



My literary journey began on Blue Mountain over 1,000 feet high above St. Croix one evening in 1984. It was one year before my retirement as prison warden at the Golden Grove Correctional Facility. Twice a week after work, I'd stop by the Melvin H. Evans Learning Center, College of the Virgin Islands, only a few minutes away, to pursue studies in Public Administration.

One evening after class while in the library, I was approached by Marty Campbell.

“Richard,” he said, “what are you doing when you’re through studying?”

“I’m going home,” I replied.

“We’re having a poetry reading in the Little Theatre, and you’re invited!”

“No, Marty,” I answered, “I’m not into poetry.”

“You may like it!” he persisted.

“Nah,” I said, “I had a rough day at the prison. I’m going home.”

Ten to fifteen minutes later, I took up my books and left, but this poetry thing was on my mind. When I got to the bottom of the stairwell, I said to myself, “Ah, let me check this thing out, and I turned around and went back up the stairs and into the Little Theatre. Oh, boy! The readers were really into it, belting off poem after poem. “This is sweet,” I thought. “I like it...good stuff.”

As a member of Signal Support Activity, Virgin Islands Army National Guard, I took part in a training exercise on Blue Mountain about a week later. That night the stars were out like never before, and the view of St. Croix with its glittering lights way below was awesome.

When I had had my fill, armed with pen, paper and flashlight, I crawled into my pup tent and wrote two poems: “Stars” and “St. Croix by Night.” It was the first time in my nearly fifty years of life that I had tried my heart and hand at poetry, thanks to the inspiration that came from the students and Instructors at the College of the Virgin Islands that evening in February 1984.

Mr. Richard Joseph Schrader, Sr. is an accomplished author and poet and over the last thirty years and has published several books for example, Celebration: Salute to the Living and the Dead, Celebration Volume 11 and , In a Heartbeat, Home Sweet Home, St. Croix in Another Time, HAIKU: This Other Joy, Teach a Man to Fish 1878 Queen Mary and Dem.

