



The Muse Messenger

The Newsletter of the Alabama State Poetry Society

August, 2016

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Musings from the Editors

Can you believe summer is almost over? Because of the steamy August weather, it may not seem that way. But parents were buying school supplies for their excited students all week, and school has already started in some Alabama counties.

Last month, we asked for feedback from the members about whether they wanted us to continue creating and sending the *Muse Messenger* monthly or to go back to a quarterly mailing. We were astonished at the responses we received.

The few people who suggested we go back to a quarterly newsletter, without exception, said the only reason for their choice is that they knew what hard work it is. We were touched by the kind words that came from many of you via email or letters. However, the one that finalized our decision came from Bettye Cannizzo. You'll find her letter in this month's *Muse Messenger*.

It's been a busy summer for Alabama poets and writers with many opportunities to learn and to network. It started with the ASPS Spring Meeting at Gulf Shores in May, continued with the Southern Christian Writers' Conference in June, and culminated with The Alabama Writers' Conclave Conference in July. T.K. Thorne has written a brief article about the AWC Conference for this issue of the *Muse Messenger*.

This issue also contains another of Barry Marks's workshops for you to try at home as well as an article by Rita Moritz about how to "literally" kill a poetry society. You will also notice in "What's Happening" that the writers' groups are getting ready for a busy autumn. As proof of that, there are more contests than ever to enter. There is also an article this month by Joan Dawson about the Leeds Area Open Circle Poetry Group.

Based on your feedback and the declining interest in

the *Muse Messenger* monthly contest, we have decided to discontinue it. However, we have replaced it with something that will prove to be just as challenging and fun.

We hope you enjoy this issue and are both inspired and challenged by the articles. We hope even more that you will submit some things to us that we can include in the future. In the meantime, keep writing.

The Daily Workshop

~ Barry Marks

This column will propose "workshops" you can do all by your lonesome, in the privacy of your own home. Most will take no more than an hour, and all can be done daily, weekly or whenever you can...remember that a little self-discipline goes a long way!

Metaphors Be with You

I stole this month's workshop suggestion and the wonderful title from Jerri Hardesty, President of the Alabama State Poetry Society. She proposed a great game that I have modified to create a workshop exercise you can use to breathe a little life into your poetry.

What is the worst thing you can do to a poem? There are a number of good candidates. However, as a judge and sometime editor, I can tell you the deal-killer that causes poems to go to the bottom of the stack without even being read is... clichés.

No kidding. Few things stop a reader in his tracks (yikes!) than stumbling across (!) a familiar and tired old turn of phrase (!), which is familiar as the back of his hand (!). Poetry is like fish. Either it is fresh and new and tasty or.... But you get the point, right? (Couldn't resist that last one)

So here is the exercise and challenge:

Pick a cliché. Anything. Look in your own poetry, if you dare. Grab a newspaper. Think of something or choose from those I have listed below (and above).

Black-hearted
Black as midnight
Broken-hearted
Chicken yellow
Cool breeze
Cool as the other side of the pillow
(Actually, that's a pretty good old saw.)
Cuss like a sailor
Dead as a doornail
Dog-tired
Dog-cuss
Fat as a pig
Fire-engine red
Fresh as a daisy
Old hat
Old saw

Now, create your own alternative phrase, metaphor or simile. Something different that (1) evinces the same attitude or connotation, but (2) is surprising, thought-provoking, worth a chuckle or otherwise...different. Once you do a few, you will find it easier and easier to let loose the reins and get a little crazy.

If you can do it as an exercise, maybe the next time you get to a point in your poetry that something tired as an old shoe (!) comes to mind, you can replace it with something new as next month's Daily Workshop, which I am working on as you read this.

Sisters and Brothers of the Pen

~ T.K Thorne

In the digital age, are writing conferences still relevant? This July marked the 93rd year of the Alabama Writers Conclave. These days, writers can access a lot of material online—even virtual workshops. Was it worthwhile to bring writers together from across the state in person, face to face, for a three-day event?

My answer came from three small personal encounters. The first night in the hospitality suite, I spoke to a woman who was writing a novel based on her journey with her son to their family roots in

Romania. She was looking for ideas about how to structure the story.

I suggested she had a beginning and end, but she still needed a middle section. And I reminded her that, in a novel, she was free to deviate from historical facts and use her imagination to make whatever happen that would forward the plot and propel it toward the ending. The next day, she was beaming. She'd awoken early and written three pages with multiple possibilities propagating as she wrote! I felt as happy and buoyant as she did.

The same night, I spoke to a man who turned out to have a memory that I needed for a non-fiction history I am writing. I have since followed up with the interview he suggested and was able to get some great material I would never have had, but for that chance encounter.

The following day, chatting with a woman in the lobby around the bookstore, I learned she was writing about a horrific local crime that occurred decades earlier. She lamented that she didn't know if the reporter who had written extensively about the story was even still alive. I realized that she must be talking about someone I knew, having been in touch with him for the same history-in-progress. They have since connected.

I have no doubt that my experiences reflected those of others. From the evaluation responses, it *was* valuable for many to actually come together to learn, network, brainstorm, celebrate those who won awards, renew old friendships and make new ones.

One of the great joys of being a writer is the opportunity to help our “sisters and brothers of the pen.” In that, we carry on a tradition begun in Alabama almost a century ago.

Become a member of AWC and stay in the loop for the next writing conference—July 14-16, 2017 in Birmingham, AL. Go to:

<http://alabamawritersconclave.org/membership.html>

The “Literal Death” of a Poetry Society

~ Rita Aiken Moritz

One of the new features in the *Muse Messenger* is the “Highlight on State Poetry Societies.” I intended this month to feature the Washington Poets Association, which was started in 1971. However, I was saddened

to learn from their website that this group was “dissolved in 2013 after 42 years of existence.”

That this should happen is more than sad. . .it’s even more than a great loss. It’s a tragedy. As I thought about how that might have happened, it occurred to me that this could also happen to our beloved ASPS.

And, sadly, we might be the ones who would help it to happen. If you and I have ever wanted to be responsible for the “literal death” of something beautiful, here’s how we can do it:

- **Don’t join.** In the real world, it takes money to make things happen, and that applies to poetry societies. ASPS dues are \$20, and membership goes from January through December. Joining means we’re helping to keep ASPS alive. Heaven forbid!
- **Don’t renew.** Same as above. Some ASPS members only renew their membership every second year. Renewing our membership consistently (and on time) means ASPS will grow and prosper. We wouldn’t want that to happen.
- **Don’t sponsor a contest.** The twice-yearly ASPS contests generate funds and encourage both membership and participation in ASPS. That we have so few categories in those contests is the result of having few sponsors. So don’t be a sponsor, and the dwindling number of contest categories will help bring about the “literal death” of ASPS.
- **Don’t volunteer.** Whatever else you do, don’t volunteer. That would imply commitment, which causes poetry societies to thrive, and we wouldn’t want that to happen. Besides, those half a dozen folks who do all the work love doing it.
- **Don’t go to the meetings and workshops.** The hard work the ASPS officers put into planning those meetings and workshops doesn’t matter. They don’t mind working for months only to have 15-20 people show up.
- **Don’t contribute.** By that, I mean don’t pay the nominal fees to enter the contests, don’t submit to the *Muse Messenger*, and, whatever you do, don’t give feedback or offer suggestions to the hard-working volunteers and officers. They love doing it all themselves and working in the dark.
- **Do criticize.** The officers and volunteers are tough, and they don’t mind if you and I talk ugly about their efforts behind their backs.

● **Do continue to be competitive.** This is especially important if we enter any of the contests. After all, we’re not a team. And the uglier we are when someone else besides us wins, the better people like it.

The Washington Poets Association died, and perhaps some of these very things led to its demise. But it doesn’t have to happen here in Alabama. And it won’t if each of us will join or renew, contribute our time and our talents, and develop a team spirit.

Leeds Area Open Circle Poetry Group

~ Joan Dawson

Sometime around 1995, a few poets met to read at a little bake shop near City Hall in Leeds. The bake shop didn’t last, and the poetry readings moved to the Methodist Church, the library, and in 2000, to a permanent home in the Leeds Theatre and Arts Center. The poetry group is well established now, thanks to charter members Sherry Whisenhunt, Grady Sue Saxon, Cookie Freind, and Joe Whitten.

The Leeds Area Open Circle Poetry Group includes poets, essayists and novelists, visual artists, and “listeners.” We welcome all ages. The host or a member suggests a topic or a literary form, but the poets are free to follow their muse. Participants, sitting in a circle, read one or two poems and invite comments. We discuss the process of writing and how a poem sometimes takes its own path once the writing begins.

Novice poets feel comfortable at our meetings, because everyone responds with constructive and positive feedback. Although some members are award-winning poets and novelists, this is not a critique group. Several years ago, a few members formed a separate critique group that met for a while. Many members participate and volunteer in additional community-based and statewide literary organizations, so there is always news about what’s going on outside of Leeds.

We meet at 7:00 p.m. at the Arts Center on the last Monday of every other month. There are refreshments, exciting poetry, laughter (sometimes tears), and appreciation for each other and for the power of the written word. We welcome poets and

listeners. Email: jdawson@uab.edu to receive our notices.

We enjoy learning from each other, and we depart our meetings knowing that we were in the right place on a particular Monday evening. The next poetry group meeting is September 26, and the quarterly meeting of the Birmingham Arts Journal is October 27. Come to the Leeds Arts Center for both occasions and share your love of poetry!

Why We Should Keep Publications

~ Georgette Perry

I was considering a poem for a contest and wasn't sure whether it was already published. I searched through some old magazines and booklets and found my poem in a small 2005 anthology titled, *Places in Me*.

This was beautifully printed. The cover art by Katherine Stevenson showed a dark-haired woman, face bent as if she's reading an enticing poem. Inside, I found a poem by my friend Nancy Compton Williams and others by ASPS members. Some of those people are no longer with us. Reading their poems brought them close.

The editors of *Places in Me* were our own Jerri and Kirk Hardesty, whom I did not know at that time. Thank you, Jerri and Kirk, for the lovely book and a moving experience.

Thank you, Bettye Cannizzo!

~ The Editors

Last month we asked for feedback from members about whether the *Muse Messenger* should continue monthly or go back to a quarterly issue. Several of you responded, and the vast majority asked that we continue creating a monthly issue. Most who suggested bi-monthly or quarterly issues said they did so because of the work they know is involved.

However, the one response that made the decision for us came from Bettye Cannizzo. Her letter read as follows:

Dear Harry and Rita,

My vote goes to continue issuing *The Muse*

***Messenger* on a monthly basis. You two have done a remarkable job. Thank you!**

Eagerly I look forward for each issue; I save every one for reference as the articles are excellent. The challenges are just that and [I] like them too. I've written six poems in answer to them.

My guess is that your editions would favorably compare to any state's newsletter. As a shut-in, the *Muse Messenger* keeps me in touch with others; such contact means a lot.

**Sincerely,
Bettye Cannizzo**

Her letter was a reminder that the *Muse Messenger* is an important benefit of ASPS membership, but it's also more than that. It's a way of staying connected with other Alabama poets. For some of us, that's priceless. Thank you for that reminder, Bettye. The *Muse Messenger* will continue as a monthly newsletter for the time being.

Having said that, we still need your input. We love the months when we only have to write "Musings," and everything else is written by our members. You can help us keep it a monthly newsletter by sending us your tips, articles, and anything else you think might be a fit for the *Muse Messenger*. If it needs editing, we'll work with you. And your submissions will help us to continue it as a monthly newsletter.

Call for *Muse Messenger* Submissions

What Can I Submit to the *Muse Messenger*?

Our goal as the 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:

- **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.
- **Monthly Challenges.** If you send your challenge to us, we will include it in a future issue and credit you.
- **Fillers.** Fillers should be 100 to 200 words. They can be interesting, informative, or just fun.

All your submissions should be attached as a Word document and sent by email to:

editor@musemessenger.org. Put the feature you are submitting to in the Subject line (i.e. Article, Tips and Tools, etc.). If you wish, you may also send your submissions for any section of the *Muse Messenger* using snail mail to:

Muse Messenger, P.O. Box 763, Pell City, AL 35125.

Member News for August

Ramey Channell received two awards at the Alabama Writers' Conclave Conference. Her poem, "Stopping at the Quaker House on a Stormy Night," won 3rd Place in the poetry contest, and her children's story, "Uncle Bartholomew and the Biscuit Angel," won 2nd Place in the juvenile fiction contest. She is sending a copy of her poem and story to Carol Hull for the *Alalitcom*.

Faye Gaston of Union Springs has one of her poems published in her local weekly newspaper, *The Union Springs Herald* every week.

Mysti S. Milwee's painting, "Movement 1," was published in the newest issue of *The Birmingham Arts Journal*.

Rita Moritz's villanelle, "The Human Race," won 3rd place in Oklahoma's PSO Workshop Contest.

Alina Stefanescu has three poems forthcoming in *Ghost City Review* this month. Also, she will be reading in the "Nitty Gritty Magic City Poetry Reading Series" with poet Amelia Martens at

7:30 p.m. on September 8th at the Desert Island Supply Co. in Birmingham.

Kathleen Thompson held an informal critique session for all genres at the annual meeting of the Alabama Writers' Conclave in Birmingham in July. Her short story "Envenomation" is forthcoming in the imminent anthology, *Belles Letters 2*, from Livingston University.

Sue Walker was recently on a panel on publishing with Liz Reed and Irene Latham at the Alabama Writers Conclave. She has had two poems accepted by *Silver Blade* — "Faltering" and "Cuckoo."

Muse Messenger Monthly Challenges

Because of the feedback we have received from members and because of the few entries, we are discontinuing the *Muse Messenger* Monthly Contest. We will instead issue challenges each month that members can use as writing prompts. The challenges for this month came from Writers Anonymous. They are as follows:

1. **Response Poem.** Poets are to write a response to another poem. For an example, see:

<http://bit.ly/2aH1w45>

2. **Little Sonnet Variation:** So named because it is iambic tetrameter instead of iambic pentameter. Poets should have a change of thought or tone at the Volta (Lines 9-12) and an "aha" ending couplet.

3. Topic: **Not Fitting In**

If you or your group would like to issue a challenge or challenges, please send them to:

editor@musemessenger.org, and we will include them in a future issue of *Muse Messenger* and credit you. You may also mail your challenge to:

Muse Messenger, P.O. Box 763, Pell City, AL 35125.

Muse Messenger Archives

The *Muse Messenger* will only be sent to active members of ASPS. Archived copies of every 2016 *Muse Messenger* can be found online at:

<http://musemessenger.org>. However, you will need a password in order to access that archive. When you go to the website, you will be asked to submit

both a User Name and a Password. They are as follows, and “Case” matters:

User Name = aspsmember
Password = 1Banana2016

This User Name and Password combination will be used by all paid ASPS members during 2016. The User Name and Password combination will change in January, 2017, and will be sent to members when that change is in place.

What’s Happening?

August 2: Gifts of a Wordsmith, a poetry workshop for adults, meets on the first Tuesday of each month from 6:00 to 7:45 p.m. at the downtown Birmingham Public Library. Email Haruyo Miyagawa at: hm@bham.lib.al.us for more information.

August 4: 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, AL. For more information, go to: <http://writersanonymous.us>.

September 1: Writers Anonymous will meet on September 1 at the new Pell City Library, 1000 Bruce Etheredge Parkway, from 6:00-8:00 p.m. **Please Note Change in Time and Location!** For more information, go to: <http://writersanonymous.us>.

September 6: Gifts of a Wordsmith, a poetry workshop for adults, meets on the first Tuesday of each month from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. at the downtown Birmingham Public Library. Email Haruyo Miyagawa at hm@bham.lib.al.us for more information.

September 9: Bamaslam Montevallo Poetry Slam is on Friday, September 9. 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.

September 10: Pensters Writing Group, Univ. of South Alabama, 111 St. James St., Room 11, in Fairhope will have a workshop from 10:00-12:00 titled “Giving Your Novel its Best Start – and its Best Shot” and featuring author, Marilyn Johnston

(C.J. Petterson). For more information, go to: <http://pensterswritinggroup.com/events/>

If you have an event you would like us to add to “What’s Happening,” please send us the details at: editor@musemessenger.org.

Contests, Contests, Contests!

(August/September Contests with Deadlines)

8/15—Arkansas: Poets’ Roundtable of Arkansas Annual Contest:
<http://bit.ly/29tNPZr>

8/15—Poetry Society of TX Annual Contest:
<http://bit.ly/29mik47>

8/15—2016 Hospital Drive Decisions Contest:
<http://bit.ly/2ay1jml>

8/15—Louisiana State Poetry Society Annual Contest:
<http://louisianastatepoetrysociety.org>

8/15—Pockets Devotional Magazine for Kids Annual Fiction Contest:
<http://bit.ly/2aAp1iq>

8/17—Dream Quest One Poetry & Writing Contest:
<http://dreamquestone.com>

8/20—Poetry Society of TN (Members Only) Submit by Aug 20th for September
<http://poetrysocietytn.org>

8/20—Poetry Society of TN 2016 Poetry Festival Contest:
<http://poetrysocietytn.org/2016-poetry-festival>

8/25—Saturday Evening Post Limerick Laughs Contest:
<http://bit.ly/1p3VXfh>

8/31—Diana Woods Memorial Award in Creative Nonfiction:
<http://bit.ly/2aQnTHI>

8/31—Seven Hills Literary, Penumbra Poetry & Haiku Contests:
<https://twa.wildapricot.org/Seven-Hills-Contest>

8/31—WOW! Women On Writing Summer Flash Fiction Contest:
<http://wow-womenonwriting.com/contest.php>

- 9/1—Illinois Helen Schaible International Sonnet Contest:
<http://poetsandpatrons.net>
- 9/1—Illinois Poets and Patrons Chicagoland Contest:
<http://poetsandpatrons.net/contestrules.htm>
- 9/1—Indiana Annual Fall Rendezvous Contest:
<http://isfpc.org/annual-contest.html>
- 9/1—Missouri State Poetry Society Summer Contest:
<http://mostatepoetry.com/summer.html>
- 9/20—Poetry Society of TN (Members Only)
Submit by Sept 20th for October:
<http://poetrysocietytn.org>
- 9/21—Alabama State Poetry Society Fall Contest:
<http://alabamapoets.org>
- 9/30—Connecticut River Review Contest:
<http://ctpoetry.net/contests.html>
- 10/1—(Received by Date) Arizona State Poetry Society:
<http://azpoetry.webs.com>

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>
Virginia:	\$35	1/19
Inet: http://poetrysocietyofvirginia.org		
Facebook: http://facebook.com/PoetryVA		
Wisconsin:	\$30	Varied
Inet: http://wfop.org		
Facebook: https://facebook.com/wfopoets		
Wyoming:	\$20	12/1
Inet: http://wyopoets.org		
Facebook: http://on.fb.me/1hg9fbB		

Publishers and Journals That Are Accepting Submissions

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

The Birmingham Arts Journal:

<http://birminghamartsjournal.com>

Haiku Journal:

<http://bit.ly/22JMYpt>

Kudzu House Quarterly:

<http://kudzuhouse.org>

Mayfly

<http://bit.ly/1Zs4e0w>

Negative Capability Press:

<http://negativecapabilitypress.org>

Penny Magazine:

<http://youfoundpenny.com>

Reader's Digest 100-word True Story:

<http://rd.com/100-word-stories-submissions>

Tell Us a Story: <http://dfwcon.org>

The Poetry Foundation:

<http://poetryfoundation.org>

Be sure to check the website for submission guidelines before submitting to any of these.

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



ALABAMA WRITERS CONCLAVE 2016 CONFERENCE WINNERS

Jim Reed Creative Nonfiction Award Judge: Roy Hoffman

- First Place - Richard Perreault, "Sunshine and Smoke," Bryson City, NC
- Second Place - Dianne C. Teague, "Abandoned," Tuscaloosa, AL
- Third Place - Stephen Edmondson, "A Chance Encounter," Homewood, AL
- Honorable Mentions:
 - Faith Garbin, "In the Dark," Ocean Springs, MS
 - Stephen Edmondson, "The Spilt Milk," Homewood, AL
 - Larry Wilson, "An Unsatisfactory Death," Wetumpka, AL

Alabama Poetry Society – AWC Poetry Judge: Pat Schneider

- First Place - Carol A. Grametbauer, "Shorebirds," Kingston, TN
- Second Place - Jennifer Grant, "Mermaids of Morrison Springs," Gainesville, FL
- Third Place - Ramey Channell, "Stopping at the Quaker House on a Stormy Night," Leeds, AL
- Honorable Mention:
 - Jeff Santosuosso, "Babel," Pensacola, FL

Alabama Flash Fiction Competition Judge: Katy Yocom

- First Place - Beth Hamer Miles, "Autumn Care," Birmingham, AL
- Second Place - Linda Willing, "Mission to Mars," Gulf Shores, AL
- Third Place - Glenda Slater, "Well, If You're Sure the Time's Up," Spanish Fort, AL

Dorothy M. Lobman Novel Award (First Chapter) Judge: Laura McNeill

- First Place - Kathleen Thompson, "Remembering Fire: A Novel," Birmingham, AL
- Second Place - Katie Aiken Ritter, "Viking: The Green Land," Monkton, MD
- Third Place - Bonnie Fay Dunn, "Mary Ann's Dress," Banks, AL

Short Story Judge: Cate McGowan

- First Place - Amy Lampe, "Elderbeest," Decatur, GA
- Second Place - Beth Hamer Miles, "Well Done," Birmingham, AL
- Third Place - Richard Perreault, "Holding Hands With the Clock," Bryson City, NC
- Honorable Mentions:
 - Larry Wilson, "Desert Frost," Wetumpka, AL
 - Larry Williamson, "Final Ride," Tallahassee, AL

Juvenile Fiction Judge: Rae Ann Parker

- First Place - Kathleen Thompson, "Blame It On the Moon," Birmingham, AL
- Second Place - Ramey Channell, "Uncle Bartholomew and the Biscuit Angel," Leeds, AL
- Third Place - Barbara Gold, "The Moonlight Bandit," Stamford, CT