



IDAHO STATE
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY

IDAHO STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY REFERENCE SERIES

IDAHO POET LAUREATES

Number 473

Updated 1989

In 1923, Governor C. C. Moore appointed Irene Welsh Grissom of Idaho Falls to be Idaho's first Poet Laureate. She held this position until 1948, when she moved from the state.

Governor C. A. Robins then appointed Sudie Stuart Hager of Kimberly in February of 1949 to be Idaho's Second Poet Laureate. These were the only Poet Laureates Idaho had. After the death of Mrs. Hager in 1982, it was decided to broaden the spectrum and that designation was replaced with the Writer-In-Residence Program.

The Idaho Writer-In-Residence Program was initiated by Governor Evans, the Idaho Commission on the Arts, and the Idaho Humanities Council "to award excellence in Idaho writing and to increase the awareness of Idaho's writers in communities around the state. The Writer-In-Residence receives a \$10,000 stipend over two years and visits twenty Idaho communities to read and talk with students of literature in the schools and community centers of each town."

The first Writer-In-Residence, 1984-1985, was Ron McFarland of the University of Idaho at Moscow. His poetry is noted for its wide range of subject matter and wit. McFarland wrote The Villanelle: The Evolution of a Poetic Form published in 1987 by the University of Idaho Press. He edited with William Studebaker, Idaho Poetry, A Centennial Anthology, published in 1988 by University of Idaho Press. With Hugh Nichols he produced Norman McClain, published by Confluence Press in 1988.

The second Writer-In-Residence, 1986-1987, was Robert Wrigley of Lewis-Clark State College in Lewiston. Wrigley is the author of several books of poetry including Moon in a Mason Jar, published by the University of Illinois Press. He was invited by James Dickey to read in honor of Robert Penn Warren at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. He is also a recipient of Fellowships from both the National Endowment for the Arts and the Idaho Commission on the Arts.

Eberle Umbach of McCall is the third Writer-In-Residence, for the term 1988-1989. While a student at Oberlin College, Ohio, Umbach received the Snell Scholarship Award for Fiction. She received a master's degree in fiction from Johns Hopkins University in 1986. She has taught creative writing at Oberlin College and creative writing and contemporary American literature at Johns Hopkins University. She worked as an editorial assistant with a literary agency and is writing a novel set in Idaho.

Information on the Writer-In-Residence Program is from the Idaho Commission on the Arts Touring Roster, 1990-1991.

Publications--450 N. 4th Street, Boise, ID 83702--208-334-3428