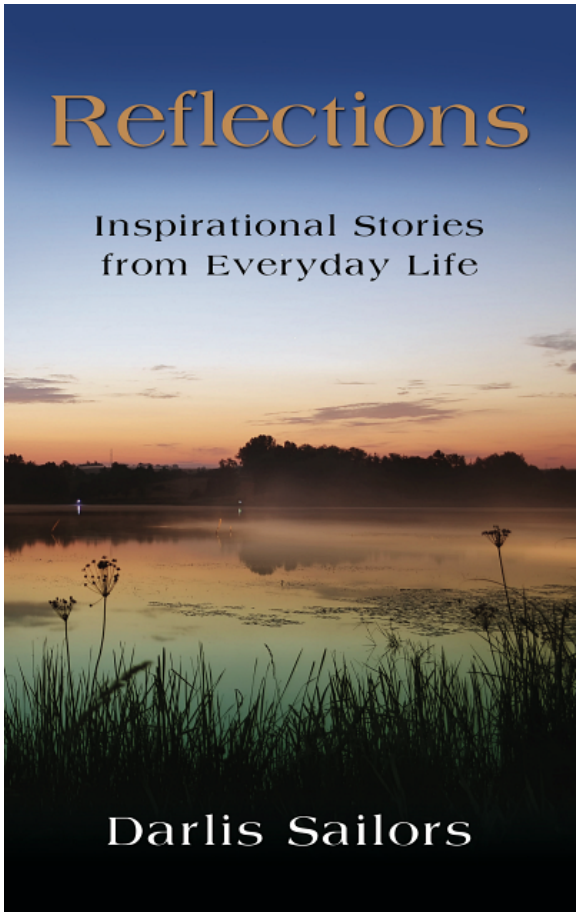


REFLECTIONS has 63 true-life short stories and 6 poems meant to be a quick source of encouragement, hope, and inspiration for your daily life.

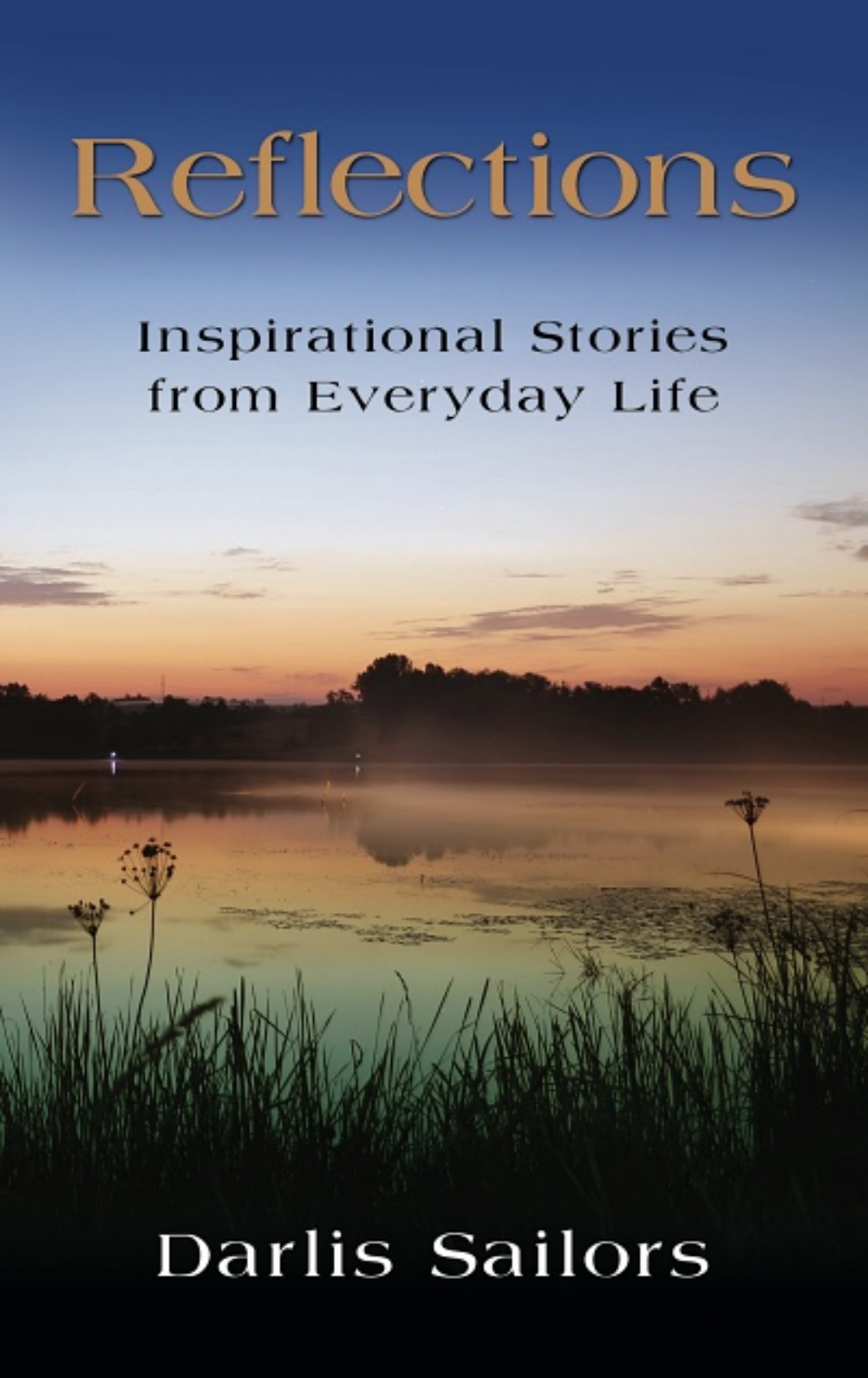
REFLECTIONS: Inspirational Stories from Everyday Life - Second Edition

By Darlis Sailors

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Reflections
Inspirational Stories
from Everyday Life
Darlis Sailors

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ISBN: 978-1-63491-730-8

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Published by BookLocker.com, Inc., St. Petersburg, Florida, U.S.A.

Printed on acid-free paper.

These inspirational stories are creative nonfiction based on actual events.

BookLocker.com, Inc.
2026

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GOOD GIFTS

I did not grow up with a dog for a pet. My husband did. But we have had many friends with lovely dogs in a variety of breeds, such as Arthur---a Wheatland Terrier, Sasha---a Shih Tzu, and Sitka---an Alaskan Husky.

We once worked with a pastor who said, "If your dog loves you, don't ask for a second opinion." Pets are a source of comfort and unconditional love that is appreciated by people of every economic level. I know some people abuse their animals and it's hard to stomach stories of blatant mistreatment, but I'm thankful for agencies who do their best as rescuers.

Arthur was a rescue dog. He became trained and certified to make weekly visits to a Veteran's Home. He knew which room to go to and would walk right up to the door and wait. He was self-controlled, patient and very sensitive to each person. When someone passed away, he would not leave until his owner took him into the room patted the empty bed and said, "All gone." Arthur would usually put a paw on the bed or touch it in some way. Then he was ready to go and did not stop at that door again.

Sasha was ready to jump into the car all week long, but our friends said she knew she could not go when they were getting ready for Sunday church. Instead of her usual "let's go" antics, she would settle down quietly into a snugly spot as they left.

Sitka enjoys his igloo-shaped dog house out on the patio, but he does well indoors. My friend is a caregiver for her mother and Sitka has been a comforting companion to them. She says, "Sitka likes to take me on walks and I've met a lot of neighbors. Sitka is such a people-lover."

When I see the interaction between various kinds of pets and the people who care for them, I think of James 1:17 which says, "Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights. . ." The Creator of the stars, sun and moon, "saw ALL that He had made, and it was very good" (Genesis 1:31). I'd put pets in that *good* category.

One of the key ingredients in relationships with pets is mutual affection. Happiness flows from us to them and vice versa. I'm glad God made these gifts in such a variety of species, colors and sizes. I always have a little trouble with things labeled *One Size Fits All*.

MORE EGGS AND TOMATOES

As a child I used to think being kind was not fighting with my brothers, not being selfish with my toys or not grabbing the last cookie on the plate. I grew up with the King James Version of Ephesians 4:32 (KJV) which said, "Be ye kind one to another." That portion of the verse was simple enough for a young child to memorize and apply to life, but as an adult it meant much more.

By then I had learned that being kind meant more than not being selfish. To be kind meant to be concerned about others, not as one big *do-all* but in *little seeds of kindness* every day.

These positive seeds/deeds can be scattered about, unnoticed by anyone but those who need them. Things like an encouraging word to the weary, a cup of coffee and a listening ear---even when there are no answers to give, a card that says *Thinking of You,* or something done to meet a specific need that won't let go of your heart.

Kindness can turn up in an act so small that you don't even remember doing it. Some people call it "doing a good turn."

In our early-married years, we began full-time ministry in a small church with a growing congregation. My husband was their first associate pastor and the salary was small, but we were grateful to also be given housing nearby.

The budget was tight, but as a newly-wed I enjoyed reading grocery ads and planning low-cost meals. Utilities were high and we did not need all three bedrooms, so we shut off two of them to make it easier for the wall heater in the living area to heat the house. Living next door to the church eased car expenses, but parishioner kindness had an impact on our lives, too.

One of the founding families started bringing us home-grown tomatoes and a flat of eggs quite regularly. We received them joyfully. One time as I was thanking them, the husband said, "We drive to an egg ranch up in the hills and it's just as easy to buy two flats as one." They continued their weekly blessings until we were able to purchase a home and move out of the parsonage.

We later left that ministry and moved to another state, but returned about ten years later after we received a call offering further ministry options. The church had really grown but it was nice to see the family that had been so kind to us in our early years.

One time, as we tried to tell them how their constant supply of eggs and tomatoes had blessed us, we were astounded when they said they did not remember doing that!

If you respond to an opportunity to do good, there is no reason it should stick in your mind. But it may remain forever in the mind of the one who experiences it. We have never forgotten those eggs and tomatoes. In fact, those *seeds of kindness* have born much fruit over the years because we have tried to repay them by *paying it forward.*

WESTWARD HO!

I enjoy living in a town that revels in its historic roots. Museums offer cowboy history and western art, Indian artifacts and pioneer buildings. A massive tree in the courthouse square has a memorial plaque stating that it was planted in nineteen twelve, the year Arizona progressed from territorial status to statehood

Visit our library and you may see an old photo, along with a letter written by a group of women who pursued a dream of free books while the town was still small and had mud streets. With hope they looked to the future and we are still reaping the benefits.

When my husband and I drive to southern California, we like to go the back way. That means starting our trip on a two-lane highway through beautiful Skull Valley with its rolling hills and ranches, then driving through small towns like Yarnell, Congress and Salome.

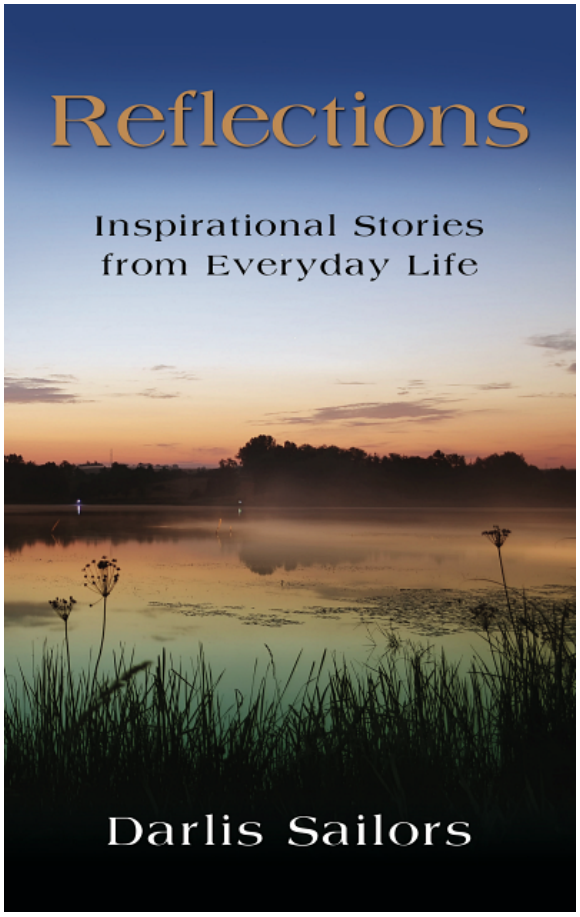
Out in the middle of nowhere, we always look forward to a tiny place called “Hope.” A large sign proudly states, “You Are Now Entering Hope,” but don’t blink or you’ll miss it! I’d love to meet the positive person who named that place.

We think the eight-hour drive to California feels long while driving over the desert in an air-conditioned car, but journeying over a trail in a covered wagon must have seemed endless. Our hope of visiting friends and family keeps us going, but pioneers had dreams and goals which propelled them daily from the known to the unknown.

I like the practical explanation of hope in Romans 8:24-25 which says, ". . . hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently." Wagon trains contained many different personalities, dreams and abilities but they had one thing in common, a wait fueled by hope. That four-letter word persisted in moving them forward and formulated patience to help them reach their goals.

My mother-in-law, Hope, was a lovely Christian woman who lived up to her name. As a young mother, she contracted polio and was in an iron lung. Told she would never walk again, she finally recovered enough to walk with braces but hope burned strong in her heart. She wanted to walk freely. When I met her years later, she did not even use a cane and I was surprised to hear her story. Her strong faith and hope are expressed in Psalm 71:14, which in the New American Standard translation says, "As for me, I will hope continually, and will praise Thee yet more and more."

Though it may seem no stronger than a whisper inside us, hope is packed with power and creates a never-give-up attitude when we take it to heart. If you are wandering around in some wide unknown spaces, grab on to hope and inwardly shout, *Westward Ho!* Its modern translation? *Let's move forward with hope!*



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