

Richard's Wings

for Ayala & Richard Talpai

Early August morning in Montana,
headwaters of the Missouri, wide banks,
basin of wind and open spaces.
Known to Crow and Shoshone, here
Sacagawea stood with Lewis and Clark
at the confluence of three rivers renamed
by explorers: Jefferson, Madison and Galatin
to replace native Horse, Elk, Cherry Berry.

Two centuries later we arrive, bearing
a token to honor a friend's late husband,
know we've found the proper place to release
small wings of cedar wood marked with blessings
in blue ink and carried through three states
for you, Richard, woodsman that you were,
sky walker you've become.

By a small pebble beach, cool winds steady,
we set your wings onto singing waters.
When they catch in grassy tangles
we toss a stone, nudging cedar to
bob and swirl away, then merge
somewhere with endless sea.

Sacred this place, this morning,
your cedar wings afloat!
In near cloudless sky, a cloud being
with dragon traits oversees.

~Claudia Lapp

*8/15/2011, Three Forks, Montana
Revised 10/2018*