

Marchant "Lucky" Wentworth's Eulogy  
at the Celebration of the Life and Art of  
Jacklyn Wayne Potter  
St. Albans Chapel, Washington, D.C.  
May 20, 2006

She sure could dance.

And sing.

And laugh.

When I first met Jacklyn, I knew I what I had to do: I fixed her bike. Then I did what any potential suitor does: I examined her—record collection. There I discovered everything from Brahms and Beethoven to Winwood and Jagger.

There is no doubt that everything involved with Jacklyn was likely to be complicated and invariably connected to everything else. There were few straight lines in this woman's life—whether it was going to the grocery or going to a poetry reading—any journey was likely to involve both actual and metaphorical detours. These detours—maddening though they might be—almost always led to some place new and exciting. Accepting and appreciating those detours was a special burden we all shared.

Jacklyn did not have to work to be unique. She simply was. Whether she was describing the Capitol Dome as a gumball machine ready to dispense or the black coat—as the Key to Fashion—the one with the collar that won't quit, she used phrases in ways we had never heard before. Her poetry—like her life—always had multiple levels of meaning.

After years of therapy, we tried to remind each other that even Freud said "sometimes a cigar is just a cigar." But I had no hope that Jacklyn, in her world of continuous metaphor, ever really believed that.

She manufactured her own life and mythologies with no help from her parents—no doting aunts or uncles to see her through. For better or for worse, her friends were her family and we were all a piece of the puzzle.

She struggled with her demons—some known, some not. She became an expert brain surgery patient—few doctors had known anyone to survive three of them. She knew about political struggles, and knew, like Frederic Douglass, that power never concedes anything without a demand.

Through it all, of course, she was courageous. She leaves us with many gifts—of special places, words, phrases, and a belief in the power of poetry with kids both great and small.

And she also leaves us with pens. Lots of pens. So please take one on your way out.

Before I end with one of Jacklyn's signature poems, I want to thank all our speakers; Denize and St Alban's for their generosity in giving us the space for this service; and especially to Anne Becker and Karren Alenier for all their help in putting this event together. Please join us for a reception at the Writer's Center. Thank you all for coming.