



Our Interview with Poet Wayne Lysobey



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Sally at the Norwalk Public Library: Thanks for joining us on the **Poetry Page** of the Norwalk Public Library, Wayne! You have a poem in our 2019 **Art & Text** Booklet—“The Summer Afternoon”—that I just love. And now summer has closed, and suddenly we find ourselves in fall. But that poem is so refreshing.

I believe you started writing poetry after the year 2010? Could you illustrate the timeline of your writing life for us? When did it begin, and what brought you to writing? I think you started writing short stories, and then moved to include poetry?

Wayne: My short story writing grew along with my interest in rowing, which started about twenty years ago, at about age fifty. I started writing emails about the rowing events I was in, and the emails grew into stories. It was my wife, Bev, who first suggested I turn my stories into a book. Then, there was the medication that I was on for an autoimmune issue. That was in 2013. It made me giddy, and full of rhyme! That was the catalyst for my poetry writing! I joined an online poetry group, FFP (http://forums.familyfriendpoems.com/forum.asp?FORUM_ID=3), and started writing—and reading— all sorts of poems, and getting feedback on my writing

Sally: Such a great story! So, *writing* poetry came later in life for you, but did you enjoy reading poetry as a child?

Wayne: As a child I loved the rhyme and whimsy of Ogden Nash, and Dr Seuss. Perhaps that is why --

Wayne followed whimsy
And Whimsy followed Wayne
They got a bit entangled
Though no one was to blame

Sally: Wonderful, Wayne! I think most children love rhyme. Mother Goose was also a popular one! There were so many.

What do you do—or did you do—for a day job? I am always interested in poets’ day jobs. Many go into academics and become professors, but many do not. Some feel a career or job outside of writing is more beneficial to their own creative life, and others feel differently. What are your thoughts on the topic?

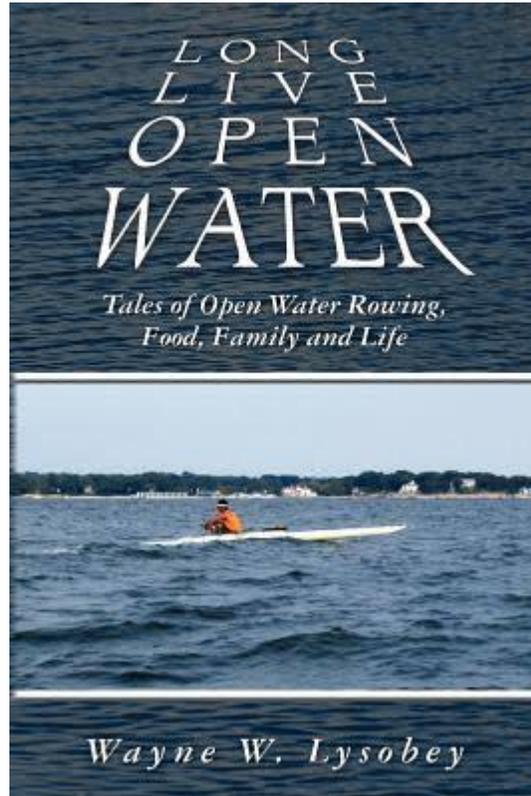
Wayne: I have a small optics shop, and make specialty optics for various scientific instruments. When I was younger, I was in the “seed oyster” business (I have a poem for that!) I would not want to write as a career. But I do have a poem that says:

“I’m gonna quit me day job/And become a famous poet”

Sally: I’d love to see a poem about optics!

Please tell us about your book of short stories. I believe they are memoir, and not fiction?

Wayne: Yes, all are memoir stories with a poem or two, and even a recipe included! (Try the Hangar steak with Mango!) The book actually starts with a limerick, and includes one of the few poems I wrote before age fifty.



Sally: Do you read a lot of short stories? What about the short story format excites you?

Wayne: In recent years, I have read short stories by Barbara Kingsolver, and Charles Krauthammer. Short stories can make a big impact in a small amount of time and effort.

Sally: Aside from publishing a book of short stories, do you have a collection of your own poems? Do you publish in journals?

Wayne: *A Poet of Little Renown* is a working title for a poetry book I keep threatening to put together. Picking out which poems to include is difficult—so many babies! Also, I may put together some short themed poetry collections. I have a lot of poems about oysters and the salt water, for example.

I have not put much effort into publishing. Being read mostly on Facebook has been satisfying enough. Quoting myself:

“He was a poet of little renown / And in this he did rejoice.”

Sally: A book about oystering would do well in Norwalk!

Who are your favorite poets, and what are a few of your favorite poems? Why?

Wayne: I read Poe in my high school years. I like to paraphrase “Annabel Lee”:

”I was a child and she was a child in our kingdom by the sea. And we loved with a love that was more than love, I and my Annabel Lee.”

I am a big fan of poet and song writer, rock/punk legend, Patti Smith. Here is a line from “Death Singing”:

“Have you seen death singing in the straw colored light?”

Yes I have, I say to myself.

Most of my poetry reading takes place on Facebook, and my favorite poets are on Facebook. I have hundreds of writer/poet friends from around the world, with a big cluster from Nigeria. Umar YB, and Ayoola Goodness from Nigeria, and Saroj K Padhi from India, are some of my favorites. Umar just clicks with me. Ayoola has an awesome unique goose-bump- raising style. Saroj is the master of metaphor. And there are so many others from different Facebook, and Internet groups. There is Vangie King from Alabama— I call her the queen of cadence, and one of the quickest humorists around. I co-wrote a humorous poem with Vangie about snakes in a toilet, which is my favorite for reading in front of an audience. I read that on the **Norwalk Public Library** sponsored **Virtual Lit Crawl** this year. Also, we have wonderful local poets like the ones you have included on the Poetry Page!

Sally: Do you find yourself writing poetry mostly in form? “The Summer Afternoon” is a short poem in couplets with its second line repeating at the end. Its musicality is lovely. Is this a style you lean toward?

Wayne: “The Summer Afternoon” is one of my favorites, and a good one to recite out loud. At my 50th high school reunion, I recited it to a classmate I played baseball with when we were ten years old. I haven’t actually written much in that style, though. I use lots of different styles, and different moods— from death to nonsense, and all in-between. I have a few poems I call Recipoems; poems and recipes, combined!

Contemporary poetry is usually not written in rhyme, I find. I do have lots of poems that rhyme, and many that do not. Sneaking in a limerick here!...

Poetry now it don’t usually rhyme
Some people think that’s really a crime
To write in free verse
Is not better or worse
Though it gets more respect in our time

Sally: How important a role does poetry play in your daily life?

Wayne: There were times when writing poetry was all-consuming. The muse would take over:

The doppelganger likes to take over
And that became my sorry plight
He would lurk over the bed stand
Like Poe's Raven in the night

Now, most days, I manage to stay away from poetry; at least the writing part. I have been really interested in reading my poems at open mic events over the past couple of years. Many of the events have been sponsored by the **Norwalk Public Library**.

Covid covid go away, let the poets come back and play.

Sally: Did you ever have a writing schedule, or do you simply allow inspiration to call?

Wayne: I sometimes see my Facebook writing friend complaining about writer's block. No such thing for me—I call that a break! I have been known to get up in the middle of the night to write, if feeling inspires me (the doppelganger makes me!). Often my writing is in the quiet of the early morning.

Sally: I love “the quiet of the early morning.” What advice would you give to young writers? Or any writers?

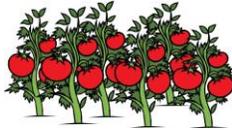
Wayne: Don't be apologetic for what you write. Your thoughts and feelings are valid; own them.

Also, I like the story of the Buddhist master who said, “Pay Attention!” If you are not sure how to write a poem—first, you need some revelation, and some rhythm, and some rhyme...

Then you sit down at the key board like you're having a good time
You need inspiration concentration and some cadence every line
If your meter doesn't peter and your message ain't a crime
And your humor's not a rumor you can do it every time
Almost every time anyways!

Sally: Please tell us other things you enjoy! I believe these include rowing and fishing! And cooking? Do you garden?

Wayne: Rowing, skiing, fishing, cooking, growing tomatoes, and playing my recorder.



Sally: This has been truly enjoyable, Wayne! Thanks for joining us on the **Poetry Page!!**

Wayne: Thanks for having a **Poetry Page!**

Now, three of Wayne's poems...

Clinging

How he clung to that oak banister
Like his life depended on it
That last trip up those stairs
Step by step

It was will power drove him up
He would not be denied
This one last time
Up those varnished timbers
Hugging that railing
Step by step

An ancient sailor
Battered by many storms
Clinging
Clinging to his rigging
Master of his fate
Step by step

Even as his ship was going down

By WLysobey

7/25/20

Prompted

Prompt me not to write a poem
That has to do with feet
Especially one that has to do
With walking on the beach

To feel the sand squish thru your toes
Down at the water's edge
And wonder where the child went
That played upon that shore

Burden me not with such a task
That wakes the memory so
Of times that once were timeless
And summers free and slow

By WLysobey

9/2/19



Oyster Shucker

I got me an oyster knife
I thought I'd be a shucker
I tried it on the first one
It was a really stubborn trucker

I tried it on another
This one made me pucker
The shell it sliced my finger
That lousy bivalve mucker

I stuck one right in the hinge
And gave a mighty twist
The oyster did not budge
Now I was getting pissed

I started getting serious
I gave a satisfying curse
I put some muscle into it
Things went from bad to worse

The oyster knife it did slip
Jamming right into my wrist
I was dying for an oyster
Now I just might get my wish

By WLysobey

8/24/16

Thanks, Wayne!

