

Byer, Kathryn Stripling ^[1]

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by Sierra Alley, 2013; Revised by SLNC Government and Heritage Library, March 2023

b. 1944—



Kathryn Byer accepting an award at the NC Literary Hall of Fame. Image from Flickr user -ted/twbuckner.

^[2]Kathryn Stripling Byer, an American poet, teacher and essayist, was born in Camilla, Georgia. Her father, C.M. Stripling, was a farmer and her mother, Bernice Campbell Stripling, was a homemaker.

Byer attended Wesleyan College in Macon, Georgia, and she also attained her Master of Fine Arts from The University of North Carolina at Greensboro ^[3], where she also was poetry instructor. Byer studied with Fred Chappell ^[4], Robert Watson and Allen Tate, and she also won the Academy of American Poets ^[5] while she was attending the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Byer served as a poet-in-residence at Western Carolina University ^[6] in Cullowhee, North Carolina; University of North Carolina in Greensboro, and also in Lenoir–Rhyne University ^[7] (formerly Lenoir–Rhyne College). Her work has appeared in distinguished poetry and scholarly journals, including *Poetry*, *Georgia Review*, *Southern Review*, and *Hudson Review*.

Byer has also published several essays, including the autobiographical essay “Deep Water” in *Bloodroot: Reflections on Place by Appalachian Women Writers* ^[8] (1998) by Joyce Dyer and “Turning the Windlass at the Well: Fred Chappell’s Early Poetry,” which was published in *Dream Garden: The Poetic Vision of Fred Chappell* ^[9] (1997) by Patrick Bizzaro. Her first volume of poetry is *Girl in the Midst of the Harvest* ^[10] (1986), second volume of poetry is *Wildwood Flower* ^[11] (1992), third volume of poetry is *Black Shawl* ^[12] (1998), fourth volume of poetry is *Catching Light* ^[13] (2002), her fifth volume of poetry is *Coming to Rest* ^[14] (2006), and her sixth volume of poetry is *Descent* ^[15] (2012). Byer has also published five chapbooks.

In addition to Byer’s publications, she has also received several awards, along with fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts and the North Carolina Arts Council. Her second volume *Wildwood Flower* (1992), received the Laymont (now Laughlin) Prize for the best second book by an American poet. In 2005 Governor Mike Easley ^[16] named Byer Poet Laureate ^[17] of North Carolina and she held this position as the first female Poet Laureate of North Carolina from 2005-2009.

Until her death, Byer lived in Cullowhee, North Carolina with her husband, Jim Byer, former professor of nineteenth century literature at Western Carolina University. On June 5, 2017, Kathryn died ^[18] at the age of 72 from lymphoma. Kathryn and Jim had one daughter together, Corinna Lynette.

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Subjects:

[Biographies](#) [25]

[Educators](#) [26]

[Poets](#) [27]

[Women](#) [28]

[Writers, journalists, and editors](#) [29]

Authors:

[Alley, Sierra](#) [30]

Origin - location:

[Jackson County](#) [31]

[Cullowhee](#) [32]

[Western Carolina University](#) [33]

[Guilford County](#) [34]

[University of North Carolina at Greensboro](#) [35]

From:

[NCpedia.](#) [36]

2 April 2013 | Alley, Sierra

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