

Thistle~Down

Southern Minnesota Poets Society

The S M P S, a regional chapter of the League of Minnesota Poets holds open meetings, unless announced otherwise, at Barnes & Noble Booksellers, 1857 Adams St. in Mankato on the second Saturday of months of September through May, from 1:00 p.m. through 3:30 p.m. Meetings and memberships are open to all lovers of poetry and writing. For further information call Editor, Sandra Newbauer, at 507-344-0147, or Sue Chambers, President, at 507-278-4200 or e-mail PoetSue@aol.com



January Program

COME ONE, COME ALL!!!

January 9, 2004

Barnes and Noble Booksellers

1857 Adams Street

Mankato, Minnesota

1:00 pm through 3:30 pm

Come and join your fellow poets for a day of poetry, and a great poetic start to the New Year!!! Poet Ed Brekke-Kramer will lead us in an exercise called "Listening for a Poem." Last year Ed delighted everyone by calling on our sense of poetic sleuth to find the most unusual poetic stimulus from books we might ordinarily ignore. This year's exercise promises to be just as intriguing, so bring your ears and a pen!

ASSIGNMENT

Our assignment this month is the same theme that will be featured for the next NFSPS Contest, deadline March. Give it a try: a *light poem for troubled times*. Must end with a strong punchline. Any form. Twenty-four line limit.

Bring any other poem you may want to share.

EDITORIAL NOTE

Editor Ikars (Ike) Sarma is still recuperating from a recent hospitalization and doing well. Our best wishes go out to you, Ike! We are hoping you are able to spend time with some of your favorite poets as you feel better and better.

In the meantime, Sandra Newbauer will be acting editor. Please let her know of any achievements or announcements you may have.

DON' T FORGET

BLIZZARD WRITER'S RETREAT

Jan. 23rd - 25th

at Sue Chambers

57310 166th Lane,

Good Thunder. 56037

Rules--bring a program of $\frac{1}{2}$ hour at least,
and something to eat!

Local poets (those within 20 miles or less) are encouraged to come for any portion of the weekend that they are able. Local poets may stay over if we have enough bed space, otherwise we ask that you commute each day.

This is an excellent opportunity to listen to some great poets, learn about forms and subjects you may not have studied, and, of course, a time to write!

Contact PoetSue@aol.com for directions



Keep in mind

The Geraldine R. Dodge Poetry Festival from September 30 through October 3, 2004. The largest poetry festival in North America, it is held every two years. This year it will take place on the historic Duke Farms in Hillsborough, New Jersey. The largest tents will accommodate more than 3,000 people. (We're talking poets here.)

SMPS is planning a bus trip to the festival. Look for more information in future newsletters and at monthly meetings!

For the curious: <http://www.grdodge.org/poetry>.

The Website for the National Federation of State Poetry Societies is: <http://www.nfsps.com>. Current contests, books by past winners and newsletters can be obtained from this site. Poetry links are accessible as well.

The Spring LOMP meeting will be in Rochester on Saturday, April 29, 2004.

The NFSPS Convention is scheduled from June 17 through June 20, 2004 in Ohio.

More information will be provided at regular meetings and in the newsletter.

New Year's Haiku:

As my deputy

A crow

Is bathing in New Year's water.

-Kobayashi Issa

A New Year begins

With the blooming

Of a single frosty rose.

-Mizuhara Shuoshi

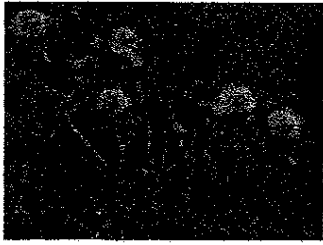
On Thursday, January 29 the Good Thunder Reading series is featuring **Candace Black**, a local poet. Many will recall her presenting the most excellent programs to SMPS on more than one occasion. She is the wife of professor Richard Robbins who you will recall as a frequent presenter of programs to the SMPS. I believe Candace has another book of her poems published recently.

We encourage members to attend the reading at 7:30 P.M. the Ostrander Auditorium, in the Student Union at Minnesota State University, Mankato.

Thistle~Down
1577 Sharon Drive
North Mankato, MN 56003



Meredith Cook
427 N. Gorman
Blue Earth, MN 56013



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Visitors welcome! No fee to attend.

February 2004

Volume 24, Issue 2

Thistle-Down

February Open Meeting on Valentine's Day

♥ Join us on February 14 for

Changing Forms

Gwen Hart, a graduate student at Mankato State University will be our guest speaker for an inspiring discussion on formal poetry. She is the author of a poetry chapbook *Losing Ohio* and will share her expertise and passion for sonnets and other formal poetry forms. She will help us to hone and sharpen our own skills. Ms. Hart will be available to share, sell and sign her books. Don't miss this opportunity! Be at Barnes & Noble in Mankato at 1:00 p.m.

You won't be disappointed!!

Assignment for February

Subject: *Any*

Form: *Chaucerian Stanzas (also known as Rime Royal)* – A five stanza, 35 line poem written in iambic pentameter, each stanza consisting of a Sicilian triplet rhymed *aba* and a quatrain rhymed *bbcc*.

Bring the assignment or another poem to share! Do you have a Valentine favorite?

✓ Mark your Calendar

National Poetry Convention
NFSPS will hold the annual convention in Westerville, Ohio, a suburb of Columbus, on the Otterbein College Campus from June 17-20, 2004. □

The Geraldine R. Dodge Poetry Festival takes place at the historic Duke Farms in Hillsborough, New Jersey, from September 30 - October 3, 2004. The largest poetry festival in North America, it is held every two years. SMPS is planning to charter a bus, so let President Sue Chambers know if you are interested in attending. For details on the festival, see their website:
<http://www.grdodge.org/poetry>

League of Minnesota Poets Spring LOMP meeting will be held in Rochester on Saturday, April 29, 2004. More details in future newsletters.

Good Thunder Reading Kent Myers will be the next writer featured during this year's Good Thunder Reading Series at MSU. He will read from his works on Thursday evening, February 19, 2004 at Ostrander Auditorium at MSU. His book of short stories *Light in the Crossing* was a New York Times Notable Book.

Remember to Pay your Dues

Blizzard Writer's Retreat

The 2004 *Blizzard Retreat* from January 24th - 26th was a huge success. Held annually at Sue Chamber's home, writers from around Minnesota have an opportunity to share their works and challenge themselves with spontaneous writing exercises provided by participants.

This year poets wrote about the street they live on, learned to compose a sestina, described the language of a non-human and honored former SMPS poet Bill Johnson among other formal and non-formal compositions.

As always, the food, ambiance and company stimulated the imagination and warmed the soul. *Many thanks to Sue and her gracious family.*

January Meeting

SMPS members listened intently as Ed Brekke-Kramer read from several books on a variety of topics from savannahs to single malt liquor in order to compose a poem incorporating as many words or subjects as the writer chose. Readings culminated in reflective as well as humorous creations. Thank you Ed for such a good time!

NFSPS tote bags in either black nylon or black canvas with gold logos are available. Contact Doris Stengel, 1510 S. 7th Street, Brainerd, MN 56401 for more information.

December Meeting

SMPS members shared the holiday spirit with lunch and a non-traditional gift exchange at the Great Wall Restaurant in North Mankato. Songs and poetry highlighted the meal. Participants wrote poems describing their gifts and everyone had to guess what the festively wrapped gifts were. Round two of the gift exchange allowed everyone to pick someone else's gift! By the way, any word on those lottery tickets?

Good Thunder in January

Several SMPS members along with students and community members found that one of the coldest days of the year could be warmed heartily by the writing of Candace Black and Edward Micus. Candace's first book *The Volunteer* won the 2000 Minnesota Voices Poetry Prize and was recently published by New Rivers Press. She has won a variety of awards including a Loft McKnight Award in Poetry. Her works are published in numerous publications and she teaches at both MSU and Gustavus. She left her audience with memorable observations and reflections about life and family.

Ed Micus's musings about twins and swimming at the YWCA roused the crowd with laughter as well as posing poignant commentary about the human spirit. Micus is also the recipient of the Loft McKnight award in Poetry as well as numerous other awards. His

work can be found in a variety of publications and his new book of stories *Landing Zones*, was published by New Rivers Press. He is the Assistant Director for the center for Academic Success at MSU, Mankato. If only these readings were longer! Check their books out!

Got News?

Recently had a poem published? Did you take a class you would recommend? Read a good book? Discover a great poet? Know of local poetry readings or events of interest to poets of all kinds? Let us know! Submissions are welcome at *Thistle-Down*. Your ideas and contributions will help SMPS to be informed and to grow. Thistle-Down is here to serve you! Don't be shy!

Spoken Word

Russell Simmons *Def Poetry Jam* had people dancing in their seats, laughing and crying. Eight young spoken-word poets took to the stage at The State Theatre in Minneapolis, MN on February 6th and 7th. Their works along with sound effects, music and theatrics brought a whole new level to poetry and entertainment. More young people could have benefited from these vibrant voices of our time. Spoken Word is gaining recognition and popularity as an art form. For more information, contact the MN Spoken Word Association (MNSWA) at 612-789-INFO or check out their web site at www.mnspokenword.org.

President's Message

How fitting that our Valentine's Day speaker's last name is "Hart." She has promised an excellent talk and we will get a chance to hear her read from her book. I hope all of you will come. You have a chance to get her autograph on her book. This would be a great time to bring a guest. Don't forget to bring some poems to share!

I hope you will take to heart the writing suggestions made and polish up your poems. For the past half year we have been diligently working on our

writing assignments and now the end products may be languishing in your writing file. How about dusting them off and giving them a final shine, and sending them to the NFSPS contest? The deadline for that competition is March 15th. I am always looking to see how many poets from Minnesota have entered - lately the number of entries has been increasing. You know you write well, why don't you submit? I will be waiting to hear your newest works this Saturday!

Yours in Poetry

Sue Chambers

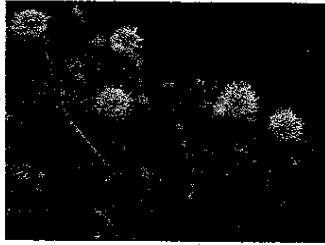
Thistle-Down

Southern Minnesota Poetry Society
c/o Sandra Newbauer, Editor
59 Camelot Lane
Mankato, MN 56001

Thistle-Down
1577 Sharon Drive
North Mankato, MN 56003



Meredith Cook
427 N. Gorman
Blue Earth, MN 56013



March 2004

Volume 24, Issue 3

Thistle Down

Southern Minnesota Poets Society

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Visitors welcome! No fee to attend.

Join us on March 13th

Panel Discussion

SMPS President Sue Chambers will join Meredith Cook to lead our panel discussion on why and how to contest your poems. Both Sue and Meredith have won numerous local and national poetry competitions and Ms. Cook is the editor of the League of Minnesota Poets publication *The Moccasin*. They will share insights from other poets who have entered and won prizes for their poetry. You won't be disappointed!!

Saturday, March 13, 2004 at Barnes & Nobles Booksellers in Mankato!

Assignment for February

Subject:

The Louisiana Purchase (1803-2003)

Form: Any, 40 line limit

Bring the assignment or another poem to share! Do you have a Valentine favorite?

✓ **Mark your Calendar**

League of Minnesota Poets Spring LOMP meeting will be held in Rochester on Saturday, April 24,

2004. Note date change!!! Contact Sue Chambers at 507-278-4200 if you are interested in attending. A van that holds six is available.

National Poetry Convention

NFSPS will hold the annual convention in Westerville, Ohio, a suburb of Columbus, on the Otterbein College Campus from June 17-20, 2004.

Don't forget the NFSPS competition deadline is March 15th. See *The President's Message* and come to the panel discussion for more information.

The Geraldine R. Dodge Poetry Festival takes place at the historic Duke Farms in Hillsborough, New Jersey, from September 30 - October 3, 2004. The largest poetry festival in North America, it is held every two years. SMPS is planning to charter a bus, so let President Sue Chambers know if you are interested in attending. For details on the festival, see their website: <http://www.grdodge.org/poetry>.

Look for a list of recommended reading from our guest speakers and members in the next issue!

February Meeting

SMPS Poets Write Sonnenizias with Gwen Hart

Gwen Hart wowed SMPS members with her poetry and the exercise requiring them to write a Sonnenizio.

What is a Sonnenizio? Gwen explains that according to the book *What is This Thing Called Love* by Kim Addonizio, it was invented in Florence in the 13th Century by Vanni Fucci as an irreverent form whose subject was usually the impossibility of everlasting love. Dante retaliated by placing Fucci into the 7th chasm of the *Inferno* as the thief. Originally composed in hendecasyllabics, the sonnenizio gradually moved away from metrical constraints and began to tackle a wider variety of subject matter.

The **sonnenizio** is:

- 14 lines long
- Does not need to be metrical
- Begins with a line borrowed from a sonnet (doesn't have to be the first line)
- Repeats one word from that line in each line of the poem
- Ends with a rhymed couplet

Ms. Hart notes that the word selected from the chosen sonnet line can be altered. For example, *love* can appear in any form, including *loved*, *lover*, *loves*, *lovely*, etc. It can also appear as part of a word, such as *apartment* and *part*.

Gwen did advise participants that she suspects that the history of sonnenizios is fabricated. (Note the uncanny resemblance to the form sonnenizio and Kim Addonizio's name.) Curious?

To Cupid: a Sonnenizio on a Line by Millay by Gwen Hart

Here might you bless me; what you cannot do

is make the blessing stick. Your arrows pierce

my heart and keep on going, leaving one big blessed

hole in the plaster and lots of smoke. You are less

powerful than you imagine, obsessive baby-

faced god with the target practice blues.

Your best shot doesn't make me weak

in the knees or elevate my troubles into

bright balloons you can blast with flaming

darts. You blister the tulips red, heat the coldest

words until they drip like honey, but I feel less

and less each time you fire. Infant, cursed

and blessed by innocence, give up this fight.

You cannot kindle bliss where none ignites.

We suspect SMPS members were *sonnenizio-nizing* for days! We sincerely hope Gwen Hart joins us again in the future!

Ike's Reflections on Craft

The assignment for February was to write Chaucerian Stanzas. The stanza form, known alternately as either the Chaucerian or the Troilus stanza and is also known as Rime Royal. Ike notes that the reason for the latter is that James I of Scotland borrowed the ababbcc rhyming scheme for his own verses. Chaucer wrote poems containing several such stanzas but was likely to conclude them with an envoy.

Technically, this stanza form belongs to the *septets*, complete seven line poems. In a purist sense, rhyme royal is not just a combination of a *tercet* and a *quatrain*. Viola Berg has it that quatrains are poems completed in four lines, rhymed either *abab* (alternate-wise) or *abba* (envelope-wise) and possibly *aabb*.

Ike questions the purity of couplet-wise rhymed "quatrains", especially those that are part of another stanza form as is the case in the following septet.

My Little World by John Mansfield

Oh, God, I am not fit for Your great
plans,
My little world is small, and so am I.
Wee babies I can hold within my
hands,
And rosebuds all Your wonders
multiply.
Just let me live, and love, in Thee, to
die,
And when the angel beckons me to go,
My poems will record the overflow.

President's Message

I hope you will join us for an
informative panel discussion on why
poets benefit from entering poetry
contests. Meredith Cook and I will
share our experience as well tips we
have learned along the way! We will
include great comments made by
other contesters such as Doris
Stengel, Claire van Breeman Downes
and Kathy Pederzani, who is the
current contest chair of the NFSPS
competition. This information should
be helpful and we hope for a lively
discussion!

Registration forms for the NFSPS
convention will be available.

See you Saturday!

Sue Chambers

Don't forget the NFSPS Competition
deadline is a postmark March 15th. Be
careful of the 50 characters per line
rule for this year. If you know
any students in grades 9-12 who write
poetry, remind them that they can
enter the contests without any entry
fee. Anyone can get a copy of the
rules and a listing of the 50 contests
at www.NFSPS.com.

Southern Minnesota Poets Society

*For all who love poetry and/ or write
poetry*

***at Barnes & Noble Booksellers
at 1857 Adams, Mankato
(across from the River Hills Mall)
at 1 p.m. unless otherwise noted.***

***ALL VISITORS GLADLY WELCOMED!
NO FEE TO ATTEND!***

*SMPS is a chapter of the League of
Minnesota Poets.*

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*LOMP is affiliated with the National
Federation of State Poetry Societies.*

REMAINING MEETINGS FOR Spring, 2004 SMPS

(Our assignments are never mandatory)

March 13th

**A panel discussion by veteran
participants on why and how to contest
your poems.**

**Assignment: Subject: The Louisiana Purchase
(1803-2003). Any form. 40 line limit**

April 12th

**“Writing the Religious Poem” a
writing workshop with Alan Downes,
retired professor from St. Cloud
University and past coordinator of the
NFSPS Annual Poetry Contest.
Claire Downes is a published writer and
will be available to sign her books.**

**Assignment: Subject: Poetry for children. Any
form. 32 line limit.**

May 10th

**My Favorite Poet: Attendees are asked to
bring a few short poems of their favorite
poet, and tell us about this poet and why
they are a favorite.**

**Assignment: Subject: Summer memories.
Any form, any line limit**

June 14th Annual picnic

**11:00 a.m. at Sue Chambers house
(map and directions available on
request).**

**Bring your poetry to share to every
meeting.**

SMPS MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

NAME: _____

Address: _____

E-mail: _____

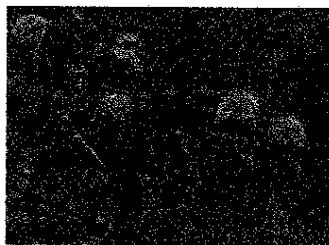
Phone (h): _____

Phone (w _____

***Annual Dues are
\$15.00 for adults,
\$7.50 for students.***

***Mail application and check to
Treasurer:***

***Elaine Anderson
463 200th Street
Trimont, Minn 56176***



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Visitors welcome! No fee to attend.

April 2004

Volume 24, Issue 3

Thistle-Down

April Showers poetry

Writing the Religious Poem

On April 12th Alan Downes, retired professor from St. Cloud University, and past coordinator of the NFSPS Annual Poetry Contest, will talk with SMPS members about *Writing the Religious Poem*. Claire Downes, a published writer, will be available to share, sell and sign her books. See you at Barnes & Noble in Mankato at 1:00 p.m.

Humor is a Funny Thing

On Saturday, April 24, The LOMP Spring Meeting will convene at the Senior Center on 121 North Broadway in Rochester. Registration begins at 8:00 a.m. *Humor is a Funny Thing* will be the subject of keynote speaker David R. Harris, retired from the University Center, Rochester, where he taught English and poetry. Registration forms are available in the recent *Lomplighter*. Afternoon seminar poems should be submitted to Laurie Winter, PO Box 7372, Rochester, MN 55903-7372 by April 9th.

Assignment for April:

Subject: Poetry for Children

Form: Any form, 32 lines

✓ Mark your Calendar

LOMP Spring Meeting in Rochester
on April 24, 2004. Travel
arrangements will be discussed at the
April meeting.

National Poetry Convention
NFSPS will hold the annual convention
in Columbus, Ohio at the Holiday Inn
Columbus/Worthington on June 17-20,
2004. Contact Sue Chambers,
President, for more details.

**Poet Jim Redmond and Fiction
Writer Bart Schneider** are guests
for the Good Thunder Reading Series
at Minnesota State University
Mankato campus, Ostrander
Auditorium, Thursday April 15, 2004
at 7:30 p.m. Open and free to public.

Festival of Authors and Books at the
Blue Earth County Library in Mankato
on May 1, 2004. Over 30 Minnesota
authors are attending.

www.festivalofauthorsandbooks.com

**The Geraldine R. Dodge Poetry
Festival** in New Jersey, from
September 30 - October 3, 2004.
Details on the festival on website:
<http://www.grdodge.org/poetry>

*Once again the time has come
To make a difference with one
small sum.
To get mailings and other news
Make sure you pay your 2004 dues!*

Annual dues are \$15.00 payable to
SMPS. Mail to Elaine Anderson, 463
200th St., Trimont, MN. 56176.

Note: On the mailing labels of this issue,
the number beside your name will show
the year **SMPS** records show your
membership was last paid in full. M03
would mean dues were last paid in 2003.
Mxx means **SMPS** has not received any
membership dues. Don't risk being
dropped from the mailing list!

Successful Contesting

The March **SMPS** meeting featured a
panel that advised participants on how
to contest successfully. **SMPS**
President Sue Chambers and *Moccasin*
Editor Meredith Cook shared their
insight and experience along with the
wisdom of LOMP President Doris
Stengel and Claire Downes, LOMP
editor. Panel members have all won
numerous contests, both at the State
and National levels.

Doris Stengel recommends the
shotgun approach... send your poetry
out to the world! She cautions it does
require intestinal fortitude (like
sending your children to school), but
the more entries you have, the more
it validates a win.

Sue Chambers, **SMPS** President,
recommends preparing for contests
ahead of time by pulling out completed
poems and those *in progress*. Sue
advises that poems may have not
placed in previous years, but could

strike judges differently in another contest. Sue believes contesting keeps her to a deadline and it is important to re-edit and "tighten up" your poems. Often a slash-cut-experiment approach can bring new life or meaning to previous works. Look at your poem many times!

Meredith Cook advises that if at first you don't succeed, try and try again. Revise and resubmit. Judges can vary in preferences and mood from contest to contest. Meredith shared the *Criteria Chart for Poetry Judges* developed by the Pennsylvania Poetry Society. A perfect score would require maximum points in the following areas: *Aptness of Title, Impact, Imagery, Suitability, Meaning, Basic Theme and Technical Detail.*

Although judges are not likely to follow a chart precisely, all areas are considered for winning poems.

Claire Downes referred to an essay published in *Minnesota Literature* in May 1991 that highlighted the value of contests. They include: *contests* supply deadlines which are great motivators, *contests* encourage new forms and subjects, *contests* have fixed ending dates, *contests* require poets to evaluate and find the right category for their poems.

SUMMARY OF PANEL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONTESTING:

- Avoid vanity presses where you pay money to have your work published in an anthology.

- Pay attention to category requirements such as length and form. Follow all of the criteria or you may have a good poem disqualified. Judges do not automatically re-categorize for you! Obeying rules will get your poem final consideration.
- Don't say in one hundred words what you can say in one and don't say in one word what you need to say in a hundred!
- Send quality copies and have good punctuation. Mail in a sturdy envelope to ensure your entries arrive.
- Never forget that winning requires effort which may mean re-working and re-submitting a poem many times!

Special thanks to Panel participants for their expertise and talent! We wish all poets who entered the NFSPS contest in March the best of luck!

Ready, Get Set, Contest!

LOMP 20th Annual Poetry Contest

Poems submitted must be postmarked by July 31, 2004. There are 18 categories open to all poets. Contest information can be obtained by sending SASE to Mary Larkin, LOMP Contest Chair, P.O. Box 1173, Brainerd, MN 56401.

See the most current issue of *STROPHES* for a listing of current poetry contests listed with NFSPS.

Dear SMPS Members,

Spring as the time of year I refer to getting "my babies in their Easter finery" as I prepare for the National Federation of State Poetry Societies, Inc., competitions. I pull out poems from the last year and apply a number of re-writing techniques to "tighten them up." One such technique is to pull out every other line (first the even, then the odd) and see what happens! Poetry contests encourage me to grow and to write.

I have entered as many as 50 poems in as many categories as possible in order to stretch my creativity and develop skills in different areas.

Although the NFSPS contest deadline

is past, there are always poetry contests to enter and to prepare for down the road. Information is always available at SMPS meetings. I hope SMPS will be a comfortable forum for you to stretch and write, write some more and re-write!

I want to thank everyone for their participation in March's panel, your poetry sharing and extend a special welcome to new participants. Please join us again!

Remember, your dues work for you through SMPS sponsored mailings and events. Mail them today!

Yours in Poetry

Sue Chambers



Southern Minnesota Poetry Society
c/o Sandra Newbauer, Editor
59 Camelot Lane
Mankato, MN 56001

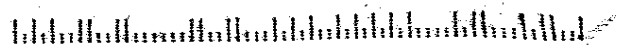
April's Featured Website: The Loft at
<http://loft.org/about.htm>

April's Featured Reading: *The Triggering Town, Lectures and Essays on Poetry and Writing* by Richard Hugo

April's Featured Poets: Sue Chambers and Meredith Cook, NFSPS Contest Winners



Meredith Cook (M04)
427 No Gorman
Blue Earth, MN 56013



SMPS March meeting featured a panel that focused on the benefits of entering poetry contests. SMPS panelists Sue Chambers and Meredith Cook have entered their poems in numerous contests and placed. They are April's featured poets.

A CHANGE OF GROUND by Sue Chambers

Walk with me down this old gravel road
through the oaks to the river.
In the wind we will hear their voices
rise on spring sun waves.
They will stroke our cheeks
with the alive of water,
the new smell of earth.
Their green will brush our sadness,
mellow it warm.
They come back with summer birds
silent for so long a stretch of white.
Their songs will swirl around our slight smile.
Walk with me between fields and waiting maples.
Feel the change of ground beneath our feet.
Although we still anchor in north ravine snow drifts,
there are woodland flowers on the edge of melt,
And the dogs run with a grin
along heated black furrows.

SOUND SENSE by Meredith Cook

The brook and the voice and the dulcimer,
The flickering crack of the fire,
The music that springs from the sound of things
That lift the voice upward and give the feet wings
Gave birth to the lute and the lyre.

Just out of reach with the sideshow's allure,
Tumbling and juggling the centuries spin
Patterns from notes - symphonies - concertos
Like roses that spring up in foot prints in snows
To show where a magical passage had been.

What can we do while such rose scents endure
And sound at our senses as old as romance,
As new as technology's digital lure
Of cellos and oboes and harps pure of blur,
But take time's extended hand and dance.



**Southern
Minnesota Poets
Society**

The SMPS is a regional chapter of the League of Minnesota Poets, holds open meetings on the second Saturday of the month from September through May (unless announced otherwise) at Barnes and Noble Booksellers, 1857 Adams Street, Mankato, MN from 1:00 – 3:30 p.m. Meetings and memberships are open to all who love poetry and writing. For further information contact *Sandra Newbauer, Editor* at 507-344-0147 or e-mail Snewbauer0147@charter.net, or *Sue Chambers, President*, at 507-278-4200 or e-mail PoetSue@aol.com.

Visitors welcome! No fee to attend.

May 2004

Volume 24, Issue 4

Thistle-Down

May Favorites

My Favorite Poet

Join SMPS for May's open meeting to share poetry written by your favorite poet(s). Bring a few short poems and tell us why this poet is your favorite. Don't forget to bring a favorite poem you have written as well. Perhaps a poem you wrote that was inspired by your favorite poet!

SMPS meetings are a good resource for upcoming poetry events and news. The summer months promise to be busy!

Where: Barnes and Noble Bookseller, Mankato

When: 1:00 - 3:30 p.m., Saturday May 8th



Assignment for May:

Subject: *Summer memories*

Form: *Any form, any line limit*

Happy Mother's Day to all Mothers!

What a great time to write a poem for that special mother in your life.

✓ Mark your Calendar

Annual SMPS Picnic

The June monthly meeting of SMPS will be at President Sue Chamber's house for the annual picnic and poetry readings. Bring poetry to share and picnic fare!

When: June 14th 11:00 a.m.

Sue lives in the country outside of Good Thunder. Map and directions available on request.

National Poetry Convention

NFSPS will hold the annual convention in Columbus, Ohio at the Holiday Inn Columbus/Worthington on June 17-20, 2004. Contact Sue Chambers, President, for more details.

The Geraldine R. Dodge Poetry

Festival in New Jersey, from September 30 - October 3, 2004.

Details on the festival on website:
<http://www.grdodge.org/poetry>.

Newest Poet

So who was the six month old that stole everyone's heart at the April meeting? Our welcome to Sue Chamber's grandson Keegan who was introduced on April 12th. Are we correct to assume the Chamber family poets will now span four generations? Sue's mother was a poet and son Colin and daughter Christina are poets. Christina won the NFSPS University Level Poetry Competition in 2003. To be sure, he has a good start.

Downes Time at April Meeting

Alan Downes and Claire van Breeman Downes met with SMPS members for lunch at Applebees restaurant before the April meeting. It was a time of great food and great conversation.

Where appetites were whetted, however, was at the April meeting. Alan gave a great talk about the religious poem that included visual aids. He told participants that first and foremost, the poem must be poetic. He provided comparisons including *Psalms* and modern poems that he felt met the criteria of poetic first, religious second.

Alan encouraged everyone to try their hand at a religious poem. Many participants got a good start with his gentle and helpful comments.

To add to an enjoyable afternoon, Claire read from her recently published poetry book *To Whom it Must Concern*. Her poems were enthusiastically received.

Downes are Tops

Reflections on the April Meeting by Ikars Sarma

It is possible to contend that language, i.e., words, is by far the major tool and medium for a writer. It is good for any writer and, especially, a poet to know everything that can be known about words. A thorough knowledge of that kind is not easily acquired, and we are fortunate when we can learn from a

speaker who has the opportunity, time and love and interest to do so. That is exactly the kind of opportunity we had when professor Allan Downes spoke last month to the SMPS about writing religious poems.

It is not an easy subject to discuss, as this observer feels, but professor Downes made an easy task of it. In essence, he reminded us that whatever we write must be poetry first. Even a religious poem must share in some of the features we have been told a poem should show.

When we write any poem we can expect it to go in a direction it wants to go and not where we think it should go.

Another important consideration is that it should set out to tell things in a new way, for there is hardly a thing under the sun that a poem has not been written about before.

We should dare and take a risk for the poem to be unusual and, in the case of a religious poem, avoid paraphrasing dogma, orthodoxy or resort to conventional verbiage and phrasing.

Professor Downes has considerable experience judging, and, being part of juries in poetry competition has heard of the recurring question by participants: "Just why did my poem not win?" To answer that question, professor Downes reminded us that English is a layered language, meaning that distinct groupings of its

vocabulary can be traced to periods of time dominated by the use of words of either Celtic, Anglo-Saxon or Latin origin.

Of special significance are the latter, imposed on us by Roman and Norman conquerors. Words used by those overlords were considered by the common folk to bode them no good. Over time, anything said or written using too many of such words became something to be mistrusted. Thus, poems that are dominated by words of Latin origin tend to exude imposition by the officialdom, formal and unfriendly.

It would be nice if we had the time to catalog more than a few such words as celestial, glory, eternal and words, but it is certain they were avoided by most of SMPS members present and participating in the ensuing workshop.

Thank you, Allan Downes for an excellent presentation and for assuring us that "the greatest poem ever has not yet been written", and we better get working on it.

Annual Dues

Make sure your annual dues are paid to Elaine Anderson, membership chair. Remittance of \$15.00 can be sent to: Elaine Anderson
463 200th Street
Trimont, Minnesota 56176.

Dear SMPS Members,

Remember to put poetry events on your calendar and attend as many as you can! The turn out for our SMPS meetings has been terrific. Keep coming and keep bringing poetry to share with other members.

Some future dates to keep in mind:

The League of Minnesota Poets Annual Poetry Contest will accept submissions postmarked by July 31, 2004. There are 18 categories open to all poets. Contest information can be obtained by sending SASE to Mary Larkin, LOMP Contest Chair, P.O. Box 1173, Brainerd, MN 56401.

The annual *Woodticks Retreat* will be July 15-18 at the Stevens cabin on Horseshoe

Lake north of Brainerd. This is an annual summer event to compliment the annual *Blizzard Retreat* in January and is open to all LOMP poets. The extended and diverse poetry workshops provide a valuable opportunity for poets to get constructive feedback and learn different forms of poetry. More information will be in the June newsletter.

We'll get ready with our annual SMPS picnic hosted by my family on June 14th. We'd love to see you and hear your poetry! The bird watching is superb!

Yours in Poetry,

Sue Chambers

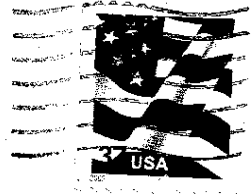
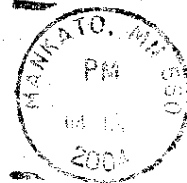
Thistle-Down

Southern Minnesota Poetry Society
c/o Sandra Newbauer, Editor
59 Camelot Lane
Mankato, MN 56001

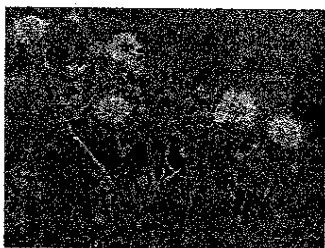
May's Featured Website: The Kenyon Review
at <http://zoopress.org/zoo>

May's Featured Reading: *A Poetry Handbook: A Prose Guide to Understanding and Writing Poetry* by Mary Oliver, Harcourt Brace, 1994.

April's Featured Poets: Alan Downes and
Claire van Breeman Downes



Meredith Cook (M04)
427 No Gorman
Blue Earth, MN 56013



**Southern
Minnesota Poets
Society**

The SMPS is a regional chapter of the League of Minnesota Poets, holds open meetings on the second Saturday of the month from September through May (meeting place will be announced in September newsletter) from 1:00 – 3:30 p.m. Meetings and memberships are open to all who love poetry and writing. For further information contact *Sandra Newbauer, Editor* at 507-344-0147 or e-mail Snewbauer0147@charter.net, or *Sue Chambers, President*, at 507-278-4200 or e-mail PoetSue@aol.com.

Visitors welcome! No fee to attend.

Join members for lunch at *The Neighbors!* Could it be our new meeting site? See page 3.

July 2004

Volume 24, Issue 5

Thistle-Down

THE 16TH ANNUAL

WOODTICK POETRY WEEKEND



Retreat to Susan Stevens Chambers "cabin"
13362 SW Horseshoe Lake Road,
on Horseshoe Lake
Merrifield, Minnesota (North of Brainerd)
from July 15 - 18, 2004

Pack up your poetry gear, food and a thirty minute program that can be a workshop, talk on writing forms, or reading from a famous poet. Let your imagination run wild! The beautiful northern woods setting is poetic inspiration in itself! Dress casual, bring a swimsuit and long sleeves or bug spray. You may be asked to share a room with a roommate.

Please register by contacting Sue Chambers at 507-278-4200 or Email PoetSue@aol.com and Sandra Newbauer at 507-344-0147 or Email Snewbauer0147@charter.net to ensure appropriate accommodations.



Complete directions to Horseshoe Lake are on the back page for your convenience.

NFSPS Annual Convention Held in Ohio Minnesotans Among Winners!

Susan Stevens Chambers and Meredith Cook from SMPS attended the NFSPS in Columbus, Ohio from June 17 -20, 2004. Both Sue and Meredith brought home awards along with other SMPS and LOMP members. For a complete listing of Minnesota winners, see page 2. Congratulations to all of you!



The National Federation of State Poetry Societies Contest Winners Announced

The list of contest winners was just released by the National Federation of Poetry Societies following their annual conference held in Columbus, Ohio from June 17-20, 2004. There were various categories with cash prizes sponsored by both state societies and NFSPS.

Conference goers didn't have to wait to hear who won! Winners were announced throughout the conference adding to the excitement and fun. Prizes were awarded at every lunch and dinner, finishing with the Grand Prize on Sunday evening. The top three prize winners of each contest who were present delighted the audience by reading their winning poems.

It was hard to miss LOMP winners as Minnesota participants set off little loons that cried out each time a LOMP winner was announced. Minnesota poets placed in a number of categories including members of SMPS. Hopefully they will be sharing their winning entries at future SMPS meetings!

We are proud to congratulate:

Susan Stevens Chambers, Good Thunder, 2nd Place. Our own SMPS President won for her poem *Singing Elk Replies to Clark and Lewis*. Sue also won in 4 other categories.

Honorable Mentions awarded to SMPS poets:

Meredith Cook, Blue Earth 5th HM;
Sue Stevens Chambers, Good Thunder, 2nd HM, 2 5th HMs;
Shirley Ensrud, Blue Earth, 7th HM

"Also Cited" SMPS winners:

Sue Stevens Chambers, Good Thunder;
John Calvin Rezmerski, Eagle Lake;
Shirley Ensrud, Blue Earth

First Place Winners from Minnesota include:

Doris Stengel, Brainerd, for *Wake for a Piano*. Doris won 1st HM and 6th HM for other poems;

Diane Glancy, St. Paul, for two poems - *How the Light Gets In* and *Among the Crosses*;

Jeanette Hinds, Rochester, for *Older Brother*. She also won 3rd Place for *Twin Tree* and placed with 2nd HM, 3rd HM, 6th HM as well as 7th HM;

Charmaine Donovan, Brainerd, for *Welcoming the Storm*. Charmaine won 4th HM, 6th HM and an *Also Cited* placement.

Other LOMP Poets who won Honorable Mentions were:

Joan Weisner, Brainerd, 3rd HM;
Claire Van Breeman Downes, St. Cloud, 6th HM;

Other LOMP Poets who were awarded Also Cited were:

Maxine K. Russell, Brainerd, two poems;
Claire Van Breeman Downes, St. Cloud, two poems

A full listing of winners will be available on the NFSPS website at a later date. That website address is <http://www.nfsp.com>.

Winners will also be announced in the *Lomplighter* and the next issue of *Strophes*, the NFSPS quarterly publication due out again in August 2004.

NFSPS Convention Report

Sue and Meredith found the NFSPS Convention to be stimulating and full of great programs. They were able to hear from the largest small press publishers, well know poets and performance poets who have won national competitions. We will hear more at *The Woodtick Retreat* and future meetings!

Lunch Meeting at Neighbors

Regular meetings will resume the second Saturday in September. A new meeting place is being contemplated by SMPS. Join other members for lunch on Wednesday, July 14, 2004 at 12:00 noon at *The Neighbors* restaurant at 1812 S Riverfront Drive, Mankato, to check out this location. RSVP to Susan Chambers at 278-4200. Bring poetry and enjoy their Italian/American cuisine. SMPS looks forward to a great year with exciting poetry programs coming your way.

SMPS History

The history of SMPS will be featured in upcoming newsletters so please share stories you may have from years past!

Our SMPS Historian Monica Toohey Haack will be assisting the Editor in gathering information. Monica has a long history with SMPS and has published a book of her poetry called *Catch Me a Poem*.

She has been featured in the Mankato Free Press and has shared her book and poetry in the schools with children. A memorable moment for her was when the children in St. Clair drew pictures based on her poems and gave them to her as a gift.

Monica hopes the twenty plus years SMPS has met will be remembered with pride. Her poetry reflects some of the rich history and memories of the Mankato area. We are grateful for Monica's dedication to the SMPS archives.

SMPS Summer Picnic: Fun & Food

Gracious hosts Ike and Ranta Sarma treated SMPS poets to a lovely picnic dinner complimented by the pot luck dishes that SMPS poets brought with them. The likes of deviled eggs, turkey, salads, rhubarb cake and plenty of fruit whetted appetites prior to a discussion of poetry. Approximately 10 SMPS members were present on June 12th for a delightful afternoon.

✓ Mark Your Calendar

Don't forget the Geraldine R. Dodge Poetry Festival from September 30-October 3, 2004 in New Jersey.

See <http://www.grdodge.org/poetry>.

Please contact Sue Stevens Chambers if you plan to attend!

I hope to see you at the Woodtick Retreat! It is a beautiful drive and well worth the time you will spend with other poets and exercising your poet within in ways you can't imagine! Be prepared for walks along the beach and in the woods. Please come and drive safely!

Have a wonderful summer and write, write, write. Our programs this fall promise to be as thought provoking as the Presidential election is with s!

Sue Chambers

Throttle Down

July's Featured Poets: Sue Chambers, Meredith Cook, Shirley Ensrud, John Rezmerski and Monica Toohey Haack

July's Featured Reading: *Catch Me a Poem* by Monica Toohy Haack.

From Brainerd, Minnesota. If you have come from Little Falls, follow Highway 371 in, taking the "Barrows" loop. Go through town (north) until you see an old fashioned water tower on your right (intersection for Hwy 210.) Turn right (east) and take Hwy 210 until you come to the intersection at Hwy 25. There will be a mall on your left. Turn left (north) on Hwy 25, follow this road approximately 8 miles to Merrifield. Go through Merrifield, where the road changes to Co. Rd. 3 for approximately 7 miles (through Ossippe Corners.) Right after "Jim's Campers" on the right side of the highway, turn right onto Mission Park Drive (blacktop road.) If you pass *The Mission Township Hall* or *Cheeks Saloon* you have gone too far. Follow Mission Park Drive to Oak Spur, turn left. Follow Oak Spur to the stop sign, make a sharp right on Horseshoe Lake Drive. The Stevens Cabin is the first left driveway after the turn. There is a MURRAY & BARBARA STEVENS sign out front.

Welcome!

