Marginal Notes:
Introduction to the Project
The reason for *Marginal Notes*

This project is a byproduct of my life with *Susan Irene Rose*, who died on May 13, 2008 in our apartment in Alexandria, Virginia. The stories, music, and poems were my response to a joyful life with her. It is called “*Marginal Notes*” because:

- It was made on the sidelines of our life, a life described in the “Family notes,”
- It was not a work of professional writing or composition, but an avocation, and
- Like the scribbled notes one makes in a favorite book, the music and writings in *Marginal Notes* are often the kind of observations, reflections, and self-argumentation that one makes to understand a larger subject.

For me, the larger subject was sharing life. How do you share another person’s understandings, perceptions, aspirations and joy? How do you both receive and give these understandings while also living your independent lives, following your separate vocations and avocations? Robert Frost wrote for the individual when he said,

> “But yield who will to their separation  
> My object in life is to unite  
> My avocation and my vocation  
> As my two eyes make one in sight.  
> Only where work and need are one  
> And the work is play for mortal stakes,  
> Is the deed ever really done  
> For Heaven and the future’s sakes.”

But from my first meeting with Susie, I wanted to be done with the individual. Enough effort had already been spent on seeking my own calling. Here was my calling: *cherish her*. She evoked and united avocation and vocation. The internal antinomy of
self-interest with empathy and the external antinomy of sharing with independence both disappeared as our four eyes saw “one in sight,” and I wrote:

As heart by double motion lives,
receives and gives;
as resting birds,
souls of hemlock and bare oak,
in sunward-burst wing-stroke revive,
gaining desires roots choke,
so love, withholds, forgives.

Let us revive our love,
each give its potion, each drawing breath,
as stars draw tender silicate from ocean—
each breath more delicate, more tender.
Come, let us tend this fire
that borrows us to be our lender.”

Now the fire goes out. The relationship between us flickers in my memory. My life has ended but my heart keeps beating. Yet I know that Susie would repeat to me Frost’s other words, the words she said so often:

“Oh, when to the heart of man
Was it ever less than a treason
To go with the drift of things,
To yield with a grace to reason;
And bow and accept the end
Of a love or a season?”

I will commit no treason, Susie. Let me finish this work, even if it is only a pale commentary with parables instead of songs, and characters all with the same voice, and stories and verse too earnest to be serious. I will work for a while longer in the margins.

These Marginal Notes, musical and spoken, lived in the margins, in the spaces between our daily acts. This work was made between conversations, during long walks together, between classes, after changing babies’ diapers, after raking leaves, while waiting in hospital corridors, after touching and lovemaking, and while waiting outside the touch lines of soccer fields—always in the margins.
Sometimes I mistook the work for something professional that would pay off in the end. In fact, some of it was performed for charities, and, in that way, did pay off. But this work has a different end, an end I will never know. It is the work of an amateur, like Simon Rodia’s Watts Tower in Los Angeles, the Rock Garden of Milton Watkins in Seattle, the playhouse of Marta Becket in Death Valley, James Hampton’s *Throne of the Third Heaven of the Millenium* in Washington, D.C., James Goddard’s rocket in the driveway, or Chagall’s mural for the home of John and Evelyn Nef—and other such gifts evoked by friendship, faith, and love.

I misunderstood this only when I looked away from Susie. To turn back and see the work in her eyes was to know it had been done for love of her—nothing more professional than the work of a bower bird. Born on the first of May, she was always first, always the “may” that allowed me to work, and now the “may” that permits me to finish.
The Contents of the *Marginal Notes Project*

The main divisions of the project are the *Family Notes*, *Marginal Notes*, and *Annotations*, as outlined below:

**Family Notes**

Personal accounts, letters, selections of journals, photographs, memorabilia, miscellaneous poems, songs, and other information gathered mainly for our family and friends:

**WORDS & PICTURES**

- *A Book for Kathryn*
- *Fifty Glances Back*
- *The Timeline*
- *Our Life*
- *Miscellaneous poems and writings*
- *Swallowing the River*
- *Other materials*

**MUSIC & VOICES**

- *The Selfish Giant* (*Ballet*)
- *Jo Evelyn* (*Songs*)
- *Miscellaneous songs*

**GENEALOGY**

- *Cousins: Roses, Bruches, Sullivans, Helms, and others*
- *Ginny Bruch: Dandelion Days*
- *Ginny Bruch: Proud Wanderers*
- *Ginny & Truman Bruch, & Jo Sullivan, Beneath the Oaks of Ivy Hill*

**REFERENCE NOTES**

- *Original sources* (*list of collection*)
Marginal Notes

An extended written and musical narrative related to future events in a politically autonomous region of the United States, named The Northern Region. Both the composer and some of the writers listed below are fictional.

THE WORDS:

*Problems with Authority* by Richard L. Rose

*Death Wears a Tricorn*

*Spearpoints Bright*

*Three May Keep a Secret*

*Death Wears a Hand-lens* by Richard L. Rose

*I am at the other end of my arm.* by Richard L. Rose

*Primary Sources* by Richard L. Rose

*Selected Poems* by Richard L. Rose

*Collected Poems* by Richard L. Rose

*Finding a Purchase* by Irene Brooks

*The Profit of Doom* by Tom Farley (Irene Brooks, Editor)

*Fragment from an Alien Journal* by George Neely.

*Other writings*

THE MUSIC:

*Five Compositions of Narrative Music* by George Sakalas Smeltzer

*The Good Samaritan*

*The Books of Daniel*

*Amber*

*The People’s Voice*

*The Profit of Doom* by Brooks and Smeltzer


Annotations

End notes are appended to most of the works.