



Salt Runs in My Blood

Susan Schmidt

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As sailboat captain, rower, flyfisher, gardener, and Quaker naturalist, SUSAN SCHMIDT writes poems about moving from dark into light as she plays in boats and walks long trails. She remembers bright parrots, big trout, gales at sea, glaciers, peach pie, old loves, Celtic ancestry, Civil War battlefields, and learning to navigate. Her Carolina Parakeet poem appears in *Literary Trails of Eastern North Carolina* (UNC Press, 2013). Her Gettysburg poem won the 2012 Guy Owen Poetry Prize. Susan has worked as science-policy analyst and professor of literature and environmental decision-making. Susan now edits books, with the same mindfulness as pruning apple trees, and walks beaches with her Boykin Spaniel, a Silkie like her, happiest wet. *Salt Runs in My Blood* relates the poet's personal journey—mostly by boat: her inner flights and actual escape as she loves her family and natural neighbors. Observing birds, she learns her own survival strategies. She travels to New Zealand, Alaska, the West Indies, but stays South where she can name the trees and swim year round. Vulnerable on land, she is more confident on the water. The book could have been called "The Watery Part of the World." Part I of *Salt Runs in My Blood*, "Estuary," opens with the poet's Chesapeake homeplace; learning to sail from her father whose ancestors were Chesapeake ship captains four hundred years (salt), her mother's Irish side (soil and ink), Civil War generals, and scuba diving. Falling as a rockclimber, she turns to paddling. Fleeing a scary marriage, she goes to sea. "Open Ocean," part II, follows her delivering sailboats across oceans to the islands. In "Pocket Water," part III, she flyfishes in North Carolina mountains, leaves a tired romance, returns to Virginia rivers. In "Sea Level," part IV, the poet walks the Camino de Santiago and settles on the Carolina coast where she survives hurricanes, rows and swims.

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