

## **The Biggest Tip**

*by Marilyn Kallet*

I was thirteen, faked seventeen  
to snag the waitressing job  
at Camp Cayuga,

Happy Land.  
My dining-hall tables were packed  
with adolescent boys,

and I was never quick enough  
with the bug juice  
or burgers.

“C’mon!” the boys yelled.  
Their counselors  
egged them on.

I cried after breakfast,  
lunch, chipped-beef dinner.  
But one counselor

was kind, and at the end  
of summer, Arty Blumenthal  
handed me a sealed envelope—

my name, and a twenty!  
A golf pro, he was dating pony-tailed  
June, a real seventeen-year-old.

These days when I over-tip,  
I mention Arty, and servers  
beam at me, as if

we share a secret  
stash, as if  
I understand them.

**Marilyn Kallet**, *Knoxville Poet Laureate*, has published 18 books, including *How Our Bodies Learned*, *The Love That Moves Me*, and *Packing Light: New and Selected Poems*. She has translated Paul Eluard's *Last Love Poems* and Péret's *The Big Game*. Professor Emerita at University of Tennessee, Dr. Kallet leads a writing residency for VCCA-France.

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