

LETTER TO HELEN KEITH BEAMAN  
April 16, 2011

Dear Helen,

It has been suggested that I say a word or two today--to say that I forgive you, my poet friend, compatriot, our President Elect who soon would take my place as President of Utah's State Society of Poets. You would become leader of our flock--and I would rest for a season. But you left us all in shock. You left...

1. But, I do. I forgive you  
for running out on us, stage left, just when our state poetry convention, next week, was balanced nicely on your shoulders, all the hard work neatly done.

The bricks have now all tumbled down and we're trying to rebuild. You it was, who knew the way to make old barns become cathedrals, always adding elegance to everything you willed, and at our state convention, how we will miss you.

But, I forgive you, and quite frankly, there are other things I feel I must forgive you for:

2. I forgive you  
for writing poems that sang to stars while my hard lines were gargling and learning how to spit, for winning publication as our Poet of the Year while all of us were waiting in the wings, hopes dangling in dejection--although we cheered for you.

3. I forgive you  
for being small, petite, and graceful as a dancer as you move, while I stumble along. You reassure me I am regal, and not a clumsy cow--head down, mowing the pasture--you a butterfly above me, glittering.

4. I forgive you  
for being beautiful in the morning, even before you put "your face" on, for your knack of knowing which odd color will look radiant reflecting

other shades, your scarves a flutter as you smile and move around the room.

5. I forgive you

for gathering us like Pine Nuts in your pack of poems and dreams, singing snatches and songs with sisters, Mary, and Karen, for nurturing lonely hearts with gifts of music--and for sometimes bringing chocolate to Pine Valley's Read Arounds--for always begging one more poem before we quit and called it a night!

6. I forgive you

for carrying your scriptures as you travel through the world, suggesting--no matter how tired we thought we were--that we each take turns and read aloud-- in Ireland, Pine Valley, in Minnesota, Oklahoma, Tennessee--for carrying your faith in God in the satchel of your heart for easy access, for opening your testimony like a velvet case of jewels that you would share with everyone, because you love so much.

7. I forgive you

for being born into a different family than mine, because, truly, you, and I, Karen, and Mary--we are really sisters. Perhaps the Lord is right, and we should understand--we ARE one big family through His gospel plan. I think you did understand, because you were constantly gathering new brothers and sisters from everywhere, loving them just the way they are--and almost as much as you and Bruce love each other, your children, your grandchildren.

8. Lastly, Helen, I forgive you

for leaving without asking. We would have answered, "No, you are too young, we need you far, far too much to let you go." But, I know our Father in Heaven welcomed you with arms outstretched, that Heaven sang for joy--though we're bereft without you.

And, since you love family so much, and since you're going home, and since our Savior loves us-- and we WILL see you again--

Dear Helen, I forgive you.

LaVerna B. Johnson

