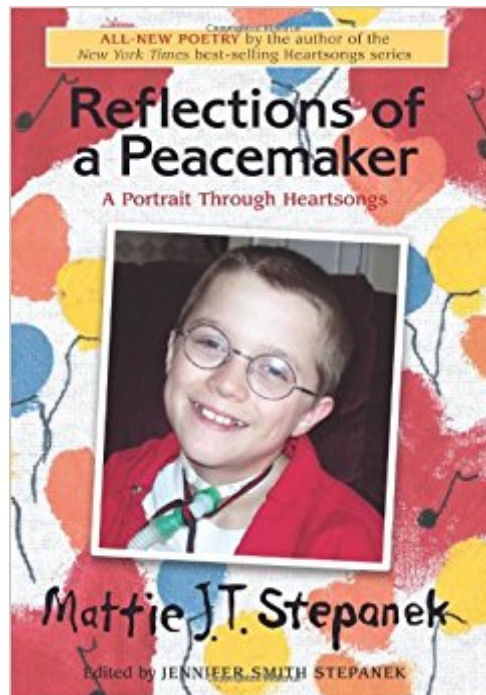




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# Reflections Of A Peacemaker: A Portrait Through Heartsongs



## Synopsis

“I write about anything that touches the essence of my existence. What I witness, what I feel, what I think, what I fear, what I treasure. I write about life, which is our greatest gift.” --Mattie Stepanek, 1990-2004

Mattie J. T. Stepanek lived and died a child, but he had the spirit of a giant. Affected by a rare and fatal neuromuscular disease, Mattie lived almost fourteen years but in that time became a poet, best-selling author, peace activist, and a prominent voice for the Muscular Dystrophy Association. Before his death in June 2004, his five volumes of Heartsongs poetry sold more than a million copies. *Reflections of a Peacemaker: A Portrait Through Heartsongs* is the final collection of Heartsongs that Mattie was working on when he died. It includes the last poem Mattie penned along with a special collection of unpublished poetry, photographs, and artwork spanning the decade from when he began writing Heartsongs at age three. Culled from the thousands of poems, essays, and journal entries Mattie left behind, the entries in *Reflections of a Peacemaker* create a portrait of Mattie in his own words. In these poems he explores disability, despair, and death but also the gifts he finds in nature, prayer, peace, and his belief in something “bigger and better than the here and now.” The poems are grouped by theme such as playful, stormy, sacred, and final Heartsongs, with each section introduced by a personal tribute from the likes of Maya Angelou, Oprah Winfrey, Larry King, and former President Jimmy Carter.

In the words of Mattie’s mother, Jeni Stepanek, who has published *Reflections of a Peacemaker* at her son’s request, “In reading these poems we enter Mattie’s world and gain insight through a child who somehow balanced pain and fear with optimism and faith.”

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

â fMattie J.T. Stepanek was a poet, a peace activist, and the best-selling author of the Heartsongs poetry series. He was a motivational speaker and the National Goodwill Ambassador for the Muscular Dystrophy Association for three years. He died in June 2004 from dysautonomic mitochondrial myopathy. The Mattie Fund was established at MDA to specifically continue research of treatments and cures for childhood neuromuscular diseases.â fMattie's mom, Jeni Stepanek, is a Ph.D. candidate in early childhood special education. She is an inspirational speaker and writer and a national vice president for MDA. She lives in Maryland with Micah, the service dog she and Mattie shared.

I own this book, and even purchased a copy for the use by my Alma mater University for their children's collection of books. This book is the FINAL published book of poems by 13 year old Mattie Stepanek, who died on 22 June 2004 from a rare form of muscular dystrophy: Dysautonomic Mitochondrial Myopathy. He was a genius by intellect, but as sweet as a boy could have been. I recommend this book because of Mattie's keen insight into major human issues such as LOVE, PAIN, SUFFERING, FRIENDSHIP, SICKNESS, LONLINESS, FULFILMENT, DEPRESSION, AND IMPENDING DEATH. By late Autumn of 2003, I believe Mattie surmised that not only was death possible but was probably imminent. By Dec 2001, Mattie and former US President Jimmy Carter became close friends, and this undoubtedly had an impact on Mattie's later poems. You actually SENSE Mattie becoming a Peacemaker like his childhood idol, Jimmy Carter. This book is more than simply GOOD poetry, but the plethora of photos from his mother's collections give the reader a visual biography of a boy who ROSE ABOVE his fatal sickness and who proved to be an angel in disguise for millions upon millions of people, when the day was Done! A MUST BUY Book.

Such a bright and beautiful light worker.

The world is a better place for having being blessed w/Mattie's spirit and life for the few short years we had him. I'm in awe w/every page of every book I read from my order...I sit and weep...For his mother, for myself; and for the world; that he was "here " such a short time...I can only imagine what he would have achieved had he lived to become an "old man". Bless You!! Jeni Stepanek

Although I've only begun reading this book, I have already shared the poem "The Twelve Lights of Christmas" with four prayer groups in which I participate. All members of these groups are unanimous in wanting to read it again, and that has of course led us to share other parts of the book in group readings. Having begun my experience of Mattie's mission by watching his mother Jeni being interviewed on "Currents" by my dear friend Matt McClure, I already knew I was going to be profoundly blessed by delving more deeply into Mattie's poetry and story. As I continue to read, that blessing simply grows and grows, and will continue to be shared with great enthusiasm.

What an incredible young child! With all the negative in the world, reading about this young mans short and challenged life, it makes you look at your own and be ever so thankful that your cross in life is what it is because other peoples crosses are enormous!! compared to ours--A grateful heart is something we are very short on today and need to look at closely-An excellent read!

I AM A FAN OF MATTIE AND HIS MOM AND ADMIRE THEM VERY MUCH SO I WAS HAPPY TO GET ALL OF HIS POEMS IN THE SAME BOOK. I WAS ALSO HAPPY TO SEE THAT PART OF THE PRICE WAS BEING DONATED TO THE MUSCULAR DYSTROPHY ASSOCIATION. I AM GETTING 12 COPIES FOR ALL OF MY FAMILY AND FRIENDS THIS CHRISTMAS. WHEN YOU READ THIS BOOK AND MATTIES POEMS IT WILL REMIND YOU OF HOW MANY BLESSINGS WE HAVE WHEN WE HAVE GOOD HEALTH.

I remember when I saw this young man with Oprah on TV and I was so impressed that when I went to Banrnes and Noble I got all his Heartsongs which I've been passing around especially to youngsters. They helped me a lot as a teacher to show children that they are "creators" ... that they must learn to love themselves to know what love is.

I have read most of Mattie's books as they have come out. This is an excellent combination of his best work plus new insights from him. He was an astounding person, very hard to believe that he was so very young when he wrote most of his poems. His insight into human nature is truly amazing. You cannot read this book and not be moved and motivated to be a better person.

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