



**Cherished Moments
with My Sister
Ruthanne**

by Linda Tucker

400 STORIES PROJECT

GLOUCESTERMA400.ORG

GLOUCESTER
400⁺

OUR PEOPLE, OUR STORIES

1623 | 2023

FOREWORD

Ruthanne Collinson, Gloucester's Poet Laureate from 2010–2014, was known as a free spirit and kindhearted person. Her friends called her "Rufus." Sadly, Rufus passed away in 2022. Many continue to miss her, including her sister Linda Tucker, the author of this story.

ABOUT THE COVER PHOTOS

From top to bottom:

Ruthanne's love of life and Gloucester shows at Stage Fort Park in 2013.
Credit: Linda Tucker.

Our last song together, August 2022. Credit: Linda Tucker

Dogtown College's literary publication cover, circa 1979. Peter Anastas has a feather in his mouth, Ruthanne is kneeling with a flower in her hair, and I'm putting a flower in the milk crate. Josh Brackett, standing second from right. Paul Cultrera is holding the crate. Mark Alexander is standing on the left side looking at the group, Hartley Ferguson next to him and Peter. Wish I could remember everyone's name!

Cherished Moments with My Sister Ruthanne

BY LINDA TUCKER

My sister, Ruthanne Collinson, loved Gloucester with all her heart and soul, and not only because our Elwell ancestors were among the first settlers of Gloucester and our Johnson (Walimaa) Finnish ancestors settled in Lanesville at the turn of the 20th century. She would have settled in Gloucester even if her roots were elsewhere because she was attracted to its every element—people, scenic beauty, ocean, history, arts. Ruthanne deeply appreciated Gloucester life, taking in every breath of its ocean air. Her appreciation extended into our family history with ancestors from both sides, including quarriers, artists, stone masons, fishermen, and poets.

Dear Ruthanne passed away in September 2022. We still “talk” to each other every day. Here’s a sweet story I’d like to share. She started writing poems when she was a girl. She wrote ideas on Sucrets wrappers and stored them in her tin Sucrets box in our top bureau drawer. I remember the first time I opened the box and read what she had written. I was in awe, even though, as her younger sister, I didn’t quite understand some of the meanings or where her thoughts were headed.

As the years went on, Ruthanne and I loved sharing with each other our works of art, which included her poetry and my paintings. In the fall of 1978, when she was 32 and I was 26, we decided to experiment with each other’s creativity. She drew and painted for me a beautiful scene on a wooden box, and I joined a creative writing group with her led by Peter Anastas called Dogtown College. We met him at the group’s sign-up and were so excited, knowing we were meeting someone rare and special. We wholeheartedly participated in his writing group from beginning to end. Little did we know it would provide some of our most treasured memories and teachings. We often relived memories of the first time we listened to Peter read from *On The Road* by Jack Kerouac. I can still hear and see him rocking back and forth in his chair as he read. We had never experienced anything like his profound passion for reading excerpts from a book. Although it was a favorite book of Peter’s, his enthusiasm was stunning. I instantly became interested in writing and was introduced to the incredible inner journey writing takes you on.

Ruthanne's love of writing deepened, and she began sharing her poetry with friends, which eventually led to public poetry readings. And she published two poetry books! And yes, she was Gloucester's Poet Laureate from 2010 until 2014! I learned from the Dogtown College writing group experience what "one thing leads to another and another and another" truly means in the most wonderful sense. I am forever thankful Ruthanne and I learned such valuable lessons in a wondrous place on earth, Gloucester.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Linda Tucker lived in Gloucester from birth until moving to Essex in 1986; in 1987, she became a Peace Corps volunteer on the Caribbean Island of St. Vincent, where she met her husband. They were married at a quarry in Lanesville in 1989 and had a son in 1990. A year later, they traveled to China to teach English for a year. After her husband got his master's degree in teaching English as a Second Language, they lived and worked in Saudi Arabia and the UAE from 1994 until 2002. She was awarded a medal while working for the U.S. Military in Saudi Arabia and awarded Staff Employee of the Year in 2016 while employed by Charlotte County Public Schools in Florida.

[CONTINUE FOR POEM AND PHOTO GALLERY >](#)

Celebrate Gloucester

A POEM BY RUFUS COLLINSON

Let us go to a high place and look out,
Gulls soar and drift like our spirits.
Trees reach out and spread their dapple and their shade.
Small birds twitter in droves like the beauty of our distractions.
Hills emerge and rocks lounge like beached whales.
The land curves and the sands glisten.

We see everything that keeps and holds, encloses
Coves, forts, quarries, cellars, the bell tower, break water
Harbor ramps and wharves and pilings, hulls and masts and lines
Vessels of pleasure and provision
Rooftops, widow walks, chimneys
The language and history of the neighborhoods
The salt of our current lives

We dwell in the spirit of all that swells and beckons, seizes and provides
The shining harbor
Steeple, lighthouses, Our Lady of Good Voyage,
Man at the Wheel,
Coffee shops, bars, restaurants
The aroma of the nations
The endless call of the sea and promise of the horizon
The spirit of Gloucester surrounds and teaches us
How to create Love from Loss
How to look far out and find the possibilities within
How to live close and always see the distant horizon.
Celebrate Gloucester and your self
All that you have become
Within the shining city of your soul.

Photo Gallery



Ruthanne with her children Sam, Suze, and Bradshaw, 2009.



Peter Anastas, phenomenal teacher, author, social worker, activist, at his Action Inc. office, 1992.

PHOTO CREDIT: ENDURING GLOUCESTER POSTING BY PETER ANASTAS



Ruthanne's grandchildren when they were babies, Georgia (2010) and Finn (2012).



Ruthanne with our brother Ron in Boothbay Harbor, Maine, 2012, who is also an artist!



Ruthanne and I toasting each other at Two Sisters Coffee Shop, 2018.



We loved to sing together, making more memories in 2011.