

# Thistle ~ Down

Southern Minnesota Poets Society

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The SMPS, a regional chapter of the League of Minnesota Poets holds open meetings at Barnes & Noble Booksellers, 1857 Adams St. in Mankato on the second Saturday of the months September through May from 1:00 p.m. through 3:30 p.m. Meetings are open to all lovers of poetry, and so is membership. For further information call Ikars (Ike) Sarma, VP, at 1-507-345-4014 afternoons, or e-mail [icarusj@mnic.net](mailto:icarusj@mnic.net)

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## November, 11<sup>th</sup> Meeting

A repeat reminder: Those of you who find it convenient to arrive in Mankato early (to make greater opportunity of the trip) may want to gather for a quick lunch at the food court of the River Hills Mall. You may find your fellow poets and poetry lovers in the area nearest the West entry and the J.C. Penney store starting at about 11:30 a.m.

Our guest speaker will be **Jim Englert**, Assistant Manager at Barnes & Noble, who will give us an overview on "Regional Poets".

The **'assignment'** is a poem on environmental issues, the theme for the **NFSPS contest category #4**. Assignments are not compulsory, but intended especially for those looking for poem ideas or novel ways to write poetry and/ wish to enter certain contests.

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## CORRECTIONS

Your Editor apologizes most ardently for a **huge bit of misinformation**. Submission of poems to the **Moccasin** is limited to members of the LOMP. There is no excuse for this, even though it was due to hurry, for he knows.

The deadline for the NFSPS contests is March 15<sup>th</sup> as stated in the October issue. There is, however, another deadline, that for the 2001 Convention Contest. The contest is open only to those attending the Convention and the deadline is February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2001. Look in following pages for details.

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## October Meeting

The LOMP Fall Conference took place on October 13 and 14 at the ASSISI COMMUNITY CENTER in Rochester, Minnesota. Those of you who are members should have all the info. For those who are not LOMP members a summary of the prizes and honorable mentions garnered by SMPS members appears under the Achievements heading. Read on and share the triumphs!

A handful of SMPS members gathered for a small critiquing workshop (in something like a round robin fashion) at the North Mankato City Library on October 21. The surroundings were quite pleasant and the disturbances minimal. A worthwhile place to consider in the future whenever we are in a conflict for a meeting place. The group had no **great** ideas as to what adjustments our meetings should have, but felt some form of small group exchange can be helpful on what could be done to enhance a poem one is not all sure about.

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### Next Meeting

Our December meeting will be on the 8<sup>th</sup>. The program is to be a surprise that everyone ready to celebrate the season should enjoy. **PLEASE NOTE** that due to the nature of the program we may have to change the venue. If so, it will be announced in plenty of time.

The 'assignment' is in keeping with our tradition to write poems on the season with a gentle touch of reverence. As it has been said before, no trite greeting card stuff. Please see attached pages for comments as to expectations a judge may have.

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### Program Schedule

Several program prospects have turned up negative, at least for the time being, and others have not yet been reached for confirmation.

Professor **Robbins** who teaches creative writing at MSU in Mankato, is the Director of the Good Thunder Reading Series and has agreed to give us a program on some very near future date. It is of great interest to note that has a new collection of poems "famous persons we have known", published by EASTERN WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY PRESS. In a publicity release Jonis Agee has the following to say:

"This is a humorous, sly, savvy book that explodes our national obsession—these poems are rooted in the weird conglomeration of movies, pop culture, and nature, where we haunt the landscape like ghosts of fame we imagine at every gas station grocery store, suburban mall, waiting for mysterious encounters with ineffable—Elvis or God—something to transform us, infuse us with passion, lead us out of the darkness of ordinary life."

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### Achievements etc.

Congratulations to the following for their successes in the 16<sup>th</sup> Annual LOMP Contest:

**Susan Chambers** – 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> prize and 5<sup>th</sup> HM and **Bruce Depew** – 7<sup>th</sup> HM in the Lilian Osborne Memorial Grand Prize that had 184 entries.

**Kathleen Pederzani** – 2<sup>nd</sup> prize and **Susan Chambers** – 3<sup>rd</sup> prize in the "Writ in Water" Award that had 63 entries.

**Kathleen Pederzani** – 2<sup>nd</sup> prize in the Woodtick Poets' Award that had 37 entries.

**Susan Chambers** – 2<sup>nd</sup> prize in the Power of Woman Award that had 43 entries.

**Merdith Cook** – 3<sup>rd</sup> prize and **Shirley Ensrud** – 2<sup>nd</sup> HM in the Sonnet Award that had 41 entries.  
in the Power of Woman Award that had 43 entries.

**Susan Chambers** – 1<sup>st</sup> prize in the Art Poem Award that had 48 entries.

**Shirley Ensrud** – 5<sup>th</sup> HM in the Pat M. Johnson Spirit Award that had 69 entries.

**Susan Chambers** – 2<sup>nd</sup> HM and **Merdith Cook** – 6<sup>th</sup> HM in the Coral D. Johnson Memorial (Spoon River) that had 34 entries.

**Merdith Cook** – 6<sup>th</sup> HM in the Family Roots/Heritage Award that had 51 entries.

We all wish (this is not belated, or is it?) a

**HAPPY** 80<sup>th</sup> birthday to **Lorraine Mueller** (it was on November 4<sup>th</sup>)

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## December, 9<sup>th</sup> Meeting

A repeat reminder: Those of you who find it convenient to arrive in Mankato early (to make greater opportunity of the trip) may want to gather for a quick lunch at the food court of the River Hills Mall. You may find your fellow poets and poetry lovers in the area nearest the West entry and the J.C. Penney store starting at about 11:30 a.m.

The 'assignment' is a seasonal poem, a poem about the wonder of and rejuvenation through snow and any variation on how we celebrate the winter solstice, religious or otherwise. In keeping with our tradition to write poems on the season with a gentle touch of reverence, no trite greeting card stuff. Do note that assignments are not compulsory, and any inspired writing, poem or otherwise is welcome and on any subject, as long as you feel the need for sharing, compassion, help and advice.

We will not have a set program, but will have a singing session led by certain "local musicians", in keeping with the arrival of a new year and all that it entails. By the same token, we need to examine and discuss new directions for our activities and programs. Although our next operating year is seemingly far away, in the fall of 2001, summer comes soon enough leaving little time for concerted planning action.

## November Meetings

Yes, your vision is not impaired, nor has the Editor lost his mind. There were three meetings.

On November 11 **Jim Englert** who is one of the Assistant Managers at Barnes&Noble gave us a fascinating presentation on "Regional Writers". It is impossible to recreate the overall impact of his presentation. Specifically mentioned were: Jon Hassler, Bill Holmes, Eugene McCarthy, Wayne Johnson and Gerald Wisenor. While not all the authors discussed may be equally well known, the tie-in theme was that Minnesota writing can be regional and the regions are recognizable by the language used. **Thankyou very much, Jim Englert.**

For long we have contemplated holding one or more small group meetings per month. The idea? There we can better help each other to examine and evaluate poems in emergent stages; or those we have loved and not been entirely happy with some part or parts thereof and not wanted to either share them or let them appear in print. Moreover, this provides additional opportunity to get stimulated and write new poems about subjects or ideas we would not have thought of otherwise.

Some, not too many, years ago one such group meeting was held almost every month. Then, the main intent was to study new forms. This goal has not been abandoned. It may be expanded though, since, recently, our membership has shown interest in a kind of a 'group exchange' learning more about poetry, the do's and don'ts, or the rules to be broken, the terminology and other items that fall under the 'craft' label. **Monica Haack** has taken on the responsibility of contacting members to explore the viability of such meetings. She has made arrangements for a meeting space with the Blue Earth County Library and contacted individual members. (read on)

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The first such meeting took place on Friday, November 17 with six members in attendance. We agreed to keep meeting dates and times flexible, depending on seasonal and personal constraints. The prevalent hours are to be from 12 noon, or so, till about 3 p.m. It is not possible to give a true flavor of the literary part of our discussions. You can find out though by partaking. Contact Monica or Ike to find out the date and time of the next meeting.

The second meeting was Monday, December 4<sup>th</sup> with four members present. A special feature was that we heard a few stories read as part of the menu. There is an indication that some of our members, or potential members like to write stories as well as poems.

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### Next Meeting

Our **January meeting is scheduled for the 12<sup>th</sup>**. At this moment no specific program is scheduled. Due to the uncertainty in weather and a possibly low attendance it did not seem proper to invite an outside speaker of note. We will discuss options and weigh available choices at this meeting. A change in meeting place must too be considered due to the crowding conditions at B&N during the season. **PLEASE NOTE** the announcement of the **2nd ANNUAL BLIZZARD WRITERS' POETRY RETREAT**. A map for getting there will appear in the next issue of the *Thistle~Down*.

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## January 13<sup>th</sup> Meeting

Faye Mattison and Bonnie Ann Wolle will present their favorite mind-openers from *The Artists Way: A Spiritual Path to Higher Creativity* a book by Julia Cameron. They will introduce you to exercises designed to bring to light your hidden interests, or as the author would have it, 'a discipline for "discovering and recovering your creative self." Be sure to bring some paper and pencil or pen for taking notes.

The 'assignment' is the minute form –like in "a minute of time", not like the synonym for small. It is also the topic for the NFSPS Contest #38, and, by the way, the deadline for entries to all the NFSPS contests is March 15.

The 'minute' is a 12-line poem in iambic meter with a specified syllable count of 8, 4, 4, 4, 8, 4, 4, 4, 8, 4, 4, and 4 syllables per line, in that order. The lines are couplet-rhymed, i.e., the rhyme scheme is a,a,b,b,c,c,d,d,e,e,f,f. The poem is to be capitalized and punctuated properly, like prose, and is to capture a slice of life. Assignments are not compulsory, and any inspired writing, poem or otherwise, on any subject, is welcome, as long as you feel the need for sharing, compassion, help and/or advice.

As stated in the last issue, the 2nd ANNUAL BLIZZARD WRITERS' POETRY RETREAT is to be held on the 4th Thursday in January. Details appear on a separate page. See a map for getting there on next page.

## December Meeting

Bonnie Ann Wolle (guitar) and Ike Sarma (harmonica) led the group through a spirited singing of carols and other seasonal songs. We shared poems celebrating Christmas and the magic of winter available in Minnesota only.

A special welcome to Charles Sehe, a likely new member on his first visit to the SMPS. His last name sounds roughly like 'zee-he' and, by the way, means 'I see' in German.

No small-group meetings were held because of the season and, for same reason, none are planned for the immediate future. Your VP is soliciting your response as to interest in having such a group. He will be happy to receive your letters or, at least, a card indicating your preference as to frequency and specific days of the week and times you would find this an opportunity too hard to resist. If you missed the details, a brief rehash follows on the next page.

In addition to our 'big' meeting, many of our members would like to have one or, perhaps, two small group meetings per month. The idea is that there we can better help each other to examine and evaluate poems and other writings that are either: 1) in emergent stages, or 2) those we have loved and not been entirely happy with. Such meetings would also provide an additional opportunity to be stimulated to write poems about subjects or ideas we would not have thought of otherwise.

A few years back such meetings took place almost every month. The main intent was to study new forms, a goal that has not been abandoned but expanded. Recently, many members have shown interest in a 'group exchange' way of learning more about poetry and story writing: the do's and don'ts, or the rules to be broken: the terminology and other items that fall under the 'craft' label. We have an arrangement for a meeting place at the Blue Earth County Library.

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### February Meeting

Barring a blizzard, our scheduled meeting date is the 10<sup>th</sup>. The topic is open, to be announced in the next issue. **Richard Robbins**, who by now hardly needs an introduction, will be our guest speaker and is quite willing to try to taylor his talk about a topic we may choose. If you have a special request(s) let your VP know well ahead of the time.

For an assignment you may choose between NFSPS Contests # 40, a love poem with a 40 line limit in any form, or #36, a dramatic monologue, possibly in blank verse, with a 60 line limit. Any one of these may be longer than you feel you can do in the span of a month, but you can get started. The finished product will be 'accepted' for sharing in March, April, May or whatever. See if you can find a copy of C. Browning's My Last Duchess.

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### Calendar and General Notes

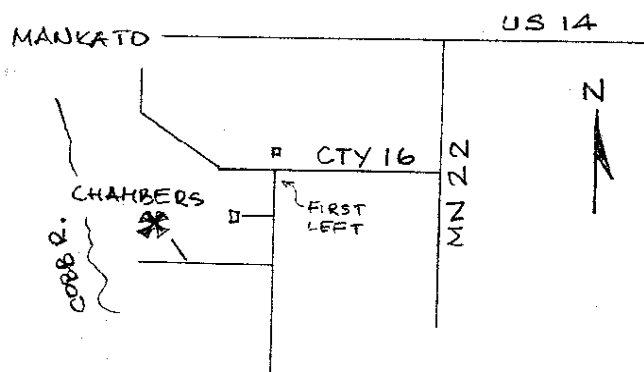
We find that some of our members are extremely sensitive to scented products and tobacco smoke. We ask that you refrain from using these products approaching meeting times. Your consideration is appreciated.

Remember: NFSPS contests Deadline is March 15.

SMPS and LOMP dues time is here. SMPS dues are \$15 and should be sent to Elaine Anderson, 463 200<sup>th</sup> St, Trimont MN 56176. LOMP dues are \$20 sent to James Eberling, 1766 Karis Way, Eagan MN 55122-2671.

Start thinking about the Woodtick Poetry Retreat in July at Sue Chambers' cabin in the North woods. The basic 'requirements' are the same as for the Blizzard Writers' Retreat, and more detailed info will become available as time goes on.

Consider entering the Christian Visions Ministries Poetry Contest. The deadline is January 31 of this year. The prizes are \$100, \$50 and \$25. Entries can be any subject, any style with a 21 line limit and you may enter as many poems as you wish @ \$5 per poem. Put your name and address on each page and on a page listing poems included which page should also say how you heard of contest. You retain the rights to the poem, but CVM reserves the right to publish poems. Send to: Christian Visions Ministries, 2596 50<sup>th</sup> St., Granada MN 56039. Winners announced by February 28, 2001.



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## February 10<sup>th</sup> Meeting

We welcome **Richard Robbins**, who directs the creative writing program and the Good Thunder Reading Series at Minnesota State University, Mankato. Professor Robbins' poems have appeared in numerous national publications. His first collection, *The Invisible Wedding* was published in 1984; his second, *Famous Persons We Have Known* was published just recently. He has presented instructive talks to the SMPS on several prior occasions. His talk in February relates to his work on open form poetry, supported by a grant from the Minnesota Arts Council and will concern "the definition, identification and significance of the poetic line".

Please note: our meeting will frame a public reading and book-signing session by professor Robbins (scheduled by Barnes & Noble for 2 p.m.). Your officers implore you will let them know (call the VP) if you are not capable to attend the meeting.

For an 'assignment' choices you have NFSPS Contest # 40, a love poem with a 40 line limit, in any form, or #36, a dramatic monologue that can be in blank verse with a 60 line limit. You should have no problem finding an anthology with Robert Browning's *My Last Duchess* as one example. If this seems much, the finished product will be 'accepted' for sharing in March, April, May or whatever.

By the way, the deadline for entries to all the NFSPS contests is March 15.

Reminder: Our esteemed fellow member **John Calvin Rezmerski** is the featured author of the Good Thunder Reading Series session on February 1. You can find the nitty-gritty as to when and where in a past issue of the *Thistle~Down*.

## January Meeting

A huge THANK YOU to **Faye Mattison** and **Bonnie Ann Wolle** for sharing their favorite mind-openers from *The Artists Way: A Spiritual Path to Higher Creativity* a book by **Julia Cameron**. They also presented some very exciting exercises and associated handouts designed to bring to light your hidden interests, or as the author would have it, 'a discipline for "discovering and recovering your creative self." A significant number of attendees brought the assignment poem, the Minute Form and others for sharing.

The 2nd ANNUAL BLIZZARD WRITERS' POETRY RETREAT was a huge success with over a dozen of poets attending in spite of the somewhat formidable weather conditions. Each attendee had a short 'program' and just about all of them included a writing exercise. Your editor especially liked those that had a "you can take it home and continue" flavor to them.

### March Meeting

Barring a blizzard, our scheduled meeting date is the 10<sup>th</sup>. The topic will be announced in the next issue. Your editor hopes to have **Richard Terrell**, a professor of creative writing at MSU and a poet as our guest. He has a recently published volume of non-fiction stories about jazz (a field of which he is a practitioner) and has a very definite poetic feel even to his prose.

As an alternative we will consider a writing workshop, one of those done at the Blizzard Writers Retreat.

The assignment is a two-fold choice of NFSPS Contests: 1) # 23, Music Lesson, with a 30 line limit, or 2) #14, Song that Lingers, with a 40 line limit.

As for the first, consider a unique experience. Paint a picture of something unusual within or associated with a lesson or a moment in music not necessarily a lesson.

For the second, think of an experience that is not necessarily significant but tends to haunt your memory. Then explore how and why it is significant for you. Avoid, if you can, the use of the word *linger* and concentrate on showing how the memory keeps recurring in time.

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### Calendar and General Notes

Remember: the deadline for the NFSPS contest(s) is March 15.

SMPS and LOMP dues time is here. SMPS dues are \$15 and should be sent to Elaine Anderson, 463 200<sup>th</sup> St, Trimont MN 56176. LOMP dues are \$20 sent to James Eberling, 1766 Karis Way, Eagan MN 55122-2671.

The LOMP Spring Meeting will be early May. Minneapolis is the place.

Start thinking about the Woodtick Poetry Retreat in July at Sue Chambers' cabin in the North woods. The basic 'requirements' are the same as for the Blizzard Writers' Retreat, and more detailed info will become available as time goes on.

**You may find a mailing wrapper which has an old announcement for the 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Blizzard Writer's Poetry Retreat. Ignore it.** It is your editors way of getting some use of old postage stamps attached to some of the excess number of announcements.

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## March 10<sup>th</sup> Meeting

The program is to be a **writing workshop**, not the kind where you write new poems, but where you may learn how to write your poems better, including poems you have already written. The difference between entering contests and this is that from the former you have no idea why your poem won or did not win. In this workshop you get help from suffering fellow poets, those who share your fears and hopes to have their poems read and appreciated by others. **Please, try to remember to bring copies for others to read as we share**. In addition, we will again discuss the ins and outs of writing in the *haiku* form, traditional or otherwise.

The assignment is a two-fold choice of NFSPS Contests: 1) # 23, Music Lesson, with a 30 line limit, or 2) #14, Song that Lingers, with a 40 line limit. **You still have time before the March 15 deadline to enter the NFSPS Annual Contest for 2001**. For the first, consider a unique experience. Paint a picture of something unusual within or associated with a lesson or a moment in music not necessarily a lesson. For the second, think of an experience that is not necessarily significant but haunts you. Explore how and why it is significant for you. Avoid use of the word *linger*, but concentrate to show how the memory keeps recurring.

## February Meeting

We enjoyed a tremendous presentation by **Richard Robbins**, Director of Creative Writing at Minnesota State University, Mankato and of the Good Thunder Reading Series and above all a very nice fellow poet and an excellent teacher of poetry.

To meaningfully describe the high points of his presentation is beyond the physical limits of these pages. Sufficient is to say that, for one, there is the need to know how to read poetry. For poetry's power lies in not only what it says (which is important) but how it says it (without which what it says may not at all be apparent).

The line is probably (your Editor's interpretation) the single most important aspect of poetry because it forces its readers (if they be attentive) to go beyond what can be done by punctuation only. Try to read the attached sampler with that in mind. Note that *from* BEOWULF is accentual, that is the number of stresses per line is prescribed, rather than the number of metric feet. At the next meeting you attend, please ask for a copy of the rest of the handout which is too voluminous to include.

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## April Meeting

Our **scheduled meeting date is the 14<sup>th</sup>**. We will have a **HAIKU Workshop**. In anticipation of that, your assignment is to write a haiku, roughly a three-line poem with a defined syllable count of 17 – a five-syllable first line and a five-syllable last line with the second line having seven syllables. Try to indicate a season in which the experience of your poem takes place.

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## Calendar and General Notes

**ATTENTION! ATTENTION! ATTENTION!** April is National Poetry Month and Barnes & Noble is holding a

**Poetry Open House on Friday, April 6 at 7 p.m.**

You may have a chance to read your poetry along with **Richard Robbins, Joyce Suthpen and Richard Terrell**. Also, the announcement of the Minnesota Book Award (s) will be made at that time.

Remember: the deadline for the NFSPS contest(s) is March 15.

SMPS and LOMP dues time is here. SMPS dues are \$15 and should be sent to Elaine Anderson, 463 200<sup>th</sup> St, Trimont MN 56176. LOMP dues are \$20. Send them to James Eberling, 1766 Karis Way, Eagan MN 55122-2671.

The LOMP Spring Meeting will be early May. Minneapolis is the place.

Keep in your mind the Woodtick Poetry Retreat in July at Sue Chambers' cabin in the North woods. The basic 'requirements' are the same as for the Blizzard Writers' Retreat, and more detailed info will become available as time goes on.

**Important!** While SMPS welcomes all poetry lovers to its regular meetings and special other activities, there is a basic need for some funds to support our operations. One of them is this publication, and we are in the process of putting together an anthology to include your poems. Your dues or contributions are the main financial support. Those of you on our mailing list who we are not sure of wanting to continue will see an ORANGE DOT following this paragraph.

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## April 14<sup>th</sup> Meeting

We celebrate **National Poetry Month**. You can join in this through a presentation of your favorite poet. A short biographical overview and/or a few poems would be nice.

The assignment is the **haiku** form, traditional or otherwise. Roughly, **haiku** is a three-line poem of 17 syllables. The syllable count is five – seven - five for the three lines. Try to include an outright mention or, better, a hint or symbol of the season in which your poetic inspiration takes place. Do not worry about bringing only the polished fruits of your talents. Your poetic friends will be most happy to enjoy and support your efforts and help you polish them if you so desire. Look for sample haiku on pages following.

Also note that Barnes & Noble will have a **Open Poetry Hour** on **Friday April 6 at 7 p.m.** Poets featured are: **Joyce Suthpen, Richard Robbins** and **Richard Terell**. Each will give a short (about half-hour) reading and will then field questions on poetry. There will be an "open mike" session at the close, authors representing various sections of our community reading their work. **Sue Chambers** is a definite part of this selection. You could be asked as well! Come prepared!

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## March Meeting

A number of members and guests brought for comments poems they have been agonizing over for a 'critiquing' workshop. Participants agreed that this is a very desirable process and voiced satisfaction in finding confirmation for the strengths of their poems and help in smoothing out the rough spots, e.g., those they were not sure to support the intent of their poem.

We enjoyed the presence and participation of two guests (and potential new members): **Anne Dickau** and **LaVonne Smasal**.

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## May Meeting

**NOTE! NOTE! NOTE!** Our usual meeting date is the 12<sup>th</sup>, but it 'coincides' with **Mother's Day** and a change will be considered, since many may find it inconvenient. Moreover, the **LOMP Spring Meeting** is set for **May 5**. The actual meeting date will be announced timely. **May 19** is the most likely date.

**Mary Goings, Emma Dimit** and **Alma Reincke**, members of the South Dakota Poets will present a program on the topic **Favorite Poets and Why**. They will arrive the Friday night before and hopefully we can arrange an informal "potluck or something" (quoting Sue Chambers, I am).

The assignment is a "seasonal" poem. The subject can be spring, awakening, refurbishing, rejuvenation or any new beginning. No form or length limit.

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## Calendar and General Notes

The **League Of Minnesota Poets Spring Meeting** is set for **May 5**. If you are not now a member of the LOMP, but are interested in attending, contact the Editor for details of how to get to the location and the agenda. The venue is the Southdale Hennepin Area Library, 7001 York Avenue S, Edina, Minnesota.

SMPS and LOMP dues time is here. SMPS dues are \$15 and should be sent to Elaine Anderson, 463 200<sup>th</sup> St, Trimont MN 56176. LOMP dues are \$20. Send them to James Eberling, 1766 Karis Way, Eagan MN 55122-2671.

Reserve time around mid-June for our annual picnic. It will hopefully set to not interfere with high-school graduation festivities.

Keep in mind the Woodtick Poetry Retreat in July at Sue Chambers' cabin in the North woods. The 'requirements' are the same as for the Blizzard Writers' Retreat. More detail will be available as time goes on.

Your Editor regrets not having the following information early enough to mail the *Thistle~Down* sooner. He has found the **Good Thunder Reading Series events of great value and interest**. The next one is **April 5** and features the poet **Tim Seibles**. Talk on craft is at 3 p.m. and the reading at 7:30 p.m. at Room 253 of the student union, the Minnesota State University at Mankato. The best parking and quickest access is the West Road. If not familiar with the layout, look in the Mankato phone directory (page 55) for the map of the campus. Starting from Riverfront Road, the simplest two routes are:

- 1) Stolzman Road, Stadium Road, left at top of the hill onto Ellis, another left at the union and then a right and
- 2) Warren Street, Val Imm Drive – right at top of the hill onto Ellis, another right onto Maywood and then a left.

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### Haiku Samples

The following haiku by Horst Ludwig, a professor at Gustavus Adolphus, were published in the Free Press

Outside the clinic  
a crow, slow, stepping away  
from some carrion.

The old man reaching  
to catch a tumbling leaf.  
A thin bony hand.

In your Editor's opinion, the former is good, but non-traditional and of less obvious intent, which is of course open to interpretation. One possibility is the contrast/parallel between clinic and carrion. The second has the season hinted by the tumbling leaf, which is dry and, therefore, comparable to the bony hand of an old man.

A few more:

Last year's rose  
a slim book of love poems  
pressed petals crumble

Darkness slowly grows  
twirling lawn sprinklers scatter  
last of June's sunlight.

Madelyn Eastlund

Winnie E. Fitzpatrick

# Thistle ~ Down

Southern Minnesota Poets Society

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The S M P S, a regional chapter of the League of Minnesota Poets holds open meetings at Barnes & Noble Booksellers, 1857 Adams St. in Mankato on the second Saturday of the months September through May from 1:00 p.m. through 3:30 p.m. Meetings and membership are open to all lovers of poetry and writing. For further information call Ikars (Ike) Sarma, VP and Editor, at 1-507-345-4014, or e-mail [icarusj@mnpc.net](mailto:icarusj@mnpc.net)

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This is the last 'official' issue (before summer recess) of the *Thistle~Down* for the operating year 2000-2001. A special issue or two may be justified as needed for updates on how we may want to re-structure our meetings and timetable.

There appears to be some interest in having additional, small group meeting at times other than our regular meetings which will continue as before. **Monica Haack** who was willing to do the liaison work, has been told by her doctor in no uncertain terms to forget it. She is still interested to participate in this endeavor with the prime intent to practice writing 'named' forms.

Other possibilities would be having informal meetings in the summer and another sub-group of members who are interested in writing fiction, e.g., short stories and stories for children, as well as poetry.

Barnes & Noble have indicated that they could accommodate small group meetings on relatively short notice.

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## June Picnic Meeting

As mentioned before, the picnic is set for June 2<sup>nd</sup>. You may arrive starting at 11 a. m. Sue is cooking a turkey and paper plates will be available. You may bring contributions to the potluck, but be sure to check with Sue (507/278-4200) if you have any doubts as to what would be needed and to avoid excessive duplication of similar dishes or other food items. Of course, your "specialties" are always appreciated. Directions to Sue's place appear below.

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## May 19<sup>th</sup> – Last Regular Meeting of the Season

It would be difficult to say enough thank you's to **Sue Chambers** for her effort to introduce us to the life and poetry of **Mary Oliver** and the excellent writing workshop. Your editor can hardly remember any other time when a workshop produced some quite remarkable results from just about all the participants.

We had a well attended meeting with about 14 present including some rarely seen members and a few guests and potential members.

**Your summer assignment is to write a poem—not to exceed, say, 20 to 40 lines—and of no specified form, but focused on some single item (bush, bird or bath), even a single event typical of the season.**

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Treasurer James Eberling asked me to remind all (over and over again) that LOMP membership "fees" are due ASAP. They are \$20. If you have not done so yet, send them to James Eberling, 1766 Karis Way, Eagan MN 55122-2671.

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Remember to take care of your SMPS dues as well. They are \$15 and should be sent to Elaine Anderson, 463 200<sup>th</sup> St, Trimont MN 56176.

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## Future Events

Remember to leave room in your summer plans to attend the **Woodtick Poetry Retreat** July 20 through 22, at Sue Chambers' cabin in the North woods. The 'requirements' are the same as for the Blizzard Writers' Retreat. If you have any special questions you may contact her (at the number given on the first page) or your editor. Directions for getting there are included.

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## Achievements & Brags

It is your editor's pleasure to introduce **Elliot Lloyd**, a guest and potential member (How should he not become one after this!). He has been published in 4 books (I think, he meant anthologies) including *Best Poems of the Nineties*, in *Angel News Magazine*, *Alembic Magazine* and (one part of which I can't decipher) – *A Celebration of Life*. Welcome aboard, Elliot.

And then there is your EDITOR eating crow to apologize for the May issues that did not reach you, because he was careless and let the wind take a bunch, as he was trying to get them into the mail box outside the post office. In addition, he has to play catch up with some earlier kudos that were misplaced though not necessarily by him alone—any excuse being better than none.

### January

**John Rezmerski** presented a workshop session on Oral Interpretation of Poetry to the District 6 Fall Meeting of Toastmasters International.

**Sue Chambers** taught poetry to the 8<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grades for the "Omnium Gatherum" at GAC during the Christmas break.

### April

**Charles Sehe** is happy to have finally managed to write a haiku, which he read. Now that he has become an "item", he better become a full member. Have to check with Elaine to see if he has.

**Susan Chambers** spent 2 (whole) days as presenter/teacher for the Young Writers' Conference at Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter. Furthermore, she was (a?) speaker for the March Meeting of the Mississippi Writers and Poets.

### May (no apologies here)

**Monica Haack** is becoming a fixture in Destin, Florida, where they ask her to read poetry at all kinds of meetings. Her *Let Me Hug You with My Pen* appears in *Happiness*, a national publication.

**Sue Chambers** is to be the keynote speaker in Huron, SD for the SD State Poetry Society (meeting?) in June.

**Ike Sarma's** translation, *Mountain Climber*, was included as an example in **Amy Zook's** article, about the Rainis' Sonnet, appearing in the Spring 2001 issue of the *Poets' Forum Magazine*. And just now he **has been asked to consider developing and teaching** an on-line course about **writing of poetry** under the auspices of the **Barnes & Noble University**. This should not in any way affect his membership in SMPS and LOMP and all the associated activities. It is an offer both exciting and humbling, and he asks all of you to pray that he succeed in doing a creditable job if he accepts it.