



NATIONAL FEDERATION OF STATE POETRY SOCIETIES, INC.

An educational and literary organization dedicated to the writing and appreciation of poetry in America.

Strophes

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www.nfspd.com

October 2015



Eleanor Berry
31st NFSPS
President

Dear NFSPS Poets:

Since I wrote my previous column, I've had a chance to pore over the books and notes I brought back from the convention in Florida and also to participate in a joint exhibition with a visual artist. In this column, I want to share with you some ideas about our work as poets that have emerged from my reading of poems by fellow poets in another state and from the experience of having poems of mine reflected back to me in pieces by an artist in another medium.

As I've read around in the books of Florida poetry that I bought or received as complimentary copies at the convention, I've been struck by the correspondences between the poetic culture of the "sunshine state" and that of the state with a reputation for rain where I've been living for the past two decades—Oregon. From what I've gathered in my very brief survey, Florida poetry reflects an intense concern for the natural environment—its rigors, its beauty, its imperilment; so does Oregon poetry. Florida poetry seems haunted by awareness of the region's Native American inhabitants and the violation of their culture by European explorers and settlers; so does Oregon poetry. Florida poetry is enriched by an admixture of Spanish language and Hispanic tradition and contemporary experience; so is Oregon poetry. Florida poetry has a strong vein of performance-oriented work emerging from traditional occupations with their particular regional inflections; so does Oregon.

Those aren't all the correspondences that I've noted, but they should suffice to suggest the extent of resemblance between the poetry cultures of two states at diagonally opposite corners of the country. When I went to St. Petersburg for the convention, I was aware of the work of several well-known Florida poets—Lola Haskins, Peter Meinke, Enid Shomer—but had no sense of the context in which it was created. In sessions at the convention and through reading and reflection in its aftermath, I've gotten a feel for that context and been excited to discover its resemblance to the context in which I work here in Oregon.

One of the rewards of involvement in a nation-wide federation of state poetry societies is the opportunity to become more aware of the poetry culture of one's home state by seeing it in relation to those of other states. What is the value of such a perspective? Certainly, one may feel no need for it. One may find it completely satisfying to participate in a local critique group, to attend local readings and state conferences, and to read books and anthologies of work by poets in one's home state. But, I would argue, that isn't enough. Poetry created in awareness solely of a local, state, or even regional context can become constrained by conventions the poet isn't even aware are conventions. Poetry, like families, can become inbred. Both individual poets and the communities in which they participate benefit from excursions to, and incursions from, other poetry communities.

Attending national conventions in other states is an excellent way of gaining exposure to other poetry cultures, but it is certainly not the only way. Joining the poetry societies of other states, receiving their publications, and possibly attending occasional conferences in those other states can enlarge our perspective on our own state's poetry and, like attending conventions, give a sense of fellowship with poets beyond our state borders.

For becoming acquainted with the work of poets all over the country and having contact with them, there is perhaps no better way than through sharing one's skills in a national role. If you would like to be involved in carrying out any of the Federation's programs or producing any of its publications—or if you have ideas for other programs or publications—please contact me. My email and postal addresses are listed in this newsletter. [continued on page 8]

2016 NFSPS COLLEGE UNDERGRADUATE POETRY COMPETITION

NFSPS strives to promote poets of all ages and at all stages of development. Since 1988, the Federation has offered awards to college students, and we will continue to do so in 2016. However, significant changes have been made to the competition. Following a successful trial of online submissions for the 2015 competition, electronic entry via Submittable.com is now the rule rather than the exception. We have changed the name from the NFSPS College/University Level Poetry Competition to the NFSPS College Undergraduate Poetry (CUP) Competition. We have also changed the submission period to December 2015-January 2016, which aligns better with most college schedules and allows the winners to work with our chapbook editor before they are hit with finals.

Two awards—the Edna Meudt Memorial Award and the Florence Kahn Memorial Award—are given for manuscripts of ten poems each. Each award recipient receives \$500 plus publication of his or her winning manuscript as a chapbook and marketing on Amazon.com. Each winner is also given 75 copies of the chapbook to sell or give to friends and family.

Both award recipients are invited to read from their work at the NFSPS Convention. If they attend, they receive a \$300 stipend to offset travel expenses, a complimentary meal at their reading, and complimentary registration for the entire convention, plus complimentary membership in the NFSPS through an affiliate state society.

Complete submission guidelines for the College Undergraduate Poetry Competition are on the NFSPS website at nfspd.com/CUP.html.

A panel of three judges will select the two winning manuscripts from among all those submitted that meet the guidelines. The two award recipients will be announced by March 7, 2016, and their chapbooks will be published in time for the 2016 NFSPS Convention, which will be held June 9-13 in St. Paul, Minnesota.

Please help spread the word about this exceptional opportunity for poetically talented undergraduates. Encourage entrants among your friends or family, and tell any creative writing teachers you know about this opportunity for the poets in their undergraduate classes. Anyone with questions about the competition is welcome to email the competition chair, Shirley Blackwell, at sonneteer@earthlink.net.

NFSPS 2016 CONTEST BROCHURE CORRECTIONS

On the back page of the NFSPS 2016 contest brochure, please be advised of the following corrections:

- * Membership: Jim Barton's email is jbob214@yahoo.com
- * Stevens Manuscript Competition Chair is now: Wilda Morris, P.O. Box 1669, Bolingbrook, IL 60440 stevens.nfspd@gmail.com

**NATIONAL FEDERATION OF
STATE POETRY SOCIETIES, INC.**

Organized October 17, 1959 ~ Mary B. Wall, Founder

Honorary Chancellor: Peter Meinke

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STROPHES

Strophes, the newsletter of the National Federation of State Poetry Societies, Inc., is published four times a year: August (*June 25th) ~ October (*August 25th) ~ January (*November 25th) ~ April (*February 25th). News items and information on contests may be sent via regular mail or e-mail, which is preferred, by authorized members of NFSPS member state societies to:

Paul Ford, *Strophes* Editor
10239 Hickory Pt. Dr., Sandy, UT 84092-3960
pford3@yahoo.com

* Submission Deadlines

Strophes is available without cost to all paid-up members of NFSPS member state societies when mailed/shipped in bulk to the president or other designated person, who is responsible for ordering the number needed by the submission deadline for each issue. Individual subscriptions are \$4.00 a year to cover handling costs. Special orders are mailed separately. To order a single issue: specify the issue ordered, include a #10 SASE and \$1.00 per copy.

**NFSPS PAST PRESIDENTS
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* Deceased

**2015 STEVENS POETRY
MANUSCRIPT COMPETITION
Awarding \$1,000 + Publication
+ 50 Books**

MANUSCRIPT GUIDELINES

- Except for previous Stevens winners, open to all poets writing in English
- Original work by a single author
- Include title page (title only), table of contents, and 48 to 70 pages of poetry, counting any section title pages but not counting front matter
- May include previously published poems. The winner will be required to provide an acknowledgment page if the manuscript includes previously published poems.
- **No author identification** anywhere in manuscript
- No illustrations
- Pages numbered, one poem, one column per page. Poems may be continued on a second page, but do not put two poems on the same page.
- Single space your manuscript. Use 12-point type in a conventional font such as Times New Roman. If you write in long lines or complex formats, be aware that the winning book will be published in a 6" x 9" format.
- Simultaneous and multiple submissions permitted. Notify us immediately if your manuscript is accepted elsewhere.

DEADLINE

Submissions will be accepted from **SEPTEMBER 1 through midnight Pacific Standard Time, OCTOBER 1, 2015**. The Submittable online system will be accessible only during this time, and hard-copy submissions must be **postmarked** during this period. No early or late submissions.

ENTRY FEE & PAYMENTS

The submission fee is \$20 for NFSPS members, \$25 for nonmembers. Members of state poetry societies affiliated with NFSPS are members.

- For online submissions, pay at Submittable.com with a credit card or PayPal.
- For mailed paper submissions, place your check on top of the manuscript.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Online Submissions via Submittable.com. We strongly encourage using NFSPS' Stevens submission page at Submittable.com. You can find a link to this page by going to nfsp.com and selecting the Manuscript Contest link. Using Submittable saves us both time and money.

- Simply submit the manuscript in a single document file from your computer into the designated area.

- If you have an acknowledgements page, it must be submitted separately.
- You will be notified that your manuscript has been received.
- A Submittable account is free, simple to set up, and instantly usable. If you currently have a Submittable account, you may use it to enter the competition. If you do not have an account, use the online sign-up. An increasing number of journals and other literary venues accept submission only through Submittable.

Mailed Submissions. If you are unable to make an online submission, mail your manuscript.

- Manuscript must be typewritten or computer generated.
- Enclose manuscript in a plain file folder and/or held by a manuscript clip; NO staples or binding.
- On the top of your manuscript, place a page with the title and your name, address, phone number, and email address, plus the name of the state poetry society where you are a member (if applicable). You will not be eligible for the reduced fee without society membership information.
- Do NOT send by certified or registered mail. Do NOT send disks.
- Manuscripts will NOT be returned. Entrants who enclose a business-size, self-addressed, stamped envelope, or provide an email address, will be notified of the results in January 2016.
- The winner will automatically be notified.

Mail submissions to:

Wilda Morris, Chair
NFSPS Stevens Poetry Manuscript
Competition
P. O. Box 1669
Bolingbrook, IL 60440

JUDGING, PUBLICATION, QUESTIONS

All manuscripts will be reviewed for compliance with guidelines and overall quality by the competition chair. Approximately 100 manuscripts will be sent, without identification or acknowledgments, to an independent judge, who will remain anonymous until the results are announced. The winning manuscript will be published by the NFSPS Press, and the book will be available for sale at the NFSPS annual convention and elsewhere in June, 2016.

You may address questions to the contest chair at the above address, or by email to stevens.nfsp.com@gmail.com.

Past Judges: David Baker, Michael Dennis Browne, Michael Bugeja, Anne Marx, Sue Brannan Walker, Kenneth Brewer, David Sutherland, Donna Salli, Bruce Eastman, Ruth Berman, Peter Meinke, Lawson Inada, Patricia Fargnoli, Jeff Gundy, Carolyne

Wright, Ralph Burns, Lola Haskins, Jessica Garratt, Maggie Anderson, Glenna Holloway, John Witte.

**MINNESOTA MAGIC—A CAPITOL
CONVENTION!
JUNE 9-13, 2016**

Located in an iconic, century-old building in the heart of downtown Saint Paul's business district, Hotel 340 hotel340.com (at 340 Cedar Street, St. Paul, MN 55101) is the region's premiere boutique hotel. The soaring, two-story lobby features a magnificent fireplace, ornate architecture, and full-service adjacent bar. It's the perfect space to unwind with a cocktail and a book or catch up with a friend.

We have a special rate of \$139 for suites, \$119 a night for standard rooms and \$89 a night for efficiency rooms. Guests are able to book any room type, but must make their reservations on or before **April 24, 2016**. Call 1-651-280-4120 to make reservations and you must refer to the League of Minnesota Poets to get this rate.

North of the Mississippi River, downtown Saint Paul has seen its share of artists, mobsters, and politicians. Visitors catch musicals, museum exhibits, and hockey all within a few blocks of the Xcel Energy Center. Not far from the state capitol, Lowertown is home to artist collectives. Noteworthy architectural sights include St. Mark's Episcopal Cathedral and Summit Avenue's Gilded Age mansions.

We are pleased to announce our keynote speaker, Natalie Goldberg. She is the author of *Writing Down The Bones: Freeing The Writer Within* (1986), which broke open the world of creativity and started a revolution in the way we practice writing in this country. The book has sold over one million copies and been translated into fourteen languages. Since then Natalie has written thirteen other books, including the novel *Banana Rose*.

Natalie is also a prolific painter. Her book, *Living Color: A Writer Paints Her World*, describes painting as her second art form. Her lively watercolors are exhibited at Ernesto Mayans Gallery in Santa Fe, New Mexico. *Top of My Lungs* (Overlook Press), contains forty poems, twenty of her paintings in color and an essay, "How Poetry Saved My Life."

Natalie has been teaching seminars in writing as a practice for the last thirty years. People from around the world attend her life-changing workshops and she has earned a reputation as a great teacher. The Oprah Winfrey Show sent a film crew to spend the day with Natalie for a segment on Spirituality that covered her writing, teaching, painting, and walking meditation. She currently lives in Northern New Mexico.

NFSPS MEMBER SOCIETY NEWS

POETS' ROUNDTABLE OF ARKANSAS' Marilyn Joyner, David Hall, and Donna Henson (all from South Arkansas Poets of the Pines) presented the program "Poetry from the Garden" to Union County Master Gardeners this summer. The branch also plans to start a "Poetry in the Parks" program during the fall as part of their mission to spread the word and words of poetry. Marcia Camp and Justin Booth (both River Market Poets) recently had a book published chronicling Justin's progress as he became an award-winning poet during a short prison term. He credits the River Market Poets branch with encouraging him toward much of his success. He has since given poetry readings in New York and California. He also enjoys considerable popularity in Ireland. Dr. Ed Madden (PRA member at large and former Arkansan) was named the first City Poet Laureate for Columbia, South Carolina in January. Dr. Madden will serve a 4-year term to "encourage appreciation and create opportunities for dissemination of poetry in Columbia." Originally from Newport, Arkansas, Madden serves on the faculty of the University of South Carolina, teaches English, directs the University's gender studies program, and leads poetry summer camps for students. He has published 3 poetry books and won fellowships from the SC Academy of Authors and the SC Arts Commission. PRA's 68th annual Poetry Day is on Saturday, October 3rd at the Cox Building at 120 River Market Avenue in Little Rock. The event honors Rosa Zagnoni Marinoni, Arkansas Poet Laureate (1953-1969) who established the first annual Arkansas Poetry Day on October 15, 1948. Contest winners will be announced after lunch. The topic selected for this year's Sybil Nash Abrams Award (\$1,000) is "Arkansas Law and Disorder." Also watch the website for agenda updates and site directions. The River Market Poets are hosting this annual event. As part of PRA's Poetry Day 2015, the featured speaker is Hope Coulter, a fiction writer and poet whose poetry collection, *The Wheel of Light*, was released in spring 2015 as part of the New Poets Series of BrickHouse Press. She was the winner of the 2014 Laman Library Writers Fellowship and she placed in the *Southwest Review* Morton Marr poetry contest and the *North American Review* James Hearst Poetry Prize. Additional honors for Hope include two Pushcart nominations, Arkansas's Porter Prize for Literary Excellence, and the Short Story Award of Louisiana Life magazine. Her novel, *The Errand of the Eye*, and was published in 1988 by August House Publishers, and her children's picture book, *Uncle Chuck's Truck*, came out in 1993 from Bradbury Press. She

teaches at Hendrix College, where she currently directs the Hendrix Murphy Foundation Programs in Literature & Language. Hope grew up in Alexandria, Louisiana, and earned her AB at Harvard University and her MFA at Queens University of Charlotte. She lives in Little Rock with her husband, Mel White, a nature and travel writer. She has three grown children and enjoys travel, birding, and swimming. ~ *Laura Loughridge, Secretary*

CONNECTICUT POETRY SOCIETY hosted its annual summer picnic near the end of August. Lovely location by the sea—lots of good food, great poetry, and friendly people. The *Connecticut River Review*, a national journal sponsored by the Connecticut Poetry Society, published its 2015 edition in August. It contains terrific work by poets from all over the country. Connecticut's new poet laureate, Rennie McQuilkin, succeeds Dick Allen. In addition, several more towns in Connecticut are appointing local poets laureate. CPS member Ginny Lowe Connors initiated a "Poetry in the Parks" project in her town of West Hartford. Local poets and artists collaborated on poetry posts; the wooden structures, each featuring a poem enhanced by an artist's interpretation, were placed in two local parks for the public to enjoy. Participants ranged from middle school students to senior citizens. ~ *Ginny Connors, Newsletter Editor*

FLORIDA STATE POETS ASSOCIATION, recovered from hosting a very successful and rewarding NFSPS Convention, has now turned attention to our own annual Fall Convention. This year it will be held October 16-18 in Palm Beach Gardens hosted by the Third Dimension Poets of Broward County. Florida's new Poet Laureate, Peter Meinke, will be honored along with our newly appointed chancellors. Workshops will include Al Rocheleou, creator of the 12 Chair Poetry Education program, Third Dimension Poets, Lee Bennet Hopkins on youth and poetry and our continuing conversation about poetry with Peter Meinke. Winners of the FSPA poetry contest will be announced throughout the convention. Open mic readings will be provided and, of course, a Board Meeting and General Membership Meeting. Everyone is invited to be there. Check floridastatepoetsassociation.org for details. ~ *Mary-Ann Westbrook, Secretary*

ILLINOIS STATE POETRY SOCIETY on July 1st started a new two-year term of board members, including a second member-at-large. The monthly Brewed Awakening coffeehouse continues to be a popular venue for featured poets and public as well as a member open mic in Westmont. Our annual poetry contest, with a submission deadline of

September 10, offered several new categories, which proved to be popular. The online critique venue is a successful new format to supplement participation in five active chapter gatherings. Future plans for a statewide convention are being considered with a possible 2016 gathering. Another members' anthology is also a possibility for next year. Please visit illinoispoets.org for ongoing updates and membership form. ~ *Susan T. Moss, President*

INDIANA STATE FEDERATION OF POETRY CLUBS say "Hello poets!" We are excited about the upcoming Fall Rendezvous, all the poetic experiences, and opportunities to visit with fellow poets, enjoying one of the best state parks in Indiana, McCormick's Creek State Park. Besides the fantastic lineup of speakers and workshops, there will be several opportunities to get outside on these beautiful autumn days and hike. Poets may choose a leisure spot in a wooden rocking chair, Adirondack chair, or resting under a tree, for a perfect writing spot. We truly will help you in being inspired. Our workshop presenter is Joyce Brinkman, former Poet Laureate of Indiana (2002 to 2008). Keynote speaker is Barry Harris from Brownsburg, Indiana, who is editor of Tipton Poetry Journal and has been published in over 15 literary publications. What a fantastic time everyone will have! We hope you can be at McCormick's Creek too. The weekend of the 37th Annual Fall Rendezvous is October 9th through October 11th. Elections will be held for the following key officers: Manningham Chair (2nd VP), the Contest Director (1st VP), and the new President of ISFPC. We are pleased the other new officers are finding their footing very well: Jenny Kalahar as Treasurer and Sarah Morin as Secretary and Webmaster. Sarah has even impressed us by developing a blog, keeping the members and the public abreast of the happenings of Indiana poets. With the fresh changes, we look forward to more great things, as we welcome these new officers to their positions. Remember to check isfpc.org for various gatherings; we have spring and fall conventions. And you are welcome to be part of what we do, as many from other states have dual memberships, and participate in multiple activities. We always encourage the art. Keep writing those beautiful poems! ~ *Caroline Dewey, ISFPC 1st VP*

LOUISIANA STATE POETRY SOCIETY will hold its annual meeting and fall festival on October 18, 2015, in Baton Rouge, to celebrate Poetry Day. Our three chapters (Baton Rouge Founders, Greater New Orleans-Fleur de Lys and Monroe) have been meeting regularly to read and write poetry. Several long-time LSPS poets have passed

away: Genevieve Dewitt (Pelican chapter), Martiel Johns (Monroe chapter), and Kathryn Fortenberry (Baton Rouge Founders' chapter). On a good note, the Founders and Monroe chapters have experienced an increase in meeting participants. The Greater New Orleans-Fleur de Lys members read poetry at the Metairie regional library in June. Emma Pierson of the GNO-Fleur de Lys chapter also read from her collection of poetry based on Degas paintings at the same library in July.
~ *Mary Galvin, 1st Vice President*

MAINE POETS SOCIETY in September gathered at the Rockland Public Library. Contests were prose poems, judged by President Carol Bachofner, and poems on the subject of "Confusion," judged by guest judge Weslea Sidon. For contests results and more about the society, visit mainepoetsociety.com or contact President Carol Bachofner at mainepoet@me.com or 207-594-8954. In place of the society's winter meeting, most recently held in Saco during February, a pilot program of regional gatherings in the Augusta, Rockland, and Portland areas is in the development stage. For dates and details, please check the website early in 2016. Information will also be available in the next issue of the society's newsletter, *Stanza*.
~ *Sally Joy, Publicity Chair*

MASSACHUSETTS STATE POETRY SOCIETY members travelled to the town of Lunenburg, MA, to meet in the wonderful bucolic setting of the home of VP Mary Ellen Letarte and her husband, Rich. August 1st was our Summer Meeting which included a Poetry Workshop followed by a traditional picnic lunch. President Jeanette Maes prepared a Memory page that brought each participant back to Good Old Summer Times—furiously fast writing. What fun it was! Good poetry emerged. Round Robin No.4 member, Barbara Blanks, wowed us all with the awards she won in the NFSPS 2015 contests. Congratulations, Barbara! Next MSPS meeting is scheduled for Saturday, October 17, at the Winthrop public Library when the Waterfront CREW Poets will offer a program on "What is Winthrop."
~ *Patricia Bruen Tacelli, Reporter*

LEAGUE OF MINNESOTA POETS is showing signs of renewed life. As of this writing we have nearly one hundred-fifty paid members, up considerably from only a few years ago. One factor leading to this growth is our increased use of technology: dues payable through Paypal, improved website, Facebook, and others. Many of our new members bring with them an enthusiasm for poetry that is contagious, and we hope our group continues to grow. Presently, the Southern Minnesota Poets, a chapter of LOMP, is gearing up to host our fall convention, which will be held

the third weekend of October. The convention will be held at Hotel 340, the site of next summer's NFSPS convention. Our national convention chairpersons requested we meet at that site as a dry run for next summer's event. Hopefully, any problems we might run into can be alleviated before the big event. At the fall convention, the winning poems entered in LOMP's annual contest will be announced and read. This is always an exciting event, especially for those who have poems entered. This year we had an exceptional number of entries, especially in the grand prize category. If you have entered work in the LOMP contest, expect to be notified by late October. It's not too early to be thinking about the 2016 NFSPS contest. If you haven't looked at the categories, you should. Time slips by so fast, and before you know it, March 15, the deadline to have your entries postmarked, will be here. Enter as many as you can, and then plan to visit St. Paul, Minnesota, in June for the national gathering. And if you attend the event, sit back and wait for your winning poem to be announced and your name called.
~ *Dennis Herschbach, President*

MISSISSIPPI POETRY SOCIETY has been busy in its respective branches celebrating poetry and people. Because we are attempting to encourage more young poets in the state to write and be recognized, we have moved the Student Contest to the fall. As mentioned in the last NFSPS newsletter, the deadline for student poets to enter the contest is December 1, 2015. Please note this change. For more information, click on the tab "Contests" on misspoetry.net. One of the charter members of MPS, "Dessie" Anderson Caulfield, had the desire to promote student writing. After her death her children helped to bring this desire to fruition. On Sunday, October 19, 2015, the Arts Council in Dessie's hometown of Water Valley, will host an afternoon for young poets in her memory. Time and place will be posted on the MPS website at a later date. Interestingly, Dessie, who loved writing poetry from her youth, won a Third Place in the Founder's Award of NFSPS back in 2005 at the "young" age of 89! Recently, MPS members were invited to participate in the Mississippi Writer's Guild convention held in Oxford on August 1 and 2. Representatives from MPS attended the awards luncheon where Mr. James Meredith was presented a Writer's Guild Lifetime Achievement Award for his writings and given a lifetime membership in the Writer's Guild. North Branch recently honored our own Col. Mick Denington, with a Lifetime Achievement Award. Five members were in attendance for the presentation of a certificate in Southaven, MS recognizing his excellence in poetry. Pictures of the event and some of

Mick's poems can be seen in the "Spotlight" section of our website. Mrs. Ruth Richmond was selected as our first North Branch Poet of the Year. Ruth will be honored at the meeting in October. Central Branch is getting ready to host our Spring Festival next April at the beautiful and popular Lake Tiak O'Khata Resort in Louisville, MS. We have been promised an interesting and exciting time. A link for reservations is on the home page of our website and more information will be posted there at a later date. South Branch celebrated July with a "porch picnic" at the beachfront home of their president, Brenda Finnegan. Cinquain poems with the theme "Summer Fun" were read. Their 44th annual Writers Unlimited Mississippi Poetry Society South Branch Contest is underway with a receipt deadline of October 1st. Their branch secretary, Judy Davies, who is also our state president, reported on her trip to NFSPS in St. Petersburg, Florida. Congratulations to several of our at large members who were NFSPS contest winners. ~ *Dorothy Wiman, Secretary*

NEW MEXICO STATE POETRY SOCIETY is pleased, as our mission states, "to promote poetry in the land of enchantment and beyond." In that spirit, NMSPS sponsored a team of slam poets, The Slam of Enchantment, to compete in the National Poetry Slam in Oakland, CA in August. We also sponsor a Children's Poetry Project involving the entire student body of one Albuquerque elementary school, a successful pilot project that we plan to share with other schools and chapters in our state. As the school year begins, we have at least one new school interested, and dozens of poets have signed up to participate during 2015-16. Some of our chapters host monthly open mic readings for their community, others meet in small groups for round robin readings or studies of individual poets. Some of our poets participate in city events, like Open Space readings and poetry picnics; some organize their own events at public libraries and snake museums! Others stage "guerilla poetry" events—folding poems and slipping them into pockets of thrift store garments for the unsuspecting purchaser to find. I have come to think of us as an "all-volunteer poetry army"—doing the best we can with limited human and financial resources to wage peace through the written and spoken word.
~ *Andrea (Andi) M. Penner, President*

OHIO POETRY ASSOCIATION wrapped up a successful fundraising season earlier this summer. We raised funds through a charitable giving campaign sponsored by The Columbus Foundation (TCF) and were awarded a grant through the TCF Community Arts Fund for a fourth year in a row. We capped off our efforts with a series of raffles at our annual

summer picnic in July, where we featured a number of OPA “All-Stars”—members who have published books recently or who won OPA poetry contests. The autumn kicked off in mid-September with our annual fall writers’ retreat at Malabar Farm State Park with workshops led by David Lee Garrison, followed by the first-ever poetry reading at the Serpent Mound State Memorial, the site of an ancient Native American effigy in the shape of a snake. Titled “Voices of the Past,” the event featured readings honoring Ohio’s native peoples with poems, readings, and music. In October, we hosted our fourth and final quarterly poetry workshop, titled “Jump-Starting the Imagination: Making Poems Stand Out,” led by Neil Carpathios. We also support the annual Ohio Poetry Day, October 16–17, where the Ohio Poet of the Year is featured. Finally, we are putting the finishing touches on our annual journal, *Common Threads*, which is available for purchase on ohiopoetryassn.org. And we are pleased to announce that by the time this report is published, Ohio will likely have its first-ever State Poet Laureate, to be named later this year. Look for more information about this announcement on the OPA website and social media outlets. ~ *Chuck Salmons, President*

POETRY SOCIETY OF TENNESSEE in Memphis is getting ready for its big annual event, the Mid-South Poetry Festival. It’s booked for Saturday, October 3. Contestants have entered over 600 poems in this year’s competition. Local members of PST will celebrate the event at a party the Friday night prior at Sarah Gurley’s house. Some winners may be announced at the party to pique the excitement. The workshop leader this year is Dr. Michael Porter, who says he has written for all the media, including music. He promises an interesting and fun presentation. Call JoAn Howerton, Festival Director, if you need any help (901-361-0077), or contact her via email (joan0620@att.net). The deadline for contest entries has passed. Sincere thanks to all who sent poems to the competition, to Sarah for the party, and to all who are working behind the scenes to make our annual event happen. We are looking forward to the best ever Mid-South Poetry Festival. Luck to all the poets. ~ *Florence Bruce, Corresponding Secretary & Contest Coordinator, 2015 Mid-South Poetry Festival*

POETRY SOCIETY OF TEXAS’ Summer Conference was hosted by the Beaumont Chapter at the Hilton Garden Inn in Beaumont, July 16-18. Chairman of “Partying with Poetry Mardi Gras Style” was Birma C. Castle. Presenting a variety of programs and workshops were Laurie Kolp, Charlotte Renk, John Gorman, Sam Gwynn, Mike Baldwin and Marilyn Komechak. Donna Walker-Nixson presented along with panel members Charlotte Renk, Sherry Craven, Loretta Diane Walker, Cassy Burleson and Rachel Crawford. There was a presentation by Austin’s International Festival’s Overview Group featuring James Jacobs, Thom the World Poet and others. Naomi

Stroud Simmons was unable to attend due to recently broken ribs, so her program was given by Birma C. Castle and J. Paul Holcomb. Budd Powell Mahan spoke about his newly published book, *A History of the Poetry Society of Texas*. Lisa Salinas, winner of PST’s 2014 Edwin M. Eakin Memorial Book Publication Award, read selections from her book, *Smallest Leaf*. On Thursday, the Bayou Sounds Trio from Port Arthur entertained with Cajun music, setting the mood to “Let the Good Times Role!” That night, Garrison Martt, who wore different costumes throughout the conference, was the Dinner Speaker. Friday’s luncheon speakers were 13 year old cancer survivor, Angel Deshotel, and her cousin, Shirley Richards, a missionary to Africa who wore traditional African attire. Before the Friday night banquet, the King and Queen and their royal court from the Majestic Krewe of Aurora Mardi Gras Ball Group came fully costumed for a photo op with attendees. The banquet speaker was Dr. Jerry Bradley from Lamar University in Beaumont. The winners of PST’s “You Be the Judge” poetry contest were: 1st Place - Valerie Martin Bailey, 2nd Place - Charlotte Renk and 3rd Place - Barbara Blanks. ~ *Nancy Baass*

WYOPOETS—Wyoming Governor, Matt Mead, has selected life-long poet, Rose Hill, as the state’s new Poet Laureate. Rose has been a member of WyoPoets, Wyoming Writers’ Inc. and Third Thursday Poets. She has served as board member, officer and advisor for each of them. She completed a written history of her church and has had her work published in regional publications. Rose is an inspiration to writers throughout the state. Our WyoPoets’ workshop presenter, Rick Kempa, poet, essayist and editor followed up the workshop by sharing his list of “Generally agreed-Upon Qualities of Good Poems.” Next year’s 2016 workshop is scheduled for April 22nd & 23rd at the Holiday Inn in Riverton, Wyoming. Mark your calendar! ~ *Lee Ann Siebken, Reporter*

CONTESTS

REDROCK WRITERS’ CHAPARRAL POETRY FORUM CONTEST. The City of St. George, Utah, is a sponsor of the Adult Chaparral Poetry Forum Contest for 2016. Entries postmarked Sept. 1 through Dec. 1, 2015. Contest guidelines official site: redrockwriters.org. Contact Chairman Marie Tollstrup at mariect@infowest.com.

WYOPOETS is sponsoring the 2016 Eugene V. Shea Annual National Contest which opens Oct. 1, 2015, with a deadline of Dec. 1, 2015. The contest is open to all poets worldwide. Submissions must be in the English language and fees in U.S. Dollars. Prize awards will be as follows: 1st, \$100; 2nd, \$50; 3rd, \$30; and 4th, \$20. For contest guidelines, send a SASE to Contest Chair Art Elser, 1730 Locust St, Denver, CO 80220, email Art at artelser@me.com, or download the contest guidelines from the Contests page of wypoets.org.

ORDERING STEVENS BOOKS

The following award-winning Stevens Manuscript books are available for purchase. Please note these are updated prices. Prices on NFSPS.com may not reflect these changes yet. Some recent titles are available on Amazon.

* <i>Beast</i> by Scrupe	\$15
* <i>Breaking Weather</i> by Hughes	\$15
* <i>Full Cry</i> by Ampleman	\$15
* <i>Good Reason</i> by Habel	\$10
* <i>Lines From The Surgeon’s Children</i> by Tomlinson	\$10
* <i>Come In, We’re Open</i> by Ries	\$10
* <i>Bear Country</i> by Soonnenschein	\$10
* <i>Capturing The Dead</i> by Terry	\$10
* <i>Meager Life And Modest Times Of Pop Thorndale</i> by Pfefferly	\$5
* <i>Harvest</i> by Mahan	\$5
* <i>Aqua Curves</i> by Braucher	\$5
* <i>Zen Piano Mover</i> by Wagner	\$5
* <i>A Thousand Bonds</i> by Swanson	\$5
* <i>Fine Art Of Postponement</i> by Bailey	\$3
* <i>Stones For A Pillow</i> by Glangy	\$3
* <i>Binoculars</i> by Lawder	\$3
* <i>Singing In The Key Of L</i> by Nightingale	\$3
* <i>Shadowless Flight</i> by Palmer	\$3
* <i>I Have Learned 5 Things</i> by Christenson	\$3
* <i>A Common Language</i> by Clement	\$3

Please include check or money order made payable to NFSPS for the price of the books ordered plus \$2 postage for the first book and 50 cents per book for any additional books in the same order. Email Polly at pollyopsahl@gmail.com with any questions. Send orders to: Polly Opsahl, 7316 Huntington, Oscoda MI 48750.

POETRY ARTICLES

ASPIRE TO JUDGE POETRY

by Charmaine Pappas Donovan,
NFSPS Judges Chair

Judging poetry takes specialized skills just as learning to craft poems takes time and effort. If someone contacts you to judge a poetry contest, they have confidence in your ability to think critically about poems. You have impressed them through your poetry and achievements. You are serious about poetry and ready to assume the responsibility of judging.

Immerse yourself in a variety of poetry. You will increase your discernment regarding good writing. Acquaint yourself with the scope of poetry in our literary world. Attend readings and workshops, buy books, and surf poetry websites to better understand poetry’s diversity.

Increase your tolerance for different styles and forms. Become a more versatile judge. Not all contests are divided into form poetry and free verse. In NFSPS’ 2015 Poetry Contest there are 49 adult contests. Only three of these are “Free Verse Only” contests. There are eleven form/rhyming/ metered contests. The thirty-five remaining contests are “Any Form” which includes free verse and prose poetry. While you may know a form, mastering that form is another

way to gauge the difficulty and level of skill a particular form requires. Buy books on form and add these to your poetry library.

Be fair to the poem by reading it thoroughly when you have the time, are rested and undistracted. Some judges say they can judge a poem by the title and first line. Is this how you would want your poem handled? Ideally, wouldn't you like a judge to read your poem through at least twice? First readings may not catch the nuances of the poem (e.g. internal rhyming, subtle word usage, extended metaphor). Read those final poems aloud. Ted Kooser said in a Lake Superior Writers' Workshop that only 25% of people can hear sounds internally while three-fourths *need to hear sounds read aloud*.

In Michael Dennis Browne's book, *What the Poem Wants: Prose on Poetry*, he asks readers to consider the intent of the poem. Compelling poetry should be free from cliché and trite sentimentality. Poems that haunt us, those to which we repeatedly return, ones that rattle our emotions, delight, disturb, and give us pause; these are the poems that should be winners.

Poem topography concerns how poems look on the page. A poem's initial appearance can be deceiving. Watch for spaces between stanzas; how spaces and line breaks allow the poem to breathe. Note how the overall poem is arranged on the page, whether the font is easy to read. Is the poem constructed in a way that makes it visually appealing? What about that soiled poem with the boot print on it? Even its battered look cannot prevent the words from shining through. Typographical errors may lower the ranking of a potentially prize-winning poem.

Although subject matter should have little bearing on your choice, this often becomes a factor in contests where subjects are designated. How subject matter is interpreted is discretionary for the poet as well as the judge. Why do judges complain about poems that look or sound alike? Pre-conceived ideas may creep into the creative process—as Frost said, “No surprise in the writer, no surprise in the reader.” A unique approach to subject matter breathes life into the poem.

Ethical judging acknowledges your personal biases and limitations. If a poem sounds familiar, you may have seen or heard it before. Setting aside a poem you helped shape in a workshop is the correct response. Share some poems with a poet you trust if you feel it will help you judge more fairly. Your choices are final. Know others would make different ones. Live with it.

The process of judging poems well is as satisfying as writing them well. The pleasure you experience when hearing poems you've chosen read at the podium, or included in an anthology of prize-winning poems like NFSPS' *Encore*, may surprise you. More importantly you will grow in your appreciation for those who love poetry as much as you do.

THE WAY OF ALL THE WORLD: Creating a Poetry Society that Takes the Poet Beyond the Technical Experience

by Mira Evans, Utah State Poetry Society

We were saddened to hear at the NFSPS convention in Salt Lake City [last year] that several state poetry societies had disbanded in the last year. It is a difficult task in the 21st century to make a poetry society that can compete with the online opportunities. If the state society is to survive, we must consider what we can offer one another that the Internet lacks.

Why would a poet pay to attend a convention when she or he can hear free lectures at ted.com? Why would a poet enter a competition that requires a SASE and a trip to the post office when all the major journals have online submissions? (I was pleased to see in the last *Strophes* that the NFSPS 2015 College/University competition will be conducted through Submittable.com.) Today's poet leaving college has received extensive training in current literary techniques. Do our critiques push the members to the next level as effectively, or are the recent graduates seeking an online crowd with similar training?

Our local societies have strengths that the Internet cannot offer. We must enhance and capitalize on these in our publicity and make them the foci of our meetings so that new members will be more likely to continue their membership.

1. We welcome poets of every type, technique, and experience. We learn more and branch out more when we are exposed to writing that differs from our own.
2. Lessons on the process of creating. In the modern world, the finished product is all around us: on the radio, the television, paintings, blogs, books, architecture, all are so easily accessible that we don't often get to see the hours of creation that go into that product. A society dedicated to works-in-progress is important in a fast-paced world. We must play to this strength and use our societies to heighten the experience of creating.
3. Face-to-face interaction. In the world of online anonymity, page names, and avatars, the reality of the face-to-face meeting with other writers could not be more important. Our social media pages are filled with “friends” we hardly know, and we follow celebrities we'll never meet. Against that background, we offer a group of actual people that we get to know better with time who care about our craft, our growth and our success.
4. Regularly scheduled meetings. We all work better with a deadline.

Our societies can also use today's technology better.

1. Are the states' websites focused on bringing in potential members or only on informing current members? Are there phrases on the websites that people would type into a search engine (e.g. poetry readings Arkansas, writing

groups Chattanooga)?

2. If you can't beat them, join them! Is there an email round robin option available?
3. Contests are harder for the Contest Chairs if they're done online, but submitters love to have the option! Let's learn from the National Society and get Submittable accounts.
4. Blogs with open discussions allow people from within and without our societies to participate in conversations about poems, poetic craft, poets, and related topics.

Obviously, our societies do some things very well. However, we must heighten the effect of these aspects and seek ways to remain relevant in today's world. As insightful as the founders of our societies were, we should revisit our constitutions and update them to take into account the changing world so that our societies may continue in perpetuity.

NEW NAMES ON THE APPOINTIVE BOARD

2015 is an “off year” in the NFSPS election cycle, so the Elective Board continues unchanged, but you will see a couple of new names on the list for the Appointive Board. The positions there are not simply honorary, though the people filling them deserve much honor—they are major volunteer jobs.

After several years of sorting entries to the 50 categories of our annual contest, sending them out to judges, preparing certificates for the winners, and doing sundry associated tasks, Mikki Pennington has stepped down as Contest Chair, and Charlotte Abernathy has taken on those duties for 2016. Regularly on the list of Oregon winners, Charlotte won't be able to enter next year. Instead, she'll be applying experience she gained in organizing and conducting a local contest to handling our national one. I hope that she'll find time to continue writing—and also to keep painting, for Charlotte is a visual artist as well as a poet.

By the time you read this, our new Stevens Poetry Manuscript Competition Chair, Wilda Morris, will have received all the book-length manuscripts vying for this year's Stevens Award and sent about 100 of them to the judge. For the first time, entrants will have had the option to submit their manuscripts online via Submittable. All entries, both digital and hard copy, will remain blind until the judge makes his or her selection. When Wilda accepted appointment as Stevens Chair, her schedule was already full. An active member of the Illinois State Poetry Society, she participated in Poetry Camp in Door County, Wisconsin, this past summer, as well as teaching a poetry workshop at Green Lake. She is expecting three great grandchildren this year, in three different states, and this November she'll be traveling in Italy. We are fortunate indeed that she was willing to take on a new job serving her fellow poets, and that she has the energy and organizational ability to handle it in the midst of such a busy year.

Eleanor Berry ~ 31th NFSPS President

President's Message continued from page 1

Besides re-seeing my state's poetry in the light of Florida's sun, I also had the opportunity this summer of re-seeing my own poems through the eyes of a painter who did a series of pieces in response to poems of mine. Many of us poets respond to works of visual art with ekphrastic poems, but ekphrasis in the other direction—visual art that responds to poems—is much less common. For a poet, it is an extraordinary experience to see responses to his or her poems embodied in paintings. It was certainly so for me.

To have one's poem reflected back by a work of visual art is to be shown what that poem can hold—or open—for a fellow artist in another medium. It is to be made aware of what one had not known was, at least as potential, contained in the poem. To take one example, until I saw the paintings responding to my poems, I hadn't realized how frequently stones appeared in them, and I hadn't been fully aware of the qualities stones hold for me. The renderings of stones in the paintings enabled me to recognize how deeply stones embody for me the strange, wonderful fact of the world's being.

Earlier this year, I'd had the experience of hearing a musical setting of poem of mine performed as part of a concert by a full chorus and orchestra. To have one's poem set to music by a composer is another way of having it reflected back, of learning what is in it for a fellow artist in another medium. At the concert, I was surprised into tears by the performance of a poem of my own—completely familiar yet utterly strange. The composer's interpretation and the concert rendition made me aware of a latent meaning in the poem's title and, more broadly, of the near inevitability of saying more or other than, or even the opposite of, what one thinks one means.

What is the value of such recognition? It is partly humbling, even discouraging, but also somewhat thrilling—a reminder of the important fact that poems mean more than poets, that language always exceeds the purposes to which we think to bind it in our lines. I hope that I will have further opportunities to re-see or re-hear my poems through other artists' renderings in their different media, and I hope that you, too, will have such opportunities.

Providing such opportunities, which widen horizons not only for poets but also for their counterparts in other media, is something that can be done on the state and even local level. A poetry society in a small town near where I live has several times held poet-artist exchanges in which poets

and artists trade pieces and then each does new work in response to the other's visual art or poem. My local unit of the Oregon Poetry Association does collaborative exhibits with an area artists' organization, in which their members do visual works in response to poems by an Oregon poet. I am sure that poetry societies and chapters in other states have similar programs. I would love to learn of them and to hear the experiences of the poets involved. And I hope that some of you reading this column will be inspired to organize such programs in your communities.

Eleanor Berry ~ 31th NFSPS President

REMINDER TO STATE PRESIDENTS & MEMBERSHIP CHAIRS

Please note the NFSPS 2016 Contest Brochure's "Members Only" Contest Rule #9. To give your members the advantage of lower fees for entering, as well as to make them eligible for the "Members Only" categories, you need to send your list of paid-up members to the NFSPS Treasurer by January 15th, 2016, with the \$3.00 per member dues.

You have a two-month window to add names and payment, up to March 15th. While I'll accept these additions any time within that window, in whatever way is easiest for your recordkeeping, it is most convenient for me if you send them all together. Thus you would have TWO reporting deadlines: January 15th for membership to that date, and March 15th for new members and renewals between January 15 and March 15th. Your information is NOT made available for advertising or commercial purposes, so it is safe to include mail addresses. Occasionally, we have needed to use these when a question arises.

Lists, in alphabetical order, can be sent to Lucille Morgan Wilson at 2325 61st Street, Des Moines, IA 50322 or lucille_e_wilson@hotmail.com. Thanks.

POETRY FESTIVAL IN SOUTHERN UTAH -- MARCH 3-5, 2016

Plan to spend a weekend next spring in Southern Utah immersed in poetry and creative writing. On Thursday, March 3, at 7 pm in the Springdale Canyon Community Center, Z-ARTS will present a free lecture, "An Evening with Plein Air Poetry," by visiting poet Dr. David J. Rothman, Director of the Graduate Program in Creative Writing at Western State Colorado University.

On Friday, March 4, from 9 am to 4 pm the seventh annual POETRY IN THE PARK will take place at Zion Park Lodge with Rothman presenting a Plein Air Poetry Workshop surrounded by the natural beauty of Zion Park's red rock country. Admission to the park and a guided naturalist walk are included in the seminar fee.

Continuing into the weekend, the 20th annual Redrock Writers Seminar will be held on Saturday, March 5th, from 9 am to 4 pm. The Seminar features a distinguished faculty exploring: Cowboy Poetry, Writing with Tension, Photo Journalism and Plein Air Poetry. More info. is available at redrockwriters.org. These workshops have been made possible by a partnership between Utah State Poetry Society and Zion Natural History Association with partial funding from the Utah Department of Arts and Museums and NEA. Details are available at poetry-in-the-park.com.

Fees are \$60 each for Poetry in the Park and for Redrock Seminar, with discounts for UTSPS members. Lodging is available at reduced prices at Zion Park Lodge, in Springdale, or in St. George which has a regional airport with connections to Denver and Salt Lake City. From the Las Vegas airport, shuttles are available to St. George and carpools to Zion Park. Don't miss this wonderful learning opportunity in inspiring Utah—make lodging and travel arrangements now!

CONVENTION MADNESS! POETRY CONTEST

Win Your Way to NFSPS Convention

June 09-June 13, 2016

Hotel 340

St. Paul, Minnesota

Must attend to receive 1st-3rd place prizes

1st Place— 4 nights stay at Hotel 340, St. Paul, MN (\$556.00)

2nd Place—All meals (package) (approximately \$200.00)

3rd Place—Registration Fee (\$75.00)

1st- 3rd Honorable Mentions—Poem by Post Subscription

Any form, any subject, limit one page, 10 point type or larger. May be previously published.

Fee: NFSPS Members 3 poems for \$10.00. Non-members 3 poems for \$18.00. Make checks payable to the League of Minnesota Poets.

No limit on number of submissions, so long as a new entry fee is included for each set of 3 poems.

To submit: Include two copies of poems. One copy with name, address, phone number, e-mail and State Society membership and one copy with no identifying marks. Include a S.A.S.E. for winner's list. Winners will be notified by March 1, 2016.

DEADLINE: January 5, 2016.

Mail your entries to:

Susan Stevens Chambers

57310 166th Lane

Good Thunder, MN 56037

Sponsored by the members of League of Minnesota Poets