

September 2009

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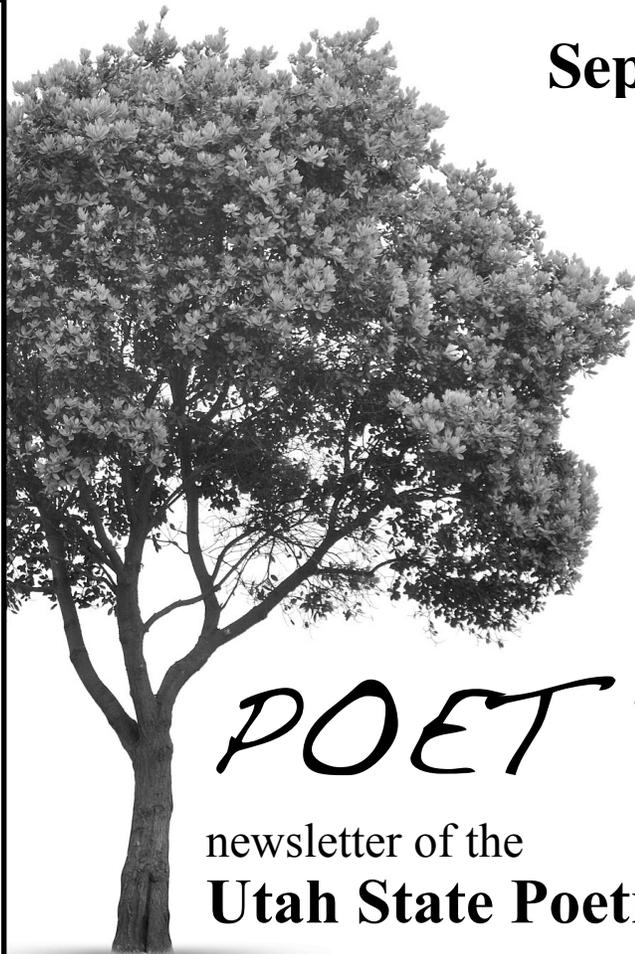
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POET TREE

newsletter of the
Utah State Poetry Society

Mom's Squirrel

Somewhere in the dusty files, my mother wrote a poem
About a squirrel outside her window where she grew up at home.
I see a little wide-eyed country girl, fascinated so,
Peekin' out her upstairs bedroom in Paris, Idaho.

My memory tends to fail me and I can't recall too much
Of what her poem was all about, the point it made and such,
I just remember Momma sayin' how fun it was to know
Bushy was out there to watch on days with sun or snow.

Now a little bushy tail's out there a'fascinatin' me.
He scurries up the spruce and flies from tree to tree,
Storin' up his winter cache as squirrels always do
And I'll look up what your poem's about, but Mom,
this poem's for you.

-- Doug Brewer



President's
Message
from
LaVerna
Johnson

To My USPS Friends

They say nobody gets rich writing poetry, so money cannot be the reason we spend so much time and energy wandering this path together.

Sometimes I wonder if I am just wasting time, because I am pretty sure I will not be remembered as a "great poet"--but then I remember the day we worked as judges at a local high school. These students might, or might not, excel in academics, or qualify for scholarships because of great sports skills, but they blew our socks off with words!

How proud we are of our Junior Creative students who were top prize winners at our NFSPS Annual Convention in Duluth, MN. Over 200 prize-winning students and parents at our USPS April Awards Festival testified that this feeling is shared by many people in Utah as well.

I realize that Utah State Poetry Society members, each with different faiths and varied views, in our own way, touch lives, enrich the world as we comfort, encourage, celebrate, or bring laughter to lighten someone's burden through poetry.

Sometimes we have a message we want desperately to share. We work and rework lines until they shine. But, then, we sometimes catch our breath as words tumble into perfect form and teach us something we never knew before.

When our poems travel out into the world, we can never be sure which roads they will follow or who might be touched. I was surprised to receive this note today from a friend I have not seen or heard from in twenty years--about a poem written in 1983:

"LaVerna. I found this when I was cleaning out some files this summer. I threw PILES away. Your poem was the only thing I saved...it was the thing I was grateful for in my gratitude journal that day! Here it is:

TODAY

*Busy in the process of Becoming,
My eyes were focused on eternity.
Anxious to improve each shining moment,
Determined to become a better me,
Hopefully, I held onto tomorrow.*

*Then, listening, I heard the Savior say,
"I love you child, just as you are this moment.
I love you as you are this hour, this day.
I love you not for your eternal measure,
Nor withhold love until you reach your goal.
So, love yourself as gently as you love others.
Let peace be your companion as you grow."*

"I had been berating myself for my continued imperfections, feeling down on myself...and definitely NOT feeling peace, when I found your poem. It touched me at my core...and I wept.

It was EXACTLY what I needed, EXACTLY when I needed it. I felt like it was a message from Heavenly Father, just for me. And it came through YOU! I love the thought that the Savior loves us for who we are RIGHT NOW, warts and all. My favorite lines are these:

*"So love yourself as gently as you love others.
Let peace be your companion as you grow."*

Again, I remember that each of us, with different faiths and varied views, and in our own way, touch lives, enrich the world as we comfort, encourage, celebrate, or bring laughter to lighten someone's burden.

Sometimes we don't even know when this happens, but it happens. Sometimes we learn of it twenty years later. I think of each of you, of your talents, your goodness--and I remember why I spend time with poetry--and with you, as I follow your great examples.

Most people ignore most poetry
because
most poetry ignores most people.

-- Adrian Mitchell, Poet (1932-2008)

who reads 100 poets writes like 100 poets
who reads 1000 poets writes like herself

-- ancient Chinese poet

CHAPTER REPORTS

Rhyme & Reason by Co-president Kolette Montague

The Rhyme & Reason Chapter continues to meet on the second and fourth Wednesdays of the month at the Bountiful-Davis Art Center. Our *calling committee* reminds members about each meeting. We'd love to have you visit. During the past ten years, organized by Maxine Shreve, we have had over 300 poems displayed on the Poetry Wall at the BDAC. We were saddened in March this year to lose another of our long-time members. Glen Detton, a gentle man and lover of poetry, passed away after a long valiant fight with cancer. Although we are not the fastest-growing chapter, we continue to be active and productive. We are proud that the State President of the past two years, Vera Bakker, is an active member of our chapter. We value our affiliation with the poets of Utah and other state organizations. Got poems? You bet!!

Oquirrh by Marney Hilton Zembrano

Oquirrh Chapter functions despite fluctuating attendance from one month to the next. We are all busy with professional and personal obligations that make it difficult for us to set up a regular meeting schedule and stick to it. Nevertheless, we persevere and participate as circumstances allow. We can almost always count on a couple of "old timers" to show up. Those who want to be involved occasionally miss a month or two due to various conflicts—but they eventually return and blend right back in, as if they've never been away. For example, Elaine Ipson invited a poet who used to be an active member to join us for just one evening. Although she hasn't renewed her membership yet, she hasn't missed a meeting since then, and she brings good poems to share each time.

We had five successful monthly meetings in a row, and then May got away from us—but our June 19 gathering made up for that little setback. Our guest was Gail Gunnarson Schimmelpfennig, and her presentation could not have been more informative or worthwhile. She led a serious discussion, brought cookies for the potluck and a poem for our critique session. Nobody wanted the evening to end.

We voted to adjourn our monthly chapter meetings until September. All things considered, this past year has been kind to us, and we hope to improve and

increase our activities in the years ahead. Besides, we're too dang stubborn to let Oquirrh Chapter cease its operations altogether!

Ben Lomond by Alma Richie

The Ben Lomond Chapter holds a delightful summer poetry party each year during the month of August at the home of Clarence Socwell. All poets are always welcome to attend. We bring potluck, swim in the pool, and have a great poetry read-around.

Les Wade is our new chapter president. Alma Richie will be moving to Ivins, Utah. Les' three assistants are Bill Asplund, Marion Beal, and Mike Bourn.

Robin (Janice) Zito, one of our members, was rescuing a dog in the Ogden river when she slipped and hit her head on a rock. She died the following day. I attended her graveside service, and they released six doves into the air. Very appropriate for a fine poet.

We average about twelve poets at every meeting and all enjoy the camaraderie of colleagues, fine poetry, and the benefit of critique. Namaste.

Valley Winds by Shawn Dallas Stradley

We meet twice each month, on the second and last Wednesday, usually at the Holladay Library. Between five and fifteen members attend the informative and helpful meetings. We begin each class with one of our members reading a poem by a great poet. Our second Wednesday meetings include a class on the art of poetry, about half hour in length, taught by one of our members. Both meetings are about critique. We all bring a poem to share and have critiqued by the attending members. In August we have a garden potluck social at one of the members' homes, and in December we have a holiday party at one of the members' homes.



MEMBERSHIP

Please notify the Membership Chair immediately with **dues, changes of address, email address, and telephone number**. Send dues and address changes to:
Rosalyn Ostler, 7685 Dell Road
Salt Lake City, UT 84121-5221
rosieo1@juno.com, 801.943.4211



Poet of
the Year, 2009

Gail
Gunnarson
Schimmelpfennig

Book Concert: October 10, 2009, 7:00 p.m.
SLC Main Library Auditorium

Born in Ogden, Utah, and attending public schools there, Gail grew up loving language. She wrote her first poem at age 7 and was hooked. She met her husband Scott, a computer hardware expert, while attending Weber State College as an English major. They have lived in Ogden, Provo, Salt Lake City, West Valley, and Sandy, Utah. They have one daughter, Jennifer, a web designer, and one granddaughter, Autumn, a fourth grader. Gail is employed by the Canyons School District and enjoys teaching teenagers about writing. She recently returned to college at Weber State University and completed her English degree, in preparation for a career in teaching English. She also writes nonfiction and science fiction/fantasy. Her interests include anthropology, skiing, needlework of many kinds, basketry, and painting on silk. She is a twenty-four-year volunteer with Girl Scouts of Utah.

Gail's book, The Frozen Kingdom, is a book of poems about her journey through breast cancer. She had been writing seriously for several years before her diagnosis; but during treatment and recovery, writing became a healing practice. She used poetry to shape an overwhelming experience into art and meaning. She now sees her diagnosis of cancer in 2001 as the beginning of a dark and ultimately rewarding experience. At the present time, she has no evidence of cancer recurrence and plans to enjoy a long and healthy life teaching, writing, and being grateful for life.

Gail has previously had poetry published in Utah Sings Vol. VIII, Nine One One, Metaphor, The Trooper, and The Wise Mother. Some of her original ceremonies for Girl Scouts have appeared in Let's Celebrate! She has also published essays in The Wise

Mother. She is frequently awarded prizes for her poetry from the Utah State Poetry Society.

Autumn Adagio

-- Gail Gunnarson Schimmelpfennig

The snow is melting into sodden leaves,
the cold has draped its pall across the sky,
rose petals hang abjectly, limp with grief,
reduced to mourning as they simplify.

The cold has draped a pall across the sky
and I remember all that I have lost;
reduced to mourning as I simplify,
bereft of warmth and tracing lines of frost.

Now I remember all that I have lost
I feel the growing sparseness of my tears,
bereft of warmth and traced in lines of frost;
even grief abates as winter nears.

I feel the growing scarcity of tears,
my cheeks and fingers stiffen in the cold,
even grief subsides as winter nears.
On afternoons like this one, I am old.

My cheeks and fingers stiffen in the cold,
the rose grows limp and shriveled as she grieves.
On afternoons like this one, I am old;
the snow is melting into sodden leaves.

Gail writes about her book:

I believe that everyone suffers. I believe that suffering can be a fruitful root for the creation of art. I invite everyone who has suffered to find in The Frozen Kingdom metaphors for their own struggles.

I was a serious practicing poet before my cancer diagnosis in 2001. It seemed completely natural, even essential, to write about my experiences with cancer. The further I went in my journey, the more I realized how much there was and would continue to be for me to write about. Some of the poems I wrote during chemo were dreadful, thanks to chemo-brain. But I kept writing. Some days it felt like a triumph just to make a poem about it. I wrote angry poems, sad poems, hopeful poems, grim poems, silly poems, and peaceful poems. I wrote about every treatment, every new experience. When I felt afraid and alone, I invented angels to guide me. It took a long time before I could bring myself to write about being bald; that was

the most difficult part for me. My friends in the Poetry Conspiracy supported me in amazing ways. During chemo, when I had no immune system, they stayed home if they had the slightest sniffle, to protect me. They'd compliment me on my hats, they'd listen to my stories, they'd pray for me the days of surgery. At one point, a couple of years after my diagnosis, Doug Oblak asked me when I would be through writing about cancer. I told him I didn't know. I said I'd be writing about cancer as long as cancer poems needed to come out. I wrote cancer poems for years. Finally they slowed to a trickle. My last cancer poem was last year. And bless their hearts, the Poetry Conspiracy stuck with me.

I started entering my book in the Pearle M. Olsen Competition in 2003. Each year I didn't win, I'd tell myself it was because it wasn't good enough yet. So I'd work to take out the weakest poems and add some newer, stronger ones. The name changed three times, because the poem I'd anchored the name to was removed. Finally I realized that I didn't need to apologize for my mythology poems. During treatment, I'd sought out every death-and-rebirth myth I could find, and I wrote about many of them. I realized that those mythology poems carried a central metaphor, and they should become the basis for the title. I once again reorganized the poems, this time around the title The Frozen Kingdom. The title refers to the Greek vision of the Underworld where Hades holds Persephone prisoner. I felt cancer could be compared to a strange country, or to a kind of death or underworld. I think a lot of survivors find themselves different persons when they come to the end of their journey through cancer. I know I did.

I feel profoundly blessed to be the 2009 USPS Poet of the Year. This is an amazing opportunity. I know there are others whose work is terrific who have not yet been chosen. I certainly encourage them to keep trying. I think, if any lesson can be learned from my win, it is that we can write about our most painful and difficult experiences; and sometimes those are the poems that best succeed in connecting with others.

Please come to my book concert on October 10th at the main downtown SLC library. And chapter presidents, I would love to visit every chapter in the state to read, discuss, and share. Please e-mail me about a schedule that works well for you. I'm willing to come before the book concert, as well as after. I had a great time with Marney and the Oquirrh chapter out in Tooele a few weeks ago. Come fall I will need to

adjust around my work schedule, but I very much want to come. I'm also happy to do readings at bookstores or libraries or gatherings. Feel free to ask! My e-mail is gailsch@gatekeepers.com, and I'm on Facebook. My website will be frozenkingdom.com.

The Air I Breathe

-- Vicki Wheeler

The air I breathe is filled with astral vibes,
those elements enhanced for earthly life.
When breathing in I blend my life with all
the truth and spirit of Infinity.
This universal mix infuses me
and my connection to the cosmic heights.

Then soon released with my exotic stamp
to travel on into this New Age soup
that kindles and engenders other worlds
on planes we have not yet explored nor seen.
I bid my contribution well, exhale
and pray that I may have bestowed some spark
that will give solace and creative balm
to others' lives and thoughts in other planes.

Ideas and their pals, creative deeds,
beget those other life-essential needs.

*Vicki's first book Satin, Lace, & Rusty Nails,
just published by Xlibris, is now in book stores.

CHAPARRAL POETRY CONTEST

For a great local poetry contest, check out the website www.redrockwriters.org. This is a wonderful contest associated with a fantastic event. Entries postmarked July 1, 2009 - November 1, 2009.

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POET TREE deadline, March 2010

Just a friendly reminder that **all** materials and information for the next issue of Poet Tree, March 2010, need to be completed, prepared, and emailed to Shawn Dallas Stradley, Poet Tree Editor, by **January 11, 2010**. Thank you.

NFSPS CONTEST WINNERS

I am impressed! I always am with the group of poets from Utah. There were many winners in many categories in the national contest, and they are listed here. (Due to space constraints only 1st, 2nd, 3rd, HM1 and HM2 are listed.) Congratulations to all!

50: Student Award -- 2HM, Jacey Jacobs, "And We Wonder Why the Roses are Dying." 2nd, Maria Maraekova, "When I Came to America."

49: San Antonio Poets Association -- 3HM, Juanita Watts, "Sacred Places." 1st, Maurine Haltiner, "Gathering Place."

48: Gingerbread Poets -- 3rd, Grace Jessen "Lamentation." 2nd, Merrijane Rice, "Autumn Calls." 1st, LaVerna B. Johnson, "Oleander Snow From Yucca Flat."

46: Mississippi Poetry Society -- 1st, Grace Diane Jessen, "Invitation."

44: Wyopoets Award -- 3rd, Elaine W. Christensen, "The Snake."

42: New Jersey Poetry Society -- 1HM, Kolette Montague, "Walking the Strand with Mary Oliver." 3rd, Glenn Pruden, "Speaking of Flowers." 1st, Maurine Haltiner, "Needles and Girls."

40: Lighten Your Life -- 2HM, LaVerna B. Johnson, "Statistics: What Women Think About Their Ass." 1HM, Martha P. Morrise, "Charley Horse."

39: Poetry Society of Michigan -- 3rd, Maurine Haltiner, "Red Alert."

38: Poetry Soc. of Tennessee Dorsimbra -- 1HM, Clarence P. Socwell, "Under Leaden Skies." 1st, Kolette Montague, "The Danger of Shadows."

37: Massachusetts State Poetry Society -- 2nd, Sue Ranglack, "Sky Writing."

36: Ben Lomond Poets Award -- 1HM, Elaine W. Christensen, "Memorial Day, 1996." 1st, Sue Ranglack, "Musings of the Night Owl."

34: The Minute Award -- 2HM, Elaine W. Christensen, "Crimson Song." 1HM, Vera Ogden Bakker, "Moody Weather." 2nd, Grace Diane Jessen, "Daily Exercise." 1st, Martha P. Morrise, "Malocclusion."

32: Dorman John Grace Memorial -- 2HM, N. Colwell Snell, "Libby's Monument."

30: Barbara Stevens Memorial -- 1HM, Theda Bassett, "Merinos at the Seashore."

28: Joseph V. Hickey Memorial -- 2HM, Sue Ranglack, "New Year's Eve in Manchester."

27: Missouri State Poetry Society -- 3rd, Kathy Larson, "Gathering."

26: Our American Indian Heritage -- 3rd, Eric H. Read, "The Grandfathers Speak." 2nd, Markay Brown, "Torn."

25: Humorous Poetry Award -- 2HM, Kolette Montague, "All Tolloed." 1HM, Martha P. Morrise, "Clothes-Minded." 1st, LaVerna B. Johnson, "Seniors Breakfast Special."

24: Ohio -- 2nd, Maurine Haltiner, "Winter Reflection." 1st, Kathryn Clement, "The Scullery Maid."

21: Morton D. Prouty & Elsie S. Prouty Mem. -- 1HM, M M Fisher, "Sunday, Sketching in Dry Wash." 1st, Kathryn E. Clement, "Rannoch Moor, Scotland."

18: League of Minnesota Poets -- 1st, Elaine Christensen, "Circling the Sun."

17: New York Poetry Forum -- 2HM, Kolette Montague, "Mad Dogs and Poets."

15: William Stafford Memorial -- 2HM, Sue Ranglack, "Waiting for the Dog." 1st, Eric H. Read, "The Pirate's Secret Box."

14: Arizona State Poetry Society -- 1st, Sue Ranglack, "Poetry Redux."

12: Indiana State Federation of Poetry Clubs 3rd, Eric Read, "Vision Quest."

8: Utah State Poetry Society -- 2HM, Juanita B Watts, "Timeline." 3rd, Gay N. Blanchard, "This Land." 2nd, Sue Ranglack, "Wagon Wheels in Reverse."

6: Poetry Society of Texas -- 1HM, Elaine Christensen, "The Night I Was Conceived." 3rd, N. Colwell Snell, "The Gambler." 2nd, Sue Ranglack, "Dreaming in Ice."

2: Winners' Circle -- 2HM, Maurine Haltiner, "Stallion with Mare – Oil on Canvas."

1: NFSPS Founders Award

2HM, Marilyn Bushman-Carlton, "Mrs. Anne Shakespeare Waits for William."

NFSPS Convention, a final word (thanks, Bob)

Nationals this June, besides being one of the most expensive, was one of the best. The weather and scenery in Duluth, top of the line. The panel workshops, one of the best ideas yet. The usual troop of Utah writers to the winners' podium, a warm fuzzy as usual. All the grand rooms and good food did not make up for missing the people who could not afford to go. One positive above all: The contest chair read the honorable mentions uninterrupted. This made Sunday evening end at 9:30 instead of midnight. Let's hope Memphis goes as well and a whole lot cheaper.

-- Bob Frederickson



ROUND ROBIN

Looking for help and encouragement? A poetry snail-mail round robin might be the niche for you. When you join, you have several other people read your poems and make favorable comments and suggestions. You also read and critique poems of the other members. Join today by writing to:

Clarence Socwell (poetcps@comcast.net)
2737 N. 650 East, Ogden, UT 84414

Include your name, address, phone number, and email address (used only for contact or questions). When four to six participants inquire, their names will be added to a group, and you will receive the first round by regular mail. -- Clarence P. Socwell



**USPS CONTEST NEWS--A
CONTEMPLATED CHANGE**

Contest Rules and Category details will be available at www.utahpoets.com by October 31, 2009. We can save postage by using our website to get contest info to most members. Those without email will receive contest info in the mail. If you prefer having yours mailed to you, contact us at (801) 489-7707 or (801) 885-6596. Nad and Markay Brown.

Grandpa's Game

-- Steven Leitch

"I got you and you can't get out!"
I hold you tightly and then,
as you struggle and strain to break free,
I loosen my grip just enough
to allow you to slip from my grasp.
You delight in your escape.
I revel in your laughter.
You instantly return to me for another hold.
You fall into my arms with feigned innocence.
Again I am the villain, and growl and grab
an arm, a leg, and bind you for another game.
I could dominate, prevail and make my hold
inescapable,
but I let you stealthily slip through my arms again
to hear that laughter and see your joy.
"I got you and you can't get out!"
You may skulk from my grasp when we play
this silly game,
but you will never escape from my heart.
My hold is much too tight.

CRITIQUE BUREAU

USPS members may submit 12 poems a year for FREE critiques from seasoned Utah poets (\$5 for nonmembers, checks to USPS). Guidelines:

- Send 1 to 4 poems per batch, maximum 5 pages, one poem per page, typed on standard 8.5x11 white paper. Send only one copy of each. Place name and address on upper right corner of each poem. Staple poems together only when a poem is two pages.
- A book manuscript may be submitted with a \$15 reader's fee (checks to USPS) and two manila envelopes large enough to forward and return the manuscript. Put adequate postage on both envelopes. One envelope should contain your name and address as receiver; leave the other blank for forwarding to a critic. Allow a month for return.
- Remember, each critic has a different approach to a poem. If you would like another viewpoint, you may return the poem or poems for another review.
- Address submission to: USPS Critique Bureau
c/o Dr. Lavon B. Carroll
1742 25th S., Ogden UT 84401
or
c/o Elaine Ipson
449 Country Club Dr., Stansbury Park, UT 84074

CALENDAR FALL 2009 - SPRING 2010

- October 10, Friday, 7:00pm - Book Concert
SLC Main Library, Main Auditorium
- November 14, Saturday, 10am-12pm, **Workshop***
Speaker: Joyce Davis -- *In The Grove, In Sublette's
Barn & Other Online Poetry Places*
- January 5, USPS Membership postmark deadline
- January 9, Saturday, 10am-12pm, **Workshop***, TBA
- January 11, POET TREE deadline - March Issue
- February 1, USPS Contest postmark deadline
- February 13, Saturday, 10am-12pm, **Workshop***, TBA
- March 11-13, Redrock Writing Seminar†
- March 13, Saturday, 10am-12pm, **Workshop***
Speaker: Marianne Klekacz
- April 23-24, Friday and Saturday
USPS Awards Festival
- June 10-13, NFSPS Convention, Memphis, TN
- June 15th - July 31, 2010, Panorama submissions being
accepted (refer to page 3 of your 2009 Panorama for
more details). Submissions are to be sent to the editor,
Bethany Ng, 5217 South Heath Ave, Kearns, UT
84118-6848. (No emails please.)
- *USPS Workshops:** at Bountiful-Davis Art Center, 745
South Main, Bountiful, 10am-12pm. Take Bountiful
500 South exit and proceed east to Main St. Turn
south on Main to the Art Center. A fun tradition: lunch
afterward with other USPS members.



†**Redrock Writers Seminar:** Enjoy the 14th Annual
Redrock Writing Seminar in St. George, Utah. March
11-13, 2010. "Redrock Writers feature outstanding
authors and poets, and have kept registration at \$50."
For information, registration, please contact D. Gary
Christian: viking@bajabb.com.
www.redrockwriters.org

Any healthy man can go without food for
two days - but not without poetry.

-- Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867)

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Critique Bureau Dr. LaVon B. Carroll
& Elaine Ipson
Photographer..... Esther Phelps Jackson
Poetry Week Theda Bassett

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Elaine Ipson, Kolette Montague, Joel Passey,
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CHAPTER PRESIDENTS

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Dixie (St. George)..... Candy Fowler
Oquirrh (Tooele)..... Marney Zambrano
Rhyme and Reason (Bountiful)..... Kolette Montague
Valley Winds (SLC)..... Paul M. Ford
Word Weavers (Utah Valley) Julie Nelson