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**WNBA keeps the holiday spirit!**

Members and guests celebrated the holidays with the traditional "salon" at Teism Penn Quarter.

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**Your dues do good work.**

The chapter treasurer discusses WNBA/Washington's financial planning and activities.

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**Your WNBA chapter needs you!**

Our current president writes about involvement in WNBA and recommends it as a source of fun, satisfaction, and growth.

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Women's National Book Association

# Signature



www.wnba-books.org/wash

**WNBA Previews the "Hot" Spring 2006 Books**

Are you eager to know what exciting books are being published in 2006? Join WNBA members and guests at Olsson's Bookstore in Penn Quarter on February 7, when three book professionals—writers, reviewers, and critics—will present their 2006 book "hits."

Maureen Corrigan, of National Public Radio and *The Washington Post*; Julia Duin, of *The Washington Times*; and Wendi Kaufman, a literary blogger, fiction writer, and contributor to the *Post*, will highlight their recommendations for us. Attendees will have the opportunity to ask questions at the end of their presentation.

Maureen Corrigan teaches literature at Georgetown University; her most recent book is *Leave Me*

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<b>WHAT</b>	Writers, reviewers, and critics recommend books from the Spring 2006 lists
<b>WHEN</b>	Tuesday, February 7; reception at 6:30 PM, program at 7:00 PM
<b>WHERE</b>	Olsson's Bookstore (Penn Quarter), 418 Seventh Street, NW (between D and E Streets); nearby Metro stations are Archives/Navy Memorial (Yellow line) and Gallery Place/Chinatown (Red line); Metro Center (Orange, Blue, and Red lines) is 5 (mostly short) blocks away
<b>ADMISSION</b>	Members free; guests \$10
<b>RSVP (and directions)</b>	Contact Patricia Leslie at patricialeslie@comcast.net or 703-734-3376 by February 5

**A Rewarding Trip to Japan**

By Roberta Beary

thunder  
the roses shift  
into shadow

Those three lines are the haiku I wrote one late-summer afternoon two years ago. A few months ago, I entered that haiku in the Kusamakura International Haiku Contest, which is held each year in Kumamoto, on Japan's western-most island, Kyushu. *Kusamakura* (*Grass Pillow*) is the name of a novel by Japanese writer Natsume Soseki, as well as the term used in Japanese literature for a poetic journey. In a sense, my haiku has been on its own journey

from Bethesda, MD, to Kumamoto, Japan, where, on December 4, 2005, I received the Kusamakura Grand Prize for International Haiku.

The Kusamakura International Haiku Contest is sponsored by the International Division of the City of Kumamoto. The number of entries has increased steadily over the years the contest has been held. In this 10th-anniversary year, more than 700 haiku were submitted. There are two judges for the contest, and both must agree on the prize winners. Judging is "blind"—that is, the authors' names do not appear

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on the haiku given to the judges. Kumamoto University professors Morio Nishikawa and Richard Gilbert, were this year's judges. Richard Gilbert said that, in judging the contest, the judges look for "experience in the genre, sensitivity in writing haiku in English, and a minimal style, [which is] required by the form."

I first began writing haiku in 1990, when I moved to Japan for five years. Fifteen years later, at the Kusamakura award ceremony banquet, I was able to meet and speak with Japanese master haiku poets—known as "living legends"—about the difficulties of writing this deceptively simple form of poetry. At the award ceremony the next day, I was presented with a beautiful certificate and an award of 50,000 yen (about \$470.00). My trip to Japan and a four-day stay there were also part of the prize.

One of the highlights of my trip to Japan was a private tour in Kumamoto of the house of Natsume Soseki (1867-1916), one of Japan's most famous novelists, who also wrote haiku. There I saw his original manuscripts and writing instruments and many photographs of the writer and his family. I was also given a private tour of Kumamoto Castle and the nearby hot springs of Mount Aso, an active volcano. My last day in Kumamoto



Roberta Beary stands at the famous Suizenji-Jojuen Garden in Kumamoto.

was spent attending a haiku workshop with Japanese poets. All in all, the trip was a wonderful experience.

I encourage any haiku poets who may read this to enter next year's contest. Further information about it can be found on the contest's web page, [www.jonet.ne.jp/kusamakura/english/tukuru/html](http://www.jonet.ne.jp/kusamakura/english/tukuru/html).

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was important training. Yet it has been challenging to learn how to be a president—to delegate rather than be the delegatee. It has been and is incredibly rewarding to work with such a great group. I think back to the programs we've had—organized by board members and other member volunteers—from "Grace and Gravity" to "Finding Your Creativity" in 2004-2005 and, already in this 2005-2006 year, "An Evening with Azar Nafisi and Jacki Lyden" and a panel of distinguished librarians sharing their outlooks on "The Future of Libraries." And let's not forget the holiday parties, the brunches and our gracious hostesses, and the two national events that our chapter hosted in 2005—the presentation of the WNBA Award to librarian Nancy Pearl in January and the meeting of the WNBA National Board in June.

Serving as your president and chapter representative to WNBA National has also given me many opportunities to work on overcoming my

fear of public speaking. I could never have imagined doing that even a few years ago.

I've shared my story because I hope it will help you to rethink why you joined WNBA and to consider how getting more involved may bring you wonderful, unexpected opportunities for professional and personal growth.

WNBA membership is like anything else—the more you put into it, the more you get out of it. I feel blessed to be your president and to work with a thoughtful, energetic, and motivated board that truly works as a team. And I thank you all for being enthusiastic, supportive members.

In May, we'll have our biennial elections at the spring brunch. In the next month or two, we will let you know via *Signature* what positions will be opening up on the board for 2006-2008, which will begin its work in August 2006. I hope you will step forward to volunteer.

As my daughter would say, "Go for it! You can do it!"

Carla

## WNBA at the Virginia Book Festival

WNBA/Washington will have a table at the Virginia Book Festival in Charlottesville, VA, on March 25th. WNBA member authors who would like to have their books displayed on the table should contact Carla Danziger at [cdanziger@verizon.net](mailto:cdanziger@verizon.net) or 703-283-6549 by January 27. Authors or other members who would be able to help staff the table should also contact Carla.

## Volunteer to help WNBA

The WNBA/Washington Program Chairs welcome your help with upcoming programs. Volunteers are needed to staff the registration desk and manage the refreshments table. Contact Patricia Leslie ([patricialeslie@comcast.net](mailto:patricialeslie@comcast.net) or 703-734-3376) or Helen Starkweather ([helenstarkweather@yahoo.com](mailto:helenstarkweather@yahoo.com) or 202-275-2068).