



Border Arts Network Artist Spotlight

Telling the stories of the Border.

Name

Kathleen Bunyan Carlson

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State: Texas (and Aruba, Wisconsin, Illinois, California, Indiana)

City: Mission



Bio

Kathleen started writing poetry at the age of seven and made writing her profession. She earned a BA in English, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee; MS in Journalism, Northwestern University; and an MA in Creative Writing, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. She worked as a technical writer, grant writer and project coordinator for city and county governments in Indiana and Wisconsin, and for a technical college in Wisconsin.

She was born on the island of Aruba, Netherlands Antilles. Her family immigrated to Wisconsin in 1952. She became a U.S. citizen in 1974. She lives in Palmview, Texas with her husband Vernon who is a musician, painter in acrylic and watercolor, and nature photographer. His photos of birds and butterflies of the Rio Grande River Valley appear in Kathleen's latest book *Émigré*.

Publications include *Foreword*, *Border Arts: Beyond the Barriers*, anthology of The Raving Press; *Émigré*, Legado Publishing; chapbooks *Spiritual Reflections* and *Some Not So*, Westbow Press, and *Deep Night*, The Kenwood Press; selected poems published: on *Your Daily Poem*; in *Boundless*, the Rio Grande Valley International Poetry Festival; *Interstice*, South Texas College; *Flight, Fright, Mirrors, and Echoes*, anthologies of the McAllen Public Library Writers Circle; *Ekphrastic Collaborations "What's Missing"* with Angel Troyer and *"A Scarlet Sash"* with Heidi Hallett, Pewaukee Area Arts Council; selected poems, *Journey of the Heart*, Waukesha County Technical College.

Interview

1) *How does your home state influence your art?*

My 'home' states are Aruba, Wisconsin, Illinois, California, Indiana and Texas. Each home shows up in my poems or songs as the stimulus of senses or the action of the Spirit on my heart.

2) *What inspires you to create?*

I was born a writer. I have to write. Anything can inspire me to write from a crumb of eraser dust to the fresh smell of an outer space shot, from a kitten's smile to a dead tire on the expressway.

3) *What is your art? Literary? Music? Drawing, painting, sketching? Photography? Film? Or other?*

My art is usually writing poetry but it expands into writing songs, both the words and the melody. When I worked as a technical writer, I used figures of speech to enhance some pretty dry material.

4) *Which creators influence you?*

I create under the influence of e. e. cummings, Edna St. Vincent Millay, Edgar Rice Burroughs, Sir Walter Scott, Dylan Thomas, Richard Rodgers, Oscar Hammerstein, Paul Simon, Art Garfunkle, Weldon Johnson, and Snoopy.

5) *How is your art (or art in general) important to society in the border states??*

The border states are rich in culture, history, animals, plants and landforms. Poetry softens the harsh edges of the border while making life explode with beauty and excitement. Poetry quenches the border's thirst for expressing its deep love for the place and the people. Without poetry, the border would shrivel and dustify..

6) *Is there a specific purpose for your art?*

Art wakes the heart and mind out of the stupor that life can become. Poetry expresses exquisite joy and exquisite pain in the same breath..

7) *Are there other artists that you collaborate with, network, or recommend?*

I collaborate with my husband, Vern Carlson, to turn my books of poetry into a fuller five senses experience for the reader by using his photos of nature.

In the past I collaborated with oil and watercolor painters in producing ekphrastic works of art. I would like to do that again. Participants learn so much from each other in that shared creat-activity.

8) *Do you have a "real" job or is your creative work your fulltime gig?*

I have never been 'a starving artist'. I have always been employed as a professional writer. Writing poetry is not my hobby. It is the essence of my life.

9) *Do you collaborate with other artists/creators?*

Yes. Vern and I write music and songs together. Vern plays the Yamaha Tyros 4 keyboard and prepares the scores.

So far we have produced and copyrighted one song, "If You Meet Me in Tecate" which Diego Saurina, a Valley singer and performer, has recorded for us. Diego also sang Vern's song "I Would Be Blue Spending Christmas Without You" at an entertainment venue at Val's Country Corral, Mission, in 2021.

Diego and Edith have been entertainers in the RGV for over 11 years. They sing and play a variety of dance music at Valley senior citizen parks and other venues. This year they won the competition and title of "Entertainer of the Year" in the Valley Star Awards Show sponsored by the Winter Texan Times.

I wrote the lyrics and score for the song "We Live in the Rio Grande Valley", a humorous take-off on one of the songs in the musical "Candide". I plan to copyright Vern's "I Would Be Blue..." and then registering it and "If You Meet..." with ASCAP or BMI. Diego is my go-to singer for original creations and recordings.

I'm hoping that B.A.N. artists will be able and willing to help us with these efforts.

10) *Tell us about an upcoming project you are working on currently?*

After Legado Publishing completes and markets my book *Emigre*, I'd like to help coordinate and participate in another ekphrastic art collaboration with artists in B.A.N..

Additional info:

Please review the previous information I've written in the B.A.N. Questionnaire.