

# Major Festival Honors Kearsarge Poets

## Memorable Day of Poetry Draws Participants from Ten States

by Barbara Yoder

WITH THE HELP OF AN ENERGIZED GROUP of more than fifty volunteers, the participation of nineteen talented poets and presenters, the support of eight funders and twenty-three in-kind donors, and an audience of nearly two hundred excited participants, the New Hampshire Writers' Project proudly presented the Kearsarge Poetry Festival in Wilmot on October 7, 2006.

NHWP's largest NH Writers' Trail event to date, the festival celebrated the work of beloved Kearsarge poets Donald Hall, Jane Kenyon, and Maxine Kumin, and other outstanding regional and visiting poets. Programs included hikes, poetry readings, a roundtable discussion, writing workshops, a poetry symposium, and a gala Writers' Block Party commemorating Donald Hall's appointment as U.S. Poet Laureate.



Photo by Margaret Vencator

The Jane Kenyon Walk began at Eagle Pond.



Photo by Brian Faughman

Hikers gather for a poetry reading in the graveyard of horses during the first of three Jane Kenyon Walks. The walk was created by poet and hiker David Cook (right, wearing cap).



Photo by Randy Brow

Ethney McMahon, at work on a short film about NHWP, captures Hope Jordan as she leads the roundtable discussion *How to Read Poetry Out Loud* at Wilmot Community Association.



Photo by Randy Brow

Singer-songwriter Tom Eslick leads the *How to Write Lyrics that Sing* workshop in the home of festival committee cochair Dana Dakin. Eslick later performed at the Writers' Block Party.

The weather, foliage, venues, and views of Eagle Pond and Mount Kearsarge were stunning; they created an ideal milieu for a celebration of poetry. People came from ten states—California, New Mexico, Tennessee, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Vermont, and, of course, New Hampshire—to take part in the day's festivities. "What a great production you pulled off. It managed to be a national, state, and local celebration all rolled into one," said *Concord Monitor* editor Mike Pride, who moderated the Kearsarge Poetry Symposium with Hall, Kumin, Alice Mattison, Alicia Ostriker, and Joyce Peseroff.

Photo by Randy Brow



Joyce Peseroff, Alice Mattison, Alicia Ostriker, and Mike Pride discuss the Kearsarge poets during the Kearsarge Poetry Symposium in Wilmot Town Hall, as New York filmmaker Norbert Lempert shoots footage for a documentary film about poetry in America.

Photos by Randy Brow



Donald Hall and Maxine Kumin sign books in Wilmot Town Hall after the symposium.

Festival participants also gave the event outstanding reviews. The festival was “absolutely fabulous!” said NHWP member and volunteer book review coordinator Lisa Jackson. “Talk about going above and beyond to deliver something so divine. So many options to choose from, great speakers, gorgeous weather, well-run, well-organized programs. . . . I’m glad that I went and participated in . . . the hike, poetry readings, and symposium.”

More than sixty people took part in the Jane Kenyon Walk, which included readings of poems by Kenyon and Hall in locations that inspired the poems. “As vivid and emotional as some of Jane Kenyon’s poetry is, seeing her home and walking the paths she walked made her poems really come to life for me,” said one festival participant. “I drive a forklift in a warehouse . . . Walking for a few hours in Jane’s footsteps was like a vacation for me: refreshing, calming, and inspiring.”

Caitlin Krause of Rhode Island commented, “I can’t say enough good things about these events! Not only were the writers up-front and candid with their feelings and experiences, but it was a window into the world of New Hampshire, and specifically the Kearsarge region, with its many natural wonders. By the end, I wanted to move there! I’m grateful for this experience.”

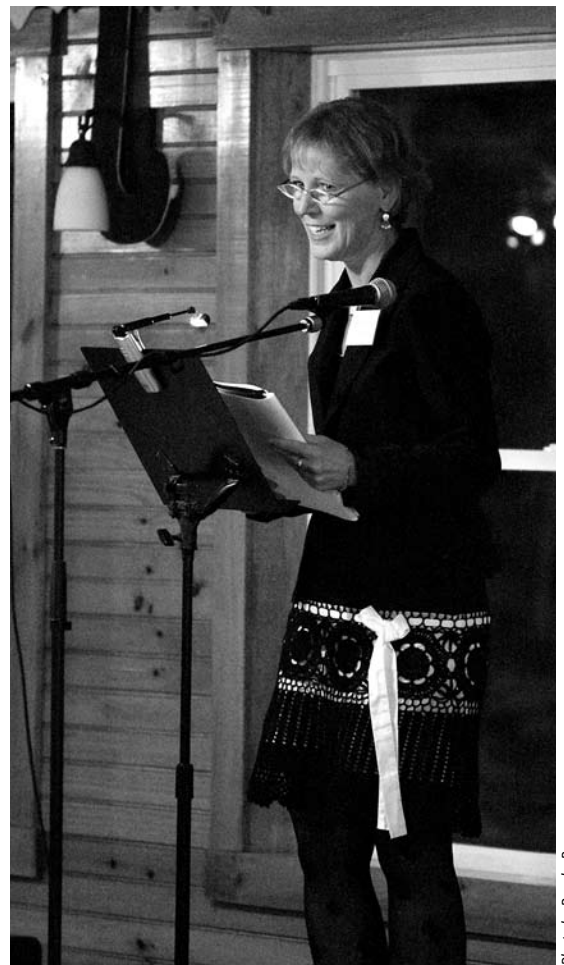


Photo by Randy Brow

Poet and festival program chair Laurie Zimmerman delivers a tribute to Donald Hall at the Writers’ Block Party at Eagle Pond Lodge.

The photos on these pages capture some of the spirit of the day. More photos and a short video clip of the Writers’ Block Party are posted on our Web site, [www.nhwritersproject.org](http://www.nhwritersproject.org).

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