*This week’s guest on “Poetry from Daily Life” is Maryfrances Wagner, who lives in the Greater Kansas City Area. Maryfrances began writing poems as an eighth grader and today writes mainly poetry and some essays. A unique fact about her is that she has been hit by a car, not once but twice, while crossing the street! Among books she enjoyed writing is her latest,* The Immigrants’ New Camera, *and* Solving for X*.* *~ David Harrison*

**Poetry from Daily Life: All you need are your senses and 17 syllables to write a haiku**

*By Maryfrances Wagner*

When I was a child, my mother wrote little poems and put them in our lunch boxes, my dad’s hunting gear, my brother’s duffle bag, and my overnight bag. We never knew when we’d find one, but they came for many years periodically. They were short poems about nature. She had no training. She merely sat down, stared outside, and wrote about the trees, the birds, the flowers, the things she saw outside. My father loved to memorize poems, and he’d recite them to us when we went for ice cream on summer nights or to visit relatives. Later, I discovered, that all of those years my parents were married, he had been writing birthday and Valentine’s Day poems for her, but I never knew that until I found them after they died.

When I began writing poems, no one told me what to do. When a teacher assigned us in eighth grade to write about country living, my parents suggested I try a poem instead of an essay. Together we brainstormed details, and I went to my room and wrote the poem. The teacher read it aloud and put it in the school literary magazine. The journey had begun.

I’ve always believed anyone can write a poem. During my time as the sixth Missouri Poet Laureate, one of my goals was to get everyone to write haiku, so I started the Missouri Haiku Project, and over six months, thousands of people wrote haiku for me. Although the project is over, I’d like to challenge you to take the plunge and write some haiku. Here are the essentials of writing a haiku:

**The Essence of Haiku**

1. Haiku poems record an experience or observation, usually in nature.
2. Haiku can record a moment of revelation, of insight or presence that changes us.
3. Haiku are sensory: sights, smells, sounds, touches, tastes that startle us.
4. Haiku are short: 6-17 syllables or short words. in three lines. They don’t always follow 5/7/5 syllabic count.
5. The best haiku imply and don’t explain what is left unsaid.
6. Haiku are momentary, intuitive, intimate and express what is in a moment.
7. Haiku often identify where, when and what.
8. Remember perspective: Large and small things are both large or small, when viewed near or far.
9. Haiku poems are not about the poet’s feelings or interpretation or explanations of the content, only the observation of the writer and reader.

Here are a few of my own haiku. Please try your hand at writing one:

❖

Queen Anne’s lace

shelters a faun, feeds a bee—

tilts her head to sun

❖

In the dark, dogs find

the opossum dead in the yard

until we go inside

❖

October sun backlights

fallen sycamore leaves—

a lit path for stepping.

❖

lady bug squeezes

through a slit in the screen—

flies to my shoulder

❖

dogwood in bloom

blossoms vibrate

with bees

❖

A cluster of pebbles

sink roundly into palms—

so many tiny clicks.

❖

When you finish them, hand them to others as little gifts.

*Maryfrances Wagner was Missouri’s sixth Poet Laureate and winner of the Missouri Arts Council Individual Artist of the Year Award. She and her husband, Greg Field, have two rescued dogs named Annie Sexton and Lucille Clifton. For more information, visit* [*https://www.pw.org/directory/writers/maryfrances\_wagner*](https://www.pw.org/directory/writers/maryfrances_wagner%20) *and* [*http://maryfranceswagnerwriter.fieldinfoserv.com*](http://maryfranceswagnerwriter.fieldinfoserv.com).