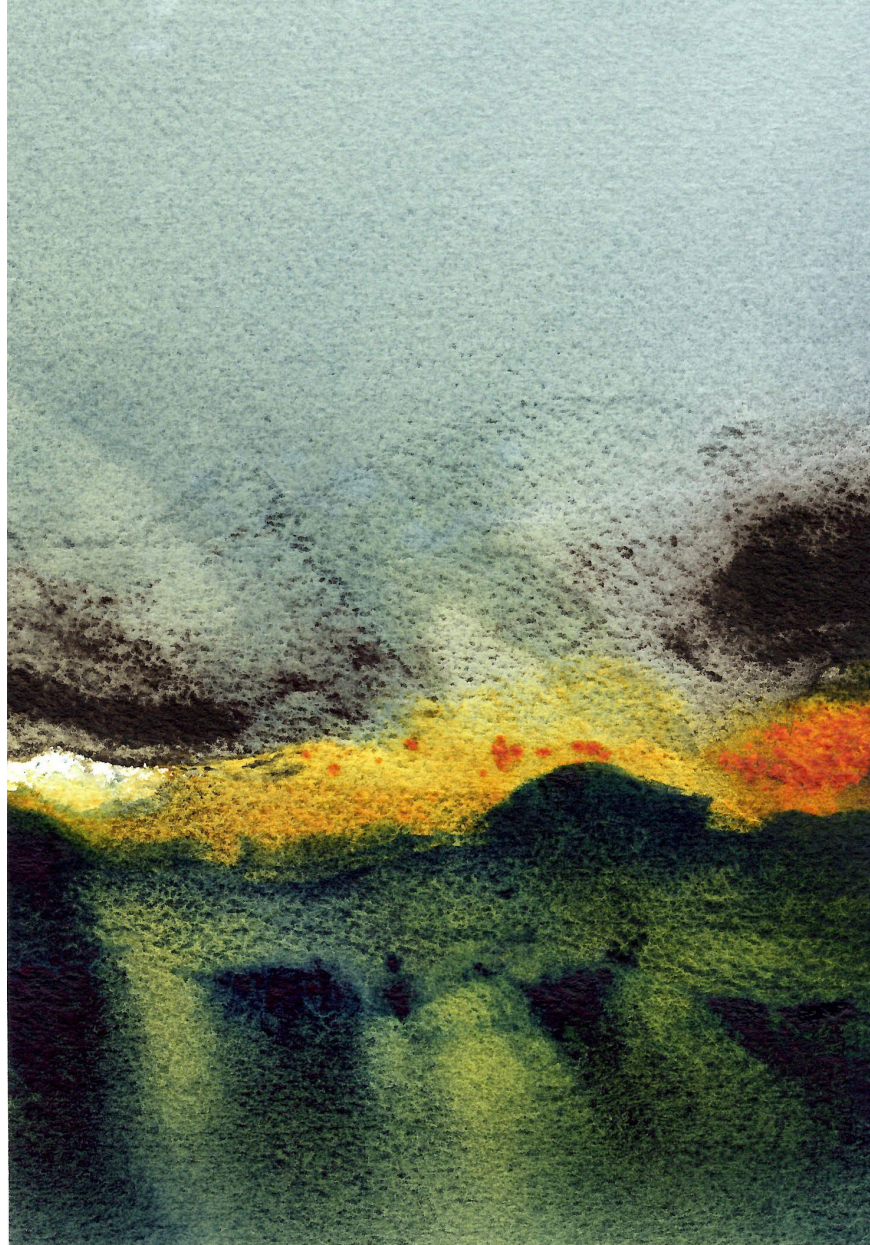


VISION & REVISION



OLLI POETRY

Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at Auburn University
Fall 2022

Vision and Revision

OLLI Poetry – Fall 2022

Table of Contents

Snow in Alabama - Ken Autrey	2
Can't Find the Words - Leslie Beard	3
Dominion - William Blake Brown	5
String - Joanne Camp	6
Godiva - Wendy Cleveland	7
Summer's Last Hurrah - Wendy Cleveland	8
Cosmo, the Tufted Puffin of Coquille Point - Margaret Craig-Schmidt	9
At Salt Lick, Austin, Texas - Ruth Crocker	10
In West Florida - Ruth Crocker	11
By the Dogwood Tree - Dick Graves	12
Stained Glass - Dick Graves	12
A Visit to the Doctor - Sandy Halperin	13
Surely I Am Able - Steve Harrison	14
Villanelle Not to Be Read by Sissies - Steve Harrison	15
Stuff - Margaret Kouidis	16
13 Reasons to Visit the Greek Islands: a Prose Poem - Margaret Kouidis	17
Imagine - Scott Melville	18
Low Flying Duck at Dusk - Scott Melville	19
Crusaders' Pilgrimage to Stuckey's - Diane Miller	20
Dateline: September 25, 2001 - Diane Miller	21
Autumn - Nancy Penaskovic	22
Sip the Moment - Nancy Penaskovic	23
Hello Poetry - Charlene Redick	24
Your Laugh - Charlene Redick	24
Time Passes - Crystal Rogers	26
What I Learned From My Dog - Crystal Rogers	26
The Ballad of Shorty Small - Barbara Sforzini	27
West Virginia - Dwight St. John	28
Konjugated and Korrekt - Rosalyn Thomas	29
The Endurance of Ordinary Things - Gary Wagoner	30
Daddy's Favorite - Bill Wilson	31
Seasonal Haikus - Bill Wilson	32

Cover art by Leslie Beard

Snow in Alabama

Ken Autrey

Arriving this morning, barely
sticking, it floats like down,
blends into bushes, drops
soundlessly to the ground.

Yesterday I shoveled out
a hole and planted a dogwood sapling,
hoping for hushed rain and then
a gradual crawl toward spring.

Down here you get what remains
when the Mississippi valley,
then hills to the west, take their cut
of the weather, letting the rest

settle over depleted land
of Creek and Cherokee, who left
behind only names that seek
their sources like rivers

looking back on themselves.
When waters on high turn into
star-like crystals, so light
and evanescent you wonder

why they fall instead of rise,
you see the land go white a moment,
then warm back to its dark past.
The snow, its purity, won't last.

Can't Find the Words

Leslie Beard

Lend me your ears,
I have a tale to tell.

I'm at a loss for words,
so please bear with me.

When I lived in Music City, USA,
bringing home the bacon
and drowning in work,

Mama rang me up.
I got on the horn.
The stork had arrived,
my sister had brought forth a boy,
now baby makes five,
but a dark cloud hovered
and an ill wind blew.

The baby wasn't run of the mill.
He'd dance to the beat
of a different drummer,
but love conquers all
and all shall be well
and all shall be well, et cetera.

Later that day
Mama rang again.
The baby's heart was broken
(now so was mine).
He'd go under the knife that day.

Things took a turn for the worse:
congenital leukemia.
It never rains
but it pours.

I caught the red-eye,
flew the friendly skies to
my sister's neck of the woods.
I could help with the other three small fry,
chauffeur them to school
and make sure they'd
chow down,

hit the books, and
hit the sack.
But, mostly, I could hold them in my heart.

The next ten weeks were
an uphill battle—
out of the woods one day and
at death's door the next.
A roller coaster ride in the dark.

At last he passed on,
gone the way of all flesh.

We howled with grief,
lost our faith,
prayed without words.

People put their two cents in:
he's in a better place,
it's God's will,
and God never gives you
more than you can handle.

My sister went over the edge,
sank beneath the waves.

Her husband drowned his sorrows
in the bottom of a glass.

There's nothing new under the sun,
no one gets out alive.
God wants his pound of flesh.
Death is a riddle
wrapped in an enigma.

But these things I know:
time does not heal all wounds,
sorrow casts a long shadow,
and you never get the taste of ashes
out of your mouth.

Dominion

William Blake Brown

On the cusp of morning, I sit,
coffee cup in hand, watching
as the sky gradually lightens
and my neighbor's driveway
becomes visible. A rabbit hops
tentatively down the drive,
pausing to listen for danger.
A chipmunk emerges from
a flowerbed, skitters across
the drive and dives into another,
a living animated cartoon.
The rabbit nibbles its way
along until it senses danger
and darts into a hydrangea.
More light reveals beyond the end
of the concrete a deer munching
from the buffet that my neighbor
considers a flower garden.
We think we have dominion
over our little kingdom. We do,
but only in the light of day.

String

Joanne Camp

String, a soiled cotton twist,
That my grandfather collected
In a ball atop the ice box.
Used for tying and binding packages
Sent to his pets,
his term of endearment.

String, rounded nylon that plucks
Murmurs from the hollow of a guitar.
Gut core, caressed by a bow, crooning "Let it Be".
Nylon with steel core, near the chin
Of a Suzuki child.
Practicing the language of maestros.

String, a sequence of characters
Enabling a computer, steel and wire,
To speak human thoughts, and
Store the data of flesh and bones in
Their magnetic memories.

String, in theory, one dimensional filaments
Floating in the cosmos
That vibrate in angelic peals
Forming and drawing all created into an embrace
So tight that even light cannot escape.

These I ponder as I pray on my
String of beads.

Godiva

Wendy Cleveland

Morning sun burns through fog and breeze
shivers willow leaves in whispered clusters.
Coventry is quiet, its peasants lost in sleep.
They have clapped their shutters tight
and my husband, the Earl, lies abed
not believing I will ride bare to dare him
to repeal the tolls that burden the poor.
In the stable I saddle my white mare,
lead her to the open paddock where I disrobe,
mount, ride naked through the town.
Under the cloak of raven hair my breasts swing
with the steady pace of my haughty steed.

Perhaps I am the haughty one,
risking my marriage as if it were some
emblem of sway, my body a holy relic
to barter for the poor, hungry and helpless.
Or, naïve to think my groom Tom
will not find a way to peep through the knothole
he gouged wide enough to see the shivering
coin-sized cameo of my body,
an eyeful of lust that quickens his pulse.
I imagine his sigh, heavy with a man's appetite,
and coil my mane tighter, turn the mare about.
Petition rendered, let the sun rise on shutters,
coax them wide open and woo me home to bed.

Summer's Last Hurrah

Wendy Cleveland

Four coleuses stand tall, cornered
on the back porch, red igniting lime
green potato vines that spill over and wrap
around chair legs and plant stands.
In the perennial bed Moonbeam
tickseed stretches its tall stalks
beside yellow yarrow, lantana,
and blue carpet phlox, all
spent from punishing drought.
Spotty sunlight pokes through trees
whose leaves let go their summer keep,
and in the clay pots swallowtail
caterpillars devour parsley,
as lemon basil crowds rosemary
oregano and thyme.
I pick tomatoes fat on the vine
then simmer and can, fill jars
that will line the cellar shelves,
hold summer in winter's grip.

Cosmo, the Tufted Puffin of Coquille Point

Margaret Craig-Schmidt

Cosmo, the Tufted Puffin, stands guard over black rocks
Jutting from the foamy ocean waves off Coquille Point.
Birthed from sea trash washed up on the Oregon beach,
A statue was made by transforming plastic pollution into art.
Buoys were fashioned into feathers and tires cut into wings.
Black and white flipflops were sculpted to make his head,
With his white top crown formed from sliced golf balls.
The washed-up and broken became a regal sentinel.

The Japanese word *kintsugi* refers to the art of repairing
Broken pottery with lacquer mixed with powdered gold.
Repaired pottery is often more valuable and beautiful.
The majestic Cosmo was created by a *kintsugi*-like process
With cracked and broken debris converted to valuable art...
A small, but creative solution to environmental pollution.
To visitors walking the path along the cliffs above the coast,
Cosmo is a reminder that the unwanted can be made beautiful.



At Salt Lick, Austin, Texas

Ruth Crocker

We drive out of Austin through hill country
to Salt Lick, to feast on barbecue.
Join the line in a dusty yard shaded by silver-grey live oaks
and wait our turn to enter a darkened passageway,
Jostle and shoulder each other as we're herded
along a narrow passageway toward the noise of shouting,
and the smell of roasting meat.

And I imagine the cattle
how they pushed and trampled each other
as they hurried toward death
along a run designed to hide their destination,
how their pace quickened as they smelled blood
and heard the bellowing,
how their eyes bulged with fear, ears flattened, nostrils flared,
their hooves clattering, a mad dash.

We move too, toward noise and the smell of wood smoke
and roasting meat.
We come out into a wooden shed
where half-obsured by the dust of trodden limestone,
diners sit at wooden tables.
Some eat silently with a strange urgency,
others shout and laugh, platters of meat are endlessly refilled,
Pitchers of soda and iced tea are generously shared.

Afterwards, as the smell of ashy dust still rises from the firepit
and a worker throws another mesquite log onto one
white hot and already crumbling,
we emerge into the warm evening
where under the live oaks a crowd sits waiting for a table
and the lone guitarist sings the songs they know.

In West Florida

Ruth Crocker

There are too many mansions here. Their open gates invite the stares
of envious strangers, and their architecture recalls a gilded age.
Or, with gates closed, they speak of absence and the privilege of return.
Don't stop to peer through the dark foliage, tourist, or you'll be driven off by the roar of leaf-
blowers or the terse inquiries of investigative reporters
from the local paper.

Look, if you want to see the inhabitants of these mansions
they gather downtown at the Opera house, noisy and flapping
like seagulls on the beach, diamonds flashing,
bodies tanned and disciplined, the women mere skeletons, with skin stretched over old
cheekbones, eyes black with kohl, dresses of satin and moire,
their husbands sleek and tieless, confident beside them,
ready for a board meeting, or another gin.

Yet it would have been a shame not to have come here,
Not to have watched the pelicans rise, rise above the sparkling water
Then turn and plunge with a splash, not to have seen the cormorant's head swivel as it listens to
an underwater world then dives out of sight
to reemerge, neither fish nor bird, not to have heard the triumphant cry of the osprey from the
treetop, a fish pinioned to the branch by cruel claws.

And it would have been a shame not to have stepped out in the early morning on the still-dark
beach and seen the teams of small sandpipers run down
after each wave, then dash back to safety as the next rolls in, beaks down,
scouring the wet sand for clams left stranded by the receding wave.

If we had stayed at home and dreamed of here could we even have imagined
the lizards, miniature dinosaurs stunned by the heat, basking on the hot pathways.
Could we have walked barefoot on white sand?

By the Dogwood Tree

Dick Graves

Inspired by Elizabeth Bishop's poem, "Questions of Travel."

Today I leaned against the ancient Dogwood tree
and put my hand upon the trunk.
There beside my hand was a butterfly,
spectacular black, crimson markings,
perfect natural form.
He was pulsing and watching me, and I him,
we together, lingering, by the Dogwood tree.
What is the butterfly telling me--
if only I had ears to hear?

Stained Glass

Dick Graves

Suicide touches not only members of the family but friends as well.

Anonymous

It happened on a Sunday morning when
I was in the vestibule, alone, and
looking out through that smoky gray
 stained glass window
and whispering beneath my breath
 Why did you do it, Mary?

You probably won't believe this but
you just don't make this stuff up.

There in that smoky glass appeared
 her face,
alive and full and vibrant, as beautiful
 as ever.

And then she said to me the six words
I will always remember,
 But I come back every day.

Voices. Steps in the hallway behind me
 and she is gone.
I guess I will never know the reason why
but that is not important anymore.
Maybe she doesn't know either.

A Visit to the Doctor

Sandy Halperin

Statin, is that Latin?
I've told her "No!"
and she knows better than
to scold me.

Her frown meets my determination.
I refuse to
surrender my lease on life,
turn it over to cholesterol drugs
to suffer accompanying muscle pain and
memory loss
to please her so in her medical chart
she can write
that I was warned that my only life might
be cut
short
by
13 1/2%.

I choose instead
to follow my level head, my warm heart
and be smart
about what I eat and do.
In fact, I love my vegetables, fruits, and grains.
And faithfully every day
I run and walk and play
at yoga so
I stay in shape.

Who knows how long I'll live?
But at least I know that I will give
everything I have to life!
To love, to laugh, to languish
is worth the price.

Surely I Am Able

Steve Harrison

Surely I am able to write
a poem without getting stuck
and asking for help from my friend
Kenny, who always says, "Don't ask
me to read such stuff again,"
leaving me somewhat dejected
until I remember how Shinichi
Suzuki, after hearing the worst
scritch-scratch off-key attempts
at music by a bad-tempered child,
said brightly, "You play the violin!"
and that encouragement lifts me
into the poetic stratosphere, where
all around me I see the muses
of great poets dead and living
and I am inspired to connect
these words so weird and original
that after I'm gone my fans
will think of me as in the same league
as Yogi Berra, and it will be like
déjà vu all over again.

Villanelle Not to Be Read by Sissies

Steve Harrison

Old age is not for sissies, I've been told.
Granny said it first, then mom, and I concur.
With little left to lose, should I be bold

To take you in my arms and hold
You close? If we have wrinkles everywhere,
Who cares? We're not sissies! Though we've been told

The end is near, we don't complain, advise, or scold.
Let time speed up and weeks pass in a blur.
We've little time to lose, so let's be bold.

Our former loveliness is now cold
Comfort: our hearts do not prefer
Old age. But we're no sissies. I've told

My grandkids I would not trade the gold
Of remembered love for other
Riches. With little time to lose, I'm bold

To sing the song I know, intent to fold
My dreams and memories together.
Old age is not for sissies, we've been told.
With little left to lose, we should be bold.

Stuff

Margaret Kouidis

To the trials of aging now add disposal of stuff.

A life-time's accumulation of desire and bad taste
overflows garages, attics and cabinet space,
testament to our folly and lack of spiritual grace:
prized possessions devolved to *stuff and nonsense*,
like wheat reduced to chaff. Today, when beer and wine are enough,
my three sets of liquor glasses rebuff such clutter and waste.

Closets are crammed with clothes of last month and yesteryear.
Children scoff at hand-washed wedding china,
Grandma's quilts, Granddad's tavli board, off-prints of our publications,
travel albums of dream vacations, their own old toys and trophies.
Yard sales abound and thrift shops choke with castoffs.

But say a girl of our time—let's call her Miranda,
wandering disconsolate among the refuse in such a shop,
happens upon a used book bin and Shakespeare's *The Tempest*.
Flipping its worn and marked pages,
she lights upon Prospero's melancholy warning
to his own Miranda and Prince Ferdinand.
In brief, he tells them, the party's over:

*The Cloud-capped towers and gorgeous palaces
... The great globe itself...shall dissolve
..... We are such stuff
As dreams are made on, and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep.*

If the light is right, the old magician's alchemy resolves
those liquor glasses into a crystal prism
of remembered friendship and celebration
and absolves us of our folly.

Thirteen Reasons to Visit the Greek Islands: a Prose Poem

Margaret Kouidis

1. Blue Star Ferries to and from the islands; rhythms of departure and arrival; cheese and spinach pies at a ship's snack bar—
2. Variety within eternal sun and sea: on Crete, Minoan Knossos, Mt. Ida--home of Zeus, the novels of Nikos Kazantzakis; the brown of Aegean islands giving way to the green Ionian landscape of Corfu and Kephallonia; the shipping history of Andros; on Patmos, the cave of John the Apostle; on Rhodes, the Old City of the Knights Templar; Mitylene, whose beaches were the first to hear Sappho's love songs; on Ithaca the ghostly footsteps of Odysseus—
3. The Mediterranean's shifting hues, from Homer's *wine dark sea* to the azure of sun-dazed water bleaching to the aquamarine of a coastline surf—
4. Long sandy beaches and intimate coves sheltered by olive groves; on Santorini, pebbly entry to the black water of a volcanic crater—
5. On Kythnos, as elsewhere, villages of white houses with blue doors and shutters, draped in flamboyant bougainvilleas—
6. Straw-hatted donkeys plodding village streets and country lanes, carrying produce of the island or posing for a tourist's' Kodak moment—
7. Siestas forcing restless tourists to discover the pleasure of doing nothing—
8. Sun scorched days giving way to sea breezes as the moon rises and harbor lights compete with the stars—
9. For thrill seekers, blasé taxi drivers undeterred by one-way signs or narrow roadsides shearing down to oblivion—
10. Café- and restaurant-lined streets where fast-talking waiters invite and often coerce your patronage—
11. The ambient music of mandolin and bouzouki—
12. Greek food: fresh breads, elegant pastries, hand-held vegetable and meat pies, fried eggplant and zucchini appetizers, feta topped village salads, grilled sea bass and octopus, spanakopita, moussaka, meatballs grilled and in sauces, roasted vegetables and savory stews, lamb chops, souvlaki, and for the rashly gluttonous—baklava drenched in honey—
13. Greek beer.

My Most Cherished Memory of the Greek Islands

My husband's joy in his Odyssean voyage, year-by-year, decade-by-decade, to Athens and the islands, his homeland, his Ithaca—relishing his first swim of the season, retooling his Greek with waiters and hotel clerks (and anyone else he can waylay), and after a couple of glasses of retsina or ouzo, singing and dancing with mandolin and bouzouki—the music of Zorba in his soul.

Why I Won't Return to the Islands

It is time to create new memories.

Imagine

Scott Melville

imagine a world without beauty
where there is no music
no appreciation of the sky
no poems or paintings
nothing to make them sigh

imagine park-less cities
square blocks of buildings and bridges
where functionality is all
people winning and losing
Spring no different than Fall

imagine a world without beauty
no ribbons or garland
no latticework or lace
forest no more than trees
a clever formulaic race

imagine all the people
praying to heaven
banking on a better place
dreaming of a goldilocks planet
paying to rocket into space

Low Flying Duck at Dusk

Scott Melville

Yeh, Yeh, you can lie back and watch
the high up flap-less circles of hawks.
Maybe it will put you to sleep
if that's what you want.

But what about this guy,
rocketing straight down the river,
inches off the polished water?
He's got me a-tiptoe leaning out
over the rail.

A webbed-waddler turned test-pilot,
on mission. His outstretched neck
a sleek laminar line. His cadence
resolute, afterburners on.

What sights, what wind, what winged
speed, what flat-out fun must be.
On and on, a speck, a speck,
and gone.

My heart is settling back
in the silent calm. And in good time
my thoughts (still caught in contrails)
will glide and splash down.

Crusaders' Pilgrimage to Stuckey's
Diane Miller

O we have left the sultry steam of noontime workaday
And enter now the temple of the god,
Its cool recesses calling us to watch and pray
To find the sacred icon we have sought.

What, shall you herald progress of believers true,
Ye temple bells a-jingle at the door?
Emblazoned ye with INDIA in red and blue
Proclaiming entry and announcing more.

And we, knights-errant of the blessed holy quest
Shall bow before the altars ranged about
To seek the treasure others long have pressed
Their willing hearts arduous to find out.

Ah, there! We now approach environs of our grail
'Tis velvet Elvis promising our prize,
For close behind there be the painted plates we hail
As harbingers, with message from the skies.

Now pink flamingos solemn stand erect and mute,
Convoluted scallop shells guard well
Against intrusion by the heathen absolute
Who would invade, and holy order quell.

Afar in back we come upon the sacred sign;
Proclaims BEHOLD METROPOLIS OF STONE.
An exhortation to our people through all time,
The vision given worthy ones alone.

We wrest the emblem from the chaos of the straits,
Victorious, valiant, bear our prize to court.
There gum-pop maid in innocence she blithely waits,
Insouciant before the roiling horde.

"Dost thou wish else?" she duly asks in serving us;
Aught else would satisfy our ancient need.
"Nay, maiden, onward to our journey now we must,"
Et exeunt omnes, faithfuls to our creed.
O may we ever bear the banner free and bold,
A charge to yield pecuniary gain,
Yea, prithee e'er be wont to ante up thy gold
And treasures such as this shall be thy aim.

Dateline: September 25, 2001

Diane Miller

After the special editions heavy with multiple pages and grief,
After the searing scenes of faces streaked with tears and ash,
After the heroic images of stalwart shoulders battling tragedy,
On page four below the fold days later, a portrait commentary.
There, in the furious smoke of dreams destroyed,
A leering visage bulged, belching brimstone,
The very face of evil high against the darkness of full morning,
The shattered twin towers of the fallen still upright and ruined
Behind his heinous head. Simply a curious effect, some said;
Others insist a monstrous being walked live among the lost.
Was it an actual creature? It makes no difference.
There is no question it was real.

Autumn

Nancy Penaskovic

Autumn ushers in the season for gratitude,
A time for harvesting the treasures of the earth.
Trees unfurl magnificent colors-
Red, yellow, crimson and orange-
Capturing in us a sense of awe,

A time of change, preparing for dormancy.
Things wither and die,
Revealing to us the face of winter.
We long for the warmth of summer,
Realizing we abandoned the gift of being grateful.

Take time to look at the pages of your memory,
Good times, sad times, difficult challenges.
We need to weather the wisdom of change.
Gratitude means we savor the small wonders of life,
The morning sunrise, an evening of solitude.

To family, friends, and fortitude
We have to say, "Thank you, Lord
For the gift of Life."

Sip the Moment
Nancy Penaskovic

I write to sip the moment when my father was dying.

The taste of those moments was bitter.

I look back and see how those caustic moments shaped my life.

Etched in my mind is the resentment I felt when my father
had to wait for pain medicine, the prescribed time had not been met.

I made a resolution never to have a patient wait in pain.

I felt there had to be a better way to face death.

In 1990, I was offered an opportunity to be the Hospice Director
For EAMC Hospice. I gladly accepted and spent the next sixteen years
Developing an outpatient program for a three-county area and in the
Year 2000, established the first inpatient-free standing program in the
State of Alabama. It was the bitter taste of a moment that motivated my response.
Sweet moments may reinforce your strength and convictions, but
Acerbic moments force action and change.

Hello Poetry

Charlene Redick

Hello
Who are you?
Who am I?
I founded a social media poetry site *Free the Poetry*
There are one thousand poets who communicate on this site,
And post their ideas,
And support each other's work.
I thought it would bring hope to the world
That Shinji from Johannesburg, South Africa, and Antonio from Rio De Janeiro
And Dancing Bear from Flagstaff, Arizona
Had lyric thoughts to share
About world sickness, love sickness, war, peace, endurance, understanding, faith in the future.
I invite you to send a poem to *Free the Poetry*.
Let us give out hope like bread.
The world is starving.

Your Laugh

Charlene Redick

No doubt about it, you were beautiful naked,
Quick with sexual solutions, informed, skilled,
And your grooming—always spot on —
your kisses minty, your Bay Rum embraces unforgettable.
You were ultimate intimacy -- turgid offerings, quick starts, moments when we merged
Then got up flushed and still excited to take back the world.
And then the tool proficiency. You could fix anything.
We had bookshelves in every room.
The table you built for the deck seated twelve—so many happy parties.

If I were too busy, forgive me. You were the best partner in freedom, permission, and back up.
When I was impatient with your caution feeling you and the children against me —
The inner family—our brilliant daughter called the trio of you, her brother and herself--
You redeemed the hurt with a compliment—*My throat gets thick when you come in the room*,
restoring me to the throne of adoration, as the four of us convened in the kitchen
and cooked a delicious spaghetti dinner—
you chopping the salad, she basting the garlic bread, and he and I building the tiramisu.

Make me laugh. You said.
You are perfect. You never make mistakes.
You hear her Lord, from the peanut gallery, singing my praises? Bless her heart.
And then a loud guffaw:
The eyes first, surprised at contradiction, absurdity, the politics on television.

Can you believe this crap? Curses accompanied your hilarity.
You shook your head in incredulity as the sardonic stoked your mirth:
He criminalizes everything he touches. I've got to stop this.
How? I turned to you amazed.
Your snort raised us above cynicism. *I've got ways.*
Like what?
You'll see.

It was your chortle of delight that freed us. Delight at the thrill of a fact revealed that was obvious all the time, your enrapture over our children, your jubilation when the disadvantaged evened the score,
Or with the dog or our horses, or on the raft at the beach—the delight--
before the sharks, before cell phones, before the bad diagnosis.

Fifty years ago, you saved me during our rock-climbing class.
Tangled in the repelling ropes, I dislocated my shoulder.
The instructor was at the top of the cliff.
You were one hundred feet below -- you had gone down the sheer wall first.
I was in agony, suspended in thin air, frozen, humiliated and near tears.
How am I going to get down? My arm won't work.
I heard your calm voice from the ground beneath me.
Just hold onto the belaying line. Don't push against the wall, try not to aggravate your shoulder.
Doug is going to talk you down and as he lowers you to me, I will catch you.
Catch me?! How?
I've got ways.

I did everything you told me to do and arrived on solid ground, my blue denim shirt torn badly, my jeans ripped, blood on my knuckles.
You held me.
We laughed.

I've got to find humor now.
With you gone, how will I live if I don't gather reasons to grin across the room
and let the hurrahs take over?

The pain of living will kill me without that nudge, rebound, kiss of laughter,
That return to the originator, without negative consequences--successful, flourishing and prospering--that originator that sent me by way of laughter into faith in the future.

Can you hear me?
Laugh down from heaven.
Delight me again.
You've got ways.
Save me one more time.

Time Passes

Crystal Rogers

Pink and yellow
angel trumpets blooming,
Decorate the trail
that leads to
The Last Hurrah,
before the killing frost.
When the white angels come,
it will not be far behind.

Wilting heat of summer
drifts south.
Sun begins descent,
goldenrods
reach new heights,
But I march in place.

What I Learned from My Dog

Crystal Rogers

Don't go alone
into dark alleys
or deep woods.
Come home
when you are tired.
If the sun shines,
it is a sign from God: Enjoy.
If you don't like it,
don't eat it.
Find someone you can trust,
Cleave to them forever.
After a time,
even when they are gone,
they will still be with you.

The Ballad of Shorty Small

Barbara Sforzini

Captain Shorty Small bellied up to the bar
On a bleak wintry night in December

With a wave of his hand, he took quick command
And bellowed "Do serve us bartender!"

Me Maties and me we've been out on the sea
These bitterly cold wintry nights

We've sailed a far piece over billowing sea
With snouts full of frozen salt ice

Our tongues are all swole like ye boot heels thick soles
And our throats throb with spine prickled cactus

So bring on ye ale, three jugs if ye please
For one jug certainly won't last us

Our bellies do growl like a dog with a bone
And grumble for a plate of ye bread

So make haste and do serve
To fill these lad's bellies before
They fall on the floor dead

And when I'm filled full with ye grub and ye ale
Give me no feathery bed

Give me a wench with soft supple bosoms
To pillow me dead tired head

West Virginia
Dwight St. John

Coal town holler looms quiet in the fog,
All the houses feathery white. In these parts
Haves and have nots live close together,
And by the holler mouth or down in the head
You won't find gated communities.
Down this winding narrow road,
With the creek on the right and the hills rising left,
I'm looking for 58 on a front porch post.

"Mr. Sininger, howdy, I'm the man from the paper.
We talked yesterday." Muffled growl.
"Old blue hound, he'll bite you! Ranger, down!
Sorry, bud, here, have a seat, rest your face and hands.
Abigail! Bring us sweet tea!

Beauty shops I've built all over these hills,
Framin' and drywall, electrical, plumbing...
But anymore it's 'local artists' people seem to want.
You seen the changes down on Morehead Street?
Tain't far from here, park right on the square; you'll see,
New folks grind their own grain and coffee beans."

Fog lifting gentle sun stays with me as I walk
This town, my first time back; layers of history,
American flags. On State Street corner
A mellowed brick warehouse ghost-signed Tobacco
Sports celery green awnings: up close
The old façade exuding warmth at noon,
Galvanized stock tanks lush with Asian herbs,
Lemongrass, Thai basil, Cantonese greens.
Overflowing water soothes a tiled slate sphere.
Garlic in the air! Hungry, I enter
Beneath a delicate calligraphy sign: *Oboe*

A few blocks away, septic tanks still seep,
Carve leach line ditches when there's heavy rain,
But the houses face no direction, pale children emerge.

Konjugated and Korrekt

Rosalyn Thomas

Grams would tell my ma of her great grandpa who regaled them
With his tales. More culturally cured ethmoids would take a
cumulus tilt if they heard his words. They called him Busara.
He use of whatsonesvers, gwinetos, come ears, afoes, yonder ways,
And I suspicioned that. With his cane he fashioned detailed spiders,
scorpions and birds but could not write his name. Grams would say
No ears were diverted. Mouths were gapped with lots of
Oooos and awwws. He'd start a story this here now,
Or tarry time ain't cheer.
We climbed the trunks of acacia and jacaranda. Napped beneath
Marula. Lifted the trunks of elephants, stroked lion manes.
Fanned our faces with tiger tails. We tasted fresh bananas dipped in coconut.
We stood on warm sandy beaches. Friendly oceans washed us out.
Ran through tall green grasses as they talked to the wind.
Chased waterfalls-bathed in their stream. Guided the wings of giant birds
as we climbed mountaintops.
When asked about the words Busara spoke my gram would say
taint nothing wrong. Every verb Busara spoke was konjugated and korrekt.

The Endurance of Ordinary Things

Gary Wagoner

We gather things even more fragile than we
wineglasses, teacups
a lip brushes the enameled sink,
and it's irreconcilable fragments.
Yet the rest remain in ranks on shelves
to be boxed and taken away by the children
when the house is emptied.

Things,
beautiful or ordinary
accumulate concatenations of memory for we who live
with them

Like that sunflower-printed tablecloth you bought
at the thrift store in Gunnison with my father,
now becoming threadbare from years of shared meals
but still more durable than we (twenty years since my father left us)
and with that memory woven into it
Only until you're gone.

Daddy's Favorite

Bill Wilson

Enthralled as creatures strange came into view,
the sisters sped from sloth to chimpanzee—
Two laughing girls both skipping through the zoo.

“Oh, Daddy, look a panda. There’s a gnu.”
Quite awed by species rare on land or sea—
enthralled as creatures strange came into view.

“We’d like to see the reptiles, Daddy, too
and there’s an Orang swinging from a tree.”
Two laughing girls both skipping through the zoo.

Pere David’s deer and elands came in view.
“Let’s see what new exhibits there may be”—
enthralled as creatures strange came into view.,

Then bats and boas, tigers, caribou,
koalas, dingoes, wombats roaming free—
Two laughing girls both skipping through the zoo.

“Daddy, we would like to hear from you
what you like best”. “The wooly yak’s for me.”
Enthralled as creatures strange came into view—
Two laughing girls both skipping through the zoo.

Seasonal Haikus

Bill Wilson

Spring

Cherry blossoms wave—
Droplets fall from Lincoln's beard—
Time dissolves them all.

Summer

Heat squats on the Mall—
Congress leaves Capitol Hill—
August's gift to us.

Fall

Rainbows festoon trees—
Dressed in finest fall array—
Soon they will go bare.

Winter

Cold thwarts Nature's life—
Hoped-for heat will come again—
Suppose it doesn't?