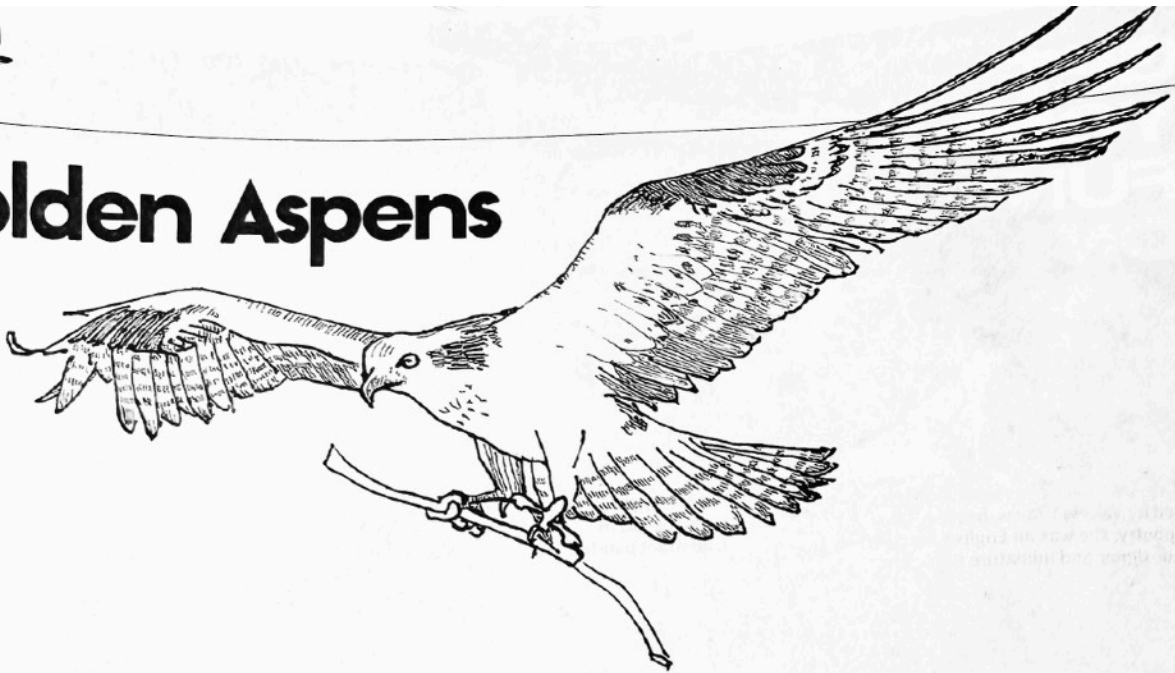
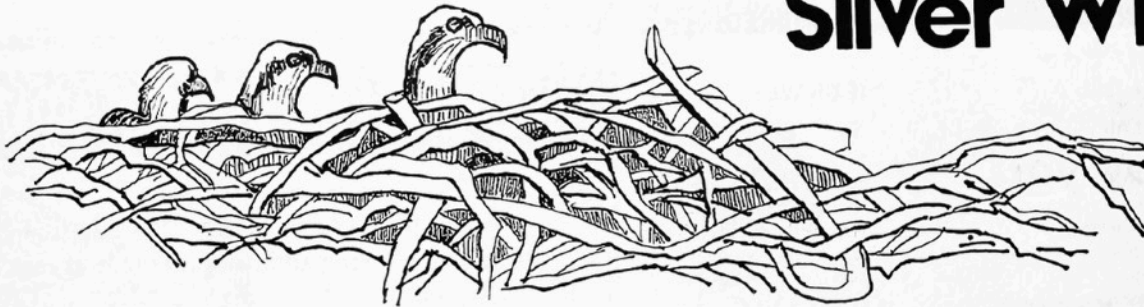


'Golden Aspens



Silver Wings:



Our Shared Fragile Earth'

"From the top of the spiky cactus
she watches,
guarding her nest just below...
She hops
from one dangerously sharp cactus arm
to another, and skips along the ground,
searching for insects
for her and her chicks
who will fledge soon
and learn bravery, power and song from their mother."



COURTESY PHOTO

Sandy Seth with her dogs Putter, left, and Sadie. Her new poetry book, illustrated by Valerie Graves, has just been published. Before she began to publish poetry, she was an English teacher, fireplace builder, abstract painter, website designer and miniature horse breeder.

BY ROBIN MARTIN

"GOLDEN ASPENS, SILVER WINGS: OUR SHARED FRAGILE EARTH"

BY SANDY SETH, ILLUSTRATED BY VALERIE GRAVES

LINEBREAK WORKS, 2025, 151 PAGES.

SANDY SETH'S NEW BOOK OF poetry, mostly about the natural world, illustrated by Valerie Graves, is lyrical but sometimes bleak.

Her subjects are often animals: meadowlarks, blackbirds, ground squirrels, bison, hummingbirds, and favorite pet dogs. Some portraits are merely beautiful. Others tell of the dangers these animals face from humans: 19th century bison hunters on the Great Plains; farmers who shoot blackbirds because they graze on crops of birdseed; medical researchers who perform cruel tests on beagles.

Seth is a keen observer of birds and their habitats, of domestic pets and their people. For instance, the poem about a cactus wren says in poetry what it would take an ornithological field guide many paragraphs to describe:

"From the top of the spiky cactus / she watches, / guarding her nest just below... / She hops / from one dangerously sharp cactus arm / to another, and skips along the ground, / searching for insects / for her and her chicks / who

will fledge soon / and learn bravery, power and song from their mother."

As well as being lyrical, the poems are instructive. Who knew that sandhill cranes are living fossils or that pronghorn antelope won't jump a fence?

Deer, moose, bear, a badger, blackbirds, doves, wrens, a Cooper's hawk ready to hunt, are all meticulously drawn by Valerie Graves. Each feather or tuft of fur is in its right place.

Both Seth and Graves are longtime Taos residents. In 1988, they collaborated with Sandy's sister Laurel on "Adobe!"; a book about traditional Southwest architecture.

Seth grew up in Santa Fe, graduating from Santa Fe High School and the University of New Mexico. She moved to Taos in the early 1970s where she taught English and worked as an art substitute at Taos High School. She had a range of students, some who were already scholars and enthusiastic readers, others who had led troubled lives. Her goal was to "have kids find out why they existed" through painting, sculpture, prose and





poetry. Between sets of stripes she painted on school walls, the students could fill in their own creations.

She said she often runs into former students and has finally trained them to call her Sandy instead of Miss Seth.

Her next career was building fireplaces and adobe houses.

Next came miniature horse breeding. She and Graves raised and showed horses, participating in national and Canadian championships during the late 1990s.

Then Seth went back to school, earning a certificate in publishing technology from UNM-Taos. She was a pioneer in designing websites, also teaching clients how to use email and performing other tasks on the computer. She volunteered at the bird sanctuary of Bosque del Apache, producing publicity material. Graves made art for postcards sold at the visitor's center.

Seth's current career is that of a writer. Her motivation is to teach people who are not connected to the natural world that "animals have their own souls and lives. There is harm to all life from humans."

Illustrator Graves is also attuned to nature. She is well known in Taos — and among art collectors who visit New Mexico — for her landscape paintings. During her long artistic career, she has specialized in pastels.

Graves grew up in many states, as her father worked in public health. At one time the family lived near Washington, D.C.; in those days, she could freely wander the halls of Congress. She met presidents John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson.

At the University of Rochester in upstate New York, she majored in history and political science, also taking sculpture courses. Upstate New York weather convinced her she didn't want to live somewhere "dreary and cold." Influenced by her subscription to Arizona Highways, she drove West after graduation.

She stopped in Taos and never left. An early job was with Ila McAfee, helping care for the artist's husband, cooking and

working with the couple's land and animals.

Graves' many other jobs included caring for Taoseña Grace Parr, looking after the Harwood Library, weaving with Rachel Brown in Arroyo Seco, even working at the Bent Street Museum for 50 cents an hour, all the while making art.

Eventually Sandy Seth's mother Jean told her she could make a living as an artist. The elder Seth had a gallery in Santa Fe on Canyon Road; she understood what collectors liked and what prices they would pay. Jean and later her daughter Laurel mounted shows for Graves, who was by then a successful artist. Her miniature paintings will be on display at Sandy Seth's book reception in the Wilder Nightingale Fine Art Gallery.

Clear, straightforward, poetry and carefully wrought line drawings combine to make this book worth reading and looking at.

"animals have their own souls and lives. There is harm to all life from humans."

-Sandy Seth



COURTESY IMAGE

Illustrator Valerie Graves is a well-known painter of New Mexico scenes. A group of her miniature works will be on view at the poetry book signing Saturday (May 31) at Wilder Nightingale Fine Art.

BOOK SIGNING PARTY

**Saturday (May 31)
from 3–5 p.m.**

*Wilder Nightingale
Fine Art Gallery*

119A Kit Carson Road, Taos.

*For more information, call
575-758-3265.*