

# *Magnolia Muse*

## *The Mississippi Poetry Society Newsletter*

*May 2015*

**Spring Festival Follow-Up:** In celebration of National Poetry Month, our annual Spring Festival took place the weekend of April 18-19 at the Gulf Hills Inn and Conference Center with a fun-filled pre-festival party at Martin and Brenda Finnegan's lovely waterfront home in Ocean Springs on Friday, April 17<sup>th</sup>. We squeezed 18 poets and spouses into their home and onto their welcoming porch, filled our tummies with delicious finger foods prepared by South Branch members, and enjoyed an evening of fellowship and humorous poetry. Thank you, Martin and Brenda, for kicking off a very busy weekend with such a delightful party.

In the familiar surroundings of the Gulf Hills Inn and Conference Center, registration opened with folders of information, lots of coffee and donuts and words of welcome from Brenda Finnegan, South Branch president, followed by announcements from our MPS president, Judy Davies. Contest coordinator, Sheila Grieco, then announced the student awards.

Jim Barton, our guest speaker, presented a morning workshop "Word Count vs. Words That Count". Jim hails from Huttig, AR and is the NFSPS first vice-president. Several poems had been sent to Jim in advance and he showed us the value of cutting unnecessary words to make our poetry more powerful. Sheila announced some of our adult poetry winners and poems were read to the appreciative attendees. Following lunch, more awards were announced before our business meeting. The following items were discussed and voted on at the business meeting:

1. It was voted that as of 2016 our entry in the NFSPS contest will be changed to a sonnet with the entrant specifying the type of sonnet. Prize money will be increased to \$75.00 (\$35, \$25, \$15).
2. It was recommended by the president that all branches have at least the treasurer and one other officer on the branch bank account. This is to cover the branch in the event that the treasurer may be ill or out of town.
3. Following discussion, it was voted to change our membership policy and update our by-laws immediately to reflect the following addition: "we reserve the right to terminate or refuse membership and/or contest participation for any reason deemed in the best interest of the organization." The membership application is also being amended to reflect the change.
4. It was voted that the Poet of the Year Committee will now be known as the Awards Committee. It was approved that there will be a ten year wait before the recipient of a Poet of the Year Award is once again eligible to compete for that honor. The Awards Committee will consist of the most recent three Poets of the Year with an additional Awards Chairman. The chairman will receive the nominee packets and arrange for an independent judge who will judge only the poetry section. The three past POY's will judge the sections on service to the community and awards/honors. The chairman will then receive the results from the committee and from the independent judge and tabulate the results to obtain the new Poet of the Year, which will be announced in October. The chairman will also be responsible for awarding the Lifetime Achievement Awards, also announced in October. Awards will be officially presented during Spring Festival and the Poet of the Year's chapbook unveiled at that time.
5. A member had asked about the possibility of expanding our website. Following discussion, it was found that members consider our website to be adequate as is and that expanding the site would incur expenses that are not needed at this time. The vote to expand the website did not carry.
6. It was also decided that we would send out the student portion of our contest earlier in the year with the student deadline being December 1<sup>st</sup>. This is to facilitate getting winning poems into NFSPS for the Manningham Awards on a timely basis.

Following our business meeting Sheila continued our awards presentations. A new item was added this year, our "Grand Door Prize" which consisted of a specially made "door" as we just couldn't have a grand door prize

without a door! Behind the door was a \$25.00 gift certificate from McElroy's on the Bayou and a \$250.00 weekend for two donated by Gulf Hills Inn and Conference Center. James O'Loughlin of North Branch was the lucky winner. The "door" was sent home to Central Branch and we hope it will become a new tradition.

In the absence of Awards Chairman Jeanne Kelly, Dorothy Wiman presented a Lifetime Achievement Award to Dr. Emory D. Jones. Dr. Jones has been an active member since 1981. His tireless service and capable leadership has helped to keep the Mississippi Poetry Society alive and intact. I was also honored to receive a Lifetime Achievement Award for my varied skills and services to MPS. Dorothy also presented our Poet of the Year, Sandra Bounds, who read from her chapbook, *From the Heart of the Deep South*. Sandra graciously signed books for members and friends during our book sale. POY nominees Linda Watson Owen and Judy Davies were also recognized with certificates.

Our favorite caterers, Broome's, did it again! They provided a delightfully delicious buffet dinner. Dinner was accompanied by the live music of Elva Avara on keyboard and Ken Davies on trombone, who played many of those old tunes so familiar to us. Thank you to the students who assisted as servers during the dinner. We do appreciate our volunteers.

Ann Carolyn Cates introduced our keynote speaker, Jim Barton, who shared tidbits of information about how to get our work published. He highly recommended purchasing the Poet's Market and using it as a guide. We received written information including samples of a cover letter that should accompany our submissions for publication. Jim emphasized that sometimes it only takes one submission to be successful, but that is rarely the case. It is more likely you will need to submit numerous times to numerous places, but do not give up. Send them your best work and keep sending your work out. Thank you, Jim, you were a great addition to our festival.

Sunday morning Dorothy Wiman provided a brief devotional for us and Sheila continued our awards. We listened to lots of good poetry throughout the weekend. Our MPS award winning poem with the \$100.00 prize was won by Linda Watson Owen with her poem "The Ballad of St. Mary's by the Bay." Many thanks to all those members who helped make the 2015 Spring Festival a success.

**Important Notes:** Please be sure you don't miss the addition of one of our North Branch members to the "Spotlight" section on our website. Patricia Neely-Dorsey, author and poet, has been named as a "Goodwill Ambassador" for her celebration of the south and things southern across Mississippi. A direct link to her website appears on our resource page. Congrats, Patricia!

**Appointment Updates:** Dr. Emory Jones has agreed to take care of our scrapbooks and bring them up-to-date. If you have pictures or items to contribute to our scrapbooks, please contact Emory at [pianot@bellsouth.net](mailto:pianot@bellsouth.net) for address and mailing instructions.

Brenda Finnegan has agreed to serve as Awards Chairman. Many thanks to Jeanne Kelly who has held this position for 15 years and is now going to enjoy a well-deserved rest. Jeanne will continue as Student Poetry/Manningham Committee Chair.

*Judy Davies*  
*MPS President*

*"One day your life will flash before your eyes...make sure it is worth watching."*

