

**Pearle M. Olsen Book Award Winners**  
**April 24, 2010**

First Place: *Walking The Earth Barefoot* by Rosalyn W. Ostler

Second Place: *It's Not About The Fish* by Lee C. Snell

Third Place: *When Nothing Else Will Burn* by Markay Brown

Honorable Mention: *Desert Voices* by Patricia A. Kimber  
*Legacy Of Starlight* by Grace Diane Jessen

Judge: James W. Cushing, California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo, CA

Ph.D. University of California, Irvine, 1983

Primary Fields: Ancient, Romanticism, Modern Literature. He has published three books of his poetry, all with Cahuenga Press in Los Angeles: *You and the Night and the Music* (1991), *The Length of an Afternoon* (1999), and *Undercurrent Blues* (2005). In 1994 he received *Renegade Magazine's* "Warlord of the Subculture" Award. He hosts "Miles Ahead," a weekly jazz program on Cal Poly radio station KCPR. He won the College of Liberal Arts Distinguished Lecturer Award in 2005. He joined the lecturer faculty in 1989.

Comments on the winners of the 2010 Utah contest  
by James Cushing,  
Poet Laureate, San Luis Obispo, CA

This year's first place winning manuscript, "Walking the Earth Barefoot," offers compelling evidence of a mind and spirit attuned to the moment-by-moment drama of our dealings with the natural environment. The drama is now gentle, now harsh; at once full of memory and expectation, the poems contemplate the mystery unfolding at the edge of awareness:

The things I don't know  
are staring at me again...

In the dawn, weeping birches stand  
like old men, white-bearded  
in the milky air,  
waiting for answers.

("Christmas Fog")

The tone is respectful, muted, devoted to what it sees and gleans.

The second-place winner, "It's Not About the Fish," has enough poems about teaching to suggest the author's profession - and the classroom poems are funny and honest enough to convey how devoted to that profession he is:

Student: *what is integrity?*

Teacher: *Find out. It is germane  
to your paper.*

Student: *what is germane?*

Teacher: *find out.*

("Whatever It Is, I Don't Need It")

In other poems, this witty, well-read man takes us fishing and hunting, walks with Coleridge and dances with Dr. Seuss. His evocations of prairie life are honest and powerful.

Coming in third place, "When Nothing Else Will Bum" opens with a poem that indicates nicely the author's sense of why poetry matters:

Any of us could feel alone,  
yet bonded in the same firelight...

The last stick fades.  
No more moon magic.  
We remove an ember to tend in cold grates,  
kindle on days  
                  when nothing else will bum.

("Possibilities With Fire")

Poetry to this writer is a kind of fire that warms, illuminates, cleanses and gives energy. In her medium, she dances to Ray Charles, sends grown children off to college, visits Dylan Thomas' writing room, and maintains a hard-won balance.

The two honorable mention manuscripts are "Desert Voices" and "Legacy of Starlight." While not as consistent or coherent as the three winners, both these collections offer clear narrative poems that respect the reader's heart and descriptive poems that sing the land's integrity. One section of "Desert Voices" stands out: called "Beyond Smoldering Embers," it explores the poignant fate of Native Americans.