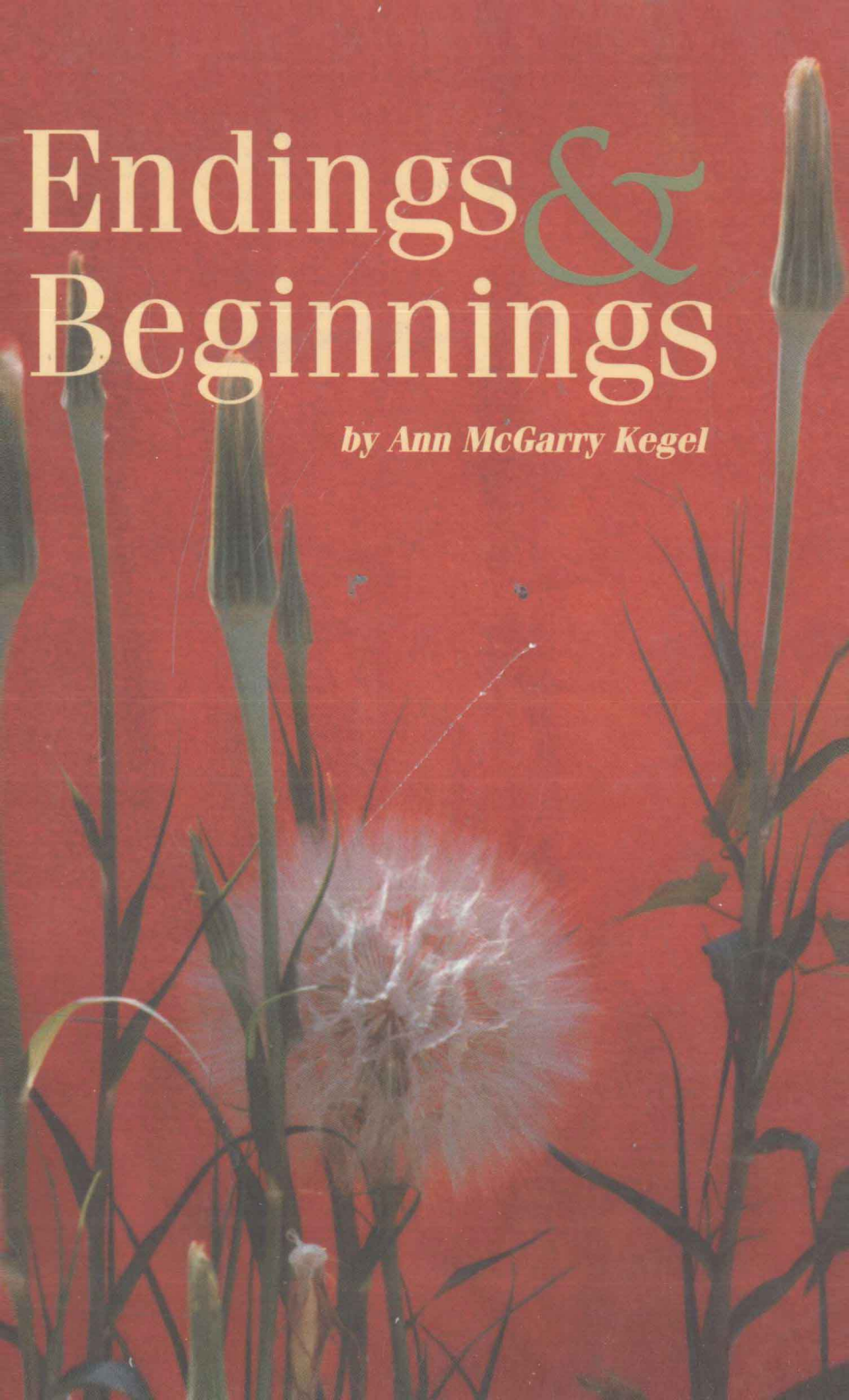


# Endings & Beginnings

*by Ann McGarry Kegel*



# Endings & Beginnings

*by Ann McGarry Kegel*

*Edited by Patrick D. Kegel and Paul L. Kegel*

---

Copyright 2000 © Ceithre Phāiste Press

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form without permission of Ceithre Phāiste Press.

First Edition

ISBN Number: 0-9677742-0-9

Library of Congress Card Number: 99-69464

Published by Ceithre Phāiste Press  
1814 Charles Street  
De Pere, WI 54115

Printed in the United States of America by  
Palmer Publications, Inc.  
318 N. Main Street  
Amherst, WI 54406

"Dear Friends" was published in *Moments in Time: Poetry by Midwesterners* (1980). CSS Publications, Ames, Iowa.

"Calico Child" was published in *Feelings: Poetry by Midwestern Poets* (1981). CSS Publications, Ames, Iowa.

## *DEDICATION*

To Nancy's children: Patrick, Brian, Thomas, and Lynn; to all who loved her; to all who were her friends; this book is dedicated.

## CONTENTS

<i>DEDICATION</i> .....	<i>iii</i>
<i>INTRODUCTION</i> .....	<i>1</i>
<i>I DAISY GIRL</i> .....	<i>5</i>
<i>II PRAIRIE DREAMS</i> .....	<i>13</i>
<i>III DEAR FRIENDS</i> .....	<i>19</i>
<i>IV DEATH MARCH</i> .....	<i>35</i>
<i>V REFLECTIONS</i> .....	<i>45</i>

## INTRODUCTION

Ann C. McGarry, known to her family and friends affectionately as Nancy, was born in Chicago in 1942. In 1964, she graduated from Edgewood College in Madison, Wisconsin, with a B.A. in English and a minor in the performing arts.

Ann continued to pursue her interest in the theater following her marriage in 1965, and the birth of four children. While living in Worthington, Minnesota, from 1970 to 1977, she co-founded the Grassroots Community Theater and the Touring Children's Theater; and received high praise for her performances in numerous theatrical productions throughout the region. Ann once wrote, "I prefer a visual medium to an audial one." Perhaps for this reason, she also excelled in directing since, in many ways, it is an exercise in "visual choreography." While living in Marshalltown, Iowa, from 1977 to 1984, this preference for the visual may have led Ann to photography and, ultimately, to poetry which invokes the reader's imagination through the power of the word. Ann had written previously, e.g., "The Yellow Gloves" (1964), but from this point forward it was as if photography and poetry were in a kind of symbiosis. Ann excelled in both fields, winning numerous statewide contests, and was published in *Moments in Time: Poetry by Midwesterners* (1980). An intensely private person,

however, Ann ultimately wrote for herself and the people around her. The majority of her work was circulated among family and friends, and remained largely unpublished.

What first captures the attention of most readers is the imagery of Ann's poems. The use of color terms, the juxtaposition of light, darkness, and translucency immediately stand out: "A cat's eye on a golden day/ Cannot find you" ("Calico Child"); "Reflections on the wall/ Cast the shadows of my loneliness,/ Rainbow hues of pink and blue and yellow" ("Reflections"); "Prairie dreams float through/ The ashes of my memories/ Like dusty calico dancers" ("Prairie Dreams"). Yet Ann's poetry is more than a collection of strikingly beautiful verbal montages. "Dear Friends," published in *Moments in Time: Poetry by Midwesterners* (1980), and awarded first place, was in part inspired by events in the lives of some of Ann's friends, and was written as an outcry against societal double standards towards women of her generation. "Before Surgery," another semi-autobiographical poem, occurs against the backdrop of a cancer ward. The reader's attention, however, is drawn to the image of a rosary which passes from a mother to her first-born, and which seems to suggest that the ties of family and tradition are stronger than any disease or suffering. And then, of course, there are the numerous poems on death: "The Same" ("I've come to think/ That Life and death/ Are both the same"); "Death March" ("Death is not a quiet

ghost/But a silver king”); and even the child’s poem “Daisy Girl” (“That the butterfly will beat himself/To death is of no significance”) are all touched by the presence of death. And yet there is nothing morbid in these poems. Once again, they are beautiful in their imagery, but, more significantly, death is transformed into a kaleidoscope of ideas: a silver king, a walk through a cemetery, an act of love, and even an occasion for humor as in “The Graveyard” where we read:

“If you lived here, you’d be home now.”  
 If you were dead, you’d be home now.  
     Same thing isn’t it?  
     I try to be non-partisan.

As in form, so in content, none of Ann’s poems are monochromatic. All of the pieces are characterized by a hyper-abundance of sometimes-contradictory feelings and a paradoxical juxtaposition of hope and despair, light and darkness, resignation and resistance, love of life and fascination with its end. This ability to pair the unexpected and create beauty where others might only have expected to find discord is characteristic of good poetry, and ultimately renders Ann’s work a joy to read.

Somewhere there is a saying that the brightest stars are the most ephemeral. Sadly, Ann passed away in 1998 after a brief illness. She leaves behind four adult children, a husband, a large family, and a close



circle of friends who remember her for her kindness, humor, intelligence, insight and love of beauty. All of these traits can be seen and felt in her poetry where they resound like “The echo from a mountain/That is still a grain/Of sand.”

I.  
*Daisy Girl*



*FIRST BORN*

You were:

The echo from a mountain  
That is still a grain  
Of sand,  
The embryonic whisper  
Of a love barely begun.

You are:

The bellows of our heart  
Beat sounded across  
The land,  
The sound of eternity  
Already sung.



*CALICO CHILD*

A cat's eye on a golden day  
    Cannot find you.  
You are my calico child,  
    Rushing across a field  
    Of sunset.  
Only by the darkness  
    Can you be held.



*DAISY GIRL*

The Daisy girl's answer  
    To your dreams,  
    Real and unreal,  
Is to race across the field  
    Capturing butterflies  
    Of magnificent beauty.  
Each time she succeeds  
    She rushes back to where you sit,  
    Holding her shoebox of treasures.  
She carefully lifts the lid  
    And places the butterfly,  
    Wings pierced together, inside;  
    Then snaps the lid shut.  
That the butterfly will beat himself  
    To death is of no significance.  
    She did it for you.  
You laugh and she laughs.  
She will do it again and again so  
    That you will share infinitely  
    This ethereal joy.  
She is not a child of your bone  
    And flesh; she is of your  
    Dreams. She is a beautiful  
    Daisy girl.





The Daisy Girl 1979

*Untitled*

The last roses should  
    Have been cut yesterday.  
I thought one more day of  
    Sunshine would give bigger blooms.  
I made a mistake. The wind blew  
    Down and bent the stems  
    And battered the blooms.  
They look unloved but still have  
    Their sweet fragrance.  
My son should have been  
    Hugged yesterday.  
I thought he would rest his  
    Head against my breast for  
    More than today.  
I made a mistake. He grew  
    Out of this embrace.  
He looks unloved but still  
    Has that sweet child fragrance.  
The roses make me sad. I  
    Should have cut them yesterday.



*LITTLE WOMEN*

Props against the wall,  
    The plays the reason.  
Hang the decoration  
    On your arm  
But watch out for those  
    Wooden-headed toys.  
Someday they will  
    Pinocchioize.  
Yesterday belongs  
    To you.





