News 'N' Notes

November 2026

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, everybody!
Well, you made it through the first ¾ of the year, and now you are in the home stretch albeit with some stressful things ahead. My end-of-year stressors have finally reduced by at least half. Having retired a few months ago, I find being able to visit other groups, attend workshops and readings without worrying about making it back to the office, and being able to work at my own pace is wonderful!

Two readings and meetings I attended, as well as conversations with other poets, have helped expand my way of looking at things. As Henry David Thoreau wrote "It's not what you look at that matters. It's what you see." Everyone views the same world differently, so our perspective is varied. A couple poets at the Conway reading shared what brought them to draft certain poems. One was a newspaper article and the poet explained how and why it touched him. One poet spoke of a legendary woman who could be viewed as both a heroine and a monster, and explored the points of view. With ekphrastic poetry, you behold a piece of art. Some may write a description. Others tune in to how that art makes them feel, or what it makes them think of. No two pieces on the same subject will ever be the same.

Sometimes it's not easy. I am writing this from the lodge at Lake DeGray, and the view out the window is amazing but a blank slate. Like a photo on a postcard, there is no story. Yet when I let my eyes and mind focus, I see specifics. The stones and rotting branches on the exposed shoreline, where the water is lower than it has been for decades. The clichéd reflection of the full moon across the water, dreamy and expectant. The small black deer that dart in and out of the trees and step down to that shoreline for a drink. The waterfowl feeding on the algae in the near-stagnant water. The groundskeepers diligently moving water sprinklers and tending the landscape. Now I will probably spend the rest of my time here writing.

The point of all this, I guess, is that generally people aren't aware of their surroundings. If they notice at all, they gaze and think "this is pretty… that is interesting" without exploring that thought, and go on about their day. Your creative minds are not ordinary. You see beyond what you look at and use your words to reveal a unique vision. Your poems, essays, and stories build a world that is unseen until you expose it. Show an alternate or unrealized life. Help adjust expectations. Even ignite protests! You are a necessary part of our communities.

Keep it up. You do good work.

"A rock pile ceases to be a rockpile the moment a single man contemplates it, bearing within him the image of a cathedral." – Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

Christine Henderson

PRA President

Welcome New Member

Jami Myerpeter of Hot Springs, Arkansas

Congratulations and Newsworthy

August Monthly Contest Winners
Judge: **John McPherson**
First Place: **Dennis Patton** "Impossible as it Seems"
Second Place: **Cathy Moran** "Connecting Strings of Knowledge"
Third Place: **Jerri Hardesty** "Partnership"
First Honorable Mention: **Marie Allison** "Sabotage"
Second Honorable Mention: **Patricia Laster** "Le Litterateur's Jardin"
Third Honorable Mention: **Sara Gipson** "Medical Appointments"

September Monthly Contest Winners
Judge: **Charles Templeton**
First Place: **Dennis Patton** "The Door of August"
Second Place: **Gail Denham** "Judd"
Third Place: **Sara Gipson** "Threshold"
First Honorable Mention: **Karen Moulton** "Semantics"
Second Honorable Mention: **Pat Durmon** "Before You Cross the Threshold"
Third Honorable Mention: **Elizabeth Dail** "The Turn Around"

In September, **Alyssa Darby** published a poem-turned-children's-book called "Greeting Autumn." It is based on a poem that won local Arkansas and even national awards a few years ago. She touched it up to fix some flaws, then hand-illustrated it. It's available online and can be found at aliceadarebea.com/books. She also posted a read along video for it. (Alice Adare Bea is one of Alyssa's pen names.)

John W. (Doc) Crawford served as "Featured Poet" at Wednesday Night Poetry(WNP) in Hot Springs on September 2nd, his 90th birthday. WNP has never missed a Wednesday night open mic night since its initial night February 1, 1989. He is a charter participant. WNP continued during 2020-2021 virtually with the leadership of Kai Coggin. Crawford read several poems from his five published volumes. His current plan is having a volume titled *SWAN SONG* featuring a number of his favorite winning poems. In addition, he won first place from the Massachusetts State Poetry Society's annual contest for "To Dena, on her 56th Birthday;" he won first place for "What a Thing of Beauty," second place for "My By-Way: The Road Less Traveled," and honorable mention for "Mrs. Flaherty's Room" in Arizona State Poetry Society annual contests; first place from NFSPS for a prayer poem, "Unity in our Dreams," read before the Friday luncheon at the July convention; won honorable mention from Mississippi Poetry Society's annual contest for "My Bear," a sonnet; published "On Angel Wings" in Hot Springs' *The Sentinel-Record* Poetry Corner, on October 3rd; published "Always a Friend" in Hot Springs *The Sentinel-Record* Poetry Corner on September 19th; third place in the Tim J. Smith Memorial Contest, for "Angels from My Past"; second honorable mention in the L.C. Bridges Memorial Contest, for "The Wedding at Cana" in the PRA's Poetry Day Contests.

Gail Denham had her poem "A Peace Prize" placed in *Sunflower Rising Peace Anthology*; "Boys & Their Critters" placed in Mississippi Anthology; first in theme contest with "Chicken Feud"; a poem used in FSPA Anthology; PRA monthly contest win with "Judd"; third place in Massachusetts contest with "Lift It Up"; ASPS contest monthly: two second places and one first with "Clara Mae."

Samantha Wilson's book, *Other Ways to Die* was published October 1st. You can find the link to purchase it here:

https://bookshop.org/p/books/other-ways-to-die-samantha-wilson/0ec4228bd79dd59f

Teresa H. Klepac was a featured author at Spoken Poetry and Prose on August 27, 2026, held at Café Berlin and on September 24 read two poems at open mic at Spoken, in Columbia, MO. She also published a non-fiction story in *Pictura Journal* titled "The Coffee Cup in Cedar City." (These intervals last on-line for only a short while.) She also attended the Missouri State Poetry Convention in Lebanon, MO, October 2-3, representing The Merry Bombadils Chapter of MSPS. She is currently working on her first poetry book, titled *Skipping Stones*. Teresa is a member of the Columbia Chapter of the Missouri Writers Guild and Poetry After Dark.

Denise England's poem "Sans les Baigneuses" is in the current issue of *The Orchards Poetry Journal*; her poem "Bordeaux in Winter" appeared in their previous issue; *Spiritus* by John Hopkins University Press published "When God Answered Hannah" in their new volume; "Canada Geese," "Crown of Thorns," and "Hot Tub Mythology" appeared in the May issue of *Cantos*; "Abstract Artist" appeared in the Spring 2026 40th anniversary edition of *SLANT: A Journal of Poetry*; her poem "Persephone Waking" is in *The Metaphor Tree: An Ekphrastic Poetry Anthology* which is available from Amazon; England will be a panelist at the Windhover Writers' Festival, February 18-19, at the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor in Belton, Texas; Her forthcoming full-length collection, *Gilded Windows*, is expected late winter or early spring of 2027 from Kelsay Books.

Karen Moulton's poems "You Make Me Want to Eat" and "Proof" were published in *The Reprise*, Savor Issue in September; "Kaleidoscope" and "Lines Written While Throwing Out Old Photos" were published in Issue 6 of *The Marbled Sigh*; "The Green Parrot Bar" is upcoming in the Fall 2026 Issue of *SLANT*: *A Journal of Poetry*; "A Daughter Remembers" is upcoming in *Shared Grief Journal*; five poems after Max Ernst will be published in *The Ekphrastic Review* on November 28, 2026.

Debra Dail's poem, "A Reminder" won Best of Show in the Baxter County Fair. This is the third year one of her poems has won Best of Show. (See poem below.)

A Reminder
By **Debra Dail**

She danced her fingers upon the keys.
Her ebony and ivory of ballet.
As melody skips across the room
time drifts years ago and far away.
Daydreaming of a man she once met
tucked away in a quiet café.
Stepping out from the rain, she was
on that blustery day in May.
She sat in that corner seat
with her parcels secured nearby.
Noticing first his eyes, she did
knowing a love without reply.
He followed her to world and home
and recalling best of life as we do
he lit a light into her loneliness.
His heart, she knew, was true.
As this harmony sailed upward
she remembers that night in May.
But he had to leave next morning
for his ship harbored at bay.
He died at sea not long after.
She felt so weathered and worn.
Compensation was a blue-eyed reminder
for his child from her was born.
Never again would she see him.
But remembers of that day
stepping out from the rain, she was
on that blustery day in May.

Batesville Poetry Slam November 6

Samantha Wilson is hosting a Poetry Slam in Batesville on Friday, November 6, 2026, at Polk and Paddle Beer Garden beginning

at 7:00 p.m. It costs $10.00 to compete. They will take ten poets and the winner will receive the pot. If you are interested in competing, email her at sammymercedezwrites@gmail.com
The event is free for audience members to come and enjoy...may be 'adult content.'

Poetry@thePublic Features PRA Board Member Michelle Stoll



Michelle Stoll and Acie Clark were featured readers as part of the Poetry @the Public Series at the Faulkner County Library in Conway Sunday, October 11th. (Photo by **Christine Henderson**)
Guest emcee for the November 8 event will be **Paulette Guerin** with Nick Boone of Searcy and Angie Macri of Hot Springs reading poetry. For more about these events, see the PRA Facebook page.

Rhyming Tool Added to Website

For those of you looking for rhymes for your poems, please note that RhymeHamster has been added to the links under Resources on the PRA Website. When you click on the tool's link, you'll be able to read why the creator of this rhyming dictionary thinks it is unique and of more use to you than most rhyming dictionaries.

Leaders Needed

Note from President, Christine Henderson - Positions Open with PRA
All PRA Officers
All officers' positions are open for nomination. Current officers may/may not decide to be available for re-election. The nominating committee will be reaching out to determine interest by members for holding PRA offices for the 2027-2028 fiscal year. If you are interested in serving, contact **John McPherson**. PRA has not had an elected treasurer since June 2025. Treasurer could be divided into two responsibilities - Poetry Day accounts and Spring Celebration/General Funds Accounts. I have a detailed list of responsibilities if you have interest, and I will have the nominating committee reach out to you after Poetry Day.
Poetry Day Contest Chair for 2027
John McPherson has indicated he does not wish to hold this position for 2027. It's a detailed position, and could be split among two people. Ask me for a detailed description.
Pat Laster Collegiate Contest Chair 2027
This contest is funded through a generous donation, but is in danger of being cancelled for lack of member support. **Karen Moulton** has been chair for several years and will aid in the transition. Ask Karen for details.
Sponsorship Administrator - This is a much needed NEW POSITION. Administrator needed to gather sponsorships for Poetry Day and Monthly Contests and develop contest lists. This could be split into two separate positions. Answers to the President and/or Treasurer. (President has been fulfilling these duties.) Ask for details on one or both.

NFSPS Contests for Students

Manningham Student Poetry Contest Grades 6-8 and 9-12 is open for submissions through Submittable. **The contest closes on November 15, 2026.** For details: https://nfsps.net/manningham-student-poetry-contest
2027 College Undergraduate Poetry Competition (CUP) historically is open for submissions December 1st. Two winners will be chosen: one receiving the Edna Meudt Memorial Award; the other receiving the

Florence Kahn Memorial Award. Keep checking nfsps.net for updated information.

Poetry Day Highlights



Speaker, Tori Sharpe, Associate Professor of English at Arkansas Tech University, presented an "Introduction to Meter" to the members in attendance at Poetry Day.



PRA Secretary, **Marie Allison**, receiving the PRA Merit Award from President, **Christine Henderson**



Sybil Nash Abrams Award winners from left to right: First Place: **Stacey Bowers**, Second Place: **Dennis Patton**, Third Place: **Laura Bridges**, First Honorable Mention: **Diane Stefan** (not in attendance), Second Honorable Mention: **Larry Witherspoon**, Third Honorable Mention: **Karen Moulton**
To see the complete Poetry Day Contest Winners' List, visit https://poetsroundtableofarkansas.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/10/2026-winners-list2.pdf

Getting to Know PRA President, Christine Henderson



How did poetry enter your life?
I think I was born into it. My dad was a lover of books and poems, and as an adult, when I was visiting, he would spring a line of poetry on me and expect me to know the next. We always discussed poems and books. After I got married I got away from it, and at 45, when newly divorced, started writing.

Describe your writing process.
Hmm…as Lewis Carroll's King of Hearts said – "Begin at the beginning and go on till you come to the end. Then stop." Seriously – I do not journal, but use my phone to make notes. I am not structured - I write when I have the time, between work and chores. A poem simply starts with me writing down what I want to say, then seeing how it fits into a poetic structure. Sometimes it rhymes, sometimes not. I just go where it leads. Often the end result is not what I started out to do at all, so then there's another poem to write!
Where do you find poetic inspiration? Do you have a muse?
If I have a muse, she is fickle and does not stay with me often. Maybe she prefers someone with more talent. I note names of places, things that catch my eye, parts of conversations, lines from movies – anything that grabs my attention as something to explore further. So I have lots of 'prompts' when I need them, and maybe all that is my muse at work, calling my attention to often overlooked thoughts.
What is a revision strategy you find effective and that you are willing to share?
Throw out the unnecessary and work the rest into a proper order. Try to avoid redundancy in word and thought. When you think it's clean and done, put it down, and read it again the next day.
Name a poet or a few poets you really like and/or who have inspired you over time.
Since I grew up with my dad's poets, I tend toward the poets of his generation - Frost (My favorite poem is "Birches."), Sandburg, Kipling, and others. I always had a fondness for odd poems by Lewis Carroll. ("The Walrus and the Carpenter" was the first poem I ever memorized fully.) Skipping about 30 years doing other things, I missed a lot, so I always listen to who others like and check them out – new or old. I didn't discover Langston Hughes until a couple years before he died, and feel like I really missed out. I think I have all his books now. I have known of William Carlos Wiliams, but recently got a few books to really study his life and works. It's a continuous process.
What have you read recently that got your attention? (Can be a book of poetry but doesn't have to be.)
I just finished *Theo of Golden*. I did not care for the book, but I think it's one of those that people love or hate. The read was not a waste, because it did give me some thoughtful moments about society, so that may work into poems later this year.
How did you get involved with the PRA? What would you say to poets thinking about joining the PRA?
I had friends who belonged to PRA and they would talk about it from time to time, but **Dennis Patton** and Jim Barton approached us at White County Creative Writers and encouraged our members to form a branch – so we did. Gin Creek has been going ever since – I don't remember the year it started, but it's been 10 or 12. PRA is a great way to get your work noticed, to share it, and actually do things with it. It also gives you access to the national organization and organizations from other states. If you start with the poet, work up to national level, it's one great big Poetry Pyramid. Members should also realize that for these things to work, people have to JOIN, not just belong to, the organization, (remember the JFK quotation? "Ask not…etc."). In order for all the events to be available, people have to cooperate with each other and keep the behind-the-scenes things running.
Now that you've retired, what are you most looking forward to doing?
Actually, the retirement question is what a lot of people ask. For the first few months, it seems like I've only been able to catch up with things that I've been putting off. I'm looking forward to doing more of what I enjoy – writing and traveling – and

exploring a few items that I've always wondered about but not had the time. We've talked about combining travel with volunteering for the programs that relocate adoptable and foster-able pets to other parts of the country.

What is a question you wish people would ask you?

And there are no questions I can think of, because I talk so much, people already know more about me than they really want to know. Thanks for asking, though!

In a Grotto

Sunbeams
peek through the leaves;
reach eagerly to touch
the mossy ground beneath my feet
and play.

From the Editor

My husband brought my winter clothes up from the basement so it is official: fall is here! I asked him to help me carry the totes because my knees are cracking and locking and at least one of them is going to be replaced soon. But in the meantime, I need warmer wear because I am heading to the Poconos in Pennsylvania in early November to attend a poetry retreat at Boyd's Mills (of *Highlights* magazine) sponsored by the *River Heron Review*. I will be there for five days and think I will learn much from the sessions and from the other 11 participants. I haven't done anything like this since I attended LaRomita in Italy with Kim Addonizio in 2012 and 2014. Even though I'm retired, it is challenging to find dedicated writing time. I was born in West Virginia so this place will very much be like where I grew up and since fall is my favorite season—well I think the whole experience is going to be grand.

If you haven't visited *River Heron Review*'s website, I encourage you to visit it. They offer online classes all year long. This is the place where I discovered Barbara Krasner who introduced me to ekphrastic poetry. I'm hooked now. Writing to art released something in me, a type of creative freedom, I had not experienced with written prompts.

On a different note, my older sister died in August. I flew to Los Angeles and was with her in what turned out to be her final three weeks of life. What began as a gall bladder issue soon escalated into many other problems including necrotizing pancreatitis. Watching her systems fail reminded me in a stark way about my habits and my health. I must strive to do better.

I recently finished a book of poetry by Jillian Stacia called *Set the Bone*. You can always tell when I like a poet because of all the dogeared pages! This one has plenty. I also finished Margaret Atwood's memoir *Book of Lives*. It is close to 700 pages. I will follow that one up with her large book of collected poems, *Paper Boat*. Most people know her from *The Handmaid's Tale* and *The Testaments* made popular by the two TV series, but Atwood started her writing career by writing poetry. One of my favorite poems of hers is "This is a Photograph of Me." https://poets.org/poem/photograph-me It has a surreal quality that is missing from most of my poetry, although I've been able to inject more surrealism into my ekphrastic poems.

Don't forget to send me your news as you receive it. I'll keep it in a folder for the next newsletter.

Sincerely,
Karen Moulton