

The
Journal

Winter 2024
Writers Guild of Virginia



In This Edition

David Reid Brown	
Just Wait and See	2
Word Choices	4
Kathleen P. Decker	
September Monarchs	6
Sharon Canfield Dorsey	
Moving And Downsizing Can Bring You Joy	8
DM Frech	
The Flowers Were Dead	14
Persimmon Tree	16
Gratefully Yours	17
James L. Garrett	
Feathers	18
Marjorie Gowdy	
Monarch of the New World Order	20
Phoebe When the Wind Blows	21
back to school	22
The Cafeteria Lady	24
Reyn Kinzey	
Death Comes Quickly	26
Freeing Ziggy	27
Ziggy Marley: Irih Cat	28
The Gift Of Speech: A Christmas Poem	29
Peggy Newcomb	
September Morn 2023	30
Thankfulness	31
Joyce Carr Stedelbauer	
Cemetery in Kiev	32
About the Contributors	

Just Wait and See

(Ecclesiastes 3:11a)

David Reid Brown

A moment
maybe all you have
but that's enough time to see
all the beautiful things
that were meant to be.

The One who causes
wars to cease
mass murder to end
diseases to be cured and
despots to die
will make all things beautiful
in its time.

This dreamer has seen
some of the beautiful things
that were meant to be.

Things I have known,
so, I look for them.
Things I have experienced,
so, I can sense them.
Things I have prayed for,
so, I expect them to happen.

Beautiful things.

I have known the cruelty of the overseer,
the desperation of the slave,
the hope of the runaway,
through novels, movies, and museums.



It's a beautiful thing.

I have experienced life under Jim Crow
separations done in Colored and White
the presumption of inferiority
through stories passed down by my elders.

It's a beautiful thing.

Pause.

God has not made me blessing blind.
I am living the beautiful thing.

The manifestation of my mother's desires
and the fruition of my father's dreams,
the beautiful thing is humming in my consciousness,
pulsing through veins, pushing me every day
to shake hands with my friend, Ambition.
Ever grateful for every opportunity
then devouring each one like it's the last.

Maybe we'll all see it.

God
making things right
mending things broken
mopping up messes
we made.

Perhaps we will be able to see
the beautiful things
that were meant to be.

And maybe we won't.

God
Loosening His grip
letting things be
so we can eat the fruit
we chose.

Perhaps it's not for us to see
The beautiful things
that were meant to be.

She's gone.

There's a hole in the ground filled with what I love.
There's a hole in my heart that will never fill
but only gets deeper.
There's no time in time for beauty to be found.

She's mourned.

God is teaching grief lessons I don't want to learn.
While I'm alive, she still lives.
So, through the pain, I rustle the coals
and keep the embers glowing.
There's some time in time for beauty to be found.

She's remembered.

The hole is getting filled with fertile silt
creating a valley that sprouts wild grass and flowers,
to the relief and admiration of those who offer a
passing glance.
A living marker for what once was but never once
loved.
There's still time in time for beauty to be found.

She's fading.

I have tried to pass her passing
onto those who have no memory of her at all.

It's not sticking.

Longevity was my friend but is now introducing me
to a New Acquaintance that will help me be
reacquainted with her.
I am out of time in time for beauty to be found.

Do you have a moment?
Just wait and see.

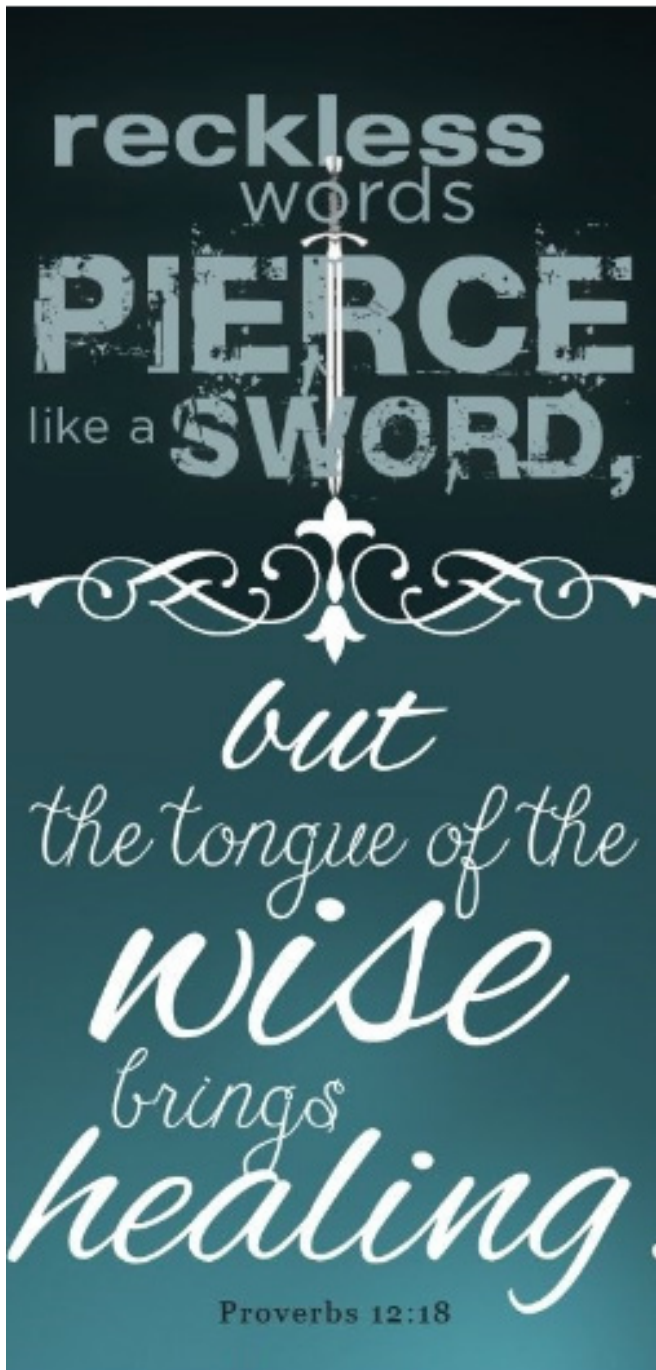
God will perform
all the beautiful things
that were meant to be.

Word Choices

(Proverbs 12:18)

David Reid Brown

Reckless



Spit!
Acid arrows
that puncture and plant
acid corrosion
in the heart.

Spit!
Searing saliva
a slimy wad from
the caldron of hot-tempered
animus.

Spit!
The quick victory
meant to end arguments
only to give oxygen
to the flames.

Spit!
Soil the sod
between us
and soothe
what you need
to gratify.

Spit!
So, I can't wipe it
off my face
or my soul.

Spit!

Wise

Words
Thoughtfully spoken
with the well-being of
the other in mind.

Words
Carefully chosen
a succulent sweet treat
that goes down easily.

Words
Deliberately unearthed
nuggets of ore drawn
from a heart of gold.

Words
Affectionately shared,
covering all wounds with
the balm of blessing.

Words
Generously spread,
massaging the salve of kindness
over the soreness.

Life's chosen through what's been spoken.
Heard once but echoes in reverberations
mending your mind and innermost being
projecting the best of what words can be.

Nor'easter

Cold puddles splash.
Barren trees sway.
The Grey Mask silhouettes the sun.

Try to keep dry
as you march
in the Umbrella Parade.

Freedom's Fate

It's the same old song,
whether Christ or King:
just seems like blood
was meant to be shed.

Existence

Life:
the shortest distance
between
the womb
and
the grave

September Monarchs

Kathleen P. Decker



this was to be the September
of monarchs
custom cage, designed for chrysalises
home-grown, native milkweed
in five varieties, certain to please
and mail-order caterpillars
ready to hang in J formation

Alas! An early fall cool,
accompanied by torrential rain
after a hot, dry August
day after day in September
hoping for a monarch miracle
in vain
milkweed dies back early
not a caterpillar to be seen

all September
swarms of swallowtails
fly and alight, fly and alight
on gold and violet butterfly bushes
probing for nectar
fulfilling biological imperatives

dimorphic females
some in black evening dress,
others wearing brilliant stripes of sunlight hues
set against black velvet
all festooned with lacy splotches of blue
courting smaller males

one day, realization dawns
this was the September of swallowtails
the real monarchs of Virginia
fall into gratitude



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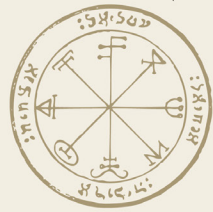
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Moving And Downsizing Can Bring You Joy

Sharon Canfield Dorsey



What eighty-year-old woman in her right mind would want to leave her 3,100 sq. ft home of seventeen years to downsize to a townhouse, especially when that beautiful home was filled with priceless memories and art collections and was situated on two wooded acres. Maybe a woman who was tired of constant repairs, deer who ate her flowers, squirrels who carried off her apples, and neighbor chickens who pooped on her sidewalk. Hmmm.

This Is My Story.

I woke up on a May morning in 2023, three months after my eightieth birthday, and decided it was time to sell my house and downsize. No conversations with children, who would be shocked; no consulting with financial advisors; no reading How-To books, just a conviction that now was the time to make this change. Before

telling anyone of my decision, I called Chelle, a neighbor who's a realtor and told her my plan. I signed a contract that day, and we were off on our great adventure.

The first obstacle came immediately when Chelle told me there were no townhouses on the market in my price range, \$250,000 to \$300,000. At that time, there were none on the market at all. Lots of people looking, combined with nothing available, had created a bidding frenzy whenever something did come on the market.

My plan was to sell my home for \$550,000, leaving me enough money—after paying off the mortgage—to pay cash for the new place and have something left to cover moving expenses. My goal was to break even, at least, with no mortgage. That would mean I could retire after forty-two years as a Mary Kay Cosmetics director if I wanted, and I really wanted to be done with working. I could

envision myself sitting happily at my computer, turning out sterling prose and poetry for the ages. Yes, I wrote those words on my vision board.

Since there were no townhomes available to view, I decided to begin what I would later call the great purge. We were having a lovely cool spring, so I decided to begin the clean-out with the detached garage and storage buildings. I should explain that my late husband, Don, had a lot of wonderful traits. Living lean was not one of them. He believed if one item was good, then having five of those items was much better. After he died ten years ago, I spent weeks clearing out his garage. I was convinced screwdrivers must have learned how to clone themselves because I stopped counting at one hundred.

Packing and Donations

Don's two best friends helped me pack and donate several truckloads of tools to Habitat for Humanity. They also hauled away ten trailer loads of junk. None of us understood why Don had saved boxes of worn-out windshield wipers



or enough nails and screws to build a city. After all that clearing, plus three Saturday yard sales, I was so done with all of it. At the last yard sale, I didn't care whether shoppers paid me or not. I just wanted the stuff gone. I was too weary to

tackle the workbenches or cabinets, so I decided to leave those for later.

Later arrived this past May along with the reality of how much was still hiding in the garage and storage buildings. I couldn't ask Don's friends to help again. They were ten years older and had worse back problems than I did. Luckily, my longtime lawn guy, Chris, and his brother, Terry, my handyman, volunteered. They loaded trucks and trailers with donations and junk. Then they moved sawhorses and plywood into the clean garage and filled the newly constructed tables with saleable tools.

The tools went fast at a Saturday yard sale, so my daughter, Shannon, and I began refilling the tables with the things we were purging from the house – everything from books and CDs, to camera equipment and Christmas decorations. I would sort and pack all week. She would come over on Friday evening after work and carry things out to reload the tables. What we didn't sell on Saturday was hauled away by the Habitat truck on Monday, and we would start filling up the tables again. We were a well-oiled machine!

Four yard sales later, we declared, "Enough!" The sales were exhausting but fun. We met lots of nice people, and our friends came to shop and visit. Even Santa and Mrs. Claus came. Santa wore shorts, but there was no mistaking the long white beard and twinkling eyes. It was easy to see why Colonial Williamsburg had chosen him to portray Father Christmas. Shoppers went away with bags of stuff, and every item that found a home, made me feel lighter, freer.

No Townhouses Available

Meanwhile, Chelle would call occasionally about a townhome to visit, but they were either too expensive or would require too much work to make them livable. It was discouraging, but I had set my path, and all I could do was keep looking and hoping. My dream was to find a home in the little community where Shannon lived. It was wooded, quiet, and pretty. I knew living closer together would make both our lives easier as I moved on down that eighty-plus road.

I needed a two-car garage, a bedroom on the first floor, an office, and a guest room. It didn't seem like a lot to ask, but where was it? My smart realtor decided to send out letters to everyone in Shannon's neighborhood, explaining that she had a cash buyer if they were interested in selling their house. Nearly two months into our search, she got the call!

A mother and daughter had an end unit in Shannon's neighborhood with all the features I needed, and they were asking \$300,000. Both Chelle and I thought it was too good to be true.

Everything else we'd seen was \$400,000 to \$450,000. It must need a lot of work, we thought. NOT! It was immaculate with an open-concept living/dining room, three huge bedrooms, an extra loft room that could house my Native American art collection and bookshelves, two-and-a-half baths, high ceilings, tall windows, a private patio in the back, two-car garage, beautiful kitchen, new appliances, AND new heat pump. At 2,480 sq. ft., I'd be able to keep most of my furniture. I couldn't believe I was so lucky.

There were two catches. The owners said it would take three months for them to get packed and ready to move. I wanted to move in August, so I could get my house on the market before winter. The second catch was that it was two stories with steep, higher-than-usual stairs. I suffer from scoliosis and spinal stenosis, which would only get worse as I aged. Could I safely navigate those steep steps every day to reach my office, library, or guest room? Probably not. I thought about it, did some research, and decided I could have a stairlift installed. It would be expensive, but this was the perfect house for me. I was willing to make the investment.

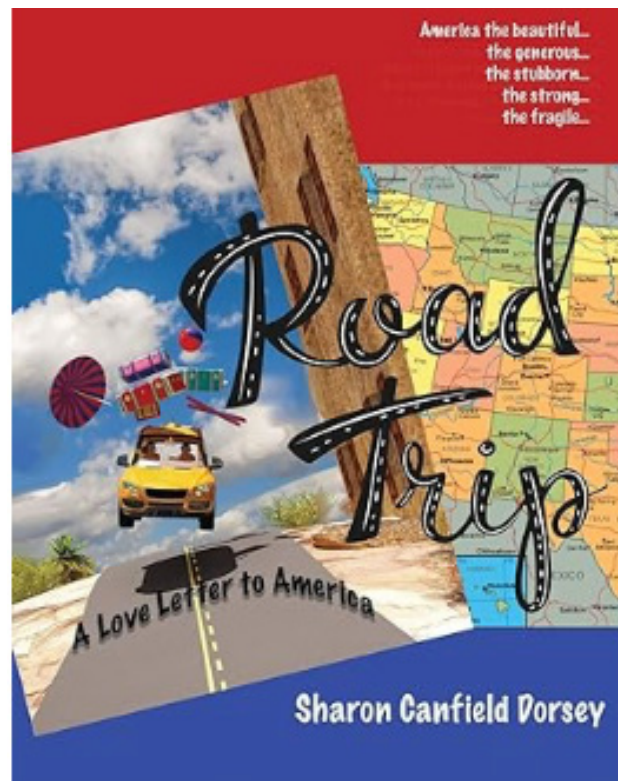
We submitted a contract the next day, accepting their asking price, plus offering them \$5,000 toward moving and packing expenses if they could be out by August 1. After much negotiating on Chelle's part, they agreed. I had a new home! Now I just needed to sell the old one. We agreed it would go on the market the weekend I moved out.

The Purge

Now the purge kicked into high gear. I had worried about my ability to let go of things I had saved for years and years. It's one of the reasons I waited so long to move. Strangely, the more I sifted and sorted, the happier I felt. The turning point came the day I realized I didn't have to keep the things to keep the memories. After that, it was just a matter of finding the right homes for everything.

Don and I had spent many years traveling in the West and Southwest. Those travels resulted in a large collection of Native American art and memorabilia, more than my new loft room could hold. I woke up one morning with the solution. I could choose the pieces I really loved, then divide the rest between Shannon and my son, Steven, who lives in Kentucky. I would throw in a curio cabinet for display. They were excited, and I breathed easier about my treasures...until I remembered the piano.

When I was a little girl, I dreamed about having a piano and taking lessons. My father was a coal miner. We lived in a small frame home with an outhouse in the back. There was



no money or room for a piano. When I grew up and had children of my own, I was determined they would have the thing I always wanted—that piano. As a single mom, I saved and saved until I had enough money to buy an old upright piano. Unfortunately, I learned it's never good trying to live vicariously through one's children.

Shannon marched off to piano lessons willingly but had to be prompted to practice. I never once saw her sit down at the piano and play, just for fun. Finally, her very patient teacher called and said, "I can keep taking your money, but Shannon is not progressing and really has little interest in learning the piano." When I cancelled her lessons, I suspect Shannon did a happy dance.

Google Knows Everything

Steven, on the other hand, was in the fife and drum corps, loved music of all kinds, and wanted to continue his lessons. When I realized the piano was one of the belongings that wouldn't fit in the new house, I immediately thought of him. I knew he had always loved that old piano, and maybe my three grandchildren would enjoy it too. Steven didn't have a lot of extra space in his house either but really wanted the piano and vowed to "figure it out." But how would I to get it to Kentucky?

Google knows everything. I found a local piano mover who would pick it up and drive it to the beautiful horse country of Versailles, Kentucky, along with the curio cabinet for the Indian art. As the piano was trundled out the door, I thanked it for the joy it had given me over the years. Two more items were on their way to a good home, and it was my turn for a happy dance.

The decisions about what furniture to move to Kinde Circle and what would have to be left behind seemed overwhelming. When Don's mother died many years ago, he had made the trip to Kansas City and returned with a trailer full of beautiful antique furniture, a grandfather clock, and half a dozen other unique German and Austrian clocks. I couldn't keep everything, but they were family heirlooms that deserved a loving home. Don's only sibling, Dave, had passed away, but his daughter, Teresa, was still living in Kansas

City and had become a good friend. I called her, explaining my dilemma.

Teresa didn't hesitate. "We'll drive out with a big truck and bring back everything you can't use. My kids will love inheriting Grandma Martha's treasures." Yay and onward!

Moving Day

Shannon volunteered to take most of the family room furniture, happy to replace some of her older pieces. Chris could use the extra bedroom furniture and the teak dining table that would not fit into my much smaller kitchen. Terry decided to take the deck furniture that was too large for my small patio.

Chris thought we should move all the potted plants on the deck to the new patio. He created a beautiful little Hosta garden for me there. He even moved the large river rocks Don and I had carted all the way from West Virginia and made a border along the side of my townhome. I was pleased and surprised that I could save so many of those special outdoor items and take them with me, thanks to Chris' hard work.

As moving day grew closer, I still had some large pieces of furniture unclaimed by family or friends – the dining room china cabinet and buffet, plus an antique game table. I remembered the local women's club had been happy to get my extra china and glassware to auction off at their fundraiser to provide scholarships for local students. I wondered if they could also auction the furniture. The answer was an enthusiastic yes!

Finally, all the left-over furniture had homes. I held a give-away day for friends to come and claim small things, like pictures and what-nots that I couldn't use. It was fun for them and exciting for me to see more possessions going off to new homes where they would be appreciated.

Packers Were Interesting

I was finally ready for the packers and movers. I'll admit, Shannon and I barely avoided nervous breakdowns during those four days of items being stuffed into boxes, loaded onto trucks, moved, and unloaded. I'll spare you all the details, but

this one story will give you an idea of how things went.

The moving trucks were being unloaded at Kinde Circle. I looked out and saw my bed pillows being tossed onto the ground and walked on by the movers. There were broken lamps, crushed lampshades, scratched furniture, plus, they lost the pieces to my platform bed. Thank goodness, Shannon and I had packed and moved all the Indian art and as many of the other fragile objects as we could. That moving company will never see a recommendation from me on Facebook.

I spent the first night in my new place, exhausted, sitting in my favorite chair in front of a television set the cable guy had brought to life, surrounded by rows of boxes taller than me. It looked like those forts we used to build as children. I felt strangely protected and happy to be home.

The unpackers arrived the next morning and announced they could only work a half day, instead of the full day we'd been promised. Unlike the packers, they were careful with everything and worked diligently. Shannon created a clever relay system that managed to get the entire kitchen and pantry unpacked in half a day. Then, my helper and I emptied all the wardrobe boxes and filled my bedroom closets. Not bad for a half day's work, we decided.

Never a Dull Moment

The unpacking then had to go on hold while we readied the other house to show.

Shannon went back to work after a week off to help me. I ran back and forth between houses to meet the house cleaners, carpet cleaners, photographer, and Junk Luggers, who took away the last of the junk from the storage buildings. Finally, the last weekend in August, the house sparkled, the lawn was mowed, and the flowerbeds were trimmed. Chelle was ready for an open house and the masses of expected house hunters. Everyone predicted the house would sell the first weekend. Remember that saying, "If you build it, they will come?" Well, they didn't.

Open house was a bust, with just a few people

wandering through. No offers. Chelle was shocked. I was uneasy for the first time since this whole process had started in May. We had been so sure we'd have multiple offers. The next week was disappointing and the next and the next, with few showings and no offers. I went from uneasy to scared to terrified. The what ifs began to crowd in. I had invested my entire retirement savings in the new house, based on the assurance that the house would sell quickly. What if it didn't sell at all and I was left with the expense of two houses and no savings? We decided to lower the price from \$550,00 to \$525,000.

While nothing was happening on Tanbark Lane, lots of unpacking continued on Kinde Circle. Friends came and went, helping to empty boxes. I rewarded them with paper-plate lunches and decadent desserts. Shannon came every day after work to carry away the boxes and packing paper. The house was beginning to take shape, and I was loving the results.

New Spaces to Explore

The loft room became a unique library/meditation room, filled with my favorite books and the Indian art I had kept for myself.

Shannon and I decided the guest room would also be the family history room, with portraits and pictures of four generations of our family covering the walls. One of my hobbies is scrapbooking. As Don and I traveled around the country, he constantly took photographs. I turned those into colorful scrapbooks of our adventures. Terry added extra shelves to the family room closet, and it became the storage area for all those much-prized books.

My new office is double the size of the previous one. I had fun organizing it, hanging my Mary Kay awards and the Southwest artwork that inspires me, including a painting of Sedona, Arizona, my soul place.

The downstairs was the easiest to unpack and felt like home as soon as my favorite possessions were in place. The tall windows make the whole living/dining area sunny and bright all day. My bedroom on the first floor is comfy, with a

huge bathroom, plus two walk-in closets – every woman’s dream.

I made the two-car garage a priority early in the unpacking process. There was room on both sides for storage shelves, which I quickly filled. The day all the boxes were gone and I could move my car into the garage was another happy dance day.

It Only Takes One

My joy at settling into my new home was marred by the fact that the house on Tanbark Lane was still empty, unsold. Would it be that way through the fall and winter? Showings had dwindled to nothing.

Chelle kept reassuring me, “It only takes one.”

That one appeared in late September in the form of a young couple with two small children, who’d always wanted a large house with lots of land. They fell in love with 124 Tanbark Lane. They made an offer of \$485,000. I didn’t think I could go below \$500,000, so we countered with that. They accepted, contingent on selling their house. The contingency was a concern, but we had no other choice.

Chelle once again reassured me. “Their house is really cute, in a good neighborhood, and priced low enough to sell fast.”

I’d heard that promise before. This time, Chelle was right. The buyers received a contract the first weekend the house was on the market. We were excited! Then it fell through. The second weekend, they received another offer. This one held. Their buyers were pre-approved. We held our collective breaths. Done!

I signed over the Tanbark house on October 31, six months from the time I made that first momentous decision to sell and move. That morning, I walked through my old home for the last time, remembering Christmases, parties, family gatherings, and ordinary Sundays by the fireplace. I thanked the house for all the joy it had given Don and me, locked the door, and drove away with no regrets.

Two months to the day from the time I moved to Kinde Circle, I unpacked the last box—

maybe a new world record for unpacking, thanks to Shannon and the friends who generously volunteered their time and muscles to help. I am happy and content in my new home. The downsizing I dreaded for years has been freeing and has rewarded me with the unexpected joy of being untethered from all that unnecessary stuff.

I’m proof it is possible to create a new lifestyle at any age, even eighty. Like my favorite fairy tale heroines, I plan to live happily ever after.

Not the End



The Flowers Were Dead

DM Frech

The flowers were dead. It was time to move on. Ivy couldn't, with the shroud of pain that imprisoned her. All she could see were dead flowers looking like her dead son, Peter. He was only thirteen when he was ambushed. Since then, since his murder, Ivy bought fresh flowers daily to honor him and slow down shredding emotions. The flowers purchased earlier that day had wilted. They should have lasted. It was unnatural.

Ivy had brought the flowers to the house where she cared for a baby boy. Three months ago, she took the job to watch the child hoping a distraction would ease her torment. The infant stared at her as she stood frozen, perhaps sensing her underlying sadness.

The unexpected strangeness of dead flowers put Ivy in a catatonic state she couldn't shake, even when the silent baby started to squirm. She would never see Peter again. The thought squeezed her heart to suffocation. She took a deep breath and felt his kindness, his voice, his laughter, his eyes looking at her, depending on his mom to help him find his way, but she wasn't there. Peter had been alone. Ivy forgot to pick him up.

The white roses drooped a little more. Several petals fell on the table. She frowned. She didn't care about anything except a need to see Peter's loving, ever-friendly smile.

The weather changed and the room's light softened to a murky gray. Ivy opened a window, and icy north wind blew into her lungs. The infant looked around the room, grabbed air.

Ivy wasn't okay and never would be, not in this world. She picked up the phone, called the baby's mom, "You need to come home immediately." Then, she opened the door and walked out. On her way home, she bought more flowers and went to the gravesite of her son, and there she lay.



Persimmon Tree

DM Frech



When autumn breezes
take over the air
hundreds of beautiful
round, bright, orange fruit
pop on branches,
so much fun
so much fruit
more than one can eat.

So, I invite friends,
family, strangers
to share my treasure
everyone clamors
for persimmons,
with great clamor
come great request
if denied, guilt festers,
fruit go unpicked
drop to the ground
turn to mush
like feelings turn as
people turn away.

People are needed
to help receive
the shiny fruit
even as I grow weary
of people asking, picking,
asking, picking,
bring me a basket
as I pick the tree
until picked bare
its course run
not having gained a new friend,
myself left with
my persimmon tree
picked over, empty
until next season.

Gratefully Yours

James L. Garrett

I'm tortured by your tender smile,
the whiteness of your grin.
You call to me from across the miles
and beckon me come in.

You offer me a promising release
from this pressure inside.
At times I want to find some peace
and so, I try to hide

from the pureness inside your door,
from my fear of falling down.
But my habit draws me, wanting more;
when I enter, my fears abound.

And once my pen darkens paper
I'm hooked again and never waver.

Well, regarding the little Ford
and license, it no doubt was
Ernst as the folks said he went
to Toledo to get some affairs for
an Ireland, Cap. as to the number
that is the license number on
the Ford. Of course I wish it would
if Ken, myself in the Ford get, I am
in the Army now and this is
the life.

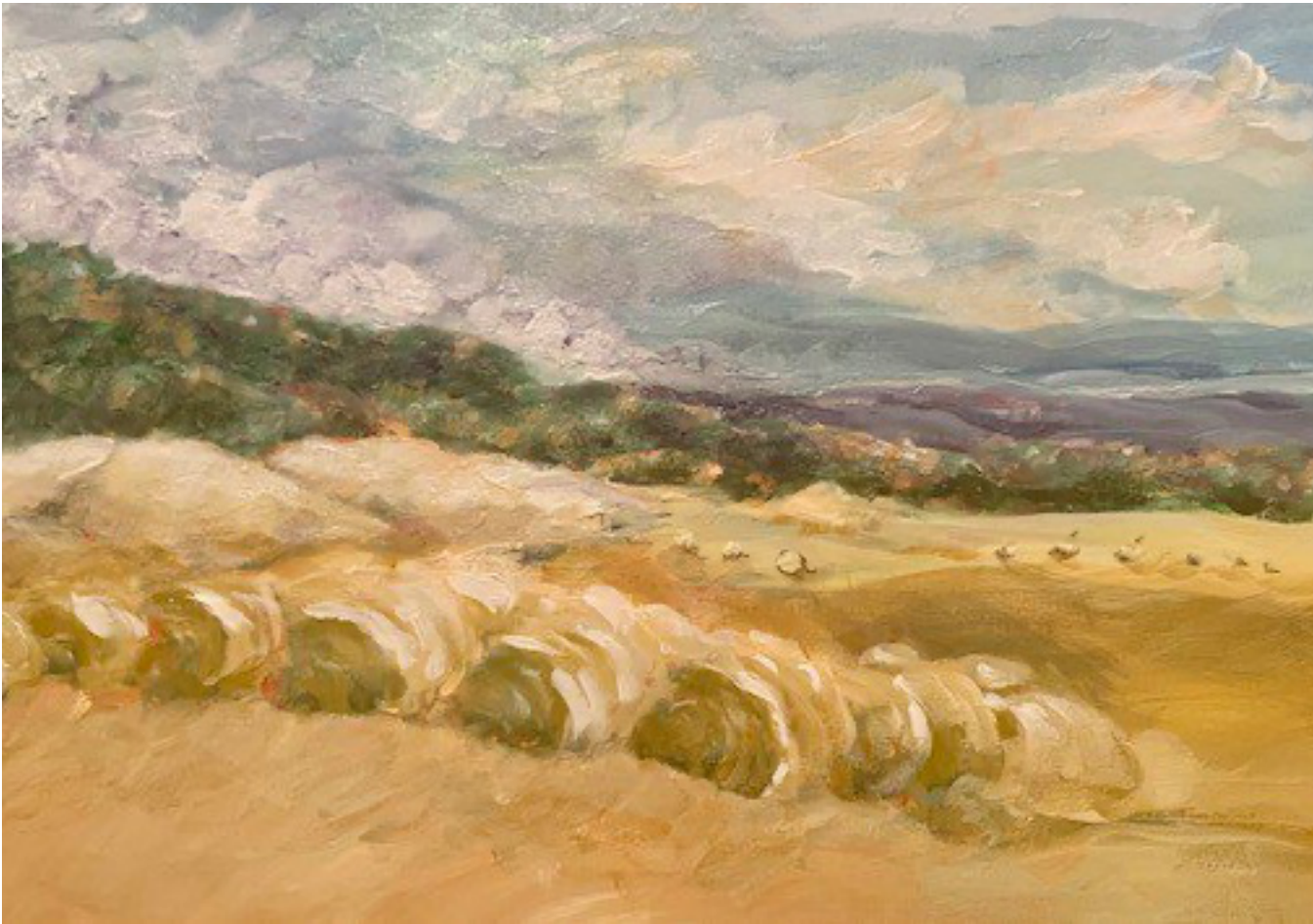
I can imagine that wonder-
fully seeing you spent standing on
the corner, but as you were tearing
in the seats, as ~~the~~ country folks
do the first time they come
to the city. Suppose Pierre is the
same Red.

Well my first sick day
in camp was last Tuesday, the
reason for it was, we received our
second shot in the morning about
8 o'clock and they went to barracks
and about an hour later I had an
awful time to keep from going
down but I did not give up.

Feathers

Marjorie Gowdy

I've long wondered about that osprey,
solitary, bent, eyes down,
perched on a pylon against north winds.
Ship Island refugee,
battered cup of lost souls.
Quartz as sand stings in the blow.
Rubbed rock like crushed ice
running from blue hills a million years
south
through rivers, bayous
to briny sea.
But here, atop Virginia pine
streamside,
this osprey is heads-up, eyes straight.
Waiting to float above younger stones,
fishing for fresh brown trout.



Monarch of the New World Order

Marjorie Gowdy

Milkweed knoll for the nymphs
Decked out in orange and black

They care not that we watch
From farm lanes, cellphones aimed

Impatient we are, care-free are they
Our rapacious greed culls them

These bloody screens, relentless noise
Vellum wings fly south not needing us

She waves, the survivor, to those who cannot leave
Sips weed's fresh cream, sighs, then winks and flies.

Phoebe When the Wind Blows

Marjorie Gowdy

She looks confused, grey head twisting.
She searches for shelter,
my forsaken yellow chair,
last year's lantern.

When he lived here, she built her nest above his glass door.
In spring, I'd hear him curse her
when he watered
his new begonias.

But he never bothered the nest.
He'd close the door. She'd race back to her young.
A spring two-step
performed by just those two.

He left.
She's here, in autumn.
Alone for now, she seems to settle
in the browning leaves of his begonias.

back to school

Marjorie Gowdy

is charity a
virtue when the children die
does prayer block bullets

fiend's fire in fury
air disappears, scalded breaths
seared hands lock



The Cafeteria Lady

Marjorie Gowdy

She came to the funeral
explained she knew him when he was young and smart
that he talked to them like friends
(that he loved to eat, too)
But mostly that he protected the penniless
youth in lunch lines with pocket holes
youngsters bruised at birth
an old bean can, clean, filled with his dollars
promise of a sandwich on a cold coatless day.





Death Comes Quickly

Sail on, Ziggy

Reyn Kinzey

Sometimes death comes quickly.
So it was with Ziggy.
An old Norse drinker accepts it.
He ran up the stairs to his food bowl.
One moment he was eating.
The next he was on his side,
convulsing.
I was useless, so I called Becky.
She ran downstairs.
Ziggy died in her arms,
and he was gone.
Death had come quickly.
So, sail on, Ziggy
to the western isles,
or wherever
your heart wanders.

*Our Lady, Queen of the Apostles (Octave of the
Ascension) 2023*

Freeing Ziggy

Reyn Kinzey

The church remains skeptical of cremation.
It allows it now but seeks to regulate.
We are not allowed to scatter
human remains in the Chesapeake.

But Ziggy was our cat,
given to us
to hold and protect.
We did, as best we could.

But God, in His time,
took him back.

Now, his remains are ours,
to decide what's best.

In the spring,
we'll paddle out to the bay.
We'll scatter his ashes,
to send him on his way
to the blessed western isles,
or wherever his heart wanders.

Feast of the Three Kings, 2024

Ziggy Marley: Irish Cat

“If you cannot see the next hill, it’s already raining.”

(Irish proverb on predicting the weather)

Reyn Kinzey

I’ve said before,
Ziggy understood old Norse,
but I think he was an Irish cat.
He’d appear on the deck
in any storm
to stretch his back
to the wind and rain,
content with any weather
God gave him.
There’s a lesson
in that.

The Ascension of Our Lord, 2023

The Gift Of Speech: A Christmas Poem

“...so gracious is the time...”
In memory of Ziggy

Reyn Kinzey

We had a cat.
We named him Ziggy Marley.
He was a funny cat.
He refused to speak English,
but he understood Old Norse.
In early mornings,
he'd go down to the dock
to hold long conversations
with the Eider Duck,
recounting songs
of Viking heroes.

Some say—
or used to say—
on the night of Our Savior's birth,
so gracious is the time,
that animals receive
the gift of speech
and we can talk with them,
as once man spoke with birds and beasts
before the fall.

So, on Christmas Eve,
like a child,
I would try to stay awake
until Midnight
to talk with my cat,
to hear his tales.
But like a child,
I never quite made it
until Midnight.

Now Ziggy is passed and gone.
I haven't seen the Eider Duck in seasons.
I missed my chance
to hear their tales
of the north country.

The Most Precious Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, 2023

September Morn 2023

Peggy Newcomb



Ahh...at last
a cool morning
for the dog and me
to enjoy the out of doors.
Hurricane off the coast
of Florida sending
cooler air (from over the ocean)
our way.

I sit here with my sweater
clutched close to brace
my body against the 66 degrees.
Quite a change from
90 plus and high humidity...
high enough to make you
sweat just by walking out the door.

Oh...could fall be on its way?

How can people deny
Global Warming?
My dad said the ponds froze over
when he was a boy. And he ice skated!
I've never witnessed that.

In 1918 the York River froze over
and people drove Model Ts across the ice!
Believe it or not, and this is
Yorktown, Virginia, ya'll!

I now hear the honks of
Canada geese.
I look up, and here they come
flying above the rooftop...
and flying in formation
just above my head!
I quickly count: twenty-eight.

It must be fall.

Thankfulness

Peggy Newcomb

Thankfulness is the way
we show appreciation
for all we have
for all we enjoy
for all we love and
for all who love us.

What have I missed?

Thank you, God,
for each new day and
each restful night.

And for me, dear Lord,
for the love of my life
that I had for fifty years.
And for the grandchildren
and the great-grandchildren
and for my children...
even though I had to go out
and find them for myself.

They have brought me love, joy,
success, and stress...but are there
any children who don't?

I'm thankful for my life and
the fact that I was able to
discover capabilities as I aged
(that I didn't know I had).

I've always said, "There's never
a dull moment at my house!"
and I now realize
I like it that way.

Thanks again, Lord!



Cemetery in Kiev

Joyce Carr Stedelbauer

Larger in death than in life---
granite statues line an avenue of accomplishment.
Darkened by decades of godless diatribe,
crosses bristle on many stone monuments
and sightless eyes are fixed on the past.

A conductor with upraised baton waits for the final chord,
the actress with blood-red roses dying on her breast,
the general at attention to review his troops,
the politician's last promise forgotten.
A composer bent over an unyielding keyboard,
the writer's pen laid down without words,
the youth who never knew manhood,
his mother weighed with tears of stone.
Lovers straining to embrace,
husband and wife, silent as time.

A morning mist hangs in the trees like grief.
Autumn leaves slick the street and rustle memories
in corners of the past, memorial wreaths curl into dust,
ribbons fade and roll away like dreams.

Closer in death than in life---
little space breathes between the busts of great and greater.

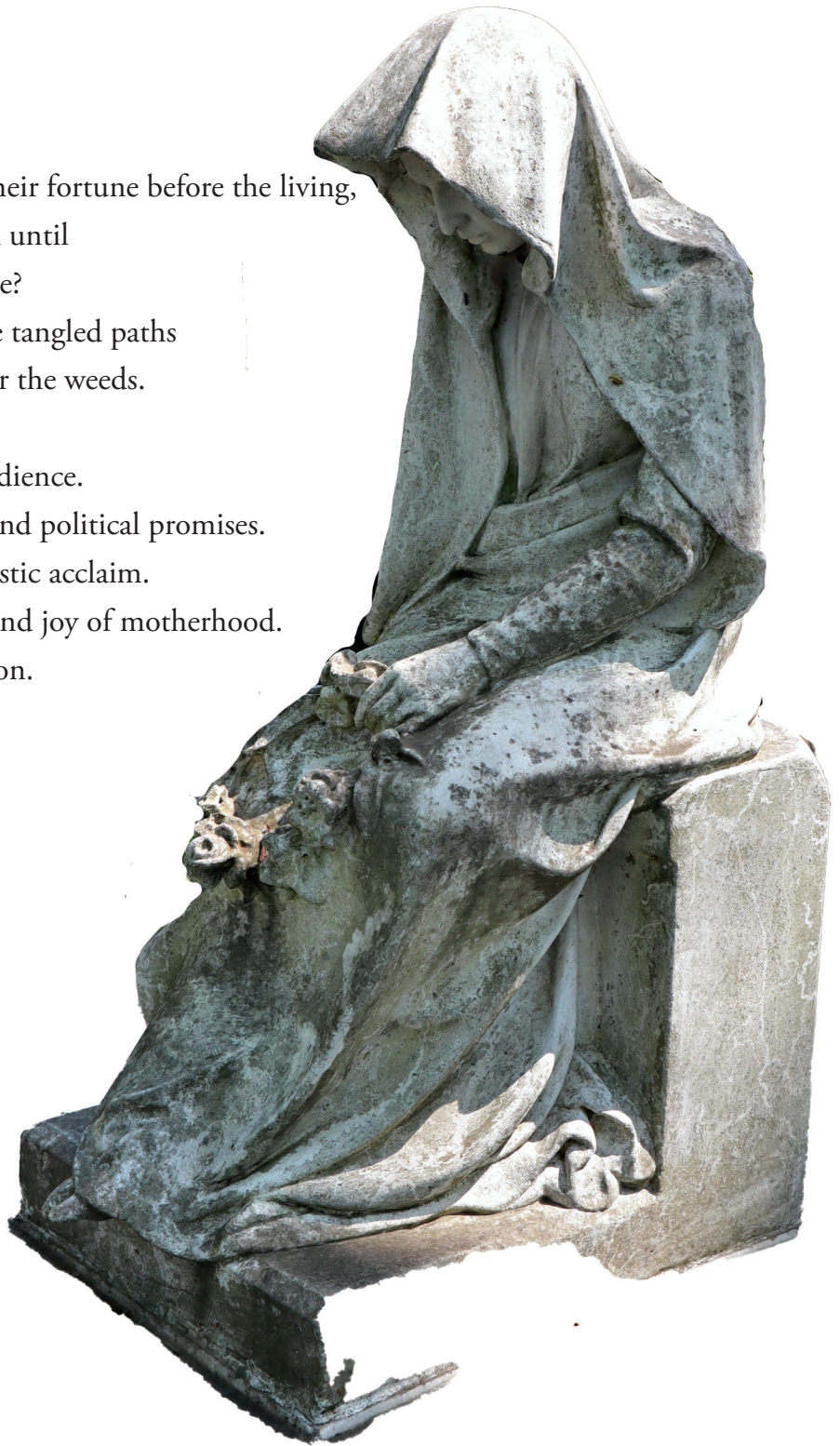
Was this their desire to parade their fortune before the living,
chiseled dates of birth and death until
winter rain erases name and fame?
Under black umbrellas we tiptoe tangled paths
where no one is left to remember the weeds.

Death knows no orchestra or audience.
Death cancels military parades and political promises.
Death silences all music and artistic acclaim.
Death steals the hope of youth and joy of motherhood.
Death defies a kiss or conversation.

+++

*If Christ has not been risen
your faith also is in vain...*

I Corinthians 15



David Reid Brown is an artist, pastor, and retired Navy Chaplain. His first books, *Spirit Soundings: A Chaplain's Journal of Life at Sea* and *Lost Summer*, were born out of his global experiences in the chaplaincy, spanning twenty-one years of peace, war, and three overseas deployments. He is living out his God-given passion to “build people” through teaching high school government, history, and art at Grace Christian School in Mechanicsville, VA.



David has been married to his beautiful wife, Rayna, for twenty-nine years. He earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from Virginia State University, a Master of Divinity degree from the Samuel DeWitt Proctor School of Theology, and a Master of Elementary Education degree from Hawaii Pacific University.

You can purchase any of David's books at: www.GetMyNewBook.com. You can follow all social media posts at the following: Facebook: Spirit Soundings - @SpiritSoundings3vols; Lost Summer - @LossandRecovery;

Psalms From the Sea - @PsalmsFromTheSea Email: davidreidbrown1@gmail.com

Kathleen P. Decker is a poet, physician, and musician. She is a past president of the National League of American Penwomen, Seattle Branch, and has been Vice President of the Poetry Society of Virginia, Eastern Region since 2019. Dr. Decker has been a member of the Williamsburg Poetry Guild since 2018, and Haiku Society of America since 1996. She has authored several books of poetry including, “Russian Reverie,” “Whispers on Paper,” and “Essence of Woman,” in addition to multiple poems published in national and international haiku publications. She edited and published an online and print international haiku journal called *Chiyo's Corner*, and was an editor for the World Haiku Association. She edited the haiku anthology “My Neighbor's Life,” a celebration of the 30th anniversary of the Haiku Society of America by poets of the Pacific Northwest (Laughing CyPress, Seattle, WA, 1999). She also edited “On Crimson Wings,” an illustrated



anthology of Japanese and American haiku which commemorated the centennial of the Japanese Consulate in Seattle, Washington (Laughing CyPress, Seattle, WA, 2001). She created a poetry/music/art film from a 100-link renku with three other poets, “Shedding Winter Coats.” Her non-fiction publications include the book “Fit, Unfit, or Misfit: How to Perform Fitness For Duty Evaluations in Law Enforcement Personnel” (Thomas, Springfield, IL, 2006) and over 60 peer-reviewed scientific publications. Dr. Decker is a Distinguished Life Fellow of the American Psychiatric Association.

Sharon Canfield Dorsey is an award-winning poet and author. She has written four children's books, a memoir, two books of poetry, an anthology, and a travel memoir. “Writing is like breathing for me – necessary for survival. It's the first thing I want to do in the morning and the last thing I want to do at night. I have been honored to have my work published in many anthologies and prestigious magazines like *The Pen Woman*, the publication of the National League of American Pen Women, alongside the work of such icons as Maya Angelou.” <https://www.sharoncanfielddorsey.com>



DM Frech lived in New York City's East Village as a modern dancer for sixteen years, attended New York University, Tisch School of the Arts, and completed bachelors and masters degrees in dance. Later she moved to Virginia, worked at the Governor's School of the Arts, got married, had two sons, worked as a realtor, and embraced fiction at The Muse Writer's Center.



Finishing Line Press published her poetry chapbook, *Words From Walls*, June 2022 and will publish her chapbook, *Quiet Tree*, in September 2023. She writes poetry, children's stories, fiction, non-fiction, and screenwriting. Her photography is on *Streetlight Magazine's* website.

Note to my poem that appears on page 16 (Persimmon Tree):
Norfolk, VA Monday Oct 16, 2023, dmfrech10@gmail.com This is my poem for Luisa's workshop. It was a stretch to write this, anyhow. The prompt, it to write about nature as neither romantic backdrop or scenery, not as mere extension of human thought, purchase of ambition

Jim Garrett is a retired high school English teacher from Florida. He is a member of the Poetry Society of Virginia, the Writers Guild of Virginia, and the James City Poets. Jim is a former U.S. Marine and a retired marathoner. In his spare time, he enjoys reading, writing, and walking with his wife Suzanne.



Jim can be reached at jsgarrett70@gmail.com.

Marjorie Gowdy writes at home in the Blue Ridge mountains. Gowdy was Founding Executive Director of the Ohr-O'Keefe Museum of Art in Biloxi, MS, which she led for eighteen years. Now retired, she has worked in other fields that fed her love of writing, including as a grants writer. Gowdy is a summa cum laude graduate of Virginia Tech and has a master's degree in liberal studies from University of North Carolina-Greensboro. She is currently newsletter editor for the Poetry Society of Virginia. Gowdy lives in Callaway, VA, USA.



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Reyn Kinzey: I was born and raised in Richmond, Virginia. I went to UVA, and having no idea what I was going to do with my life, I hung around and got an MA, an M. Ed., and even finished the course work for a PhD. But I never finished my dissertation (actually, I never started one: my attention span isn't that long).



Still not knowing what I wanted to do with my life, I took a job at Virginia Commonwealth University, where I taught for twenty years, both full time and in the night school. I also started a rugby career of playing and coaching for over twenty-five years. I wasn't much good, but I loved the game.

From academia, I drifted into market research, which proved a good fit. For twenty-five years, Rebecca Day and I ran Kinzey & Day Qualitative Research. We had a good run, working for clients such as Hilton, McDonalds, Anthem, and various hospitals and universities.

I am the author of two books: *Chasing the Dragon - Selected Poems* and *Sleeping Dragons - Selected Poems*.

Peggy Newcomb was born and raised in Chester, Virginia. She graduated from Mary Washington College of the University of Virginia (UVA) with a BS degree in Chemistry. At the time of her graduation, women were not allowed to attend UVA unless you were in the nursing program. She taught Chemistry and Science at York High School, Yorktown, Virginia.



She wrote for several newspapers and has been published in numerous venues including The Poet's Domain. She was awarded first place in non-fiction by the Chesapeake Bay Writers. She is a member of the National League of American Pen Women and the James City Poets.

A portrait artist, her art has been displayed in several local galleries including Arts on Main in Gloucester, Virginia and The Bay School in Mathews, Virginia. She has published two books - *I Used to Wear Shoes Like That* and *The Curtis Letters - A Cat's Eye View of Life*.

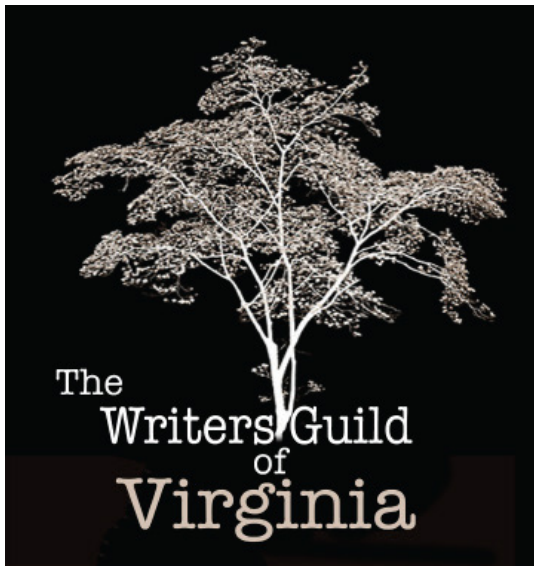
Joyce Carr Stedelbauer is a poet and author who lives in Williamsburg, Virginia.



She is the author of four popular inspirational books on biblical people:
Have You Met Eve?
Have You Seen the Star?
Who Rolled the Stone?
Where are you Adam?.

She has written two children's books:
The Awesome Alphabet Animal's Party
The Angels Birthday Celebration.

She shares practical ingredients of her recipe for transitioning to a renewed life following the unexpected death of her beloved husband for 64 years in *A New Widow Learns - Batteries Not Included, Some Assembly Required*.



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We hope you will visit us on our website to learn more about us and join us at one of our events.

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First Edition 2024

Compiled and Edited by Cindy L. Freeman

Published by High Tide Publications, Inc.
www.HighTidePublications.com

Deltaville, Virginia

Graphic Arts: Firebelliedfrog.com

Printed in the United States of America.

Artwork on page 31 from Adobe AI generated.