

# **LIGHT ALL AROUND ME**

**Naomi Wingfield**

(1912 – 2014)

youth is a flying horse  
age slows to a walk on sand  
now I notice sea shells

**Second Edition with additional poems 2019**

(First Edition 2007)

**Edited by Ellen Ryan**

## Foreword

Paula Papky 2007

In the fifteen years that I have known Naomi, she has evolved from a person who wrote letters and cards to a person who expresses her deepest self in poems. Our journey together began when she joined a group I was starting at our church, a group that would practice writing for self-discovery. I was testing out an idea that combined the journal-writing techniques of Kathleen Adams (*Journal to the Self*) with the fast-writing techniques of Natalie Goldberg (*Writing Down the Bones*). What began as a short-term experiment for a dozen women developed into years of Saturday morning group writing sessions.

Naomi shone through the years, began writing poems based on her journal entries and then writing poems on her own, shyly offering to read them to us. We quickly heard the soul of a poet in Naomi as we moved through the nineteen nineties and into a new century.

People change and move on. When our original Saturday morning group came to an end, Naomi and I became part of a new group, again combining journals, fast-writing and poems. During that time, as Naomi entered her nineties, she gave up her car, and just recently, her house, but she never gave up her writing. Her poems and her presence continue to show what a wonderful mentor and wise woman she is.

*Light All Around Me* is Naomi's first collection of poems. How do we say what that light is? Some of her poems are about her sense of the light of God in her life, consoling, giving hope, clarifying dark periods. In some poems she remembers what it felt like to be a young wife and mother. She takes care to use images that appeal to all the senses, giving us glimpses of her life in those years. Dancing through the book like motes in sunlight are the haiku that Naomi began writing when she was past ninety, little gems of images like *Youth is a flying horse* and *Memories are birds and dreams*. Long or short, her poems are lyrical and shine with insight.

In some poems Naomi speaks of the losses she has suffered in living as long as she has: two life partners, a brother, a sister, friends. Each is held for a bright moment of gratitude, for the memory of a lover's touch, a

child's voice, a tightly held hand. She helps us to see that writing poems is powerful medicine as we grow old.

Recently, Naomi moved into a seniors' residence. This uprooting, a move that would be wrenching for any one of us, has yielded many new poems. I am grateful for the sense of hope she expresses, even as she speaks honestly about settling in, her longing to be known, her struggles with hearing loss and recently, impaired vision. Strangely, wondrously, these physical losses have not diminished her powers as a poet, one who sees into the heart of things.

Perhaps Naomi's honesty about love and death and loss may alarm some readers. Our mothers might have said to us, "Try not to take things so much to heart." In *Light All Around Me*, Naomi's heart is in every poem. She is a beacon for us as we age and as we continue to set down in words what our lives mean.

\* \* \* \*

## **Change**

My attic has changed.  
For fifty years we stored our treasures there,  
my mother's wedding dress  
great-grandfather's solemn face in the ornate frame  
love letters from high school days.

Change. My house is sold.  
I return grandchildren's drawings.  
My brother's wife cherishes letters from war-time years.  
My daughter has my mother's dress.

The attic is bare,  
but my heart is full  
of what has been.

## **Ninety-Five**

If I live to one hundred  
that's only five more years.  
I am greedy.  
I want more.  
I want to hug my children,  
feel the love of friends,  
bat memories back and forth  
like balloons with my sister.  
I want tulips in spring,  
larkspur, roses, impatiens in summer,  
and golden mums and gerbers in the fall.  
I want to see the sunrise in the morning,  
the soft light hitting the birch at sundown.  
I want to snuggle more babies,  
rejoice with grandchildren.  
I want to read more books.  
I want, I want, I want.  
I am greedy.

birds at the feeder  
a flash of red soon gone  
wait - they will come again

## **The Cardinal's Song**

Open your window  
and hear my song.  
Rejoice with God  
in my splash of red  
on leaves and snow.

Open your hearts  
and hear my song.  
Grieve with God  
for the red of wars.  
Love one another.

## What is Heaven?

What is Heaven?  
It's not for me  
if it is a huge picnic  
on a turquoise lake,  
with friends and family,  
and all the ones I've loved.  
Not just a reunion,  
no matter how joyous,  
even if Jesus dropped by.  
It must be more –  
I want to see God.

For a moment, or an eon,  
to hug and love again,  
to meet Einstein, Darwin and Joan of Arc,  
to see Aunt Gertrude without a scowl.  
But then  
no peaceful lake --  
a rushing river  
on my way to God.

I hope there is colour there,  
and dazzling light.  
Will I travel alone?  
Will someone hold my hand  
on my eternal journey  
going towards God?

## **To Sheilagh**

I love the love I find  
in unexpected places.  
Past loves are the cushion  
I rest upon.  
Parents, caring,  
a snuggling baby,  
a toddler's outstretched hand.  
My present loves,  
a gentle flowing stream  
of friends and mate,  
sisters and grown children,  
carry me along,  
supporting, enriching.  
All these, and yet  
I love the love I find  
in unexpected places.

## **She Doesn't Sew Much Anymore**

She doesn't sew much anymore,  
and when she does  
she squints to thread the needle.  
She's slow, to make every stitch right.  
It's hard to rip mistakes.

She smiles, remembering  
her grandmother teaching her,  
"You must use a thimble.  
Here's how to make the stitches."

She remembers pillow slips  
with dainty flowers,  
small children's clothes,  
even tailored suits.  
Now, perhaps a hem,  
and lovely memories.

## **To My Brother Who Left Home Forever**

Bobby, what if you came home?  
Would I know you –  
Would something tell me who you are?  
Would some slope of your shoulder be the same?  
Could some echo of a boy, eighteen, last for fifty years?

Why am I crying ?  
It can't be –  
But if it could --  
Would I know you Bobby?  
Would we hold each other tight?  
Would words rush out to tell the past?  
Would we feel strange?  
Would you see the girl I was?  
Would you be my young brother?  
Where are you Bobby?

## **To Margie**

I love the child you were.  
First snow, large flakes  
gently falling.  
You, wide-eyed with wonder.  
"It's tasty outdoors."

I love the woman you are,  
nurturing your children  
with quiet strength.  
Still wide-eyed with wonder  
and with wisdom.

## To Glennie

I wish, dear heart,  
I could sit with you  
in your own home,  
sit for a long time.  
Not rushing out for lunch  
or shopping.  
Just sitting and remembering  
when Ed sat there with you.

I wish I could tell you  
I too, remember  
his laughter and his wit,  
the children climbing on his knee,  
his tallness and his tenderness.

We could remember together,  
children rushing in  
with friends, or bruises,  
with news and noise,  
needing hugs and cookies.

You dream and remember alone.  
But it would help  
if we could share our thoughts  
and memories.  
When you sit and stare,  
see me across the room  
and feel my love.

a still August day  
green trees and red flowers won't last  
don't remember snowy days



## **Framed in the Skylight**

Framed in the skylight  
summer clouds gently moving,  
making images, bringing memories of  
two small sons, lying in the grass,  
looking up - "I just saw God skip by."

The whole space covered by white cloud,  
blank. It is eternity.  
Slowly, soft grey shapes make a pattern  
on the white  
and I know it will all make sense,  
someday.

## **Letting Go**

I shut my eyes to block the pain  
as a loved one breathes the last few breaths.  
The quiet, the hand of my sister,  
a friend changes the bed,  
and I realize a shadow will remain.  
I couldn't fight it. Accept it,  
and hold on because I must.  
I have to let go and stand alone.

Family and friends are lights all around me,  
dark shadows when the lights go out,  
shadows that show him in his chair,  
at the door, in the woods.  
I catch his likeness in his sons  
and say thank you for what has been.

## **Creator, Artist**

Creator, Artist, God.  
Sleepless  
thoughts of you  
come tumbling 'round.  
I share your grief.  
Grief for wars, for babies born in snow,  
for hungry, hurting children,  
for old ones waiting.  
Pushing hopeless thoughts aside,  
I remember  
stripes on zebras, spots on leopards,  
colours and patterns on fish and birds.  
And I worship you again.  
Creator, Artist, God.

## **Creator, Presence**

Creator, Presence, God,  
I need you nearer.  
My mind aches with thoughts of  
galaxies, super novae, black holes,  
infinity, eternity.  
I want you to be my closer God,  
the God I recognize in hyacinths,  
in sunshine,  
in a baby's perfect hand.  
I want you closer,  
in sorrow, in joy,  
in all my hours.  
I'm jealous of the wonders of your stars.  
I want you near to me.

## **Sisterhood**

I look deeply  
into the gorilla's eyes  
and she looks back at me  
for a long minute.  
She holds her baby  
as I held mine.  
A rush of recognition,  
Sisterhood.

A young mother in the mall,  
rushing, frowning,  
dragging her toddler.  
I look into her eyes,  
I feel her pain.  
I send her understanding  
and love.

An old woman  
in a wheelchair  
reaches out to me.  
I take her hand and see  
myself along the road.  
I see in her the girl she was,  
remembering my younger self.  
Recognition. Sisterhood.

## Winter Ice

Ice,  
you are a white tiger,  
crouching, waiting  
to pounce on me.  
I am afraid of you.

I walk like a duck,  
hoping you won't notice.  
Antique hips, fragile wrists.  
I feel your danger.  
I am afraid of you.

But Ice –  
you are an artist.  
You frost each branch,  
each blade of grass,  
a fairy land in sunshine  
and in moonlight.

Snuggled before a fire  
I rejoice in winter's beauty  
and dream of daffodils.

## Tick-tock

She half-dozes as she proudly watches  
daughters, sons' wives and granddaughters  
prepare the Christmas dinner.

Is she asleep?

She is softly remembering  
rushing home and making dinner  
for hungry sons, a husband, a daughter.

Remembering her first cookbook—  
the biscuits with too much salt.

She is a young girl, skipping breakfast,  
toasting marshmallows on a stick.

She is a small, shy child  
passing cookies to her mother's friends.

This can't be true.

How did it happen?

Now she is the old grandmother,  
rocking, rocking.

too much sun blinds us.  
retreating to shady spots  
we see more clearly

## Sunny Morning

She laughs out loud.

It is a crazy fact, she is ninety-four.

The sun splashes in,  
daffodils wink back.

She remembers dark rooms made bright  
with sunshine yellow,  
a son, a grandson, golden curls.

She can't bargain, go back,  
live forever.

Looking forward, she laughs.

## To My Grandmother

Tola,  
I never saw you smile.  
I feel the softness of your body  
as you hold me.  
I feel your gentle hands  
washing and combing my hair.  
I feel the thimble  
as you taught me to sew,  
but I never saw you smile.

Did you smile before I knew you?  
Did you smile when Lige came courting,  
when you made curtains, planted flowers?  
Did you smile in bed?

Did you smile at your small babies,  
at graceful daughters, and a son,  
at friends and kin at hearty suppers?  
Did you smile in church?

When did your smile go?  
When two babies died?  
When war took your son?  
When life was too hard  
and you left his father?

On the way to the graveyard  
grandchildren smiled,  
remembering you,  
loving you.  
But Tola,  
I never saw you smile.

## **Beyond Death**

Death, I am not afraid of you  
but I don't like you.  
You are big and dark,  
and you take my friends.  
You take the wrong ones.  
You leave old and suffering souls,  
and you don't care.  
I don't like you.

Dying, that's another thing.  
You are gentler, and sometimes sweet.  
We can control you  
and rejoice as we wonder  
and anticipate.

Living, you are the sun.  
If I skip along with you  
will shadows seem less frightening,  
will Death be understood?

Loving, the very best,  
goes on and on,  
past shadows, past Death.  
I can't control Death  
but I can nurture Loving  
beyond Death.

## **Only Just Now My Heart-Shell Breaks Open\***

Only just now my heart-shell  
breaks open  
in thankfulness for Paula,  
for this group  
taking time Saturday mornings  
to come together,  
to give, to learn, to know  
ourselves,  
and to know each other,  
even a little bit.

Only just now my heart-shell  
breaks open  
to love the fall,  
to smell the earth  
after the flooding rain.  
To love the grey  
and remember the sun.

Only just now my heart-shell  
breaks open  
to see the bannock bread  
half eaten.  
To taste the wild grape jelly,  
to taste the tartness,  
to see it as communion.

Only just now my heart-shell  
breaks open.  
I cry to myself  
when time is wasted,  
when so much beauty waits,  
when thoughts should be  
productive,  
when life flies by  
and guilt is always below the  
surface,  
when thoughts are bigger than  
my heart can hold.

Only just now my heart-shell  
breaks open.  
I want to hold all things close  
to take the pain away,  
not mine, but theirs.  
I want to be a blessing ,  
I want to show my inner self,  
I want to be worth sharing.

\*Title is a line from Anna  
Akhmatova



## **I Want To Dance**

I want to write a poem.  
I want to dance.  
The pills, the canes,  
the dying of my friends  
cement my feet.

I want to paint a flower.  
I want to dance.  
A hundred pansies in a window box  
lift bright and expectant faces  
as young children do.  
Small cracks in the cement.

I want to sing a song.  
I want to dance.  
Summer clouds, a cooling breeze.  
A friend comes in.  
My sister phones.  
My heart is free,  
and I can dance.

## **Dreaming**

When I am dying  
and the nights are long,  
I'll spread my legs  
and feel your loving body there.  
I'll part my lips  
and feel your mouth on mine,  
I'll feel your fingers in my hair.  
Memories will hold me fast,  
and I'll let go  
with peace at last.

## Moments I

She sits and watches  
as he plants the pansies.  
A stiff spring breeze  
ruffles his hair.  
She sips her coffee  
while she plans the day.  
Contentment flows.  
Between white clouds  
a glimpse of larkspur blue,  
and all at once  
God is there.

So many children,  
too many toys.  
Bills and laundry piling up.  
Shouting and tumbling,  
scuffed knees and cut fingers.  
Her head spins, and then  
the little one brings a tulip head,  
his eyes, big and loving,  
and all at once  
God is there.

The computer is down,  
her desk is a mess,  
the report is due  
and her shoulders ache.  
Her friend comes in  
with tears and a sob.  
The ache moves to her heart  
as she hugs her friend,  
and all at once  
God is there.

She gently spoons  
the mushy food  
into the toothless mouth.  
Pale, wrinkled eyes try to  
twinkle.  
She reaches out and hugs  
old shoulders,  
remembering her mother,  
and all at once  
God is there.

memories are birds and dreams  
flying fast and fading soon  
keep memories, have new dreams

## Consideration Tarts

I imagine my Grandmother Tola,  
a young woman in Michigan,  
teaching her daughters,  
Bessie, Hattie and Lucille,  
to make the Christmas tarts.

Not only at Christmas,  
but always at Christmas,  
syrupy, syrupy, no raisins or  
nuts.

The girls, now women,  
bake the same tarts  
in their kitchens  
teaching their children,  
girls and boys.

Where did they get their funny  
name?

One rotund friend when offered  
another  
said, "Well, I've had three  
but I will consider one more,"  
so then they were Consideration  
tarts.

I remember one hectic  
Christmas eve,  
still baking the tarts,  
as I listened to midnight mass  
broadcast from the Cathedral.

My daughter bakes the tarts  
in an old Ontario farmhouse  
while beef cattle and horses  
remind her of the first Christmas.

A great grandson starts a new  
tradition.

He bakes dozens every year  
for a big party at the Vancouver  
Planetarium.

From Michigan to Ontario,  
to Vancouver and Halifax,  
wherever you visit  
aunts, cousins and  
grandchildren,  
always at Christmas,  
Consideration tarts.

### Consideration tarts.

1 cup corn syrup  
¼ cup brown sugar  
2 eggs  
butter the size of a walnut  
pinch of salt  
1 teaspoon vanilla or nutmeg

Put in unbaked tart shells. Bake  
10 minutes at 450F. Reduce  
heat to 350F and bake 5 more  
minutes.

## **Sleepless**

Sleepless,  
I count a thousand sheep  
and sip warm cocoa.  
My run-away mind still gallops in circles.

And then,  
your arm across my body  
    drawing me close,  
your thigh against mine,  
your soft breath  
    gentles my mind  
and I find peace -  
    or passion.

If you go  
    will I count sheep again?  
    sip more cocoa?  
    read until three?

Don't go.

## To Lyle

I sit and hold your hand.  
These quiet times,  
these precious times,  
I sit and hold your hand.

I see your younger hands,  
planting the pansies,  
stirring the chili,  
steering the boat,  
baiting the hooks,  
netting the fish,  
docking the boat.

I feel your hands,  
cupping my breast,  
stroking my thigh,  
touching my face.

I imagine your hands,  
tickling a baby,  
building a house,  
making furniture,  
dealing cards.

I will hold your hand  
as long as I can.  
I will love you forever.

## Sparrows

I take my grandson for a walk.  
Before he has words, he laughs  
and points to small sparrows  
on the road.

I take my mother in her wheelchair  
to the patio.  
She loves the clouds,  
then enjoys small sparrows eating crumbs.

I remember my grandmother,  
calling sparrows  
"God's little chickens".

Bluebirds, finches, cardinals  
crowd the garden,  
but sparrows are the gentle thread  
binding me to my past and future.

birds at the feeder  
a flash of red soon gone  
wait - they will come again

## **Almost Sleeping**

I'm riding on a star.  
We're going fast.  
I'm seeking God.

I'm riding on a star.  
It's deeply dark.  
I think I'm lost.

I'm riding on a star.  
We change our course.  
I see a light.  
It's far away.

I turn in bed.  
The star is gone.  
You reach and hold my hand  
and God is there.

## **Am I Old?**

If clouds excite me  
remembering;

If babies, small children and old  
hymns start tears;

If mornings bring thanksgiving,  
and evenings gentle peace;

If older ones still need me,  
and younger ones seem  
not to mind my years,

Am I old?

## **Moments II**

A poem comes  
quietly holding a loved one's hand,  
remembering, sharing.

A poem comes  
burying your face in a baby's hair,  
snuggling so close you feel one.

A poem comes  
drowning in scarlet and gold  
on an autumn day.

Feeling family closeness,  
the encompassing caring of friends,  
a poem comes.

A poem is a prayer  
of acceptance,  
of praise,  
of joy in creation  
and the wonder of love.

Thank You for poetry,  
Thank You for prayer,  
Thank You, God, for love.



## **I will Sing a Song to my Mother**

I will sing a song  
to my Mother.

You bought hyacinths and daffodils  
when the light bill was owing.

You dashed cold water  
on your face  
to hide the tears.

You ran cold water  
on your wrists  
to cool the prairie heat.

Where are you now, Mother?  
in Heaven as you planned?

Are rooms full of sun  
and roses?

Are you playing with grandchildren?

My heart rests  
when all I remember  
are the good times.

Peace .

## **My God**

Let me show you my God.  
He is not an old man in the sky.  
Transcendence, Immanence, the Holy One,  
all that and more.  
My God makes house calls.  
I don't see him.  
I feel him behind my right shoulder.  
We rejoice in the morning sun,  
with flowers or snow, squirrels and birds.  
When sorrow comes he says,  
Don't worry, we will get through this together.  
Now, tell me about your God.

a holy time now  
writing and dreaming together  
the stillness, the sun

## **After a Busy Day**

Oh -- it is lovely to be in bed.  
Your own bed, I mean.  
Not a hotel bed  
    with a stiff spread,  
    javexed sheets and  
    big, hard pillows.

Not in Cousin Amy's guest room.  
She calls it the spare room,  
    with dozens of frilly cushions  
    and lumpy pillows.

No, it's your own bed,  
    your own covers,  
    your favourite pillows,  
    and your memories.

Yes, it's lovely to be in bed.

## **Bring Back the Pain**

My dear one –  
when you died the pain was  
a jack-hammer destroying me.  
In time it became a small hammer,  
the size to hang a picture.  
Pain and memories were the Cheshire Cat.

Stop fading.  
I want to remember the sparkle in your eye,  
your foot touching mine,  
the feel of your back as I curl around it,  
the autumn smell of your old tweed jacket.  
If memories are fading blooms  
I welcome pain to keep them fresh.  
I smile and you are close again  
my dear, dear one.

## **Macular Degeneration**

The darkness, the future darkness looms.  
Self pity is a black cloud  
releasing tears when I'm alone.  
Milton's poem- a mouse running in my mind.  
Helen Keller haunts me.  
My sister-friend holds my hand.  
God says "Fear not, I am with you".  
Can I believe?

I can feel the dark, black bear following,  
coming closer, waiting to pin me to the ground.  
I pretend acceptance  
while inside I'm screaming "I can't read".  
I slump in despair.  
The dark, black bear keeps coming, coming.  
When June sunshine touches my cheek  
will remembered sunshine warm me?

## **This Old Woman Can't Be Me**

This can't be me.  
This old woman pushing a walker  
down the halls of a retirement home,  
anticipating breakfast with three pleasant women  
warm porridge, steaming coffee,  
scrambled egg and bacon.

This can't be me.  
I'm a young woman,  
a happy wife  
pushing my first baby  
in a borrowed carriage  
down a Toronto street.  
Not an old woman in a retirement home.

Where would I rather be?  
In my lover-husband's arms,  
laughing at shared memories,  
counting present blessings.

Yes, this old woman is me.

## **Seven Rooms to One**

My home was seven rooms.  
Now it is one.  
A patio makes another.  
Our bed, the chest we bought  
for our first home,  
The bookcase my husband made  
of knotty pine,  
All fit. I call it home.  
I am content.

## **I Mourn the Things I had to Leave Behind**

I mourn the things I had to leave behind.  
Who has the spool bed we bought for our first home?  
The cedar chest my husband made?  
I miss my friend, the birch tree in the garden,  
the birds and squirrels,  
the old car in the driveway.  
I miss the cooking pots, the slotted spoon.

I can't be a young girl again,  
a passionate wife,  
a nursing mother with a baby's wide amazing eyes,  
a mother of teens.  
I fill in the square that says "widowed".

I can be a grandmother,  
rejoicing in children and a sister-friend.  
When I accept a cane, a walker, orthopedic shoes,  
a smaller space,  
and learn to love this home;  
when I hear the chatter at each meal  
as strangers meet future friends.

When someone says  
"I have enjoyed dinner with you,  
I will see you again";  
when I see a sea of faces  
and wonder who will be a friend;  
when I feel a sense of family  
and my space as home;  
when I open my heart to this new life,  
then –  
Peace.

## Taxi

She calls a cab and with her walker  
escapes Gracious Retirement Living.  
She walks the streets of Westdale,  
sits on the library bench  
in warm October sunshine.

Where is the girl who raced  
down Sterling Street to McMaster?  
She is here in a ninety-year-old body.  
Where is the young mother  
carrying food from Picone's  
to feed her family?  
She's here with bent shoulders  
and orthopedic shoes.

She remembers old stores –  
Picone's, Lindsay's, Mary Anne's,  
the clock over the dry cleaner's,  
McFadgen's drug store with  
a few booths for snacks and  
a lending library.  
Big V, Doug Reid, and “Better Times”.

She remembers the welcoming  
friends of Haddon.  
Should she walk past her old home?  
No, not yet.  
The sun fades,  
another cab back to Gracious Retirement Living.

## **In My New Home**

I want someone to know me.  
Not this quiet woman  
in the huge dining room,  
hearing nothing, seeing shapes, not faces.

I want someone to know  
how Hafiz lifts my spirit,  
brings a friendly God closer,  
how babies make my heart race,  
how an earthquake-size gap  
swallowed my husband and friends.

I want someone to know  
my fear of future darkness  
and my joy each morning.  
Let me show you me.

## **Aging Eyes**

I want to paint a picture.  
Aging eyes, losing sight.  
I'll paint my feelings in an abstract.  
With a broad brush  
I splash on red –  
the rosy red of sunrise,  
of impatience and roses,  
the darker red of old Valentines, a baby's overalls.  
Near the bottom of the picture  
the red gets muted, muddied  
as it nears the darkness  
that defeats me.

Then I splash on yellow.  
Old age is funny.  
If you don't see it that way  
You are in trouble.

It is the time you laugh at yourself  
And laugh with your friends.  
How did this happen to us?  
Where are my glasses?  
Did I write that note?

## **Special**

She knew she was special.  
Old people, canes, walkers, wheelchairs.  
A parade to the dining room.  
She imagined they had old people white underwear.  
She was special.  
She had purple underpants.



## **My Daughter's House**

I sit in my daughter's house,  
feel the love she feels,  
husband, two sons, a daughter,  
and this old house

She is content with her garden,  
baled hay, grazing cattle,  
the horses, barn cats  
and Georgie, the old black lab

The knotty pine floors delight her,  
deep-set windows for 100 years  
have brought sunshine to the breakfast table,  
rosy hues at sunset

Her grandmother's bookcase against one wall,  
the washstand in a corner,  
the old, old captain's chairs  
I like the way she hangs the pictures,  
sets the table, welcomes guests  
Soon she will have her grandmother's blue bowl  
and my doll.

## **Wonderful June**

My heart is bursting.  
My granddaughter called to share her joy,  
a baby.

I laugh, I cry, I shout my thanks to God.  
She thinks it will be a boy, John.  
Another John, I cry again.

We joke about knitting,  
we laugh and cry together.  
She says "We will come in the summer,  
I will call you soon."

I hug myself and feel a baby there.  
June, June, wonderful June will bring  
my first great grandchild.

## **How Long is Forever?**

My ninety-nine year old friend lives alone.  
Her daughter comes to live with her.  
How long will she be here, Mary?  
Forever, I hope.  
How long is forever?

My grandson is seven.  
How long before Christmas?  
Until December.  
He thinks that is forever.

The war vet limps with his cane  
in the Memorial Day parade.  
Remembering lost comrades,  
he thinks this has been forever.

Two people in love make vows to share  
a home, a family, their love forever.  
How long is forever?

## **I Think I Will Live Forever**

I think I will live forever.  
Not really, I just pretend.  
The birch tree will always sway in the wind.  
The amaryllis will stand straight.  
The tulips will come up.  
The clouds and sunrise will always be there.

I won't give away  
Grandmother's blue bowl,  
remembering golden corn steaming in it.  
I'll keep the children's drawings.  
I won't discard old letters. I'll cherish them  
because I will need them,  
because I will live forever.

I'll make a will  
and make arrangements,  
and then forget them.  
What do they have  
to do with me, because I'll live forever.

I'll buy new books  
and keep the old ones.  
I'll read as long as I can see.  
And when I can't I'll say to myself,  
The Lord is my Shepherd.  
I'll try to say  
This is the day which the Lord has made  
I will rejoice and be glad in it.  
I will live, but maybe not forever--.



1912-2014

## **2007 Biography**

**Naomi Wingfield** came to expressing herself through her poetry late in life. It was in her mid-80's, inspired by friends in a journaling group, that she found herself able to cope with family grief, her loss of two husbands and her own deep spirituality in writing.

Prairie born (1912) and raised, she moved from Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, to Hamilton, Ontario to attend McMaster University. Married to one of her fellow students, she raised two sons and a daughter. She held a variety of jobs, none of which defined her. Her chosen role was that of daughter, wife, mother, grandmother and friend.

Now, at 95, recently moved into her own apartment in a retirement facility, she is still writing and anticipating the arrival of her first great-grandchild in the spring.

## **Addendum, 2019**

Naomi and her sister Norma Bidwell celebrated their 70<sup>th</sup> reunion at McMaster University in 2008, their family having moved from Saskatchewan to Hamilton in the 30's for the two girls to attend the university. Both sisters passed away in 2014, Naomi almost 102 and Norma just reaching the centenarian mark.