



Southern
Minnesota
Poets Society

The SMPS is a regional chapter of the League of Minnesota Poets, holds opens meetings on the second Saturday of the month from September through May at the River Hills Mall, Mankato, MN from 12:00 – 3:30 p.m.

Meetings are open to all who love poetry and writing. For further information contact

Bethany Berry, Editor at Bethany.berry@mnsu.edu, or Sue Chambers, President, at 507-278-4200 or e-mail PoetSue@aol.com

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Sue Chambers, *Pres.*
Ike Sarma, *VP*
Faye Mattison, *Sec.*
Doria Wachter, *Treas.*
Monica Haack,
Corresponding Sec.
Sandra Newbauer,
Regional VP

January 2006

Volume 26, Issue 01

Thistle Down

Happy New Year to All!

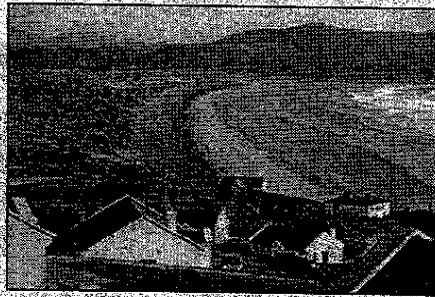
As we look forward to an exciting new year of poetry and fellowship, we hope that your New Year's Resolutions include making time for writing poetry. All of the events this year are sure to further develop the gift within. We eagerly anticipate seeing you at upcoming events!

Saturday January 14th ; 12 noon

WRITING IN IRELAND

SMPS members Sue Chambers, Colin Chambers and Christina Flaughter discuss their Irish Writing Adventure.

At the beginning of September four members of our group traveled to the Dingle Peninsula in County Kerry Ireland. Join us on January 14th, 2006 for a discussion of their writing experience. See pictures from the trip and hear about two wonderful weeks of poetry.



Assignment for January: Haiku *This Japanese poem consists of three lines, usually arranged in a syllable count of 5-7-5. Metaphor and personification are not a part of this short poem, and it usually contains a reference to nature.*



Coffee Hag Reading

SMPS Poetry readings continue at the Coffee Hag every 3rd Monday of the month. Join us for the next reading on January 16th. The theme is "THE WINNER IS..."! See you there!!

✓ Mark Your Calendar

NFSPS Poetry Convention

Don't forget the NFSPS Convention. Call Sue Chambers for information on registration and hotel accommodations. The convention is in San Antonio, Texas; June 8th - 11th. In order to facilitate as many LOMP members going as possible LOMP is providing a subsidy of \$1,000.00 to get our members there on a group bus. For more information or if you are interested in attending contact Susan Chambers at 507-278-4260 or e-mail her at PoetSue@aol.com

February Critique Session

For the Critique session in February members need to bring a poem to this meeting.

Poems should be no more than one page. Please bring two copies, one with your name on it, one that is not identified. Put the unidentified copy in a seal envelope.

Everyone who brings a poem will also pick up a poem to be critiqued by the next meeting.

When participating, please remember Doris Stengel's rules for a positive critique.

President's Message

I hope everyone had safe and Happy Holidays. I look forward to seeing all of you and hearing your latest poetry accomplishments in 2006!

Consider making a New Year resolution to challenge yourself in your craft of writing this year. For some, this may be reading more poets; for others, this may mean getting in front of that microphone and sharing your work. For yet others, perhaps it is conquering a new and more difficult form than you have tried in the past.

Christina and I set out a challenge of a poem-a-day after the last Blizzard Retreat. We are now up to the 344th day. We have missed assignments, of course. We have written silly one-liners. Christina found rather than writing a poem each day, it was important for her to just be writing. She has completed a book! Some days, we have found an assigned exercise has taken our poetry to some new threshold that we may never have crossed without the trigger. Each of us measures our success in different ways, which is only right. We set the goals as individuals, although we are grateful to have each other's support. I am pleased with what I have learned from this exercise: it has stretched my abilities in new directions.

This is what I like about poetry. Unlike athletic goals, where one day your body just refuses to let you achieve those ultimate gold medals, in poetry you always have an opportunity to grow and stretch your writing skills.

So here is my challenge: take a little time to think about your own poetry. Find a writing goal for this year that is right for you. Find a friend or family member who can encourage you as you venture out into the unknown and go for the gold! Happy New Year.

SUE

7th ANNUAL

League of Minnesota Poets

BLIZZARD WRITER'S POETRY RETREAT

WHEN: 4th weekend of January. Come Thursday, January 26th afternoon or night through Sunday, January 29th, 2006 (Or who knows how long if we get snowed in!)

WHERE: At the home of Sue Chambers, located in the country on 10 lovely wooded acres next to the Big Cobb River, 10 miles south of Mankato, Minnesota. There are many bedrooms in the main house, additional if needed in garage apartment. There are fireplaces to curl up in front of, a full library so we can consult the authorities, and good places to hike, ski or skate. **LOCAL MEMBERS ARE ASKED TO COME DAILY INSTEAD OF OVERNIGHT, IF POSSIBLE.**

Directions: Approximately 8 miles south of Mankato on Highway 22. Turn west (right) on County Road 16. (Or 2 miles north of Beauford, if coming from the south, and turn left (west) on County Road 16). Follow Co. 16 and turn left on the 2nd gravel road on the left (approximately 2 miles). Follow gravel road to first right (Don't turn into farmhouse driveway!) (Approximately one-half mile), turn right. House is on the right, is milk chocolate in color. Look for the dogs! (Friendly)

WHO: You! This retreat is for all who are interested in poetry.

WHAT IS REQUIRED: Bring a poetry program that is at least half an hour in length and some food to share. The program can be anything that tickles your fancy--a writing workshop, a favorite author, a new form, a lecture, a special taped program that you want to lead a discussion on...the possibilities are endless. Joint programs are also permissible.

Not required, but you might also want to bring hiking boots, cross-country skis, skates, a sled. Please notify Sue Chambers at least 3 weeks in advance so that food selections can be coordinated.

Want to Come? Contact Sue Chambers:

57310 166th Lane, Good Thunder, Minnesota 56037

Home phone: (507)278-4200

Work phone: (507)625-3000 Fax: (507) 625-2002

E-mail: PoetSue@AOL.Com or Schambers@Katolaw.com

The League of Minnesota Poets
proudly presents

Twentieth Annual Manningham Poetry Competition
(Deadline: February 1st postmark)
State and National Awards (no entry fee)
School year 2005-2006

Two Categories:
Grade 6-8 (Junior Division) & Grades 9-12 (Senior Division)

Contest Entry Rules:
All students school in Minnesota are eligible: whether attending public, parochial, private or home schooled. Submit two copies of ONE original poem. No more than 50 lines. If more than one page, staple the second page. TYPE THE POEM. Please do not use fancy typefaces, colored fonts, or illustrations. *Submit only one poem per student per year.*

One copy of the poem should contain only the poem with title. This poem goes to the Judge. If your name appears anywhere on the page (in the poem or after the poem) it will be disqualified.

The second copy should contain the following information: 1) student name and complete home address 2) student's grade and division (junior or senior) 3) school name, address and the school's phone number. 4) A statement "This is my original work." The student must sign this statement. 5). Poems submitted may have been published or may have won previous awards. *Poems that disregard these entry rules will be disqualified. Please be considerate of our Judges. We want to see your work, but we need it to be in the correct format.*

Nationally recognized poets judge the contest. The winners will have their poems published in a chapbook, which will be forwarded to all participating schools. The winners will also be sent to compete in the National Manningham competition. There they may win cash prizes and publication.

Mail all contest entries to:

Ike Sarma, Manningham Contest Chair
1557 Sharon Drive
North Mankato, Minnesota 56003

ALL POEMS MUST BE POSTMARKED BY FEBRUARY 1, 2006.
Good Luck, and Keep Writing!



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Sandra Newbauer, *Regional VP*

February 2006 Volume 26, Issue
02

Thistle Down

NOTE CHANGE OF LOCATION!

**DUE TO LAST MINUTE
REMODELING OF THE
COMMUNITY ROOM AT
THE RIVER HILLS MALL
WE WILL MEET AT SUE
CHAMBERS' HOUSE
FOR THIS MEETING
ONLY**

(DIRECTIONS ARE ATTACHED)

Get Ready for our February Critique Session!

On February 11 we will be featuring our Members Critiquing Session. At this meeting the poems submitted last month will be shared and critiqued.

Poems were submitted last month, and those who brought a poem picked up a poem to be critiqued by the next meeting.

When participating, please remember Doris Stengel's rules for a positive critique. They are as follows:

1. *Encourage each other*
2. *Make specific constructive criticism. General criticism such as "I like this poem" is not helpful.*

3. *Don't take yourself too seriously, have fun.*
4. *Avoid using words like bad or good. Instead ask yourself does this poem seem clear to you? Instead it's important to questions about the poem's clarity, if it has concrete images, if it avoids uses of clichés, has a first and last line that is strong etc.*

THIS WILL BE POTLUCK

Check for your last name and please bring:

- | | |
|-----|----------------|
| A-E | Salad |
| F-K | Hot dish, meat |
| L-P | Buns, breads |
| Q-Y | Vegetable |

SUE WILL PROVIDE DESSERT

We Look Forward to Seeing You There!

January's Irish Insight January's program featured the Chambers family recounting of their amazing trip to Ireland in fall of 2005. They were generous enough to share remarkable pictures of the Emerald Isle with the group as well as read poems generated by workshops attended while on the retreat. It was great to think of thirty some poets gathered together by the ocean sharing their work and challenging themselves.

Thanks again!



Please Note:

For the sake of our members who are chemically sensitive, please refrain from wearing scented products such as perfume, aftershave, hairspray, scented lotions, etc.

Thank you.

The Annual Blizzard Retreat!

At the end of January a great time was held by all who made the trek to the home of Sue Chambers in rural Good Thunder. At times the group included up to 20 poets. Some came from as far away as Brainerd and Rochester to eat, share poetry, write poetry and to just have a good time. The retreat kicked off on Thursday, January 26th, when the group took a field trip to the Minnesota State University, Mankato campus to go to a reading of English faculty. They were privileged enough to be able to hear Candace Black, Susanne Bunkers, Terry Davis, and Richard Terrill read from their published and unpublished works. The reading was a delightful mix of both poetry and prose. Throughout the weekend the gathering was blessed by great homemade food (thanks to Jim Eberling from the Mississippi Valley Poets for great pies!) and wonderful workshops that really got the writing going. Once again, thanks to Susan for agreeing to host this wonderful event and for opening her home for poetry.

Assignment for February: The "Gloss" form. This expands a well-known poet's quatrain in iambic pentameter or tetrameter. This quatrain, the text, must be given as an epigraph under the title of your poem, along with the author and title of poem. Following the epigraph are four sextet stanzas, 24 lines. Each stanza beginning with a line from the text with four original lines added in rhyme scheme of one's choosing and closing with the same line of the text.



Coffee Hag Reading

SMPS Poetry readings continue at the Coffee Hag every 3rd Monday of the month. Join us for the next one on *Feb. 20*. Our theme is "Completely Different". Last month we got snowed out, so poems on January's theme "and the winner is" can also be shared.

✓ Mark Your Calendar

NFSPS Poetry Convention

Don't forget the NFSPS Convention. Call Sue Chambers for information on registration and hotel accommodations. The convention is in San Antonio, Texas; June 8th - 11th. In order to facilitate as many LOMP members going as possible LOMP is providing a subsidy of \$1,000.00 to get our members there on a group bus. For more information or if you are interested in attending contact Susan Chambers at 507-278-4200 or e-mail her at PoetSue@aol.com.

President's Message

We are fast approaching a number of contest deadlines. March 15th is when the National Federation's 50 categories are due. A number of our assignments include poems which could be entered into the NFSPS contest.

Why enter contests? It isn't just for the thrill of hearing your name announced as a merit, honorable mention or winner, although I will admit that is a lot of fun. Entering also helps improve our poetry. Every time I begin working on my entries, I scrutinize my poem. How can I improve the lines, the meter, and the way it appears on the page? I check spelling; I search for just the right word. I

dress my "baby" in its finest clothes and send it out into the world.

This is a great way to get your poems polished! Otherwise, we often just place our poems into a file once the assignment is done, and never work on them again. All poems can benefit from some revision.

Don't be disappointed if there isn't a win the first time you send it out. Individual judges like different types of poetry, and just because one judge doesn't select it doesn't mean another won't like it.

But when the poem comes back, listen to the winners and look at your poem with a fresh eye. Were your images strong? Did you avoid clichés? How dynamic was your title? Again, at the end of a contest I often do some of my best revisions.

Be sure and enter this year! It is fun to have a large contingency of Minnesota poets entered. If you are present, you are able to read your winners at convention. All Minnesota Poets present celebrate your win with you, cheering and playing our loon calls.

This year, we want to get as many people down to San Antonio for the convention as possible. We are still working on the bus! SMPS membership will also be asked if some of our funds can be used to help subsidize members who want to go, maybe for the first time.

Don't forget that contest deadline for NFSPS-March 15th. If you don't enter, you can't win! Happy Writing!

SUE



Thistle Down

Join us this month for a special picnic!

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SMPS will be featuring our annual Potluck Picnic on Saturday, July 22nd at the Chamber's House in Good Thunder. The event starts at noon and ends around three or four o'clock in the evening.

We will also go over next year's calendar, so please mention any speaker ideas you want considered, as this is the time to bring them up!

THIS WILL BE POTLUCK

Check for your last name and please bring:

A-E	Salad
F-K	Dessert
L-P	Buns, breads
Q-Y	Vegetable

SUE WILL PROVIDE THE MAIN MEAT

Please feel free to bring a guest or family member to enjoy the fun!

THE SOUTHERN LEAGUE OF MINNESOTA POETS WOULD LIKE TO EXTEND THEIR CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL SMPS MEMBERS WHO TOOK HOME PRIZES AT THE ANNUAL NFSPS CONVENTION. JOB WELL DONE!



Coffee Hag Reading

SMPS Poetry readings continue at the Coffee Hag every 3rd Monday of the month at 7:00 p.m.. We could really use an audience who will cheer us on. Join us there!

July's Feature Article



A Texas Poetry Fiesta

By Bethany Berry

I was unsure of what to expect when attending the annual NFSPS poetry convention for the first time this June in San Antonio, TX. I knew the next five days would be full of special speakers, workshops and competition awards, but what I also found was a place where some of the greatest poetic minds across the country were able to come together and share in their mutual passion of the written word. From the beginning of the convention to the final award ceremony, I found myself surrounded by artists whose range of experience and love of poetry challenged and inspired my own.

Not only did I benefit from the general atmosphere of camaraderie, I also had the amazing opportunity to learn from the expertise and wisdom of many incredible special speakers. Among my favorites was Trinidad Sanchez Jr., who used references to traditional Hispanic foods as symbols

and metaphors to highlight human experience as well as his culture and heritage in his book, *Chicano Food is Hot*. Marian Haddad complemented this when she spoke about writing between cultures, "the muse is not a separate identity," she said "but rather ourselves at heightened attention." I also loved Allen Birkelbach's talk about the difference between symbols and shrines. "Symbols sum up a large number of meanings and attitudes," he said "while a shrine represents something past a place in time where it exists; it is a holding place for symbols."

Perhaps the most powerful part of the conference was hearing the convention's key note speaker, Naomi Shihab Nye on Sunday night. "Poetry is the cheapest art," she said, speaking about the essence of poetry. "It can also be healing. Poetry is the place where you can feel the timeless- in poetry the beauty [of a passing moment] is not lost." She also gave advice on writing poetry, "Think about something you said, now write what you wish you would have said. Give yourself permission to read and write what you love... you don't have to prove anything."

By the time I left the conference, I had a notebook full of fledgling poems, a head full of practical advice and a heart full of the warm companionship of poets across the nation. I look forward to next year's convention with eager anticipation.

President's Message



I hope you are finding time to write as we progress through this beautiful summer weather. Be sure and carve some time out for your creative passion. A good way to get the juices flowing is to take a poem you have already written and begin the work of a rewrite to make it better. I often find when I work on existing poems it gets me into the poetry writing mood and I go on to write new poems.

Other ways to trigger the muse include getting out to poetry events. With NFSPS Annual Convention in June, the Welch poetry event just held out at

Morgan Creek Winery, the Woodticks Poetry Retreat and other events, how can you not start writing poems?

I hope you will join us at our SMPS picnic. We will share food, poetry, nice weather and take a look at our plans for our new poetry year. We need your ideas! All are welcome, including friends who might not yet be members but love poetry.

Keep writing! SUE



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November Meeting: Deep Valley Book Festival Has Arrived!

Come join us at the Midwest Wireless Civic Center Saturday, November 11th for the Deep Valley Book Festival. The meeting and readings will be on the 2nd floor of the Civic Center. The display table will be in the main arena.

Throughout the entire day, the League of Minnesota Poet's will have a table to sell books of both the organization and individuals.

We need members to put in an hour or two at the table over the course of the day.

The Southern Minnesota Poets Society members have the opportunity to read their poetry at noon and also again at 6:00PM.

All members who are interested in volunteering and in sharing their work should contact Sue before November 8, 2006.

schambers@katolaw.com

Or 278-4200.

The Southern Minnesota Poet's Society and the RiverCrossings collaboration was a huge success!

In August, the Southern Minnesota Poet's Society met at The Envision Offices to experience original works of art and write about them. The poetry was then used for an exhibit in the RiverCrossings art fair in motion October 7th and 8th. Artists and poets were able to enjoy witnessing their own work complemented by a very different medium. Reactions from both poets and artists were positive at the end of the weekend, and all parties looked forward to collaborating again next year.



Coffee Hag Reading

*SMPS Poetry readings continue at the Coffee Hag every 3rd Monday of the month at 7:00 p.m. This year, each reading will feature the work of two of our own poets. After they are done sharing their work, the mike will be open for anyone who wishes to share their poetry. This month the poets reading on **NOV 20** are:*

Christina Flaughner, Anna Larson & Derek Liebertz

BE SURE AND COME TO CHEER THEM ON!

SMPS' thoughts are with Sister Justin Wirth as she assists family in dealing with illnesses.

POETRY ASSIGNMENT OF OCTOBER and NOVEMBER (we will share our your efforts at the Deep Valley Book Fair)

October Subject: A Poem that paints a portrait of someone, real or imaginary, with words instead of a paintbrush. Any form, 40 line limit

November "Cinquain" Form. The traditional cinquain is based on a syllable count. Line 1 - 2 syllables, line 2 - 4 syllables, line 3 - 6 syllables, line 4 - 8 syllables, line 5 - 2 syllables. The modern cinquain is based on a word count of words of a certain type: line 1 - one word (noun) a title or name of the subject, line 2 - two words (adjectives) describing the title, line 3 - three words (verbs) describing an action related to the title, line 4 - four words describing a feeling about the title, a complete sentence, line 5 - one word referring back to the title of the poem. Example:

A Threat

By Suzanne Honour

*Storm clouds,
casting shadows
over weary soldiers,
threaten to cry heavy buckets
of tears.*

President's Message



This year SMPS is getting out in the community. Our successful collaborations with other groups have made us more visible throughout southern Minnesota. I have had more than one person come up and indicate how much they enjoyed hearing from our members, and seeing their poetry, both at the COFFEE HAG featured readings, and at RiverCrossings. Soon we will have the results of our Poetry into Music Competition. Musicorum has already been working on their part, obtaining grants to pay the composer, and planning the gala performance of the poem on **May 5, 2007**. There will also be an opportunity for SMPS poets to read during the performance.

When we reach out to new audiences we help get the word out about poetry. This is not a dead art form! Many of those who have a chance to hear or see our work for the first time are expressing an interest in coming to meetings. Be sure and welcome these potential new members, or better yet, invite them to come along with you as

host. Full participation is what makes SMPS thrive. I hope to see you at the Deep Valley Book fair and the Coffee Hag this month!

AND KEEP WRITING!

SUE

TAKE A LOOK AT THE LOMP WEBSITE! IT MAKES YOU PROUD TO BE A MEMBER OF THE LEAGUE OF MINNESOTA POETS. BE SURE AND CHECK OUT WHAT SOME OF THE OTHER CHAPTERS ARE DOING AT THIS WEB SITE!

www.mnpoets.org