

# SIGNS & LIFE

Poems in collaboration with life and one another  
by Ellen Howie and Judy Lindblad

# **SIGNS OF LIFE**

**Poetry in collaboration with life and one another**

The poetry in this volume came to light as we prepared for our first "Interactive Art Event", SIGNS OF LIFE, at Myra's Dionysus Restaurant in Cincinnati, Ohio, in May of 1994. Called to our "wildness", we dedicate our works to you as you participate in creating Signs of Life around the world ...with special gratitude for the pioneering pathway work of colleagues in The Ecumenical Institute/Institute of Cultural Affairs.

You are invited into your own discoveries...  
to enjoy the surprise of your own poetry.

Ellen E. Howie and Judy O'Neill Lindblad

## LEGACY

(Written on the occasion of  
the 125th Anniversary of Mt. Auburn Presbyterian Church)

Our stone-proud Presbyterian ancestors chose a hilltop years ago  
to build their meeting house.

Stone-wise they were as well, replacing wood with rock  
for permanance.

Factionalized,  
they found unity in the task and built a place  
that celebrates the craft of human hands.

Faithfilled,  
they served a century's worth of needs  
with hands and hearts and treasure.

Risking to embrace the ever changing world,  
they left a legacy of wisdom, stones, and caring.

And we who risk to serve in factious times with faithfilled hearts,  
give thanks,  
for we are blessed with many doors to open!

JOL 11/9/93

## **NAME CHANGES**

It's not like putting on a new tie to brighten your day  
- or wearing a new dress.

A name change stays and shapes and focuses,  
Shifts your attentions-  
affects your self talk-  
defines a new reality.

And it takes a while to fit.  
Mom to Grandma, Dad to Gramps-Son to Dad?!

Corporations turn to ad folks to help in trumpeting the NEW...  
Prepare the way!  
Declare the change!  
And smooze the doubt away.

But what of those who face the new without a slogan team?  
We pray the way  
and learn each day  
to *celebrate* the doubt!

JOL 12/93

## HOARY FROST AT THE WALHONDING

Dendrites are merely seeking lower free energy you know.

Reaching out in geometric abandon-

    hairy bits of ice coating tree and weed.

Condensing,

    Cooling,

        Freezing,

Doing their appointed thing,

    and creating a wonderland along the ice slushed river.

Drawn to inspect the whitened Walhonding River trees,

    we slowly walked the hushed roadway.

Enchanted by soft iridescent puffs of airborne ice crystals,

    we soon rejoined the spirit world of natural wonders,

    graced by a " scenic highway" promise kept -

    in the lovely magic of hoary frost.

JOL & NRL\*

12/30/93

\*Editing and technical assistance

## GRAND CANYON-WINTER PROSPECTS

Did we dream the washed rock castles and cliffs-  
the layers of life  
chronicalled in geologic time?  
Our first encounter at Mather Point lured us into  
the Canyon's vastness beyond speaking.  
We hoped for a lingering relationship,  
but were soon cloud engulfed,  
awed by winter prospects-  
as wind whipped snow etched crevices and pine boughs.  
Warmed by embered fires in rock shelters,  
we adapted to the Canyon's stormy mood-  
drumming,  
sensing,  
peering into mist and fog.  
Then once again at Yavapai, as if on cue-  
Grand Canyon reappeared-  
refreshed our mind's eyes,  
revealed old Buckey's butte,  
renewed an invitation to return.  
We accepted!

JOL 2/94  
technical assistance JML

## **CLAIM THE CLAN**

(A journal poem guided by the angel of strength and the wolf.)

"Are you a teacher?", they ask.  
Time after time that question comes.  
And I, remembering times of foundering not-rightness  
    or arrogant stand-outness,  
Protest no, not I!  
    Demurring quietly  
    about the way we all are teachers, aren't we?  
And so I miss the point-  
    and yet the point is made.  
To teacher you are called.  
Come join the drumming pathfinders,  
The wise guiders of the tribe.  
Attend the muse in solitude where power lives,  
    and mark the stars.  
Your snowflake crystal path will cross in gentle partnership and  
Standing firmly there, your words will carry truth,  
Your yes sustained on wings of strength.

JOL 2/25/94

## **Anticipating Spring...**

grasping the  
significance of  
Life...

given and taken away....

given again.

EEH

2/26/94

## **Passing By**

Looking, I did not know.  
Distracted...I did not stop.  
Reflecting...I surprised myself.

Looking again, I saw myself anew.

That which I would have done in the past I did not do,  
That which went undone was accomplished by others.

EEH

3/11/94

## **Seeing from within**

Awake I now see.  
Silent I now know.

Time passes by  
Time beyond time enters in

Knowing becomes unknowing  
Unknowing in silence

Awake.

EEH

3/12/94



## DR. ESTES AT THE EMERY

Dressed in black

Her dark hair held gently with a bright red scarf,

Dr. Estes perched on a fine plaid wing chair,

Sharing the stage with a luxurious bouquet of flowers.

She was at home.

She was at office.

Conversing with a thousand as though one.

Sharing a message deep and healing.

Prompting all to be their wholeness-

laughter, tears, and awe.

The thinkers, movers, and shakers were there.

Excited to be together

and to dream of liberty and justice for all.

And each heard special words that night,

to cradle in their minds through other nights.

For me it was these words...

"I'm not a recovering Catholic!"

"Because my grandmother always told me,

'We do not belong to that church -

'We belong to what is under that church!"

Having shared her medicine,

Having sung over the scattered, dry bones,

She moves on.

And we move as well-

Brought to new life-

Called to our wildness,

With a renewed passion for justice and healing in our city.

JOL 2/28/94



ette  
94.

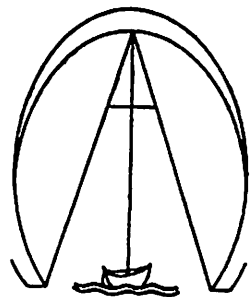
## 1990'S SON-RISE

"I don't know ", we sigh with resigned laughter...(Keep it light!)  
We frame unsure questions and gently probe for whys.  
It is certainly an end of *knowing* and *doing* !

Moving on to trust in *being*,  
we refuse hopelessness.  
Hurting for them,  
we postulate and theorize,  
Pausing to rehearse a "Parenthood" mantra  
about goal lines and end zones.

Is this a necessary passage-  
not noted in the current guidebooks?  
Maybe ancients understood-  
made way for such searching times as natural.  
Could it be these sons of pioneers must pioneer anew-  
confront uncharted space that we passed by before?  
And in so doing , in their own way,  
claim new son-rise wonders!

JOL 3/17/94

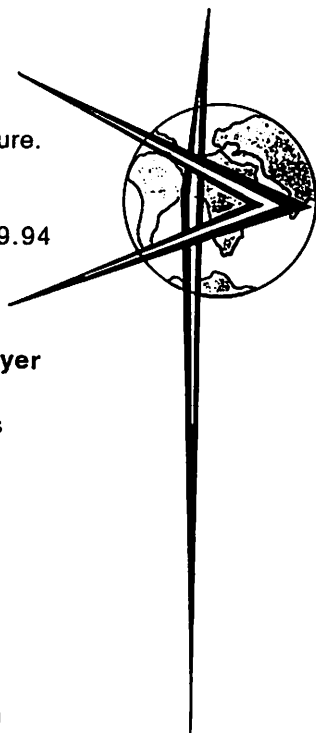


## Kindred Spirits We

To gather at Myra's  
past meeting present  
present calling future  
Art exploring depths  
depths calling to depths  
depths demanding expression  
Past coming to light  
Dark coming to light  
Light  
becoming dark  
becoming light

into the future.

EE  
3.19.94



### Centering Prayer

entering the darkness  
permission to change  
change  
leading  
to  
change  
leading  
to  
transformation  
pain becoming passion  
permission to change  
Light  
entering the  
darkness  
darkness becoming light  
Light leading the Way.

EE  
3.21.94

## Dawn

Swirls of water, hitting the beach...  
Sounds of waves, each unique, yet  
joining their own energy, make  
one sound - constant - held in  
being by unseen forces in this  
universe - a wholeness...  
a holiness,  
vibrating  
with life...  
given and taken away...  
given again.

☐  
4.6.94



## **SAY CHEESE!**

What a beautiful church!  
Where's the camera?  
Oh no! it's back there on the table...  
    you mean you didn't pick it up?!

Stomachs sink.  
Anger wells.  
"It can't be", races through our heads,  
    but finds no place to rest.  
It's true. It's gone.  
We dash back-60 anxious miles,  
Serving hope, yet unconvinced.  
Will honest people find it?  
Did stupid people leave it?  
Our questions hang unanswered.

The empty table tells no tales  
    makes no judgements...  
And yet we choose to ponder "might have beens"  
    with nashing teeth and shamefilled guilt-  
    embarrassed, self accusing, vulnerable.  
Decrying wastefulness we face at last  
    our imperfection layed out in \$100 bills.  
Absurdity descends...  
    Can we be trusted with another?  
    Perhaps a small "house camera"  
                            kept safely on a shelf...?

But wait!  
Our things do not own us!  
We'll amortize our goofs.  
Regain control...LET GO and RISK!

Say cheese!

JOL  
4/10/94

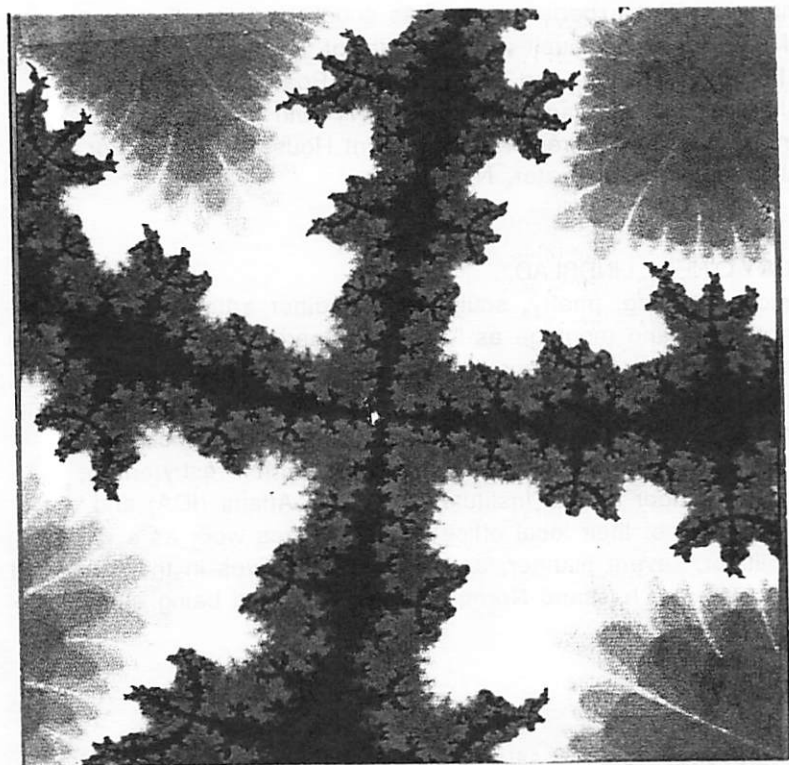
## FRACTAL DAWN

Fractally speaking -  
    unguided by our hands,  
    **CHAOS MOVES TO ORDER.**  
This insight fractures long held thoughts!

For years I've claimed the opposite as TRUTH.  
My best laid plans,  
    Laid waste like shattered dreams,  
I've worked with diligence  
    to bring them back again.  
    Willfully imposing order on the chaos.  
In time lapsed arrogance,  
    ignoring wonders that were there,  
    I watched the order turn again to chaos.

And yet  
    despite my merely mortal grasp-  
                                    of things eternal.  
    the promise of each moment dawns,  
                                    and dawns,  
                                    and dawns,  
  and....

JOL  
4/21/94





### ELLEN E. HOWIE

As a Registered Nurse, Spiritual Director and folk artist, Ellen has been exploring artistic expression as a vehicle for the healing of persons and communities since 1984. In her work as a retreat leader she encourages the discovery of the artist within each of us. In the co-creating of this Interactive Art experience she has sought to bring the resources of participants in touch with the gifts of The Institute of Cultural Affairs: USA where she serves on the Board of Directors. She lives in the village of Altamont, NY with her husband Dick, and is a spiritual director at Still Point House of Prayer For All Peoples in Stillwater, NY.

### JUDY O'NEILL LINDBLAD...

enjoys painting, poetry, sculpture and other artforms including seriagraph and montage as "Zen-ful" experiences which offer new ways of seeing and comprehending the world. She has done some study in art and is now giving more focused attention to exploring her interests in the field. Her other involvements include: volunteer work with her church, (Mt. Auburn Presbyterian); board member of The Institute of Cultural Affairs (ICA) and coordinator of their local office which includes work as a group facilitator, event planner, and trainer. She lives in the Cincinnati area with her husband Norm, exploring life and being attentive to new roles.

All proceeds from the sale of this exhibit are designated to the Annual Board Commitment Fund of The ICA:USA.

