

*Listening to the Sky*

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# *Listening to the Sky*

*reflections of my young life*

*on the farm*

*poems of*  
*Marilyn Appl Walker*

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## *Acknowledgment*

Grateful acknowledgment is made to the editors of the following publications in which some of these haiku appeared in present or earlier versions.

*Acorn*

*A Hundred Gourds*

*Frogpond*

*The Heron's Nest*

*Hekinan Exposition*

*Modern Haiku*

*Snapshot Press*

*Tallahassee Writers Association*

*Valley Voices of Mississippi Valley State University*

Since 2002 Marilyn's poems have been published regularly in leading haiku journals. She is a long time member of the *Haiku Society of America* and has received awards from *Genkissu Spirits Up Competition*, *Modern Haiku*, *The Heron's Nest*, the *Haiku Society of America*, *Haiku 21*, *Kaji Aso Studio International Contest*, *Penumbra*, *Vancouver Cherry Blossom Festival*, and *Yuki Teikei Haiku Society*. In 2003, 2007, 2009 and 2010 she and other members in the *North Georgia Haiku Society* read their haiku at *JapanfestAtlanta* in Atlanta, Georgia. This is Marilyn's first book.



**Dedicated to**

Marshall, Caroline, and Lauren





This kaleidoscope of poems reflects life growing up on my family's farm in Kansas during the 1940s and 1950s. It is a tribute and celebration of the agrarian lifestyle of that era, portraying a blend of personal experiences in farming, weather, home life and family activities including close relationships with members of my extended family, in a period of time at the threshold of unimaginable change.

Kansas is named after the Kansa Native American tribe which inhabited the area. The tribe's name is often said to mean "people of the south wind".



high plains spring  
a couple of stallions  
whinny their manes

a pheasant's low flight  
to the fence line  
contrail sky

suppertime  
the corner hay bale  
props up the sun

listening to the sky...

the wheat rustling

hazy moon  
the apple-mint stretches

out of the pot



off the hayloft

into the wheat pile

para

chut

i

n

g

fast moving clouds

little brother hiding at the top  
of the windmill

thunder

angus heifers bolt  
down the fence line

sunshine after rain  
a pot of geraniums  
scents the morning breeze

this first time

i see water flowing in the dry creek bed

prairie sunshine  
a tiny flower  
with an indian name

a lullaby  
in grandpa's first language  
apricot blossoms

high cirrus sky  
fluffy ducklings kite  
the pond's wind-waves



hailstorms side-sweep the wheat field harvest week

harsh sun  
the complicated eyes  
of a grasshopper

quiet twilight  
grandpa trims thin limbs  
with his pocketknife

clouds drifting by

sound of the sprinkler  
rotating

a patchwork  
of hollyhock flowers

a quilt on the line

tractor sound...  
from the south quarter

phone lines down  
hot south winds blowing  
all day

the longest day  
he stills the tractor  
at twilight

thunder moon  
odor of the rodeo  
kicking up

the clown barrel spinning...  
the bull's snorty breath



dog day afternoon  
we take turns moving  
the garden hose

cucumberandmelonblossomsinterminglethelongday

rattlesnake bite

at the creek bed rocks tenth year

an old love song  
mother slices  
home grown tomatoes

white clouds shimmer  
into sunset pink  
evening calm

viewing the vast milky sky  
we name the stars we know

hide and seek  
among the hollyhocks  
august moon

distant grain elevators  
in mirage  
the silent shimmering

a water tower  
holds up the summer sky  
hometown parade



no hesitation in mother's hand mushroom gathering

a slaughtered beef hangs  
from the barn peak  
autumn chill

ghost stories  
campfire embers drift  
and disappear

barn party  
autumn leaves  
do-si-do

*chicken in the bread pan*  
*pickin' out dough*

gently falling snow  
grandma's bread dough  
nearly risen

morning light  
the little pile of snow  
below the keyhole

the rooster's crow  
ice-white

buffalo country

he digs through snow  
to dig the grave

softly from her piano  
*in the sweet by and by*

each pencil lead  
the same shade of gray  
winter deepens



a snatch of dad's red wool  
in the barbed wire  
crows talking

winter moon  
the cat nudges in  
through the closing door

fading contrails   a pheasant's tail tracks in snow



### *About the Author*



Marilyn Appl Walker was born in Garden City, Kansas on June 13, 1940 and grew up on her family's farm in Wichita County, Kansas amidst buffalo grass and fertile farmland during the 1940s and 1950s. The farm was home to Marilyn and her parents, Gaynell and Elmer J. Appl as well as her younger brother, Loren.

Her grandparents, Grace and Frederick Appl and Emma and John E. Fisher; plus great grandparents, Dora and Jay Hoffman, and Victoria and Franz Appl, also farmed the fields and raised livestock in Western Kansas.

Marilyn's background includes primary school education and real estate sales and management. She and her husband, Marshall, have lived and worked in Kansas, North Carolina, South Carolina, Louisiana and California. They now make their home in Madison, Georgia.

*Award Credits: (appearing in Listening to the Sky)*

“suppertime”

Penumbra, Honorable Mention; Tallahassee Writer’s Association, 2003; Tallahassee, FL.

“a lullaby”

Penumbra, Honorable Mention; Tallahassee Writers Association. 2005; Tallahassee, FL.

“thunder moon”

Frogpond, 2008; July Winner for The Haiku Calendar 2009; Snapshot Press, 2008, United Kingdom.

“dog day afternoon”

Grand Prix Award Winner for Genkissu Spirits Up Competition, Hekinan Exposition. Hekinan, Japan, Hekinan Collection, 2006.

*Award Credits, continued*

“hide and seek”

Honorable Mention for Robert Speiss Memorial Collection,  
Modern Haiku, 2004.

“no hesitation”

October Runner-up, The Haiku Calendar 2015, Snapshot Press 2014,  
United Kingdom.

“hazy moon”

Acorn, 2005; April Runner-up, The Haiku Calendar 2007, Snapshot  
Press, 2006, United Kingdom.

“a water tower”,

Penumbra, Honorable Mention, Tallahassee Writer’s Association, 2008;  
Tallahassee, FL.

“each pencil lead”,

Acorn Supplement #5, selected poems with commentary from ten  
years of publication, 2008.





