

# NEWS 'N' NOTES

## Poets' Roundtable of Arkansas

Founded February 5, 1931

Member of the National Federation of State Poetry Societies, Inc.

<http://poetsroundtableofarkansas.org>

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August 2016

### President's Address:

Subject: Poetrygraph

As the hot weather of summer has set in, it has me thinking about how fast the year is streaking by. Moments, er, months ago, it was January and we enjoyed a mild winter. It slipped into spring as we slept and brought rain and flowers, and flowers, and flowers. Such beauty! Everyone has a green thumb. It has been a thrill to see the flowers some of you are posting on Facebook.

I circle back to summer to draw attention to our activities of the season. Vacations with kids and grands are aflame since school is out. Visits to the lake or beach create excellent pictures that must be preserved. Personally, we've spent two weeks at the lake with the grands. They were excited to fish and it was a mad house for me as I baited the hooks and took off the ones they caught. Later, we enjoyed the cookout of fish and fries with all the trimmings. Boat rides are also memories that we intend to preserve.

I encourage you to use your camera when your families are doing these fun summer things. But, don't forget the craft of poetry. You can't always stop to write in the fast-paced moments, but jot some notes for later in the evening after the campfire has settled to embers, and write a few lines to capture the day. At least, keep a journal, write something on the weekend, and save your adventures with pen. That journal will be a treasure chest that holds more than gold.

For us, time is slipping away like a lazy stream meandering down a creek. We've had swimming lessons, trips to the library, and soon one will be off to camp. In a short time, school will start again and we will wonder where summer went.

My encouragement to you is to use your poetrygraph to encapsulate the summer of 2016. Poetrygraph is pictures without the camera--just like you remember.

Dennis

### Jim Barton Elected NFSPS President!

PRA's Jim Barton was elected President of the National Federation of State Poetry Societies (NFSPS) in June. Jim is an award-winning poet, published author, popular speaker, PRA's State Treasurer and Branch Treasurer for South Arkansas Poets of the Pines. Last year he served as NFSPS 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President and Membership Chair. Arkansas is one of 31 states affiliated with NFSPS. Jim encourages PRA'ers to attend next year's NFSPS conference in Fort Worth, Texas June 29-July 2, 2017. A press release on Jim's election was emailed to each branch president in July with space for local branch promotion. If your press release was published please send a copy to PRA's Historian Marilyn Joyner for the scrapbook.

### Poetry Day, October 22, Hot Springs:

The Roundtable of Hot Springs branch will host PRA's 2016 Poetry Day conference on Saturday, October 22, from 8:30 AM to 3 PM at the Comfort Inn (behind Dixie Café), 3627 Central Avenue in Hot Springs. A Friday night event also is planned from 7 to 9 PM at the same location. Our thanks to Poetry Day Chair John Crawford and the Hot Springs poets for their hospitality. Thanks also to Pat Laster who will serve as Poetry Day Contest Chair. See the Poetry Day contest brochure posted on PRA's website. Send poems with payment in one envelope posted by August 15, 2016 to Pat Laster, 7433 Samples Rd., Benton, AR 72019. See tentative agendas for Poetry Day activities below:

**Friday, October 21, 2016, 7- 9 PM, at Comfort Inn, 3627 Central Ave, Hot Springs, 501-623-1700:**

- Sing-a-long, led by PD Chair John Crawford and Terry Rutledge with keyboard
- Read-a-round, 1 poem, 24 lines, subject-something about membership in PRA, any form
- Impromptu contest (sheets provided at registration) for a poem of 24 lines, subject-"fall", any form
- A hand-raised vote will award by majority prizes of \$25, 15 and 10 provided by Hot Springs PRA

**Saturday, October 22, 2016, at Comfort Inn, 3627 Central Ave, Hot Springs, 501-623-1700:**

|               |  |
|---------------|--|
| 8:30 - 9:15   | Registration   |
| 9:15 - 10:00  | Greetings - Hot Springs - John Crawford<br>Greetings - PRA President - Dennis Patton<br>Reading of Poetry Day Proclamation<br>Announcements from floor |
| 10:00 - 10:30 | Poetry Presentation - Kai Coggin   |
| 10:30 - 10:45 | Break  |
| 10:45 - 11:15 | Critique of Poems - Kai Coggin   |
| 11:15 - 11:30 | Questions from the floor   |
| 11:30 - 1:00  | Lunch on your own -- Dixie Cafe (next door)  |
| 1:00 - 1:30   | Business Meeting - Dennis Patton   |
| 1:30 - 2:30   | Awards Chair - Pat Laster  |
| 2:30          | Announcements and dismissal  |

**VOTE on Constitutional Amendment:**

The position of 2nd Vice-President of PRA has been vacant for several months. A motion was made at the Spring Celebration to eliminate this office from the PRA Board. A vote of the members will be taken at Poetry Day in Hot Springs. Be there to cast your vote.

Another issue to be discussed at Poetry Day is whether to continue producing PRA's Anthology. The past few years have shown low participation in this publication. If continued, a volunteer is needed to perform the duties of Anthology Chair.

**Monthly Contests and Sponsors** – Thanks to all who sponsored these contests for the 2016-2017 fiscal year. And thanks to Jim Barton for finding them. See contest guidelines on PRA's website and in the yearbook. Send entries to new Contest Chair Liz Faulkner, 3 Ridge Oak Cove, Little Rock, AR 72223. These contests are free to PRA members.

**Student Contest Chairman** - Timothy Tripp has volunteered to serve as chair for PRA's junior and senior high contests. Our thanks to Timothy and to outgoing chair Laura Loughridge who has ably served in this capacity for several years.

**New State Critic** - Effective 7/1/16 send your poems for critique to Todd Sukany, 5443 South 188th Road, Pleasant Hope, MO 65725, [editor@upstarespress.com](mailto:editor@upstarespress.com). Our thanks to Todd and to outgoing state critic Jeff Rawlings for his service to PRA poets.

**New Webmaster** – Effective 7/1/16 Karalin Rogers will serve as PRA's Webmaster. Our thanks to Karalin and to outgoing webmaster Robin Burrows who implemented PRA's new website last year.

**New PRA Vice President** – Nominee Mark Barton was elected by the board to fill the position of Vice President for the remainder of the 2016-2017 term. Our thanks to Mark and to outgoing VP Stephen Johnson for his service in this role.

**Nominations Chairman** – Our thanks to Membership Chair Kate Lacy who will serve as Nominations Chair, seeking members to serve as PRA officers during the next 2-year term starting 7/1/17. Ballots will be in the February newsletter. Be sure to vote.

**Collegiate Contest** – Our thanks to the new sponsor of PRA's Collegiate Contest, Roger Carter. The Jeanie Dolan Carter Memorial Collegiate Contest will continue for 2017 and thereafter with similar rules and no entry fees. Donna Smith will Chair and coordinate the contest this year. More details to come.

**A NEW PERK for PRA Book Authors:**

The PRA Board in its June meeting voted to add a new tab on its website to help members promote the sale of their poetry books. The website will list only PRA member authors, only poetry books, and links for potential buyers to deal directly with the authors. PRA will not be involved with the buying or selling. To post your book information link, contact PRA President Dennis Patton at [patton\\_dr@hotmail.com](mailto:patton_dr@hotmail.com).

**Reminder!**

You can still pay your dues to participate in free monthly contests and enter the Poetry Day contests, plus the NFSPS contests. Send \$20 (or \$15 for students and seniors) to PRA Treasurer Jim Barton at Box 263, Huttig, AR 71747. (Note: College students who entered the collegiate contest are paid through 2017.)

**Want a PRA Handout for Events?**

Try the attached "2016 Year-in-Review" report. It includes general information about PRA and NFSPS, plus highlights of statewide activities during the year. See PRA's webpage "Resources" tab to print copies.

**PRA-Arkansas State Fair Partnership:**

PRA is sponsoring the Best-of-Show poetry winners for 4 age groups at the 2016 Arkansas State Fair in October. Winners will receive: \$25/adult (age 19+), \$25/senior youth (14-18), \$15/junior youth (9-13) and \$10/youth (5-8). The adult winner also will receive a PRA membership for 2017. See contest details on the State Fair's website in the Adult Division Handbook (<http://www.arkansasstatefair.com/events/2016/creative-arts-information>). Each age division has a separate but

similar handbook. Or call 501-372-8341 for a print version. Entry is free to all Arkansans. Mailed poems (with entry form) must arrive at the fair by September 30, or be hand delivered by October 8th.

### **Yearbook Corrections:**

Please make the following additions/corrections to your 2016-2017 yearbook, when it arrives by mail in August. Information from the yearbook also is posted on PRA's website, excluding member names/addresses.

Welcome new PRA members: Stacy Pendergrast of Little Rock; Jeff Rawlings of Yellville; Dean Henning of Alexander; and returning member Dr. Ed Madden of South Carolina.

The following members renewed in July and may not appear in the new yearbook: Carrol W. Crolley of Jacksonville, Fay Guinn of Jonesboro, Karen Kay Bailey of Oklahoma, Mary Lee Cunningham of Jonesboro, Tom Long of Oklahoma, Dena Gorrell of Oklahoma, Nancy Powell of Hackett, Joan Pitlik of Little Rock, Jeffrey Rawlings of Yellville, Kinzey Rogers of Ft. Smith, Sara Gipson of Scott, John McBride of Iowa, Keli Wright of Rogers, Vivian Hoskins of Helena, Faye Duncan of Helena, Minna Ulmer of El Dorado, and Debra Riggs of Camden.

### **Did You Know?**

PRA members also are members of the National Federation of State Poetry Societies (NFSPS) with yearly access to 50 contests at the national level, plus access to contests in other states.

### **Farewell to John Fewkes (1956-2016):**

We say farewell to another long time PRA member, John Madison Fewkes, IX of Dundee, Mississippi. John was a member of the Delta Poets of Helena and served as Branch Treasurer. He was born on June 16, 1956 in Chicago to John Madison Fewkes, VIII and Dortha Fewkes. He died in Helena on April 8, 2016. John is survived by his wife Edna, his parents, a sister, 2 brothers, several relatives, nieces and nephews, plus many lifelong friends. PRA sends its regards to John's family and his branch colleagues in Helena who also lost their President Betty Heidelberger in March 2016.

### **Poetic Wins, Activities & Publications:**

**Please send notice of activities & accomplishments to PRA News Editor Donna Smith, 58 Briarwood, Greenbrier, AR 72058 ([tndsmith@live.com](mailto:tndsmith@live.com)).**

PRA Monthly Contest winners are: **May**- 1<sup>st</sup> D. Beecher Smith, 2<sup>nd</sup> Jodine Tooke, 3<sup>rd</sup> Cathy Parker, 1HM Marilyn Joyner, 2HM Don Crowson, and 3HM Elizabeth Dail; **June** – 1<sup>st</sup> Kathy Helmer, 2<sup>nd</sup> D. Beecher Smith, 3<sup>rd</sup> Cathy Parker, 1HM Pat Laster, 2HM

Carolyn Cates, 3HM Barbara Blanks; **July** - 1<sup>st</sup> John McBride, 2<sup>nd</sup> D. Beecher Smith II, 3<sup>rd</sup> Lilly Hobbs.

NFSPS contest winners announced in June 2016 included 14 PRA members who won 40 national awards. Congrats to Renee Ramsey, Pat Oplinger, Cathy Moran, Sara Gipson, Don Crowson, Gail Denham, John McBride, Pat Durmon, Dennis Patton, Dena Gorrell, Karen K. Bailey, Barbara Blanks, Jim Barton, and Russell Strauss. PRA also won two prestigious awards for Youth Activities and Poetry Day Celebration. Our thanks to Laura Loughridge who did double duty earning these awards as PRA's Youth Chair and 2015 Poetry Day Chair.

Fay Guinn (Member-at-large – Jonesboro)- won 7 awards at the 72nd Arkansas Writers Conference in Little Rock, June 3-4: two 1<sup>st</sup> places for short story, two 3<sup>rd</sup> places for essay and poetry, two 1HMs for short story and poetry, and "on the spot" award for poetry.

Congrats to PRA's Robin Burrows and husband Adam Crawford who welcomed a new baby daughter - Lily Catherine born May 31<sup>st</sup>.

The Free Verse Group of Mountain Home presented the **Coralee Eck Spencer Poetry Scholarship** to Kaitlyn Deatley on May 17th at the Annual Mountain Home High School Awards ceremony. Each year graduating seniors are invited to compete for the \$300.00 scholarship funded in part by attorney F. S. "Rick" Spencer in honor of his late wife.

New Officers of the Free Verse Group of Mtn Home are: Pat Durmon, President; Barbara Robinette, VP; Stephen Johnson, Secretary; Jackye Swyers, Treasurer; Monterey Sirak, Slam Officer.

The South Arkansas Poets of the Pines branch has committed to do "Open Mic" nights each month for the rest of the year at PJ's on the Square in El Dorado. They encourage poets, musicians, and various performers to participate.

Patricia Oplinger (Free Verse of Mtn Home) won a 3<sup>rd</sup> place in prose, and a 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> HM in poetry at the 2016 Arkansas Writers' Conference. She won 4<sup>th</sup> HM from NFSPS in the 2016 contests for her poem on the Trail of Tears history in Arkansas. Pat also won the WOW! Press Award, plus a 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 1HM.

Gail Denham (Member at large - Oregon) won the monthly prizes from Arizona and Illinois; 2HMs from National Poetry; a 2<sup>nd</sup> and a 3<sup>rd</sup> from Galaxy of Verse; a 2<sup>nd</sup> from Indiana; a 2<sup>nd</sup> from Massachusetts; a 1<sup>st</sup> from Pennsylvania; and a 2<sup>nd</sup> from Mississippi. She also placed poems in the Pegasus Anthology; Poets and Patrons; Pennessence; Peninsula Poets; ISPS (Illinois) newsletter; Sylvan prize poems, Galaxy of Verse Anthology, Highland Muse, and the Illinois Library.

Barbara Blanks (Member-at-large – Texas) has a new poetry book out: *Flesh of the Sun: Life Above the Ground*, available in paperback & eBook at Amazon, Barnes & Noble, or directly from her, with autograph: [www.barbara-blanks.com](http://www.barbara-blanks.com).

John J. Han's (Member-at-Large, Missouri) newest poetry book is entitled *Returning Home: Haiku and Other Succinct Poems* (Allahabad, India: Cyberwit, 2016; 136 pages). Contact John at [hanjn7@gmail.com](mailto:hanjn7@gmail.com) or [hanjn@mobap.edu](mailto:hanjn@mobap.edu).

Marilyn Joyner (SAPOP) won a 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> place for poetry in the 2016 Arkansas Writers Contests.

Pat Laster's (Saline County) collection of short stories and long poems will soon be available on Amazon as a softback and ebook: *Hiding Myself into Safety*. Plus *HER FACE IN THE GLASS*, is now available on Kindle and softback book from Amazon.

Past PRA President Helene Stallcup (Online Group Member) sends her best wishes to fellow PRA'ers. After her husband died, she moved into College Square Retirement Center in Conway. She continues to publish work in Conway's Log Cabin newspaper, from her books *Poems in Many Places* and *Count it Joy*.

Cat Donnelley (Poets Northwest) published an essay about Irish poet Louis de Paor on the *Dime Show Review* website: <http://www.dimeshowreview.com/louis-de-paors-study-of-interstitial-places-by-catherine-hotaling-donnelly/>

Lilly Hobbs (River Poets of Batesville) won several awards at the 2016 Arkansas Writer's Conference; 3<sup>rd</sup> HM in the Rescued Pet Award; 2<sup>nd</sup> HM contest 1 short story, 1<sup>st</sup> in the David Goodgame Memorial Award.

Renee Ramsey (River Poets of Batesville) won 2<sup>nd</sup> HM in the David Goodgame Memorial Award at the 2016 Arkansas Writer's Conference. Renee also won first place in the Donald Stodghill Memorial Award at the 2016 National Federation of State Poetry Societies.

Dr. Ed Madden (Member-at-Large – South Carolina) published a new book, *Ark*, by Sibling Rivalry Press, and launched it in Little Rock at Oxford American in March.

Congratulations to our excellent poets and branches for promoting the art of poetry.

### **Need Publishing Tips?**

Check with Pat Durmon who, with her marketing team, researched publishing tips for “old school” and “new school” poets. She will be happy to share their results. Contact Pat at [jdurmon@centurytel.net](mailto:jdurmon@centurytel.net).

## **Upcoming Deadlines/Events/Contests**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday each Month:** PRA's Monthly Contest entries are due by mail to Liz Faulkner, 3 Ridge Oak Cove, Little Rock AR 72223. See PRA's yearbook and website for rules, plus links to resources on poetry forms. **PRA members may send one poem per month for free critique to PRA's State Critic Todd Sukany, 5443 South 188th Road, Pleasant Hope, MO 65725 ([editor@upstarespress.com](mailto:editor@upstarespress.com)).**

**August:** Watch your mailbox for PRA's new 2016-2017 yearbook.

**August 15:** PRA's Poetry Day contest entries and fees are due in one envelope postmarked by August 15, 2016 to Poetry Day Contest Chair Pat Laster, 7433 Samples Road Benton, AR 72019. See details on web.

**August 27:** Submissions are due for the Betty Heidelberger Memorial contests sponsored by Saline County Branch of PRA. Mail entries and fees to: Catherine Parker, 17102 North Alexander Rd, Lot 587, Alexander, AR 72002. Contact Dennis Patton for more details at [patton\\_dr@hotmail.com](mailto:patton_dr@hotmail.com).

**September 1:** Chicagoland Poetry Contest entries due. See guidelines at [poetsandpatrons.net](http://poetsandpatrons.net).

**September 30:** Arkansas State Fair Poetry Contest entries must arrive by this date, if mailed. See details at [arkansasstatefair.com](http://arkansasstatefair.com). PRA will award Best-of-Show prizes in 4 age groups at the Fair in October.

**October 1:** See “2016 High Cotton on the Bayou Festival” at Scott Plantation Settlement in Scott, Arkansas from 10AM to 4 PM. Vendor booths are available through 9/25/16 for authors, artists, craftsmen, photographers and farmers. Contact PRA's Sara Gipson at 501-961-1647 or [saragipson@aol.com](mailto:saragipson@aol.com).

**October 18:** Deadline for PRA's Anthology pages and contest. See guidelines in the yearbook.

**October 21-22:** PRA's 2016 Poetry Day Events in Hot Springs hosted by the Roundtable Poets of Hot Springs. Contact Poetry Day Chair John Crawford for questions.

**November:** Student contest information will be posted and distributed this month. PRA branches are asked to promote these contests with schools in their area.

PRA members receive the quarterly *News 'N Notes* via email and web posting. The NFSPS quarterly *Strophes* newsletter is available online via link from PRA's website. Members may request copies of both by postal mail. Branch Presidents are asked to assure that all members have access to these publications.





# Poets' Roundtable of Arkansas

<http://poetsroundtableofarkansas.org>

## Year in Review – 2015-2016

**Purpose:** Poets' Roundtable of Arkansas (PRA) is a private, non-profit organization established in 1931 to share the love of poetry, encourage the writing of poetry, and support poets in Arkansas.

**History:** PRA is the oldest poetry organization in the state. Most of Arkansas's Poet Laureates have been members. Among them were Rosa Zagnoni Marinoni of Fayetteville (1953 - 1969) and Dr. Lily Peter of Helena (1971 - 1991), for whom the two annual PRA conferences are named. Current Arkansas Poet Laureate Peggy Vining of Little Rock also is a member. PRA is affiliated with the National Federation of State Poetry Societies (NFSPS), a non-profit entity promoting poetry nationwide. PRA members are also NFSPS members.

**Membership Benefits:** PRA branches are located all over the state for local members to meet monthly. PRA also offers an online group for members with no nearby branches, plus a quarterly newsletter to keep members updated. PRA's two annual conferences provide free educational opportunities to learn more about poetry and meet other poets. Members also may participate in the annual NFSPS conference with poets from other states. PRA's monthly contests and its spring contests are free for members. Winning poems may be published in PRA's anthology, and national winners may be published in the NFSPS anthology. PRA also offers the free service of a state critic for members to help improve their work.

**Contests:** Members may enter 15 free PRA contests throughout the year. PRA's annual Poetry Day Celebration in October sponsors another 25-30 contests, many open to all poets, for a small entry fee. Winners receive monetary prizes of up to \$1,000. Plus, members may enter 50 national contests at discounted rates through NFSPS. PRA also supports a number of student contests annually, including the Sybil Nash Abrams Contest for Arkansas High School and Junior High students, PRA's statewide Collegiate Contest, plus national student contests through NFSPS. Guidelines for all contests are posted on PRA's website, and distributed through branches and educational partners.

**Activities 2015-2016:** PRA poets hosted activities, published books, spoke at events, and promoted poetry in a variety of ways during the year. Many PRA poets also received an impressive number of awards too numerous to name here. Highlights of the year include:

South Arkansas Poets of the Pines (SAPOP) continued to sponsor monthly "Open-Mic Nights" through the year at PJ's Coffee Shop on the Square in El Dorado. All participants were welcomed to share poetry, song, rap, and readings. The event has become popular entertainment in the area. South Arkansas Poets of the Pines (SAPOP) and South Arkansas Writers also were featured in the spring 2016 edition of the *El Dorado Insider's Guide*.

Little Rock's River Market branch hosted PRA's 68<sup>th</sup> annual Poetry Day Celebration in October 2015. The annual conference honors Rosa Zagnoni Marinoni, Arkansas Poet Laureate (1953-1969) who established the first Arkansas Poetry Day on October 15, 1948. Poetry Day Chair Laura Loughridge welcomed guests and introduced PRA's featured speaker, Hope Coulter, award-winning author and professor at Hendrix College in Conway. Coulter spoke on writing, reading and publishing poetry. She also critiqued poems with ample group participation, and autographed her newest book for members. President Dennis Patton read the Governor's Proclamation for Arkansas's 2015 Poetry Day. Then Past PRA President Cathy Moran announced the 2015 Merit Award winner, Dennis Patton of Alexander for his numerous hours of service. President Patton conducted a brief board meeting, and discussed 2 new contests coming in 2016 (collegiate and state fair), PRA's new website, recruitment of new members and branches, plus several other activities underway. Finally Poetry Day Contest Chair Donna Smith announced the 2015 winners. This year's entries were very competitive, up 42% from 2014's level. Winners came from all over Arkansas, 14 states and Canada. Before announcing the Sybil Nash Abrams Awards, PRA Treasurer and NFSPS 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President Jim Barton shared a short biography of Mrs. Abrams (1900-1980).

PRA's board launched several new activities during the year including: a new PRA website started in October 2015 with new webmaster Robin Burrows; posting PRA's yearbook information on the website; a "2015 Year-in-Review" report to be updated annually and posted on the website for new member information; a 2015 Member

Survey that yielded suggestions to help members, encourage sponsorships and improve outreach; a new partnership in May with the Arkansas State Fair to sponsor poetry “Best of Show” winners from across the state in 4 age categories; a new online group started by Kate Lacy for members without branches nearby; and a new statewide Collegiate Poetry Contest. Winners in the latter were: 1<sup>st</sup> Annie Criswell of Hendrix College in Conway; 2<sup>nd</sup> Austin Farrell from the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville; and 3<sup>rd</sup> Andrew Newman from the National Park College in Hot Springs. (Andrew is a past winner in PRA’s Sybil Nash Abrams contest for high school and junior high students.)

One of five National Student Poet winners for 2015 was Arkansas’s own David Xiang, 17, of Little Rock. David also won PRA’s Sybil Nash Abrams student contest in 2014 (1<sup>st</sup> place) and 2015 (2<sup>nd</sup> place). First Lady Michelle Obama honored the 5 teens in October at the White House. The program is the nation’s highest honor for youth poets, with over 20,000 entries. Winners came from Alaska, Arkansas, Florida, New Jersey and Ohio.

Siloam Springs Writers’ Branch sponsored their first Poem of the Year Contest in the fall of 2015 for northwest area poets with a grant from the Roy Chesney Foundation. Chesney was a Siloam Springs resident who designated money from his estate to stimulate writing and the arts in the area.

John Crawford (Hot Springs branch) led a free monthly discussion of poetry forms at the Garland County Library each second Monday starting in February 2016. John also read poetry at the Ozark Writers League (OWL) at Branson, Missouri in February, and led a discussion on what makes good poetry.

Pat Laster (Saline County) was interviewed for a podcast on the Ozark Radio Hour while she attended the Lucidity retreat in Eureka Springs during April 2016. It was archived, so it will be available for some time.

The South Arkansas Poets of the Pines (SAPOP) hosted PRA’s Dr. Lily Peter Spring Celebration at El Dorado in April, National Poetry Month. Members enjoyed a Friday night meal at the Laredo Grill, followed by an “Open Mic Night” at PJ’s Coffee Shop. PRA’s own Karen Hayes was “hot” as PJ’s featured performer, reciting 5 series of poems. Several audience members also participated with spirited songs and readings. Then on Saturday the conference was a full day at St. Mary’s Episcopal Church. SAPOP President Donna Henson opened the meeting, welcomed us to historic El Dorado with “spudnuts” and dedicated the conference to departed PRA members Doreen Bailey, Magdalene Collums and Betty Heidelberger. To honor the conference namesake, Jim Barton delivered a poem by Dr. Lily Peter, a past Arkansas Poet Laureate. PRA President Dennis Patton offered tips for critiquing our poetry with humorous examples of a “Poetry Mechanic.” He also read his winning 2015 Sybil Nash Abrams poem, “The Jesse James Shoot-out”. SAPOP Treasurer Jim Barton presented the first Lifetime Achievement Award to Poets of the Pines charter member Mildred McKinney, an honorary lifetime member of PRA in her mid-90s from Camden. She is still able to recite more poems than most of us have read! We congratulate her on her many achievements. Everyone had a wonderful time and returned home with a jar of delicious Mayhaw jelly from El Dorado.

The Hot Springs Branch sponsored 2 poetry contests for adults and youth in the city during the ARTS AND THE PARK event from April 29 to May 8, 2016. Poetry Day Chair John Crawford reported that they also are busy planning to host Poetry Day in Hot Springs on October 22, 2016, with some fun activities on Friday evening, including a read-a-round, an impromptu contest, and a sing-a-long.

PRA’s Jim Barton was elected President of the National Federation of State Poetry Societies at the NFSPS conference in Minnesota during June 2016. We are so proud of Jim! He is a native of Huttig, Arkansas, near El Dorado where he started the South Arkansas Poets of the Pines branch in 2009. Jim is an award-winning poet, published author, popular speaker, PRA’s State Treasurer and SAPOP Treasurer. Last year Jim served as NFSPS 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President and Membership Chair. One of Jim’s “big” goals is to have poetry societies join NFSPS from all 50 states - currently 35 states participate. Jim sincerely hopes more PRA members can attend next year’s conference closer to home at Fort Worth, Texas June 29-July 2, 2017.

NFSPS contest winners announced in June 2016 included 14 PRA members who won 40 national awards: Renee Ramsey, Pat Oplinger, Cathy Moran, Sara Gipson, Don Crowson, Gail Denham, John McBride, Pat Durmon, Dennis Patton, Dena Gorrell, Karen K. Bailey, Barbara Blanks, Jim Barton, and Russell Strauss. PRA also won two prestigious awards for Youth Activities and Poetry Day Celebration. Our thanks to PRA’s Laura Loughridge who did double duty earning these awards as PRA’s Youth Chair and 2015 Poetry Day Chair.

PRA welcomed 2 new PRA branches during the year: Two Rivers Poetry Society of Fort Smith and Gin Creek Poets of Searcy. PRA currently serves 152 members, 12 branches and one online group statewide.