

Seattle City Council

Housing, Human Services, Health and Culture Committee Meeting

2 p.m. Wednesday, December 11th, 2013

Words' Worth

The Poetry Program of the Seattle City Council

Curated by **Judith Roche**

Today's poet is **Susan Lane**

Susan Lane is no stranger to City Hall. Susan was the Director of the City's Office of Women's Rights from 1978-80, during which time the first women entered the City's Fire Department, and the electrical trades at City Light and the City began its first contracting programs for women and minority owned businesses. Most recently she served two three year terms on the Pike Place Market Historical Commission, two years as its Chair of the Commission. She is also a poet. Susan Lane writes and publishes poetry under her given name, Sigrun Susan Lane, in honor of her Icelandic heritage. She has a degree in English from the University of Washington. She taught English in local schools and then pursued a successful career in business. She has published poems in national and regional publications. She has received awards for poetry from the Seattle and King County Arts Commissions.

Umma

By Susan Lane

Your hair was grey in a single stubborn braid.
When I was seven you were already old.
You took me to the Market

where you haggled for our dinner.
You bought cheap. You took ripe fruit,
worn lettuce and pickled pigs' feet.

And in the kitchen at Leah's house
we disjointed and gnawed
the feet to gristle and bone.

Then sucked the bones.
We ate silver herring slices
on your brown rye bread.

Then paper thin *pannakakur*.
Four apiece, sweet and moist,
you and Leah guilty as girls, giggling

sipped coffee through hard sugar
talking Icelandic, sounds as savory
and nourishing as food.

Later I wished you another grandmother,
one bringing pale tea, dry white toast.
I flinched at your broken-tongued English,

your daily immigrant's bargains,
burned in coats you cut from father's suits.
Today in a life as smooth as tile,

as predictable as a super market,
I listen for your voice dickering
for tired lettuce, bruised fruit.

I hunger for your rich dark bread.

-- end --