

“Take Me by Home”

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Wayne County Silver Arts Literary Entry

Life Experience

Silver Arts

Artist's Name: Linda Farmer
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Category: Literary Arts
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Wayne County Senior Games

It was his request: "Take me by home".

Silently the ambulance arrived, flashing red and white lights that shone brightly even in the afternoon. He wanted to see home before leaving his town. The local hospital had prepared him to be taken to a veterans' hospital in a larger city.

His service in the United States Army had enabled him to build a home, one of the few single-family dwellings for blocks on his street. He and his wife had raised three children in this home. There had been tough times, easy times, ups, downs, happiness, sadness, worries, and carefree joy. His children never went hungry, were clothed, kept warm, and had celebrated and enjoyed holidays, birthdays, high school and college graduations. He helped with cleaning and often cooked. He enjoyed propagating plants, thus on one side of the home, the property line started with a prickly pyracantha bush, and ran the length of the lot with camelias, azaleas, forsythia, weigela, first breath of spring, and ended with a lilac tree. Daffodils, irises, and roses filled the backyard, along with a fish pond, a labor of love, dug and cemented by him and his daughter.

He was a quiet man who took pride in working in his yard. He tended a vegetable garden in the lot beside the house; working the soil was relaxing and therapy after a day of manual labor. It was April, his birth month. The yard was fragrant with blossoms, and the garden had been planted. At age 58, he had suffered a stroke that morning.

Neighbors—who could borrow a cup of sugar, as well as borrow a couple of dollars, who could get a meal, who could stop by and sit on the porch with someone who knew what was going on with everyone but found fault with no one—had already heard about the stroke, and now, as the ambulance arrived, they came out of their homes, and with tear-filled eyes and aching hearts, a few approached the ambulance window. No words came forth, only slight waves and blown kisses. The oldest neighbor who sensed, instinctively knew, that this was the last time that her friend would see home, wept as she returned to her front porch

A stillness overtook the neighborhood. There was no talking, no children playing. Two cars slowly passed the scene; each driver reverently bowed his head. Neighbors stood immovable on their porches as the ambulance driver turned on the red and white lights, and slowly moved down the street with family cars following. The piercing siren began as the ambulance moved out of the block onto the main street.

It had been his request: "Take me by home". The news came two days later. He had gone *home* but not to his old neighborhood. His legacy lives in his children, and the love of plants dwells in his daughter