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# Local Author turns poet

## Susan Taylor Block publishes poetry volume

Susan Taylor Block has turned her pen to poetry. The slender volume, entitled *Sit Right Here Beside Me*, is serendipitous - as in an attitude for making fortunate discoveries. Like a light shining over dark water picks up the iridescence from waves, Susan's verse sparkles with revelation of the diminutiveness that shows how significant details really are.

She writes about every day situations experienced by many of us. Yet Susan expresses these mundane things in a slightly different way. For example, in "Focus!" she doesn't just have us look for those reading glasses. As the dilemma presents itself she writes:

The question emerges

For middle-aged lasses;  
O migosh, where  
Are my reading glasses?

Susan's attention to detail is evident in all of her writing, whatever the subject. Whether her material covers the Wilmington Garden Club and its involvement with the Azalea Festival, or her Pluggers cartoon contributions, she chooses her words with care to express her thoughts.

She is probably best known for the books she writes of history about Wilmington and the Cape Fear region. One of her books, *Wilmington through the lens of Louis T. Moore*, is coffee table size. Her meticulously researched text, to share with Moore's outstanding photography, is a treasure.

Her books, *Along the Cape Fear* and *Cape Fear Lost*, give the reader an understanding of by-gones eras in the region. For native Wilmingtonians and new folk from other places moving here, these stories add to the recorded lore of our region. Her latest history book, *Tales of a Shirt Maker, A Jewish Upbringing in North Carolina*, details the work of her husband, Frederick Block, and his outstanding contributions to the area.

Susan has received numerous awards for her writing. The Lower Cape Fear Historical Society honored her book, *Airlie*, with the prestigious Clarendon Cup in 2003. The same organization has twice presented her with the Society Cup, which is given for distinguished writing. She also was

named Historian of the Year - East in 1999, received an award from the NC Society of Historians for her writing, and an award from the National Garden Club, Inc. for *Belles and Blooms*, published in 2004.

Beyond the historical, she has received awards for comedy from the New York Magazine Contest and from Pluggers, the Syndicated Cartoon/rhythms group.

Susan has also published in divergent magazines over the years. Her articles have been included in, to name a few of the publications, the Tugboat Review (UNCW), Reader's Digest, Rotarian, Ladies' Home Journal, the Wall Street Journal and the Saturday Evening Post.

Now this accomplished writer, in an enchanting twist of talent, turns to poetry.

The rhymes for *Sit Right Here Beside Me* are illustrated by Deborah Cavanaugh. The well-known artist started painting when her children gave her a box of watercolors for a Mother's Day present in 1992. She has been painting every since. Deborah's work is shown in galleries from Maine to Florida and her paintings hang in private collections across the country. Her scenes invite the viewer into her world where they can recognize their own. Visiting her web site is like taking a stroll through a fantasy garden. Susan's poetry volume is Deborah's first work of illustration for a book.

Anne Russell, a friend of Susan's, introduced her to Deborah's artwork in the proofs of a children's book Anne wrote about Airlie Gardens. The jaunty and cheerful paintings seemed just right for a book of light and whimsical verse. When it came time for illustrations for her book of poetry, Susan thought of the paintings Anne had shown her. From the illustrations of each of the poems to the colorful cover, Susan's writing and Deborah's artwork are a delicious match.

Another creative woman now entered into this mix of poetry and painting. Barbara Brannon came to Wilmington to teach courses in book publishing at UNCW with twenty-five years of experience in editing and book designing. Last fall, when Stanley Colbert retired, Barbara became director of the Publishing Laboratory, which serves as the small-press publishing arm of UNCW's Department of Creative Writing. The Laboratory publishes literary or nonfiction works in keeping with its teaching mission. In connection with this goal, Barbara teaches graduate and undergraduate courses in book publishing, editing and design.

As former managing editor of the University of South Carolina Press, in her work with other excellent editors and publishers over the years, and

now her work at UNCW, Barbara has an appreciation of what it takes to have a good book. With this background, she founded Winoca Press in 2004. This small press works with a select number of associates and publishes four or five books a year. With such a small list, each book and author gets individual attention. That consideration is evident in *Sit Right Here By Me*, from the Winoca Press.

On Saturday, September 10, from 1:00 - 3:00, the Two Sisters Bookery will hold a signing party for Susan's poetry book. Two Sisters Bookery is located in the Cotton Exchange on downtown's Water Street. Cathy Stanley, owner of the book store, invites the public to come for this special event to meet Susan Taylor Block, the author, Deborah Cavenaugh, the illustrator and Barbara Brannon, the publisher of *Sit Right Here Beside Me*.

Talking about her writing, Susan said, "I'm thankful to the good Lord that I enjoy virtually every minute of my work - whether it is history or poetry. Writers are fortunate to produce something concrete. Look at all the good teachers, ministers, and social workers out there, yet there is nothing sometimes to show how hard they worked and nothing to indicate how their efforts might pay off later."

Or, as Susan put it in "An Afternoon Tea Shafted,"  
When visitors come to chat  
And sunrays bring a kiss,  
You know where you dusted  
And they know what you missed.

The event at Two Sisters Bookery on September 10 is a not-to-be missed occasion.

— *Blonnie Bunn Wyche*

Blonnie edits newsletters for the Lower Cape Fear Historical Society and the Brunswick Town State Historic site. She is an award winning short story writer and author of the historical novel, *The Anchor — P. Moore, Proprietor*.