

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, Ikars (Ike) Sarma, at 507-345-4014, or e-mail icarusj@mnic.net or Sue Chambers, President, at 507-278-4200 or e-mail PoetSue@aol.com

GRAND FALL OPENING of the 2003/4 SEASON.

SATURDAY, September 13, 2003

1:00 P.M.

at

Barnes & Noble Booksellers

1857 Adams Street

Mankato

Did that get your attention? I hope so!

Welcome back!

We have great expectations for this season as witnessed by the attached, extensive and promising program schedule. Thanks to our President, Sue Chambers, for the hard work put in to make all the arrangements.

Due to the urgency of that effort there are some omissions. Please note that some vital points have been omitted.

There will be an updated version of the **schedule** making it clear that membership, although highly recommended is not a prerequisite for attendance. Our meetings are open to everyone and we are certain that many will commit to a membership.

A viable membership is important, therefore, make an utmost effort to publicize our activities by posting copies of the updated schedule, available at the September meeting, in every public location in your town that you can think of. Look for, invite and bring along anyone who might be interested. When talking to them, point out our affiliation with the LOMP and, through that with the NFSPS. Talk about the contests and plan to submit your poems.

Anyone here should consider taking a crack at the Stevens manuscript contest. So what if you don't win the first time around. Just trying is good experience.

This issue of the *Thistle~Down* has several enclosures other than the rough schedule. **There** are the rules and conditions for entering the Stevens contest and there is **info** concerning the Fall Conference of the LOMP to be held October 10 thru 11 in Duluth. This is for the benefit of those who are not yet members of the LOMP who do not receive the *LOMPLIGHTER*. An excellent opportunity to meet a wider variety of talented poets.

KUDOS AND SUCH

Congratulations to SMPS member Christina Chambers for winning the NFSPS University –Level Poetry Competition.

Other members who have been recognized at the 2003 NFSPS Annual Convention are: Sue Chambers (one 1st Prize and 4 Honorable Mentions), Meredith Cook (2 HM's), Shirley Ensrud (one HM)...there must be something about living in Blue Earth...and John Rezmerski (2 HM's.)

LOMP members recognized include Diane Glancy (a 1st, a 2nd, a 3rd and a HM), Jeanette Hinds (one 1st, one 3rd and a HM), Doris Stengel (a 2nd and 3 HM's), Mary Stanko (a 3rd and a HM), Char Donovan (4 HM's), Lucile Wilson (2 HM's) and Claire Downes, Mary Hughes and Laurel Winter (one HM).

As one can see being a poet has its rewards in more than one way. The 1st, 2nd and 3rd's all bring in some respectable cash and HM's on a national level are respectable achievements. Start thinking about entering next year's contests.

The NFSPS Stevens Manuscript win is worth \$1,500. Belated congratulations to Diane Glancy for winning in 2000.

EDITOR'S KORNER.

It is the plan for the *Thistle-Down* to keep all informed about anything significant in the world of poetry, especially events and happenings that may be accessible to SMPS member and could be of benefit in their artistic growth.

Let us not overlook the many wonderful opportunities to hear many new and established poets and writers invited to the *Good Thunder Reading Series* supported by Minnesota State University at Mankato. The readings are held always on Thursdays at the Ostrander Auditorium located in the Student Union Building. Each author gives a talk on craft at 3:00 p.m. and does a reading at 7:30 p.m. The talks on craft, whether given by a poet or a writer in any other field, are of great interest because they inform us about writing, routines habits and techniques which apply regardless of your chosen avenue.

ASSIGNMENT.

Assignments are not mandatory but a good practice. That way you can be assured to produce at least one poem per month even if you are too busy to do any more.

This month's assignment is a Pirouette, a 10 line free verse—meaning you don't have to look for rhymes or, usually, not count the number of syllables in a line [this being an exception and more of a syllabic poem as well as f.v., Ed.], and can be on any subject. The major distinction is that there has to be, in the middle of the poem, a turn-around, (a fulcrum?), a sharp reversal in the thought of a poem: That is to be accomplished by making lines 5 and 6 identical. Line 5 must end with a period and be married in thought to the first part of the poem, while line 6 is to be 'married' to the second part.

You may consider this assignment for presentation in October since we have not now devised a way to give more time for members to do assignments for September. This is something we may have to ponder as a group. Come to the meeting to help in that.

The assignment for October is a Keatsian ode (See his "Ode to a Nightingale.") This is a 30 line poem written in, ostensibly, in iambic pentameter, 10 syllables per line [Possibly, but not throughout, +/- 1 syllable when your lines may want to go catalectic or hypermetric. Ed.] The poem must have three (3) ten-line stanzas rhyming ababcbdecde, fgghijhij and kklmnopno. In effect, each stanza consists of a alternately rhymed quatrain joined to a sestet olike the one in the Venetian sonnet.

Needless to say you should consider keeping the SMPS healthy and send your annual dues to Elaine Anderson.

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

OTHER UPCOMING POETRY EVENTS

NFSPS CONVENTION

June 17 -20, 2004

SMPS sends delegates to the National Federation of State Poetry Societies' meeting. This year it will be in Ohio.

BLIZZARD WRITER'S RETREAT

Jan. 23rd - 25th

at Sue Chambers

57310 166th Lane,

Good Thunder. 56037

Rules—bring a program of ½ hour at least, and something to eat!

Contact PoetSue@aol.com for directions

SMPS participates in the Woodtick Writing Retreat (in the Brainerd area) July 15-18, 2004. Contact Sue Chambers for details.

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.

SMPS is a chapter of the League of Minnesota Poets.

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

September 13th

Welcome back! We will share new poems and poets discovered over the summer.

Assignment: Any subject. Form: Pirouette, created by Chuck Belcher -- A 10 line free verse poem with a turn around, a sharp reversal of thought, in the middle. Each line contains 6 syllables. Lines 5 and 6, which contain the turn around, are identical; line 5 is married in thought to the first half of the poem and ends in a period; line 6 is married to the second half.

(Our assignments are never mandatory)

October 11th

League of Minnesota Poets Fall Meeting in Duluth, want to carpool?
Call Sue Chambers 278-4200

October 18th

NOTE change of date
Jim Englert, assistant manager at Barnes & Nobles Book Store will explore what delights are available at our meeting spot. He will discuss his favorite poets.

Assignment: Any subject. Form: Keatsian Ode (for example, see John Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale") -- A 30 line poem written in iambic pentameter, divided into three ten-line stanzas rhymed ababedcde, fgfghij and klklnomno

November 8th

"THE POETRY IN LYRICS"

DAVE O'CONNELL

Member of the band "Vicious Fishes", songwriter and musician will talk to us about the poetry in lyrics. He may be persuaded to play his guitar.

Assignment: Subject: Peace. Any form. 60 line limit.

December 13th Noon.

Great Wall Restaurant
1802 Commerce Drive, North Mankato. Note change of time and meeting place.

Enjoy the Christmas festivities. Have lunch: share the season's spirit. Bring a favorite Christmas poem or song.

Assignment: winter or Christmas Poem.

January 10th, 2004

SMPS MEMBERS will bring a writing challenge to the group and we will workshop and share our results.

Assignment: Theme: A light poem for troubled times. Must end with a strong punchline. Any form. 24 line limit.

February 14th

"CHANGING FORMS" a

discussion on formal poetry. Gwen Hart, author of a poetry chapbook "Losing Ohio", and a graduate student from M.S.U., has a passion for sonnets and other formal forms and will help us sharpen our skills. Gwen will be available to sell and sign her books.

Assignment: Any subject. 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 bbbc

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

Claire and Alan Downes, Retired Professors from St. Cloud University and past coordinators of the NPSPPS Annual Poetry Contest will share their poetry insights with us.

Claire is a published writer and will be available to sign her books

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

May 10th

LOMP Spring meeting (date and time to be announced) may conflict with our meeting, so a writing workshop is tentatively planned. We will announce any date changes at meetings and in the newsletter, so watch for developments.

June 14th Annual picnic

11:00 a.m.
Sue Chambers house (map and directions will be provided in newsletter)

League of Minnesota Poets

Fall Conference

October 10 and 11, 2003

Comfort Inn, Duluth

Register by September 18th—see conference registration form on page 3.

Note clearly: The cost of the optional dinner Friday evening is NOT included in your registration fee.

Friday, October 10

4 pm Registration begins at Comfort Inn

5 pm Optional supper at Giant Panda restaurant (a short drive from Comfort Inn or Super 8)

7 pm Contest results announced, Comfort Inn

Saturday, October 11

Breakfast is not provided by the conference; your motel may offer you a continental breakfast.

9:00 Registration, Saturday-only attendees

9:00 Open reading / get-acquainted time

10:00 General assembly & business meeting

10:30 NFSPS Report by Meredith R. Cook

11:00 Seminar with Alan Downes

12:30 Luncheon

1:30 Keynote address: "Musing Along With the Muse" —John Calvin Rezmerski

Map and hotel information on page 3. You should make your hotel reservation quickly, because fall is a busy time in Duluth—the time of leaves in color.

SEMINAR GUIDELINES

(September 10 deadline)

The seminar is a regular feature of our state meetings, providing an opportunity for you to hear a detailed analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of your poem, but with a protective blanket of anonymity. There will be in-depth comments, but no ranking. We encourage everyone to send a poem they want input on. Because of time restrictions, it is to be understood that the seminar leader may select a limited number of poems for analysis. The seminar leader receives copies with no identification. Send poems to Doris Bergstrom at address below. She separates and sends them on.

Only members of LOMP may enter. Send two copies of a one-page poem (one copy with and one without your name and address) postmarked by September 10 to:

Doris Bergstrom

P.O. Box 518

Pine River MN 56474

(Postmark deadline September 10, 2003)

Include a self-addressed stamped envelope for return of your poem if you are not planning to attend the conference.

(Since poems will be displayed on a projector, it is important that you provide good, dark print on white paper.)

August, 2003

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PLEASE NOTE THE CHANGE IN DATE
See below info on the LOMP Fall Meeting

SECOND FALL MEETING of the 2003/4 SEASON.

SATURDAY, October 18, 2003

1:00 P.M.

at

Barnes & Noble Booksellers
1857 Adams Street
Mankato

We are again fortunate to hear a presentation by **Jim Englert**, assistant manager at Barnes and Noble. He will discuss **his favorite poets** and tell us about the special delights available at this our regular meeting place. As long as he is willing, his insightful presentations may well become an annual occasion.

ASSIGNMENTS.

Assignments are not mandatory but good practice. That way you can be assured to produce at least one poem per month even if you are too busy to do any more.

The current assignment is a **Keatsian ode** (See his "Ode to a Nightingale.") This is a 30 line poem written in, ostensibly, an iambic pentameter, 10 syllables per line [Possibly, but not throughout, +/- 1 syllable when your lines may want to go hypermetric or catalectic. Ed.] The poem must have three (3) ten-line stanzas rhyming abab, fgfghijhij and kklmnomno. In effect, each stanza consists of an alternately rhymed quatrain joined to a sestet, one rhymed cdecde that is supposedly characteristic of the so called Venetian sonnet.

Bring along your Pirouette, the assignment for **September**, and most certainly any other poems you have written during the summer.

Your Editor managed to find a sample Pirouette through his online poetry group. See it on the next page.

The assignment for **November** is a poem on **peace**. Any form is OK, but there is a limit of 60 lines.

Should you be wondering how to approach that subject, consider looking up all the possible applications of that term. It can stand for quietude or tranquility, domestic contentment and, of course, the absence of turmoil and hostilities between the peoples of this world.

EDITOR'S KORNER.

A viable membership is important, therefore, make an utmost effort to publicize our activities. Plan to invite and bring along anyone who loves poetry. When talking to them, point out our affiliation with the LOMP and, through that with the NFSPS. Talk about the contests and plan to submit your poems.

While there was no scheduled official program for the September meeting, those attending found themselves well entertained by participating in an impromptu discussion about why we write and how we may go about encouraging ourselves to find time to write more and keep that 'poetic muscle' limber.

Try to find a way to attend the Fall Conference of the LOMP October 10 thru 11 in Duluth. All the info needed for how to register and get there was provided in the September *Thistle-Down*. This is an excellent opportunity to meet a wider variety of talented poets and find more about poetic opportunities.

The *Thistle-Down* strives to keep all informed about significant items in the world of poetry, especially those happenings reasonably accessible to SMPS members. If there are any events in your part of Minnesota the rest of us may not be aware of feel free to contact *T-D*.

If some of the below seems repetitious be assured that is intentional. We live so much among our day in day out concerns we easily forget the finer things.

Anyone here should consider taking a crack at the Stevens manuscript contest. So what if you don't win the first time around. Just trying is good experience. A win is worth \$1,500. Think of all the poetry books you could buy for that. On the other hand, you could then easily afford to attend the Geraldine Dodge Poetry Festival next year. Not to overlook that you would have a book of your poems published. The deadline for submission is October 15. This means you still have time, if you don't dawdle.

There are wonderful opportunities to hear emerging poets and writers invited to the *Good Thunder Reading Series* supported by Minnesota State University at Mankato. The readings are held on Thursdays at the Ostrander Auditorium located in the Student Union Building. Each author gives a talk on craft at 3:00 p.m. and does a reading at 7:30 p.m. The talks on craft, whether given by a poet or a writer in any other field, are of great interest because they inform us about writing, routines habits and techniques which apply regardless of your chosen avenue.

Needless to say, consider keeping the SMPS healthy and send your annual dues to Elaine Anderson.

Candlelight

"Just like the good old days,"
I tell my wide eyed kids.
"Abraham Lincoln ate
this way and that is why

we dine by candlelight."
We dine by candlelight

because the lights are cut.
My wife don't say nothin'.
If my piece wasn't hocked,
I'd rob a liquor store.

Chuck Belcher

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3rd MEETING of the 2003/4 SEASON.

SATURDAY, November 8, 2003

1:00 P.M.

at

Barnes & Noble Booksellers
1857 Adams Street
Mankato

There is a special treat in store for members and all other poets and poetry lovers—a talk on poetry in song lyrics. We welcome **Dave O'Connell**, a musician, a member of the "Vicious Fishes" band and a songwriter. We hope to persuade him to play his guitar. Your editor suggests you bring a short poem, printed. Who knows, you may be able to persuade **Dave** to put it to music. (Just a notion, not a promise.)

ASSIGNMENTS.

Assignments are not mandatory but good practice. That way you can be assured to produce at least one poem per month even if you are too busy to do any more.

The current assignment, as given in the last issue, is a poem on peace. However, if you have written a Pirouette or a Keatsian ode which you did not have a chance to read yet, bring that along too and, most certainly, any other poems you have written during the summer.

The assignment for **December** is, foremost, to come and bring some part of the Season's Spirit, a favorite song or poem and, hopefully your latest poem on (no wonder) the subject of winter or Christmas.

LAST MEETING.

A wonderful experience created by **Jim Englert**, assistant manager at Barnes and Noble. He spoke in detail about the exciting, new and old work by some of the well known and many not so well known authors from Minnesota and a few whose work is about Minnesota. What made the whole thing even more valuable is the fact that Jim is extremely well read, a veritable treasure chest of knowledge and information about literature past and present. Thank you so much **Jim**, and we hope you will find time to make your insightful presentations an annual occasion.

EDITOR'S KORNER.

As has been stressed before, make an utmost effort to publicize our activities. Plan to invite and bring along anyone who loves poetry. When talking to them, point out our affiliation with the LOMP and, through that with the NFSPS. Talk about the contests and plan to submit your poems.

Having run short on time your Editor must warn you there will be a lot of info in the next issue, including that on the next NFSPS contest which will be run under very strict rules not to mention some new ones and a few changes in the old.

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, Ikars (Ike) Sarma, at 507-345-4014, or e-mail icarusj@mnlic.net or Sue Chambers, President, at 507-278-4200 or e-mail PoetSue@aol.com

Christmas Program

December 13, 2003

The Great Wall Restaurant

1802 Commerce Drive

North Mankato, Minnesota 56004

Noon

WELCOME TO ALL

Come and join your fellow poets for a day of poetry, and an opportunity to share your Holiday Spirits! Note the earlier start time and that we will be meeting in a restaurant for a Dutch treat lunch. We will enjoy music and poetry.

Each person is asked to bring a small gift to exchange, somewhere between \$5.00 and \$10.00. But this is just the beginning of the fun! Please wrap the gift, and attach a poem to it. The poem should be about the gift, but not describe it (for ex. If your gift was a toy car, the poem should not be titled "car") or totally give it away. The poem can be from any poet-masters, friends, or your own. We will read the poems and try and guess what the package contains.

Directions to restaurant: The Great Wall is in upper North Mankato. Take Highway 14 to the Lor Ray Drive. The first intersection (with lights) is Commerce Drive. Turn West on Commerce Drive. The Great Wall is located on the right side (north) in the strip mall behind Wells Federal Bank, about a block and one half from Lor Ray Drive.

ASSIGNMENT

Our assignment this month is a winter or Seasonal poem. No line limit, but please try to keep this to one page. Try not to repeat hymns, greeting cards, or TV ads. Find fresh and exciting language to describe your topic.

In January, we will try our hands at a topic that appears in the next NFSPS Contest brochure. The deadline for that contest is March, so this will be timely. Assignment: Theme: A light poem for troubled times. Must end with a strong punchline. Any form. 24 line limit.

Temp. Editor

You may note a change in "voice" in this newsletter. Our own Editor Ike ended up in hospital for a time. We are glad to report he is back home and recuperating fast. Get well soon, Ike.

BLIZZARD WRITER'S 2004 RETREAT

Jan. 23rd - 25th

at Sue Chambers
57310 166th Lane,
Good Thunder. 56037

Rules—bring a program of ½ 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

HELP WANTED

In January we are planning a writing workshop, using our own SMPS members. If you have an exercise you would like to try out, please contact Sue Chambers before the year end.

2004

Make a New Year's Resolution to write more often. William Stafford use to write every day. He gave himself permission to write the worst dribble ever, and noted that a funny thing happened—because he was writing, good things came out. It wasn't dribble at all. If you don't take pen to paper (or fingers to computer keyboard), you can't make a poem.

INTERESTING WEBSITES

Have you checked out any of the writing websites? Our own National Federation of State Poetry Societies can be found at <http://www.nfsps.com>. This site includes all the current contests, sells books of past winners, has past newsletters to peruse and provides links to the state organizations.

<http://www.poems.com> is the Poetry Daily website. They have a new poem every day as well as autobiographical information about the poet.

We are planning a bus trip to the next Geraldine Dodge Poetry Festival in September. You can read all about the festival at <http://www.grdodge.org/poetry>. As new information about the Festival is obtained, they keep adding to the website, so visit it more than once.