

A CURATED COLLECTION OF CREATIVE WRITING

BY SOURCEPOINT MEMBERS

# Writing From The **SOURCE** 2025









# *A Message From Joan*

When I began the journey of facilitating a creative writing group years ago, I didn't expect to still be offering it more than twenty years later. What I knew, and confirmed, was that writing is an important form of self-expression. Just as some can paint beautiful images with paints and brushes, others create images and take us places with their mastery of words.

Writing can allow us to ease feelings that we are experiencing: grief, tragedy, trauma as well as celebrate beauty, life, positive awe, gratitude, life reflection and so much more. Each time I step into the Creative Writing groups, I leave having traveled with those present to other places. The writers make us laugh, cry, contemplate...feel things. Oftentimes we experience similar feelings or can relate, and it solidifies the bond that we share during these magical times together. Each writer is different, yet the writings unite us.

Each month, several writing prompts are shared. There is some "in class" writing, but most of the writings are done at home. Writers have five minutes in the group to share their writing. They may write about a topic that they choose, or they may respond to the writing prompts that I share. There is a combination of these writings included. We have learned about different kinds of writing—six-word memoir, diamante, haiku and poetry. We have responded to sounds, photographs, quotes and more.

Over the years, I have had the honor of observing writers as they gained confidence and became better writers, in being proud to be a witness as writers created characters that they wrote books about and published, and of seeing their works published in a variety of publications. I am so encouraged by the wonderful human support that comes from the camaraderie of sharing from our souls.

Please enjoy this, our first e-publication. Thank you to the committee for choosing the writings for this publication. Thank you to Lisa Brammer for bringing it to life.

Happy reading,

Joan Pearce, SourcePoint Arts and Education Manager and grateful Creative Writing facilitator







# *A Message From the Editors*

As editor of My Communicator, I enjoy the opportunity to read members' creative writing each quarter. This e-publication has given me the perfect chance to read more and appreciate the unique voices in our community. I am in awe of the talent in this building on any given day.

~ Alison Yeager, SourcePoint Chief Advancement Officer

I am thrilled to be part of this publication, which highlights 19 talented SourcePoint writers. Reviewing each submission was a welcome journey of emotions, ranging from heartwarming to heartbreaking. Each piece left an impression on me and ignited a spark of inspiration. To the authors, I extend my heartfelt gratitude for sharing your beautiful and creative works with us.

To the readers, thank you for celebrating the exceptional creativity of our members.

~ Lisa Brammer, SourcePoint Digital Media Coordinator

I was honored to be asked to review the writing submissions from SourcePoint members. I was impressed with the overall quality of all of the submissions and enjoyed reading them.

~ Jim Davenport

It was an honor and a pleasure to be one of the reviewers of the creative writings of some of the SourcePoint members. I thoroughly enjoyed reading their pieces, many of which had very insightful thoughts of life after 55. These are just a few examples of the many talented SourcePoint members and the leadership here that inspires us.

~ Lora Davenport







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*Wendy Bauder*

## WHERE EVERYBODY KNOWS YOUR NAME

The theme song of a well-loved sitcom begins this way: Sometimes you want to go where everybody knows your name. And they're always glad you came. I am a concierge at SourcePoint and the words to that familiar song frequently flit through my mind. I know that the people who walk the halls at SourcePoint were once big names, known names, beloved names. They are former bank presidents, artists, musicians, first responders, and educators on every level. They carried business cards, owned companies, and supervised teams of people. They answered to the name of professor, captain, doctor. At one time their names were well known in their circles, and their opinion was respected. But somewhere along the line things changed. They aged. Their kids moved away, they retired, spouses died. Over time, coworkers lost touch, fewer people asked for their opinion, and others forgot to include them. It is the fault of no one and nothing. It simply is. Now titles sound remote instead of respectful, and the titles 'sir' or 'ma'am' are just one more example that no one recognizes their name.

Companies do try though. I went to a local coffee shop last week. The barista glanced at me and said, "Do you have our App?" When I said no, she asked for my name. While I stood and waited for my order, my cynical writer's brain went through a series of thoughts. If I'd wanted to order my coffee through a mobile App, I could have. But this particular establishment is merely convenient, not a favorite. I could also be sitting in the line of 7 cars in the drive-through. But instead, I was here in person. I watched the barista gather my items and frown at the order screen. She hadn't written my name down even though she asked for it. I stepped forward. "Wendy," I said. "Right," she answered, and slid my order across the counter.





## WHERE EVERYBODY KNOWS YOUR NAME

In a polar opposite experience, I met a woman who repeated my name so many times it began to sound strange to my own ears. I felt sure we both knew what my name was and it was almost embarrassing to keep hearing it. Using a person's name in the course of conversation is actually a tactic taught as a means to remember a particular person because when you repeat their name, you are cementing the image of their face in your mind along with it.

When I was a kid, my parents had an insurance agent whose name was Ed Mudd. I never met him but I remember his name to this day. Why? Because he was constantly thrusting his name in front of us. Every birthday, anniversary and Christmas my parents received a greeting card from Ed Mudd. It became a source of laughter in our family. "Hey Mom, you got a birthday card from Ed Mudd." I'm sure Ed Mudd didn't know my parents beyond their insurance policy - and my parents couldn't have cared less that his office generated greeting cards on his behalf - but what brilliant marketing on his part.

Enter SourcePoint, an establishment made up of a select group of people who assist others in navigating life after 55. At the conclusion of my tours as a concierge for SourcePoint, I perform what I call 'the hand off.' I'll lead the prospective SourcePoint member to the business desk. "Here is Leigh," I'll say. Or Mary. Or whomever happens to be working that day. I'll finish the introduction with, "Ask them anything. If they don't know the answer, they'll find out." As I walk away I'll usually hear the SourcePoint staffer greet the new person by name. We're not always in a place where everybody knows our name, but it sure is nice when we are.







*Donna Bingham*

## I SAW YOU TODAY

I saw you today from afar.  
I was in the coffee shop,  
You were leaving your car.  
You looked so handsome  
In your dark wool coat  
With the plaid scarf I gave you  
Wrapped around your throat.

You walked around and  
Opened her door.  
As I stood there watching,  
My heart sank to the floor.  
She stepped out in heels  
And a dress, whereas  
I stood there watching  
In sweatpants, I confess.

A flashback of times  
We shared long ago,  
The first blush of love  
And our hearts aglow.

My heart wasn't ready  
And I built up a wall.  
You were secure  
And I felt so small.

So undeserving of  
Your splendid gift,  
So, I sent you away  
And set myself adrift.  
I look at you now  
And wonder, what if,  
My life would be now  
Had I been less stiff.

What would have changed  
When I feared a new life,  
Had I said yes  
To being your wife.





*Janeene “JJ” Jackson*

## THE STORIES WITHIN ME

The world is an overflowing book for my imagination. I watch a butterfly have words with a flower who invites it in for drinks. A bird twitters in the tree above me, joined by a second to sing a duet to the elderly lady on the bench below.

Across the road, a man walking his dog stops to chat with the postman, no doubt passing on a secret message about the couple in house #22. They're under surveillance, you see, not only by the dog, but also by the woman sweeping off the sidewalk in front of her bookstore.

A whiff of hot cinnamon rolls beckons me towards the bookstore's nearest neighbor, the baker, as he props his door open and calls good morning to her. She smiles and, with a quick glance around, seizes the moment to step inside the bakery with him. The start of a beautiful relationship?

A kitten cries at my feet, and I stoop to pet it. How did it get out? Where was it from? Was it lost? A raucous car horn startles the kitten, and it darts into a nearby garden where it ducks under the porch to safety.

All this occurs within the first 15 minutes of my morning stroll down the sidewalk of Small Town, USA. The stories abound here, just waiting to be set to paper. My fingers itch to grab my pen and dive in...





*Robin Knowles Wallace*

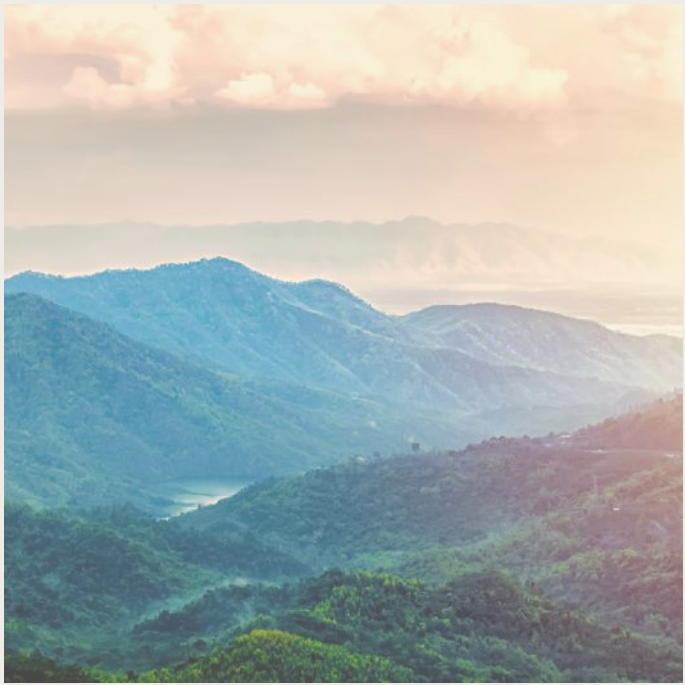
## DISCOVERING AN UNMAPPED ROAD

In the late 1950s on vacation in New Hampshire's White Mountains, on Sunday afternoons my father's joy was getting lost off the map, finding roads not yet charted. That is not my joy; I am a planner. I like to look at maps and know where I am going. I am proud that I can speak "left/right" and "north/south." Even though I have begun many life journeys without knowing the destination, I still have had at least some sort of map in my head.

So, when I decided in the late 2010s that my retirement could take place on two continents over each year, I felt both adventurous and satisfied. I had discovered the previous decade the joy of solo travel in English-speaking countries. The thought of maybe living in a walkable village within the United Kingdom, with a river nearby, and ideally with some ancient ruins to wander and wonder in gave me joy. I had convinced myself that I could do that, at least for several months each year in retirement after June 2021.

Then came the worldwide pandemic in 2020. I felt so blessed to have gone to Scotland and then England, twice across the ocean in 2019, while I could. Then in the spring of 2022, I was hit with serious physical pain, and my energy evaporated. It took almost two years to get my pain and energy under some control. I was faced with the limitations of my chronic disease, the challenges of energy for daily tasks, and a sense that deep peace needed to be my focus now for my life. There was grief for what reasonably would not be. I needed to find some roads not yet clear on the map I had considered for the rest of my life.

During the pandemic, on one of my masked ten-minute-in-and-out-of-a-bookstore trips, I picked up *A Complete Guide to Slow Living* (a one-time publication from the United Kingdom). In an article reminiscing about travel, there were small pictures of lovely places with the words "Can't get there? Try this for inspiration instead," followed by suggestions such as:





## DISCOVERING AN UNMAPPED ROAD

- Why not plan a day trip with your favorite food and activities?
- Head out for a walk early in the morning and enjoy the peace when few people are around.

Ah, roads and spaces not on my original “retirement map.” Time to find roads not yet traveled.

It has been easier than I might have imagined to find things in my life to compensate for the global places I miss. I have pictures and memories I love from past trips, along with travel books from those places and more. Public television has travel shows to watch and their Passport streaming service includes dramas set in different countries. Movies, especially if filmed somewhere I have actually been, and music of all sorts can take me away. There are novels to take me to places I know or to those where I have not yet been. In 2024 alone, I traveled through novels to 13 countries—including Botswana, India, Norway, and Palestine—as well as to times long ago, and to experiences beyond my own. Through political news, my religious denomination, and daily playing a geographic online game, [worldle.teuteuf.fr](https://worldle.teuteuf.fr/), I am reminded to pray and help people in countries around the world.

Locally, I am privileged to live on the edge of a travelable city with a good art museum, parks galore, with restaurants, vegan bakeries, and coffee shops for carryout. Daily walks around my neighborhood with my daughter give me some time in civilized nature while still providing animals—dogs, cats, the occasional deer, geese, ducks, and a rabbit, and children to see. The eclipse and aurora borealis in 2024 provided awe and wonder. I have friends I meet on a regular basis for lunch. On my weekly trip to the drive-up window at the local library, I have options of traveling by the river or through wooded residential streets. The space I live in has reminders of travel and family around me in pictures, books, and souvenirs.

Every day I am thankful for moments that remind me that my life is still full of beauty, awe, and delight. A little joy from my father’s sense of adventure has seeped into my life—finding a road that was not on my map.





*Emerson Laird*

## FORGING CIVIL DISCOURSE

The anvil spews conflicted elements.  
The hammer melds all doubt.  
Stray shards of enlightenment  
thrust javelins into the cauldron of thought.

The demise  
of inertia  
accelerates  
any intrinsic idea.

Wordsmithing  
any biased consensus  
enhances  
polite coexistence.

In conversation  
waning doubt  
allows compromised opinions roiling in the cauldron  
to be measurably ladled out.

Ubiquitous Wisdom  
counsels meritoriously  
the mindful art  
of speaking eclectically.





*Tony Marconi*

## SONG OF THE ROADWAY DOOR

...three hundred miles,  
    ahead the road more visible  
    as the land dissolves in the pink light  
                                of almost dawn

you sit beside me,  
    eyes fixed and restful on my face,  
    offering hot coffee from a thermos  
                                while the farm news  
                                breaks morning music  
                                on a local station

i could be here forever,  
    moving toward an unfamiliar place,  
    held by speed and the vibrating engine,  
                        touched by the warmth of your breath

i could be here forever,  
    even as day turns into twilight;  
        you borne lightly on sheets stiffly cleaned,  
        wrapping your strength within, around mine;  
        prepared for tomorrow's miles

we and machines;  
    only we moving, moving;  
                                i could be here forever...







*Marcia Mistry*

## THE BARREN ROOM

Abandoned. This music room is lifeless. Jenni's death stole her ambiance from the atmosphere. Her tone perished. The starkness of this space awakens me. I realize singing duets together has ceased. This bleak area magnifies my emptiness. It mirrors my heart – hollow without her harmony.

My pulse dwindles. I sink in sadness and my body pulls me to my knees. Sorrow overwhelms me. Tears shower my cheeks and bubbles of pain pound my chest. My heart, saturated with sadness, longs to hug her. I reach into my memory and search. I remember the songs we sang, but I no longer hear her voice. Each tune scrapes my wound. Painfully, I peel these musical memories, threading a quilt of loss. Each melody I remember is a stitch in my arduous journey. Weeks of grief challenge me as I recapture our special days.

Eventually, my aching heart begins to mend. I accept the loss. I remember Jenni's kind character, and thoughts of her friendship cuddle me. She encouraged me to use my talent. Can my heart start humming again? Hinting at a purr, its vibration introduces a smile. My misery begins to mellow. Jenni's touch is not tangible, but I hold those gracious times we shared. Although I can't imagine singing yet, I embrace the echoes of her friendship. Her love is engraved in the gap in my heart. It's her epitaph of compassion that I'll carry within me.





*Carl Von Patterson*

## MY LAST FIVE MINUTES

In desperation, Mrs. Perry, my sixth-grade teacher, finally yelled, "You will never, ever get them back. They are gone forever! Our mouths, now quiet, hung open. We looked at her in disbelief. We wondered what she meant. After recess, she had a rule that we had to be quiet before we entered her classroom. However, after our time on the playground, we didn't want to "settle down and be quiet" as we stood outside her classroom. Mrs. Perry had been attempting to make us all stop talking and be quiet. She had tried, without success, to "shhhh" us, but we continued talking. After her outburst, she saw the confused look on our faces and explained, "You just wasted five minutes of your life. You will never, ever get those five minutes back again." Some of us laughed. Others were quiet. No one understood what she meant.

Later, she wrote on the board, *"Lost time is never found again."* — Benjamin Franklin

As a boy, I enjoyed attending the county fair. I have great memories of warm summer breezes, the sounds of laughing children on amusement rides, and the feel of fluffy cotton candy in my mouth. I loved to watch the man at the cotton candy machine swirl the cardboard stick around to capture the strands of cotton candy like a silky cocoon. I would take a handful of the fluffy stuff and pop it in my mouth. After a moment, the big wad of cotton candy would disappear, and only a little bit of sugary goo would remain.

I retired several years ago, and Mrs. Perry's words have returned to me





## MY LAST FIVE MINUTES | CARLVON PATTERSON

recently. When I want to connect with others, I spend five minutes checking my email. When I want to know what is happening in the world, I take five minutes to visit my favorite news opinion site.

And when I want to chill, I flip through funny video shorts for five minutes. But I never seem to stop after just five. The minutes keep adding up. Pretty soon, I look at my watch and see that 15, 30, or 60 minutes have passed. I realize that it is so easy to “kill time” with social media. Suddenly, I hear the words of Mrs. Perry: “You just wasted five minutes of your life. You will never, ever get those minutes back again. They are gone forever.”

Social media is the cotton candy of our time. It appears important, inviting, and delicious. Yet after a moment, there is hardly anything left, except a fuzzy memory. This realization makes me regret how I have spent my time with nothing to show for it. But it is so tempting to grab another handful.





*Donald E Pearse, Sr.*

## GENIE IN A BOTTLE

Genie was a happy-go-lucky figment of people's imaginations. One night, he became attached to Patrick O'Donnell's imagination. He was having a ball, since Patrick was a robust, elderly Irishman having a merry old time in a pub. He had just put the finishing touches on a bottle of Irish Mint Liquor when his buddies bet him that he could not live for three whole days without his imagination.

Patrick never in his life turned down a bet, especially when it entailed a prize of a new bottle of Irish whiskey! He grabbed his empty bottle and whisked his imagination into it. Of course, Genie was caught up in this unexpected whirlwind, and he soon realized he was trapped when Patrick jammed the cork into the bottle. The pub keeper then placed the bottle high up on a shelf behind the bar for all to see.

Poor Genie was overcome by the odor of whiskey in the bottle, and his vision was distorted when he tried to look out due to the fancy designs in the glass.

And so it came to pass that Patrick's imagination was trapped in a whiskey bottle, and Patrick was without an imagination for the first time in his life. He never realized how much he used it until it was gone. How dull life became when he only had reality to observe and contemplate. No more visions of life than he wanted it to be. No more creative ideas of ways to solve problems or to visualize happy situations

Meanwhile, Genie was beside himself inside that jar. He tried to think of a way to escape. He decided to imagine being free since he was a figment of someone's imagination to begin with. However, since he was bonded to Patrick when he was placed in the bottle, that did not work. He was trapped for three whole days.

Patrick was getting increasingly distraught by the hour. He wanted to win that bet, but it was horrible having to live without his imagination. On the second day, he went back to the bar and sat looking at





## GENIE IN A BOTTLE | DONALD E. PEARSE, SR.

the bottle that contained Genie. He had almost decided to go grab the bottle when some of his drinking buddies arrived. They chided him about giving up on the bet, and he told them that would never happen. Poor Genie sat in the bottle and pouted.

After the pub closed that night, Patrick waited outside the back door until everyone but the pub keeper had left. He banged on the door, and when it opened, he barged into the bar and over to the shelf with the bottle on it. Genie got all excited when he saw Patrick coming, and he spun around so fast in the bottle that it began to glow! Patrick stopped in his tracks. He might not have had his imagination, but he could still visualize a cash register ringing up piles of money for him.

He offered the pub master a cut if he would cooperate. The very next night, when the bar was filled with merrymakers, Patrick stood on the bar and made an announcement. He declared that he could make the empty whiskey bottle glow in the dark.

Everyone burst out in laughter, but Patrick said he would bet every man in the bar ten euros that he could make it happen. Amid the laughter, the money was put up, and Patrick walked outside. That was the cue for the pub master to turn down the lights, and then Patrick came back in, heading straight for the whiskey bottle with Genie in it. Again, Genie got extremely excited, and his gyrations made the bottle glow brightly!

Everyone was in awe, and Patrick happily collected the euros from the bet. He planned to do this once a week, hoping to catch new patrons off guard. He expected to get rich at poor Genie's expense. After the anticipation of being set free, poor Genie was totally exhausted as he slumped to the bottom of the bottle.

Life was good for Patrick, except for one little unexpected glitch. The pub master hired a new helper. On his first day, he saw the empty bottle on the shelf and immediately removed it. He was about to throw it away when he happened to notice a wee bit of whiskey swirling around the bottom. He glanced around to see if anyone was looking, and with the coast all clear, he removed the cap, tipped the bottle up, and let the dribble of whiskey flow onto his waiting tongue. Genie scampered out, and he was free at last!

Genie decided to never again let anyone trap him, and Patrick vowed to never again make a bet that involved his imagination.







*Dave Richards*

## A BUSY RETIREMENT

Being retired gives me at least 70 hours more a week of time to fill. I know some people have problems filling in that time, but I have not had that issue. I find I need more time to do the things I want to do. In those moments between volunteering, doing activities in the neighborhood, at Source Point, and church, I fill [time] thinking of words of wisdom and sage I've heard and have freely given out.

Here are two phrases I heard long ago and took to heart. "Retire to something, not away from something," and "It's better to wear out than to rust out." I've also adapted someone else's words of wisdom as, "The first 100 years are the toughest." Other words I use often are "Have a fun day" or "Have a fun week."

My dad didn't often coach us as kids. He was more of the hands-on "come help me with projects" type. That learn by doing things is sort of a version of the adage, "Experience is a tough teacher. It gives the test first and the lesson afterwards." When he did coach me, it often started with the word, "Son."

I came home one day from grade school and teased my younger brother that I was the only one in my class to ace this test. Dad was reading the paper and put it down as I walked by. "Son," here it comes, "don't get a fat head. As you go through life, you'll meet those smarter than you and those not. Treat them all the same. They all have a story to tell." That was proven often during my working life and somehow even more so now as I volunteer.

It's amazing to me how my memory works. I often remember the general idea or concept for a quote but not always the exact words of the quote or saying that affected me. That just now triggered words of wisdom I heard recently that, as time goes on, our priorities change





as to what is important. This is so true. When I was a young youth, I wanted to be a superhero, then a sports star, then rich and famous. I was determined to try any experience or action I thought would get me there. What happened was I was getting older, but in my mind not that much wiser, until I heard another great sage, Conan the Barbarian, who enlightened me with the words, "Those experiences that don't kill you strengthen you." An odd personage to get wisdom from.

Now my mind flashed back to all the times my actions or the actions of others could have killed me. I didn't see it at the time, but I'm stronger now because of all I did. Somehow, I wish I had done more. Now that I'm retired, I've created new goals and jobs for myself. While I can plot, plan, and provide resources for these new goals, the problem I face now is that I may not have any direct control over the process of fulfillment. However, I do have control over one goal -- my favorite-- because it requires me to let the kid out, which I do quite often. I can spread a touch of humor to brighten someone else's day.

Now, what matters to me is not to be rich or famous or even remembered, though these would be nice. What matters to me is that someone's day was brighter because I passed by and left them with some type of words of encouragement or a touch of humor. It is my hope that they pass that on to others. That to me would be true fulfillment.

Years ago, I donated a concrete bench to my college to be placed around the Quad among others already there from multiple donors. We were allowed to have a message engraved on that bench to enlighten future generations. I picked one I found over thirty years before from a bone doctor named Kavanagh, who said it in 1908. Ironically, if you Google his quote, you may not find his name listed as saying this because newer stars used his quote and were given credit for it. I hope he lived long enough to at least hear others use his words to spread wisdom and sage. Many more quotes have touched me and shaped my life so I can have a busy retirement, but I'll end with Dr. Kavanagh's quote.

*"To succeed in life, you need three things: A wishbone, a backbone, and a funny bone."*





*Jack Riordan*

## THE LONG SLOW GOODBYE

She was a little older,  
Lived two houses from me,  
Played in our yard.  
Mom liked her, so  
When I started school  
We walked holding hands  
Telling the wonders there.  
Holding hands became  
Passage to our places,  
Connections not yet understood.

Despite her slight frame  
She ran long distances, and  
Debated in high school.  
Before I could drive,  
Mom drove to see her events.

In High School, I blossomed  
Big in everything while  
She was in a local college  
To be a physical therapist, but  
She came to my events.  
I went to an out-of-state U to play  
But she found a way  
To hold hands and see me play.





## THE LONG SLOW GOODBYE | JACK RIORDAN

I got a degree in Electronics  
And an Army Commission in  
Vietnam as Intelligence Officer,  
I liked it and promoted, adding a year.  
On leaves home, we held hands  
In our way, discussed life's issues.  
We started to write ambling letters  
I thought and dreamed of her.

When I finally came home  
She was there with a big hug,  
Her hands eased the nightmares.  
We spoke about hopes, dreams.  
When I asked her to be my wife,  
She said, "Two years ago, I said  
Yes, with our hands. You were busy.  
A perfect marriage, good jobs  
Three smart and athletic kids  
House near some woods; we  
Learned much raising them.

Unlike her organized ways,  
Forgetting symptoms started after  
Kids moved out on their own  
We held hands. Ignored them,  
As long as we could.

Then, years of doctors, tests,  
Experimental treatments.  
An exploratory operation, but  
No clear What is it or Why.





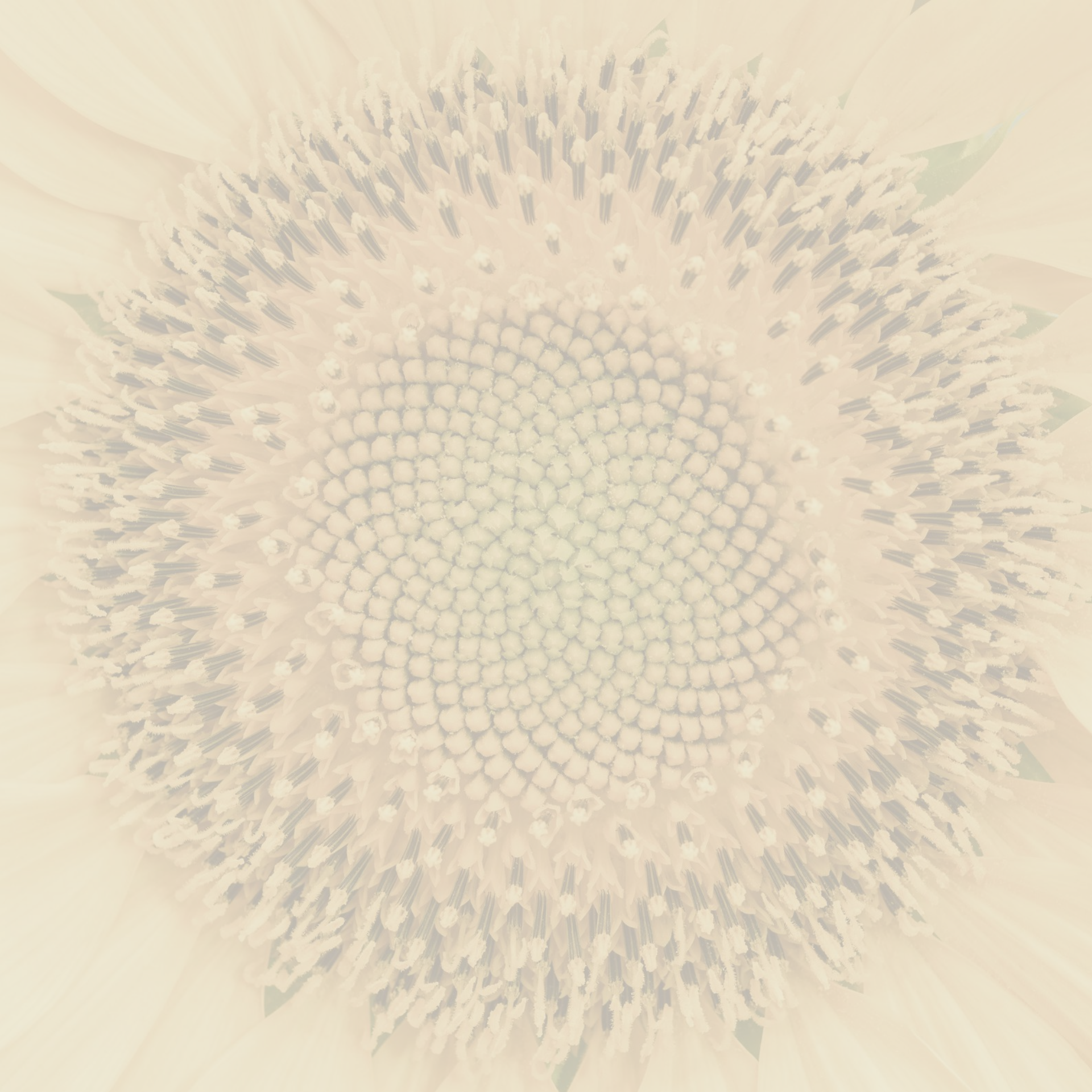
THE LONG SLOW GOODBYE | JACK RIORDAN

She could no longer stand or walk.  
Through it all, we held hands  
Discussed and talked it through.  
What began as helping me  
Became me helping her pray  
To find a way back to our places.  
Her small world was shrinking  
She needed 24-hour Med care.

She picked Assisted Living,  
I visited almost every day  
Holding hands in our old way.  
The boys and friends came,  
Mostly, our daughter was regular  
When she could not recognize them.  
We held hands for 3 more years,  
Where in her life was she?  
Once, she said, "Stop. It's a red light."  
I hoped it was remission, but it was,  
From my nap next to her bed.

Soon, she did not know me,  
Or herself. Her hands got cold  
Her tiny body's life ended,  
The goodbye didn't end.  
I was too old to find new  
Warm hands to hold  
I'll just keep those  
From our old ways.







*Nancy Ross*

## A HAIKU FOR SOLAR ECLIPSE

Otherworldly light,  
Bright sun and dark shadows join,  
Darkness overtakes.

Shadows everywhere,  
Nearly dark as moonless night,  
Distant yellow glow.

Shadows creep away,  
As sunlight begins to shine.  
Bright daylight again.





*Rhonda Smith*

## SIX-WORD MEMOIRS

Happiness comes at the weirdest moments.

A welcome diversion from real life.

Do my words matter to anyone?

Making excuses is your only language.

Smells like teen spirit- laundry emergency.

Seems dumb luck is my luck.

Being in the middle never works.

My heart, My soul, My mind.

Shopping is an addiction; I'm hooked.

I'm seeing myself in my grandkids.

It all changed in a moment.

Never give up the daily struggle.

Life is a highway--Don't speed.

The ceiling can hear my thoughts.

Another day, another dollar...not here.

One blink, then it's all gone.

Pain tells me that I'm alive.

I had a MacGyver idea today.





SIX-WORD MEMOIRS | RHONDA SMITH

Cute and adorable and insightful too.

I need a six word memoir.

How do hackers learn their craft?

Cats are my happy place today.

Carbohydrates call to me literally everyday.

Rising early means not enough sleep.

She's going for that funky look.

Sometimes it just makes sense, really.

Earworm stays all day--next song.

Few hours to myself, Ahhh...heavenly.

Nothing new learned, let's try again.

Hats wear different faces of me.

She loves to write; to create.

Gratefulness is a double edged sword.

New day, New feelings, New issues.

Terrible twos or pre-teen, what's worse?

Cats, Kids, Son, Husband--small apartment.

The laundry never seems to end.

Baby It's Cold Outside--really cold!

Excerpts from 2024 Six Word Memoirs.





*Gae Snyder*

## SPRING WOES

Spring flew in on a chilling wind.  
No sun, only dark, dreary clouds.  
Seems like winter wasn't ready to end.  
His gusty, cold breath knew no bounds.

Bundle up with hat and coat.  
Or stay inside where it's cozy and warm.  
While Old Man Winter continues to gloat.  
Transition through March is full of bluster and storm.

Oh, Spring, you teased us with sunshine and sixties.  
Daffodils and other bulbs were budding.  
We shed boots and sweaters for sandals and short sleeves.  
Weather so nice, we forgot you were bluffing.

The emerging change of season is looming.  
Anticipation paints our daydreams  
With trees blooming, gardens flowering, and birds crooning.  
Fresh breezes dance across glowing sunbeams.

Ready to welcome longer days and warmer temperatures.  
To savor the perfume and color of new beginnings.  
To suffer through allergies, lightning, and thunder.  
Woes aside, hopeful signs invite my heart to sing.





*Jim Snyder*

## PERSERVERANCE

May your epitaph  
be evidence for/of your  
everyday toils.

Express truthful words  
for those whose ears are ready  
to hear you.

Do not let body  
language betray your choice words...  
Wear what's true.

Allow those with whom  
you interact feel they are  
here and prized.

Live one's life to speak  
accomplishments...Their value  
memory.





*Barbara Taylor*

## A LETTER TO MOM

Dear Mom,

I wish you had a phone up in heaven because I wanted to tell you that the doctor says I'm doing OK. I'm working on my blood glucose. It's been up and down, like always. I wish I had a ladder so I could climb up and give you a hug when I want to and give you a kiss, too.

Milo is gaining weight from all the treats. When I took him to your house, he looked everywhere for you. Milo still likes taking Sage outside, and they play like crazy.

I miss giving you a hug and talking to you. I wish I could pick up the phone and call you when I just need to talk. I hope I can see the ocean from up in heaven so we can walk the shores of heaven together when I go home to be with you.

Love  
Barb





*Judy Titus*

## WHAT I KNOW FOR SURE

1. Life is too short to fold fitted sheets.
2. Self-love isn't selfish; it's a requirement for loving others.
3. What you send out always comes back to you.
4. Every problem comes with a lesson to be learned.
5. It is in the hard times that we grow.
7. We will be remembered for how we made others feel.
8. The moments you savor become precious memories.
9. People who do not command respect need it the most.
10. It's never too late to become who you might have been.
11. Change is the only constant.
12. Life would be very dull if it weren't so full of surprises.
13. We always have choices, even though we may not like the ones we have.
15. How we treat others is a reflection of how we feel about ourselves.
16. As Buddha said, what we think, we become.
17. Using the word try sets me up for failure.
18. Open hands and open minds receive the best gifts.
19. Worrying never changed anything.
20. Our greatest fear is what we do not know.





*Marjorie Wilhelm*

## THREE PEOPLE

Today is Saturday. Clint and I were out and about, grocery shopping, garage sale-ing, and this evening, a coffee house concert. In the course of this day, I met and talked with three very different people: two women who were strangers to me and one man I knew slightly but had not seen for four years.

The contrasts among these three are striking. The first was a very old woman, probably in her early 90's, who was sitting in her rocker watching her household possessions sell at a garage sale. She had recently moved into a retirement center. Even though her husband and two of her five children had died, she had some hearing loss, and was getting rid of most of her possessions, visiting with her was a delight. She graciously offered a chair to me when it became clear that Clint and her son had a lot to talk about. She refused to take any money for the Lazarus recipe booklet I chose from her stack of well-used cookbooks. She was cheerful, thoughtful, and happy to share time with me. She didn't seem to have any complaints at all.

The next person we met was a very thin young woman whom we had watched from our booth at Arby's while eating lunch. She carried a very large, dilapidated backpack and a couple of other bags and had a dog on a leash. She was rummaging through restaurant trash cans. When we left the restaurant, she was standing in the shade of a tree, giving the dog a chance to rest. We drove close to where she stood and asked if there was something we could do to help her. When I asked if she needed money, she said yes, although she had shown no evidence of begging. She was very happy with the money I offered, and when I asked if she was homeless, she replied, "Yes, at the moment, but my friend is leaving for California in a few days, and I'm going to ride with him." Her face was radiant with both hope for the future and appreciation for our help. She thanked us over and over and told us





## THREE PEOPLE | MARJORIE WILHELM

to have a good day. I could not forget her, knowing her best hope for the night would be a cot in some homeless shelter or a bedroll with her dog somewhere under a tree.

The third person I spoke with was a man we ran into at a concert in a coffee shop. Although he sang at my birthday party four years ago, we had not seen him since. He is probably in his early 40s, and I am fairly sure has enough to eat, a vehicle, an adequate place to live, and, by all appearances, good health. When asked how he was doing, he spent the next several minutes complaining about his job situation, the long hours he has to work, the poor pay, and the difficulty of finding a better job.

I left the coffee shop thinking about the differences between these three people. One was penniless and homeless, yet there was something in her smile and manner that I can only describe as a radiant glow of both hope and appreciation. One was facing the adjustments required nearing the end of life and had lost three of the people closest to her, yet she was cheerful and a joy to be around. The third was in the prime of life, with good health and adequate resources, yet he seemed neither hopeful nor happy.

This was a powerful reminder to me of what I have always believed but sometimes forget. The things we have- the money, the possessions, even the good health- are not what make us happy. Happiness comes from something deep within us. Happiness is a decision, an attitude, and a grateful and generous spirit. I am grateful for that reminder today.







*Doug Yost*

## CHARLIE WAITING WELL

The pager vibrated, and I knew what it was about: Charlie White. I was at the hospital most of the day with Charlie's wife, Mable. Charlie, a humble auto assembly worker who would only drive Fords, would often say, "If we who live in this town don't support what we build in this town, what will we have? A dyin town!" He was a wise prophet.

Charlie was the father of my boyhood friend, Mike. Mike was the first kid to take me into the inner circle of boys when I first moved to Charleston. I was scared and shy, and a bit intimidated by the whole move. Mike walked up to me on the playground at school, stuck his hand out, and said, "My name is Mike; what's your name? I was a new kid once. We became friends and were inseparable from that time forward. Mike and I are still friends, and I love his family as my own. His dad, Charlie, became my second father and a powerful spiritual influence in my life; I didn't know how much until much later. He was sowing spiritual seeds in my life.

Charlie loved his family and Jesus. He would have done anything for his family, and he loved to share the message of Christ with anyone who would listen, even if they wouldn't listen. People could not help but see how he lived his life for Christ. When I became an on-call chaplain, Charlie told me repeatedly, "HoJo, our lives ought to be a liv'n sermon for all to see. If we cain't live the life, then no sense talk'n bout the life."

He and Mable moved to Charleston, Ohio, from rural West Virginia in the 1950s to work on the Ford assembly line. He came to make a better life for himself, his wife, and his children. Charlie grew up on a dirt farm, and he wanted more for his family. He used to say to me when I was a kid, "Charleston, Ohio, was my destiny, HoJo. It has my name in it—Charlie's Town."

He had been ill for some time, and the doctor called us all in to tell us that Charlie's time of passing was imminent. Dr. Kennedy took me aside when I got there and said, "Do not leave this family;





## CHARLIE WAITING WELL | DOUG YOST

they need you here. Pray for no pain and an easy transition. He is a good man, chaplain.”  
“Yes, he is, and yes, I will stay to the end, and it will be glorious,” I replied.

The doctor turned to me and said, “Glorious? This man is going to die tonight. He is going through the fire, so to speak. Death will consume him.”

“I know he is going through the fire,” I replied, “but death will not consume him any more than the fire consumed Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the book of Daniel. He will pass through the valley of death to eternal life.”

“I used to believe that,” the doctor replied, “but I have seen so much pain, suffering, and death that I have become numb. I know that prayer and your presence here is ... well, it’s important for him and his family, but this idea of eternal life? I just don’t know. I just don’t know anymore.” Dr. Kennedy shook his head, turned to leave, and as he left, he said, “I will be back to check in on him. Call the nurse if you need anything. We are just trying to keep him comfortable and reduce his pain.”

Charlie’s family was all out in the waiting room. They needed to be with their daddy and papaw. I went to the nurses’ station and explained what I wanted to do, and the head nurse replied, “Yes, of course, HoJo. Charlie and Mable need them to be in there. Take all the time you need. I don’t think it will be long before he passes.”

“Thanks, Charlotte, for all your help,” I replied.

I went to the waiting room and gathered all Charlie’s children and grandchildren. I explained what we were going to do and that it was Charlie’s request. First, Mike and his family would go in with Charlie and Mable and express their love. Next, Melva and her family would do the same. I further explained, “While Charlie is very weak physically, his mind and spirit are strong. He would be fully aware of what you are saying, just don’t expect him to respond verbally. Hugs are okay, just be gentle.”

“When you all are done saying your goodbyes, Charlie has asked us to sing two hymns as a family. However, Mike and Melva, your dad wants you to pray with him alone with your mom before the family sings together. After that, we will just wait on God.”

Earlier in the day, Charlie told me he wanted his family to sing “How Great Thou Art” and “It is Well





## CHARLIE WAITING WELL | DOUG YOST

With My Soul." "HoJo," he told me, "you can do these songs at my funeral also later, but I want to hear them before I die. I have one more request. I want you to sing for me and my family the hymn 'God Leads us Along.' You know, 'Some through the waters, some through the flood, Some through the fire, and some through the..some through the...oh I forget the rest."

I continued, "Some through the fire but all through the blood; Some through great sorrow, but God gives a song, In the night season and all the day long.

"Yes, that is it! Can you do it? Charlie asked.

"Yes," I replied, "it would be my honor."

"HoJo, I want to die well!"

Each family came in and spent their time with Charlie. Then I asked everyone, except Mike and Melva, to return to the waiting area for a few moments. I closed the door to give them space. I was about to leave when Mike opened the door and said Charlie wanted me to be there also.

The next fifteen minutes or so were a blessed time of prayer mixed with laughter and tears. Charlie looked up at us and said, "I love you all. Now, let's sing my hymns."

I went to get the rest of the family, and Melva took her place next to her mom, who was sitting in a chair, and Mike took his place to the right of his father. When the families returned, they instinctively took their respective places on the right and left sides of the bed. I took my place at the foot of the bed. Some grabbed hands, and some hugged. Silently, Dr. Kennedy and Charlotte, the nurse, slipped into the room and watched from behind me.

The family began to sing "How Great Thou Art," which was almost angelic. Pure voices floated on the notes and lyrics. "Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to Thee How great Thou art, how great Thou art!"

There was no dry eye in that room when the song was done. Even the doubting Dr. Kennedy was moved to tears.

Then, the family sang "It is Well With My Soul." By the end of that song, the room's door





was open, and we could see all the nursing staff and others had gathered outside. It was stunning.

Then Charlie spoke with supernatural strength, "HoJo, I want you to read the scripture I asked you to read. Then, please sing the song I requested.

"Charlie, this is what the Lord says— he who created you, Charlie, he who formed you, Charlie: *Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; Charlie, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you, Charlie, and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, Charlie, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. For I am the Lord your God, Charlie, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.*" -Isaiah 43:1-3 NIV

Then I began to sing.

*In shady, green pastures, so rich and so sweet,  
God leads His dear children along.  
Where the water's cool flow bathes the weary one's feet,  
God leads His dear children along.*

*Some through the waters, some through the flood,  
Some through the fire, but all through the blood;  
Some through great sorrow, but God gives a song,  
In the night season and all the day long.*

When I finished the refrain for the last time, there was a holy hush in the room. We all gazed upon Charlie's face. His eyes were closed, but he had a smile on his face. There was no rhythmic rise and fall of his chest; Charlie had passed to his Savior's arms. He was finally home. He died well.





*Wendy Bauder*

## DAMASCUS GRAND

My name is Damascus Grand, and I am a sewing machine. Not a fancy, digital gizmo with 37 different stitches, but a workhorse; modest and tenacious. The date on my instruction manual says 1920, but I can still sew like I used to with the help of a little lubricant now and then.

I was born in Belvidere, Illinois, in a place called the National Sewing Machine Company. One of my greatest dreams was to see the Windy City, so I was thrilled when I got a modeling job on the floor of Montgomery Ward & Company on the north branch of the Chicago River. I'll admit, I was a looker. I had an oak cabinet with 4 storage drawers, a cast iron treadle foot, and a leather oscillating belt. I was built like a brick house, even if I do say so myself.

In 1926, I moved to a borough in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, to live with a young farmer and his bride. I was a wedding gift from the church ladies who combined their pennies to help Bride get a start on the donkey work they knew awaited her. As a child from a poor family growing up during World War I, Bride never knew a life of leisure. Small mercy then, since the Great Depression was just around the corner. Bride and I pieced quilts for her family from feed sacks and wool uniforms. We sewed denim overalls, muslin union suits, flannel pajamas, and corduroy trousers. She and I sewed while she was pregnant, between chores, during the children's naptime, and long after the animals and babies were asleep for the night. I loved the feel of every fabric we sewed, and somehow, we made it through the hard, lean years.

Bride grew old, and I didn't sew as much as I used to, but I still pieced quilts. In the summer of 1992, Bride introduced me to a city slicker from California who wasn't familiar with the Depression or either world war. I was dubious, but Bride was resolute in teaching her to quilt, and the city slicker was curious enough to try it. I made it difficult for her, sewing backwards when she made the slightest wrong move with her foot on my treadle. The city slicker was





determined to learn, though, and I admired her persistence. As a reward, I gave her beautiful, even stitches and perfect seams.

Bride passed away in 2003, and I was moved to the basement where I collected dust. Over time, my leather belt frayed, and my treadle grew stiff. Fifteen years passed before I saw the sun again. I was heaved and hefted out of the basement – because I was still built like a brick house - and into a truck where I rode for several hours until I arrived at a place called the Buckeye State. A woman supervised the relocation to my new quarters, and I was shocked to see the city slicker again. She'd aged, but she was still curious. My room was filled with sunlight, sundry sewing notions, and a quilt frame. She dusted me off and replaced my leather belt, but she didn't always choose me. She had an electric machine and a serger that got more use than I did, until the night everything changed. The snow fell steadily for hours, and the wind howled outside as a winter storm built. The city slicker had foolishly volunteered to sew 29 capes for the children's Christmas pageant at church, and she was down to the wire. The storm hit the following morning, and the unthinkable happened: the power went out. I remember tears and phone calls, and her pacing in the sewing room. I wanted to shout at her, but I am just a sewing machine.

And then she remembered me. She oiled my creaking joints and opened the window blinds to let in as much light as she could. I think she prayed over me, but I'm not well-versed in such things. She sat down and began to work my treadle with her foot like no time had passed. It was wonderful to work again. As the sun began to set, she found a battery-operated light that fit nicely on my cabinet. We sewed into the dark night, and before she went to bed, 29 children had a Christmas cape to wear.

The city slicker and I still sew together, though not as much as we did that night. Last week, she sat down at my cabinet with a notebook. She ran her fingers over me and smiled. Then she began to write. My name is Damascus Grand, and I am a sewing machine, so I couldn't read over her shoulder. But I'd like to think she's writing our story.





*Emerson Laird*

## WE

We are thin clouds  
passing one through the other.  
We are turbulent waters  
seeking another.

We are cymbals with echo.  
We are a chorus with ballad.  
We are restless with dreams.  
We are engaged with what seems valid.

We are wisdom with voice.  
We are avenues with zones.  
We are buskers with song.  
We are seasons with unknowns.

We are weary with racial charades.  
We are living matter with pigmentation.  
We are rogues with heroes.  
We are despotic with Creation.

We are demons with conscience.  
We are ambivalent with romance.  
We are enamored with platitudes.  
We are sages with nuance.





WE | EMERSON LAIRD

We are humbled with perfection.  
We are vision with perception.  
We are civil with compassion.  
We are reason with conviction.

We are solipsistic with our good fortune.  
We are flattered with evolution.  
We are compliant with nonsense.  
We are rebellious with emancipation.

We are stoic with defeat.  
We are incognito with mascara.  
We are mute with dialog.  
We are prophetic with Nirvana.

We are thin clouds and turbulent waters with velocity.  
We are a void without compromise which thrives on another's empathy.





*Jack Riordan*

## JENNY

He was beginning to have trouble with guilt-driven Catholic theology; still, he became an Urban Monk. He tried to be a Jesuit after graduating from Saint-Ignatius High School, but his Latin was bad. He had a 3-year intense romance that ended after junior year when she said over the phone, "She wanted to date other men." He was devastated. He was brokenhearted. It not only destroyed his last year in college but also caused his simple, make-believe future to crumble. He spent the next few years in a macho bravado state, drinking too much. Then, he joined the Federal Army Reserve in an attempt to stay out of Vietnam.

Searching for purpose, he volunteered to help the French Little Brothers of the Poor visit old folks and bring them ribbon-tied wrapped packages and bouquets of flowers. The Brothers' motto was "Flowers Before Bread." When the founders came to check out their first start-up operation in the USA, he asked if he could join as a Religious Urban Monk. The Order sent him to France for a novitiate. He learned about poverty, chastity, and obedience, as well as how to cook, raise money, and live in harmony in small, all-male communities.

When he got back to Chi-Town, the founder, Count Armond Marquissette, was buying a large old family retreat with 7 bedrooms and a large screen front porch facing Lake Delevan so poor old people could have a vacation. Armond and a bevy of wealthy women donors were decorating it with rehabilitated donated furniture. In France, he managed two much larger vacation houses using teenage boy volunteers to do most of the grunt work and entertain the old folks.

This purchase presented a likeable challenge for him; busy work making sure the utilities, kitchen, bathrooms, and common areas would work. A neighbor two doors down, Roger and Dorothy Wellington, their daughter Jenny, and her grandmother were very welcoming. Jenny was a talkative, bright little girl with a beautiful smile and long yellow hair; she was six or seven. When the old folks





moved in, she began to come over often. The old folks loved her. Although she got underfoot, she was a great addition that he did not have to feed. Often, she would bring over cookies, "I made them myself." Jenny established her presence with presents.

One evening, after a long day caring for a house full of elderly people, all of whom wanted attention, he escaped, walked to the sloping bank along the lake, and worked on a rock garden he was trying to rescue. Behind him, he heard Jenny say, "Hi, don't pull that up. In a few weeks, it will be beautiful."

"How do you know?"

"Gram told me. She knows everything about the plants, animals, bugs, and birds."

"Do you think she could help restore this bank? I can't tell the good from the bad; I'm from Chicago."

"Don't they have plants and trees in Chicago?"

"Not many in my Neighborhood."

"I'll ask and tell Gram about Chicago."

A few days later, while raking grass from the struggling evergreens, "Gram said for you to ask me, and if I didn't know, I could take a cutting, a few leaves, or a bug back to her. Then she could tell us. What to do?"

That's how his nature education began, and Jenny's childhood kingdom was revealed.

During that first summer, whenever he got a chance, he worked on the slope, and Jenny seemed to appear, usually holding a raccoon or bunny to tell him about a red-headed woodpecker she saw that day. Since she lived by the lake all year, and thanks to her grandmother, she knew the names of the wildflowers and the birds, those that stayed and those that passed through. She brought her natural world kingdom with her.

Within her realm, it was always nice and warm but never hot. Tranquility reigned. Once within her kingdom, he could think of nothing, not even the questions for Grandma. Talking was unimportant. Her presence was important, and yet they always talked of acorns and squirrels, bugs, and butterflies. She was sunshine in the gray world of suppressed emotion. They talked of the birds and trees, of plants and animals which lived along our lake. Wordlessly, his heart spoke to her of the joy she was to him.





## JENNY | JACK RIORDAN

For three and half years, he lived a life of celibacy, expecting a lifetime of unmarried dedication to God. Jenny was a daughter teaching him the wonders of nature, but there was something more, an indescribable fondness, a magic. By the third year, he began to think of Jenny as the daughter he would never have. In Jenny, he found all that he had decided to do without and the family he wanted.

Jenny passed from a child to a young girl during the time she shared her childhood kingdom. In the last year, she has changed a lot. Before, she would come over for no reason, but of late, she only came when she had an excuse. He began to detect new looks on her face. It was only on the day he prepared to leave that he noticed that her eyes were very brown and beautiful. Before, her expression was on her whole face; that last day, she spoke only with her eyes. Her face had not yet learned to say goodbye. It was always her whole face he saw, with her captivating smile that seemed to have no place to go. For three years, he loved her quietly, never telling her, and he hoped she silently loved him. Jenny was ten or eleven, and he was twenty-eight when he was about to leave for Vietnam. She was part of the reason for his leaving the Little Brothers.

He wanted to tell her that he cared for her, but she could never understand the complexity of his affection. She looked up and into his eyes and asked if he would like to go for a walk along the lake. So, in the last moments of their farewell, they walked to the slope and talked of the flower she had saved and a few leaves changing color. They said goodbye with as little sadness as they could. They shook hands. That was the only time he had ever held her hand.

She started home, and he headed back to the house, watching her leave. She turned and said, "Be careful over there," and after a pause, "I will miss you, Jack, when you are gone." That was the first time she ever called him by name. "I'll miss you too, Jenny," knowing she would never understand how much or why.







*Nancy Ross*

## I AM DOROTHY

I am a doll, but so much more. My life began the day I was given to a little girl named Edith, for she loved me from the first moment she looked into my delicate blue eyes.

My glazed porcelain China upper body was made in a factory in the early days of the 20th century. I was made whole when my China head, neck, and shoulder piece was attached to a body made of blue and white ticking stuffed with sawdust. My blue eyes sit under black eyebrows beneath my jet-black wavy hair. I have a cute little nose and ears, pursed red lips, and dark pink cheeks. My name is embossed below my neckline in letters painted gold. I am dressed in petticoats and a dress made of white cotton that may have been actual baby clothes. I even have real little girl panties! My legs are covered with Edith's own baby socks, and her button-top baby shoes adorn my feet. Edith took very good care of me from the first moment we met, although I was packed away in a box for safekeeping much of the time.

Then one day, another little girl looked into my eyes and fell in love. Nancy is Edith's granddaughter. Edith made little Nancy sit on a bed to play with me, at first. When she was older, Nancy would make us a little house in a closet. She covered the floor with blankets and pillows so I would be safe. One day, Nancy noticed that sawdust was leaking from my legs, so I had to go away for a while to get fixed up. When I came back, both Edith and Nancy were happy to see me looking as good as new.

Nancy asked her grandma if she could take me home. She was told no. Edith told her that I was now hers, but I had to stay at grandma's house.

Time passed and Edith with it. I waited for Nancy to come for me, but her mother, Esther, took me to her home to be stored under a bed. Nancy would get me out sometimes, but her mother would not let her take me to her home, no matter how many times she asked. So, back under the bed I





## I AM DOROTHY | NANCY ROSS

would go to wait. Time passed, and Esther grew old, and finally Nancy was permitted to take me home. We were so happy to be together at last! I have been on display in Nancy's home most of the time since then, rarely in a box. She told me that on the day I went home with her, she heard her grandma Edith's laughter and the words, "I told you she was yours!"

So I am, to this day, loved and cared for. Time will pass, and Nancy will too, and I've been told I will live with Lydia then. She's Nancy's daughter. She doesn't love old things like Nancy does, though, so we're a little worried. I may be just a doll, but I am so much more. I'm a cherished piece of family history; that's what I am.







*Judy Titus*

## IF COURAGE KNEW NO BOUNDS

1. I'd walk the Appalachian Trail in a party of three: Mother Nature, my thoughts, and me.  
I'd rest in a bag spread upon hard ground and sleep to the sounds of the forest.  
I'd sketch unfamiliar plants and flowers and greet my old friends, the rocks.  
I'd meander the path that others hike and know the joy of slowing down.  
I'd walk only a portion of the trail but know the contentment of enough.
2. I'd point my car west and chase the sun until it sinks beneath the waves.  
I'd shun the racetracks of cross-country highways in favor of narrow roads with quirky-sounding names.  
I'd idle along at ten mph, lose myself, and find myself along the way.  
I'd eat in unpretentious diners filled with the aroma of simple foods and the laughter of locals.  
I'd explore small towns that time forgot and hear the stories of forgotten people.  
I'd climb a mountain just for the view and come away with treasures that can only be earned.  
I'd stand beneath a desert sky ablaze with stars and see my place in the universe.
3. I'd live in a tent on the shore of Lake Superior with the lake and forest for companions.  
I'd explore the rocky coastline and challenge myself to find a way forward.  
I'd be lulled to sleep by the heartbeat of an inland sea.  
I'd walk on beaches to the rhythm of waves and feel the rhythm of my life.  
I'd know the unparalleled joy of coming home.  
I'd live in the asystole of time, that infinitesimal pause between seconds where time stands still and peace resides.





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