

## **My Soul Captured and My Life Celebrated -Barbara D. Parks-Lee-Washington, DC**

There is one item that has always been important in my life. It may seem strange to those of us in the digital age, but to me, it has been something that has kept me able to share my life as an author. My fountain pen has always been something small but important enough that I let everyone know it was NOT to be touched by anyone, ever. As a left-handed writer, the nib had developed its own touch, one that was the result of my constant use, and if someone else used it, the pen scratched.

People smiled when I said I would rather someone used my toothbrush than messed with my fountain pen. From fourth grade, when I received my first Esterbrook™ green and black fountain pen, I was proud to carry it and my bottle of Script™ black ink. That pen filled with a bladder system, and the lever on its side helped draw the ink into the pen. It was not until much later that fountain pens could be filled with pre-filled cartridges. Cartridges were easier to carry, but I still felt more comfortable with my trusty bottle of ink. I have used many fountain pens since then, but I still remember my first pen that allowed me to free my thoughts. I enjoyed the feel of a good pen on good paper, and my fountain pen gave me pleasures others might not have appreciated.

Members of the computer generation look at my fountain pen and my cursive handwriting like relics from a bygone age. People who have grown up with keyboarding instead of cursive writing now cannot read cursive writing. Even as I am beginning to learn to join the digital age, my fountain pens are still like the character Linus's security blanket. My fountain pens do not need batteries, they do not require plug-in cords, and they do not need program aps to work. They only need my loving touch, my caresses as I enjoy the fine print or the appearance of calligraphy letters on art paper.

The one item that had always been important in my life has always been something small, something maybe insignificant to anyone but me, but it has always allowed me to record the happenings of my life. My fountain pens have recorded my whole life's happenings, the good, the painful, the challenges, the lessons, the extraordinary, and the things most valuable to me. My fountain pens have journaled, written poetry, short stories, essays, textbooks, and novels. They, though small, will always be important in my life and in maintaining my sanity. They are more intimate than computer keyboards, and they do not fail if the power goes out. I do not have to hit "save" or to use external means to keep from losing what I have written.