

How Stingrays Swim at Seaside School

By Carol A. Mullen

Dedicated to Tom Nelson, for his being of the natural rhythm

Sea Blue Angels these,
Dashing 'round the world
as stunts of team precision,
Flying in and out of waves, not clouds.
Surfers delight in the spray.
First within view, then gone,
Now reappearing, first one
Then two
four
six
eight, and so many
Regrouping, spinning, turning, splashing.
Column right, column left--
A perfect array in wheeling motion.
With wingtips folded heavenward,
Black, smooth, shiny hawklike,
Soaring under the water's crest,
Plunging, resurfacing, diving
In harmonious formation,
Each move of the team,
a calculated risk
And a gamble won.

Schools of education contrast:
These landlocked buildings--
places of disrupted rhythm
Forgetting the art of soaring and splashing
Searching for buried treasure
like thirsty pirates past.
Exhausted Blue Angels,
Stingrays without momentum or perch,
Clamor against the calculated losses,
The impositions cruel and unnatural.
Bodies stray from the formation
To return, disappear, regroup at will.
Teamwork ridiculed with reckless stunts.
Lost to the rhythm of the ocean.

Darting artfully through the ocean's skin,
Fin-like wings mark the breaking boundary
Splashing rays of light through my eye.
These stingrays
Create circles that reach the shore,
Teasing my bare ankles,
Mocking the heeled shoe I wear.
Nudges like these
Brush the naked foot,
Wet the arid skin,
Reminding us, these rays,
Of Life Guards teaming,
Becoming the scene they survey.

