

Freeda's Beads of Joy



by
Sarah Jane Conklin

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Images: Sarah Jane Conklin

All jewelry, beads and buttons in the images are from my ancestors, my past and my present.

*Music is good for the soul....we must all help
each other to find moments of joy. Keep smiling
and keep singing.*
Dame Vera Lynn. March 2020 at 103 years old.

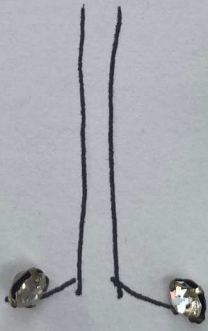
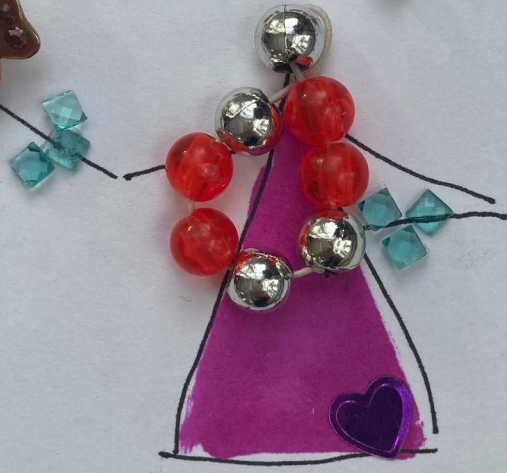
As Freeda stepped outside her house,
In her flamboyant way,
She waved at me - a passerby.
I stopped and said, "Good-day".



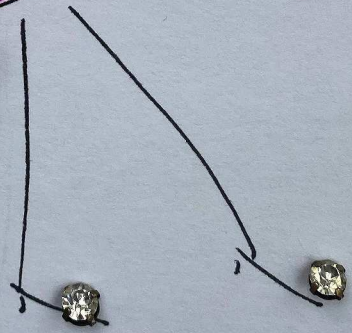
Her striking jewelry caught my eye.
She wore it with great flare,
Of gaudy baubles, buttons, beads.
I could not help but stare.
The necklace sparkled in the sun.
Its light bounced off her face,
Reflecting in her brilliant eyes,
And skin like patterned lace.
She wore big bracelets on her wrists,
And dangly earrings too.
In awe, I saw her shiny ring
Of pink and cobalt blue.



I asked about the beads she wore,
And how they came to be.
She looked delighted to be asked.
I listened, patiently.



Her smile was bright and genuine,
With calmness in her eyes.
Enthusiasm in her voice
Had tones both warm and wise.
Her words came out in music notes,
Both lyrical and sweet.
She mesmerized me with her song.
She kept a joyful beat.



"Collecting baubles, buttons, beads,
Is something that I do.
It's always been a way to bring
The old back into new.
Repurposed from my ancestors,
And loved ones I have known,
From jewelry, cushions, beaded clothes,
Their usefulness has grown."

"I string each item one by one;
Each moment I feel joy.
Creating helps me to recall-
Creating to enjoy."

I asked her questions 'bout her life,
Of things that made her smile.
She brought out lemonade to drink,
Then sang to me a while:



"I love the lights at Christmastime,
The twinkly ones that glow.
They brighten up the darkest night
And sparkle through the snow...
To smell the scent of baking bread,
To hear the church bells chime,
To feel the love that friendship brings,
To find a silver dime.
To taste the tangs of summertime,
To touch a newborn's face.
To dream of peaches heaped with cream,
To feel a warm embrace."



To hear the peepers in the spring,
And crunching winter snow.

My own imagination when
There's nowhere else to go.

To look back at accomplishments
And hills I had to climb.

To give, receive, be kind, believe,
When all you have is time.



Inviting me inside her house,
We stepped up to her door.
“If you would like to see more beads,
Come in, I’ll show you more.”

And much to my astonishment,
From ceilings to the floors,
Were garlands of her strings of beads
Round windows, lights, and doors,
Adorning almost every inch,
On walls and upstairs too.
I saw the joy in Freeda’s face,
As if she saw anew.



She sang, "When mem'ries start to blur,

The details start to fade.

But feelings of the happy times

Are what have always stayed.

And when I have a gloomy day,

I simply look around.

My joyous beads illuminate,

And moments can be found.

I like to hold them in my hands,

And roll them in my palm.

Like worry stones, they comfort me

And give a sense of calm."

I listened closely to her words-
Her pearls of wisdom deep.
Her optimism, teaching me
Forever, I will reap.

Soon trav'lers came from near and far
To see her beaded place.

And those with frowns, had always left
With smiles upon their face.

Some thought the strands as cluttering,
While others thought them grand.

It didn't matter what they thought;
She treasured every strand.

Her charms and songs could warm cold hearts.
And somehow they all knew-

Her unapologetic ways
Could teach a thing or two.



I visit her from time to time
To share a spot of tea.
She sings to me, "I've made new strands
Because you're friends with me."

By knowing she's inspired me;
An unintended deed,
She's joyful! And with nimble hands-

With strands to string.
And songs to sing.

...Adds one more precious bead.



The End





Life is made up of moments of joy. It is up to each of us to recognize, remember and embrace these single moments. Freeda chooses to remember these moments by stringing together, while she sings, beads that have been repurposed from her ancestors. She has filled her home, unabashedly, with garlands of her beads of joy. *Freeda's Beads of Joy* was inspired by a quotation by Dame Vera Lynn: Music is good for the soul...we must all help each other to find moments of joy. Keep smiling and keep singing.

Sarah Jane finds her own moments of joy while she paints and writes in Fall River, Nova Scotia.

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