

The Aging Poet

By Suzy Hopkins

Even though she was 88 to my 28, we were good friends, meeting every Friday evening to critique each other's newest poems. She wrote one every morning at three a.m. when she awakened for the day. I would provide dinner.

Raised during the Great Depression she was obsessively careful with spending and saving. When she asked me to help her move to assisted living I found 11 cans of tuna fish, every plastic bag she had ever received from stores, a thousand pennies in a basket, writing and note paper that was so old it had turned yellow, hundreds of bedsheets and towels. I now understood the fear that followed these survivors of that awful time.

To the local science museum I brought hundreds of spectacular framed photos she had taken of weird spiders over her years of world travel. She contacted all her poet friends to whom she gave her many poetry books. Over the years a smart woman had obtained and published her mountains of poems.

This is my poem dedicated to her memory:

*"Years ago she would swoop in on your day
Crowding it with ideas and feelings.
Before you could defend yourself
You were caught up in trying to please her.*

*"She was always a good friend in that she would confront you
If she thought you had made a wrong turn;
Never questioning her being so sure of herself.*

*"Obsessed with the past
Fascinated with the present,
She used her poems as therapy
For her many losses
Which she never got over.*

*"Always insightful – it was her greatest gift.
Her eternal optimism made her an inspiration
To women of all ages.*

*"She was like a grand old building
That has seen more prosperous and more useful times
Whose beauty is in its dignity – even in decay."*

My precious friend, Janet Carncross Chandler, you are greatly missed.