

From the President: A Review of the State Convention

The cleanup is done, the bills have been paid, the figures are in, and the organizers of our first NMSPS State Convention have had at least one good night's sleep apiece since Saturday. In every respect, we had stellar success.

Our original plans estimated attendance at 40 people; 60 came, but we were able to accommodate everyone. Our Annual Meeting was well attended and allowed us to review a remarkable year and express thanks to the members who have made all of it happen. I announced the site for our 14-16 June 2013 National Convention will be Hotel Albuquerque, in Old Town, and our keynote speaker will be Dana Levin.

The memorial moment for Lula Daudet and Peggy Sandoval was enriched immensely by the presence of Scott Sandoval, who shared with the group what the NMSPS meant to his mother, Peggy. Ray Reeder, member of the Albuquerque chapter, read one of Peggy's poems as an invocation.

The "make your own sandwich" bar after the meeting received donations that were only \$3.50 (one loaf of bread) shy of paying for the entire meal and saved both time and money for folks wanting to get to early workshops.

The workshops were full and I heard so many compliments about every single workshop leader. We had an astonishing turnout for the Bookstore, the Poets' Cafe was busy every time I stepped in, and we signed up new members who came to the church for another event but were drawn to ours.

We enjoyed live music from Dog Star and a delicious and plentiful dinner. I gave two awards that I hope will become traditional: the NMSPS Mission Award to Stewart Warren for best exemplifying our mission "to foster the appreciation and creation of poetry throughout the State" by founding the Albuquerque Poet Laureate program, and the Patron of Poetry Award to Paul White of Santa Fe for his support of the poetic community. We kicked off the open mic with readings by our youngest member, 8-year-old Faith Leah Pearson, followed by Poets Laureate Hakim Bellamy and Valerie Martinez and by haiku guru Charles Trumbull. Most amazing of all, everything ran on time.

Because we had such a good turnout, the "cost" per person was less, and we took in \$516.44 more than we spent. On time, under budget, and with no catastrophes, most people would say we succeeded admirably. So much for the obvious. Here is where I believe we really hit the home run:

This State Convention has always been designed as preparation for the upcoming 2013 Convention, and it has proven to be invaluable. Of course we had glitches, surprises, and missteps. Thank heaven for every one of them, because we now have a lead on fixing them

before 2013. From badges to Bookstore to budgeting, we learned a lot of tricks that will stand us in good stead. Our suggestion box contained ideas for solving or avoiding future problems.

It is great that the State Convention gave us that practice, but unless it met the needs of our Society independent of the 2013 event, I would not call it a success. I think we achieved many of the objectives that our members asked for, although we will do it even better next time by building on what we learned last Saturday.

What I saw was NMSPS members excited by how our Society is on the move--not just in growing numbers but also in our scope of activities and visibility in the larger poetry community. Time and again at the State Convention, people said they were having fun and making new friends. They traded ideas, formed cross-chapter partnerships, and sketched out future projects. This sense of camaraderie and common purpose is what will keep NMSPS moving forward when the 2013 Convention is a cherished memory.

So, yes, pat yourselves on the back. I will proudly take the State Convention program to show around at the NFSPS Convention in Indiana on June 14, and let's start now to make the 2013 National Convention in Albuquerque the best the Federation has ever seen.

I thank every one of you who came to our first Convention; I thank the Albuquerque Chapter for the wonderful kickoff at Page One, and I thank all of you who have stepped forward to offer our help next year. There will be a way for almost every member of NMSPS to be part of the 2013 Convention, with jobs big and small, from heading committees to stuffing goodie bags or taking tickets.

The biggest thing you can do is start planning now to attend the event on June 14-16 of next year--that, and enter as many poems as we can in the Federation contests next year so that we have lots of New Mexicans on the winners' platform. Let's make ourselves heard!

Shirley Blackwell