



## Mary Belle Campbell .... Peg

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1998 AWP Dedication Text:

Mary Belle Campbell's own life is a living, breathing poem. She creates it. Epic, narrative, lyric, elegy, ode - she writes it down.

Undaunted by the blank page, Mary Belle makes things happen. She actualizes dreams, brings goals to reality; she trusts her inner self. She began at the age of ten in Illinois by founding *The Neighborhood News*, her own handwritten accounts illustrated with photographs clipped from *The Saturday Evening Post*. Later she graduated from Ohio Wesleyan University with bachelors' degrees in English and sociology, a master's degree in psychology. She continued with graduate work at Ohio State and New York and Harvard Universities. She married Walter; they had daughter Patricia and son Gregor. Mary Belle taught in the Ohio public schools, was Realtor and travel writer. She and Walter moved to Whispering Pines in 1973. She became ours, became a poet.

Mary Belle is quoted in a news article as saying "I'd heard people talking about writing sort of like thunder in the background." When the source of thunder struck, the lightning, she took a course under poet-professor Ron Bayes at St. Andrews College to discover in depth Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot, William Carlos Williams. Her own poems began being published in little magazines. She became a member of our N.C. Poetry Society, the Poetry Council of N.C., the N.C. Writers' Network; she was invited to join the N.C. Writers' Conference. She studied under such master poets as

Galway Kinnell, William Stafford, Robert Bly. She studied under Ira Progoff, student of Carl Jung, and now conducts weekend workshops in intensive journal writing sponsored by Dialogue House of New York City.

Mary Belle's energies expanded. She founded Scots Plaid and Persephone Presses. She generously bequeaths the legacy of the annual Persephone Press Book Award to the N.C. Writers' Network. She traveled the planet, scaled the Alps, collected glints and sparks of light from Mayan tombs; recently Mary Belle was a passenger on a barge charted toward Avalon. She teaches creative writing at Sandhills Community College. Her books of poetry include *The Business of Being Alive* by St. Andrews Press, *On The Summit: Bed and Breakfast in the Swiss Alps* by Scots Plaid Press, and *Light from Dark Tombs: A Traveler's Map to Mysteries of the Ancient Maya*. She is currently working on a fourth manuscript.

Our Mary Belle is a metaphor for grace, for light and living, learning, giving. Her rhythm is her own individual pulse, her own heart beat. Surely we are challenged by her philosophy, by this passage from her poem "Learn to Fly":

I stand on a rim of light..  
searching for a path    up or down  
..How to prepare..by trial and error..method to date.  
Trust    the popping in my ears  
means I'm learning to remember  
where I've been  
the dreams I'm coming from.  
Hope    the latent images I've glimpsed  
will develop like film  
in this acid bath    showing me the way..  
The on-going adventure    becoming clear.

Mary Belle, mentor, shining friend, we dedicate this *1998 Award Winning Poems* to you. Excelsior!

AWP Dedication by  
Mary C. Snotterly

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## **Pine Lake at Twilight**

*Whispering Pines, NC 1975*

**In the afterglow of February sundown**

I hear the honking of two migrating ducks  
over-flying our home—  
fore-flyers of the flocks to come.

They swoop down over the pine-rimmed lake,  
land on water, join the wintering mallards,  
the pintails and widgeons feeding here  
on the corn we spread at water's edge.

The air tonight is soft as the lapping water,  
sweet with songs of indefinable  
pre-spring waking, quiet as the maples  
lining the inlet to the pine-rimmed lake,

their branches reddening, swelling to liven  
with starbursts of strange red-brown  
tree-flowers. Something of last year's  
dying is in the air, swelling to ripen anew.

Even as we do. We go from one year,  
one love, one life, to another,  
knowing spring will unfold us, summer  
fly us, autumn flay us, till our veins

burst with longing to understand  
and we drop down—to lie with mosses  
and fungi—under layers of leaves,  
flexing our muscles on stone.

Originally in *On the Summit: A Poetic Quest*, Scots Plaid Press,  
1988; reprinted in *Word and Witness: 100 Years of North Carolina  
Poetry*, Carolina Academic Press, 1999; © by Mary Belle Campbell

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