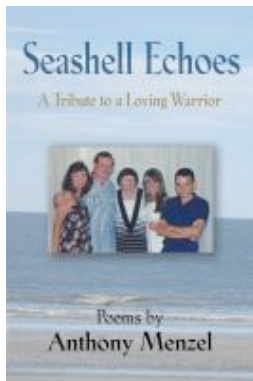


# Seashell Echoes

A Tribute to a Loving Warrior



Poems by  
**Anthony Menzel**



*Seashell Echoes is a poetry collection written in memory of Anthony Menzel's grandmother Minna. A stateless refugee following World War II, Minna immigrated to the United States with two children and three dollars in her pocket. The author believes her story will be an inspiration to those who read about her. Throughout Seashell Echoes, the author also shifts between despair and joy, resulting in a reading experience that is both moving and full of hope.*

## **Seashell Echoes**

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# **Seashell Echoes**

**“A Tribute to a Loving Warrior”**

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## **Chapter 1: Omi**

(All of the poems in this chapter are specifically dedicated to  
my grandmother Minna;  
"Omi" means "granny" in German.)

### **Seashell Echoes**

All the shells were small  
on the tan sand of Myrtle Beach –  
Though toe and fingernail-sized,  
I can place the ones  
we collected  
to the misty ear  
of my memory,  
and even with the passing  
of decades,  
I hear their echoes –

Echoes  
from a landing  
made of wood,  
painted dark brown,  
illuminated  
by a typical  
incandescent bulb  
in the blackness  
of humid summer nights;  
the rest of the family  
went dancing,  
but I was too young for clubs.

*Seashell Echoes*

Echoes  
of you entertaining me,  
not with games  
or empty television,  
but by engaging me  
in activity  
that filled my soul –  
hours of sharing  
the scribbles from my heart.

Echoes  
of enjoying  
your attentive ear,  
anxious both for encouragement  
and honesty.

Like many memories,  
the echoes have grown less distinct,  
except for the echo  
of always  
feeling loved.

*"A Tribute to a Loving Warrior"*

### **Hot Pink and Turquoise**

I remember my grandmother  
wearing hot pink, in turquoise  
Singing by colored Christmas lights  
In black fur in sparkling sunlit snow –

I think of her exclaiming,  
talking, sharing her beliefs  
The sharp accent softening, ringing through –

I can see her laughing, smiling  
Smoking in dignity,  
shining cases, crystal ashtray;  
concern for me –

More than I can see her  
with the final pain,  
The day the tears made her look  
like a baby chick first waking  
And the day the darkness came.

*Seashell Echoes*

**A Fleeting Disappointment**

Now I know why  
I saw a disappointment  
fleeting in my grandmother's eye  
When I defended her stories  
Against my uncle's joking:  
He was celebrating now;  
I had focused on the past  
without today's vivacity.

Despite his faults, she loved him.  
Against all of us, she would defend him.  
In my misunderstanding,  
I forgot reflection  
as I often seem to do:

Despite my silence,  
she never tried  
the stereotypical in-roads;  
she never expected  
societal norms for a youngster  
in interests or actions.  
Despite my awkward distances,  
Despite my faults,  
she loved me too.



*"A Tribute to a Loving Warrior"*

### **My Stateless Refugee**

An ethnic German in Poland,  
you were not given a part  
in the land of your birth,  
nor were you considered  
part of Germany.

With almost every relative  
lost behind the Iron Curtain,  
you came to a foreign land  
with a different language,  
different customs,  
your only connection  
a sponsor you had never met.

You came alone,  
with two small children  
and two suitcases –  
Though half a century has passed,  
those suitcases,  
filled with German letters,  
are still in the basement,  
a hidden monument to you.

I am glad I learned to decipher  
the inscriptions they contain;  
As long as I live,  
I intend to keep that inheritance,  
that reminder  
of the sacrificial journey  
that you made –

*Seashell Echoes*

A monument  
to my stateless refugee,  
who,  
despite working two jobs  
for years,  
despite your suffering,  
never transmitted bitterness,  
only love  
and tenderness.

*"A Tribute to a Loving Warrior"*

### **Growing Spirit to the End**

The years ate her frail body;  
Her efforts to provide  
made her body frail;  
Her strength ate up her strength.

But her life was not a fading like her body –  
A loving brilliance,  
not a weak shimmer, toughened hand:  
She enjoyed,  
sought more knowledge,  
peered further into,  
Humanly crying  
against the harsh, consuming agony  
But like my uncle's laughter,  
Growing spirit to the end

**The Coldness Comes So Quickly**

The coldness comes so quickly –  
Slowing, hollow breath  
an ironic crescendo  
For the tempo of the war inside:  
The hands that clasped so tightly  
fade so fast;  
The warm skin  
so suddenly pales.

That a mountain of life,  
which embraced love and passion,  
disintegrates when lightning is cast;  
That a solid round tree of intensity,  
Vast interwoven memory, knowledge, faith,  
is cut away  
with the few hackings  
of a gray axe blade

are statements  
of the transience  
of human existence;  
Testimony that each moment  
with a loved one  
truly is a treasure  
surpassing diamond crowns;  
A reminder  
that our passing through  
the dangers, defects  
of this earthly time  
is a miracle,  
wondrous as deep canyons  
cast in mingling rust, gold, pink hues.

*"A Tribute to a Loving Warrior"*

### **I Wish I Had One More Year**

I wish I had one more year  
To sing to my grandmother  
To show her who I am  
In all my flannel glory, my wild songs –  
She would understand.

One more year  
for her to sit on the porch,  
rest beneath the trees,  
come with us at last;  
To talk,  
learn no more history  
but to discuss and learn  
who she is today.

But I guess she will have to bring me  
this refracting dew field shining  
In the tacit language of experience  
As a bird after passing

To teach me to cast off  
my worthless insecurities  
And always be wholly real –  
No shimmering impression withheld;  
There is no time  
and too much love  
to be a person  
who withholds.

*Seashell Echoes*

**Your Cemetery**

We scattered your ashes  
in the Blue Ridge Mountains  
in some remote, unmarked locale –

I know you are in heaven,  
but I missed having a grave,  
where I could go to talk to you  
and visit your remains.

Then the disease  
that took you  
much too early  
ironically became  
my memorial place:

Each spring  
when I attend  
a Cancer Society Relay,  
I light a candle in your name

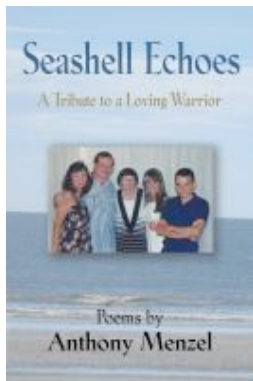
focusing my thoughts  
not on ashes,  
not on endings  
but on all that you imparted  
through phone calls,  
cards, and visits,  
all the love  
that you gave.

*"A Tribute to a Loving Warrior"*

### **Wind Chimes**

In storms,  
cool breezes –  
The hollow tubes  
of the chimes echo –

Each time  
my father  
intently listens,  
and I smile,  
for in silence,  
I know  
that he happily remembers,  
hearing the seashell  
and other echoes  
that remind us  
of you.



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