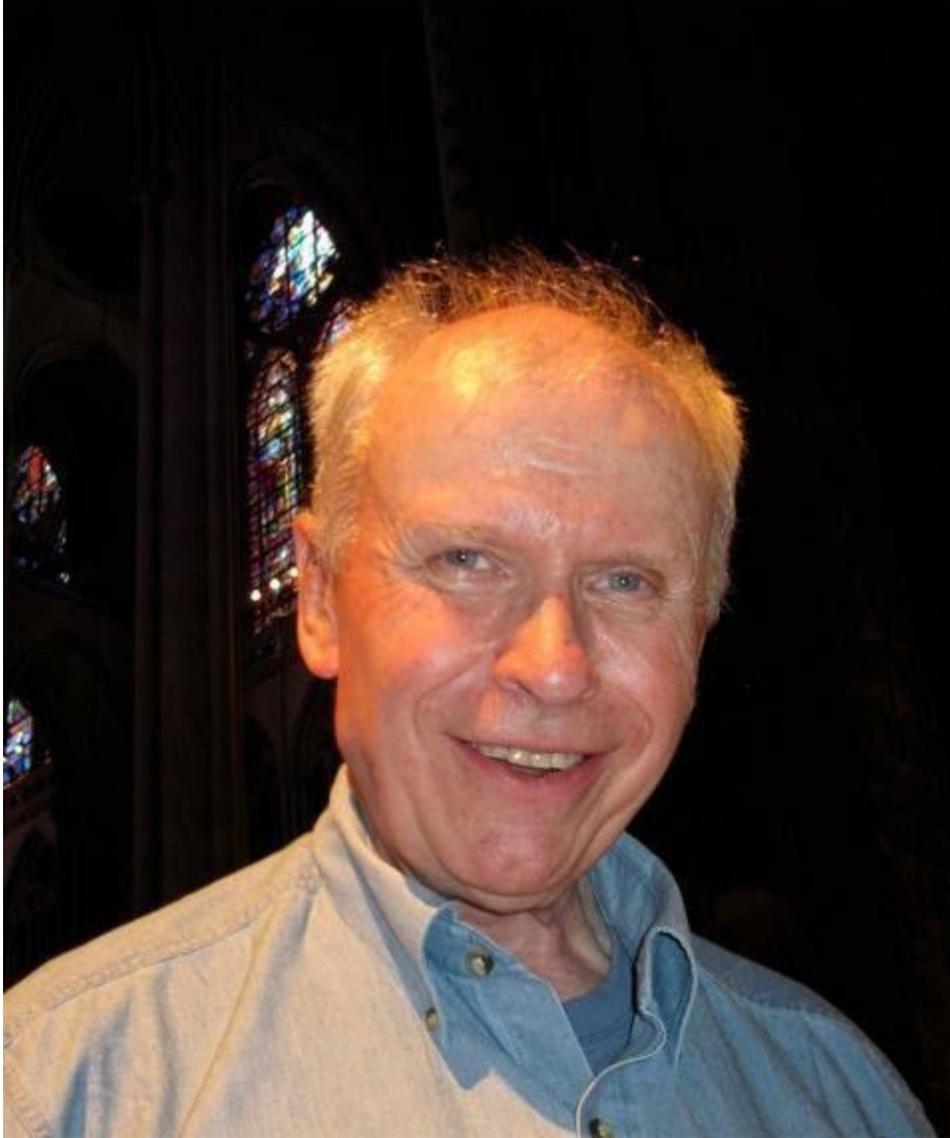


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