

## WHERE I'M FROM AND WHO I AM: REFLECTIONS OF AN ELDER

By Valerie Vickers

A Universe of billions of stars, the birth and death of galaxies  
A cosmic dance of forces, dark and light

A gathering of Earth atoms into elements, compounds, mixtures  
Raging volcanoes, earthquakes, great seas and vast change

The evolution of chemical soup into nucleic acids for life  
Diatoms, jellyfish, dinosaurs, woolly mammoths, cave dwellers

Birth, coupling, death of countless hominids  
Migration, struggle to survive across Africa and Asia

DNA from Britain—England, Scotland, Ireland--  
Iberia, Scandinavia, Senegal, Eastern Europe

Perilous crossings of oceans in sailing ships, of land in covered wagons  
Sweat and toil of farm life during the Great Depression

Wars-British Isles, America—Revolutionary, Civil, Foreign  
Prisons, pestilence, tyranny, freedom

Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Methodists, Quakers,  
Believers, nonbelievers, persecuted, deported

Maine, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Nebraska  
Kansas—Lone Elm, Iola, Augusta, Topeka

Hunters, gatherers, ordinary people, extraordinary people  
Cowboys, farmers, railroad workers, homemakers, judges, teachers

Rolling Kansas prairies, endless sky, cabin in the Rockies  
North Carolina's Piedmont, Blue Ridge Mountains and Coastal Plain

Weather of four seasons, calm and chaotic  
City neighborhoods with mulberry trees, crepe myrtle, dogs

--that is where I'm from

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Woman: daughter, sister, wife, mother, grandmother, aunt  
Friend, mentor, teacher

Kansas/North Carolina educated, global learner  
Swimmer, lover of children, critters, music, travel, books

Kansas sunflowers, Colorado columbine, North Carolina Venus fly-traps  
Belize acacia, Uganda papyrus, Jamaica mangroves

Fresh garden peas, fried chicken, mashed potatoes, corn, tomatoes  
Fast food and herbs

Notebook paper, typewriter, Kodak film, map, books  
Digital camera, computer, iCloud, GPS, Kindles

Spiritual seeker, Quaker Universalist, cosmic adventurer  
Writer and dabbler

Mourner of destruction of all Earth's habitats  
Passionate naturalist; cherisher of the wild

--that is who I am

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