

# News 'N' Notes

November 2025

## Poets' Roundtable of Arkansas

Founded February 5, 1931

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

<http://poetsroundtableofarkansas.org>

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Hello again, to all members. Thank you for making Poetry Day such a huge success. Despite the impending bad weather, many of you braved the trip and we really appreciated it.



Let's talk about ideas for our writing. My ideas for messages to you have flown out of my head, much like ideas for poems that I say I'll remember. I made notes on some of them, but who knows where I saved them. Are you like this, too? I am really thankful to whoever decided to put that little 'notes' app on cell phones, because mine is loaded with things to remember.

Under the note labeled PROMPTS are the words Banana Leaves. Huh? I remember watching a movie and someone said something profound on the significance of them, but later I had to look it up to remind myself. Under ODD THINGS, I have a note about Rising Sun Missionary Baptist Church being in the town of Sundown, AR, and also a note about a church being severely damaged in a tornado – do they claim it as an act of god with the insurance company? Arkansas is full of odd and interesting names, places, people and just plain unusual things and I make notes on weekend road trips. They are often useful for breaking writers' block.

I'm also inspired by other people's writing. Listening to other poets read their works,

participating in critique sessions, and I admit I peeked at some of the entries the past few years when I was Contest Chair. Most of the time it was the title that caught my eye, or a word or two that jumped out at me.

There is such a variety of topics and opinions and random thoughts represented in those poems. So, I'm wondering how do you all keep up with your ideas? Do you use your phone, keep a notebook, or just hope you remember them later? We all have our own processes, as well as specific things we watch for.

Talking about using other works for inspiration brings me to another question. I have written spoofs of other poems, which by nature are part of another writer's work. But should I be wary of writing something that another poem made me think of? If a line reminds me of something I heard or saw somewhere, am I obligated to toss that thought aside? If a title takes me to a thought different from the original poem, can I write about that without guilt? And, one last question, what about titles?

Personally, I would attempt a variance, but realistically, there are many poems out there with the same title – how do you avoid that?

**"Creativity is seeing what everyone else has seen, and thinking what no one else has thought." — Albert Einstein.**

Thanks for being with us –

**Christine Henderson**

**President, PRA**

## *Welcome New Members*

**Brian Lucas**

## *Congratulations and Newsworthy*

### **August Monthly Contest Winners**

Judge: **John McPherson**

First Place: **Janet Ryan** "Social-lies-ing - and the words not spoken"

Second Place: **Janice Canerdy** "Kermit the Frog"

Third Place: **Christine Henderson** "I'm Still Here"

First Honorable Mention: **Marie Allison** "Hungry Wolf"

Second Honorable Mention: **John Crawford** "Penelope's Pea"

Third Honorable Mention: **Jerri Hardesty** "I, Owl"

**John W. Crawford** received an honorable mention from the California State Poetry Contest (Annual) for "It Had to Be" in the Free Verse category; third place in the Peninsula Poets of Michigan, for "Ode to Spam". (Annual). in the Humor category; first place from the Arizona State Poetry Society's Member Contest Category 4 for those earlier winners in other categories, August, "What a Thing of Beauty," and from the Massachusetts State Poetry Society, Annual Poetry Day Contest, second place, for "Education through Life," second place, for "Mrs. Flaherty's Room," third place, for "Autumn Joy," and third place, for "A Late Blessing."

**Michael Blanchard's** poems "Plowing at Sunrise" and "Inheritance" are in *MockingHeart Review*; "The Theory of Everything" is in *Stone Poetry Quarterly*; and "The Things of This World" is in *Streetlight Magazine*. Look for his forthcoming book in early 2026.

**Karen Moulton's** poem, "Forging a Knife" will be in the Fall issue of *SLANT*.

## *2025 Poetry Day Contest Winners*

A complete list of winners can be found on the PRA website.

<https://poetsroundtableofarkansas.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/2025-poetry-day-contest-winners-pdf.pdf>

### **Sybil Nash Abrams Award Winners**



**Fay Guinn** won first place for "River Rat" (Helen Ruth Spence, 1912-1934)

**Larry Witherspoon** won second place for "Stones A Rolling"

**Dennis Patton** won third place for "Gun Smoke on the Ouachita"

**Karen Moulton** won first honorable mention for "A Gangster's Paradise"

**Elizabeth Dail** won second honorable mention for "Unsettled Dust: Frank James" (not pictured)

**Cathy Moran** won third honorable mention for A nod to the gangsters who visited"

## *PRA's Facebook Page*

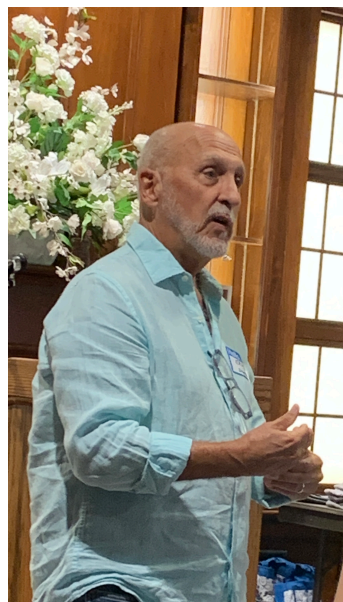
Do you or your chapter have news you'd like to share? I am happy to post it on the Facebook page as well as include it in this newsletter. Maybe you are giving a reading? Have a new book coming out? Give me a shout and I will spread the word.

## Poetry Day Highlights

(Thanks to **Larry Witherspoon** for some of these photos.)



From top left to bottom right: **Michael Blanchard** Poetry Day Chair; Arkansas Poet Laureate **Suzanne Rhodes** speaking with **Paulette Bane**; **Fay Guinn**, Sybil Nash Abrams Contest Winner with speaker, Eric Paul Shaffer; **Karen Moulton** receives Merit Award from President **Christine Henderson**; **Frieda Patton** speaking with **Elizabeth Dail** during lunch; Poetry Day Contest Chair **John McPherson** announcing winners



## Getting to Know Eric Paul Shaffer PART 11

*Do you have a community of writers where you share your work and receive feedback?*

I'm always pestering friends to read,

comment on, question, make suggestions, or listen to some recent composition. These networks change with the days and years. Currently, amidst grueling revisions, I am sharing my Young Adult novel with my pals Sara Backer, Thomas Iannucci, and Jordan Jones, who read and make actual marks on the text, all at different stages of review. My wife Veronica, who loves this book and asked me to finish when I was ready to abandon the novel, has me read the story aloud to her after every revision. She catches nearly every change every time. For the first time, I also have other readers who asked to see the (mostly finished) novel and are reading, I assume and hope, with pleasure: my sisters Lisa and Leslie, my nieces Sheila and Victoria, all at different stages of review. I collect their comments whenever they make any. My sister Lisa is great with continuity issues and discerning and assembling even the smallest of plot details. Also, of the above folks, there is nothing better than having people who *want* to read your work. I've long said and stand by the statement that the only real reward of writing is the writing. Just the writing. *Only* the writing. Everything else is, to steal a term and idea from Raymond Carver, and to make good on my solemn promise to him



and his poem, is *gravy* (see his poem of the same title). Publishing is gravy. Being read is gravy. Finding readers, getting reader responses, awards, academic and other positions, recognition, prizes, awards, reviews, interviews (like this one), and speaking engagements is gravy. All of it.

***Do you compose on a computer or do you write in notebooks? Anything of this nature I'd love to know.***

These days, I compose mainly on the computer, whether the material is poetry, fiction, or non-fiction. I do that for a number of reasons. First, I think faster than I can write; heck, I think faster than I can type, so I pen the words only when I must. Only with poems, I sometimes take advantage of the dictation feature of the software now, letting the tongue shape the words and ideas as poetry is meant to do. Second, I absolutely despise transcribing my own work. I mean, I already wrote this, and now, I have to type this? Third, computers make use of "the round file, the 'Delete' key, and the trash can" effortlessly, and nothing makes writing easier than an empty desk.

***I know your dissertation topic was on the beat poet Lew Welch. Are there other poets who you credit as influencing your poetry?***

Every poem I ever read influenced me. Many are the times I have heard students and fellow poets say, "I never read other poets. I don't want to be influenced." Well, ya ain't got a choice on *that*. The way to deal with influence is to read *everything*, to increase the amount of poetry knowledge and literary experience to a point where all influence mixes thoroughly into the medium within which we work. I love when, of one of my poems, someone says, "This reminds me of X." I am immediately respectful of one who reads and admits reading work by other poets. Then, I am glad to hear that the echoes of great works can still be heard in any lines of mine.

***What writers/poets do you enjoy reading?***

I suppose I should say I enjoy reading all writers and poets, but that is not true, unless you include shouting curses and throwing bad books across the room as a type of enjoyment. Many are the makers of poems whose works I have "vehemently" rejected. I'd name some here, but I have learned that many people take my utterly personal tastes personally. Yikes.

Any writers I've named in this interview are among those I enjoy reading, along with the following (in no order at all, from the top of my head, and only (mostly) ones whose names are bigger than we are): Lew Welch, William Carlos Williams, Gary Snyder, Naomi Shihab Nye, José Alcantara, Matt Daly, Diane Suess, Dorianne Laux, Heather McHugh, Walt Whitman, Philip Larkin, Raymond Carver, Tess Gallagher, Joyce Sutphen, Jack Spicer, Diane diPrima, Lenore Kandel, Jordan Jones, Robert Cooperman, Michael Blanchard, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Edwin Arlington Robinson, W.H. Auden, W.B. Yeats, William Wordsworth, William Blake, Sir John Suckling, John Donne, Robert Herrick, Robert Browning, Maya Angelou, Emily Dickinson, e.e. cummings, Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot, Robinson Jeffers, Lucille Clifton, Stanislaw Baranczak, Wislawa Szymborska, Jorge Luis Borges, Ursula LeGuin, Anna Akhmatova, Stephen Crane, Philip Whalen, James Taylor III, John R. Kain, Rita Dove, Jim Harrison, Ted Coover, Joy Harjo, Sharon Olds, Mary Oliver, Langston Hughes, Paul Dunbar, Alice Walker, Matthew Arnold, Thomas Hardy, John Dryden, Albert Saijo. Some missing here were overlooked, accidentally or purposely. And, of course, a long list is required under these circumstances. Sorry.

***Do you have a sure-fire revision strategy you can share with our members?***

I suggest the same strategy developed in one of my creative writing classes. I remember



one student's frustrated response to my assignment to revise another poem assignment yet another time: "What's revision anyway?" growled he. (See how easy overlooking the basics is? Such makes every student a teacher and every teacher a student.)

Nobody wanted anything complex or confusing; everybody wanted a clear, quality-based standard.

The class and I developed a short definition: "Revision means making every sentence better."

Every.

Sentence.

Better.

Revisions improved immediately. I still apply this insight daily.

***How did you meet Michael Blanchard?***

Ooh, a hard question! Soon after Michael accepted the editorship of *Slant: A Journal of Poetry*, I made a submission, and in the way of submission letters, I recalled my long history of publication with the magazine, even once being the writer to whom an issue was dedicated, and with his next e-mail, Michael asked me for more details, and that began a rapid exchange of long, detailed e-mails that I found invigorating and fun. We have exchanged books (and his writing is excellent, too) and opinions and stories for years now, and I am a better person for all that. Our interchanges led to an invitation (since I would be on the mainland anyway) to visit classes and give a public reading at the University of Central Arkansas in Conway with Michael as my companion, and man, I have never had a better time. As you might expect, invitation to travel to a place to do lit work are rare, and I am still glad and honored, and soon, at his urging and the Poets' Roundtable of Arkansas' kind invitation, I will return for Poetry Day in October. I am eager and excited for that evening and for meeting everyone. On that date, you and I and Michael will have a big

blast, deep conversations, excellent food, and a wonderful time spent in good company. I am also honored now to serve as one of the editorial staff of *Slant*, a poetry magazine that has been excellent for a score of years under the editorships of Dr. James Fowler and Dr. Sonya Fritz and now with Michael at the helm.

***What trends have you seen in poetry since you began writing?***

Oh, now you're trying to get me in trouble.

Fortunately, I can intellectualize the response. There is a long, broad streak of self-examination in the tradition of American poetry (and literature). Walt Whitman's single book *Song of Myself* is an excellent exemplar and sets an exceedingly high standard. Emily Dickinson's work has that impulse and motive as well. From there, work that we often identify as "regional" or "confessional" adds to the stream, and the flowering of the Beat and San Francisco Renaissance demonstrates the same consistent and persistent movement.

Always, then, in American poetry, the gravity of the black hole of egocentricity and personal circumstance can overwhelm for readers the broader relevance in poems that drop down that lightless well. To use the vaguest of terms, the best poems balance the personal and the universal, allowing readers, in every sense, to "see what the writer means" because of the use of familiar, common images, format, and language, and erring on the side of the universal always makes poems more accessible for all readers. Of course, writers of poems can do whatever the poem demands and their tastes dictate, but I did mention that I have been known to pitch books at walls in the past. Guess why?

In my darker or brighter moments, I assign the more self-absorbed writers of lines meant as poetry to the Navel Academy. Yes, *navel*, as in the hole in the middle of you that once directly connected you to mother,

but now provides a too-convenient entry point for writers to disappear completely into themselves never to be seen again, but unfortunately, still too often to be heard from. So that's a negative one.

The virtualization of books, the closing of bookstores, the death of browsing, the stranglehold of the five major publishers on the unrelentingly commercial enterprise of the web, the increasing political rejections of voices not saying what one wants to hear: all of these are also bad.

On the bright side, greater access to publication in every way means that I have read poems by writers I would never have seen under the circumstances under which I was raised and educated. Translations help. Presentation of a diversity of voices helps. The internet can (?) help.

***Someone recently said to me that they didn't think young people were writing poetry anymore. How might you respond to that statement?***

As a seventy-year-old, I am amused to report that the youngest people I know are now in their thirties and forties. One of the reasons I adored teaching English at community college was interacting in a real way with teenagers and twenty-year-olds. And yes, as an antique myself, I lament what is lost, but what is lost is lost. That is just the long way around to say that young people are still definitely writing poems, at least in my classes they were. But there are so many other ways for poems to emerge these days, and I am not likely to understand or even recognize many though like anyone whose vision dims, I sense the light. I live on an island created by fire within a planet that through millions of years drove molten rock upward for five miles through the sea and two more miles into the air, and even now, on a regular basis, I can watch the fresh fountaining of raw rock burning to reach the sky. So what do I know? Writing and speaking go on, and the world moves on.

***I understand you are finishing up your tenth book of poetry, Second Nature. How would you describe your poetry to someone who hasn't read it?***

Good one. I have a number of aims in my poetry.

My first and primary aim is accuracy. Every statement I make about the world, historical, scientific, literary, social, political, economic must be accurate to our current and consensual human understanding. That is non-negotiable. My use of language, and I mean English, the only language I speak, will conform to verifiable conventions, unless challenging the conventions is the point of the work. I report all of life as the events appeared and included me as accurately as I can.

I want my work to be accessible. To that end, for the critics and well-read, my poems demonstrate a thorough, even deep, knowledge of literary and some world traditions and the lines I write both celebrate and challenge much of those. The language, topics, and expressions I employ must be clear. My poems delight in the American vernacular (our contemporary, daily vivid word use), word play of every sort, and the use of as many elements of poetry and every type of figurative language as I can put into words, lines, and books. As Hans Gruber once said, "The benefits of a classical education." Anyone should find an easy way into any of my poems.

I want my work to entertain, to explore, to instruct, to discover, and to those ends, I look to the most common in the most unusual perspective and to the most unusual in the most unusual perspective. Emerson said, and I agree, "Wisdom is finding the miraculous in the common." I attempt to do that. I am also convinced that work starts close and expands to the horizon, and that is how I try to build poems. Check my lines to see how I'm doing.

Some critic defined literature as “notable utterances.” I agree. I want the poems I write to address the significant in a manner so significant and beautiful that the poems are carried away by the original reader and shared with others. I want to say what’s worth saying to those who will want to repeat the words.

You get to be the judge of how (un)successful I am in achieving my aims, but at least, I have some. :)

***BONUS QUESTION (Asked of Eric by Eric): What question do you want to ask yourself based on this interview?***

I would ask myself, “Has any new writing directly resulted from this interview?” And I would answer, “Yes!”

As a result of the original interview questions above, particularly the one concerning collecting lines and regular writing times, I mentioned my daily use of a kitchen timer. Because of that, within the following couple of days, I took the timer in hand and really examined that little machine. I was astounded to see a small, significant detail that I had overlooked for ten or fifteen years, yes, *years*, right there, staring me in the face from the face of the timer. That one little insight catalyzed thoughts and images that became a poem I titled “Everything I Ever Needed to Know I Learned from My Kitchen Timer.” Thank you!

***Please add any other information you’d like the members of the PRA to know about you and/or your work.***

What a kind question. Thank you. I am glad to be asked, especially since this is one of the first questions I ever answered in that long, wild, reckless ride someone might call my career.

These are lines from my poem “Song of the RattleSnake”:

“My works are the skins I shed/ to renew myself--/ left for the hands of the fortunate/

as a sign of where I’ve been,/ not where I’ve gone./ Hold them gently for their power.”



***Poet  
Laureate  
Series  
Peggy  
Caudle  
Vining***

After Verna Lee Hinegardner stepped down from the position in 2003, Governor Mike Huckabee appointed Peggy Caudle Vining of Little Rock to be poet laureate. She was born in Greenfield, Tennessee and moved to Arkansas in 1953. She received her elementary certificate from Union University in Jackson, Tennessee. She married her husband, Don, a World War II Navy veteran in 1948. They had five children. She attended night school at what is now University of Arkansas, Little Rock to complete a BSE and an MSE. For twenty-one years, she was Instructor and Director of the UALR Children’s Center having earned a Master’s Degree in Early Childhood Education. She retired in 1993. She became a member of the PRA in 1963 and served as its president three different terms. She was director of Ozark Creative Writers Conference and the Arkansas Writers Conference, served as state President of Arkansas Penwomen and Arkansas Songwriters Association, and was a member of Fiction Writers of Central Arkansas. Vining received a number of awards, including the Sybil Nash Abrams Award (1981) for “Arkansas, The Wonder State”, a seven-sonnet sequence poem (she revised and renamed it “Arkansas, The Natural State”); the poem also was awarded a citation from the state legislature ([HCR 1038](#)). Vining edited *Bible-Based Poetry*,



published by the Adams Press, for the Poets' Roundtable of Arkansas in 1979. In 2008, Vining was cited for and received a lifetime achievement award from the Governor's Arts Awards Council. A twenty-seven year cancer survivor, she was honored with a "Point of Light Award" from President Bush for her volunteer work with Central Arkansas Radiation Therapy Institute (CARTI). Late in life, she was compiling a collection of her published works entitled *Tethered to the Moment*. Vining died on November 26, 2017. You can read "Arkansas, the Natural State" here: <https://lrculturevulture.com/2015/04/12/poetry-month-peggy-vining-and-arkansas-the-natural-state/>

### *A Poem for You*

Dancing Autumn: An Etheree  
by **Dr. Emory D. Jones**

Leaves,  
Scarlet  
And yellow  
And near purple  
In autumn flurry  
Spin like helicopters  
Twirl through the streaking sunlight  
Pirouette like ballerinas  
On Mother Nature's beautiful stage—  
A final performance before winter.

### *Collegiate and Student Contests*

The information for all of these contests can be found on the PRA website. Please share with colleagues, grandkids, and anyone else you think might be interested. We'd love to have robust participation. Questions? **Lisa Lindsey** is the Youth Chair and **Karen Moulton** is the Collegiate Chair. Thank you for your help in disseminating this info.

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



'Oh, the Places  
You'll Go!'  
Every year  
about this time,  
I pull Keats's  
splendid ode,  
"To Autumn,"  
from my  
bookshelf, and  
read its ripened,

redolent words to celebrate "the season of mists and mellow fruitfulness" that we have just entered here in Arkansas. I invite you to read and relish it too, though it is bittersweet when I consider that the frost predicted for tonight will finish off my last rosebud.

As the Christmas season approaches, I want to invite you to a poetry reading I'm giving with Jake Stratman, a marvelous poet who is a professor and dean at John Brown University. This will be at the Siloam Springs library on Saturday, Dec. 6 from 2-3:30. It would be lovely to see you there, and you can have cookies too!

Good things have come my way since the August newsletter. I gave a poetry workshop in Bentonville to three combined Classical Conversations groups grades 9-12

(<https://classicalconversations.com/>). One of the activities was a postcard poem with the prompt, My Favorite (or Worst) Theme Park Ride. Everything had to be fitted on a 3x5 index card. Then they read their poems aloud inspiring much laughter and a few groans. I also gave a poetry workshop on revision at the Fayetteville library in October as part of their annual TrueLit festival. My Zoom poetry workshop at the Muse Writers Center has resumed for the fall semester, and we have a full class of wonderful returning poets, including PRA member Denise England.

Other good things: I enjoyed attending Poetry Day at UCA and seeing so many of you. Eric Shaffer gave an excellent presentation covering the three Cs of poetry: “Concept, Content, and Craft” (to which **Dennis Patton** added “Conversation”).

Eric’s style is interactive and comfortable, so he inspired much conversation about the poems under consideration.

My poem “Blue Heron” was selected by Mark Burrows, editor of *Spiritus*, for a Pushcart prize, and it appears in the journal’s November issue. “Brown Recluse” is featured in the current issue of *Slant* (thank you, editor **Michael Blanchard**), and “Signs,” a poem about my Siamese cat (actually my daughter’s that I’ve been keeping for well over a year, so I call him sort of mine) was published in the *Bellevue Literary Review*’s special Animalia edition. Samurai is also the subject of “Simply Miraculous” which occupies a page in the *Christian Century*, a magazine available online and in print.

It is hard to fathom that next month, on December 31, my four years of serving as the Arkansas Poet Laureate will come to a close. They have been some of the richest, most joyful and exploratory years of my life as I’ve gotten to travel throughout our state as an ambassador for the art I love most, poetry. Oh, the places I’ve gone and the people I’ve met! – first graders playing the “Silly Simile” game at Joshua Academy in Van Buren; **Michael Blanchard**, who invited me to read my poems at UCA as the first guest in his newly-launched Visiting Poets series—and the student who spoke to me afterward to say that my poem “The Way My Grandmother Peeled a Potato” touched her because in it she saw her own late grandmother; the sweet smile on Pansy June’s face at the Butterfield Trail Village memory care center when we brought “Poetry on Purpose” to the residents and Pansy June tapped out the rhythm of the

poems we read in call-and-response fashion (the “we” being myself and devoted friends LaDeana, Denise, Margret, and Toni, all poets, all volunteers); the young, eager poets who write out of the blue asking me to comment on their poems; Micah, one of the formerly incarcerated residents of Magdalene Serenity House, who said writing poetry in my class allowed her to see “what [she] is capable of” as she “developed words and new meanings” and her eyes and ears were opened “to the ways words sound”(from our Ozarks at Large conversation on KUAF with Kyle Kellams); the friend who said she started noticing and appreciating the smell of pine needles and the songs of birds because she felt my influence; the nice audiences who laughed at my limericks about funny names of Arkansas towns—well, this is but a small survey of the heart of the heartland, Arkansas—the creative, friendly, wise and wonderful people who have blessed my life immeasurably and in lasting, even transformative ways, having helped me walk through the grief of losing my beloved husband, Wayne, only six months after Gov. Hutchinson had appointed me as poet laureate.

The other thing important to say is that besides the people here, the land itself—mountains, trees, rivers, caves, and crystals—and the wild creatures who inhabit it (and if you’ve read my poems you know they are filled with fur and feathers, claws, stripes, hoots and howls)—have made me feel at home. It hasn’t always been that way in the fourteen different states I’ve lived in, but now, seven years after moving to the Natural State, I’m home.

I want to say thank you to **Frieda Patton** for nominating me to be our poet laureate, and to the Lord for allowing me such a great honor. Thank you, PRA friends and fellow poets, for your support and encouragement.

To the incoming PL, who will be appointed in January, I offer this passage from T. S. Eliot's "Little Gidding":

For last year's words belong to last  
year's language  
And next year's words await another  
voice.

And these words too, from Dr. Seuss:  
Congratulations!  
Today is your day.  
You're off to Great Places!  
You're off and away!

As ever,  
**Suzanne**

### *From the Editor*

If you were at Poetry Day, I'm sure you enjoyed the participatory nature of speaker Eric Paul Shaffer's presentation. Discussing poetry is a great way to spend time.

It is also an opportunity to talk with friends about what is happening in their lives and with their poetry. I recently married my long-time partner, Ken Forman. We were visiting a dear friend and the lady who introduced us to each other in Surry, Maine. She and her husband used to live in Arkansas but moved to Maine a couple of years ago. This was our first time visiting them.



Just before that visit at the end of September, I attended my 50<sup>th</sup> high school reunion in West Virginia during the Buckwheat Festival. The Buckwheat Festival has been happening in Kingwood, West Virginia for over 80 years. I saw about 40 of my 109 fellow graduates. It was great fun.

I do want to share with you the many online opportunities to hone your craft: River Heron Review, Sarah Lawrence College and their SLC Writing Institute, the Hellbender Gathering of Poets, 27 Powers Team, Fine Arts Work Center, Two Sylvias and the Poets Corner; individual poets like Ellen Bass, Danusha Lameris, Rick Barot, Kelly Grace Thomas, Kim Addonizio, James Crews, all offer some way to learn and develop your skills. The various methods are: interviews and discussions with poets, webinars, workshops, and classes. Some are ongoing; some are one day events. Over the years, I have participated in all of these. I'm currently enrolled in six—one will be happening in December; one in January; but I'm participating in four right now.

There are also free places to learn like Rattle magazine's Rattlecast which is a podcast/YouTube program. Rattle also has a couple of other programs that analyze poems. Rattle invites poets to send poems to their weekly Poets Respond, their monthly prompts, and their monthly ekphrastic challenge. Let's not forget our own organization which has monthly contests, Spring Celebration and Poetry Day contests as well as dynamite speakers at both big PRA events in April and October.

Remember being a member of PRA also makes you a member of NFSPS which makes you eligible to enter those states' contests. You likely have heard of Duotrope and Submittable that have scads of journals listed who are looking for poems.

I was so impressed when Eric Paul Shaffer told me he spends seven hours every Saturday submitting his work to various journals and that at any one time, he has a hundred poems awaiting acceptance. That is a level of dedication I can only aspire to. How about you?

Sincerely,  
**Karen Moulton**