Jo Garot McDougall, Arkansas Poet Laureate

Picture by Dixie Knight

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: POETS CELEBRATE MCDOUGALL AS NEW POET LAUREATE

Poets' Roundtable of Arkansas (PRA) celebrated Governor Asa Hutchison's appointment of Jo Garot McDougall as the new Poet Laureate of Arkansas. PRA held their Dr. Lily Peter Spring Celebration on April 14 at the Cox Creative Center in Little Rock.

"Arkansas can be pleased to have a new Poet Laureate to represent our art," stated Dennis Patton, President of PRA. Patton introduced McDougall, the keynote speaker, who addressed about 35 poets from across the state. The audience cheered and blew noisemakers.

At the podium McDougall stated, "We need to celebrate us." She spoke about the important role of poets to tell stories that "carry on rituals and history of culture." McDougall led the audience in a discussion of what made poems memorable, and gave tips on how to craft "small bursts of surprise" in poems.

PRA is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the study of poetry and the encouragement of poets. Laura Loughridge, President of River Market Poets, commented, "She is not only interested in her own work but spends a great amount of time encouraging the work of other poets. She's a joy to be around and will be a marvelous Poet Laureate. Arkansas can definitely be proud."

McDougall grew up on a rice farm in DeWitt, Arkansas and lived near Stuttgart for twenty years where she and her husband, Charles McDougall, raised their two children. She earned an MFA in Creative Writing at the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville. She has published seven collections of poetry and has won many awards including Pushcart Prize nominations, The Arkansas Porter Prize for Literary Excellence, and The Academy of American Poets Prize. McDougall was inducted into the Arkansas Writers Hall of Fame in 2006. Currently, she and her husband are Little Rock residents.

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Bio source: http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net

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