

MAGNOLIA MUSE FALL 2023 ISSUE

MPS is quite busy right now. I'll see if I can list the highlights:

Jason Ervin is working on the annual contest as those sponsor's forms (and judge's forms) come in. **Dr. Emory Jones has released the student contest guidelines to Mississippi schools. Also, the file was sent to MPS members. Please pass the word. The information has also been posted on our State Department of Education's teachers' blog. **Central Branch is planning the 2024 Spring Festival. **MPS has received (from NFSPS) a "Certificate of Recognition" for our outstanding achievements in promotion of poetry during 2022-2023. Only four other societies received this award. Other societies that submitted a report to JoAn Howerton (the NFSPS officer that collects achievement reports from societies and decides who receives awards) will receive a different type of certificate. **The Student Poetry Committee--Allen Baswell, Emory Jones, Karen Linstrum, Mary Beth Magee, and Mark LaFrancis (and I assist)—are waiting for Katherine Brown, Mississippi's POL (Poetry Out Loud) Coordinator to get back to us. In August, I emailed her requesting **specific suggestions/directions for promoting POL. **The Awards Committee (once called the POY Committee)—Linda Owen, Ann Carolyn Cates, and Philip Levin--is accepting portfolios from the four nominees, one per branch. Nominees are Tommy Little, Janice Canerdy, Mary Beth Magee, and Mark LaFrancis. The Committee will judge the sections on publishing credits, service to MPS, etc. An independent judge the committee chooses will judge the poems.

Reminders: Sponsor forms are due October 1!

Please pay MPS dues by November 1. This is the date stated in the "Constitution and By-Laws."

BRANCH REPORTS

North Branch last met at McAlister's in Starkville on September 9. Some of us did some unplanned sightseeing before the meeting (got lost)! Attendees were Emory and Glenda Jones, Dorothy Wiman, Tracy Miller, Lizzie Washington (student member), Bill Hill, Andreanna Page, Michael Shelton, Carey Myers, and Janice Canerdy. Tracy's devotional, a prayer skillfully written in rhymed couplets, was expressive, deeply moving and spiritual. We plan to start meeting six times per year and add two meeting places to the usual four. Next month we will have our first-ever meeting at Coffee Central in Hernando.

Dorothy gave us all some "Haikubes," and we wrote haiku using words on the cubes. This was a fun game. Janice Canerdy talked about footles. A footle is a two-line poem (or part of a poem) that has two trochees, one per line. Rhyme is optional. Reading a string of these in a natural manner poses a challenge, as does maintaining trochaic meter. Bill Hill shared his NFSPS Convention and slam experiences with us. As always, we enjoyed a poetry read-around. Our officers are Bill Hill, President; Emory Jones, Vice-president and Treasurer; and Carey Myers, Secretary. I have enjoyed writing the branch reports for the newsletter. Bill will be writing them from now on.
~~~Janice Canerdy

September 9 meeting~~~Front: Dorothy, Glenda, and Andreanna; Back: Lizzie, Janice, Bill, Emory, and Carey      Michael and Tracy had to leave early. We didn't think about taking pictures till they were already gone.



**Central Branch** held their monthly meeting Saturday, September 16; it was attended by eight members. After handling routine business items, they discussed plans for hosting the Spring Fest in April 2024. Patsy Twiner is the committee chair. They then shared poems around the table. They continue to have good representation at open mic poetry nights at Pacesetters Gallery in Flowood. Alecia Gabrielle won First Place in poetry at the William Faulkner Literary Competition for her poem titled “Ode to Mississippi Girlhood.”



Present at the **South Branch** September meeting were Mary Lee Terry, Mary Beth Magee, Trudy Olive, Carol Hutcherson, Patty Butkovich, Judy Davies, guest, Judy's husband, Ken Davies, and former member Robert (Rob) Harkins. Brenda was not with us for this meeting. She is spending time with family in Colorado since the passing of her husband, Martin, following his lengthy battle with cancer. We installed new officers: Mary Beth Magee, president; Renee Penrose, vice-president; Brenda Finnegan, secretary; and Patty Butkovich, treasurer. We also confirmed our 2024 Contest Category, acrostic. We discussed details of the summer, shared our poems, enjoyed refreshments provided by Mary Lee, and conducted our business meeting.

The group celebrated Patty's recovery from her stroke while on vacation in Illinois and rejoiced to see her present at the meeting. We bid a sad farewell to Judy Davies as she steps back from the group to focus on health issues and her music. Condolences were shared for Brenda Finnegan on the loss of her husband, Martin.

From Mary Beth~~Poets are urged to consider submitting their work to "Chicken Soup for the Soul" books as appropriate. The publisher accepts poetry as well as prose for consideration and selected works are compensated with a monetary payment and copies of the book. Check out upcoming topics at <https://www.chickensoup.com/story-submissions/possible-book-topics/>. Each volume contains 101 entries.



Officers: Mary Beth Magee, President; Renee Penrose, Vice-President; and Patty Butkovich, Treasurer. (Not pictured: Brenda Finnegan, Secretary.) Photo by Carol Hutcherson

**West Branch** continues to grow in numbers. We have ten attending the meetings and vigorously sharing their work. They are even more interested in writing poetry because of the interaction with poets in the group. Next month we're going to try writing prompts (maybe a Halloween theme). ~~~Mark LaFrancis

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**Congratulations to the winners of the Food Poetry Competition organized by Tishomingo Arts Council, The Crossroads Poetry Project & Cats After Dark - Poet Society and sponsored by The Apron Museum and Iuka Piggly Wiggly & Ace Hardware!**

Adult Winners:

**First Place - COFFEE by Galen Mark LaFrancis CONGRATS!!**

Second Place - WHEN I GROW OLD by Augusta Scattergood

Third Place - IRON GODDESS OF MERCY by James Dickson

**Fourth Place - GIVING RISE TO YESTERDAY by Linda Owen CONGRATS!!**

Youth Winners:

First Place - THE PINK COOKIES by Sharlee Shumpert

Second Place - THE TASTE OF AUTUMN by Sharlee Shumpert

Third Place - THE BELOVED ANCIENT BREAD by Julianna K. Strong

## MPS MEMBERS' REPORTS

### Janice Canerdy

\*\*collected \$100 from Potts Camp Bank for student contest prizes; awaiting donation from Bank of New Albany

\*\*Six poems, *Spare Mule* Newsletter (Missouri State Poetry Society), August

\*\*"Summer Nights and Porches," "Sweet Solitude," and "It's Summer," *Halcyon Days* summer, issue 30, in print and online

\*\*"We'll Just Keep This Between Ourselves," *Lighten Up Online*, September

\*\*"There's Much to Be Said for Swings" and "Do Not Enter; Do not Exit," *Sparks of Calliope*, online July 21, 2023

\*\*"Beauty Should Be Appreciated," *Westward Quarterly*, print, summer

\*\*Honorable Mention for one limerick in August and one in September, *Mad Kane's Humor Blog* (humorist/poet Madeleine Kane manages the blog.)

\*\*"Ode to Porches," *Your Daily Poem*, featured August 26

\*\*"Blackberry Memories," Society of Classical Poets website, September 10

\*\*"The Real Thing," *Rue Scribe* (a publication of Underwood Press) September 25 online

\*\*"The Johnsons' Storied Walls," an ekphrastic poem in response to artwork provided by the Kocomo Art Gallery in Indiana (in collaboration with the Poetry Society of Indiana) is on display beside the artwork at the gallery.

**Brenda Finnegan's** poem "April Moon" (from her book, *Horn Island Vista*) was put to music by a singer/songwriter friend from New York, and performed by Johnny Molinari at the Writers Bloc Songwriting Workshop LIVE on August 31, 2023 in New York.

Brenda, thank you for allowing me to include this lovely photo of you and Martin. Janice

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Martin James Finnegan was the first permanent deacon assigned to St. Elizabeth Seton parish in Ocean Springs (in 1988). This was their last photo, taken for their parish directory.

**Alecia Gabrielle** won 1st place in the William Faulkner Literary Competition, Poetry Division. The awards ceremony was held at the United Methodist Church in New Albany, MS, on September 21.

WOW! Congratulations, Alecia!!



Here is the link to the entire list of winners. Alecia. Thanks for sending me that. Janice Mississippi is well-represented~~several honors.

<https://williamfaulknerliterarycompetition.com/2023-winners/>

**Robert Goddard's** sonnet, "The Alpha Squirrel," is a finalist for the Royal Palms Literary Award for Poetry, by the Florida Writers Association, of which he is a member. Annual awards are given for various categories of writing such as novels, short stories, monologues, and poetry. He submitted five poems, with two of them being semi-finalists, with one of those judged as a finalist. There will be three winners in each category: gold, silver, and bronze. Each poem was judged on ten points with each point given a grade of from 1 to 10. Medals will be awarded to winners at a banquet during the annual conference in mid-October.

**Bill Hill** placed second in the Poetry Society of Tennessee September Monthly Contest with "Sonnet to He Who Did Not Try." He held a poetry workshop at the Byhalia Library on Sept. 21. Monthly poetry readings will continue at the Coffee Central locations in Desoto County: 2nd Tuesday in Southaven and 4th Tuesday in Hernando. He is really honored to be the North Branch President.

## **Emory Jones**

- \*\*“The Frog on the Lily Pad” was published by the Illinois State Poetry Society in August 2023.
- \*\*“Morning Miracle” won Third Honorable Mention in It Bears Repeating Award of the White County Writers 28th Annual Writer’s Conference, September 2, 2023.
- \*\*“Forever Faun” won First Place in Category #5 (Beach Bards Publishing Contest) of the 2023 Alabama State Poetry Society’s 2023 Annual Contest.
- \*\*“Playful Spring” won honorable mention in Category #9 (I’ll Take the French Form, S’il Vous Plait) of the Alabama State Poetry Society’s 2023 Annual Contest.
- \*\*“The Taste of Words” was published online by Highland Park Poetry on September 12, 2023.
- \*\*“Divine Sculpture” won Third Place in the September 2023 Members only Contest of the Poets’ Roundtable of Arkansas.
- \*\*“Ecstasy” won Second place in Category #3 (Amy Dengler Award) of the 2023 Massachusetts State Poetry Society Contest.
- \*\*“Epiphany” won First Place in Category #9 (Olga Blaus Memorial Award #2) of the 2023 Massachusetts State Poetry Society Contest.
- \*\*“Night Tides” won Third Place in Category #19 (Jimmy Caola Memorial Award) of the 2023 Massachusetts State Poetry Society Contest.
- \*\*“The Cat’s Meow” won First Place in Category #22 (Patricia Tacelli +Memorial Award) of the 2023 Massachusetts State Poetry Society Contest.

Though the following information is not current, it makes a timeless and moving point about the power of poetry!

**Karen Linstrum**, a faculty member at Jackson State University, has a doctorate in Counseling. She teaches in the Counseling, Rehabilitation, and Psychometric Department within the College of Education and Human Development. She conducted poetry therapy via Telehealth during the middle of the COVID pandemic. To get the patients to express themselves, she used the basic Haiku because they had to count the syllables. Counting syllables, thinking and expressing their feelings about people or things they appreciated was good for their cognitive recovery. Most of her patients had “brain fog,” and all had “long COVID,” meaning having symptoms of COVID for 3-6 months after the initial onset of COVID.

They did not particularly stick with the “nature” orientation, but feelings were expressed. Her patients liked these three best:

|                           |                             |                            |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Serving the country       | My mom was a nurse          | Todd loves trains the most |
| Combat Medic World War II | Surgery is what she liked   | Reads books till 4 a m     |
| My Daddy, I'm proud.      | Knees, digits, hands, hips! | Sleeps till football on!   |

**Mary Beth Magee** spoke at two sessions of the Berries, Bridges and Books conference in Ponchatoula, LA, on July 29. Her topics were “Writing Cozy Mysteries” and “Writing for Contests.” She will speak at the Picayune Writers Group 14th Annual Free Writers Symposium on Sept. 30 on “Not Just the Facts - Bringing Life to Nonfiction.” Her newest poetry collection, *The World Through Tears*, released on Sept. 19.

**Keith Morris** had a poem published in *Kairos*, vol 7, print.



**Linda Owen** wrote “Lasting Blessings,” a tribute poem for Rev. Josh Gray at First Methodist Church in Brandon. He and his wife, Kristin, are being gifted by the church with a trip to the Holy Land. Linda will enjoy the honor of reading this poem to them before they leave.

**Elizabeth Washington (Lizzie)** See Dorothy Wiman’s report and the flyer below.



Here is the schedule for the event:

- 1:00 Welcome, Warm-up, and Introduction of speaker
  - 1:15 Keynote Speaker, Ayanna Lynn
  - 1:45 Acknowledgments, Elizabeth Washington
- Followed by lunch and vendors, closing at 2:30

**Dorothy Wiman** collected \$200 from Belzoni banks for student contest prizes. She has provided information (above) about a special event at which she will represent MPS. Elizabeth Washington (Lizzie) got this event together herself. We are fortunate to have a teenage member like Lizzie, who is so creative and active. Dorothy and North branch are very proud of her. (See flyer.)

## MEMBERS' POEMS (IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER)

“Twas the Night Before Christmas (mostly anapestic meter)

“Twas the night before Christmas and all through the malls  
there was widespread confusion and hot, frenzied brawls.  
Many shoppers were wanting the same bloomin’ gifts.  
Desperation resulted in feud-level rifts.  
There were four grandmas fighting for one preschool game.  
Their ferocity made angry pit bulls look tame.  
Jostling shoppers collided and bags hit the floor.  
Their attempts to retrieve them caused head butts and more.  
Loud confusion—“That’s mine!” “No, it’s mine!!”—could be heard.  
Shocked bystanders heard more than one naughty word.  
Two old geezers that should have been home fast asleep  
bumped into a tired Santa; all fell in a heap.  
When announcements “Ten minutes till close” hit their ears,  
those who hadn’t found all they desired held back tears.  
The wild nightmare soon ended, and tired folks went home,  
feeling sure no time soon, crowded malls they would roam.  
All would vow, “NO MORE last-minute shopping for me!”  
Christmas morning—well-rested— all smiles by the tree,  
they remembered the monsters they’d been just last night  
and rejoiced that those creatures were nowhere in sight!

Janice Canerdy

## Grandma's Legacy

Hair pulled back, knitting needles flying,  
we read the patterns to her as her eyesight failed.  
No one could knit faster or more accurately.  
She seldom missed a stitch, even at age 92.

Colorful scarves and mittens emerged like Christmas  
magic; intricately detailed sweaters a special prize.  
My daughter still has the baby sweater grandma knit for  
her first great-great-grand--kittens with balls of yarn.

Grandma wrote down everything-knitting patterns,  
journals of family history, stories and poetry.  
She'd always kept them safely locked in her  
cedar chest at the foot of her bed.

It was her last Christmas; I was fourteen.  
Knowing I loved to write poetry and stories, too,  
that Christmas she passed to me her legacy:  
78 years of writing she'd begun when she was 14.

Judy Davies, “. . . the revision of a very old Christmas story-poem of mine based on my true story.”

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## A Christmas Apple

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I cut my Christmas stocking apple,  
not lengthwise, but across its broad base.  
Its coldness feels good in my palm. A drop of juice  
trickles down my wrist. Its top is like a  
beanie I once wore to parochial  
school. Laying it aside, I start to bite  
the other piece, but stop. I see a star  
in the center of the pale pulp, like the  
Star of the Magi. It is five-pronged, and  
nestled in it is a single seed, like  
the infant Jesus. Outside the star are  
dots, one at each star-tip and another  
in between. Ten dots, like solicitous  
angels swarming around, or a circle  
of shepherds, or perhaps the Decalogue  
of which the infant-grown-man would speak years  
later, explaining in simple terms what  
took the elders centuries to confuse.  
Simple, like this apple in my hand.

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Brenda Brown Finnegan, published in MPS 50th Anniversary Anthology *Lyric Mississippi* 1982

## PANDEMIC CHRISTMAS

My wife and I had a Pandemic Christmas.  
We have not set up and decorated a Christmas tree,  
But rather she got out our little green ceramic tree.  
We plug it up and it is beautiful.  
Our daughters have families of their own,  
We visited them over the telephone.  
But they did not come into our house  
Because they might bring in Covid.  
On Christmas Day, we watched  
The Christmas service over our television.  
We ate chicken and dressing  
With cream of chicken soup over it,  
English pea casserole, little smokies.  
And sugar-free fruit.  
We watched Christmas movies like  
White Christmas, Christmas in Connecticut,  
The Bishop's Wife, Miracle on 34th Street,  
The Christmas Cottage, and The Christmas Choir.  
All in all,  
We had a pretty nice Christmas.

Emory Jones

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## Hanukah Poem

On the cold of winter's night, voices hushed, windows tight,  
Supper finished, dishes stacked, soup to nuts, nothing lacked,  
Brass unboxed, brought to sight, candles stuffed, poised to light  
Forty-four candles, carefully packed, removed in a series, carefully racked  
Prayers are sung as we ignite and stand together to recite  
Ancient stories full of facts, days of lore, heroes backed.

Rebellion bold, those realized, that faith alone, and more besides,  
Must fight against the evil way, Romans and pagans want their say.  
The Maccabees, a tribe with pride, killed themselves, nine hundred died,  
So the winners of the day, their swords unblemished, their nerves in fray,  
Hollow victory they must hide, to find those dead, a genocide.  
Their memories of yesterday, for years to come we'll always pray.

Those days of suffering and woe, are now all past, or mostly so,  
And now the stories all are told, time to cheer and be bold  
Unwrap the gifts with shiny bow, as we play by candle glow,  
Eat hamentashen, served up cold, its poppy seeds a heavy load,  
A crowd of friends we all know, as hours wind it's time to go.  
We spin our dreidels, coins of gold, and think about those days of old.

Philip Levin

## Candles of Love Glisten

Candles of love glisten  
While before the fire we listen  
To stories old, to stories new,  
That post the year passing in review.

But not a story, so many times told,  
Can preen love's candle or change the mold;  
Can brighten the flickering light, or sustain the weakened,  
As well as the story of the Christ child, humbly unfolded.

by Ruth F. Richmond

A sincere "Thank you" to all of you that submitted individual reports, branch reports, photos, and poems. Let's all get ready to write some great poems for the annual spring contest.

Till next time . . . .

Janice