

Haikus For St. Augustine

NOVEMBER 2022 St. Augustine Entertainer



By Valerie Arena

"I love you", only 3 words express a cornucopia of feelings. Rhetorical brevity does not diminish or minimize the essence of meaning or feeling. In high school many had to write a poem in English class for something we dreaded, Homework which limited our fun time! But a haiku is a poem, right? Only 17 syllables, 3 lines, 5/7/5. Yay, accomplish this and go out to play!

First let's thank the Japanese for the haiku which often focuses on images from nature, and emphasizes simplicity, intensity, and directness of expression. Also, we can write haikus for humor, raise social awareness, evoke emotions, or to reminisce. Imagine writing the history of our Ancient City with haikus and pairing them with our Fountain of Youth, magnificent sculptured lions, The Alligator Farm, Lighthouse and so much more. If you are in haste to see, learn, and enjoy St. Augustine, Florida, Catherine Avery St. Jean facilitated and prepared you for an aesthetic history of our awesome Ancient City with haikus and companion photos.

One New Year's Eve, Catherine and her husband, Nick decided to pursue a journey. Ah, Florida, since warm weather invited and welcomed the New York City couple. They drove spontaneously and on January 3rd, and her response to their first Florida destination, on this excursion, "I thought I was in Europe!". The culture, beauty, architecture and good vibes placed Catherine and Nick on a path, as destination became destiny. On Valentine's Day, 2012, they closed on their St. Augustine home. It was time to depart from their long-time careers and begin a new chapter.

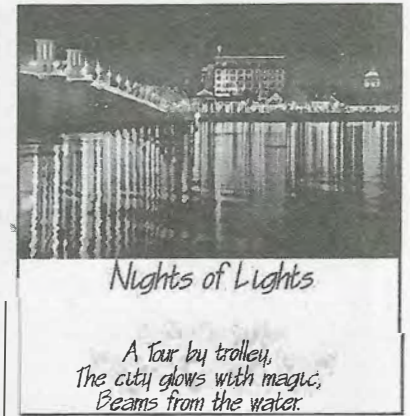
The artist in Catherine came out of the closet AGAIN, after years of diligent creativity in the advertising business and on to the canvass, wood, glass ceramic and other choices! Exploring downtown she enjoyed the art galleries. Across from O C Whites Restaurant, she discovered the St. Augustine Art Association, which is dedicated to promoting artistic excellence through exhibitions, art sales, and educational programs. Immediately Catherine became a member and is now a Permanent Life-Long Member! Initially, after painting for St. Augustine's 450th Anniversary, she placed a price on her work and donated 4 paintings to the Treasury Bank and all were sold! This inspired her to continue to paint, an activity she embraced with serenity, enthusiasm and joy.

Catherine's former endeavors included playing an organ at St. Patrick's Church in Dubuque, Iowa, enjoying her family of 10 with 6 brothers and a sister. She graduated from Loyola University, Chicago, Illinois where she changed her major from Art to Communications. After college she worked in Advertising on Michigan Avenue for 2 prestigious companies and advanced throughout time to become a Director of Creative Services. When she finished her Master's degree at City University, Staten Island, she learned that

the University was once Willowbrook, a hospital for the mentally ill and the hospital was funded to experiment on developmentally disabled students. This information came from Geraldo Rivera and she produced a film exposing this. In their very young adult ages, 2 of her siblings died from cancer which inspired her family to create The Avery Foundation. Her brother, Ron Avery helped establish this organization that helps cancer patients financially to alleviate the stress by providing grants to pay for unexpected expenses for the patients hospital bills. Catherine created paintings for the Foundations to help raise money. Her sensitivity and compassion is deep-rooted and this is evident in her career choices and her art.

She loved art but writing was just never Catherine's "thing". When 7 years old, she was in the hospital for 100 days with Asian flu that advanced to pneumonia and persisted in various forms. All she could do was read. Reading was/is enjoyable but she never loved writing as many who read enjoy writing. However, she loved challenges which are frequently a catalyst for contests. The St. Augustine Art Association hosts exhibits throughout the year and local artists are invited to participate. If one becomes a member, they are kept informed via email and there are various themes. Artists go on line, search for the theme and participate. On Nov. 4th, one can visit the Association on 22 Marine St. and enjoy Fabulous Florida. Catherine and others participate celebrating our fabulous state.

Catherine is a member of St. Johns City Library Advisory Board and was inspired to participate in St. John's Cultural Council's April 2022 Haiku contest. The theme was SPRING. I reckon in a state that has so little variety in terms of the seasons, Catherine was not inspired! She wanted to compete but all she could think about was haikus about Van Gogh, Shakespeare, Mozart, etc. "I don't care if I win an award. I simply want to write about the arts!", she exclaimed to her husband. Nick's reply, "Maybe create a good book to publish about artists?" Mission accomplished defining the Artist as, "A person whose work exhibits exceptional skill". An artist, composer, expert, inventor painter, authority, creator, virtuoso, whiz or craftsperson".



Preoccupied, obsessed, inspired to write haikus incessantly, haikus she wrote. Loving St. Augustine stimulated Haikus and Haikus for St. Augustine has been published. The Introduction: St. Augustine - "Fifteen sixty-five (5), A Village floated from Spain (7), To grace us today (5)". Historical Pioneers, our Ancient City buildings, Lighthouse, The Alligator Farm, our beloved Lions who protect our bridge, a veritable St. Augustine story featuring digitally manipulated pictures and Catherine's paintings together with haikus.

Throughout her life, Catherine has opened her heart and mind to many different realms and blended them to help others, to attempt challenges, to compete, and express. She is a cultured woman, knowledgeable, educated, and proficient in a wide range of fields: in other words, a contemporary Renaissance woman! When you read her haikus and without turning the page look at our history in her books, one a world story and the other, your story, you are touched. Imagine learning and experiencing history with a mere 17 syllables.

We approach the season of giving. If you know someone who loves St. Augustine, this is a perfect gift that you can acquire on Amazon or at St. Augustine Art Association. If you know people who are visiting us and they want to select activities, St. Augustine Entertainer and Haikus for St. Augustine are guides, invitations to savor the beauty of our city.

