

Seattle City Council

**Culture, Civil Rights, Health, and Personnel Committee Meeting**

Wednesday, 2:00 PM, August 13<sup>th</sup>, 2008

**Words' Worth**

The Poetry Program of the Seattle City Council

Curated by **John Burgess**

Today's poet is **Madeline DeFrees**

**Madeline DeFrees**, originally from Oregon, has lived in Seattle since 1985. She is the author of eight poetry collections – the two most recent Blue Dusk and Spectral Waves from Copper Canyon Press. She has written two nonfiction memoirs of her nearly 38 years as a Sister of the Holy Names. Madeline has taught at University of Washington (where she conducted the Roethke courses in the summer of 1975), University of Montana, Holy Names College in Spokane, and University of Massachusetts (Amherst). Her prizes and awards include a Guggenheim Fellowship in poetry, the Lenore Marshall Prize, a National Endowment for the Arts prize, and two Washington State Governor's Awards.

**The Spider In *Brewer's Dictionary***

by Madeline DeFrees

Opened, the book released a small  
spider: pale, nearsighted,  
anonymous. No doubt a scholar of  
phrase and fable, who preferred  
investigating the shadows. Under  
the kitchen's public light, the spider  
flinched in the sudden  
fluorescence. The meaning I wrenched  
from this brief encounter: *Sweetest  
to die doing the work you love best.*

**Skid Row**

by Madeline DeFrees

Out of the depths have I cried, O Lord,

Where the lean heart preys on the hardened crust,  
Where short wicks falter on candle-hopes  
And winter whips at a patchwork trust.

From darkened doorways no welcome shines,  
No promise waits up the broken stair,  
And the coin that summons the night with wine  
Buys a morning of sick despair.

Out of the depths have I cried in vain  
And the still streets echo my lonely calls;  
All the long night in the moaning wind  
The bruised reed breaks and the sparrow falls.

-- *end* --