

**Gone from the Dock A reading for the Memorial Service of Peg Knipp
8/27/2016**

(Inspired by the poem *Gone from My Sight* by Henry Van Dyke)

We are all standing together on a long weathered dock. The sun is setting, and it is giving away a free gift of golden beauty to all who value such rare currency. As the orange light reflects on Hardy Dam Pond, the purples in the sky and the water dress the world in iridescent clothing that no designer could ever copy.

In front of us, moored on the dock, is a sturdy and reliable pontoon boat. It's silver pontoons glisten in the falling light as the waves knock lightly on the side, urging the boat to depart. The boat itself is all outfitted and ready to go. It has been readied for a night of Walleye fishing. An assortment of fishing poles are all laid in, many with new line and reels. On the poles and in the tackle boxes of the boat are every sort of lures and spinners ever invented. There are vertical jigs, pitch jigs and jigs with twisters, pencil plugs and bottom bouncers and hot N tots. Crankbaits and slip bobbers of every color await to be put to use. Live bait is along for a ride in nightcrawler harnesses, along with a wide selection of minnows and even crawdads.

Down the dock and up to the boat she strides with her ready and confident smile. She puts her grocery bag with sandwiches and a thermos in the boat and says her final goodbye to all who have gathered to see her off. But her full attention is no longer here on this dock. She pauses and lifts her eyes to the other shore and smiles as she seems to hear someone calling to her from the other side. As hands lift off the mooring lines and wave farewell, she turns over the engine and sets the boat in motion. It pulls away from the dock and off into the lake, creating a frothy winged wake behind it.

It is a scene to remember forever. The purple and gold sky is balanced above the calm lake. The dark trees on the horizon, miles away, exist mysterious and unknown. We stand on the dock and watch together, as the rumbles of the boat's engine echo back toward us, bouncing off the waves and growing ever softer. The silver of the boat grows smaller and it finally diminishes in our sight until it is a simple little speck against the dark trees of the beyond. As we blink back our tears, someone, one of us, says sadly, "There she goes. She is gone now."

Gone where? Gone from our sight is all. The boat is still as whole and as real as the day it was bought. The engine is still roaring, the wake is still churning.

The fishing poles and the tackle are all still ready to get to their final destination.

Inside the boat, the wind is ruffling her hair as she urges it forward at top speed.

The diminished size of the boat is only in our sight. It hasn't actually faded away at all.

But just at the moment when the voice says, "She 's gone", there are other voices far away on the other shore. Those voices take up the shout and begin to wave and to dance. "Here she comes! She's coming!" And they crowd together, waiting for the boat to come closer and larger. They are waiting for the moment when she will pull the boat up to a new dock and then rush at a run into the arms of those she loved and has missed for a very long time. For then the celebrations can begin for real as the daughter is welcomed home, her trip finally finished and her life joyfully fulfilled in the eternal kingdom.