Linda Flowers Award winner: Steve Lautermilch

The Linda Flowers Literary Award, presented annually since 2001 by the North Carolina Humanities Council, recognizes writing that exemplifies the life and aesthetic of Linda Flowers: the gift to see the world with both eyes open and write about it, regardless of the subject, with an unflinching transformative brilliance and candor that exalts it.

Born of tenant farmers in Duplin County, Linda Flowers grew up in Faison and went on to teach at North Carolina Wesleyan College in Rocky Mount. Published in 1993, her book, *Threwed Away: Failures of Progress in Eastern North Carolina,* is a classic of North Carolina literature.

The 2013 Linda Flowers Award competition attracted 128 entries from across the country – fiction, personal essays, reflections, and poems. Those entries were winnowed to 15 and submitted to a panel of final judges: Randall Kenan, Brian Lampkin, Julie Overman, Glenis Redmond, and myself.

This year’s award goes to Steve Lautermilch for his poem “Where Waters Meet.” The judges praised this memorable poem’s “sheer sonic impact,” “aural brilliance,” “fresh and innovative imagery,” ability to “authentically capture North Carolina,” and “inimitable, breathtaking use of language while still remaining accessible.” To read “Where Waters Meet” in its entirety, go to ourstate.com.

— JOSEPH BATHANTI
North Carolina Poet Laureate

WHERE WATERS MEET: On Moving into a Home Overlooking Croatan, Albemarle, and Currituck Sound [excerpt]

A small rise. Once a cleared space, covered now with seedlings fallen growth tangled vines.

Headstone. Footstone.
Graveyard.

At home with the snakes, frogs, mist and rain and sleet.
Undaunted by the heat or the humility.

Compass needle and map.

Marked unmarked lettered unlettered seeded and planted and left to grow,

Born Sep. 1, 1866 died July 2, 1885.
Father lover husband stranger

whose the hand
the edge that traced and worked these lines.

*I have fought a good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith.*

Imagine her hair, late sun through lace curtain, imagine the lue of his eyes, the flicker of sea trout,

consider their silence, the set of their jaws, the few that came or came back to watch or pray,

the small number that lie alongside,
the ferns the moss over their mounds the quick green gold of rollers

the tines of the white oak
the tuning fork and shaped notes of the sun, curling
and cupped and riding the backs of the waves falling and rising on the rippled sand.

The ride, play of this light, sea water’s phosphor slipping across a floor as the moon rises over the marsh.