



# Magnolia Muse

Newsletter of the Mississippi Poetry Society

August 2015

[www.misspoetry.net](http://www.misspoetry.net)

## **Notes from the President:**

**NFSPS Convention:** In late June, Ken and I were privileged to attend the annual National Federation of State Poetry Societies Convention held at the Hilton Bayfront in beautiful St. Petersburg, Florida. For four days we sampled a treasure of poetry in readings, workshops, presentations and fellowship with over 130 poets from across the country. The Convention provided a series of workshops including Ethnicity in Poetry, Surrealist Poetry (with a trip to the Dali Museum), Cow-Hunting Poetry, Performance Poetry and a panel on the Power of Partnership. We were introduced to Slam Poetry and Florida's Slam Poetry Team was selected. Contest awards were announced during meal times and Mississippi received a certificate for its participation in Poetry Day and Poetry Month activities. Unfortunately, there were no Mississippi poets among the winners this year, but several of our at-large members: Jim Barton, Barbara Blanks, Von S. Bourland, Gail Denham, and Catherine Moran were successful in some of the categories and we offer them our congratulations. We're proud of you!

Florida State Poet Laureate, Peter Meinke, was our keynote speaker at the final banquet. In his book *The Shape of Poetry*, he wrote that "Those in the profession—the calling—of writing poetry should be knowledgeable and skilled as any carpenter, passionate and dignified as any priest." I heartily agree.

The Convention Bookstore was filled with delightful books from many poets and I did my fair share of shopping. The Presidents' Meeting provided opportunity to share our successes and concerns for the future of poetry in order to help it thrive in our state. An aging membership, difficulty attracting younger members and need for program funding were common challenges voiced by many state presidents. A few states did present ideas to help draw younger poets that seem to be working in their states.

**The 2016 National Convention:** The 2016 Convention will be held in St. Paul, MN. **Minnesota Magic** will take place June 9-12, 2016 located in Hotel 340, a premier boutique hotel located in the city's center. The keynote speaker will be Natalie Goldberg, author of *Writing Down the Bones: Freeing the Writer Within*. Additional information will be provided at a later date.

**New Lifetime Achievement Award Winner:** Long time North Branch member, Mick Denington, who lives in Memphis, TN, has been awarded a Lifetime Achievement Award. Mick is a gifted poet who has made significant contributions to the betterment of poetry. He has always been willing to serve his fellow poets and we are grateful for his expertise. Due to Mick's health issues, North Branch members asked we not wait until the next Spring Festival to present his award. Please see *Mick Denington* in the "Spotlight" section and click on "more" to see pictures

of the presentation as well as read some of Mick's favorite poems from his book *Like a River*, published in 2009. It is a privilege to have this devoted poetry master among our members.

**Sponsors needed:** Our contest coordinator, Sheila Grieco, will be sending out requests for sponsors for our Spring 2016 contest in the next few weeks. We hope many of you will sponsor a category. The more categories, the more fun you can have writing poetry. With prompt response from you, Sheila will be able to have the contest online by early October and you'll have over five months to write your fine poetry.

**Looking ahead:** Central Branch is preparing to host the 2016 Spring Festival on April 22-24, 2016, at the beautiful Lake Tiak-O-Khata in Louisville, MS. Centrally located to the MPS membership, situated beside a picturesque lake and flower garden, providing a dining room with three outstanding home-cooked style meals each day, MPS will convene in the conference center across the road from the dining room. Overnight accommodations are available in a variety of options. If ground floor accommodations are desired, early reservations are a must!

**Spotlight:** For any branch having members who have newly released books, won contests, etc., please let us know so we can share your success with our readers via our "Spotlight" section.

Have a safe and pleasant rest of the summer!

*Judy Davies*  
*MPS President*

*"Poetry is invasive heart surgery using the scalpel of emotion and the suture of words."*

*James F. Ahearn*