

# 2018

## H. Gene Murtha Senryu Contest

### Results

**First Place**

**prayer book  
all the funeral cards  
but hers**

**Gregory Longenecker**

This poem touched me deeply. Both of my Grandmother's were devout Catholics. When someone in the church dies there is a mass prior to the burial. At that service each person in attendance receives a prayer card. On one side is an image of the departed and a brief obituary containing the names of close family members, date of birth and death, etc. On the other side is a prayer with an image of a saint of the church. Often the card directs the recipient to a charity or mission to receive donations in the name of that person. It is, in short, a remembrance of birth and death, and a promise to the believer of heavenly reunion.

As you grow older you collect more and more of those cards. They become a memory bank of smiling faces and the prayers of saints. On older cards the prayers might even be in latin. But in this poem the poet is looking at the cards collected by someone they have lost. Can you imagine the epiphany when he imagines that he will be adding her card to this prayer book very soon.

This is a poem that meets the haikai spirit fully. From this poem I feel that I can 'link' and 'shift' to so many topics in the imagined lives of all those memorialized on those cards, and yet it has the feeling of a single moment for the poet. That is an achievement worth celebrating, it matches the spirit and sensitivity that Gene Murtha often used in his own poems. Steve and I both had this on our shortlist from the beginning.

*Michael Rehling*

## **Second Place**

**new tabla  
the smells of India  
in one strike**

**Nicholas Klacsanzky**

As with many successful haiku, this senryu presents a single moment of perception. Yet it immediately expands outward to include the many smells of India which are triggered in the mind and memory of the poet in that one brief moment; the aromas of spices used for cooking, the smells of monsoon rains, the forests, rivers and cities of India, the smells of the sea and much more flash into the poet's mind in that one fraction of a second upon hearing a single beat of the distinctive sound of a tabla drum. Though Klacsanzky doesn't say whether or not he's outside of India when he hears the beat of the tabla, I'm left with the impression that he's away from India and welcomes the sudden flood of memories that the sound of the drum stir in him.

Synergy is an oft used tool for poets – including senryu poets – and Klacsanzky handles it deftly here. Though many people find that certain smells trigger memories of past experiences, Klacsanzky turns that

common experience around, using the sound of the tabla to trigger memories of smells. It's a well crafted senryu and one which I will revisit often.

*Steve Hodge*

### **Third Place**

**moving out -  
the perfection  
of pomegranate halves**

**Kerstin Park**

As with Klacsanzky's poem, this senryu begins with a simple premise which expanded as its meaning reveals itself. Opening a pomegranate, one finds six symmetrical chambers filled with seeds. The poet is moving. Do the seed chambers represent her belongings packed away in boxes just as the pomegranate seeds are packed in their chambers? Perhaps. But the pomegranate is cut into two separate halves. And she isn't just moving, she's moving out; leaving someone behind. A husband? A lover? Her parents as she begins an independent life of her own? We don't know. How does the poet feel about the new life she is taking on? Her assertion that there is a perfection to the halves of the pomegranate indicates that she is enthusiastic about the separation.

Reading this poem – though I don't know the specific circumstances of the poet's situation – I feel happy for her. And I'm happy that she entered this senryu in the Third Annual H. Gene Murtha Senryu Contest!

*Steve Hodge*

## **The 'Short List'**

**just us  
touch dancing  
the universe expands**

**Scott Mason**

**final words  
his clod strikes a hollow tone  
on her coffin**

**Stephen Bailey  
(sometimes writing as Hansha Teki)**

**unloading the dryer  
my daughter's bra and mine  
entangled**

**Hannah Mahoney**

**worry beads –  
one by one I parse  
your silence**

**Mary Kendall**

**photo album  
those faces  
I used to know**

**Gabriel Bates**

**spring again  
the high street floods  
with umbrellas**

**Rachel Sutcliffe**

**plum petals. . .  
after the ginkgo walk  
the ticks**

**Marilyn Ashbaugh**

**silence  
the strength to wait  
for her reply**

**Pat Davis**

**pulling it together**

**letting myself go  
jazz riff**

**Peter Newton**

**deep autumn . . .  
walking barefoot  
on my mother's grave**

**Pamela A. Babusc**

**our last dinner date  
the bones  
picked clean**

**Christine Taylor**

**a legless man  
shines his boots  
Veterans Day**

**John Hawk**

**birdbath filled  
with yesterday's songs  
his empty pillow**

**Pris Campbell  
my shadow**

**the height and width  
I always wanted**

**Scott Wiggerman  
holocaust museum  
remembering  
to breathe**

**Joe McKeon**

**chemo  
the passport photo  
no longer me**

**Barbara Tate**

**blushing bride  
the secret she's keeping  
'til after they're married**

**Garry Eaton**

**in the stillness after the OM swallows**

**Johannes S. H. Bjerg**

**barefoot in the grass  
a violet's close call**

**Jerry Dreesen**

**checking the deck  
for the king of hearts  
singles cruise**

**Jennifer Hambrick**

**thunderstorm  
holding close  
my dog`s rosewood box**

**Susan Mallernee**

**estate auction  
a pair of elephants  
carved in ivory**

**prognosis  
no more  
somedays**

**Bill Kenney**



hospital curtain  
her last breath lingers  
in the ripples

Lori A Minor

old white cat  
acorns sculpt his grave  
with shadows

Sandi Pray

discarding  
the sex organs  
edible orchid

Kelly Sauvage Angel

final goodbye—  
the ice melts  
in her lemonade

buddhist shrine—  
the smell  
of someone's socks

Salil Chaturvedi

**making love . . .  
my sneakers finally  
didn't run**

**Don Baird**

**summer lilies  
one more funeral  
I skip**

**Eva Limbach**

**running as I say goodbye her mascara**

**Mike Keville**

**family dinner  
in-depth conversation  
about mashed potatoes**

**Lynne Jambor**

**a bird flipped  
through the sunroof  
summer heat**

**Terri French**

**wireless connection  
this stream of information  
i call me**

**Jay Friedenber**

**street band  
an old soldier shakes  
his bag of pills**

**Ken Olson**

**history talk  
some questions  
never end**

**Duncan Richardson**

**insomnia  
I am the only sheep  
in my head**

**Zoran Doderovic**

**the wind picks up  
a campaign poster  
the hair just right**

**Robert Witmer**

**on the bath scale...  
taking off  
her glasses**

**D.V.Rozic**

**mother-daughter selfie what it all boils down to**

**Shloka Shankar**

**mammogram  
my shadow leads  
the way**

**Martha Magenta**

**eye exam  
the doctor changes  
my long term vision**

**Elizabeth Crocket**

**rat race  
I become  
the tortoise**

**Kala Ramesh**

**bagpipers  
just far enough away  
to move me**

**Debbie Strange**

**on the road  
to the funeral  
are we nearly there yet**

**sixtieth birthday  
at last  
I let my stomach out**

**John Hawkhead**

**old war . . .  
leaders jump in  
sound of twitter**

**Ron C. Moss**

**pocket protector –  
I keep my wits  
about me**

**Susan Burch**

**fun-house mirror  
reflections  
of my inner self**

**Valentina Ranaldi-Adams**

**what she left behind  
the sound  
of an empty drawer**

**Robert Forsythe**

**glacial grooves --  
a look back at how far  
I've come**

**Julie Warther**

**department meeting  
an argument  
about collaboration**

**Bob Lucky**

**Japanese garden my mother clings onto my arm**

**Mark Gilbert**

**a pre-election poster -  
only his smile  
intended for all**

**Dubravko Korbus**

**war over  
I carry the face  
of the boy I killed**

**Mel Goldberg**

**zen workshop  
the thought of myself  
not thinking of myself**

**Chen-ou Liu**

**graffiti  
sharper  
by moonlight**

**Helen Buckingham**

**the usual  
boy leaves girl story  
assisted living**

**Anita Guenin**

**universal  
adapter  
social media**

**Ingrid Bruck**

**lullaby . . .  
both of us trying  
not to fall asleep**

**Mary Hanrahan**

**mother's eulogy  
finally I tell her  
what she wanted to hear**

**Debbi Antebi**

**hitchhiking  
the cartographer's son  
lost**

**kunjana parashar**



**Grandma declares  
Grandpa full of whimsy...  
I thought it was gas**

**William Scott Galasso**

**car wash  
it doesn't change  
where you were last night**

**Christine L. Villa**

**tai chi master  
moves slowly  
traffic jam**

**Dan Burt**

**incontinence . . .  
remains of rain  
from the red-tile roof**

**Geethanjali Rajan**

**childhood well  
I call my name  
in your voice**

**Rajandeep Garg**

shelling peas . . .  
my mind too,  
empties

**Carole MacRury**

wishing I'd worn  
a longer skirt —  
spring breeze

**Julie Bloss Kelsey**

New Year's Day—  
grunting on  
the wrong boot

**Bill Pauly**

**Thanks so everyone who submitted their work! Gene would have  
smiled reading this work just as we did.**

**Steve Hodge  
Michael Rehling**

