

# SPARE MULE NEWSLETTER



MSPS Newsletter | Vol 25 No. 04 | 16 December 2022

Photographer & Guest Editor: Josey Murphy

## Local Chapters

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- **AUTHOR UNKNOWN**  
Bolivar, Missouri
- **THE MERRY BOMBADILS**  
Cuba, Missouri
- **LEBANON POETS' SOCIETY**  
Lebanon, Missouri
- **ON THE EDGE**  
De Soto, Missouri
- **POETS & FRIENDS**  
Springfield, Missouri
- **SECOND TUESDAY**  
Bolivar, Missouri

Come read our newsletter to learn what exciting things are happening in the Missouri State Poetry Society!

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# Editor's Column

Dear MSPS Poets,

Hello again! I just want to thank you all for accepting me into MSPS with open arms and loving attitudes this year. I've had a delightful time communicating with you and editing for you, and I've learned so much about poetry through your amazing works. You are all talented human beings, and I couldn't have asked to serve a better society of poets.

I want to give an additional thanks to everyone who participated in my editor's challenge by writing an acrostic poem! I've enjoyed reading the submissions and seeing the "hidden" messages as well as the creative differences.

With a heavy heart, though, I must bid you all adieu. My MSPS internship for Fall 2022 has officially reached its end. However, I do hope to participate in MSPS in the future, whether that be through volunteering as an editor or submitting poetry as a member. This is not a goodbye, then, but simply a "see you later."

Again, thank you all for such a wonderful experience!

With blessings,

Josey Murphy

# Chapter Updates



## **The Merry Bombadils**

The Merry Bombadils are continuing the Round Robin triolet and rondelet project for 2022. We are nearing the final month or so to finish up and then put together a chap book of selected poems. Everyone has enjoyed the Thanksgiving holiday.

## **On the Edge**

Over the last three months we have met and reviewed our work attempting to improve our writing. Last month Donald Horstman brought a friend, and we welcomed a new member, Terry Harken, an excellent writer. Thanks for joining our group.

In October we decided to assemble an anthology of our poems. What an undertaking it was. Each member sent 7 verses to John Han, the editor and publisher. He selected 5 from everyone. Plus, we included the MSPS Youth Contest Winners from earlier in the year. All of us will have a nice chapbook to show off to our friends and relatives at Christmas.

The December meeting will be held at a restaurant to celebrate the holidays and our friendship. There will be good conversation and a book/card exchange.

## **Author Unknown**

Author Unknown has spent the last few months experimenting with various poetry forms, such as rondeaus. Members recently had the opportunity to read their creative works, both poetry and non-poetry, during SBU's 11th annual "Deck the Halls Christmas Extravaganza" event. We have now begun the search for publishers to publish a few of the works that we have written over the last five months.

# Member Updates & Kudos



Merry Bombadil member **Harold Asner** is busy this autumn as a volunteer math tutor at a local community college.

**Marie Asner** has had two poems accepted for the Illinois Anthology. Marie had a poem accepted for poet Charlotte Digregorio's Blog. Marie's poem "Ides of March" was selected by the Highland Park, Illinois Library to be featured the week of Halloween 2022. Marie won Second Place in the Winnetka Illinois Library 8-Line Poem Contest. Marie, also, participated in a Zoom Poetry Reading from the Kentucky State Poetry Society.

**Pat Laster** has written 96 new pieces, both poetry and prose: 61 pieces submitted; 100 pieces published, including monthly poem calendars; 7 contest wins; 8 books sold, and 1 traded. She attended a weekend writing workshop at Hemingway-Pfeiffer Museum Educational Center with mentor, Arkansas State University's Dr. Rob Lamm.

**John W. Crawford**, a member-at-large, received an honorable mention in the Small Stuff poem category during Ohio Poetry Association's Ohio Poetry Day 2022. He also placed 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> and received two honorable mentions in Poets' Roundtable of Arkansas' 2022 Poetry Day Contests.

Congratulations to all of you!

# Poetry Submissions



## Mystery of the Sea — Troy Reeves

From out to sea the waves roll in,  
Rise and fall, advance, retreat,  
Making a long white sandy beach

Rise and fall, advance, retreat,  
Ever becoming, all encompassing,  
Full of creatures that change and stay,

Ever becoming, all encompassing  
Lifeforms from nothing to infinity,  
Children of both sea and shore,

Lifeforms from nothing to infinity  
That takes form, then disappears,  
Making our eyes dazzle with a vision

That takes form. then disappears.  
The eternal sea solves the mystery  
Of how all and none adds up to one.

The eternal sea solves the mystery,  
Making a long white sandy beach  
Full of creatures that change and stay,  
Children of both sea and shore,  
Making our eyes dazzle with a vision  
Of how all and none adds up to one.

## Gardeners — Troy Reeves

Green-thumb gardeners seem to agree  
with ancient philosophers who believed  
plants have a soul of sense,  
feelings so keen it makes them wise.  
They treat flowerbeds as nurseries,  
flowers as their own children.  
An old lady falls down on her knees--  
Damn the arthritis! Full speed ahead!--  
leans over and whispers to a peony,  
"You are my pretty boy, yes you are!"  
Old men with bad backs, bad legs,  
bad hips, and bad knees will tell you  
"That ol' boy likes to lay in the shade.  
That one loves his place in the sun.  
She wants to be the center of attention,  
drinks sunshine in the morning,  
sleeps it off in the afternoon,  
dances all night to the light of the moon.  
But that big boy over in the corner  
is shy and just wants to be left alone.  
Too much attention and he'll just die."  
These gardeners think dumb plants  
can feel the timbre of a man's voice,  
the sweet breath of a woman's words.  
How fortuitous, the coincidence,  
in endless time and space, of gardeners  
who love to make their gardens grow  
and these little plants' love of life.

## OWL — Carol Louise Moon

Our tawny little bird,  
old world avian is  
out on a limb today.  
Often seen peeking face  
of angel, or small child,  
or demon from knotty  
oval hole in a tree.

## ERMINE — Carol Louise Moon

Ermine in mountains with  
Edelweiss, noble white.  
Ever so noble, she  
Enters her finery:  
Elegant fur coat of  
Enhanced-protection-white  
Each winter, ever warm.

## An Eagle Can Fly Through — Susie Reeves

I'm going round about another way.  
Maybe I'm going in circles, but I'll still stay  
In the spiraling cone of the stairs.  
I'm alone--but yet I'll stay.  
Sweet mournful calls of a turtledove  
Drift from the lofty turrets above,  
Yet an eagle can fly through the blue-sky  
Arch in the dome I made for you.  
Soaring high but yet he descends  
Like a silver bullet streaming through  
The clear sunny atmosphere of my love for you.

## Poets — Susie Reeves

I see the fabric of your being  
woven from the inside out,  
the tapestry of the words you  
call forth and the words you  
speak that call you forth  
to make your being—a Poet,  
a fine tapestry of all that  
is inside your heart and mind,  
the connection to your internal  
and your external perception--  
this you create and exhibit through  
your exploration of all that is you.

Bravely you expose yourself with  
the outlandish flair of a bullfighter,  
bold and brave for others to admire  
or pity, cheer on or boo. Or, you  
could be bathed in a Buddha-type aura  
of contemplation and stillness  
coming from within, with a tapestry  
of wisdom, self-satisfaction, and  
peace. A wave of light appears  
to some who listen with their  
eyes open. Yet, there are those  
for whom the light moves  
farther away and goes out.

Others keep the light in their vision  
which travels closer and closer  
until it becomes a part of them.  
A new wave comes floating in the air.  
It is captured and broken into pieces  
by the minds of poetic instinct  
and brought into a profusion  
of expressions—the words  
hitching a ride on each piece.  
Could this wave of light float  
so far away it will never anoint  
poets again, and a new and  
different wave appear to inspire  
poets of an unknown make?

## A Slice of Paradise — Susie Reeves

The twinkle and tinkle of the crystal stars  
And the boom of the silvery moon  
Cascading down like falling fish  
Flashing in a mighty, misty waterfall.  
I see the progress of the spotted horses  
Running from post to post,  
Making their way to the glittery coast.  
Susan is riding and taking the lead  
Of the Five Fighting Furies for Freedom.  
No one can stand before this valiant band,  
Gallop through the mountains, darting  
In and out of the gusts from the diamond dust.  
Neighs and whinnies sounding like jangling pennies,  
Manes and tails flying like sideways sails.  
Sprinting up the ragged, rocky peaks—and there  
Getting a true view of this slice of paradise  
Where once we held fast and got what we asked.  
But, knowing this—we'll be back soon  
To hear the tinkle of the crystal stars  
And the boom of the silvery moon.

**Author's Note:** "Dedicated to my best friend from the seventh through twelfth grades, Susan, daughter of one of America's most famous poets. The Five Fighting Furies for Freedom were a group of girls in the eighth grade who didn't want to play baseball but played horses instead."

## At the End — Frank Adams

A person you never knew  
will arrive at your bedside -  
place your body in a black zipper bag  
then drive you away  
in the back of a black car -  
to a windowless room  
where technicians will make you up -  
like a circus clown - then  
place you inside a locked box  
that will be placed  
in the black ground -  
where you will remain  
locked away and alone  
forever in the dark.

## Goodbye, 2022 — Janice Canerdy

Another year is drawing to a close.  
I sit alone reflecting on the life  
I've loved and cherished for these many days  
recalling every cause of joy and strife.

I think of all those walks I take near home  
and thank God for the strength to walk each mile.  
I praise Him for the town in which I live,  
where I feel safe and neighbors wave and smile.

My friends and loved ones occupy my mind.  
How little time I've spent with them! I vow  
in twenty twenty-three, I'll see them more.  
If I rely on Him, He'll show me how.

Reviewing conflicts of the waning year,  
I think of how I sometimes played a part  
in making matters worse. I cannot push  
aside those thoughts that plague my troubled heart.

I have to ask forgiveness, for I know  
it's my responsibility to be  
promoter of good will with everyone.  
Beginning now, I'll strive for harmony.

My reminiscing would be incomplete  
if I gave my church family no praise.  
Next year, I still will be with them each week.  
They are a blessing in so many ways.

To name each blessing of the year, I'd need  
a ream of paper and a quart of ink.  
I'd need to talk for days on end, but God  
knows how I feel and everything I think.

\*\*\*\*\*

Two thousand twenty-two has breathed its last  
as I am thanking God for joy and health,  
for all the seasons, and for giving me  
more than I need--in my opinion, wealth.

## Stealing Horses — John J. Han

Connie Sue Yen's "Horse-Stealing and Man-Hanging: An Examination of Vigilantism in the Missouri Ozarks" (2015), a master's thesis written at Missouri State University, discusses the widespread crime of stealing horses in the early days of the Missouri Ozarks. Indeed, horse theft was common on the frontier in the nineteenth century; in his book on Wyatt Earp, Ed Bartholomew even argues that the supposed hero was actually a horse thief. Some place names in Arkansas are a reminder that horse stealing was common in the past. The Ouachita Mountains have Horse Thief Spring Trail, which stretches for 8.5 miles. Once on a mountain road near Searcy, I came across the sign "West Horse Thief Creek." If it had not rained, I might have stopped the car and taken a picture of it.

central Missouri  
impressive names  
of plain towns:  
Westphalia, Freeburg,  
Vienna, Vichy...

## U.S. Route 67 in Autumn — John J. Han

Little gives me more pleasure than seeing fall foliage. Many areas in America are famous for their beautiful fall colors. The Ozarks is one of them. When I travel to Little Rock or other places in eastern, central, or southern Arkansas, I typically take U.S. Route 67 instead of Interstate Highway 55. There is much less traffic (hence, almost no traffic officers), and the autumn scenery along the road is one of a kind. Most recently, in late October 2022, I took 67 on my way to Monticello, Arkansas. The 118-mile route from Festus to Poplar Bluff—both in Missouri—belongs to the eastern Ozarks. Once I passed Farmington, few cars were on the road, and the stretches of the rolling hills made me exclaim, “This is why life is better than death!” Life is full of pain, strife, and disappointments, but spending hours in the mountains helps restore a weary soul, making one face another day.

summer lake  
the far-reaching waves  
made by mallards

## The Bliss of Midwest Living — John J. Han

Many Americans, as well as many foreigners, think of the American Midwest as a fly-over region. When people talk about Nebraska football, for instance, they wonder which athletes would be excited about playing in a stadium surrounded by cornfields. As someone who has lived in Kansas, Nebraska, and Missouri, I find many attractive elements in Midwest living. We have four seasons, which remind us of not only seasonal changes but the cycle of human life. We live under big skies, live close to wildlife, and believe in hard work and self-sufficiency. I have never been to New York City, but having seen it on TV numerous times, I shall be happy to stay in the Midwest, making occasional visits to the grasslands and the Ozarks instead.

late autumn  
birds' chatter makes  
the squirrel stop  
caching nuts  
for a second

## Small Town — Marie Asner

Follow me and dance,  
you in tuxedo and I in Ginger's shoes,  
while Ziegfield Girls feather a ramp  
to the deck of Flynn's galleon.  
Swords flash in moonlight  
when you rumba with Miranda.  
Fans reach out for Gable and Scarlett  
fumes with envy. Camera men  
swoop in while you and John  
trade bullets, then I climb aboard  
a stagecoach and Roy looks our way.  
Jets and Sharks blaze across rooftops  
as Maria's song fills the sky.  
"La Dolce Vita" seeks to trap us  
on our way up a light beam  
to the projection booth  
of the only cinema in town  
sold yesterday  
to a car dealer for a new paved lot.

## Christa — Marie Asner

Daybreak, the boy visions sleek Moped on tar-black road.  
In another room, girl child, sculpted in pink flannel,  
snuggles into down splendor,  
while beside her, gray cat purrs soothingly.  
Across the hall, Dad drifts calmly  
through spirals of sleep,  
but Christa, shivers,  
waking from a dream of bright orange light.

## Cowgirl Crying in her Winter Beer — Wanda Sue Parrott

Sing me to sleep with a hiccup and burp  
under rockabye heavens where cue sticks and beer  
mix and swirl down my throat till I'm swooning to slurp  
from the teardrops I'm weeping that leaven my heart  
which you smote when you left me asleep.

Sing your dingdong to sleep but ring bells in my head.  
Let me lisp like a baby and spit as I can  
under rockabye heavens where cue sticks and beer  
dinged my dang song. You took all my cash  
and then left me to weep.

What possessed you, my love, to dump me?  
Dang you, creep!

## On a Day We Offer Thanks — Todd Sukany

The living room seems full enough:  
three couples, an adopted son,  
and one mostly lame dog. Suddenly,  
as the sounds of worship music  
and voice trail off into a refrigerator cycle,  
The Presence remains. This moment,  
interrupted, erupts into an hour  
of testimony to divine appointments  
and names of people who have long ago  
joined the cloud of witnesses.

# Editor's Challenge

"Your mission, should you choose to accept it, is to write an acrostic poem. To make an acrostic poem, all you must do is spell out a word or phrase with the first (or the first AND last) letters of each line of your poem."

– Josey Murphy, October 2022



# A Collection of Acrostic Poems by Terrie Jacks

## Not A Poem

**N**ada, nein, never.  
**O**h, my gosh  
**T**his really isn't.

**A**in't going to happen.

**P**athetic effort with no  
**O**verwhelming idea.  
**E**xertion and sweat  
**M**eets failed undertaking.

## Tiger

**T**errible teeth  
**I**ndia resident  
**G**rrrrr!  
**E**at you!  
**R**acing stripes

## Poem

**P**ete  
**O**n a motorcycle  
**E**agerly revs his  
**M**otor

## To Sin — Todd Sukany

**T**raitor to my soul  
**O**gles my tattoo  
**S**ix hundred sixty-six  
**I**n my own eyes im  
**N**ever wrong

## Winter — Stella Cunningham

**W**inter is the season  
**I**n which the snow will fall  
**N**aked are the branches  
**T**rees shiver in the cold  
**E**v'rything waits for spring  
**R**eviving earth again

## Drought — Carol Louise Moon

**D**ried land, now a stark  
**r**avaged landscape full  
**o**f grasses bent down  
**u**ncovering surface rocks,  
**g**aunt land in silent waiting—  
**h**arassing clouds of rain, rain  
**t**hat is reluctant to fall.

## Poems, My Mirrors – Janice Canerdy

Poetry shakes me, wakes me up.  
Other poets open my mind to  
Endless layers of reality and enable  
Me to thrive in this special realm.  
Sharing through poetry helps  
Me know myself and others better. When I'm  
Yearning to describe honestly my  
Mindsets, whether stormy or calm,  
I find that reading poetry provides stimuli,  
Readies me for each expressive endeavor,  
Reminding me that poetry is like a mirror,  
Offering the reflection of one who  
Realizes words possess inestimable power  
Such potential for enhancing our lives!



# October Poetry Blitz

“To celebrate the UK's National Poetry Month and the US' National Poetry Day on Oct. 6<sup>th</sup>, we're hosting a poetry blitz for all MSPS members throughout October! Look for prompts posted on our social media accounts...”

– MSPS Facebook & Instagram, October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022

## Prompt #1 — Autumn

10/3: Write a poem about autumn.

### autumn decision — Terrie Jacks

on this walk in the woods  
a divide in the road  
a choice to make  
like in life  
what path to follow

a bench is provided  
sit a moment  
enjoy the warmth  
it's autumn  
winter is ahead

### Ballot Counting — Marie Asner

Fiery autumn.  
Sumac shines like glowing amber.  
Fiery autumn.  
Forest selects color - and sum  
of all ballots counted, oh, sir,  
maples won and begin to purr.  
Fiery autumn.

## Approaching Transition — Todd Sukany

In our hemisphere, autumn  
is the beginning of the end.

Hard to determine if the purple  
leaves on sunlit trees are parched

or bereft. Hard to determine if the smoke  
rising on the horizon is intentional or wild.

Hard to determine if the coolness  
in the breeze is welcome . . .

## Three Persimmon Haiku — John J. Han

persimmons  
their ripeness obscures  
the blue sky

a persimmon  
as sweet as the one  
mom bought me

eating a persimmon alone  
I don't even dab  
my mouth

## Prompt #2 — Water

10/5: Write a poem about water.

### Welcome Gulf of Mexico — Todd Sukany

Once the eye of Ian passed  
and the sunshine tucked itself again  
behind clouds, the surge gathered  
at the front door, forgot to knock,

barged in like an unwelcome uncle  
at Thanksgiving dinner,  
grabbed the couch and fridge  
to float them toward the windows

covered in corrugated steel, screwed  
from outside, every couple inches,  
to the window frames, and wave itself  
to homeostasis with the rest of its family

waiting outside, up and up,  
until occupying the second story.  
Stay out of the attic, the unforgiving  
stranger with whom you seldom visit.

## Prompt #3 — No “E’s”

10/10: Write a poem without using the letter “E.”

### Chugga-Chugga-Choo-Choo — Terrie Jacks

The choo-choo trains  
chug around the track  
chugging forward,  
round and back.

Occasionally pursuing  
the turn to the right,  
passing the crossing,  
oops! out of sight.

Motor contraptions  
found both front and back  
this rail trip is on  
yours truly, my fri'nd.

In my sport of trains  
I add sounds of horns  
and the hobo by the track  
loudly scorns.

Anyways...  
I still woo-hoo  
and follow it lots  
with woo-hoo-hoo.

## Missing a Fifth — Todd Sukany

Pious souls of faith  
may not fill all slots  
amid writing G-d.  
Variant holy tags--

*Abba, Lord, Most High--*  
pad oral communication.  
In this moral civility,  
honor is foundational.

What impact  
might this hold  
on much unsaintly talk  
without J-sus, nor r-sp-ct?

## Prompt #4 — Favorite Smell

10/12: Write a poem about a scent you love.

### Out Back — Terrie Jacks

Back of the garden  
Garden lined with white  
White Bradford pear trees  
Trees that stink  
Stink in the spring  
Spring doesn't smell well  
Well not in my garden out back

### Timeless Balm — Todd Sukany

*"...and the house was filled with the odor of the ointment."*  
--- John 12:3

Stronger than the perfume of meatloaf  
and potatoes, squash with garlic butter,  
  
fig pudding, even my sister's after-bath  
lotion--the snuff of worship, a cracked  
  
container of great worth, a stronghold  
against baloney carped by a thief,  
  
the intoxicating fragrance  
of adoration and worship.

## Prompt #5 — What Brings You Joy

10/17: Write a poem about what brings you joy, whether it's big or small.

where  
is  
my mail?  
I expect  
a note from a friend.  
mailman only delivers ads  
upset I toss them on the desk  
an envelope falls  
from amongst  
the  
ads  
my  
friend  
sent me  
well wishes  
and happy birthday.

— Terrie Jacks

### Follow a Leader — Todd Sukany

My nephew, Todd, enjoyed his time at Dunnegan Park. Geese, swans, a squirrel—all paled in appearance to the adult-sized swing at the back corner, farthest from the entrance. Todd ambled that way and seeing the joy on his adult face reminded me of childhood. Toddy's elation was interrupted by another call of nature. When we discovered the restrooms were locked, his grumbling about incompetence commenced. I knew a convenience store was just north of the park, a couple blocks away. I rushed there, but not quite as fast as the man who beat Toddy through the door I held open, and then through the washroom door. The wide-eyed look on the man's face as he left the store was explained later when I discovered the facilities for a single occupant.

Thin roof-ridge –  
A teetering old goat  
On three hooves

## Prompt #6 — Favorite Quote

10/19: Write a poem using one of your favorite spoken or written quotes as the first line, title, or epigraph.

### The Buzzards Aren't Circling, Yet — Terrie Jacks

Hey, everybody  
stop your weeping and wailing  
life is still good  
let's get up and smile  
remember a setback  
is a setup  
for a comeback  
so, you've been hit by  
my surprised diagnosis  
but I'm still able to fly  
that's why, we'll keep on keepin' on  
and never give up  
for the buzzards aren't circling, yet.

### "Inconceivable!" — Todd Sukany

Your highways are filled with signs.  
Signs larger than semi-truck trailers,  
stacked on each other, done in  
your favorite primary color,

primary, like pure water.  
Hard to imagine the cost  
to average, honest,  
blue-collar workers

who built the sign in the first place.  
"Inconceivable!" As an expatriate  
observing your decisions from afar,  
I vote, "You keep using that word.

I do not think it means  
what you think it means."

# Prompt #7 — Ghost, Slime, Cobwebs

10/24: Write a poem using the words “ghost,” “slime,” and “cobweb.”

## It's Halloween — Terrie Jacks

Trick or treat  
or trunk a sweet  
dark lantern teeth  
witches screech  
owls back beat  
pickled birds' feet  
But be aware  
on the trails...

Ghost slime cobwebs

## Secrets of Men — Todd Sukany

As the Day of Darkness approaches,  
some celebrate a bit early. They dig up  
decorations from all the years before.

The basement closet, a holiday dungeon,  
sits full of boxes packed with demons, ghouls,  
fangs, and blackness. Certain bewitchments

have crept out, shaken off their cobwebs,  
since they are more than annual adornments,  
to invade the very core and ritualistic conduct

of their occupants. Contents in a heart-shaped  
bowl of candy have melted into verde, shiny, slime.  
Outside, air-blown lawn-art, mummified, flat

until dusk, bloats as bluetooth speakers blast  
eerie creaking, hellish screams, chinking chains  
across the neighborhood, sure to wake

the November dead. All this preparation  
and honor, in advancing the sacraments,  
executed to entertain the un-holy ghost.

## Prompt #8 — Halloween Haiku

10/26: Write a haiku about Halloween.

drums beat  
a cry in the night  
frays the nerves

conversations  
upon the wind  
night specters

moonlight encounter  
a gremlins hangout  
trick or treat

— Terrie Jacks

Your pumpkin gutted--  
its emptiness fills  
with phony light

— Todd Sukany



*MISSOURI STATE POETRY SOCIETY  
SPARE MULE NEWSLETTER*

*VOL 25 | NO. 04*

*16 DECEMBER 2022*

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