

Poetry Column Debuts: Mary Knatterud Provides “A Little Color Infusion”

Kathy M Clack

Mary E Knatterud has joined *Science Editor* as editor of its poetry column, Peer-Renewed. The newly established column will run about three times per year and will include poems related to science editing. The poems, which will bring together science and language, may be previously published or new.

As editor, Knatterud will identify and compile poems for Peer-Renewed. She states, “I [am] honored and thrilled to become *Science Editor*’s poetry editor: Such a role deeply appeals to me. The medical poetry side of my brain definitely helps keep the sometimes frenetic surgical editing/writing/teaching side pertinent, informed, nourished, and sane.”

Knatterud says that poetry “provides a little color infusion—a break from the complicated dryness that sometimes plagues academia”. She says that one of her earliest memories of poetry was a gift from her aunt—*A Child’s Garden of Verses* by Robert Louis Stevenson. Knatterud has written what she calls “goofy little jingles” as long as she can remember. She says she is “not a tenure-track expert on poetry: I simply love reading poems, savoring them, sending them to friends, teaching and talking about them, as well as writing them (mostly very privately, except for one published in the November 2005 *Annals of Emergency Medicine*, plus one that was informally bound in a booklet titled ‘A word celebration of life’ as part of a 1997 poetry celebration at the University of Minnesota academic health center)”.

Knatterud is associate professor and senior research associate in the Department of Surgery at the University of Minnesota Medical School in Minneapolis. Her work there consists mainly of editing journal

KATHY M CLACK prepared this article while an intern at *Science Editor*.

articles that surgeons have drafted. She is drawn to medical academia because “it’s what really matters—helping people by publishing information important to their health.”

Knatterud’s favorite quote is “The universe is made up of stories, not of atoms”, by Muriel Rukeyser. “If physicians can get into the habit of telling a story, they can avoid simply listing what they found, and they can instead tell the story of why what they found matters”, Knatterud says.

She says she has a deep love of translating words so that people understand, and that was the basis of her decision to leave the “corporate grind” and return to academia.

Before becoming an editor in her current department almost 20 years ago, Knatterud worked for a large guarantor of private loans. Her job was to compile a guide for lenders regarding student loans. She enjoyed this work and her co-workers but was not fond of the “silly corporate rules”.

Although Knatterud took a \$5,000 pay cut to return to academia, she has remained there ever since. She says she appreciates the flexibility, autonomy, and creativity academic editing allows her. “It remains my dream job. First and foremost, the quality of your work is respected, and there is no micromanaging.”

Knatterud says she loves the portability of her career. Being able to do some of her work from home has allowed her to spend time with her children and work simultaneously. She tells of sitting on her front porch swing, editing, when her daughter interrupted with a question. She replied, “Just a minute, honey, Mommy’s working”, to which her daughter responded, hands on hips, “You call that WORK, Mom?”



Mary Knatterud

Knatterud graduated summa cum laude from Concordia College, Moorhead, Minnesota, with a BA in English and Spanish. She later earned an MA and a PhD in English at the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis. She lives in St Paul, Minnesota, with her husband and daughter. She also has twin sons, 23 years old.

For Knatterud, leisure activities include waterskiing, swimming, playing tennis, traveling, and going on hikes and to the movies. She loves the outdoors and says she takes advantage of the fact that Minnesota contains all three major biomes: “the coniferous-hardwood forest in the northeast arrowhead region near Lake Superior; the prairie grasslands along the entire western edge of the state; and the deciduous woodlands in between the other two”.

A CSE member since 1999, Knatterud has contributed guest columns and other pieces to *Science Editor*. She participates regularly in the American Medical Writers Association annual conference and the Conference on College Composition and Communication.

Peer-Renewed originated when Knatterud submitted a poem to *Science Editor* and was then asked to establish a poetry column. Thus, the first poem in the column is one of Knatterud’s own (see page 140). Knatterud welcomes submission of poems that appear suited for *Science Editor*. To submit poems for consideration, please contact her at knatt001@umn.edu. 