

# *Thistle ~ Down*

*September 1999*

*Volume 18 Issue 1*

Unless announced otherwise, SMPS meets at the Minnesota Valley Regional Library in Mankato on the second Saturday of the months of September through May, from 1:00 through 3:30 p.m.

---

We are saddened by the death of Edna Busekist, a long time member of the SMPS. Her kindness and wry humor will be missed, especially as it peeked out at us from her poetry.

---

## **Achievements & Such**

Welcome back! Welcome to our New Year of Poetry Kickoff in September. We have a great slate of powerful Speakers/activities planned for our year ahead. All of you are important to us. Your presence is essential to our existence. Please, consider a recommitment. Especially, if it has been a while... Bring a friend and realize the rewards together. Looking forward to seeing you.

*Bonnie Ann*

It is a fantastic experience to 'edit' the *Thistle~Down*. I appreciate the trust. From prior experience, however, I know it is a lot of work. It is necessary to ask all of you to think how you may help. I will be more specific in later issues.

This is another most appropriate and repeat occasion to express our gratitude to **Faye Mattison** for carrying that burden so well and for so long a time. Her tenure as Editor is the longest in the annals of the SMPS.

We have been blessed by a long succession of fine Presidents, and Bonnie Ann is a fine example. When she agreed, after much urging, to take on that responsibility for a second term, it was founded on the promise that, having the advantage of living centrally to the area served by the SMPS, I would do some of the spadework. I am certain you will do your share to make her new term an experience worth while to remember.

As for most VP's, the honors and duties of being the 'designated meany' has come to me. I must say that, as I love you all for helping to make a home for my literary pretensions, you must continue pitching in to make it so for others yet to come. Attend meetings, if at all possible, or let the officers know as soon as you can, if it is not. It would spare the entire SMPS some embarrassment when a hard-sought speaker shows up, regardless of weather, to find an audience of few. The *Thistle~Down* costs little, but, sending out an appreciable number of copies to members who have not paid their dues for two or more years, does hurt.

That's all the scolding I have time for. On the bright side? Be prepared for a grand but busy year, with the NFSPS Annual Convention in Minneapolis being the "piece de resistance". Now is your chance to try to get your best published. Enter the STEVENS POETRY MANUSCRIPT COMPETITION. And do not forget to take the advantage of the Good Thunder Reading Series. Hope to see you there and everywhere else.

*Ikars J (a.k.a. Ike)*

## PROGRAM AND MEETING SCHEDULE FOR 1999-2000

Due to coming changes at the Minnesota Valley Regional Library, all meeting places and times have not been set. You will receive notification of special places and times as needed.

September 11, 1999

Meeting 11:30 at the community room in the lower level of the North Mankato City Hall, 1001 Belgrade Ave. The easiest access is near Lee Boulevard and just off Lookout Drive which is a well marked exit off both Highways, US 14 and US 169. Bring writing tales from the summer and your poems to share, especially those earning awards from the National Federation of State Poetry Societies. Since this is our traditional rally time, recruit new members. Bring them along. SESTINA was the summer assignment.

October 9, 1999

Meeting 11:30 at Barnes & Noble – the Café part, 1859 Adams Street, Mankato (next to the River Hills Mall). Learn about the B&N poetry emphasis. Staff members will tell us about their poetry selections and monthly programs. We expect to make the public hear about the SMPS. Come ready to share special coffee and special poems: bring plenty to read, but at least 3 for the "Open Mike" reading moderated by Sue Chambers. The café serves soups, muffins and desserts. Join us for a light lunch and bring those new members. Monthly assignment: nature and human values.

October 22 and 23, 1999.

We are hosting the LOMP Fall Meeting at the Country Inn and Suites. For details, see attached. Plan to put in some prep time.

November 13, 1999.

Meeting 11:30 at the library. Program at 12:30 – We have a tentative date with one of the professors/writers with the MSU creative writing program. Assignment: a narrative poem.

December 11, 1999.

Meeting 11:30 a.m. at the library. Potluck. Musical entertainment (we hope) at 12:30 p.m. This is our Christmas gathering and annual elections. Bring seasonal poems to share. Assignment: winter tales or Christmas.

January 8, 2000. Meeting time and place to be announced.

We will study excerpts from the "Power of the Word with Bill Moyer" video series. Sarah Garcia has been kind enough to lend her talent and expertise in the field of English and will be our moderator. Ike Sama has been co-opted for his "technical assistance". (He will push the button.) Assignment: the rondeau.

February 12, 2000. Time and place to be announced.

Our speaker will be Laurel Winter. Poet and novelist; Editor of Minnesota Women Speak, a new anthology of poetry, short stories and essays. Assignment: a love poem.

March 11, 2000. Time and place to be announced.

We will have a panel discussion on "Positioning your Poem". Members of the panel: Meredith Cook, editor of the LOMP *Moccasin*; Susan Chgambers, LOMP Poet Laureate; Lee Cummings, SMPS poet, coordinator of upcoming SMPS anthology; Nancy Dauer, SMPS poet, officer. Assignment: a 'shape poem'.

April 8, 2000. Time and location to be announced.

Doris Stengel, President, League of Minnesota Poets, will be our guest speaker. Assignment: any form; subject "New Life"

May 13(?), 2000. Date, time and location to be announced.

This will be coordinated to not conflict with either Mother's Day or the LOMP Spring Meeting.

June 10, 2000.

SMPS annual picnic, 12:00 noon at the home of Richard and Susan Chambers, 10 miles south of Mankato. There will be a special reminder and a map to take you there. Perhaps, an assignment. Bring a friend!

## SEMINAR RULES

(Postmark deadline September 25)

The seminar provides expert analysis and evaluation of your poem and an opportunity to gauge your competitive standing.

Send 2 copies of one poem (any subject, any form) 24 lines or less, each copy on full sheet of paper, single-spaced. On one copy only place your name and address at **upper right**. On both copies place the form (Sonnet, Villanelle, Free Verse, etc.) in **upper right**. Awards will be given in two categories: Free Verse and Fixed Form.

Members not planning to attend the conference in Mankato October 22-23 should include SASE for return of submission and critique. Poems from out-of-state members accepted only if attending.

DEADLINE: September 25, 1999

Mail to:

Nancy Dauer, Seminar Chair  
RR 3 Box 175  
New Ulm MN 56073

## WINTER RETREAT PLANNED

Susan Stevens Chambers, NFSPS president, is spreading the word that a Woodticks-style poetry get-together is in the works for the fourth week in January, in southern Minnesota. More details later.

**PERSONAL NOTE**—Your editor's back surgery was successful and, as husband Alan says, "She walks better than she has for a year!" All your loving thoughts and good wishes were much appreciated—a security blanket all my own. Thanks!

One of the enclosures with this LOMPLIGHTER is the Edna Meudt Scholarship announcement—the green one. This is provided by NFSPS in the hope that some of us may know how to encourage one or more college-student applicants.

## LOMP's Corresponding Secretary Retires After 12 Busy Years

Loraine Schwanke Mueller, elected to LOMP Board in 1987, has completed four consecutive three-year terms as corresponding secretary for the League of Minnesota Poets. From 1994-1997 she served also as president of Southern Minnesota Poets' Society.

May 1, 1999, at the spring meeting in Little Falls, Loraine gave her final report and conducted Memorial Moments for five recently deceased Minnesota poets. Her work will be missed, but we hope to enjoy her familiar compassionate presence at LOMP gatherings for years to come.

Loraine concludes her secretarial labors by reminding us all to assist our newly elected corresponding secretary:

Helen Pappas  
513 First Street SW  
Crosby MN 56441  
TEL: (218) 546-6520

Notify Helen if a poet or a poet's family, in illness or sorrow, needs a card of sympathy—or if some signal honor requires congratulation and rejoicing from all of LOMP.

OHIO UNIVERSITY PRESS has sent us notice of the 1999 Hollis Summers Poetry Prize Competition, for manuscripts of 60-95 pages. Entry fee is \$15; award \$500 and publication. Deadline, October 31. For details, send SASE to

Hollis Summers Poetry Prize  
Ohio University Press  
Scott Quadrangle  
Athens OH 45701

**DUES PAYMENTS:** Many members will find it convenient to pay 1999 dues while at the fall conference in Mankato. Dues are \$20 (students \$10). Treasurer:

Shirley Ensrud  
208 S. Main  
Blue Earth MN 56013

Tel (507) 526-2552

## RESERVATIONS FOR ROOMS AT LOMP STATE MEETING

**DUE PRIOR TO SEPTEMBER 15**

Make your reservation directly with the Country Inn & Suites

Country Inn and Suites  
1900 Premier Drive  
Mankato MN 56001

(507) 388-8555 (Use this number rather than the toll-free to get our special rate.)

[www.countryinns.com](http://www.countryinns.com)

Rooms: \$50-89 depending on size of room; each additional adult \$6. We will get an additional discount if enough rooms are reserved.

Some rooms are suites, so you may be able to sleep up to four per room to help cut costs.

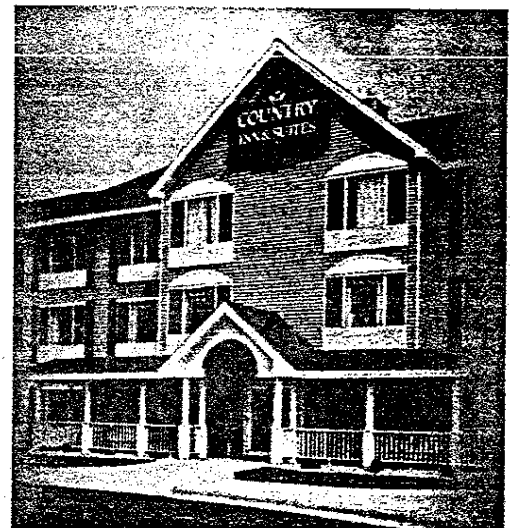
Each room has extras: hair dryer, iron and ironing board, refrigerator, coffee, and microwave.

Indoor pool and whirlpool. T.G.I. Friday's Restaurant attached to hotel.

Be sure to mention that you are with the LOMP Fall Conference Meeting when you make your reservation. Please make your reservation as soon as possible, since rooms in Mankato sometimes are totally booked if there is a special event going on at the Civic Center.

### DIRECTIONS

For those coming from Minneapolis and points north, take U.S. Hwy. 169 South to Mankato, then take U.S. Hwy 14 East. You will pass two exits before you reach the correct one. The Country Inn & Suites is located at the junction of U.S. Hwy. 14 and Cty. Rd. 193. This is called the **River Hills Mall** exit. This is also the junction with State Hwy. 22 SOUTH. Do not confuse this with the exit for 22 NORTH, which you will pass earlier.



# Thistle ~ Down

Southern Minnesota Poets Society

---

The S M P S is a regional chapter of the League of Minnesota Poets and, with announced exceptions, meets each second Saturday of the months of September through May from 1:00 p.m. through 3:30 p.m. For further information call Ikars (Ike) Sarma at 1-507-345-2211 (voice mail).

---

## Calendar Items

**Saturday, October 9, 11:30 a.m.** Meeting will be held at the Barnes & Noble Bookstore, 1859 Adams St, Mankato. Access from US Hwy 14 and Minn Hwy 22. For details, see attached page.

**Program will start at noon.** B&N assistant manager **Jim Englert** will talk about how their poetry selections are made and about the monthly (poetry?) programs.

This is also a chance for us to let the public know more about the SMPS. Come prepared to share special coffee and poems: bring plenty to read, but at least 3 for the "Open Mike" reading moderated by **Sue Chambers**. The B&N café serves soups, muffins and desserts. Join us for a light lunch and bring along potential new members. Current monthly assignment is: **Nature and Human Values**.

**The LOMP Fall Conference** is to be held **Saturday, October 24<sup>th</sup> and Sunday, the 25<sup>th</sup>**. The change of dates has occurred through a booking mistake by Country Inn and Suites for Friday night the 22<sup>nd</sup>. The schedule of events begins at 10:00 a.m. on Saturday. If you have reservations for Friday night, Country Inn and Suites should have contacted you by now. If not please check and see if they will give you credit for the extra long distance call expenses. The revised schedule is attached.

**We are the 'host chapter', and help is needed.** In specific, President **Bonnie Ann** asks that you send pertinent short poems to be included in table decorations **soon**, either to her or Secretary **Nancy Dauer**.

---

TD editor apologizes for any confusion and insufficient info on the September meeting. Although there was the need to make last day changes that is not the excuse of dropping items during composition.

A few things need to be made clear. Usually, our meetings are to start at 1:00 p.m. The idea is this should give everyone, especially those driving a considerable distance to "clear the deck" for the day before departing. Those who wish to take lunch in Mankato and before the meeting can do so. There will be special occasions, like the June picnic, September potluck, etc., when the meeting is set for an earlier hour.

## The 'VWhiP'

This is where your officers have a chance to inform members about recent events and items touching on poetry. About a week ago, PBS aired a 2-hr program titled Fooling with Words. It was moderated by Bill Moyer and covered the New Jersey Poetry Festival. The number of poets featured was truly astounding. Your VP turned on the TV by sheer accident, but, regrettably, did not have a blank tape handy. His reactions?

As a whole, poets are a fascinating lot, certainly not dull, whether you like their poetry or not, and have things to say which, he believes, are a significant factor in stretching your talent. A tape of the program can be bought at \$34.90 including shipping costs – call 1-800-336 1917, and the companion book of that title is available.

## Achievements & Such

**Sue Chambers** served as judge of contests in Texas and Pennsylvania and has been invited to be the keynote speaker at the Florida State Poetry Society's Fall Meeting on October 1<sup>st</sup>.

**Meg Kramer** and **Bonnie Ann Wolfe** have their respective tribute poems included in Truman's Centennial Book.

In case you missed it in the June issue of the T~D, **June Emanuel** and **Monica Haack** gave readings of their poems and talked about poetry with three 6<sup>th</sup> grade classes at Vernon Center in May.

**June Emanuel** relates the pleasure of singing "Thank You, Lord" a song which she wrote the words and the music for, at the 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration, in June, of the Calvary Lutheran Church in Rapidan.

**Monica Haack's** poem "These Gifts of Heart" appeared on the front page of Holy Rosary's Sunday Bulletin. She co-hosted a music-and-poetry program for assisted learning at Mankato's Sibley Manor and the Mankato Home, did readings at the Chateau La Mer and the Corpus Christi Church at Dustin, FL and was honored at Monroe Grade School for many years of reading. Her two poems for kids at Wheeler Park have been framed and hung at the branch library in North Mankato.

**Lorraine Mueller** gave a program on poetry forms at the Kiwanis Club at Tracy to an audience which included many women: currently active or retired, among them teachers, librarians and even a columnist for the local newspaper.

**Berneal Schindle** has given several poetry readings: at the Blue Earth County Women's Club Annual Meeting in April, and for the Zetetic Club, both, at their May Meeting and at the Inspirational Moment of September 13<sup>th</sup>.

**Ike Sarma** was mentioned in a small item in the Arts and Entertainment page of the Brainerd newspaper as "a poet of southern Minnesota" to give his talk on Use of Language in Poetry to the Heartland Poets on September 17<sup>th</sup>. On September 18<sup>th</sup> he was a guest of the Writer's Alliance in Brainerd and read some of his poetry.

## Next Assignment

The assignment for November is to write a narrative poem. There are no set patterns or length prescriptions. Most sources on poetry will speak of the three genres, or kinds of poetry: dramatic, narrative, and lyric. It may be helpful to consider the differences between the three.

Judson Jerome states that, and I quote: "Poetry in the dramatic mode is the most immediate...put(s) the action before your very eyes as does a play. A narrative is a somewhat more distant form. It tells a story, and in doing so may summarize action rather than representing it, though in its climactic "scenes" the poet usually dramatizes, ..., giving the words of various speakers and telling what they are doing right at the moment. Most poetry you see published today is in the third mode, lyric. Originally a lyric was a poem to be sung to a lyre... But the word has been expanded to mean any relatively (underline by this editor) short poem which expresses personal thought or feeling or seems to do so...usually speaking in the first person."

The quotation is not entirely exact, since, due to space considerations, extended details had to be omitted. For them, see Judson Jerome, *The Poets Hand-book*, Writer's Digest Books, Cincinnati, Ohio, 1980, ISBN 0-89879-021-2

# Thistle ~ Down

Southern Minnesota Poets Society

The S M P S is a regional chapter of the League of Minnesota Poets and, with announced exceptions, meets the second Saturday of the months of September through May from 1:00 p.m. through 3:30 p.m. For further information call Ikars (Ike) Sarma at 1-507-345-2211 (voice mail), or e-mail [icarusj@mnpc.net](mailto:icarusj@mnpc.net)

**Saturday, November 13, 1:00 a.m.** Meeting will be held at the Barnes & Noble Bookstore, 1859 Adams St, Mankato. Access from US Hwy 14 and Minnesota Hwy 22.

Pj Doyle, award winning poet and fiction writer will present a program and a workshop entitled: *Written in Water, Written in Stone*: Reflections on the Narrative Poem. Pj Doyle is past President of the Minnesota Writers' Workshop, Poetry Editor for *The Whittier Globe* and is affiliated with a variety of writing organizations including the League of Minnesota Poets and Mystery Writers of America. Her book, *The Baker Street Dozen*, a collection of Sherlock Holmes stories and commentary is in its 5<sup>th</sup> printing from Contemporary Books. She has had published two collections of poetry, *Signs on Posts* and *The Singing Bear*, has screenwriting credits and her articles, reviews and essays appear in national and regional periodicals and newspapers.

After the workshop we will listen to poetry written by members and guests. You will bring guests, won't you? because that is the only way to keep us growing into the future. Of special importance are the younger guests which you can recruit through contact with teachers and students at your local schools. As per usual we will have assigned poems—this time it is a narrative, but bring other types as well to entertain our guests and the public which will most likely be there since we are at a bookstore. The Root River bunch in Rochester does! Should you be hungry, they serve soups, muffins and desserts at **Barnes & Noble** and you can take care of your body before you nourish the soul. The **theme** for the monthly assignment is: **Nature and Human Values**.

The LOMP Fall Conference was held **Saturday, October 23<sup>rd</sup> and Sunday, the 24<sup>th</sup>**. The change of dates had this editor totally confused, but the turnout was great. Too bad if you had to miss it. The general meeting was devoted mainly to plans for the NFSPS annual meeting which is to take place in Minneapolis next June. The preparations are fascinating, but the LOMP will need all kinds of help. So set aside time for next June.

**We are to 'host', the table setting for one meal, and help is needed.** In specific, President **Bonnie Ann** asks that you send pertinent short poems (which will fit on a smallish greeting card) to be included in table decorations either to her or Secretary **Nancy Daurer**. Do this **soon** for there is additional work to be done to convert them into final form.

## Next Assignment

The assignment for December is a *rondeau*. A description of the form and some tips on how it might be done are given under the *Craft Corner* heading.

---

### **Achievements & Such**

Kudos to **Meg Kramer** who has just published her second chapbook of poetry and has been generous in providing a free copy for all members. Ask for yours when you come to the meeting.

President **Bonnie Ann** wishes to express her thanks to all SMPS members who attended the LOMP Fall Conference and all whose efforts made it a great experience. Special appreciation is due to **Sue Chambers** not only for all the hard work she put in to make the space arrangements and in coping with the huge mixup in reservations made by Country Inn & Suites, but also for the leadership and the critiquing of the Conference Seminar.

If you have not yet heard! Barnes & Noble has offered us an almost permanent home for our meetings, no strings attached. We can best show our appreciation by showing up in respectable numbers. The program schedule mailed to you in September will be updated in the December *Thistle~Down*. Last month Jim Englert, one of the two Assistant Managers gave a most informative and fascinating talk on Minnesota authors with special emphasis on those less well known, reading excerpts from their works published and available at B&N.

---



## The Craft Corner

Look into this for tips, gathered from various authoritative sources, on various subjects such as terminology, the makeup of fixed forms and methods and techniques which have been commonly recognized as useful information for poets. There is a plethora of sources, and each tends to lengths greater than room available in this publication. The intent here is to summarize but, to insure greatest brevity possible, some editorial liberty may be taken which will be marked to distinguish it from absolutes.

The *rondeau*, our assignment for January, belongs to what is called by some as the *rondeau* family. This includes the *triolet* (the oldest of these), the *rondelet*, the *roundel*, the *short rondel*, the *rondeau prime*, the *rondel* and the *rondeau redouble*. As the names, except for *triolet*, suggest, this feature is a means for 'closing' or 'rounding off' the poem.

The *rondeau* as shown below, is a 15-line poem of three stanzas and a fixed rhyme scheme or a 13-line poem with two 'refrains'. The 'first part' of the first line becomes a 'refrain' for the 2<sup>nd</sup> and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Stanza, that is, it reappears as Line 9 and Line 15.

Stanza 1		Rhyme
	Line 1 'first part' // rest of the line	a
	Line 2	a
	Line 3	b
	Line 4	b
	Line 5	a
Stanza 2		
	Line 6	a
	Line 7	a
	Line 8	b
	Line 9 'refrain'—the 'first part' <u>only</u> of Line 1	
Stanza 2		
	Line 10	a
	Line 11	a
	Line 12	b
	Line 13	b
	Line 14	a
	Line 15 'refrain'—the 'first part' <u>only</u> of Line 1	

This is a French form and originally syllabic. According to Miller Williams the lines, except for the 9<sup>th</sup> and the 15<sup>th</sup>, i.e. the 'refrain', may be of any length, a point not made elsewhere. He provides an example in the "contemporary idiom", by Wesli Court, using rhymes (near or slant—Ed.) a, a', b, b', a; a', a", b", r; a, a"', b"', b', a, r. Other examples (of what could be considered classic variations?—Ed.) are: "Jenny kissed me // when we met..." by Leigh Hunt, and "Ask me no more:// the moon may draw the sea..." by Tennyson. More generally, the 'first part' can be just a single word but more often a phrase and even a clause—dependent or independent.

### Comments

Poets have always recognized the special 'poetic powers' possessed by fixed forms. There are many examples of variations on fixed forms including those requiring line repetitions. The just named ones and the *villanelle*, the *pantoum*, etc.; have been written with variations in the repeated line. It is certain that to avoid cliché-like imitations such efforts have used the essence of successful plays to advantage. Practicing on fixed forms can be highly recommended. Ed.)

The difficulty and the art is obvious—write a strong first line which consists of two grammatically and syntactically related parts that can stand alone as a possible answer or a conclusion to the last clause or sentence ending in on both Line 9 and Line 14. Starting with a modifying clause which begins with a preposition, a conjunction or a pronoun is not necessarily the best but is probably the easiest way if you have not written a *rondeau* before or until you get the feel and the idea.

To avoid possible copyright troubles, a *rondeau* to demonstrate the rules and ideas and written by a member of the SMPS and/or the LOMP was to be included. Your editor co-opted respected member Wilfred Johnson to help find such but the search came up with just one published in *The Mocassin*, and Wilfred suggested editor use one of his own.

### RONDEAU TO SNOW

I know that snow which covers ground  
With softest white and muffles sound  
Which gives my world a mystic mood  
That moves my pe with quietude  
So simple words become profound.

These floating flakes make rounded mound,  
Where once the harsh trash heap was found —  
All tawdry scenes become renewed—  
I know THAT snow!

Contrarywise, I must expound  
That love of snow can come unbound.  
I loose my placid attitude  
When blizzards blow and pellets pound—  
I "No! that snow.

Roy Benjamin Moore

### MY MOTHER'S KNITTING BASKET

With fuzzy yarn, wrapped twice around,  
the bundle holds, perhaps, a pound  
of letters from a younger me  
she kept for years, in secrecy,  
and knew by whom they would be found.

The house now empty. Echoes sound  
as my feet tread familiar ground  
past work of spiders finely wound  
with fuzzy yarn.

The reeds—some charred, small mittens—browned,  
the pages—smeared where tears were drowned:  
were spared by fire, but not she. ...  
Too late, through tears of shame I see  
how hopes and love for me were bound  
with fuzzy yarn.

Ikars Justin Sarma

The two examples were written, at least originally, as assignments in 1985. The most curious coincidence is that both use the same word as one of the two rhymes. My poem was written as a tribute also to Patricia Johnson who, early in my association with the SMPS, gave me a little packet with stuff on poetry tied with a fuzzy white yarn.

# Thistle ~ Down

Southern Minnesota Poets Society

The S M P S is a regional chapter of the League of Minnesota Poets and, with announced exceptions, meets the second Saturday of the months of September through May from 1:00 p.m. through 3:30 p.m. For further information call Ikars (Ike) Sarma at 1-507-345-2211 (voice mail), or e-mail [icarusj@mnmc.net](mailto:icarusj@mnmc.net)

For the meeting of **December 11** you are invited and encouraged to bring for sharing your favorite, classic or otherwise, poems on the subject of the season and/or the holidays. Moreover, Barnes & Noble are holding a book signing for **Shirley Ensrud**. And we will share, as usual, assigned poems and other new or old poems.

A super huge thank-you to **Pj Doyle** for a telling, educational, illuminating and inspirational presentation of the why's and how's of narrative poetry. For the sake of those of you who had to miss it, the *Craft Corner* displays a heroic attempt to capture, however incompletely, some of the highlights.

If you somehow missed this earlier, Barnes & Noble has given us an almost permanent, attractive and prestigious home for our meetings, no strings attached. The guess is that they believe we add something attractive to their operation. Let us not disappoint them and show up in respectable numbers. Sorry about not having an updated program schedule for the rest of our operating year. Suppose you have noticed the effort here to get the system—for putting the *Thistle~Down* together and into the mailbox—back on track.

## Next Meeting

Our **program** will consist of watching videotape excerpts from **Bill Moyers** endeavors to expose the TV-watching audience to poetry. Since there are hours and hours of that, your program committee chose a section with readings by and conversation with **Stanley Kunitz** who may be considered the currently foremost of American poets. His poems are almost certainly narrative, and he delivers them with palpable emotion. He has just lately published, at the young age of 99, another book of his poems. **Sarah Garcia** has kindly agreed to moderate discussions arising from the viewing.

The assignment for January is a **rondeau**. Last months *Craft Corner* hopefully gave you most of the help needed to write or at least start writing one. Bring your results—finished or not.

## Achievements & Such

**Sue Chambers** was the keynote speaker at the **Iowa Poetry Association** on October 31. She also garnered a 1<sup>st</sup> and a 2<sup>nd</sup> place prize plus a 2nd honorable mention in the **South Dakota Grand Prize** (contest?).

More kudos to **Monica Haack** and **June Emmanuel** for continuing their work on poetry writing and readings for the 6<sup>th</sup> grade classes at Vernon Center. **Monica** also did readings for 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade classes at **Holy Rosary**, (her Alma Mater) and for the **United Methodist Church Ladies** in North Mankato.

Your Editor would have to perspire less if all of you achievers would be somewhat more precise as to times, dates, places, but especially capitalization of events, associations, etc. We want our achievements to sound as well, as be respectable.

## Craft Corner

Pj Doyle gave us a great deal of info on the dos and don'ts of narrative poetry. The following tries to present what one listener was able to jot down without losing the thread of her message.

...Narrative poetry tells a story, e.g. like those in Homer's *Iliad*, of Job in the Bible, the plays of Shakespeare, Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Keats' *La Belle Dame Sans Merci* (written in quatrains) and folk ballads which rely strongly on rhyme and rhythm to make them memorable. A story has an opening, a middle and an end and contains problems and conflicts like a drama. A story is driven by passion, displays emotion rather than just telling about it. Louis Simpson (in his essay on n.p.) says, you must write the story first. Yeats made notes on emotions involved on the margins of (copies of?) his letters and journal entries. While a journal serves for a day-to-day catharsis it is also a good source for stories. To write n.p., draw on some story or experience in your life or find or invent one, condense it into the basic truth. Take a book of poetry and look for that truth which compels the writing of a poem. Do not try for the easy out—the ending which pleases everyone for that is cheating the reader. While showing how you feel about the subject, try to remove yourself from the story to some extent. You should not be limited to your own voice but can pretend to be someone else, other age, sex, nationality etc. No skimping on emotional veracity...

The following is a good example that narrative poems can be any length but not too short. You have to read this one quite attentively and over and over again, and the emotion of the experience keeps getting stronger.

Your editor took the liberty of changing 'seats' to 'windows' (third line of the second 'verse paragraph' and hope Pj has no objections. If you were there you have the right to further comment.

And you are welcome to send your reactions to the **T~D** on anything concerning our meetings or printed therein.

## College Prep

Jack and I, we drove  
that old Packard across midnight,  
Rock Cave, French Creek, lurching as far  
as possible out of high school  
and coal dust. We coasted

into Buckhannon off old Highway  
Twenty, first time in our life, me singing  
country, the windows down, twanging  
a five-dollar guitar at the kind of  
smoke we never breathed before. We  
stayed awake for days, almost caught  
a fish in Stonewall Jackson Lake, found  
a whorehouse by accident, rolled

on by, around the big lake to  
Wesleyan College, no  
insurance, no brakes  
the whole way!

- Pj Doyle

Enclosed find Pj's handout for the workshop on writing n.p. As she intended us to do so can you: take time before you do the 'actual' poem part.

# Thistle ~ Down

Southern Minnesota Poets Society

The S M P S is a regional chapter of the League of Minnesota Poets and, with announced exceptions, meets the second Saturday of the months of September through May from 11:30 p.m. through 3:30 p.m. For further information call Ikars (Ike) Sarma at 1-507-345-2211 (voice mail), or e-mail [icarusj@mnmc.net](mailto:icarusj@mnmc.net)

The meeting of **January 7** will not be the first meeting of either: the next decade, the next century or the next millennium. We must wait for another year. To set the record straight, the year 2000 is the last year of the first two thousand years. Because its first digit is 2, it has been often taken as the first year of the next millennium, the third. Some think this is due to the hullabaloo about the Y2K problem. It appears that any problems were routine, as encountered when you deal with computers. They can be confused anytime a cosmic ray particle goes through which happens all the time. As for the program? Come and welcome our own poet-member **Sarah Garcia**.

The 'program committee' thought it would be fun to have a glimpse of a 'really big event' for poets and poetry lovers. **Sarah** has kindly agreed to rule over the airing of excerpts from a video tape authored by Bill Moyer, but especially over the thoughts and discussions that surely must arise. Her background includes a BS in Secondary Education (Concordia University, Seward, NE) and an AA (Bethany Lutheran College, Mankato). She has edited the *University of Minnesota Rampage* (at U of M, Waseca), and the *Sower* and the *Poppouri Literary Magazine* (Sarah says that is a misspelling and I see it as deliberate—a pun?). Her majors were English and Speech/Theatre Arts. Her work background includes the *Truman Tribune*, the *New Ulm Journal* and the *Watsonwan Advertiser*. She has taught at Sleepy Eye, MN, St. Johns Lutheran, Staten Island, NJ, and at St. Johns Lutheran, Truman MN. Currently, Sarah works for the Madelia School District where she is a grant writer and a writing teacher at the high-school where your editor caught her to get all this info.

## December meeting

The weather was very co-operative, but we missed a few of you, probably due to all the preparations for the coming holidays. We enjoyed reading and listening to numerous favorites from *The Night Before Christmas* (its proper title is *A Visit from St. Nicholas*) to Dr Seuss's zany but pertinent tales. We did not get a chance to read the assigned poems and you may bring them along for the January meeting. Moreover, Barnes & Noble had a book signing for **Shirley Ensrud** right at the tail end of our meeting. Hopefully, some of the publicity has rubbed off on the SMPS.

## Next Meeting

As promised, we will have **Laurel Winter** present a program. The topic or whatever will be announced in the next issue of the *T~D*. **Laurel** is a member of the Root River bunch in Rochester, a member of the **LOMP** and, what is of even greater interest, a professional writer/poet, which is to say her writing gets published and paid for. Her last science fiction novel will be published next fall. Mark your calendar to make sure you catch her presentation if at all possible.

The assignment for February is a love poem, naturally. Dig down into your most romantic experience and let the emotions soar.

**Please note:** The LOMP needs your help to inform school personnel that submissions for the Student Contest part of the YEAR 2000 – SIXTEENTH ANNUAL POETRY COMPETITIONS are to be sent to:

Cathy Tacinelli, 626 E. Center St. – Apt. 21, Rochester, MN 55904-4639.

# Thistle~Down

Southern Minnesota Poets Society

---

The S M P S is a regional chapter of the League of Minnesota Poets and, with announced exceptions, meets the second Saturday of the months of September through May from 1:00 p.m. through 3:30 p.m. For further information call Ikars (Ike) Sarma at 1-507-345-2211 (voice mail), or e-mail [icarusj@mnmc.net](mailto:icarusj@mnmc.net)

---

Love is the overarching theme for the month and, of course, the current writing assignment.

Our featured speaker for the February 12 meeting is **Laurel Winter**. Laurel is a poet, a writer—published novelist—and a visual artist from Rochester, Minnesota with a list of accomplishments which, if recounted in detail, would exceed the pages allotted to the *Thistle~Down*. A member of the Root River Poets chapter of the LOMP, she has chosen **Filling the Pool: Creating Creativity** as the subject of her talk. Her science fiction novel for kids, **GROWING WINGS** is coming out from Houghton Mifflin this fall.

Laurel has written scores of poems winning prizes from the LOMP and the NFSPS. For the last two years in a row she has won the "Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine" Reader's Poll Award for best poem ("why goldfish shouldn't use power tools" and "egg horror poem"). These two also won her a Rhysling award for best poem (given by the Science Fiction Poetry Association). Her stories have been published in Magazine of Science Fiction & Fantasy, Asimov's, Aboriginal Science Fiction, Women's World, several anthologies and Tales of Unanticipated where she is the poetry editor. She has compiled MINNESOTA TRIVIA and has been the co-editor of BLOSSOMS & BLIZZARDS, a self-published anthology of Minnesota authors.

President Bonnie Ann would love to see all of you in attendance and bringing in guests for this promising program. She further wishes to remind you that the SMPS has, as a chapter of the LOMP, certain obligations to fulfill towards the NFSPS National convention to be held in Minneapolis in the month of June of this year. Elaine Anderson, Monika Haack, Meredith Cook, Ike Sarma and others are working on table decorations, favors and such. Your presence in help and input of ideas is needed and appreciated.

At the last meeting we enjoyed a fantastic program conducted by our own member poet **Sarah Garcia**. Although we have excellent programs most every time you missed something special if you weren't there. As was announced before, we began by watching excerpts from two of Bill Moyers' many special video programs on poetry. The excerpts featured Stanley Kunitz considered by many to be one of the foremost poets of our time. It was Sarah's task to guide us into reflecting on to Kunitz' poems and his thoughts and moderate our reactions. Your editor can not remember any presentation of this kind that could be considered better prepared and better conducted than Sarah's and this reaction was shared by all attending. **THANK YOU, SARAH!!!!!!**

---

## Next Meeting

Our program will be a PANEL DISCUSSION on the theme "**Positioning your Poem**". The panelists scheduled to participate are: **Meredith Cook**, poet and editor of the *Moccasin*, **Nancy Dauer**, poet and recording secretary of the SMPS and **Lee Cummings**, poet and co-ordinator of SMPS anthology. The assignment for March is a 'shape poem', on which more in the Craft Corner.

---



Oscar Wilde

# Barnes & Noble EVENTS

1859 Adams Street, Mankato, MN 56001 • (507) 386-0110 • Fax (507) 386-0206

Store Hours: Monday - Saturday 9 AM to 11 PM; Sunday 10 AM to 9 PM

**February 2000**

## ELMO'S VALENTINE

**WEDNESDAY 9TH, 10 AM**

Celebrate Valentine's Day in a special way. Our storytime will feature Elmo stories, and children will also make valentines to send to Elmo. The first 50 children to register will receive a goody bag. Quantities are limited, so we appreciate your assistance by registering in advance. A sign-up sheet is available at the registers.

## BOOKFAIR

**TUESDAY 15TH, 7-9 PM**

Stop by and support the Mankato Paddling and Outings Club by making a purchase during its bookfair. The club will also host a panel discussion on Boundary Waters Canoe Area camping.



## AUTHOR APPEARANCE

**SATURDAY 26TH, 2 PM**

Pet lovers know the special bond that exists between a pet and its owner. Join us we host by Allen and Linda Anderson, authors of *Angel Animals, Exploring Our Spiritual Connection with Animals*. The authors will be on hand to sign books and share stories about the powerful impact pets have on our lives.

## HUMOR BOOKCLUB

**WEDNESDAY 9TH, 7:30 PM**

This month we will discuss *Creepshow* by Stephen King. This "horror" book is also a great example of dark humor at its best. A sense of humor is recommended but not required.

## ESSAY WRITING

**WORKSHOP**

**THURSDAY 10TH, 4 PM**

We will host a writing workshop to prepare for the Independent Thinkers Essay Contest. This workshop is open to both students and adults who want assistance in writing essays. Feel free to join us to share ideas or get tips on effective writing.

## SOUTHERN MINNESOTA

**POETS' SOCIETY**

**SATURDAY 12TH, 1 PM**

If you enjoy poetry, you will be interested in attending this open meeting of the Southern Minnesota Poets' Society. New members are always welcome!

# Independent Thinkers Essay Contest

Barnes and Noble, in partnership with Mercury Sable, is pleased to bring you the "Independent Thinkers Series," a selection of books celebrating unique points of view. In conjunction with the series, we've created an Independent Thinkers Essay Contest. In 250 words or less, tell us why you think one of the books in the series was chosen and you could win prizes, including \$25,000 in cash or a 2000 Mercury Sable. High school students are eligible for scholarships, and their schools receive matching grants and a library of Independent Thinker books. Please visit the Independent Thinkers table for details about the contest and an entry form. Deadline for submissions is March 15, 2000.

*The novel, if it be anything, is contemporary history, an exact and complete reproduction of social surroundings of the age we live in.*

GEORGE MOORE (1852-1933)

IRISH AUTHOR



**CHESS NIGHT**  
**TUESDAY 15TH, 7 PM**

Are you the next Bobby Fischer, or do you know someone who is? Bring your chess set to Barnes and Noble and challenge our in-house master wanna-be! Prizes are given to anyone who can win or draw.

**A CONVERSATION IN  
FRENCH**

**THURSDAY 17TH, 7:30 PM**

*Parlez vous Français?* If you know French and want to meet other French-speakers, or if you are learning and want to practice, join us for casual conversation and fun.

**THURSDAY NIGHT BOOK  
CLUB**

**THURSDAY 24TH, 7:30 PM**

The books may change, but the day is the same. This month the club will discuss *Hanna's Daughter* by Marianne Fredriksson. Feel free to join us.

**A CONVERSATION IN  
GERMAN**

**TUESDAY 29TH, 7:30 PM**

All German speakers are invited to join us tonight for a casual conversation in the German language. This event is open to anyone interested, including all ages and all levels of speaking ability.

**The Cafe Corner**

Raspberry Caffé Mocha  
\$3.10 (reg) and \$3.65 (lg)

*A tantalizing combination of raspberry and chocolate, mixed with steamed milk and espresso. Perfect to share with your sweetheart.*



*Barnes & Noble*  
**JR**  
**STORYTIME**

**Wednesdays at 10 AM**

**Ages 2-4**

- Feb. 2nd: Reader's Choice
- Feb. 9th: Valentine's Day
- Feb. 16th: Thomas the Tank Engine
- Feb. 23rd: Reading Rainbow

**Saturdays at 11 AM**

**Ages 4-10**

- Feb. 5th: Reader's Choice
  - Feb. 12th: Elmo's Valentine
  - Feb. 19th: Tigger
  - Feb. 26th: Reading Rainbow
- We offer storytime for children ages 2 and up. Parents and caregivers are encouraged to stay with their child. If your child becomes restless, feel free to leave the storytime area and return a few minutes later.

**BARNES AND NOBLE**  
is proud to be the newest  
corporate sponsor of the



*All events are free and open to the public.*

Events sometimes change.  
Please call ahead to confirm your event. Thank you!

**CHILDREN'S  
BOOK CLUBS**

**PARENT/CHILD BOOK  
CLUB**

**TUESDAY 8TH, 7 PM**

Spend some time with your kids and rediscover great books with the Parent/Child Book Club. This month we are discussing *Out of the Dust* by Karen Hesse and *The Midwife's Apprentice* by Karen Cushman. Space is limited, so we ask new members to pre-register by phone (386-0110).

**AMERICAN GIRLS CLUB**

**SATURDAY 12TH, 1:30 PM**

This month we will be celebrating Valentine's Day. *Felicity*, from the Revolutionary War era, will be our inspiration for this lively discussion. If you like the American Girls, join us and tell us what you think!

**TEEN CLASSICS BOOK  
CLUB**

**MONDAY 21ST, 7 PM**

This group is open to all teens ages 11-15. Bring a friend as we discuss *Anna and the King* by Margaret Landon. This classic tale of a British governess in the royal court of the King of Siam has recently been made into a major motion picture.

**YOUNG ADULTS  
SCI-FI & FANTASY BOOK  
CLUB**

**TUESDAY 22ND, 7 PM**

If you missed our first meeting in January, don't worry - it's never too late! This month we are discussing *Sabriel* by Garth Nix. Please bring ideas for books to read in the next few months. Open to children ages 6-18.



---

## Craft Corner

There is not much of outright craft in writing shape poems. You just have to work hard after that spurt of imagination and hope for a bit of sheer luck. Officially, there are spatial and concrete poems.

Miller Williams, in *Patterns of Poetry: An Encyclopedia of Forms*, states speaking of the spatial that few poets now employ this ancient kind of verse. It depends on its visible patterns for much of its effect. He illustrates a number of named, traditional shapes by means of line drawings, i.e. squares, triangles, lozenges, ovals and combinations.

(Apparently, as time goes on, they have become... Ed.)...imitative of more clearly recognizable shapes. Of course, the shape must reinforce the statement of the poem.

## THE ALTAR

A broken A L T A R, Lord, thy servant reares,  
Made of a heart, and cemented with teares:  
Whose parts are as thy Hand did frame;  
No workmans tool hath touched the same.  
    A H E A R T alone,  
    Is such a stone,  
    As nothing but  
    Thy pow'r doth cut.  
    Wherefore each part  
    Of my hard heart  
    Meets in this frame,  
    To praise thy name:  
That, if a chance to hold my peace,  
These stones to praise thee may not cease.  
Oh let thy blessed S A C R I F I C E be mine,  
And sanctifie this A L T A R to be thine

—George Herbert

Williams has more to say about *concrete* poems where the manipulation of the word on the page creates a picture of the noun, "acts out" the verb, or draws a larger picture of the action.

## BEAUCOUP BUTTERCUPS

and c o w    c o w    c o w  
    o o        o o        o o  
    w        w        w  
parsley parsley parsley

the way a  
whole field looks  
back at you

in Berkshire in  
June.

—Jonathan Williams

Your editor can say no more than this: "Poets will go to any lengths to get the readers' attention."

---

# Thistle ~ Down

Southern Minnesota Poets Society

---

The S M P S is a regional chapter of the League of Minnesota Poets and, with announced exceptions, meets the second Saturday of the months of September through May from 1:00 p.m. through 3:30 p.m. For further information call Ikars (Ike) Sarma at 1-507-345-2211 (voice mail), or e-mail [icarusj@mnmc.net](mailto:icarusj@mnmc.net)

---

Spring is here somewhat prematurely. Or is it? It remains to be seen. Regardless, your April writing assignment is **New Life**—no specified form or length

A new practice started by some of our members (when getting into town early) is to gather at the food court of the River Hills Mall. The spot is near the West entrance, the one nearer J. C. Penneys.

Our featured activity for this, the March meeting is a panel discussion centered on the task of how to **Position Your Poem—on the page, you suppose?** We have a tremendous roster of panelists. **Sue Chambers**, NFSPS president and a very successful poet will talk about free or open form verse. **Meredith Cook**, the Editor of the MOCCASSIN, whose skills have garnered her many a prize poem will deal with traditional and/or fixed form poems. **Nancy Dauer**, SMPS recording secretary and more than infrequent a prizewinner will present thoughts on concrete and shape poems. There will be someone moderating the discussion, but the blame had not been placed squarely on anyone's shoulders at the time this issue went to press.

Bring along your notepads, pens, pencils etc. Be ready to ask questions and feel free to share anything you might have read on the subject for every bit helps. President Bonnie Ann is hoping to see all of you in attendance and bringing in guests for this promising program.

---

## Next Meeting

Doris Stengel, LOMP president and an outstanding poet is to be our guest speaker in April. Her accomplishments include poems published in several periodicals including DAKOTA HORIZONS and LAKES COUNTRY JOURNAL. She has a self-published chapbook HORIZONS MEASURED. Doris began writing poetry at a young age and some of her early efforts were published in the DAKOTA FARMER. This, she says got her addicted to writing forever. She has chosen The Rhythms of Poetry as her topic, and adds that it is about putting musicality into one's poems—writing to a beat, feeling the flow—then concludes with, who knows where the beat may take us?

---

## Last Meeting

**Laurel Winter**—published novelist—and a visual artist from Rochester, Minnesota and in effect an excellent writer as well as a poet was our guest speaker in February. A member of the Root River Poets chapter of the LOMP, she spoke on the topic **Filling the Pool: Creating Creativity**. This was an excellent presentation and produced a great deal of discussion and novel ideas about writing. It is not possible in any one paragraph or even a page to give full justice to the scope of her presentation. A lot of it had to do with giving yourself permission to do things you may think you are too busy to do, things that others in general may consider a lot of foolishness, time consuming or outright. Your motto, according to Laurel, should be: "Don't just do something, sit there!" **Thank you, Laurel!**

---

**Bonnie Ann**, our President wishes the *Thistle~Down* to remind you that help of every possible shape and color will be needed for SMPS, as a chapter of the LOMP, to fulfill certain obligations towards the NFSPS National convention to be held in Minneapolis in the month of June of this year. Elaine Anderson, Berneal Schindle, Meredith Cook, Monika Haack, Ike Sarma and others are working on table decorations, favors and such. Your presence in help and input of ideas is needed and appreciated.

We desperately need some wide mouth glass jars of the Mason type and some cores from e.g. paper towel and t.p. rolls. The idea is to 'fill' (but not quite) the jars with kernels of grain grown in Southern Minnesota. The cores are to take up some space in the center of the jars to keep the weight of the whole down and make it suitable for table favors.

---

### Achievements

Meredith Cook judged a contest for the Poetry Society of Oklahoma.

Sue Chambers judged a Students' Poetry Contest in Florida.

Monica Haack is a favorite poet of the snowbirds in Dustin, Florida and gets invited to share her poetry at all kinds of dos including the local Church Ladies Bible Study group (She says she reads one serious one funny poem every time) and the St. Vincent de Paul Society for the Poor.

Ike Sarma Was asked to give a talk about present trends in poetry to the North Mankato Rotary Club and shared some poetry of others as well as of his own.

---

# Thistle ~ Down

Southern Minnesota Poets Society

The S M P S is a regional chapter of the League of Minnesota Poets and, with announced exceptions, meets at Barnes & Noble Booksellers, 1857 Adams St. in Mankato on the second Saturday of the months of September through May from 1:00 p.m. through 3:30 p.m.  
For further information call Ikars (Ike) Sarma at 1-507-345-2211 (voice mail), or e-mail [icarusj@mnico.net](mailto:icarusj@mnico.net)

This month's meeting is on Saturday, April 8 of 2000.

Our featured speaker is **Doris Stengel**, the president of the League of Minnesota Poets. Doris is an outstanding poet whose work has been published in several periodicals, including DAKOTA HORIZONS and LAKES COUNTRY JOURNAL. She began writing poetry at a young age, and some of her early efforts were published by the DAKOTA FARMER. She has self-published a chapbook HORIZONS MEASURED.

Doris has chosen The Rhythms of Poetry as her topic. It is about putting musicality into one's poems—writing to a beat, feeling the flow—as she puts it.

Consider the following editorial comment. Judson Jerome, one of the more seasoned poets writing today who has many credits as a poetry editor and teacher and has written several books on the subject, believes that most poetry written today (accept it or not, like it or not) is lyrical, an opinion which is shared by others in the field.

This is certain to be one important opportunity to add to your skills of poetry writing.

Bonnie Ann, our president and the rest of our "steering" committee ask you to bend every effort to attend this presentation. Do bring along or invite anyone you can reach who is—or could be made to be—interested in poetry, participant or otherwise.

Please remember to bring along for sharing your April writing assignment which is **New Life**—no specified form or length.

A new practice started by some of our members (when getting into town early) is to gather at the food court of the River Hills Mall. You will find them at some spot near the West entrance, the one nearer to J. C. Penney.

## Next Meeting

Since Mother's Day falls on the Sunday following our usually appointed day of meeting, Saturday, May 13<sup>th</sup>, there is a high likelihood that we will meet either a week early, on Saturday, May 6<sup>th</sup> or a week later, on May the 20<sup>th</sup>, unless that is considered too close to the LOMP Spring Meeting set for the weekend of May 27<sup>th</sup>. You will be notified in due time about the actual date, but it seems appropriate to give a fair warning about not meeting on May 13.

No specific program has been set, but there is a high possibility of having a workshop on writing haiku. This is a poem of Japanese origin and, formally, has three lines of five, seven and five syllables respectively. It is supposed to be very heavy on symbolism, i.e., you try to tell your experience and where and when (season or specific time of year) it took place while avoiding as much as possible naming specifics, but using common items to hint at them.

---

## Last Meeting

It is a real shame that it is difficult to tell those of you who were not there about all the interesting facts we can learn at any of our meetings and all of our programs.

At our meeting in March, we enjoyed a panel of presenters guiding a discussion about **Positioning Your Poem**. The most important feature of the way a poem looks on the page turned out to be that of line breaks.

**Sue Chambers**, NFSPS president and a member of our "steering" committee spoke about free or open form verse and brought along a huge handful of handouts. **Meredith Cook**, Editor of the MOCCASSIN and also a "member", spoke about classical form poems. **Nancy Dauer**, SMPS recording secretary another "member" and a skilful workshop leader brought a page of shape poems written by LOMP members she garnered from the pages of the MOCCASSIN.

There is not that much one can do about the way classical forms appear on the page, but there are some new trends and creative innovations. Thus no big fuss is made about not capitalizing the initial letter of a line, especially when using an enjambment or omitting caps altogether as done by e. e. cummings.

Shape poems are unconventional in nature. The form is dictated by the content. One can marvel at what has been done, especially in that once something is done we are left saying, but of course...and trying to use the wrinkle in a generating a different shape.

Free verse, of course, has given rise to highly unconventional line breaks and, what is even more startling, "unconventional" breaks in the line itself. Your editor's reaction to that is: having such new freedoms, be sure to not get carried away and overdo it, or you may lose the poetry among the tricks. In some instances this can be shown to be so when comparison is made of such poems rewritten omitting only the novel breaks.

---

After the program, we spent considerable time in looking over samples of possible table decorations and discussing some particulars of further work and ideas.

President Bonnie Ann has a repeat reminder for you. We desperately need some wide mouth glass jars of the Mason type and some cores from e.g. paper towel and t.p. rolls.

---

## Achievements

Meredith Cook judged a contest for the Pennsylvania State Poetry Society.

Sue Chambers judged on form (and was remunerated) the work of a group of poets in Palm Beach, Florida.

Lucile Nitzkowski received a check for her poem *Price of Progress* but has not said how much or who paid.

Lorraine Mueller won 1<sup>st</sup> prize of \$25 in the 60<sup>th</sup> Annual Contest by the Poet's Study Club of Terre Haute, IN, the serious poem category, for her poem *The Little Boy Who Loved*.

Ike Sarma gave a talk about present trends in poetry to the North Mankato Rotary Club and shared some poetry of others as well as of his own.

---

# Thistle~Down

Southern Minnesota Poets Society

---

The S M P S is a regional chapter of the League of Minnesota Poets and, with announced exceptions, meets at Barnes & Noble Booksellers, 1857 Adams St. in Mankato on the second Saturday of the months of September through May from 1:00 p.m. through 3:30 p.m.  
For further information call Ikars (Ike) Sarma at 1-507-345-2211 (voice mail), or e-mail [icarusj@mnmc.net](mailto:icarusj@mnmc.net)

---

A new practice started by some of our members (when getting into town early) is to gather at the food court of the River Hills Mall at about 11:30 A.M. You will find them at some spot near the West entrance, the one nearer to J. C. Penney.

This month's meeting is on Saturday, May 13 of 2000. We will hold a workshop on writing haiku. Our VP and the Editor of *Thistle~Down*, **Ike Sarma**, and **Sue Chambers** Past President of the SMPS, the LOMP and, shortly, of the NFSPS will be the facilitators.

**Sue** is an accomplished poet, winner of many a prize, and brings a lot of talent to the mix. **Ike** is of Latvian descent, writes poetry in two languages, reads in several more and loves to "translate" significant poems from one language to another. He prefers to be thought of as a serious student and lover of poetry, not too sure of being a poet. He has been writing since the age of eight and at the age of 15 won first prize in a nation-wide open-to-all short story contest. That story and a number of his poems have been published in the Latvian global newspaper LAIKS. He believes his destiny is that of a designated bridesmaid since he invariably wins second prizes in the handful of contests he has entered.

Come prepared to write simple and powerful short poems. There will be very little "lecturing" beyond an open discussion of what the ideal haiku is supposed to be like. There is no assignment, but, as usual, we will have time to share our latest creations. By the same token, it is OK to bring guests and potential new members and to tell them we would like to have them share their poems.

## Special Notes

The Editor apologizes to all for erroneously reporting May 28, 2000 to be the date of the LOMP Spring Meeting. He hopes that the **Lomplighter** which arrived a day too late to correct that mistake was at your doorstep before the Thistle~Down. The correct date is Saturday, April 29, 2000. Just in case you do not receive the **Lomplighter**, but still wish to and can get there it is held at the **Ramada Plaza Ridgedale** near the intersection of I-494 and I-394 in Minneapolis. This is a one-day only affair.

Bonnie Ann, our president is asking you to bend every effort to help us with the preparations for the NFSPS Annual Meeting in Minneapolis June 15 – 19, 2000. See the **Next Meeting** section below to see how you can help.

In the interim, we can all take part in reducing the load. Let someone in our "steering committee" know if you have some time in May where you individually could show up at some to be yet designated place and time to work on table decorations. Materials and simple instructions will be available and our VP would meet you to help. Weekend times would be preferable. Another possibility is for you to stop in, pick up the stuff and do it at home. This would be an alternative. You would be responsible for bringing the completed items, hopefully well before the deadline, Monday, June 12.

It was a pleasure to have two guests and potential members at our April meeting. Esther Hoffmann is a student at MSU. Carol McGuire lives and works in Windom. Both brought poetry to share!!!! And we had a crowd of 11.

---

### Next Meeting

Our annual picnic meeting is now set for June 3<sup>rd</sup> to give us a chance to work on our table decorations. This is a responsibility shared among all the LOMP chapters. At each meal needed are up to 250 place settings at 25 tables. A centerpiece will be made for each table and a Minnesota memento-like table favor for each place. At one meal our centerpieces are to be built of special black cards sporting a laser-engraved loon. The place favors are small magnets decorated ditto. At the other meal we are responsible for the center piece is to be a Mason jar or a wine bottle, fancy trimmed and filled with a mix of Southern Minnesota grown grains: wheat, oats, corn soya beans, etc. The place favors will be pressed flower trimmed cards courtesy of Monica Haack with a poem taken from the *Moccasin* pasted in. Monica is just about finished with the cards and like with the poem copies. Some pasting may still have to be done as will be the filling of the "granaries". There may be few more items, but that will be grist for the June issue of the *Thistle-Down* which will also include directions how to get to the picnic.

---

### Last Meeting

We say a big THANK YOU to **Doris Stengel**, President of the LOMP for her talk and workshop on putting music in our poetry. This editor made valiant attempt to tape the program, with two recorders at that, but there lies the tale of woe. He failed to depress the REC as well as the PLAY button. O-N B-O-T-H. Fortunately, he listened very, very carefully and took copious notes. (Of course, if he hadn't, he might have noticed his slipup.) Even more fortunately, Doris gave the same presentation a week later to the Heartland bunch and was hoping to have a tape for us to refer to. A short summary of her presentation follows.

While Doris likes writing free verse better, she is a firm believer that rhythm, flow or musicality in general is desirable and possible in free verse as well as in poetry of the more traditional kind. She started by noting that April is National Poetry Month and cited two articles in the Minneapolis Tribune which gave her additional impetus for this talk. Kristin Tillotson of the Pop Stand column says that, "...A good poet is a word miser, spending each as carefully as if it were the Hope Diamond. Kim Ode refers to Geri Chavis, a psychologist and poetry therapist who speaks of patients who are pouring their hearts out....There is a rhythm to their speech, in the way they organized their thoughts in the throes of emotion....and adds: "We are naturally rhythmic. Think of our heartbeat. And poetry lets us be free. A paragraph has to end with a sentence that ends with a punctuation mark. In poetry, you can end a line whenever you want". The way Doris puts it is: Poets communicate more than just info, and while excess preoccupation with rhythm and flow of sound may dilute the message, most of the time there is a pleasing combination.

How do we get that? Through arranging speech sounds and accents, and through repetition. Artists in general like to give structure to their creations. Two ways of doing that is through repetition and through variety. We like the familiar, the expected. Therefore the repetition. However, too much repetition creates monotony and boredom. In poetry, variation can be intermingled with the repetition—of sounds: vowels, consonants, syllables, words, phrases, lines and even groups of lines as in refrains. Some of the repetition techniques are: alliteration, assonance, consonance and the various recognized flavors of rhyme. It should be noted that too much feminine rhyme (two syllable) can make a poem sound funny. Repetition and rhythm produce the mood or the tone of a poem.

Doris' son had composed for her some special, what she calls "underneath" music, which we were asked to write reactions to—some thought and not necessarily a poem, not necessarily complete and which we could work on later at home. We shared the results and the fascinating fact was that many reactions to a given passage were quite similar and that none of us had any trouble empathizing with the reactions of others.

THANK YOU, DORIS. THANK YOU, VERY, VERY MUCH

---

### Achievements

Tim Tabor's photography and poems were featured in an Artist of the Month exhibit at Barnes & Noble. You may still see them on the walls in the coffee shop area.

---

Thistle~Down  
1577 Sharon Dr  
N Mankato, MN 56002

# Thistle ~ Down

**The S M P S is a regional chapter of the League of Minnesota Poets and, with announced exceptions, meets at Barnes & Noble Booksellers, 1857 Adams St. in Mankato on the second Saturday of the months of September through May from 1:00 p.m. through 3:30 p.m. For further information call lkars (Ike) Sarma at 1-507-345-2211 (voice mail), or e-mail [icarusj@mnnc.net](mailto:icarusj@mnnc.net)**

[illegible]