

Magnolia Muse

Newsletter of Mississippi Poetry Society



SPRING 2024 EDITION

Sweet long-awaited spring~~here at last! It's 73 degrees and breezy here in Potts Camp (the 20th), just heavenly! Yesterday morning the ground was covered in frost. After all, this IS Mississippi. Then there were rain storms. Today (March 25), it's cool and windy. I hope my neighbors love wind chimes. If they don't, they must be having very unpleasant thoughts about me.

J. P., thanks so much for producing the attractive newsletter heading and assisting me with the formatting of the newsletter!

Now~~for some branch news

BRANCH REPORTS

NORTH BRANCH

The poetry open mic nights that the North Branch co-sponsors at the Coffee Central locations are now set for the third Saturday of each month in Hernando and for the fifth Saturday in Southaven.

SUBMITTED BY BILL HILL

We had four present at the February branch meeting at the Lee County Library in Tupelo: Bill Hill, Carey Myers, Dorothy Wiman, and Janice Canerdy. Our branch President, Bill Hill, encouraged us with a devotional centered around an ancient lighthouse in Alexandria, Egypt. He referenced Matthew 5: 14-16 to convey the theme that we can be a light to others. Topics discussed were venues for future meetings and the need (1) to follow the MPS "Constitution and By-Laws" and (2) to pay dues on time ("Constitution and By-Laws" says November 1.) We shared our poems and had a lively discussion. The next meeting was scheduled for March 23 at the Starkville McAlister's.

Present at the March 23 meeting were Bill Hill, Dorothy Wiman, Emory and Glenda Jones, Carey Myers, Janice Canerdy, Michael Shelton, and Nicole and Stanley Mangum, owners and operators of Liberations Publishing House in Columbus. They are celebrating ten years in business. They are publishing a book for Michael Shelton~~*The Dragon in the Lighthouse*. We also previewed material for a video the Branch is producing for National Poetry Month. The next meeting will be in Lexington in May.

SUBMITTED BY JANICE CANERDY



THE CENTRAL BRANCH conducted our monthly meeting on Saturday, March 16, attended by 6 members: Pete Massey, Linda Owen, Bill Gressett, Patsy Twiner, Peggy Shumaker, and our newest member, Foster Welburn. We also had one visitor, Pat Martin. After taking care of routine business matters, we were able to go around the table sharing our poetry with everyone contributing three poems for discussion. Central branch continues to have members who attend and recite their poems at the monthly Open Mic Night at Pacesetters Art Gallery which was held on Thursday, March 7, this month. We are excited about having the current Poet Laureate for Mississippi -- Catharine Pierce -- as our Keynote speaker at this year's Spring Festival scheduled for April 26 - 28 in Brandon. She will also be conducting a workshop. Looking forward to hosting our MPS members from across the state and I encourage everyone to go online to the MPS website at misspoetry.net for details on how to register.

SUBMITTED BY PETE MASSEY



SOUTH BRANCH is dealing with location issues as area libraries where we usually meet undergo renovations and rotating closures. Our March 9, 2024, took place at Ice Cream and More in Gautier, MS, a business owned by Danielle Wyatt, one of our members.

Past president Mary Lee Terry is recuperating at home after a fall and rehab.

Our April 13 meeting will be at the Ocean Springs Public Library. On Thursday, May 2, our members will hold a second book signing at the Biloxi Visitors Center between 3 and 5 p.m. Five of our members participated in our first session on March 2, which resulted in contact with visitors from all over the state as well as across the nation. We were able to tell them about opportunities for poets of all ages on both the state and national level. Pictured from left to right: seated, branch treasurer Patty Butkovich, branch secretary Brenda Finnegan, branch vice president Rene Penrose; standing: Carol Hutcherson, branch president Mary Beth Magee.

Members of other branches are welcome to join us on May 2 if they wish. Please email Mary Beth at MaryBethMageeWrites@gmail.com if you would like more information or to reserve a seat.

SUBMITTED BY MARY BETH MAGEE



The West Branch had a large turnout March 9 in a joint free workshop with the Natchez Chapter of the Mississippi Writers Guild. West Branch president G. Mark LaFrancis is the former president of MWG. Our speaker was nationally recognized author John Floyd, known principally for his mystery short stories, but Floyd is a poet as well. He talked about the craft of writing, mistakes writers make, constructing a story, and did a long Q&A. We thank the MWG for organizing the workshop and providing refreshments. MWG founder Richelle Putnam, a prolific writer, was in attendance. LaFrancis was unable to attend due to medical issues.

SUBMITTED BY MARK LAFRANCIS



MEMBERS' REPORTS

Janice Canerdy

One HM in Society of Classical Poets annual International Poetry Competition~~~one poem, spring '24 issue of *Westward Quarterly*, print~~~*Your Daily Poem's* featured poem March 26~~~2nd HM, Poetry Round Table of Arkansas, February members-only contest~~~2nd place, humor; and 2nd HM free verse, Missouri

John W. "Doc" Crawford

placed 2nd in the Grand Prize category and won an H.M. in a humorous category of the Pennsylvania Poetry Society annual contests~~~placed in one category of the major prizes of the Oklahoma Poetry Society contest~~~I won 1st in an AR area haiku contest in December~~~will be singing and presenting his poem "Nothing Wants to Die in the Spring" at the 3/13 meeting of Wednesday Night Poetry in Hot Springs. This is the 35th year of WNP with never a Wednesday night missed.

Gail Denham

1st place in Tennessee contest with "Been There" (narrative)~~~poems in *Quill & Parchment*, January and February~~~monthly poems in *Poetic Voices*~~~3rd in Massachusetts Of Thee I Sing with Aunt May and Her Bard";~~~2nd & 3rd in Florida~~~ 3 poems in *Swallow's Nest*~~~"No Curtains, 2nd in ISPS contest; 3rd in *Poets & Patrons* with "We Three"; 2nd pl in Oklahoma and 3rd in Arizona contest with "The First Noel"~~~2nd in PRA (Ark) with "Creation"~~~Highland Park placed my poems "The First Noel" and "Gothics" on their Facebook page.

Alecia Gabrielle

new poetry book *Mostly Happenstance* to be released on July 5, 2024~~~created a Facebook page titled *Panoramic Poets* that all poets living in the South are welcome to join to share poems, ask for feedback, and more!

Bill Hill

Massachusetts State Poetry Society, 3rd place, monthly contest for the poem "We Don't Do It." March 15 and 16, served as the Chaplin for the Mid-South Christian Writers Conference. March 11, led a beginners' poetry workshop at The Ruth B. French Library in Byhalia.

Emory Jones

"Eyes of Love" 2nd Place (Alfred Von Brokoph Award) of the 2023 Florida State Poets Association Contest~~~"Sacred Music" 3rd Place (Agates Category) of the 2023 League of Minnesota Poets Contest~~~"Wise Men" December 2023 issue of *Pennsylvania's Poeticices*~~~"Forever Faun" HM in the 2023 Nebraska Poetry Society Contest~~~"Divine Sculpture" January 2024 issue of *Pennsylvania's Poetic Voices*~~~"The Resting Place" 2nd Place in the Jesse Bartlet Memorial Award of the Pennsylvania Poetry Society's 2024 Contest~~~"Her Photograph" 3rd Place in the Eleanor B Lapham Memorial Contest of the

Pennsylvania Poetry Society's 2024 Contest~~~"This Old House" 1st HM in the Winifred G. McDowell
Pennsylvania Poetry Society's 2024 Contest~~~"The Spirit Moves You" 2nd H M in the Michael Meager
Memorial Award of the Pennsylvania Poetry Society's 2024 Contest~~~"Deep Freeze" Connecticut
Poetry Society's 2024 Member's poems ~~~"Deep Freeze" 1st H M in the Humorous Category of the 2024
Missouri State Poetry Society's Winter Contest~~~"Summer Hummm" 3rd HM in the Free Verse Category
of the 2024 Missouri State Poetry Society's Winter Contest~~~"Deep Freeze" 2024 edition. *Agates*, a
journal of the League of Minnesota Poets.

Linda Owen is delighted to be among the authors chosen to be recognized at the Brandon Library on
April 20 for the CMRLS (Central Mississippi Regional Library System) "Literature and Arts" Brunch
from 10 am-12 pm. She will also be guest author/speaker at St. Richard's Catholic Church's "Young at
Heart" luncheon on Thursday, April 18, 11:30 am. She was the invited author/speaker at the February
meeting of Brandon Methodist Church's Ruth Circle, at which she presented a program on the word
"Love."

POEMS ABOUT SPRING AND EASTER

Balloon Man

A balloon man
Holds spring
In dancing bubbles
Born aloft
On slender strings
Of warm expectation

Children
With rainbow eyes
Chase the season
Through laughter's streets
Saving pennies
And dreams
In bottomless pockets

The sun
Signs the sky
And tepid winds
Whisper
Melting winter
Into yesterday

James J. (Jim) Brown

A Heavenly Spring Day

My front porch is my throne today
as I rest in my swing.
The birds and squirrels are at play.
My wind chimes softly sing.

Green grass and my grand ancient trees
have moved my pen to write
of them, of drifting clouds that please,
and butterflies in flight.

Spring's fragrant blooms engage my muse,
along with bees and birds.
Last lines appear, all due to views
that summoned forth the words.

Janice Canerdy

INESCAPABLE OBLIGATIONS

Ann Carolyn Cates

Our CPA is a lifelong friend
but I have waited years
to hear the words he said today.
I'm shedding happy tears.

He handed my stack of papers back
after he looked at them a while,
said Social Security checks aren't taxable
and I have no need to file.

This sentence hung above my head
for all the years I worked.
I knew my civic duty then
an obligation not once shirked.

Each year, after April 15 deadline,
my tired brain relaxes,
but especially so this glorious year,
for I've escaped both death and taxes.

Ann Carolyn Cates

USE ME LORD

Lord, take my hands,
Unfold them for they lie entwined in rest,
Like a bud unopened.
Stretch out each finger,
Strengthening to a full-blown flower,
Then use me, Lord, to feed some hungry soul
As your Son, full-blown at death,
Nourishes the world.

Submitted by Dorothy Wiman Written by Dessie A. Caulfield

The Tomb

The tomb,
silent, deserted,
but not forgotten.

Strong walls,
a stone door could not
restrain the Holy One.

Did they
think earth could entomb
Almighty God, the Messiah?

What force
is great enough to abort
God's eternal plans?

The empty tomb.
A monument, attesting to
God's ultimate victory.

Peer into
the darkness, sense the
emptiness, and rejoice

He didn't linger here.
He had to be about His
Father's business.

...last publ. Gem, 1966, Gail Denham

Natural Wonder

Behind the Holiday Inn, while out for a walk,
tired from sitting through endless workshops,
I found a creek, bubbling through the woods.

It was within feet of the parking lot,
behind a stand of evergreen trees,
yet, totally unnoticed by the crowd
of people inside and rushing to and from their cars.

I took off my shoes, and sat on the emerald grassy slope,
listening to the water bubbling over the rocks,
watching the shadows of light from the gently
moving leaves of jade, lime and olive
from trees on the opposite bank, feeling the breeze
that blew in the shadowy glen, keeping the hot sun at bay.

I marveled at the verdant sight, thinking of
the thousands of dollars spent on landscaping
around the hotel: perfectly trimmed beds of
palms and crepe myrtle, Mexican heather, bayberry,
pale green grasses and tons of mulch,
while within a few hundred feet
lay a beautiful natural scene, unused, unnoticed.

by Brenda Brown Finnegan

Doris Jones hopes “all my Mississippi poet-friends are doing well. We are doing well and settling in here in S.C. Here's spring haiku for you:

Lakeside irises,
brilliant yellow hosannas,
held for all to see.”

THE COURTYARD

Queen Lilies preen in the morning dew,
They're holding royal court in my back yard
With daisies and pansies making sweet debut
While multicolored roses stand around,

From delicate pinks and yellows to fiery hue
Against the lush dark green of new-mown grass
A natural scene that is beautiful to view—
Queen Lilies preen in the morning dew.

On this spring day, the sky is gorgeous blue
Reflected in the pond as still as glass
So full of water lilies that you knew
That they could form a flower crown

They're holding royal court in my back yard,
A flower kingdom that we hardly knew,
Queen lilies preen in the morning dew.

Emory Jones

Spring's Touch

The springs I spent in Illinois were dank, chilled, wet with melting snow,
Yet glorious in the colors shared as blossoming bulbs peeked from below.

In northern Cali, springs brought green but filled with sorrow in a way.
Low snowfalls meant the drought went on with little water left for play.

Now that I'm home, back in the South, Spring means so many things:
The thunderstorms, the flooded streets, and to the plants, new beginnings.

Like all those flowers, I'm new, too. My life has changed so very much.
The longtime dreams have been revived with Southern springtime's warming touch.

Old friends and new, a landscape changed—yet somehow still I deeply know
I'm home again and growing strong in faith and joy and love, and so

I dare to look toward His throne and pray my simple words will give
A signpost for the way to Him, so some lost soul may for Him live.

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Earth Waking

Spring sprinkles in
kissing the sleepy earth
with raindrop mirth.

"Wake up, sweet sod!" she says,
"It's time to dance with God!
and see His miracles again!"

"Shake off your drowsy chill,
and sprout your color wheel
before the rainbow races to the sun
and leaves you snoozing here
long after he's begun."

"Wake up, dear earth, wake up!
All creation waits to see
if the dreams you are dreaming
will come true!"

L. W. Owen
from "A Gift of Dappled Light," p. 12

Let's All Go

Let's go for a walk outside,
Let's go and get a breath of fresh air,
Let's go chase butterflies
And do the things I dare.

Let's play hide-go-seek
And romp in the grass
Let's climb the steeps by the creek
And try to catch the teeny bass.

Come on, Spot, let's go
Where my secret hide-out calls,
Let's chase the squirrels as before
And catch some water from the falls.

Mom, Dad, you come too,
Get out of the house—let's all go!
The path by the woodsy slew—
Spot knows, so let's all go.

Ruth Richmond

Fantasy

This time of year when I can sit and dream
as bright sunlight completely fills earth's bowl,
and know that things are not just as they seem,
perceptions mirror longings of my soul.
The wind will whisper secrets to the pine,
and stop to kiss the daisy on the hill;
then trace with eye the clear horizon line,
as birds emit their ceaseless, joyful trill.
As sunlight splatters gold upon the earth,
(the smallest ray can give a lot of pain)
It makes the dullest swampland seem of worth
with steamy fragrance after gentle rain.
When springtime piques my senses, then I find
A quest awakes in corners of my mind.

Dorothy Rogers

Producing the *Magnolia Muse* for the past two years has been an honor and a great **learning** experience. Many thanks to all of you who have sent branch and individual reports, photos, and poems~~for providing widely-varied and interesting material for the newsletters.

I hope to see you at the festival. I had never attended a Society festival till 2017. I really didn't know what I was missing! I haven't skipped one since; I've enjoyed every minute of each one.

Janice