

A Poet - Maureen McDole

By Brian Lynch

This is another in a series of interviews with Historic Kenwood artists as part of highlighting our “Neighborhood of the Arts” and our soon to be Artist Enclave.

What inspired you to write your first book?

I had a large group of poems that I wrote throughout my twenties that I felt deserved an outlet. My husband and I decided to found Summerfolk Press in 2006 to publish my first poetry book, EXPLORING MY OPTIONS. It just felt like a fun and natural thing to do.

Do you have a specific writing style?

Not really. I didn't grow up wanting to be a writer, so I didn't study other writing styles. My own voice was pretty strong from the beginning, once I decided to be a poet. I trusted it and it has never failed me.

Are experiences based on someone you know, or events in your own life?

A little of both. I write about universal issues. My poems each have a life of their own, so they really decide the tone and content when they present themselves to me. Very rarely do I sit down and write a poem with a specific theme in mind. They come to me in my daily journal writing. Many of my poems are about my own journey towards wholeness, but some are about people that have influenced me, or affected me in good and bad ways.

What books have most influenced your life most?

As a youth, it was *Little House on the Prairie* books and *Anne of Avonlea*. As an adult, I love books by Marianne Williamson, Paulo Coelho, and Henry Miller, and poems by Emily Dickson, Langston Hughes, Mary Oliver's poems, Hafiz, and Wislawa Szymborska. So many books have made me who I am today. I love reading.

If you had to choose, which writer would you consider a mentor?

Good question. Actually Georgia O'Keefe was my main mentor, even though she isn't a writer. I would have to say Emily Dickinson, who wrote poems without fame or fortune. She published very little in her lifetime. That devotion to her art inspires me to not quit no matter the outside world's opinion. Georgia O' Keefe had that same devotion to her work. I also love her independent spirit, not to mention her obvious genius.

Are there any new authors that you find interesting?

Heather Jones, who is a local play right and a founder of the Blue Scarf Collective, Mark Haber, a writer out of Houston, Texas and John Cecil, a writer and playwright in New York City, who also happens to be my cousin.

What are your current projects?

I am editing my third poetry book, writing my fourth, and compiling a book of my Daily Inspirations that I post Monday through Friday through my blog at maureenmcdole.com. I am building up my career as an Inspirational Speaker with my poetry and life stories as my platform. I am also raising my six-year-old daughter.

Name one entity that you feel supported you outside of family members.

Reading has saved me and shown me a bigger, brighter world than my reality reflected. My writing has been the ultimate balm and healer. I guess that's two.

If you had to do it all over again, would you change anything in your books?

My parents were getting divorced when it was time to learn grammar in school. I literally have not retained any grammar tools whatsoever. I have had to teach myself it as I go along, so there are some mistakes in my books. Finding a good poetry editor has been tricky, but that's what second editions are for, to correct my mistakes. I love my books though, warts and all. Nothing in life is perfect, least of all me, or my work.

Do you recall how your interest in writing originated?

I found at an early age it was the most natural way to process my emotions. It was therapy. It was my best friend. It felt safe and liberating, when nothing else did.

Can you share a little of your current work with us?

A CIRCLE IN A SQUARE WORLD

It is a daily struggle, to retain my shape.
The poking and the prodding, the ferocious rat race.

The phone keeps ringing and the mail overflows.
The voice within ignored, by listening to friends and foes.

I prefer to be a circle, no beginning and no end.
Society prefers squares, to its will I must bend.

I keep rounding out, through the snickers and the jeers.
"Corners are more attractive," is all I ever hear.

I grab onto my dreams, like an anchor to a beach,
even though the masses scream, "Being a circle is out of reach!"

Is there anything you find particularly challenging in your writing?

Writer's block. I used to get upset when people told me I needed to get a "real job." A friend of mind told me to ask them to be my assistant to see how much work I actually do next time someone says that to me. I don't worry about others' projections about my career much anymore, especially after my second book came out. I know I am meant to be doing what I am doing.

Who is your favorite author and what is it that really strikes you about their work?

Emily Dickinson. She was in touch with the life, spirit, and soul of what it means to be human. She accessed so much depth with very little worldly influence.

Do you have to travel much concerning your book(s)?

I am in the process of growing my Inspirational Speaking career, which I see taking me all over the world.

What was the hardest part of writing your books?

Not allowing being a mother to override my writing time. Promotion was tricky in the beginning, since I am an Indie Author, but now it is taking on a life of its own. I just do my best, day by day, and let go of the outcome. I trust in life to lead me where I am meant to go. My job is to be open to its directions.

Did you learn anything from writing your books and what was it?

I learned that following my bliss is the best possible life. Even when things get rough, feeling like my life has a higher purpose through a career that I love, sustains me like nothing else.

Do you have any advice for other writers?

Read and write every day, follow your inner voice, shut off the rational brain until it's time to edit, and trust you desire to be a writer. It's there for a reason. It's also important to have a least one writer friend to share your triumphs and doubts. Also if one path doesn't pan out, another will, if you are doing what makes you happy.

Do you have anything specific that you want to say to your readers?

I am here to be the best person I can be and if my words inspire you to want to do the same, then yahooooooooo!

What were the challenges (research, literary, psychological, and logistical) in bringing your books to life?

A big challenge was getting funding for the printing costs, but even that delay ended up providing extra time for much-needed changes that would have been missed if the book had gone to print earlier. Everything happens for a reason. So if I experience delays, or setbacks, I try to be patient until a solution presents itself.

Giving up on my writing has never been an option, or desire. I will always figure out a way to do what I need to do, if it feels right to me.

How does your writing affect your inspirational speaking?

I have a story from my life that inspired each of my poems. Those experiences provided a path on the road to healing and wholeness for me, which I share with my audiences. We all are fighting the good fight and want to enjoy life, be loved, and be the best we can be at our core. At least that's what I want. I hope my journey can provide an example, or road map to help inspire people to find their bliss in life, like I have.