

# *News 'N' Notes*

*February 2025*

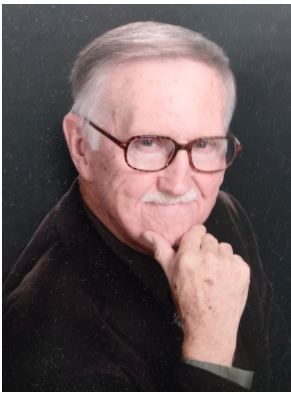
## *Poets' Roundtable of Arkansas*

*Founded February 5, 1931*

*Member of the National Federation of State Poetry Societies, Inc.*

<http://poetsroundtableofarkansas.org>

*Like us on Facebook!*



### *President's Address*

PRA Members:

This will be my last address as President of Poets Roundtable of Arkansas. It has been a privilege to serve in this capacity for the last four years. Scarcely ten years ago I would not have dreamed such a thing possible. My knowledge of PRA, if it existed at all, was very limited. In the summer of 2015, I was handed a clipping from the Searcy Daily Citizen by a friend

listing the writing contests sponsored by the White County Creative Writers group. I entered three poetry contests. In September I learned I had won two third place finishes. That gave me the courage to start attending WCCW meetings. A few months later, a few of us formed a branch of PRA called Gin Creek Poets. That began my association with all the wonderful people of PRA. What a great way to spend one's final years of existence on this earth. It seems I've always been a late bloomer. I was not raised in a church environment so I was an adult before becoming a Christ follower. I was 34 before I got my BBA degree from UALR. My son calls me the Grandma Moses of poetry. If only!

Our membership numbers are down a little from what they were in the past but I am glad to see some of our younger members stepping up and taking over some of the responsibilities of the organization.

**John McPherson**

PRA President

## *Welcome New Members*

**Barry Brown** of Searcy, AR

**Luci Best** of Jacksonville, AR

**Billy Sayles** of Hot Springs Village, AR

**Betty Walker** of Benton, AR

**Denise England** of Fayetteville, AR

## *A Chance to Give Back*

Summer Jackson has set up a GoFund Me page to help cover the storage and moving expenses of **Jo McDougall**, PRA member and Arkansas Poet Laureate Emeritus.

Jackson says, "After the Little Rock tornado of 2023 hit Jo's living facility forcing her to relocate, she faced the monumental challenge of finding a new place to live without her belongings which were sent away to storage. Our beloved poet is now facing another relocation, compounded by mounting expenses and the challenges of rebuilding her life on a fixed income."

If you would like to contribute to the fund, visit <https://shorturl.at/OccjT>.

## *Slate of Officers: Action Required*

At the end of this newsletter, find the PRA ballot and instructions for voting. Please take the time to cast your vote.

## *Congratulations and Newsworthy*

### **November Monthly Contest**

#### **Winners**

Judge: **Dr. Emory Jones**

First Place: **Marie Allison** "Footprints on my Heart"

Second Place: **Jerri Hardesty** "Grandchildren"

Third Place: **Betty Jones Middleton** "A Moment in Time"

First Honorable Mention: **Cathy Moran** "A look at what we pass along"

Second Honorable Mention: **Sara Gipson** "Perseverance"

## **December Monthly Contest**

### **Winners**

Judge: **Ann Carolyn Cates**

First Place: **William Hill** "When Christmas was Christmas"

Second Place: **John McPherson** "We're Having a Cheesy Christmas"

Third Place: **Marie Allison** "Santa's Beach Day"

First Honorable Mention: **Dennis Patton** "Twas the Night"

Second Honorable Mention: **Janice Canerdy** "A Memorable Night Before Christmas"

Third Honorable Mention: **Barbara Mosley** "Christmas Fears"

## **January Monthly Contest Winners**

Judge: **Donna Smith**

First Place: **Sara Gipson** "When John Returned"

Second Place: **John Crawford** "The Tree"

Third Place: **Rick Houston** "Life's Smile"

First Honorable Mention: **Larry Witherspoon** "All Day Long"

Second Honorable Mention: **Marilyn Joyner** "Finding Happiness"

Third Honorable Mention: **Jerri Hardesty** "Kitchen Dancing"

**Rachel Kulp** published a book of her drawings retrieved from fifteen years of drawing covers for her Siloam Springs Writers Gazette. It contains pen and ink drawings along with either a poem or a short devotional thought. "In His Hands," Second Edition is available on her Amazon author page along with some of her other books. **Mark Hudson** got his first accepted poem of the year for 2025. Local Gems put out a call for a book of poems on the theme of the new year. It is called Dawn Horizons. He got a poem accepted called "Babies and Bombs." Hopefully, the poem will create a vision for a more peaceful world.

**John Crawford** won four awards from the Ohio Poetry Society; two awards from the Mississippi Poetry Society, North Branch; two awards from the Illinois State Poetry Society; and one award from the Massachusetts Poetry Society.

**Janice Canerdy** had three poems published in *Spirit Fire Review*, November issue; she won second honorable mention in the PRA November members-only contest; second place, Rhymed Verse or Free Verse, Missouri State Poetry Society Summer contest; third place, Massachusetts State Poetry Society, November Poets Choice Award; One poem, Society of Classical Poets website, December 18, 2024; second honorable mention, PRA December members-only contest; and third place, Mississippi Poetry Society's November members-only contest.

**Fay Guinn** is giving a poetry talk to Writers Ink of Northeast Arkansas on February 15<sup>th</sup>.

**Michael Blanchard** has a new poetry collection, *The Pearl Diver's Daughter & Other Poems*. Check it out here:

<https://www.paypal.com/paypalme/blanchardm>

He wants members to know SLANT will begin accepting submissions to the Spring 2025 issue on February 1. Here is a link to the Submission Guidelines:

[Submission Guidelines – SLANT](#).

**Dennis Patton** received first place for his poem "Noir Movie Star" in Category 12 Triolet Award sponsored by Highland Park Poetry, Illinois State Poetry Society 2024 Contest.

**John McPherson** won first place in the 2024 Illinois State Poetry Society's Formal Verse Award for his poem "On the Death Of A Single Waxwing."

**Dr. Emory D. Jones** had the following publications and honors: "Deep Freeze" was published in the April 2024 issue of *Pennsylvania's Poetic Voices*; "Summer Hummm" was published in the Summer

2024 edition of *The Avocet: A Journal of Nature Poetry*.

## Opportunities

Reverend **Howard Lee Kilby**, President of the Arkansas Haiku Society, announces a haiku contest in Japan that is open to the world, students and adults. There is no fee to enter. This is an annual contest with \$20,000 in prizes. The deadline is February 28, remember that Japan is one day ahead of us. <https://itoen-shinhaiku.jp>  
The website is in Japanese. Click on ENGLISH.

The Lucidity Retreat will be held March 24, 25, 26, 2025, in Eureka Springs, Arkansas. The director is **Nancy LaChance** with Poetry Leader, **Jerri Hardesty**. Deadline for contest poems and critique workshop poems is February 24, 2025. The registration deadline is also February 24, 2025. For complete information and the registration form, please email [lachancenancy@outlook.com](mailto:lachancenancy@outlook.com).

Please help spread the word about the Spring 2025 Annual Poetry Contests for Middle and High School Students and the 2025 Pat Laster Collegiate Poetry Contest. You can find and share information with others here:

<https://poetsroundtableofarkansas.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/spring-2025-student-contests-announcement3.pdf>

<https://poetsroundtableofarkansas.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/pracc2025entryform.pdf>

The NFSPS Contest brochure is in the January 2025 Strophes. You can also find it here: <https://shorturl.at/egrdD> The entry deadline is March 15. NFSPS is transitioning to [nfsp.net](https://nfsp.net).

## Spring Celebration

The Dr. Lily Peter Spring Celebration will be on April 12 at the Parkview Church in Benton, Arkansas. Registration starts at 9:00 a.m. with the program beginning at 9:30 a.m. **Larry Witherspoon** will serve as Spring Celebration Chair. Dr. Jacob Stratman will be our speaker. According to *Plough's* site: "His poems and essays have been published (or are forthcoming) in *The Rumpus*, *Mobius*, *Plough Quarterly*, *The Christian Century*, *Rock & Sling*, *Cave Region Review*, *Nebo*, *Wordgathering*, and *The Lullwater Review*, among others. He teaches in the English department at John Brown University in Siloam Springs, AR." You can read his poetry at <https://www.plough.com/en/authors/s/jacob-stratman>.

Lunch will be a potluck. PRA will provide plates, cups, and other paper goods.

**Christine Henderson** will provide meat.

Look for an email from president, **John McPherson** for specific details.

PRA will donate \$50 to the church.

Members are encouraged to bring food items to donate to their food pantry.

Bring your serious or light verse poems to enter the day of Spring Celebration. Find out more here:

<https://poetsroundtableofarkansas.org/spring-celebration-contests/> or on page 11 of the PRA Yearbook. You must be present to win. Critique poems for Spring Celebration should reach **John McPherson** by February 19. Submit your poem to 111 Jawanda Lane, Searcy, AR 72143. Be sure to indicate that it is a critique poem as he will also be receiving entries for two of the contests.

## Spring Celebration Poetry Contests

The deadline for the Dr. Lily Peter Memorial Award, the Verna Lee Hinegardner Memorial Award, and the Freeda Baker Nichols Memorial Award is **February 28, 2025**. Find complete

information about these contests on page 10 in the PRA Yearbook or

<https://poetsroundtableofarkansas.org/spring-celebration-contests/>.

## Meet New

### PRA Member

### Billy Sayles

My name is Capt'n Billy Sayles. The captain part is from my past. I



skipped charter yachts in the Pacific NW and the Caribbean. Growing up land-locked in Iowa, it was my childhood dream to be a sea captain. Those years gave me plenty to write about. Now that I'm retired. Most folks just call me 'Uncle' Billy these days.

I was introduced to poetry in an embarrassing way. It was eighth grade. Every student had to write a poem (ugh, that girly stuff) and then stand and recite on Friday. I went home, pulled all the dusty books off my parent's shelves, to ah.... get inspired. When it was my turn on Friday, nervously began, "I never thought I'd ever see... a poem as lovely as a tree..."

"Did you write that?" Sister Dolores asked. I couldn't lie to her. She was a nun for Christ's sake.

"No Sister, I did not."

"Billy, you will write, 'I will not plagiarize ever again' one-hundred times in neat cursive and place it on my desk Monday morning."

I never, ever plagiarized again. Never. Never more... quoth the raven:)

Poets who later won my admiration: Edgar Allen Poe, Robert Frost, Paul Simon, Shakespeare, Billy Collins.

As for revisions? Yes. Over and over again. The best tool for this is reading your work to yourself, out loud. Then read it again to



someone else. If they make terrible faces at you, you should start over.  
 I am a member of the Hot Springs Haiku Club, Rotary International, Old Time Fiddlers Association and Five states / South Region Coordinator for the Haiku Society of America. It is through haiku that I have met many wonderful poets. At one of our haiku meetings, I was introduced to **Marie Allison** who invited me to join the Poets' Roundtable of Arkansas. Thank you Marie.  
 A little about Haiku. What a challenge each poem becomes. Compressing your wonderful long story into three lines, seventeen syllables (more or less) takes some practice. Here's one I wrote recently:

no rain  
 just wait gasps dry stream  
 I'll sing in spring

The Haiku club of Hot Springs is associated with the Haiku Society of America. We meet at from 2-4 pm on the first Friday of each month at the Garland Co. Library, 1427 Malvern Ave, Hot Springs, AR.

### *January Business Meeting*

The PRA Board met on January 18, 2025. Spring Celebration details were determined. (See article above.) **Suzanne Rhodes** volunteered to find a speaker for the Spring Celebration program.

**John McPherson** volunteered to be Poetry Day Contest Chair. Poetry Day Chair, date, and venue are still to be determined.

Poetry Day contests' criteria were determined as follows: O'Neal Memorial Award—subject: any; form: any; line limit: 32; O'Neal Humor Award—subject: south; form: any; line limit: 24. Sybil Nash Abrams Award—subject: Gangsters and Outlaws in Arkansas; form: any; line limit: 60-100.

**John Crawford** will be the Sybil Nash Abrams Contest Chair.

Two motions were passed regarding banking. They were: *A motion that after PRA Spring Celebration in April, the treasurer have approval to have **Dennis Patton** and **John McPherson** removed as signatories on the two First Financial checking accounts and the two Schwab money market accounts and to add the new president on all accounts.*

*A motion that the treasurer be authorized to close the two checking accounts at First Financial and open two new accounts at a new bank of the treasurer's choice if it is determined by the treasurer to be in the best interest of PRA.*

Poetry Day Contest changes were suggested and approved and will be reflected in the 2025 yearbook:

*6. All poems must be original, unpublished work of the poet. First place winning poems MAY NOT BE RESUBMITTED to the same contest for which they won that award. PRA defines publication as having an ISBN or ISSN.*

### *2025 Poetry Day Contest*

#### *Sponsorship Form*

Are you interested in sponsoring one of the Poetry Day contests? If so, visit <https://poetsroundtableofarkansas.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/2025-pd-sponsorship-form.pdf> to get the form.

A minimum of \$30.00 is required to sponsor a contest, and the first place winnings must be no less than \$25.00. PRA encourages higher level awards, similar to other states, to promote contest participation. If you have questions contact PRA President **John McPherson** at: [mcpherson8391@gmail.com](mailto:mcpherson8391@gmail.com) Complete the form and return it with your payment by the deadline to assure that your contest is listed in the Poetry Day Contest Brochure posted in March on PRA's website. The sponsorship form and payment are due **February 28, 2025**.

## *Poetry for You*

Noir Movie Star  
by **Dennis Patton**

An ashen moon and faded star  
are hard to see in waning light.  
The graying light in her boudoir,  
an ashen moon and faded star,  
will hide the ever-aging scar.  
Her life is lived on reels at night.  
An ashen moon and faded star  
are hard to see in waning light.

On the Porch  
By **Karen Moulton**

Wood against wood,  
friction creaks  
with each touch.  
Keeping time  
with her rocking,  
she tats a doily  
for her daughter,  
alabaster like  
her unblemished skin.  
A cool breeze  
ruffles the hair  
on her neck  
causing her to  
hug the shawl  
tighter to her chest.  
Sunrise yarns  
of amethyst and azure  
entwined,  
offer up warmth  
and comfort,  
as does the jasmine tea  
she pours from  
her grandmother's  
porcelain pot.  
When will spring  
release its fragrance?  
On the porch  
the gardenia  
patiently waits.

*INJURED ANGEL*  
by **Emory Jones**

An angel got too close  
To the edge of Heaven  
And tumbled over the edge.

She crashed to Earth  
And knocked herself  
Unconscious.

A little white boy  
And a little black boy  
Found her.

They made a stretcher out of two poles  
And their coats.

They set her on the stretcher  
And carried her home  
To take care of her  
Until she could  
Fly up to Heaven  
Again.

## *Book Recommendations and a Review*

**Larry Witherspoon** just finished reading  
*Dewdrops On A Lotus Leaf - Zen Poems of  
Ryokan* - Translated by John Stevens.  
Beautifully written. Very inspiring.

**Fay Guinn** recommends *On Poetry and  
Craft*, third edition, by Theodore Roethke,  
Pulitzer Prize 1954. This is considered the  
Bible of poetry writing. The other is *Raft*,  
latest publication by Ted Kooser, US Poet  
Laureate and Pulitzer Prize winner.

**Michael Blanchard's** book, *The Pearl  
Diver's Daughter & Other Poems* was  
reviewed by the *Southern Literary Review*.  
Thank you **Michael Blanchard** for  
permission to share it in the News 'N'  
Notes.

You can read the review here:

<https://southernlitreview.com/reviews/the->

### *Arkansas Poet Laureate Series*

Since 1923 when the position was established, the Arkansas Poet Laureate was appointed by the legislature and it was a lifetime appointment. So when Rosa Zagnoni Marinoni died in 1970, then Governor Winthrop Rockefeller named Ercil Brown interim laureate because the legislature was not in session. When they were back in session, they were given three nominees for the position: Anna Nash Yarbrough, Lily Peter, and Ercil Brown. But instead of selecting one, the legislature decided to pass Act 90 in 1971 which assigned the responsibility of appointing a poet laureate to the governor. Act 90 reads, "The person designated or appointed by the Governor as Poet Laureate of the State of Arkansas shall be a person whose name was selected from a list of names submitted to the Governor upon recommendation of a committee consisting of the principal heads of the English departments of all state-supported universities and colleges." The position remained a lifetime appointment. By 1971, a new governor had been elected. Governor Dale Bumpers announced Lily Peter as Arkansas Poet Laureate in October of 1971.

Lily Peter was born in 1891 in Phillips



County. She was the first of ten children, (five did not survive), so when her father died from an accident on the farm, she became responsible for the financial care of her

family. Her education was informal until she moved to Ohio to live with relatives and attend high school where she graduated valedictorian. She became a teacher and though she struggled on that salary, she

continued managing the farm. She was successful enough to buy another farm with her brother. After his death, she carried on with teaching and taking care of what was now thousands of acres of cultivated land. She dabbled in organic farming and was a leader in conservation and environmental issues. Peter studied English at Columbia and Vanderbilt universities and violin at Julliard. She was considered a philanthropist and a financial supporter of the arts, financing the college education of students and donating money to build the Lily Peter Auditorium in Helena, Arkansas. She received national notice on ABC News and in *Look* magazine for her promotion of fine arts in the state. She was a writer all of her life with much of it about the Arkansas Delta. Her publications include: *The Green Linen of Summer*, *The Great Riding*, *The Story of De Soto in America*, *In the Beginning: Myths of the Western World*, and *The Sea Dream of the Mississippi*. Lily Peter died in 1991 and is buried in Turner Cemetery southwest of Helena. You can find many of her papers and taped interviews in the archives at the University of Central Arkansas in Conway. For more on her life and for some of her poetry, visit <https://tapsandratamacues.com/poet-in-mind/poet-in-mind-lily-peter/>

#### *The Green Linen of Summer*

By Lily Peter

I wrap my thoughts in the green linen of  
summer  
Against the terror of the dragon wind,  
And pray that the linen may not too soon be  
thread-/  
bare,  
Its texture thinned.

For by and by I know will come November  
With its wintry blast;  
And what is there to keep body and soul

from/  
freezing,  
If the linen do not last?



*Suzanne Underwood*  
*Rhodes*  
*Poet Laureate of*  
*Arkansas*

Hello, Poet Friends.  
I like to commemorate  
new arrivals in my nature

journal: the juncos (Oct. 30 2024), the first green tips of crocuses poking through (second week of January), and today, January 28, the coo-coo of a mourning dove calling for a mate (you know what they say about the early bird!). And new arrivals come with poetry too: PRA member **LaDeana Mullinex**'s forthcoming chapbook *Small Comforts* to be released this spring by Kelsay Books, my daughter Emily Robyn Clark's chapbook *Morning Comes Roaring Down the Mountain* with a fall publication date from Finishing Line Press, and the many poems among our members that have won contests or found homes in journals and books. Everything that lands is announcing, "I'm here!"

One of my greatest rewards as our state poet laureate and as a teacher of poetry is seeing its impact on others. To share one example, I have a very smart friend who crunches numbers in her career and goes on walks during her lunch break. She read poems from my book *Flying Yellow* and told me that on a recent walk among the trees lining the buildings of her workplace she noticed the smell of pine needles for the first time and said it was my poems that awakened this in her. I was completely blown away by her words. She confirmed my belief that poetry is a gift to be given, like a dandelion puff caught by wind that sends the seeds sailing.

Many good things have been happening since my last column. I had wonderful experiences of teaching middle schoolers at



the New School and high school juniors who study with Classical

Conversations, both groups in Fayetteville. I was thrilled to be named the Individual Artist of the year in the Governors Arts Awards for 2025 sponsored by the Arkansas Arts Council and will be honored on March 7 in Little Rock. Some of you have bought tickets to attend this special event, and I'm SO excited and grateful that you're coming! Here's more information about the luncheon. You are all invited.

<https://www.arkansasheritage.com/events/2025/03/07/default-calendar/save-the-date-for-the-2025-governor's-arts-awards!>

Another very recent blessing is that I've been awarded a \$5,000 scholarship to attend the [C. S. Lewis Summer Institute](#) in Belfast, Ireland in July! My ancestral homeland!

And the theme is "Home!" I've never been to the UK before and this will be a wonderful opportunity to learn and grow intellectually and spiritually, form new friendships, and experience all sorts of new things to inspire my poetry. *Moladh duit a Dhia* is Gaelic for "Praise to you, oh God." I'll be going with my friend Margret Walker, whom some of you know for her fine poetry.

Other news: in February I'll be reading with Jake Stratman, John Brown University poet and professor, at the Faulkner County Library in Conway (Feb. 16), then going to Harding University Feb. 17-19 at the invitation of **Paulette Guerin Bane** to teach



her creative writing class and give a reading later that afternoon or evening. I'll also have a chance to meet with students at the local high school for a poetry workshop. I'm involved in a collaborative project with **Michael Blanchard** called ArtVerse with the Conway League of Artists where artists choose from among three of our poems to inspire paintings and which will culminate in an awards luncheon.

I have recent work in *Southern Voices: Fifty Contemporary Voices* (Lamar University Press), *Slant: A Journal of Poetry*, and *Valley Voices* (Mississippi Valley State University) and am continuing to work on my third full collection.

May this New Year be fruitful and wordful for every one of you who loves and appreciates poetry. I look forward to seeing you at Spring Celebration in April!

**Suzanne Underwood Rhodes**

### *From the Editor*

I am making more of an effort to write poetry this year. I wouldn't call it a resolution exactly. I just know that writing poetry is part of who I am. Since retiring, I've found new hobbies and interests that give my creativity an outlet. Maybe that has softened the urgency to write poems although I'm inspired daily and nightly by my surroundings here in the Ozarks.

To "kickstart" this effort, I signed up for a talk by Naomi Shihab Nye called "When a Poem Becomes a True Friend." It was sponsored by 27 Powers with Laurie Wagner. It was 90 minutes of inspiration listening to Naomi read poems that she has loved and read over and over again since she was in her teens. One was by W.S. Merwin; another by William Stafford; there was one by Lucille Clifton. She also gave us a

minute or two to respond to prompts inspired by the poems she read. She described her daily writing practice and talked about how she handwrites on different size paper, free writing with no editor. Only later when she types her thoughts does she edit and revise.

I recently registered for Hellbender Gathering of Poets' event called "The First Answer Is Love: A Valentine to the Earth" with guest Tierra Curry from the Center for Biological Diversity. It offers in-person and Zoom participation making it easy for me to attend. I imagine it will blend my Master Naturalist interests and my poetry writing. I hope to attend my first NFSPS National Convention in Albuquerque this July where Naomi Shihab Nye will be the keynote speaker. Other ways I'm encouraging my poetry writing are: entering PRA's monthly and special events' contests; reconnecting with a friend in San Francisco who I've never met in person, but with whom I share drafts of my poetry. (We "met" years ago in a Kim Addonizio online workshop.); making sure I'm reading *Rattle* and the stacks of poetry books, some by PRA members. You can find a list of PRA members' books here:

<https://poetsroundtableofarkansas.org/resources/pramembers-poetry-books-for-sale/>

You've written a book and it's not on this list? Email me the title, author, and a link where it can be purchased and I'll post it to the PRA website.

Thank you to those who contributed poems, book reviews and recommendations.

I hope to see many of you at this year's Dr. Lily Peter Spring Celebration in Benton on April 12.

Sincerely,  
**Karen Moulton**, Editor

### Vote for new PRA officers by 2-28-25:

The following members have been nominated to serve as PRA officers for the next two fiscal years from July 1, 2025, to June 30, 2027. Please put a check mark beside each nominee for whom you wish to vote or write in your nomination/vote. Mail your completed ballot to Nominating Committee Chair, **John McPherson** at 111 Jawanda Lane, Searcy, AR 72143. Or you may email yes or no to [mcperson8391@gmail.com](mailto:mcperson8391@gmail.com) by February 28, 2025. Election results will be posted in the May newsletter. New officers will be announced and installed at PRA's Spring Celebration on April 12 in Benton, Arkansas. Our thanks to **John McPherson** and his team for conducting the nomination process.

		Write-in nominations/votes
_____ President	Christine Henderson	_____
_____ Vice President	Fay Guinn	_____
_____ Secretary	Marie Allison	_____
_____ Treasurer	Frieda Patton	_____
_____ Counselor	Dennis Patton	_____
_____ Parliamentarian	Suzanne Rhodes	_____
_____ Historian	Renee Ramsey	_____
_____ Member at large	Larry Witherspoon	_____
_____ Member at large	Rick Houston	_____
_____ Member at large	John McPherson	_____
_____ Member at large		_____