



The Muse Messenger

The Newsletter of the Alabama State Poetry Society

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Musings from the Editors:

~ Harry & Rita Moritz

We were delighted when ASPS asked us to be the Editors for the *Muse Messenger*. We knew it would be hard work (and is it ever!), but it's been great fun working with it. We're pleased with the new features, and we think you will be too.

We will briefly introduce ourselves in this first "trial" edition and hope we'll have something of more substance to offer you in our "Musings from the Editors" in future months.

We've lived here in what we lovingly call "Alabama, our adopted home" for 10 years now, and we don't miss the DC area at all. We love poetry and cats and travel, especially travel. But wherever we go, Alabama soon calls our name, and coming home is the best part of every trip.

We started a writing group called Writers Anonymous in Pell City three years ago. It started with four people, and it has grown exponentially both in numbers and in skill. In the past year, WA members have brought home more than 30 awards for their writing. We think they rock.

When we aren't working on the *Muse Messenger*, writing poetry, working with our WA group, or traveling, Rita writes for her blog at www.preciousprodigal.com, and Harry is the webmaster. He is also the one who created a website for the *Muse Messenger*. You can check it out at www.musemessenger.org.

We love working together, and we love having the privilege of serving the poets of Alabama by working on the *Muse Messenger*. We hope you enjoy reading it as much as we enjoyed putting it together for you.

2015 Fall Meeting Report:

~ Jerri Hardesty:

Due to recent changes at the University of Montevallo, we had our 2015 ASPS Fall Meeting at the Rolling Hills Conference Center in Calera, Alabama. The grounds are lovely, the facilities are nice, and the staff is friendly and helpful. The lodge rooms are spacious and clean. Everyone seemed to enjoy Rolling Hills, and the only change we plan to request if or when we return to that location is to have more options for the lunch.

Friday night, we got together for delicious snacks, fun conversation, and some Round-Robin poetry. A good time was had by all! Saturday morning, we started with more fabulous food, good coffee, and a "Meet and Greet." Then came the workshops.

Suzanne Coker's workshop was about writing from pop culture. Her presentation included using historical context, the philosophy of writing from pop culture, examples of such work, the possible pitfalls and strengths, and strategies for writing these types of poems. The material was interesting, and Coker was engaging and personable. Participants were asked to write something using their own memories, nostalgia, and "fandom."

The second workshop used a new approach with Jerri Hardesty interviewing Lori Lasseter Hamilton about being a "Warrior Poet." The material was touching, challenging, and inspiring. As part of her presentation, Lasseter performed several poems about the challenges she has overcome. She uses her poetry to continue the fight for the rights, support, and comfort of other survivors. She is a true "Warrior Poet," who has turned the challenges of her life into activism. Lori's presentation included an exercise aimed at helping poets find the warrior within themselves and the subject

matter that might inspire that warrior to speak.

We also had some folks come forward and volunteer for ASPS positions. These include Jeanette Willert and Myra Ward, who have volunteered to be co-contest chairs when Kirk Hardesty's term is up next October. Harry and Rita Moritz will be handling the new, improved, revamped *Muse Messenger*. There was also lively discussion about several ideas we hope to implement this year.

The awards portion of the meeting began with the presentation of a plaque for the 2015 Poet of the Year to Jodi Adamson. Adamson read a poem and a short speech, encouraging poets to follow their dreams and to support each other.

Several winners of our Fall Contests were there to read their winning poems. It was especially satisfying that the winning poems this year were of particularly high quality. Everyone's skills are improving with time and practice.

Please like, contribute, and stay involved in the ASPS Facebook page at: <http://on.fb.me/10cQj5v> for the latest news and events and be sure to send your information to the *Muse Messenger* so we can celebrate your accomplishments with you. Also, look for our new YouTube channel, coming soon.

What's Up With All These Changes? ~ Rita Aiken Moritz

Change is inevitable, but that doesn't mean change is easy or comfortable, does it? There are exceptions, of course, and we hope the "new and improved" *Muse Messenger* is one of those exceptions.

Some things will remain the same. We'll still be asking for "Member News" and posting winners of the ASPS contests. However, we have made several changes, and perhaps the biggest one is that the *Muse Messenger* will be going out monthly. We're going to try that for six months and then reevaluate. We'll ask for your feedback when we do.

Since we can't possibly produce a monthly edition alone, that takes us to the second change. We're planning on more member involvement. These are

some of the regular features that will be new to the *Muse Messenger*.

- **Member Articles:** Our goal is to have two articles in the *Muse Messenger* each month, and we will be accepting submissions for one of those articles (500 words or less) every month. Articles may be edited or shortened by us as needed.
- **Tips & Tools of the Trade:** Writing prompts, "Blueprint" for a form, Tapping into your inner muse. What makes it work for you? We will be accepting submissions of 300 words or less.
- **A Monthly Contest:** Information on this new feature is found elsewhere in this month's *Muse Messenger*. It will be open only to current members of ASPS.
- **Contests, Contests, Contests:** This feature will let you know about contests from other state poetry societies.
- **Publishers and Journals:** This will be a list of publishers and/or journals that are accepting submissions. If you know of any, let us know and we'll add them.
- **What's Happening:** This will be a list of upcoming activities including Poetry Groups, Slams, Workshops and Conferences.
- **Highlight on State Poetry Societies:** This feature will tell you about other poetry societies that meet certain criteria and might be of interest to you.

We think you'll like the changes to the *Muse Messenger* and will like even more the chance to be a part of it by submitting your best work for consideration. Keep in mind that, as with all submissions, you should send us only your best, error-free work. Crisp, clean copy is much more likely to find acceptance in the *Muse Messenger*.

Guidelines for submissions and for entering the monthly contests can be found at:

www.musemessenger.org

"Mahabharata" is an Indian epic poem with 1.8 millions words. And that publisher thought your poem was too long?

What's Happening?

Bamaslam Montevallo Poetry Slam is on Friday, Dec. 4. Sign up at 8:00 p.m., and the slam begins at 9:00 p.m. at Eclipse Coffee and Books, 1032 Main Street in Montevallo. Email Jerri Hardesty at WytRabbit1@aol.com for more information.

Gifts of a Wordsmith, a poetry workshop for adults, meets on the first Tuesday of the month from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. at the downtown Birmingham Public Library. Email John Paul Taylor for more information: johnpaul@reallifepoets.org.

The Leeds Area Open Circle Poets Group meets every other month at 7:00 p.m. on the last Monday of the month at Leeds Arts Center in Downtown Leeds, 8140 Parkway Drive. Their next meeting will be on January 25th. Email Joan Dawson for more information: jdawson@uab.edu.

Writers' Anonymous meets the first Thursday of every month from 6:30 – 8:30 p.m. at the Pell City Recreation Hall, 411 19th Street South in Pell City. Their next meeting will be Thursday, December 3rd. For more information, go to: www.writersanonymous.us.

ASPS Member News:

Claire T. Field: has recently had poems published in *Contemporary Poetry: Volume 2* (India) and *The Horror Magazine Zine*.

Bev Gattis: reports she is under contract with Bethany House Publishing for a story that will be featured with fifteen others in a book by Jim Bell, titled *Jesus Talked To Me Today*.

Randy Hale: reports that his poem "Perfect" won First Place in the Jeff State (Clanton Campus) Poetry Slam.

Harry Moritz: reports that the 2016 Mid-Winter Writers' Conference is scheduled for February 27th in Pell City and that all 18 presenters are confirmed. There will be at least one workshop on poetry. See: <http://mwwconference.com/>

Rita Moritz: reports that Writers Anonymous had an Open Mic Event at Antebellum Anne's in Pell City (<http://on.fb.me/1NjJmFF>) on October 31st, and about 25 people attended. There was some great poetry read, and there were the refreshments WA is famous for dishing up.

James Miller Robinson: reports that his chapbook, *The Caterpillars at Saint Bernard* was nicely reviewed by Dr. Harry Moore on the Alabama Writers Forum website in the book reviews section. Also, Finishing Line Press just released Robinson's chapbook, *Boca del Rio in the Afternoon*, which was a finalist in their annual open chapbook competition.

Alina Stefanescu: has had several poems accepted for publication in various literary magazines. Those poems include "Koinonia Farms" and "Communion: Cupped Hands" among others. She has also had some fiction pieces accepted including "Owls," "My Name Is Not Rita," "People We Saved" and "Rehearsings."

Kathleen Thompson: had her poem "Alchemist" published in *2nd And Church* literary magazine. She also had her story, "Nesting," published in the inaugural issue of *Waypoints Online Art and Literary Journal*.

Sue Brannan Walker: has recently had an essay, "Playing the Hand That's Dealt or Imbibing William Faulkner's 'Was.'" published. She also had two poems, "December 25th" and "Visiting Grandma's Grave at Christmas" published in *Tis' the Season: An Anthology of Christmas Poems*. In addition, two of Sue's poems, "Holsteins" and "Lest the Light..." have been published in *American Culture*. In her "spare time," Sue gave five lectures in various places, and she will also be a presenter at the 2016 Mid-Winter Writers' Conference in Pell City in February.

If you're suffering from writer's block, maybe you should light up? Poet Amy Lowell, who was awarded a Pulitzer Prize posthumously in 1926, thought so. She said smoking cigars helped her concentrate, and she once bought 1,000 of them at one time.

Highlights on State Poetry Societies:

In order for a State Poetry Society to be featured, it must have a web presence and allow both out-of-state membership and non-member entries in their contests. Keep in mind that contest deadlines may change. Some may accept outside submissions to their journals.

<i>State:</i>	<i>Dues</i>	<i>Contest Deadlines</i>
Alabama:	\$20	Several
Inet: http://alabamapoets.org/		
Facebook: http://on.fb.me/10cQjsV		
<i>Muse Messenger:</i> http://musemessenger.org		
Arizona:	\$25	9/30
Inet: http://azpoetry.webs.com/		
Facebook: http://on.fb.me/21kcQZE		
Arkansas:	\$20	8/15
	\$15 (Seniors)	
Inet: http://poetsroundtableofarkansas.org/		
Facebook: http://on.fb.me/10cQF2T		

Contests, Contests, Contests!

(With Deadlines)

- 12/15—Massachusetts Skip Potter Memorial:
<http://bit.ly/10vut0X>
- 12/22—Poetry Society of America:
<http://bit.ly/10kNsxz>
- 12/25—Saturday Evening Post Limerick Contest:
<http://bit.ly/1p3VXfh>
- 12/31—Alabama - Book of the Year:
www.alabamapoets.org
- 12/31—Alabama - Poet of the Year:
www.alabamapoets.org
- 12/31—Blue Mountain Arts
<http://bit.ly/1SnXflz>
- 12/31—California - Monthly Topics:
<http://bit.ly/1LEi3zR>
- 12/31—Tampa Review Prize for Poetry:
<http://bit.ly/1Nd9Dk5>
- 12/31—Tethered by Letters:
<http://bit.ly/1SnY91A>

12/31—The Society of Classical Poets:
<http://bit.ly/11OHARY>

12/31—Tupelo Press Dorset Prize -
Poetry Manuscript:
<http://bit.ly/1IeSwc7>

Publishers and Journals Accepting Submissions:

The following publishers and journals are open for submissions. Be sure to read and follow the submission guidelines provided on each site. Only your very best work should be submitted.

The Birmingham Arts Journal:
<http://www.birminghamartsjournal.com>

Negative Capability Press:
<http://www.negativecapabilitypress.org>

The Poetry Foundation:
<http://www.poetryfoundation.org>

Gravel Magazine:
<http://www.gravelmag.com/>

Muse Messenger Monthly Poetry Contest:

A new feature for the *Muse Messenger* will be a monthly poetry contest. There is no entry fee, and there will be no cash prizes. However, the winner will be recognized in the following month's *Muse Messenger*, and the winning poem will be published (with the permission of the poet). All rights will be retained by the poet. There will be only one winner for each monthly contest. Guidelines are online at:
<http://bit.ly/10FF2PE>

The December Contest is as follows:
Topic: "What does writing poetry mean to you?"
Form: Poet's Choice
Line Limit: 40

The winner will be announced in the January, 2016 *Muse Messenger*.

"How do you know you can't
if you have never even tried?"
~ Rita Aiken Moritz

Alabama State Poetry Society's 2015 Fall Contest Winners:

1. ALABAMA STATE POETRY SOCIETY FALL CONTEST (Sponsored by ASPS) - 62 entries.

*THIS CATEGORY IS OPEN TO PAID MEMBERS ONLY. Any form, Any subject, Line limit 60.

1st Place	Rita Aiken Moritz	Who's That Knocking On My Door?	Pell City, AL
2nd Place	Janet Anderson	The First and The Last	Huntsville, AL
3rd Place	Jeanette Willert	The Life Lie	Pell City, AL
4th Place	Randy C. Hale	Nothing Stored	Oneonta, AL
1st HM	Faye Adams	The Persistence of Wind	DeSoto, MO
2nd HM	Catherine Moran	Designs and destinations	Little Rock, AR
3rd HM	Gail Gehlken	Ella Mae's House	Irvington, AL

2. THE "AWKWARD MOMENT" AWARD (Sponsored by Myra Ward) - 13 entries. *MUST BE A MEMBER OF ASPS TO ENTER. Any form, Subject: Write a poem describing an awkward moment. Line limit 16.

1st Place	Jeanette Willert	At the Daniel Boone Hotel	Pell City, AL
2nd Place	Mike Wahl	The Fly	Athens, AL
3rd Place	Janet Anderson	Diving Into the Unknown	Huntsville, AL
1st HM	Faye Gaston	That Awful Awkward Moment	Union Springs, AL

3. THE DAVID KATO PRIZE, in honor of murdered Ugandan gay activist David Kato (1964-2011). (Sponsored by Jendi Reiter) - 3 entries. *WINNING POEMS WILL BE PUBLISHED ONLINE WITH AUTHORS' PERMISSION. Any form, Subject: Human rights of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered people. No line limit.

1st Place	Jerri Hardesty	Human	Brierfield, AL
2nd Place	Barbara Blanks	Transfiguration	Garland, TX
3rd Place	Joanne Ramey Cage	Wayne and Walt: A Parting	Leeds, AL

4. THE "FAILING PUBLICLY" AWARD (Sponsored by Susan Luther) - 6 entries. *MUST BE A RESIDENT OF ALABAMA AND A MEMBER OF ASPS TO ENTER. Any form, Subject: Have you ever failed, spectacularly or otherwise, in a public setting? Forgotten your lines in a play, perhaps? Or begun your piece for a piano recital and couldn't get past the first bar? Told a joke and no one laughed? Write about your most embarrassing public failure, and how it opened up new possibilities for you.

1st Place	Bev Gattis	Failing Publicly	Odenville, AL
2nd Place	Rita Aiken Moritz	Boy, did I blow that!	Pell City, AL
3rd Place	Myra Ward Barra	The Basketball Game	Pell City, AL
1st HM	Jerri Hardesty	Misunderstanding	Brierfield, AL
2nd HM	Faye Gaston	The Ghost of Embarrassment	Union Springs, AL
3rd HM	Taney A. Brazeal	Politics	Fairhope, AL

5. THE "I'M PROUD TO BE AN AMERICAN" AWARD (Sponsored by Mavis M. Jarrell) - 24 entries. Any form, except prose poetry, Subject: The joys of American freedom, and/or the costs for our freedom. No line limit.

1st Place	Rita Aiken Moritz	America's Still Beautiful to Me	Pell City, AL
2nd Place	Margaret Rush	The Knock On The Door	Pell City, AL
3rd Place	Janet Anderson	Nine Eleven World View	Huntsville, AL
1st HM	Catherine Moran	That right word	Little Rock, AR
2nd HM	Faye Adams	A Soldier Returns	DeSoto, MO
3rd HM	Barbara Blanks	Cheers to America!	Garland, TX

ASPS's 2015 Fall Contest Winners (Continued):

6. THE "CELEBRATE e. e. cummings" AWARD (Sponsored by Jeanette Willert) - 23 entries.

Form: Free Verse, Any subject, Line limit 4-40 lines.

1st Place	Catherine Moran	in the aura of you	Little Rock, AR
2nd Place	Barbara Blanks	cat egoric	Garland, TX
3rd Place	Janet Anderson	churning the fragments	Huntsville, AL
1st HM	Joanne Ramey Cage	Amadeus	Leeds, AL
2nd HM	Sylvia Williams Dodgen	I Will Wait	Orange Beach, AL
3rd HM	Myra Ward Barra	Hurricane	Pell City, AL
4th HM	Gail Denham	take this path, friend	Sunriver, OR
5th HM	Gail Gehlken	As I grow older	Irvington, AL

7. THE "I CAN DO THIS" AWARD (Sponsored by Precious Prodigal and Harry & Rita Moritz)

*MUST BE A RESIDENT OF ALABAMA AND A MEMBER OF ASPS TO ENTER. - 11 entries.

Form: Poet's Choice, Subject: Have you faced a challenge and overcome it or tried again after failure and succeeded?

Take your best moment, combine it with your best words and write a poem about it. Line limit: 40.

1st Place	Bev Gattis	Cope, Or Conquer	Odenville, AL
2nd Place	Jerri Hardesty	Ceramics Class	Brierfield, AL
3rd Place	Mike Wahl	Of Silver Spoons and Bravado	Athens, AL
1st HM	Janet Anderson	The First Day of School	Huntsville, AL

8. THE "CHARACTER BUILDING" AWARD (Sponsored by Jodi Adamson) - 9 entries.

*MUST BE A PRESENT TO WIN. Any form, Subject: In the spirit of Halloween and storytelling, build a character based on something you own, and write a poem about this person. Remember to include the object you chose. Be prepared, if you win, you will need to become your character. Costumes and props are encouraged. Line limit 40.

1st Place	Joanne Ramey Cage	The Ghost Who Walks	Leeds, AL
2nd Place	Vincent J. Tomeo	Shoeshine Boy 1960	Flushing, NY
3rd Place	Rita Aiken Moritz	Al the Gator	Pell City, AL

9. THE "OWED TO A POET" CONTEST (Pun Intended) (Sponsored by P.T. Paul) 18 entries.

Any form, Subject: What poem/poet sparked the poet in you? Write an apostrophe -- a poem addressing the poet who inspired you -- telling them how their poem affected you the first time you read it, what kind of poet you've become because of it, and how that poem still inspires you. Poem MUST include two lines -- and only two lines -- from that seminal poem, but those two lines may be repeated. Line limit, at least 14, but no more than 40.

1st Place	Barbara Blanks	Ogden Nash -- Nashurally!	Garland, TX
2nd Place	Sylvia Williams Dodgen	Elysian Fields	Orange Beach, AL
3rd Place	Gail Denham	Tied to the Past	Sunriver, OR
1st HM	Rita Aiken Moritz	"Owed" to Emily Dickinson	Pell City, AL
2nd HM	Dalene Stull	To Edna Saint Vincent Millay	Danville, OH
3rd HM	Henry M. Spottswood	An Unfaltering Trust	Cincinnati, OH

10. THE "ITALIAN SONNET" AWARD (Sponsored by Writers' Anonymous) - 3 entries.

*MUST BE A RESIDENT OF ALABAMA AND A MEMBER OF ASPS TO ENTER. Form: Italian Sonnet (must follow sonnet form, use iambic pentameter, and employ traditional Petrarchan Sonnet rhyme scheme.) Subject: Poet's Choice, Line limit: 14.

1st Place	Jerri Hardesty	Beyond the Physical	Brierfield, AL
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The judge awarded no other prizes in this category, as the other entries did not adhere to the Italian Sonnet form.

Alabama State Poetry Society -- Our Officers:

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