



# The Muse Messenger

The Newsletter of the Alabama State Poetry Society

January, 2016

Vol. 47, Nr. 01

---

## Musings from the Editors

The holidays are over, and the New Year has begun. We're expecting 2016 to be the best year ever, and we hope you are too. Whether you are a person who makes "New Year's Resolutions" or not, you are sure to enjoy the guest article by Sandra Soli, "Seven Promises to Keep." It's well thought out and applicable to all of us who love to write.

Sandra also contributed to our "Tips and Tools of the Trade" this month with some good reminders for when we pick up that pen or sit down to that word processor. And while you're sitting there, consider submitting something to the *Muse Messenger* yourself. All the areas where submissions are open are listed in this month's issue.

January can be a time of renewal...and we're hoping one of the things you will renew is your ASPS membership. You will want to renew as early this month as possible since the list of current members along with their national dues is sent to NFSPS at the end of January.

Starting next month, the *Muse Messenger* will only be sent to current members. Also, the online archives at [www.musemessenger.org](http://www.musemessenger.org) will only be available to current members. If you did not renew your membership last year, please do so by the end of January so you won't miss even one month of the *Muse Messenger*.

One of our articles this month is about membership and why it's important. We hope you'll take the time to read it and to consider sponsoring someone who can't afford ASPS membership. We could make a list of people who started out being sponsored and have gone on to be

active, contributing members of groups...ASPS is only one of them.

The other way you can help ASPS is by sponsoring a category in the ASPS Spring Contest. It doesn't have to be a large financial investment, and encouraging people to write is certainly a worthwhile use of your resources. This is the last call for sponsors. If you have questions or comments about any of these things or about anything else in the *Muse Messenger*, please email us. We value your feedback.

---

## Seven Promises To Keep

~ Sandra Soli

I stopped making New Year's resolutions because I always gave up by March. While judging recent contests, I made a list for *you* instead. Read and toss, if you like, the way I do with articles titled "Lose Pounds by Eating Dessert."

What is important: keep the poetry separate from the poet (not easy to do). Take loving care of your artist self, because poet hearts are tender. When it comes to poem revision and manuscript preparation, though, you must be relentless. Every judge or editor hopes that poetry magic will fall into their laps. Who can make that happen? Only you!

**Resolution 1:** *In 2016 I will use a variety of formats instead of centering lines on the page.* Line centering is boring. It's hard on the reader's eyes and even harder for the person laying out a publication page. Editors hate line centering. Why make the sale tougher for yourself?

**Resolution 2:** *In 2016 I will not capitalize the first letter of every line in a poem.*

This bad habit is as tough to break as smoking, but do it. Use capitalization where it naturally occurs. Exceptions? Yes, but exceptions are just that – not the general rule.

**Resolution 3:** *In 2016 I will personally check spelling and grammar throughout the poem.* Computer programs know far less than software people let on. (*Spell checker's will not catch apostrophe's in plural's!*) Poets often type Georgia O'Keeffe's name with only one *f*. No excuse. Whatever your topic, readers must be able to trust that you know your subject well. And how to spell it.

**Resolution 4:** *In 2016 I will follow usage rules with the help of a quality style guide.* Sorry, but editors don't have time to "fix" your work. Present your work as professional because sloppy manuscripts have virtually no chance of acceptance. The good news: Help is nearby!

I prefer the 16th edition of *The Chicago Manual of Style* (expensive and *heavy*, but wonderful). Add to your library Strunk & White's *Elements of Style*, available cheaply in paperback, and an unabridged dictionary. I use *The American Heritage Dictionary*, Fifth Edition. Other resources include *The Grammar Lady* and *Lapsing into a Comma* by Bill Walsh. Helpful free resources abound at your library and on the Web. A Google search will locate them, and many are free.

**Resolution 5:** *In 2016 I will write poems using language of my own century.* Don't use stuff like "Ere you arrived . . . . E'er!"

**Resolution 6:** *In 2016 I will read contest rules before entering and publication guidelines before submitting.* These are available free on websites. Read good journals free online to get a better idea of what might be suitable to send. Look for the poetry editor's name on the masthead of magazines in both print and electronic formats. Subscribe to poetry journals. *Ruminant*, *Stone Voices*, and *Naugatuck River Review* are among my favorites.

**Resolution 7:** *In 2016 I will have the courage to share and submit my work, and I will cheer for other poets, who need nurturing just as I do.* Become familiar with submitting via

**submittable.com**, the method preferred by many journals. Attend poetry readings and book signings. And for this new year that arrived so quickly, may you be showered with Mr. Cummings' *blessings and grassitude*.

-----  
**Sandra Soli** is a poet and writer in Edmond, Oklahoma. Her poems, short fiction, articles, and photography have appeared widely in publications for four decades. Her article on prose poems was featured in *Poet's Market*. She has received many honors and is the author of two award-winning chapbooks.

---

## Why Your ASPS Membership is Important

~ Rita Aiken Moritz

We could debate whether it "takes a village to raise a child." However, you won't convince me that poetry or poets thrive on their own. It just doesn't happen that way. I offer as evidence the 30+ awards the members of Writers Anonymous have brought home in the year since they joined ASPS. And it isn't really about awards...it's about the developed quality that deserves an award. That's only one of the reasons you should renew your ASPS membership. Here are some others:

- **Strophes.** Part of your ASPS membership fee pays for membership in the National Federation of State Poetry Societies. Their quarterly newsletter, *Strophes*, is one of the benefits of that membership, and it is full of valuable information for poets regardless of their preferred style.
- **Discounts.** Your ASPS membership qualifies you for discounts on ASPS bi-annual meetings/workshops, ASPS contest entry fees, and the Mid-Winter Writers' Conference. It doesn't take many of those before your membership pays for itself.
- **The Muse Messenger.** Starting in February, only current ASPS members will receive the *Muse Messenger* or be able to access it online. It will be published monthly this year and will include updates on local events and information on ASPS contests as well as other contests you can enter. It will also include articles by members and "guest" authors and will showcase members and their

accomplishments. In other words, it will be packed with information you won't want to miss.

● **Investments.** As I was compiling a list of state poetry societies, I was saddened to see some of them have ceased to exist. To me, that's a double tragedy...partly because it happened at all but even more because it didn't have to happen. Without the investment of time, talent, and treasure from those of us who love words and the people who write them, that could be the fate of ASPS.

● **Making a Difference.** Did you know ASPS has a scholarship program and your tax-deductible donation can pay the membership fee for someone who cannot afford one? Those students or seniors or struggling single parents might actually do something with the talent they have if you and I reach out to encourage them.

You wouldn't be reading this if you didn't love poetry and writing, and many of you have achieved far greater things than I. But I've seen some successes too, and it's no small thing to be published or to win an award or to feel like my writing has made a difference.

However, I'm convinced that the greatest impact you and I will ever make will not be from the things we write. It will be from the influence we have had in the life of someone else. Being an active member of ASPS can help to make that impact. How?

Renewing your own membership is a start. Then you might want to consider sponsoring someone else's membership. Enter the monthly *Muse Messenger* Contest, offer to write an article for the *Muse Messenger*. In other words, make yourself available to help. Lastly, there will be many opportunities to use, showcase, and share your poetic gift. Check with one of the ASPS officers or email us to ask about Open Mic events, Poetry Slams, "Day of Poetry" events in the schools, and other activities.

ASPS membership dues are still only \$20, and membership goes from January 1-December 31 of each year. Alabama residency is NOT required. To join or renew, write your name, address, phone, and e-mail address and mail with your check to:

Jodi Adamson, Treasurer  
361 Rives Mill Loop  
Deatsville, AL 36022

If you have questions about your membership, sponsoring someone or any other opportunities in this article, you can email Jodi at [adamsjo75@hotmail.com](mailto:adamsjo75@hotmail.com).

---

## Member News

**Jodi Adamson** is asking that members pay their membership dues as soon as possible. A portion of your ASPS dues pays for your membership in NFSPS. Jodi will be sending a list of current members along with their dues to NFSPS at the end of January.

**Jerri Hardesty** is sending out this last call for contest sponsors for the ASPS Spring Contest. If you are willing to sponsor a category in this contest, please let us know as soon as possible. You can email the Contest Chair, Kirk Hardesty, directly at [niteglider11@gmail.com](mailto:niteglider11@gmail.com).

**Harry Moritz** reports that the December Writers Anonymous Christmas party was a huge success with about 30 people in attendance, including several ASPS members. Lots of food, fun and fellowship, and poets shared some great poetry. Put it on your calendar for next year!

**Rita Aiken Moritz** reports that plans are in place for the February 2016 Mid-Winter Writers' Conference. Presenters include Dr. Linda Busby Parker, David Bennett (Editor, *Home Life Magazine*), and our own Dr. Sue Brannan Walker, among many others. Registration will open on January 11. For more information, like us on Facebook or go to [www.mwwconference.com](http://www.mwwconference.com).

**Sue Brannan Walker** reports she has had two poems published in Vol 38.1 — out now — "Holsteins" and "Lest the Light: Mrs. May, Flannery O'Connor, Lupus, and the Greenleaf Bull." Sue also reports that the Alabama Writers' Conclave will be in Birmingham this year. Dates for the AWC are July 15-17.

The Editors of the *Muse Messenger* report that several features in the *Muse Messenger* are open for submissions.

---

## Call for Submissions

What Can I Submit to the *Muse Messenger*?

Our goal as the new Editors of the *Muse Messenger* is to make it a “real” member newsletter. That means we want the content to be focused on, of interest to, and even written by you...the members of ASPS. Here are some of the features that would welcome your submissions:

- **The Monthly Contest.** It’s easy to enter, has no entry fee, and is open to ASPS members only, the only requirements are that the poem be unpublished and not have won a prize in any ASPS contest. While there is no monetary prize, winning poems will be published in the next month’s *Muse Messenger*.

- **Member News.** If you’ve won a contest, had something accepted for publication, hosted a party or done anything else you want other members to know about, let us know. We love hearing about your success and letting others know about it.

- **What’s Happening.** Do you have an event planned? A workshop? A conference? If it has value, share it so other members will know about it.

- **Tips & Tools of the Trade.** What writing prompts work for you? What are some common errors to avoid? Put together three or four tips and send them to us. If we can use them, we’ll credit you.

- **Articles.** We’re always looking for well-written articles about poetry and writing. Articles should be between 300-600 words and should also be crisp, clean copy. Write it, edit it carefully and send it to us.

- **Fillers.** Fillers should be 100-200 words. They can be interesting, informative, or (like the one by Bev Gattis in this issue) just fun.

Submissions for the monthly contest should go in the body of an email or be attached as a Word

document and sent to [contest@musemessenger.org](mailto:contest@musemessenger.org). Put the month and Contest in the subject line. All other submissions should be attached as a Word document and sent by email to [editor@musemessenger.org](mailto:editor@musemessenger.org). Put the feature you are submitting to in the Subject line (i.e. Article, Tips and Tools, etc).

---

## HAVE YOU HEARD ABOUT—

- The writer who wrote a best-seller?  
The only thing missing were best-buyers.
- The customer who bought a book titled, “How to Handle Disappointment?”  
When he got home, all the pages were blank.
- The greatest American novel?  
It’s the one nobody has read, but everyone talks about.
- The bookstore customer who asked where the “self-help” section was located?  
The clerk said, “No way! That would defeat the purpose.”
- The reader who asked the librarian for tips on how to read faster?  
She suggested he first quit coloring the pages.

-----  
Thanks go to Bev Gattis for this list of “Have you Heard About...”

---

## Tips and Tools of the Trade

~ Sandra Soli

- 1) Remember, the “new” rule is ONE space after a period rather than two.
- 2) Usage Rule for using that or who: “Things: that” and “People: who.”
  - Four poets who attended the luncheon won door prizes.
  - The principal of Sara's school was the one who sang for us.
  - David brought a dessert that everyone enjoyed.
- 3) Reading your poem aloud is helpful during the revision process.

---

## What's Happening?

**January 5: 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](mailto:johnpaul@reallifepoets.org).

**January 7: 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, January 7th. For more information, go to: [www.writersanonymous.us](http://www.writersanonymous.us).

**January 9: Art Papers Live** at the Birmingham Museum of Art, 2000 Rev. Abraham Woods Blvd (8th Avenue N) from 11:00-12:00. "What the Body Can Say: A conversation between Natasha Trethewey and Bethany Collins." Admission is free.

**January 15: Bamaslam Montevallo Poetry Slam** is on Friday, January 15th. 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](mailto:Wytrabbit1@aol.com) for more information.

**January 29: Open Mic Event** is on Friday, January 29, at Antebellum Anne's, 1915 Cogswell Ave, Pell City, Alabama. Sign up at 6:15, and readings begin at 6:30. Refreshments provided by Writers Anonymous.

**February 26: Meet & Greet and Round Robin** at the Pell City Library, 1923 1st Avenue N from 6:30 – 8:30. Meet the presenters for the Mid-Winter Writers' Conference and stay for an informal "Round Robin." Refreshments provided by the Pell City Library. Admission is free.

**February 27: Mid-Winter Writers' Conference** on the campus of Seddon Baptist Church, 4205 Cogswell Avenue, Pell City. For more information and to register, go to [www.mwconference.com](http://www.mwconference.com).

**February 29: 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 February 29th. Email Joan Dawson at [jdawson@uab.edu](mailto:jdawson@uab.edu) for more information.

**July 15-17: The Alabama Writers' Conclave** in Birmingham. Details to follow.

---

## Monthly Poetry Contest:

Congratulations to ASPS member **Vincent Tomeo**, of Flushing, New York, who was the winner of the December, 2015 *Muse Messenger* Poetry Contest. His poem, "Poetry Helped Me See," appears below. Thank you to all who entered.

### Poetry Helped Me See

Blind from multiple sclerosis  
Groping like a crab on the bottom of the sea  
Poetry became my vision

Mind a ship of sight  
Entombed eyes like stones weigh heavy  
Mind swaddled in darkness scent sight

Heart my eyes...  
Sound my soul  
Touch delight  
Eyes search words  
Hear words  
Feel words  
Grope for words

See poetry  
-----

The January, 2016 *Muse Messenger* Poetry Contest is:

Topic: "New Beginnings"

Form: **Poet's Choice**

Line Limit: **40**

You can enter this contest by emailing your poem to [contest@musemessenger.org](mailto:contest@musemessenger.org) by January 21st. Either attach it as a Word document, or put it in the body of the email. Your poem must not have been published or have won in any ASPS contest. The winning poem will appear in the February *Muse Messenger*. (Contest judges are qualified poets)

who are not a part of or associated in any way with ASPS.) The guidelines are also online at:  
<http://bit.ly/10FF2PE>

---

### 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> |
|--------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|
| <b>California:</b> | \$35 (Family \$39) | Monthly & 6/30            |

Inet: <http://bit.ly/WBUQGF>  
Facebook: <http://on.fb.me/1PpIqBe>

**Connecticut:** \$30                      Several / Varied  
Inet: <http://www.ctpoetry.net/>  
Facebook: <http://on.fb.me/1j5wN11>

**Florida:**            \$25                      Several / Varied  
Facebook: <http://on.fb.me/1M6uHZ7>

---

### Contests, Contests, Contests! (With Deadlines)

- 1/8—North Carolina:  
<http://bit.ly/1Ji1pvr>
- 1/15—Pennsylvania Poetry Society Annual Contest  
<http://bit.ly/10M1UBH>
- 1/19—Poetry Society of Virginia  
<http://bit.ly/1ku4X23>
- 1/20—Poetry Society of TN (Members Only)  
Submit by January 20th for February  
<http://bit.ly/1M6wZrf>
- 1/31—California: Topic by month and submitted during each month.  
<http://bit.ly/1LEi3zR>
- 1/31—Grayson Press Poetry Chapbook Contest  
<http://bit.ly/1J1RHZg>
- 1/31—Snapshot Press Haiku Calendar Competition  
<http://bit.ly/1Sghi5i>

1/31—Austin International Poetry Festival  
Anthology submissions  
<http://bit.ly/1ZGBiT9>

2/1—Utah State Poetry Society  
<http://bit.ly/1mw9nqs>

2/5—Porter Fleming Literary Competition:  
<http://bit.ly/1kFMcZx>

2/15—Missouri State Poetry Society Winter Contest  
<http://bit.ly/1mspzzH>

2/15—Poetry Society of South Carolina:  
<http://bit.ly/10vzjM6>

2/15—Poetry Society of TX Chapbook Contest  
<http://bit.ly/1n00kyx>

2/20—Poetry Society of TN (Members Only)  
Submit by Feb 20th for March  
<http://bit.ly/1M6wZrf>

2/29—California: Topic by month and submitted during each month.  
<http://bit.ly/1LEi3zR>

2/29—Spirit First Meditation Poetry Contest  
<http://bit.ly/1QZiRI0>

---

### 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>

If you know of publishers or journals that are accepting submissions, please let us know so they can be included in the February *Muse Messenger*.

---

---

## The Alabama State Poetry Society — Our Officers:

|                              |   |  |
|------------------------------|---|--|
| President:                   | Jerri Hardesty<br>1830 Marvel Rd.<br>Brierfield, AL 35035     | 205-665-7904<br><b>WytRabbit1@aol.com</b>          |
| First Vice President:        | Emily Grimes-Henderson<br>5815 Cheryl Dr.<br>Pinson, AL 35126 | 205-587-7696<br><b>janelulu@aol.com</b>            |
| Second Vice President:       | Kirk Hardesty<br>1830 Marvel Rd<br>Brierfield, AL 35035       | 205-665-7904<br><b>niteglider11@gmail.com</b>      |
| Recording Secretary:         | Kimberly Wright<br>203 Camellia Dr.<br>Prattville, AL 36067   | 334-669-6263<br><b>wrightkimberlylou@gmail.com</b> |
| Treasurer & Membership:      | Jodi Adamson<br>361 Rives Mill Loop<br>Deatsville, AL 36022   | <b>adamsjo75@hotmail.com</b>                       |
| Contests:                    | Kirk Hardesty<br>1830 Marvel Rd<br>Brierfield, AL 35035       | 205-665-7904<br><b>niteglider11@gmail.com</b>      |
| Historian:                   | Cleveland Brown<br>2535 County Rd 93<br>Evergreen, AL 36401   | 251-300-0141<br><b>ccbrown45@gmail.com</b>         |
| Parliamentarian:             | Evelyn Hurley<br>P.O. Box 145<br>Gaylesville, AL 35973        | 256-422-3323<br><b>hur1L@tds.net</b>               |
| Immediate<br>Past President: | Barry Marks<br>P.O. Box 11386<br>Birmingham, AL 35202         | 205-251-8303<br><b>barry@leaselawyer.com</b>       |
| Newsletter:                  | Harry & Rita Moritz<br>P.O. Box 763<br>Pell City, AL 35125    | <b>editors@musemessenger.org</b>                   |