

Magnolia Muse

Newsletter of the Mississippi Poetry
November 2013

Mini-festival wrap-up—The 2013 Fall Mini-festival at Belhaven University was a success. Several attendees commented that it was one of the best MPS programs they had ever attended. Speaker Paula Lambert enjoyed her time in Mississippi and wrote about it on her web page update at <http://paulajlambert.com>. After reading and discussing her work as it related to her topic “Poetry as Healing,” she signed copies of her new book, *The Sudden Seduction of Gravity*. Joining Paula at the signing table was MPS Poet of the Year Patty Butkovich with her book *A Long-stemmed Rose*.

Congratulations to **Wynne Huddleston, Mississippi Poetry Society’s 2014 Poet of the Year!** Also recognized was **Brenda Finnegan**, who received a **Lifetime Achievement Award**. Contest Coordinator Dierdre Payne announced winners in the various categories of our Fall Contest. The list of winners is included with this newsletter.

Contest Eligibility Problems—Our Fall Contest had several entries that had to be disqualified because they had won other recent contests or had been published before. Poets sometimes fail to keep good records, but our contest rules clearly state that previously published poems and those poems which placed in any other contest are ineligible for our contests.

2014 Spring Festival Invitation—**Mississippi Poetry Society’s North Branch** invites members and friends to the MPS Spring Festival to be held at the Hilton Gardens Hotel in Starkville, Mississippi. Mark the date on your calendar: **April 26-27**. More detailed information regarding registration fees and hotel reservations will be published after Christmas.

Future of MPS—As Bob Dylan wrote, “The times, they are a-changing,” the some of the proposed additions and modifications to our policies reflect changing times.

Approved at the Fall Mini-festival to become effective for the spring contest: Prizes for Youth Awards Levels IV and V will be increased to \$25 (1st), \$15 (2nd), and \$10 (3rd). Levels I, II, and III will remain the same. Also approved was a motion to make Category I (The MPS Award) in the spring contest open to members only.

Upcoming amendments to the MPS Constitution and By-laws—This information will serve as notification to members as required by the by-laws. *Please reply to sender when you have read this section. You don’t have to write anything. Just send a blank reply unless you just want to send a message.*

1. Make this addition to By-laws: Anyone who gives MPS a non-sufficient funds check or a check on a closed account more than once, even if they resolve the issue and are brought back into good standing, will have relinquished their right to pay by personal check and only certified checks, money orders or cash will be acceptable in the future from that individual.
2. Add to the By-Laws the name of our "Registered Agent," which is the person who should be served with any legal documents if the MS Poetry Society had any kind of legal problem. Currently Dr. Emory D. Jones is our Registered Agent. Having a registered agent is a requirement by state law. If he is unable to serve for any reason, a new agent will be appointed by the President.

Other topics for voting

1. Currently MPS members who live in Mississippi pay a total of \$25 annual dues. Of that total, \$15 goes to state (including \$3 to NFSPS) and \$10 to the appropriate branch. However, at-large members only pay \$15 in annual dues.

Proposal: Beginning with the 2014-15 cycle, change the amount of dues to \$25 for at-large members so that every member pays the same fee.

2. Because of the increased cost of gas and lodging, have only one state convention per year. The branches would rotate hosting the conferences with Central Branch joining the rotation instead of hosting the Fall Mini-festival every year.

3. Have only one state contest per year. This would enable the Contest Coordinator to have more time to solicit sponsors, poets more time to prepare entries, judges more time to evaluate and report results, and the Contest Coordinator more time for printing certificates. (If MPS has only one contest per year, individual branches could have their own competition or partner with another writing group as MPS South Branch and Writers Unlimited do each fall. Alternative plans might include sponsoring a category in the Writers Unlimited/MPS South Branch Contest or volunteering in schools to encourage poetry writing among youth.)

Topics for thought and discussion

- a. Should paying members who did not enter the contest receive an annual journal?
- b. Should we continue to produce a state MPS Journal or consider publishing an online journal instead, using the money saved to advertise and promote MPS and its contests?

Check the MPS website at www.misspoetry.net for updates and information.

Final note from your president: When I squabbled with obnoxious little brothers and the verbal exchange became heated, my mother shook her finger at us and said, “The bible tells us to be kind.” The reference was to Ephesians 4:32: “And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.” (KJV)

As our organization changes and strives to find its place in a rapidly changing technological world, differences of opinion are inevitable. However, we are like a family, and we need to be kind and gentle with each other. My favorite boss always used the “sandwich” method when he needed to evaluate faculty. I also tried to use it when I evaluated students’ work. Begin with a sincere compliment, gently point out problems, and conclude with sincerely encouraging comments.

Poets tend to be somewhat hypersensitive. As fellow folks with sensitive souls, let’s encourage each other as we seek to solve our problems and move ahead. My grandmother had this to say about kind words: “Be careful of the words you say; keep them soft and sweet. You never know from day to day, which ones you’ll have to eat.”

It also doesn’t hurt to remember that all of your officers are poets who volunteer!

Your friend,
Jeanne Kelly