



**Peggy Willis Lyles**  
**-A Celebration-**

This issue of *Roadrunner* is dedicated to the memory of Peggy Willis Lyles, poet, familiar voice in English-language haiku for more than thirty years, and associate editor of [\*The Heron's Nest\*](#), who recently passed on Friday, September 3, 2010, whose influence reaches far and wide, beyond haiku poetry.

It is fitting that some poets who knew Peggy and were touched by her will be a part of this issue's celebration of her life and work. Personally, having received from Peggy a sound basic introduction to haiku my first years knowing her, and then what developed into something of a tutelage, I remain indebted to her for perspective and the catalytic role she played for the better part of a decade.

She was a friend and we kept in touch fairly regularly. I was fortunate to have met her at the Haiku North America conference in New York during the summer of 2003, though the first-day encounter was on awkward terms during the zippy

kitschness that was the “haiku handshake” snaking through the Dalton School theater where the opening proceedings were held, as I received something of a minor scolding from her for a poem appearing in the conference journal that she had intended to send an acceptance message about that I’d also submitted to the Nest. After the showing of a polite sternness asserting herself was out of the way, we got to rapping about goings-on, Coney Island, life. How can “classy” not come to mind when one thinks of this most dynamic woman? I’d met more than my share of haiku faces and bodies then to attach to poems we know (sipped soda with some, carried boxes for others), but meeting Peggy was utterly profound. As anyone who has heard her read her work, speaking with that majestic Southern accent of hers, can attest to, it seems to change and intensify one’s sense of her haiku. I consider absorbing her poems in this way a highlight of that 2003 meeting—hell, perhaps the whole trip home. It is entirely like me to have lost her at the New York Botanical Garden, to not have had a chance to say good-bye in person, but it hardly compares to what we all found out and had to face September 3rd.

Perhaps this is a digression of sorts, but it’s all just now setting in: the fact that Peggy Willis Lyles is no longer an email away. I may be remembering too much. Her penchant for delish description, telling about all the people and places she knew, for example, which was peerless. It once compelled my sister and I to take a trip see the Magnolia Plantation and Gardens in South Carolina, a place she’d been “charmed by it since childhood,” where she enjoyed exhibiting her paintings on the “big lawn in front of the house with other members of the Charleston Artist Guild” when she’d lived west of the Ashley River in the late 80s and early 90s. She’d known the owner, “who’d died several years ago, when he was still walking around the property then, always followed by a bunch of rather sad-looking dogs. He had long been a soft touch for strays and liked to insist he had probably put me through college back when my father was his veterinarian.” There was much more. Still is. Probably forever will be. She left mountains of poems and then some.

Always so full of an otherworldly enthusiasm telling about anything from her beloved Southern mountains, time with Bill, her children, the grandkids, to azaleas at the height of their bloom, I can’t help but wonder if she’ll be most remembered for the value she found in the little things, as she spoke with a resonance and clarity in

her poems that is greater than the seemingly forced and tired objective sketches we find in the work of many poets.

At *Roadrunner*, we love the edginess about many of the poems Peggy's published here, love seeing what she's put down with less restraint, love seeing her more abstruse-colored little explosions.

[The "Favorites of 2009" section](#) of *Roadrunner* Issue X:I included brief commentaries from Scott Metz and myself on two of Peggy's poems that appeared here last year:

**honeysuckle  
taking down  
the spite fence**

(XI:2)

and

**whose ghost did you talk to all the way down**

(IX:4)

And, along with other poets, we offered [some thoughts](#) last year on the Viral section of *troutswirl*, The Haiku Foundation's blog, devoted to her engaging:

**bare branches  
I choose a layer  
of blue silk**

While we'll miss her presence as much as anyone, her fire lives on in the hearts and poems of those she struck a chord with.

Now on to that celebration. The following are all the poems, ordered chronologically, that Peggy has published in *Roadrunner* since this little vehicle went go.

We thank you much for all you've given us, Peggy Willis Lyles.

And, forever with your memory, we drive on.

**Paul Pfleuger, Jr.**



February 2006 Issue VI:1

**a backhoe  
stalled in goldenrod—  
low sun**

**a lantern  
in the pothole—  
moonset**

**the net  
into deep water  
clearing sky**

May 2007 Issue VII:2

**first snow  
she says God  
is a good man**

**maybe  
maybe not  
the seedlings thinned**

**blue butterflies  
a knife without a handle  
on the lichen stone**

August 2007 Issue VII:3

**swallowtails—  
a mission fig  
cut in half**

February 2008 Issue VIII:1

**she lifts one child—  
the underwater years  
of dragonflies**

May 2008 Issue VIII:2

**broken chords  
from the carousel—  
a whale off course**

**amber waves  
a tall man demonstrates  
the dream**

August 2008 Issue VIII:3

**wind-borne seed  
I have  
my doubts**

November 2008 Issue VIII:4

**two-dimensional wise men across the pulp mill roof**

**dark seed pods  
rattle  
the Judas tree**

**ground ivy flowering the small blue earth**

February 2009 Issue IX:1

**dragonflies  
how long did we know  
before we knew?**

May 2009 Issue IX:2

**damp sand ripples cold salt wind**

**the breath beyond the breath that fills the reed**

**nothing in a nutshell All Souls' Day**

**honeysuckle  
taking down  
the spite fence**

**all ears tuned to the closing bell**

August 2009 Issue IX: 3

**uprooted —  
thorn buds stud  
the devil's walking stick**

**a loud goose  
toward the moon —  
I've lived here too**

**blossoms I don't want to change your voice**

November 2009 Issue IX: 4

**whose ghost did you talk to all the way down**

April 2010 Issue X:1

**drowning with Icarus in the textbook print**

July 2010 Issue X:2

**Osiris  
reconstructed  
buttercups**



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