

Emily Dickinson International Society  
Minutes for Members' Meeting  
Ulrich Recital Hall  
University of Maryland, College Park  
Sunday, August 11, 2013  
9:00-10:30 a.m.

### **President's Welcome and Report**

The EDIS annual Members' Meeting began at 9:13 a.m. Thirty-one members were present. President Jonnie Guerra welcomed the members present and explained that she was stepping down. A new president would take over by the end of the meeting.

Guerra recognized the following charter members of EDIS: Jane Eberwein, Suzanne Juhasz, Cristanne Miller, and Martha Nell Smith. Founding member Gary Stonum was not present for the meeting. Without the efforts of these members, no one would be present to celebrate the Society's 24<sup>th</sup> anniversary today. Guerra also presented the members of the board.

Guerra announced that the Society's bylaws are now in conformity with Massachusetts law and will soon be posted on the EDIS website.

Guerra discussed upcoming conferences, telling members that they would hear more about the 2014 Amherst annual meeting later.

The 2015 annual meeting will be held in Pacific Grove, California, at Asilomar Conference Center. The theme will be "Emily Dickinson and the Sea." Barbara Mossberg will organize this meeting.

The 2016 EDIS international conference will take place in Paris. Antoine Cazé will be the primary organizer.

### **Nominations Committee Report**

Eleanor Heginbotham has been reelected to the board as member-at-large by EDIS members in spring 2013 was

Board member Marianne Noble stepped down with one year left on her term, and Barbara Mossberg has been elected by the board to replace her.

Board members reelected for another term were Páraic Finnerty, Hiroko Uno, Jonnie Guerra, and Antoine Cazé.

The slate of officers for 2013-2014 will be Martha Nell Smith, president; Barbara Mossberg, vice president; James Fraser, treasurer; Nancy List Pridgen, secretary.

Guerra thanked Marianne Noble for her service to the EDIS board and presented her with a few small. Noble will also be guest of the board at the Willard Tea.

Guerra stated the board is eager to explore new venues for our annual meetings and invited any member to make suggestions for locations for future annual meetings.

### **Approval of the Minutes of the August 2012 Meeting**

Guerra asked Secretary Nancy List Pridgen to present the minutes for the August 4, 2012 Members' Meeting in Cleveland, Ohio, copies of which had been placed in registrants' packets, and ask for additions and corrections. No changes were forthcoming, and the minutes were approved as presented.

### **Treasurer's Report**

James Fraser gave the treasurer's report.

The Society's bank balance on July 1, 2012, was \$14,453. The balance on June 30, 2013 was \$21, 238, showing a net increase of \$6,784. Receipts from the conference are still coming in. Receipts for the conference are \$29,766, which is the largest amount of receipts for a conference and expenses for the conference were \$22,982, which is again the largest total of receipts. Copies can be obtained from J. Fraser for those who want one.

The numbers do not represent the volunteer support of individuals, including the building and maintenance of the EDIS website by Martha Nell Smith and her students, particularly Rebecca Mooney. There is now a big blue "Donate" button on the website.

Other yearly expenses include publication of the *EDIS Bulletin*, \$23,000 twice a year, four graduate fellowships at \$1,000 each, and one Scholar in Amherst at \$2,000.

J. Fraser said EDIS is also struggling to get our tax exempt status back from the IRS. The loss of the tax exempt status is something that the organization partly caused and the custodian of EDIS's tax exempt status and EDIS's status with the Massachusetts Corporation did not keep up with the Society's obligations properly. The Society is now in good standing with Massachusetts and has applied for good standing with the IRS. It has been eight months since the application went in to the IRS. Diana Fraser is now the Society's clerk, who takes care of several housekeeping tasks with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. In order to sign papers such as EDIS's annual report file with changes in board members, the secretary or clerk must be a resident of Massachusetts. EDIS has to pay a small fee each year to maintain its good standing with Massachusetts.

## Membership Committee Report

Elizabeth Petrino, chair of the membership committee, listed the members of the committee and their areas of interest:

Alexandra Socarides	young scholars
Hiroko Uno	international members
Kate Allen	graduate students
Cindy MacKenzie	new members

As of August 2, total membership was 292. Johns Hopkins University Press, who publish the *Emily Dickinson Journal*, require 300 members to guarantee EDIS will not be charged fees.

Petrino said that Hiroko Uno has represented EDIS with the Emily Dickinson Society of Japan and advertised the EDIS graduate student awards and scholar in Amherst awards with them.

She reported that Socarides has continued to work with new directions in Dickinson studies and that Dunning has worked on the graduate website.

Petrino stated that MacKenzie and her graduate student Liza Gilglum designed the Dickinson pins that were sold at this conference.

New member packets were sent to thirty-one new members. They include a certificate of membership, a letter from the EDIS president, puzzles, and a magnet. Emails are also sent to welcome new members. Email letters were also sent to members reminding them to renew.

Petrino discussed some ways to increase membership. They include contacting Dickinson researchers who have published or presented papers on Dickinson at other conferences in the last five years. EDIS will also send a pdf flyer to some of the major doctoral programs with American poetry or literature concentrations to distribute to their students, encouraging them to join EDIS. Petrino asked that anyone who knows high school teachers or individuals who are interested in Dickinson to let her know. Martha Nell Smith suggested that members consider giving gift memberships. Petrino referred to this as an add-a-member program, pointing out that those who receive gift memberships have the potential to renew.

## 2014 Annual Meeting

Petrino reported on the 2014 Annual Meeting, which will be held in Amherst, Massachusetts, on August 8–10, 2014. Petrino and Socarides are members in charge of planning and preparing for the meeting, which will include an Institute the first day. During the Institute, scholars who are preparing Dickinson papers will have the opportunity to share their in-progress papers with one another and receive feedback. A

call for works in progress will be issued in September. Abstracts need to be submitted by mid-January 2014, with the theme of “Emily Dickinson and New England Writers of the 19<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup>, and 21<sup>st</sup> Centuries.” Socarides and Petrino then will group the abstracts into small groups, giving these scholars an opportunity to workshop their ideas with other scholars.

Members not involved in the Institute will have an opportunity to attend another master class on the theme of the meeting.

Karen Kilcup will be the keynote speaker. She is a scholar who has worked on Emily Dickinson and Robert Frost and regionalism.

Trips to local writers’ houses may be included in the weekend.

Guerra added that the weekend might also include a play about Dickinson and Thoreau and that the closing address would be given by Paul Crumbley.

### **Emily Dickinson Museum Update**

Jane Wald, Executive Director of The Emily Dickinson Museum, presented a report on the Museum’s current status.

Wald made available an attractive booklet entitled, “Ten Years: 2003-2013: The Emily Dickinson Museum: The Homestead and the Evergreens.” Wald stated that 2013 is the tenth anniversary of The Emily Dickinson Museum’s formation from the Homestead and the Evergreens. It is also the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the construction of the Homestead.

Wald said she found the following statement on a scrap of paper, written early after the formation of the Museum: “The vision for the Emily Dickinson Museum is to become *the* site associated in the public’s mind with the poet Emily Dickinson.” The Museum has progressed greatly toward that goal in the past ten years, according to Wald. For example, the tour guide program, under the highly capable guidance of Interpretive Director Cindy Dickinson, has received extensive praise from both visitors and travel organizers. Trip Advisor has declared the Museum to be the number one attraction in Amherst, based on travelers’ reviews. The Museum received a Certificate of Excellence. Wald stated that a cell phone tour and an architectural tour have been added to the guided tour of the landscape.

Wald reported on activities that the Museum sponsors. They include a monthly Dickinson poetry discussion group, a marathon reading of Dickinson’s poetry in the fall, and special events for Dickinson’s birthday on December 10 and May 15, the day of Dickinson’s death. The Museum has sponsored nature related events, a 19<sup>th</sup> Century costume presentation, history related events, author talks, and book signings. A regular event for children is based on a description by Martha Dickinson Bianchi of a circus put

on by Martha and her two brothers as children. The purpose of the event is to introduce young children to Dickinson's poetry. Last year 200 children participated.

Wald stated that for the third time, the Museum will put on a professional development workshop for 80 teachers of kindergarten through grade 12. This event is partially funded by a National Endowment for the Humanities grant. It provides these teachers with both accurate in-depth knowledge about Emily Dickinson and her poetry and helps them prepare lesson plans for teaching Dickinson in the classroom. Training involves participation in lectures, poetry discussions, and field trips.

Wald reported that the Museum Board of Directors has introduced a new award: the "Tell It Slant" award, which is presented periodically at the annual celebration of Dickinson's birthday. Last year the award went to Kay Ryan; this year's winner will be Richard Wilbur.

Wald described several construction and restoration projects at the Museum. A current construction project is the restoration of Dickinson's room. It will involve moving two doorways back to their original location, restoring the floor as it probably was during Dickinson's life, and placing on the walls wallpaper that matches what is believed to have been in the room during Dickinson's later life.

Another project in progress is Replenishing the Shelves, placing copies of the books contained in the houses during Dickinson's life. Donations are being accepted for this project and the restoration of Dickinson's bedroom.

The next project is restoring Dickinson's conservatory. A lot of the original material for the conservatory is still available on the grounds.

Other major projects include the fire suppression system and the heating and ventilation in both houses, and drainage in the cellar of the Evergreens.

Wald named two new employees to the Museum: Erica Martinson, Administrative Coordinator; and Michael Medeiros, Public Relations Coordinator. She also announced three new members of the board of directors: Ellie Lash, John V. Lombardi, and Jonathan Wright. She thanked Cristanne Miller, who is stepping down from the board.

Guerra announced that EDIS is donating \$2,000 to the Museum for the fire suppression system and \$1,000 to the Jones Library, which is the repository of the society's archives.

### **Questions and Comments from Members**

Guerra asked for comments, questions, and announcements from members present.

Eleanor Heginbotham announced the location for the bus hired to deliver conferees to the high tea at the Willard Hotel at 3 p.m. in the afternoon. It would be in the parking lot at Tawes at 2:00 p.m. and then go to the University Inn. She assured attendees that there would be room for more people on the bus, as well as room for luggage. There might be one more slot available at the tea. Heginbotham also announced some plans for the new EDIS Chapter Group in the Washington, D.C. area, including a meeting at a textile factory on September 14 and a marathon reading of Dickinson's poetry in the planning stages.

A member asked if the Society was reaching out to poets in the Mid-Atlantic area, and Petrino asked the member to submit names and email addresses of prospective creative writing members to her.

Daniel L. Manheim stated that he would be sending emails to people who had committed to writing brief articles for the various sessions of the conference. He stated that he still needed someone to cover the trans-Atlantic session and the affect/ecocriticism session. He asked if someone who had good notes on either session would write a short 500-word report on the session and send it to him. He stated that the official deadline is September 1, 2013, for the fall *Bulletin*.

Yanbin King from China was interested in having EDIS consider a conference in China and expressed a need for information on how to teach Dickinson's poetry to English as a Second Language students.

Kate Allen explained that the EDIS website for graduate students has a section for international students and said that the site is looking for institutions who would be willing to host international graduate students in their Dickinson program. She offered to put Yanbin King in contact with the person in charge of the international section of the graduate website.

A professor from India – Mita Bose – asked for information for membership to take back to students in India, where she said the interest in Dickinson is great.

Petrino asked Mita Bose and Yanbin King to send emails to her so she could get them set up with institutional memberships so that EDIS information could be placed in their libraries and students could access the EDIS website.

Anne Ramirez asked if an annual meeting could be dedicated to Dickinson and Shakespeare, and Guerra said that this topic is under consideration for a future annual meeting.

Marilyn Stonum announced that Barbara Leukart, EDIS's legal counsel, is about to retire.

Guerra thanked her and said that the Society would need to search for another lawyer to serve as legal counsel.

Guerra turned the meeting over to the new Society president, Martha Nell Smith.

### **Greetings from Incoming President**

Smith said, "First of all, I just want to say that I am very honored to be the new president of the Emily Dickinson International Society." She stated that Guerra had been unparalleled in leading the Society, and that, although, she is not Guerra, she would do her very best.

She stated that it was a joy to have the conferees at the University of Maryland, and that what makes conferences outstanding is the people who come. She thanked the English department for the free use of the space, which usually rents at a high rate. She thanked the president of the University Wallace Lowe for providing a place to hold the EDIS conference, and in particular, for the use of the president's conference room for the board meeting. She stated that the University wants to show its support of EDIS.

Smith assured the members that they could still purchase tee shirts, posters, coffee mugs, and pins.

Smith also thanked Rebecca Mooney both for her photography at the conference and for her regular efficiency at keeping the EDIS website up to date. She reiterated that requests for additions to the website are usually acted upon within twenty-four hours and at the latest thirty-six hours.

Smith ended the conference by thanking the members present again.

### **Adjournment**

The Members' Meeting was adjourned at 10:13.