

SPARE MULE



Missouri State Poetry Society Newsletter
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Strophes, the national newsletter is available online at <http://www.nfsps.com/> Click Strophes online.



ATTENTION MSPS BOARD MEMBERS

Our spring board meeting is scheduled for Saturday May 7th at the First Baptist Church in Rolla. The church is located on 801 North Cedar Street in Rolla MO.

We will be discussing the convention and new officers. Michelle will be moving up to president and we will need a new vice president and perhaps some other officers will want to stem down.

After the meeting we will go out for lunch at one of the local restaurants.

On a personal note, I became the pastor of Calvary Baptist church in September of 2010. Since I am the only staff member I don't have much free time to write or anything else.

Billy Adams



CHAPTER REPORTS:

Chapter report for the **Poets and Friends**

The Poets and Friends of Springfield is working to increase membership which has sagged over the past few years.

Our Poetry in the Park was scheduled for April 17th at the Grants Beach Park between 1 and 6 p.m. We hope others from the nearby chapters will come to join us that day. April is National Poetry Month.

Due to the yearly scheduling of Poetry in the Park we have cancelled the regularly scheduled (3rd Monday evening) April meeting or more appropriately combined the two. Any business action needed at that time will be very brief.
Don DePriest, President, P&F

Chapter report for the **Crawford County Bombadils**

Crawford County Bombadils took a sabbatical after hosting the Poetry Convention in [September](#).

Now that the new year has come and the shock of it has subsided, we are gearing up again for another great season of writing and workshops. Our membership, which held steady at seven for some time, is now up to nine and hopefully we will see that continue to grow. Though we only meet in person when we are all in town at the same time, we are starting to enjoy email workshops shared by our chapter president. These are simple exercises and our results can be shared in email if we choose. The hope is that by receiving these on occasion, we will all be able to avoid falling into a dry season as we will be steadily practicing our craft all year. Perhaps one of these writing exercises will lead to our next entry into GRIST?!

Chapter report for the **HOWELL COUNTY BARDS**

The Bards will be giving/sponsoring a poetry reading on April 8th at the “*À La Carte Cafe.*” I and possibly other members of our chapter will also be reading at an annual event held at Three Rivers College in Poplar Bluff, MO, for Poetry Month. Gordon Johnston head librarian, and member of our chapter will be moderating the event.

Our chapter has also been working on preparations for the MSPS convention in September. We have made arrangements with the West Plains Library for the use of their community room. The room is ideal for our purpose, with a private entrance and there is plenty of parking space. We are in the process of shoring up agreements with the motels we will recommend, and have made arrangements for the meal/lunch to be catered as well.

Dale Ernst, President, HOWELL COUNTY BARDS



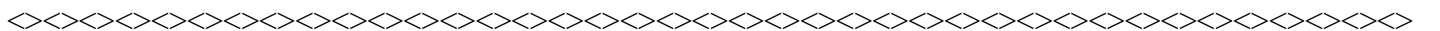
ANNOUNCEMENT:

Poetry in the Park, Springfield, MO

Celebrate National Poetry Month and Spring with the Poets of Friends of Springfield's "Poetry in the Park" on Sunday, April 17th, at Grants Beach Park in Springfield, MO, from 1200 to 500 PM. The park is located on Grant Street just south of Division St.

The celebration is "bring a best dish and favorite poetry" to share with all!! Everyone welcome.

Bring a dessert to share and let the kids run off all that candy at the playground!! We hope to see everyone there on Sunday afternoon!



2011 CONVENTION UPDADE

It's not too early to be making plans to attend the MSPS State Convention! The Convention will be hosted by the Howell County Bards this year on Friday, September 23rd and Saturday, September 24th in West Plains, Missouri. Some plans for the Convention are finalized, some are tentative, and some are still in the works, but what we have so far promises to provide poetry enthusiasts with a stimulating program.

Thanks to Southwest Baptist University, we have a speaker booked for Friday night, Jeanne Murray Walker. Walker is a Professor of English at the University of Delaware and the author of 7 books of poetry. Check out further details on Ms Walker and her poetry at www.jeannemurraywalker.com . I'm sure you will agree we are in for a treat! For many years SBU has been providing a speaker for our Friday evening convention session and we are very grateful to them. We have not finalized a speaker for the Saturday session of the Convention, but we will keep you posted on our progress.

The MSPS board meets in May and officers and state representatives will be working on firming up and finalizing Convention plans. If approved by the board, the Howell County Bards are hoping to provide entertainment by local Speech and Debate students doing "Performance Poetry." With approval we also have a commitment for catering for the Saturday luncheon by a local restaurant popular for their yummy cuisine, the A La Carte Café. For the \$20 convention registration, lunch is provided to attendees. The Bards have also determined that the Community Room at the West Plains Library is available for the Convention. This is an excellent site with room to set up tables for book sales and signing, ample parking, and handicap access. Other provisions are being made for blocking rooms at local hotels at reduced rates. Again, these plans are tentative, pending approval by the board.

Some other activities provided at all Conventions will be in place this year as well. We will be presenting a member with an Honorary Lifetime Membership on Saturday. In addition we will be announcing winners of the MSPS Summer Poetry Contest, electing officers, voting on MSPS issues, and awarding door prizes. There will be several read-around sessions where members may look forward to sharing their poetry and enjoy listening to poetry from other members. These sessions are always popular and fun.

Keep in mind that the Convention is open to all, not just MSPS members, so bring your spouse, your friends and family. I have been attending Conventions regularly for many years and have always enjoyed these interesting and inspiring events. We will be updating information as available and providing more details on the MSPS Website, so don't forget to check it out often. In addition, your resident nag and cheerleader, moi, will keep you advised. I hope to see you all at the Convention!

Michelle Martin



THE LUCIDITY OZARK POETRY RETREAT

April 19-20-21, 2011

Eureka Springs, Arkansas

Tuesday April 19 - Registration 3-5PM

First Session 7-10 PM

Check www.luciditypoetryretreat.com for more information.

GRIST Editor's Report:

It's that time of year again, Ladies and Gentlemen, that GRIST is open for business. As your editor I want to share a growing concern I have about our dwindling publication. In times past we have had a healthy number of submissions but it seems that over the past couple of years our numbers have fallen dramatically. I have received some wonderful help in compiling updated contact information for the current members of our state society. With this new information I am confident our response will be better this year. I would ask, though, that you help as well by getting the word out about our organization and what we have to offer. A great pull for new poets may be the chance to see their own work published in Grist. You can also help by continuing to encourage one another to write, and by talking with your fellow members to be certain they have received their reminders and that they know to whom their submission is to be sent.

Anything pertaining to GRIST, whether it is orders, submissions, or just questions in general, should be sent to me. This would include checks for orders which I will then forward at one time to our treasurer at the close of our GRIST season. Please keep in mind also that all submissions must be received by June 1 and all pre-orders for copies of Grist must be received by that same deadline. Pre-orders are available at \$8.75 each and all orders placed after the deadline are \$10.00 each. Checks should be made payable to MSPS.

In other news, you will soon see a change in the cover artwork. Though it will still feature Missouri Grist mills, our contributing artist is passing the baton on to another talented Missourian. Bryson Roller lent his artistic talent to us for four years in doing the covers and I am sure you all join me in Thanking him for this great gift. I was told this year, that we normally use one artist for four years and then offer the honor to another, so this year we will be receiving our artwork from a new contributor.

In closing, I would just like to challenge you all to send a piece in for publication. This is your organization and you are right to be proud of it, but your contribution matters a great deal if we are to continue to grow. Life gets busy for us all. Some seasons bring illness or tragedy and at those times we know it is okay to 'sit this one out.' We should not, however, let the busyness of regular living keep us from imbuing life into our own creation. Grist is our own creation. This society is our society, it is your society. I hope you will all rise to the challenge. Just as we get our taxes done, though it feels like work, let us all see to it that our fellow poets have a chance this year to see us supporting growth in our shared community of writers.

I am looking forward to an energetic response and a thick publication for 2011!
Blessings from Your Editor, Dawn Harmon

NOW-INFORMATION YOU NEED FOR GRIST SUBMISSIONS

(A PRECAUTION: Please do not receive any submissions from friends and forward them to me from your address. That was done several times last year and in one instance I missed that it was a forwarded piece from another poet and printed it in **GRIST** under the wrong person. Should you receive someone else's piece, please, either direct them to send it to me themselves, or print it off and note clearly on the paper who it is from and mail it to me.)

For each submission I will need:

- YOUR NAME**
- YOUR CITY AND STATE**
- CHAPTER AFFILIATION and either a phone number, email address, or mailing address.**

GRIST 2011 submissions must be received via email or post by **JUNE 1, 2011** to be published in this year's edition. Checks should be mailed to me for the order of your copies of **GRIST 2011**. Orders placed before the submission deadline will be for \$8.75/copy, any orders placed after submission deadline will be \$10.00/copy. Checks should be made out to MSPS and can be mailed to my address as follows:

Dawn Harmon Editor-GRIST
PO Box 639
Cuba, MO 65453

Thank you so much and Happy Writing!!!
Blessings from Your Editor, Dawn Harmon



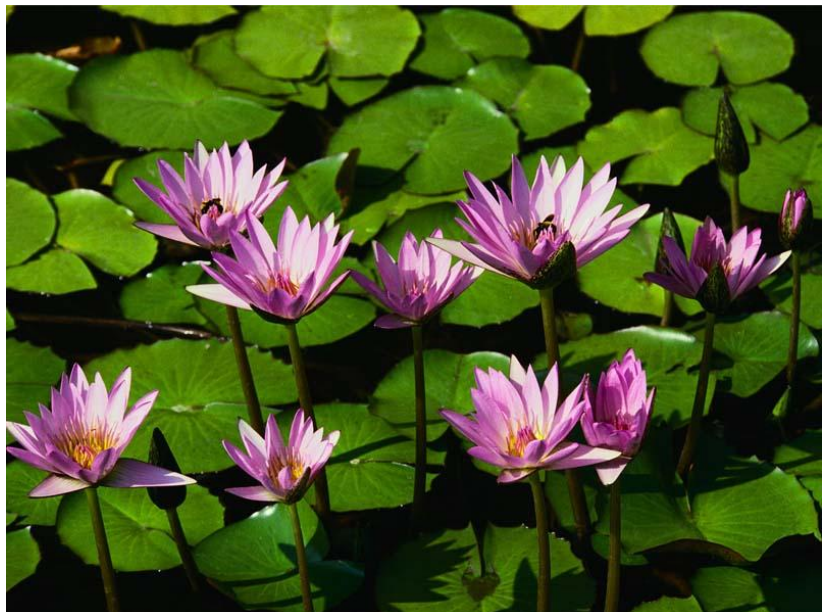
KUDOS for

LEE ANN RUSSELL

Out of 2,700 entries, Lee Ann Russell won seventh place with her poem, "Last Call," in the 6th Annual Writer's Digest Poetry Contest. Winners' names and poem titles will be listed in the Writer's Digest **August 2011** edition, then online. The top fifty poems will be published in a poetry contest booklet out in **May**.



THINK SPRING



POEMS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS FOR SPARE MULE PUBLICATION:



CONNECTED

It is, then, just a thread of connectedness.
Not a bridge or a highway.
Neither a chain nor a cord.
But, rather, a thread. Just a thread
Holding one life to another
In any sort of connectedness.
Fragile and perfect. Not binding.
Woven throughout one to another
With just this simple piece no stronger
Than a breath, or a decision, holding,
Tying those lives together. But strong
And beautiful, and when looked at closely
A wonder, a joy, this simple, fragile, thread.

Dawn Harmon

WHITE WARMTH

Walking into a cottonfield
Brings down upon me all
That was and is no more.
Homemade vanilla ice cream,
White as cotton bolls
Cranked up by loving aunts and uncles.
Warmth setting on my shoulders,
Soft and sticky as cotton fuzz
Clinging to hair and clothes.
Midnight cotton rides.
All that was and is no more,
Gone separate ways.
Cotton in my hand cloaks my mind,
Covers passing years,
Hides different journeys,
Brings back all that was.

Elizabeth Y. Porter
Member at large

WHIRLING

Sitting contemplating the years gone by,
Suddenly I hear a rustling outside above the
Din of the equipment digging up the street,
Putting in new culverts—
One thing etched in my memory, is cars
Getting stalled when they hit the water
That couldn't run off during a heavy rain.
Glancing out the open window—a wondrous
snowfall—
Seedpods from the large maple in the backyard
Spinning dervish-like, covering the yard.
As children we called them parachutes.
Yesterday my three year old grandson picked up a
few
From the balcony of my daughter's apartment.
Just as I said, let me show you something, he sent
Them whirling off over the railing—dancing on the
wind.

Dale Ernst, Howell Co. Bards

Bards

GROWING HAIKU

sleeping underground
seeds slowly wake and break out
reaching for the sky.

butterflies in flight
unexpected hope returns
nectar brings them home.

flowers tempt the bees
destiny of life fulfilled
cycle back to seed.

heaven's fluid falls
To nurture waiting seedlings
smiles at rainbow.

By Frieda Risvold
Member at large

PROGRESS

NO negative thoughts.
NOW is the time to seek and
KNOWS your inner strengths.
KNOWLEDGE comes to those who search.
UNKNOWN solutions are available.

By Frieda Risvold
Member at large

LONG VIEW

Perched in his chair like an eagle waiting to strike...
dive down, talons grasping at just the right moment.

An old Illinois summer kitchen with white-washed walls—
just a room, with a bed, desk, small closet, couple of chairs,
and a small heater for the cold of winter.

Sound of train whistle, like a sweet whisper can barely be heard,
and just a little traffic rattling by on the street, make it lively.

Ted Kooser says we should have a place where the poems can
flow from—this being such a place. With a long view, extending
out over the fields, to a woods, and beyond.

Where in the spring those fields are covered with wild flowers,
and just outside the window an apricot tree stands in full bloom.

Dale Ernst HOWELL COUNTY BARDS

Earth cry's

The seven mile stretch quivers
As the snow flakes fall wet
Soon winter's ice shivers
Just before the ice sickles set
I feel the trembling at my feet
The earth cry's its ugly roar
Are buildings shiver to her beat
Glass shatters inside the store
Are valley's split as it rips
The rivers turns'around
As you embrace, the day the earth grips'
We try to stand a gentle ground
Are life runs parallel to a small sum
It is how the earth's circle turns
From the dust we come
To the ground are village's return
Falling high from the stars
Remembering only time will tell
Sleeping in the meadows once was ours
But unlike doves in late season, are city's fell.
Gilbert Thebeau



A REMINDER FROM THE EDITOR
Poems are considered an artistic form and
beyond any obvious typo are printed (cut and
pasted) in the manner sent.

2011 SENIOR POETS LAUREATE POETRY COMPETITION

PUBLISHED and UNPUBLISHED Poems okay

NO LIMIT to number of ENTRIES you may submit

A literary contest open to all American poets age 50 and older who are U.S. Citizens regardless of where they live or are temporarily staying throughout the world, the 2011 SPL Contest is privately sponsored by **WANDA SUE PARROTT**, original co-founder of the competition and current administrator of the 2011 event. Judges will include former Senior Poets Laureate of the Meeting The Muse Panel of Judges. Entries accepted Jan. 1 through **June 30, 2011**.

Check www.amykitchenerfdn.org for more contest rules

Hi,

I wrote this in response to my own curiosity, but think it might be of some interest to others. I am a member, and Treasurer, of the Howell County Bards.

Elizabeth Hykes



Lydia Huntley Sigourney
(September 1, 1791 – June 10, 1865),
née Lydia Howard Huntley

Lydia Sigourney, a personal exploration

Today, as I was discussing grief with some women who had recent losses, I remembered Lydia Sigourney and her 19th Century writing. My grandmother's sister was named Sigourney Jane out of respect and admiration for Mrs. Sigourney. My mother said she didn't know if Aunt Sigourney was trying to live up to her name or trying to live it down, but she felt certain that name influenced Aunt Sigourney's life and contributed to the development of her very strong personality. In search of more information about Lydia Sigourney, I found my way to the courthouse in Sigourney, Iowa in the late 1980's. I saw her portrait on the second floor wall above the stairs. Little information accompanied the painting. I went to the newspaper office across the street from the courthouse and visited with the editor to learn more. As I recall, none of her publications was available in Sigourney, Iowa, her namesake. Her work had long been out of print.

Some years later, I read a feminist essay which asserted Lydia Sigourney deserves a second look. The writer, whose name I no longer recall, suggested the dismissal of Mrs. Sigourney's work was part of a general dismissal of female writers of the 19th century by male publishers and critics, and as such, was an act of sexism rather than literary thinking. This whetted my already piqued curiosity. Now, with the internet, I can examine a significant portion of her work and related criticism. My goal is to understand her popularity and loss thereof, and to understand her influence in my own life.

Lydia Howard Huntley Sigourney was born in Norwich, Connecticut in 1791 and died in 1865. She was the only child of working class parents, and was educated by her father's employer, preparing her for her long, productive writing life. She was devoted to her parents, devoted to her faith, and her writing expressed ideals of social consciousness rooted in her Christianity. Publication was driven, in part, to provide financial support for her parents. Her husband, an attorney or merchant, actively discouraged publication of her work, but, she published anyway. They had five children, but only two lived to adulthood.

Lydia Sigourney advocated universal education and respect including African Americans, Native Americans, the poor, and women. Her ideal included bringing everyone into the fold of Christianity. She promoted and demonstrated commitment to her ideals through her writing, her financial choices, and her work as a teacher. Her writing took many forms including educational materials, essays, and poetry. Her work experienced enormous popularity nation wide among readers of the emerging middle class. People of Iowa named a town for her. There is a street named for her in Hartford, Connecticut, her home throughout her adulthood. During her lifetime,

roughly 90% of the US population lived and worked on farms, and this included my great grandparents. However, industrialization and urbanization were rapidly moving forward. Poetry at that time filled the place of recorded music in [today's](#) culture. It was printed in daily newspapers and magazines. My grandmother, who was born in 1888, clipped poetry, tacked it above the kitchen sink and memorized it while she washed dishes. She recited poems spontaneously like people quote popular lyrics. Lydia Sigourney was a super star among poets of the day. Her writing expressed something vital to them. She wrote about their concerns. This biographical information clarifies for me why my great aunt was named for her, as Mrs. Sigourney espoused the values taught to me in my family. It does not explain why none of Mrs. Sigourney's writing remained in print.

Very early in my reading, I encountered the word "sentimental" describing her writing, and this was used to dismiss it. So, what does that mean? Sentimental: "dealing with feelings of tenderness, sadness, or nostalgia in an exaggerated and self-indulgent way." Self-indulgent: "characterized by doing or intending to do exactly what one wants especially when this involves pleasure or idleness." (New Oxford American Dictionary.)

{indent I see huge inconsistency between Mrs. Sigourney's goals and this dismissal of her work. It appears the critics are saying her writing is emotional and self serving. Actually, the term sentimental describes a literary movement prior to the Civil War, also described as didactic and representing spiritual convention of the time. I have read two books of her poetry and some criticism. Her Christian values and concern for others is evident throughout. Following is one example:

The Lost Darling

SHE was my idol. Night and day, to scan
The fine expansion of her form, and mark
The unfolding mind, like vernal rose-bud, start
To sudden beauty, was my chief delight.
To find her fairy footsteps following mine,
Her hand upon my garments, or her lip
Long sealed to mine, and in the watch of night
The quiet breath of innocence to feel
Soft on my cheek, was such a full content
Of happiness, as none but mothers know.
Her voice was like some tiny harp that yields
To the slight fingered breeze, and as it held
Brief converse with her doll, or playful soothed
The moaning kitten, or with patient care
Conned o'er the alphabet but most of all,
Its tender cadence in her evening prayer
Thrilled on the ear like some ethereal tone
Heard in sweet dreams.
But now alone I sit,
Musing of her, and dew with mournful tears

Her little robes, that once with woman's pride
I wrought, as if there were a need to deck
What God hath made so beautiful. I start,
Half fancying from her empty crib there comes
A restless sound, and breathe the accustomed words
"Hush! Hush thee, dearest." Then I bend and weep
As though it were a sin to speak to one
Whose home is with the angels.
Gone to God!
And yet I wish I had not seen the pang
That wrung her features, nor the ghastly white
Settling around her lips. I would that Heaven
Had taken its own, like some transplanted flower
Blooming in all its freshness.
Gone to God!
Be still, my heart! what could a mother's prayer,
In all the wildest ecstasies of hope,
Ask for its darling like the bliss of Heaven?

In this poem, Mrs. Sigourney focuses on dealing with the loss of a child, a common problem of her era, and one she experienced with her first three children. In this as well as other poems on the subject, she presents the struggle between religious faith and grief with a goal of resolving inherent conflict rather than accepting, focusing on or clarifying the conflict. Other poets of the time express a different view. For example, Emily Dickinson wrote:

{i} Apparently with no surprise
To any happy flower,
The frost beheads it at its play
In accidental power.

The blond assassin passes on,
The sun proceeds unmoved
To measure off another day
For an approving God. {/i}

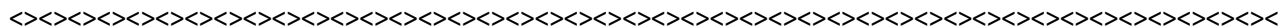
This could not be more different in its approach to the topic. It feels to me as if Mrs. Sigourney is using her writing to control emotions, to make them conform to a set of principals and beliefs, where Ms. Dickinson, is pointing out contradictions between those beliefs and real experience. In [today's](#) largely secular age, it makes sense that the Dickinson approach would receive acceptance where Mrs. Sigourney's work would be left behind. I realize this age also contains a strong, conservative religious movement, and wonder if Mrs. Sigourney would still find acceptance there.

Mrs. Sigourney's writing reminds me of common attitudes about crying. As a child, I was

taught "big girls don't cry" by the women in my family, through positive reinforcement and imitation. They would catch me before I started to cry over an injury or event and would say "there's a good big girl for not crying." I was also given didactic literature, very similar to Mrs. Sigourney's writing and encouraged to read and discuss it with my parents. Like Mrs. Sigourney, I tried to conform to a strict set of rules defining "lady" which assert I am to hold my personal experience secondary to the ideal that God, and therefore events, are always right, and direct expression of personal pain is unacceptable. These rules are intended to control, or contain emotion rather than to express, or heal. When, as a young woman, I was confronted with intense grief, these ideals were not helpful. At first, I could not tolerate Emily Dickinson, I was so steeped in didactic thinking. As I abandoned the "no cry rule," and the "no talk rule," my thinking was freed from the idea that I should be happy about my loss because God willed it, and in the process, I came to understand Emily Dickinson's assertion.

Looking now at Lydia Sigourney's writing, I recognize her ideas were passed on to me, though not through her specific writing. I suspect my great Aunt Sigourney railed against some of these ideals while also trying to conform and this might explain some contradictions in her personality. I see that Mrs. Sigourney's writing is not self indulgent, but instead, comes from an impulse to enforce social convention and spread traditional Christian values. It represented external social control. I see Emily Dickinson railing against the emotional attitudes expressed by Lydia Sigourney, speaking from a place of inner control. I suspect this is the central conflict of American culture. Mrs. Sigourney lived and wrote in Hartford, Connecticut during the Harriet Beecher Stowe's period of education. I wonder if Lydia Sigourney's expressed ideals had any influence in the formation of Harriet Beecher Stowe's attitudes presented in her book, Uncle Tom's Cabin. That question just [may](#) move me to more exploration.

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EDITORIAL

As I have been telling members at the convention and on-line, the Spare Mule has a broader scope now that we have gone electronic. As you have noticed by this point, this Spare Mule is quite large. That is due to more contributions , of course, and hopefully more interest in keeping in touch with every other member as to who we are and what we stand for. Thanks to all who help.

Our next issue will be August 1, 2011. Collection of contributions for that issue begins when I push the 'send' button on this issue.

Don DePriest, Editor



HAPPY EASTER