

NEWS 'N' NOTES

Poets' Roundtable of Arkansas

www.poetsroundtable.webs.com

May 2015

President's Message:

Poets,

I am humbled by your confidence in electing me as the new president of PRA. I appreciate the opportunity to serve in this capacity. It will be a joint effort with the new board members and with you giving us direction. I hope to be able to meet you personally over the course of the next two years and share ideas to promote our love of poetry across the state.

Thanks so much to the previous board members who have worked hard to keep PRA alive and well. We have seen good things over the past few years which have promoted poetry. I am looking forward to working with the new board members you have elected. Our desire is to keep the passion fire for poetry. We are always looking for new ideas to raise awareness.

We had our meeting for Spring Celebration with the Saline County Branch as host. Thanks to all of those who were able to attend and enjoy the program with our speaker, Jim Barton. Congratulations to those who won in the contests offered during this event. It is always exciting to visit with fellow poets from around the state and renew friendships with some we haven't seen in a while.

Spring is apace and nature is radiant with flowers and trees coming from shadows of winter. Summer is coming and there are many contests available offering challenges to keep us busy for the next few months. I encourage each of you to start now working on your entries for Poetry Day. And don't forget the monthly contests.

Life is too short to be without poetry.

Dennis Patton
State President

Dr. Lily Peter Spring Celebration May 2nd at Benton:

The Saline County Branch of PRA hosted a wonderful event for this year's Dr. Lily Peter Spring Celebration on Saturday, May 2nd in Benton. Our thanks to this group for their warm hospitality.

Opening remarks from Betty Heidelberger memorialized Dr. Peter who was Arkansas 3rd Poet Laureate (1971-1991). She was a successful farmer in Phillips County, a distinguished author, poet, teacher, musician, conservationist and philanthropist. Dr. Peter was a dreamer who made things happen. She managed her family's farm so well that it grew to 7,000 acres and she became a millionaire. Peter studied English at Columbia and Vanderbilt, received a master's degree from Vanderbilt, and also studied violin at Juilliard. She was a generous patron of the arts. Her published works are introspective, lyrical and historical poetry, mostly about the Arkansas Delta. Many of Peter's papers and taped interviews are in the archives at the [University of Central Arkansas \(UCA\)](http://UniversityofCentralArkansas(UCA)) in Conway. (See more at www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net.)

New PRA officers were installed and outgoing officers recognized for their service. Past President Cathy Moran received a plaque and gavel for her outstanding leadership over the past 4 years. PRA's own Jim Barton gave an excellent talk on editing poetry. We poets, he said, are "too wordy." He advised us to "cut-cut-cut" to the core points of the poem, use "magic" words that are most descriptive, and pick a title that stands out. He also critiqued several poems submitted by members and explained his suggestions. Each critique is only one person's opinion, he said. Jim also suggests we set goals to "dream big" individually and collectively. "Poetry is a gift to be shared," he said. Jim is an award-winning poet, published author, State Treasurer for PRA and National 1st Vice President and Membership Chair for NFSPS. One of Jim's "big" goals for NFSPS is to have poetry societies from all 50 states become members. Currently only 30 states participate.

Winners of the Sybil Nash Abrams Student Contests were announced by PRA's Youth Chair Laura Loughridge. Two winners, Christina Yutzy & Jack O'Connor, attended and read their poems. Junior Level winners are: 1st - Maria Thomas from St. Theresa Catholic School in Little Rock; 2nd - Christina Yutzy from Barton Junior High in El Dorado; 3rd - Vanessa Garcia from St. Theresa Catholic School in Little Rock; 1HM - TaSharriah Holly from Washington Middle School in El Dorado; 2HM - Leah Armstrong from Washington Middle School in El Dorado; 3HM - Jack O'Connor from St. Theresa Catholic School in Little Rock. Senior Level winners are: 1st - John Paul Hartnedy from Catholic High School in Little Rock; 2nd - David Xiang from Little Rock Central High School; 3rd - Jonah Rudkin from eStem Public Charter School in Little Rock.

Winners of the Mary Harper Sowell Contest (judged by Dena Gorrell of Edmond, Oklahoma) are: 1st Karen Kay Bailey, 2nd Cathy Moran, 3rd Jim Barton, 1HM Lee Anne Russell, 2HM Barbara Longstreth Mulkey, 1HM Marcia Camp. Winners of the Verna Lee Hinegardner Contest (judged by Dr. Mark Tappmeyer of SW Missouri College) are: 1st Cathy Parker, 2nd Barbara Longstreth Mulkey, 3rd Rita Goodgame, 1HM Karen Kay Bailey, 2HM Lee Ann Russell, 3HM Marcia Camp. Winners of the Dr. Lily Peter Contest (judged by Jeri Hardesty, Alabama State Poets Society President) are: 1st Marcia Camp, 2nd Rita Goodgame, 3rd Karen Hayes, 1HM Pat Laster, 2HM Pat Durmon, 3HM Karen Kay Bailey. Winners of the serious and light verse contests (judged by attendees) are Laura Loughridge and Jim Barton, respectively.

Poetic Wins, Activities and Publications:

PRA Monthly Contest winners are: February - 1st Jim Barton, 2nd John McBride, 3rd D. Beecher Smith II, 1HM Alana Merritt Mahaffey, 2HM Liz Faulkner, 3HM Diane Stefan; March - 1st Karen Hayes, 2nd Pat Durmon, 3rd Marla Bennett, 1HM Alana Merritt Mahaffey, 2HM Betty Heidelberger, 3HM Karen Kay Bailey; April - 1st Jim Barton, 2nd D. Beecher Smith II, 3rd Karen Kay Bailey, 1HM Marilyn Joyner, 2HM Betty Heidelberger, 3HM Don Crowson. Check monthly winners on PRA's webpage.

Jim Barton (South Arkansas Poets of the Pines) recently spoke to a Senior English class on the subject of writing poetry, at the invitation of an El Dorado High School English teacher. Jim also was featured speaker at the Mississippi Poetry Society's Annual Festival in April and PRA's Dr. Lily Peter Spring Celebration in May.

Marilyn Joyner, David Hall, and Donna Henson (all from South Arkansas Poets of the Pines) recently presented a program "Poetry from the Garden" to Union County Master Gardeners. In January, SAPOP members also sponsored an "Open Mic Night" at PJ's Coffee House on the Square in El Dorado. Readers included Jim Barton, Marilyn Joyner, Janet Ryan, Jack Ryan, Donna Henson, and members of the community. Management was so pleased, they've asked the poets to return regularly.

Marilyn Joyner (South Arkansas Poets of the Pines) won two 1st HMs in the Springfield Poets and Friends.

Lee Ann Russell (PRA member at large - Springfield, MO) won a 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place in the Missouri Poetry Society Contest and gave poetry readings at the Arts Rolla, S&T Dept. of Arts, Languages & Philosophy and MO Arts Council Annual Community Poetry Reading at PoetSpeak in Rolla, MO for National Poetry Month.

Dr. Ed Madden (PRA member at large - Columbia, SC) was named the first City Poet Laureate for Columbia, South Carolina in January. Dr. Madden will serve a 4-year term to, "encourage appreciation and create opportunities for dissemination of poetry in Columbia." Originally from Newport, Arkansas, Madden serves on the faculty of the University of South Carolina, teaches English, directs the University's gender studies program, and leads poetry summer camps for students. He has published 3 poetry books and won fellowships from the SC Academy of Authors and the SC Arts Commission.

Karen Kay Bailey (PRA member at large – Blanchard, OK) won the Poet Laureate award from the Poetry Society of Oklahoma in March. She also is a featured poet for the Christian Women's Spring Celebration in Oklahoma City on May 3rd, the Cleveland County Historical Society in Norman, OK on May 23rd, and the Shelton House Museum in Waynesville, NC on June 13th.

Charlie Southerland (Free Verse Poetry Group of Mountain Home) recently published a poem "Eclipse" in the New York poetry journal 'TRINACRIA', and it has been nominated for a PUSHCART PRIZE! He also published in "Rotary Dial."

Pat Durmon (Free Verse Poetry Group of Mountain Home) won an HM in Lucidity Poetry Retreat at Eureka Springs. She also recently published poems in "Spare Mule," "MauMag," and "Whispers."

Monterey Sirak (Free Verse Poetry Group of Mountain Home) published her book Barefoot on Broken Glass available at: <https://www.tatepublishing.com/bookstore/book.php?w=978-1-68142-329-6>.

Cathy Moran (River Market Poets) won 3rd in New Hampshire; 2nd in Pennsylvania; two 1st and a 3rd in Mississippi; and 1st in rhymed poetry from the United Poets Laureate International. The latter has winners and judges from all over the world.

Marcia Camp and Justin Booth (both River Market Poets) recently published a book together, Birth of a Poet: The Prison Letters of Justin Booth. It chronicles Justin's progress as he became an award-winning poet during a short term in prison. He credits the River Market Poets with encouraging him toward much of his success. Recently he has done readings in New York and California. He also enjoys considerable popularity in Ireland.

Congratulations to our excellent poets and branches for their activities toward PRA's mission, to promote the art of poetry and encourage contemporary poets. Please send notice of your wins and branch activities for PRA's quarterly newsletter to Donna Smith, 58 Briarwood, Greenbrier, AR 72058 (tndsmith@live.com).

A Bit of History – Bernie Babcock (1868-1962):

Julia Burnelle Smade was born in Unionville, Ohio in 1868, the eldest of 6 children. As a child, Bernie was free to roam through nature on her family's farm and indulge her ample curiosity. She began writing poems at age 6. The Smales later moved to Russellville, Arkansas where her father Hiram built a saw mill and her mother Lottie founded the Pope County Women's Christian Temperance Union. Bernie wrote her first essay at age 16 for the state Women's Christian Temperance Union against the sale of alcohol.

Upon graduation from high school, Bernie found a way to fund her attendance at Little Rock College by housekeeping, cooking and babysitting for the president's family. She earned high grades there. Then she met and married William Babcock in 1886. The young couple lived most of the next 11 years in Little Rock where they had 5 children. Bernie happily cared for her family as a dedicated mother. Unfortunately, Will Babcock died in 1897 when Bernie was only 29.

Bernie grieved Will's death through her writing. She was offered a teaching job to support her family, but she chose to write for a living at home while raising her beloved children. She was published within a year by a New York firm. Thereafter she was unstoppable. She became a prolific writer for passionate causes like prohibition, women's suffrage, archaeology, evolution, environmental issues, religions of the world, psychic phenomena, and histories of Indians and Negroes. Bernie found wrongs to be righted.

In 1903 Bernie was the first Arkansas women to be named in Who's Who for Authors and Writers. She established and led many of Arkansas's literary and historical societies, including: Arkansas Authors and Composers Society, Arkansas Federation of Women's Clubs, Arkansas Branch of the National League of American Pen Women, and the Arkansas Historical Society.

In 1919 she published a book about Abraham Lincoln's first love, Ann Rutledge. It was an international success. Thereafter, she wrote 4 more books on Lincoln and became the country's leading "Lincolnian." She authored over forty historical novels, served as editor of the first anthology of Arkansas poetry entitled Pictures

and Poems of Arkansas, and established “The Sketch Book,” a magazine with content solely from Arkansans and one of the first written by a woman. In 1927 she founded the Arkansas Museum of Natural History at Little Rock’s City Hall and was appointed its director. In 1935 she was named State Director of the Federal Writers Project. And in 1941 Bernie moved the fledgling Museum of Natural History to the Arsenal Building, the birthplace of WWII General Douglas MacArthur for whom the Museum was re-named.

Bernie Babcock retired from her directorship of the museum in 1953 at age 85, but she continued to write daily. She moved to a scenic home atop Petit Jean Mountain where she enjoyed the company of her children and grandchildren. She still saw herself as first and foremost a Mother. Her granddaughter Lucille Babcock remembered that her grandmother, “always stopped writing the minute one of the grandchildren came home from school,” to walk with them and observe nature. Bernie died at 94, sitting at her desk with an unfinished manuscript in her lap. Forever the disciplined writer, she had lived a courageous life, supported her children, and tried to make the world a better place for them. Bernie had named her mountain home appropriately, “Journey’s End.”

(Information provided by Betty Heidelberger and Marcia Camp. Marcia won the 2014 Sybil Nash Abrams \$1,000 Contest with a touching poem entitled, “Miss Bernie, In Her Own Words.” Happy Mothers’ Day!)

Upcoming Deadlines, Events & Contests:

2nd Saturday each Month: PRA’s Monthly Contest entries are due by mail to Chairman Dennis Patton, 2512 Springhill Circle, Alexander, AR 72002. See guidelines for each contest on page 7 of the PRA yearbook.

June 24-28: NFSPS Annual Convention in St. Petersburg, Florida. See agenda at www.nfsp.com.

June 30: PRA membership fees are due for the new fiscal year. Only paid members will be listed in the new yearbook. Send checks to PRA via Membership Chair Kate Lacy, 2017 Magnolia, Fayetteville, AR 72703. Dues are \$20 for regular members and \$15 for seniors (65) and students (under 18).

June 30: PRA Branch Presidents send a list of their branch officers for the new yearbook to Cathy Moran, 401 Auburn Drive, Little Rock, AR 72205.

June 30: Deadline for Kentucky State Poetry Society’s 2015 contest. See kystatepoetrysociety.org/contests.

July/August: Watch for your new 2015-2016 yearbook in the mail.

August 15: PRA’s Poetry Day contest entries and fees are due in one envelope postmarked by August 15, 2015 to Poetry Day Contest Chair Donna Smith, 58 Briarwood, Greenbrier, AR 72058.

August 15: Deadline for Poetry Society of Texas’s 2015 annual contest. See poetrysocietyoftexas.org.

October 3: PRA’s 2015 Poetry Day will be celebrated in Little Rock at the Cox Building (3rd Floor). Featured speaker will be Hope Coulter, an award-winning author and professor at Hendrix College in Conway. Contest winners will be announced. Lunch will be on your own in the River Market. Watch PRA’s website for details. Contact Poetry Day Chair Laura Loughridge with questions. Our thanks to the River Market Poets of Little Rock for hosting this annual event.

November: Student contest information will be distributed this month. Each PRA branch is encouraged to promote these contests in their area schools. Contact Youth Contest Chair Laura Loughridge with questions.

Check the PRA website for updates on Arkansas events, contests, etc. Also check the NFSPS web site (www.nfsp.com) for national news, contests and links to other state poetry societies. The NFSPS *Strophes* newsletter is mailed with PRA’s newsletter for members who do not have Internet access. Remember to send your poems – one per month at no cost - to PRA’s State Critic Todd Sukany, 5443 S. 188th Road, Pleasant Hope, MO 65725 (tsukany@sbuniv.edu.) PRA members who do not have online access to PRA news may request a mailed copy by contacting Donna Smith, 58 Briarwood, Greenbrier, AR 72058.