

WestWard Quarterly

The Magazine of Family Reading



Fall, 2003

Index	Page 3
Poems	Pages 4-11, 13, 16-21
Corner on Youth	Page 12
Essay	Page 14
Writer's Workbench	Page 22
Contest Notice	Page 23

**IN
THIS
ISSUE**

To our readers . . .

We didn't plan it this way, it just happened! Our submissions for the Fall issue are brimful of nostalgia. But then isn't autumn a time of nostalgia anyway? What makes it so? Is it the leaves falling from the trees, the cooler days warning of impending winter, the earlier setting of the sun, the gathering in of crops, family holidays together? Whatever it is for you, some of these poems are sure to bring autumn memories —hopefully good ones.

Of course, all of the above applies if you live in North America or Europe. If you're reading this elsewhere, make your own analogy!

We have also received some extraordinary reflective work along with some unique humorous pieces. All in all, this issue should have something for everyone, and we applaud our contributors for their outstanding work.

Also notice this issue has information about a new contest coming up. Check out page 23 for details. Remember, subscribers pay only \$1.00.

Shirley Anne Leonard, EDITOR

WestWard Quarterly

Shirley Anne Leonard, Editor
 P.O. Box 1586, Wheaton, IL 60189 USA
 wwquarterly@aol.com, 800-440-4043

Formerly Edited by Marsha Ward

WestWard Quarterly showcases the best work of upbeat writers and poets. Our magazine's philosophy is: "Adversity happens. Find the eternal purpose behind it." Reflect an uplifting, positive or gently humorous attitude in your submissions. Send all submissions or inquiries to the address above. The preferred mode of communication is email; put "WWQ Submission" or "WWQ Inquiry" in subject line. If sending a submission by standard mail please include SASE for response.

Maximum Lengths: Short Stories - 2000 words; Essays - 1000 words; Poems - 40 lines. Shorter submissions have a better likelihood of being published. The Editor reserves the right to edit material. For more information, visit our web site, <http://members.aol.com/wwquarterly>.

All rights revert to authors upon publication. Please credit *WestWard Quarterly* for prior publication if you later submit your work to other publishers.

©2003 Laudemont Press.

Subscriptions — \$12/year US and \$15 foreign (4 issues). Single issues — \$3 US, \$5 foreign. Make checks payable to Laudemont Press.

Index to Fall, 2003 Issue

Poems

Memories by <i>Judith Blumer Sepsey</i>	4
Around the Edges by <i>C. L. Rymer</i>	5
A Man Without a Dream by <i>Micki H.</i>	5
Grandma and Grandpa Had Time by <i>Sheila Brennan</i>	6
Rain by <i>Jonathan Brennan</i>	7
Autumn Fancies by <i>Shirley Anne Leonard</i>	8
Just a Breath Away by <i>Neil C. Fitzgerald</i>	8
The Farm in October Is by <i>Jen Whiting</i>	9
Poem-Hunting by <i>David Fox</i>	9
Someone Needs to Give You the Praise by <i>Richard Leonard</i>	10
Dusk (Contest of the Hours) by <i>Katheryn C. Leonard</i>	11
Holidays on TV by <i>William Wooley, Jr.</i>	11
Yes! by <i>Richard Sponaugle</i>	13
listen for a lthought by <i>d. n. simmers</i>	16
Break-Even Point by <i>T. Ashok Chakravarthy</i>	17
Crying Rocks by <i>Vincent J. Tomeo</i>	18
The Journey by <i>Cecil Boyce</i>	18
Another World . . . Another Dawn by <i>Sarah LuAnn Jensen</i>	19
The Rain by <i>Raymond Malmgren</i>	20
Out of Gas by <i>J. Alvin Speers</i>	21
On Seeing Her Statue in the Garden by <i>Shirley Anne Leonard</i>	23

Corner on Youth

My Riding Mower by <i>Aaron Rickard</i>	12
Short Love by <i>Karl Erickson</i>	12
O Lord, My God (Psalm 104) by <i>Christopher Easley</i>	13

Essay

A Visit to My Old Home by <i>John Acton Campbell</i>	14
--	----

Departments

Writer's Workbench	22
Contest Notice	23

Ads

<i>Northern Stars Magazine</i>	17
<i>Poets' Roundtable</i>	17
<i>SMILE</i>	17

Art from Microsoft Clip Art, Corel Clip Art and other sources

Memories

*Judith Blumer Sepsey, Wisconsin
Poetry Contest Winner, Spring-Summer 2002
(issue not published)*

Faded memories
in my mind I see,
visions of the girl
that once I used to be.

Forgotten faces
crowd my mind,
voices calling
through the years of time.

Where have I gone,
what memories have I lost?
Can I be that child again,
and what would be the cost?

Reveries keep pulling,
they want to draw me back.
But now is not the time
to walk another track.

So I'll continue on my journey,
I'll keep on being me.
But every so often I'll visit
with the girl I used to be.

Edging into life's later years finds one alone,
at times unsure of memories, faces, places
and time — things forgotten or left behind.

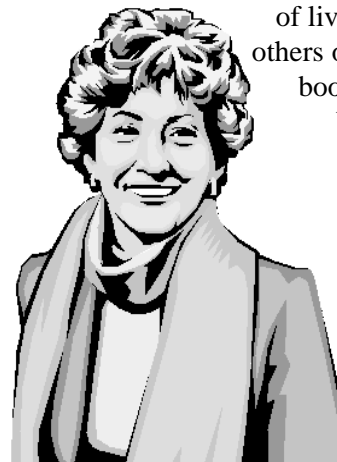
Perhaps left undone with no chance
to redo — unfinished business no one else
ever knew about or cared to attend —
misplaced within mind's gradual descend

With wishes one could still clarify
the whats, the wheres, the reasons why
before frail heart and mind resign
all ability to yearn, forestall or align
inevitable loss of self within
pale, brittle shell of wrinkled skin

Encased in years of battles fought,
of lives lived and loves now lost, a container
others overlook, often put aside like a well-worn
book set on a shelf near volumes unread,
bound to the past, to things unsaid

And yet not ready to be disposed,
to settle in or allow repose, desirous of
more breath and light, one must express
or somehow excite soul's hunger to recognize
fiber accrued through years of knowing,
self-assured, at heart and mind's unwavering
rescind — deep yearning to stay
'til last breath is taken in.

C. L. Rymer, Ohio



Around the Edges

A Man Without a Dream

Micki H., California

A man without a dream
Is like a desert land parched
And weary, although it seems
A man walks through the desert
Of his soul, torn and untamed,
Withered at the seams.
No firm foothold, though he be.

If only he had a worthy dream,
He could stand against the pain.
Have something to fight with
against the rain.
In the end he would surely gain
A life noteworthy to attain.

Grandma and Grandpa Had Time

Sheila Brennan, Illinois

When no one had time for a little girl,
I remember that Grandpa did.
When no one would answer a curious child,
I remember that Grandma would.
When I wanted a smile and some good company,
And no one was home except Queenie and me,
We'd go over the hill for a cup of coffee
'Cuz Grandma and Grandpa had time.

Grandpa would tell of the hard times he'd known
When he came here from Sweden to make a new home.
Sometimes when he told it, he'd break down and cry,
And although I was young I thought I knew why.
Those were hard times, and poor times, and lonely times too,
And the ones who endured them I'm sure were but few.

When no one had time for a little girl,
I remember that Grandpa did.
When no one would answer a curious child,
I remember that Grandpa would.
When I wanted a smile and some good company,
And no one was home except Queenie and me,
We'd go over the hill for a cup of coffee
'Cuz Grandpa always had time.



Grandma made coffee and served us her riches,
Her pies and her cookies and doughnuts—delicious!
I'd watch her roll piecrusts, tender and flaking,
Then stay near the stove while the goodies were
baking.

Sometimes she would knit, most often crochet,
And I wanted to learn in the *awfullest* way.

When no one had time for a little girl,
I remember that Grandma did.
When no one would answer a curious child,
I remember that Grandma would.

When I wanted a smile and some good company,
And no one was home except Queenie and me,
We'd go over the hill for a cup of coffee
'Cuz Grandma always had time.

I sure had good times at my grandparents' place
Learning all about violets, watching Grandma make lace.
If we used our old trick, we'd get Grandpa to sing,
And all through the house *Nikolina* would ring.
And Grandma and Grandpa were both "good to tease,"
So that sometimes we never knew what to believe!

Yes, when no one had time for a little girl,
I remember that Grandpa did.
When no one would answer a curious child,
I remember that Grandma would.
When I wanted a smile and some good company,
And no one was home except Queenie and me,
We'd go over the hill for a cup of coffee
'Cuz Grandpa always had time.

As I grow older and think of those years
My love and my gratitude spill into tears.
Though Grandma and Grandpa were poor
by most measures,
They gave me and John some of life's
greatest treasures.
Wherever life takes me, whatever I do,
My grandparents' love will be there
shining through.
Yes, Grandma and Grandpa had time . . .



Rain

Jonathan Brennan, Illinois

The silver shimmer of her gown
Floats o'er the dark and silent town,
As if a lady of renown
Had deigned it proper to come down.
She walks among the gardens there
And spreads her mist throughout the air,

Allowing leaves to come and share
From her bouquet of silver hair.
She grants a glimpse of graceful things,
Of flowers fair, and moon beam rings;
A land of princes, queens, and kings
That we imagine when she sings.



Autumn Fancies

Shirley Anne Leonard, Illinois

September comes tumbling
through sunflowers and weeds,
marigolds nesting in her hair,
romping the golden countryside
with tantalizing flair.

October's not so sure,
cavorts with scowling rain
amidst the sun's warm rays,
and calls her children home
on stormy days.

November broods in brown,
her trees remembering their leaves,
now crumpled on the ground,
and looks about on warmer days
for bees to come around.

Just a Breath Away

Neil C. Fitzgerald, Massachusetts



The leaves, like children, scatter 'round
the edges of an old stone wall,
scamper across an open field,
come to rest in a quiet stream.
Spring to fall they form a cycle,
a passage of life unto death
in a pattern of symmetry
and beauty raising the conscience
to look beyond the living thing,
to seek out the markings of God,
to know the thrust of his presence,
his coveting the human soul.



The Farm in October Is

Jen Whiting, Illinois

White birch trunks in bare woods,
Crunching twigs underfoot,
Milk pods and whirly birds
A brisk walk to the yellow gate.

Honda rides through mowed hay,
Red sumac in gray fields,
Golden poplars against brown hills,
Shotgun to shoulder, clay bird mid-air.

Fried chicken and pot roast,
Chocolate cake with candles,
Laughter around the dinner table.

Haze from smoldering leaves,
Cool bed sheets on bare legs,
Autumn family memories —
And not wanting to go back home.

Poem-Hunting

David Fox, New York

I am like a squirrel
But instead of nuts and berries
I forage for nouns, verbs and adjectives.
I search for rhyme and meter
or at least a sense of meaning.
But I can't find any.
Maybe tomorrow . . .



Someone Needs to Give You the Praise

Richard Leonard, Illinois

They say, "I've worked for what I've got,
I did it my own way.
The world owes me a living,
and I'll get mine some day!
We prosper through our talents,
and the tactics we employ;
We only have ourselves to thank
for all that we enjoy."

People go upon their merry way
as though they had no care.
"What God thinks doesn't matter,
we're not even sure He's there.
We can live the way we want to,
we don't have to keep His rules,
and those who speak of values —
they are just a bunch of fools!"

It's so easy to forget You
as we look across our land,
and think that our prosperity
has come by our own hand.
But all we see about us,
and all that we've achieved
were given through the mercy
of the God whom we have grieved.

Someone needs to give You the praise!
Someone must give credit
to Your will and Your ways.
The rocks may cry out,
and the stars above may shout,
but *people* need to give you the praise!
Someone needs to celebrate You!
Someone must acknowledge
that Your judgments are true.
So, Lord, I'll be that someone,
with the others You have called.
Together we will give You the praise!



Dusk (Contest of the Hours)

Katheryn C. Leonard, 1910-1995

Said dying Day to newborn Night:
"I will take your colors bright.
You will not see the green of trees
Nor golden wheat dance in the breeze,
Nor beauty of the crimson rose,
The purple where the violet grows."
Emerging Night made soft reply:
"There's beauty where the shadows lie —
The sparkle of the diamond dew
Glistening in the moon so new;
The crystal waves in ocean's flow,
Ice-capped peaks in lunar glow."
Descending sun in gold array
Allied itself with dying Day.
Ascending moon, in yellow light,
Rose, honoring the newborn Night.
It was a contest of the hours,
Entangling moonbeams, dew, and flowers.



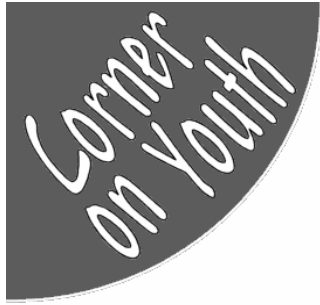
Holidays on TV

William Wooley, Jr., Texas

Harassed housewife addressing a telephone caller, regarding holiday advertising:

The rigors and expense of Halloween
Are not yet past, but still — this won't relate —
I'm hearing gobblers now, and "Jingle Bells,"
As TV noises carry through the house.
I take a look at man's pretentious screen
And view — along with turkey-on-the-plate —
Old Santa Claus, who sits right down and tells
A horrid tale to charm the Christmas mouse.

(These advertisements draw commercial raves
As we become, at last, the virtual slaves
Of greedy ones who make financial waves.
We live again in God-forsaken caves
Among: the devil-led, ambitious knaves
Whose fathers turn — with ours — in restless graves.)



Contributions from Younger Readers

My Riding Mower

Aaron Rickard, Illinois - Age 14

Vrooom! Put! Put! Put! Bruuummm . . .

"Yeah, Dad, it works!" I said.

My Dad and I had just finished fixing my first lawn mower. That day changed my life forever. Ever since that fateful day I've been fixing lawn mowers left and right — and I have also been working on other things involving small engines, such as go-carts, mini-bikes, and weed eaters.

I believe my biggest achievement to be my riding lawn mower.

One day it just quit running, so my dad took off the motor and found it badly damaged. We got a new lawn mower (actually, it was used). But mine sat in the back of the garage, engineless, for a year or two until I located a motor someone had given us, and got it running.

I put the motor on the mower and fired it up — but when I put it in first gear it went backwards!

I asked my dad about it, and he said to put the belt on so that it was twisted the other way, and it worked fine. Since then I've been changing motors on it and repairing it.

I've had it stuck twice or maybe more, but I continue to have fun riding it and fixing it.



Short Love

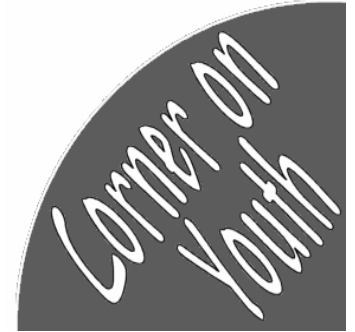
Karl Erickson, Illinois - Age 12

It's hard to love
The tallest girl
When you're the shortest guy,
For every time
You try to look
Your true love in the eye
You see
Her belly button.

O Lord, My God (Psal m 104)

Christopher Easley, Illinois - Age 11

O Lord, my God, how great you are!
You separated the water from the sky,
Up where Your beautiful clouds fly.
You are mighty to not make a mistake
In making their shape.
You are strong to make them part,
Making your light a work of art.
And with these things up high afar,
I say one thing,
"O Lord, my God, how great you are!"



Yes!

Richard Sponaugle, Virginia

To fly zooming rocket to Mars
isn't my goal in life.
I must soar above the stars,
worlds away from earth's strife.
Twenty thousand leagues beneath the sea
may be your idea of fun,
But the aquatic dreamer in me
needs a million rivers to run;
Not below the dirty ocean floor,
But parallel to the sun so bright,
And fluffy clouds where eagles roar:
Sunshine's reflected day and night.
Let others retreat to their childhood.
It's just romanticized memories
That make the early years seem so good.
My mind drifts back twenty centuries . . .
For it's God's promise of Heaven's glory,
Now and for evermore,
That makes man's dreams so ordinary
and pious souls yet soar.

A Visit to My Old Home

John Acton Campbell, Indiana, 1881

Mr. Campbell was a resident of Butler, Indiana. This essay, written in 1881, was printed in the Butler newspaper at that time. It was supplied by Alan B. Campbell of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, and edited by R. C. L.

As the first minutes of July 2 came trooping into being, we hailed the first passing train of the time-tried Lake Shore¹, found comfortable seats in its flying palaces and were soon being borne in rapid flight toward the place of our nativity. We reached Toledo as the first straggling rays of light began to tinge the eastern horizon with signs of coming day. A brief delay, and again our palaces are under motion and the murky tide of the Maumee is flowing behind us. After many snatches of uneasy slumber the blue waters of Lake Erie whitening in Sandusky Bay are seen, and old Sol, with a very red face but cleanly washed, peeps out of the water-girt horizon. With many yawns we arouse ourselves to find our train moving rapidly where once the industrious fisherman set his nets and the white sails of the lake leviathans gladdened the eyes of those same fishermen.

Cleveland is reached as the breakfast gongs are sounding, and a brief stay of an hour and a half gives us time to glance at its minarets and towers, its commerce and its gigantic viaduct. Changing our comfortable seat from the LakeShore to the Valley Railway², we are soon moving in rapid flight along Ohio's ancient commercial highways. Ohio Canal and Cuyahoga's turbid tide flow lazily beneath our window. Landmark after landmark known with great familiarity in childhood is passed, all faded and gray from the lapse of time's relentless flight — Boston, Independence and Yellow Creek being among the number. As the sun begins to shine with July power we reach Akron, the Rochester of Ohio — scoffed, derided Akron, cursed for its chills and fevers in its early history, yet showing all the powers of a giant in its growth, completely bewildering those who visit it but seldom.

A few calls among old friends who have faded, as it has put on strength, and we are again in transit over what was once England's carefully nurtured enterprise, the Broad Gauge³, now shrunken to the proportion of its less pretentious American cousin. Sterling, the crossing of the Tuscarawas Valley⁴, is reached in the early morning. Alighting from the train I see a thriving village with

enterprise and thrift written all over it, meeting here one friend of my childhood. This place was endeared to me from its being the dwelling place of a very dear friend in early childhood, but now changed since the olden time. The old farm house in which many pleasant hours had been passed is converted into a hotel and the marks of familiarity are defaced, and dimmed by time.

An hour's delay passed in viewing its changes and partaking of its mineral water, I again seat myself in the ever-present railway coach⁵ and with noise and clatter am borne down the valley toward the once dearest spot on earth. I reach my native village⁶, and alighting from the train eagerly scan the many faces of the usual crowd that always throng the American railway station. All are strangers, no familiar face is near, no waiting friend with extended hand to grasp — I am a

stranger where once faces were well known. But twenty-four years change the face of nearly everything earthly. The yellow waters of Chippewa and its familiar meanderings are the only objects in view. I pass the spot where rest the ashes of a dear mother and sister, threading my way through the streets of the almost deserted village, noting here and there some



familiar dwelling, now gray and faded with time. No familiar face appears at doorway or window — all is changed. I seek the old familiar pathway toward my old home; a railway has ruthlessly caused it to deviate its old way.

I soon reach a point from which a glance at my old home is visible, and drink in, with a delight inexpressible in words, the sight of many a familiar object. I wander alone along the stream where in boyhood I passed so many happy hours. Each bend in the stream, and each tree, are dear, familiar friends and greeted with more than brotherly affection. I view the old spring from whose limpid waters I so often quenched my thirst at noonday's heat. The mulberry tree from whose branches I so often gathered the purple fruit is still standing, its branches seared from the flight of time. I tread the broken and uneven path along the stream to the old house where all the brightest years of childhood have been spent. I enter its portals. I glance about its interior, and with eyes involuntarily filling, and with happy thoughts of other days, I wander from room to room with thoughts too big for utterance. I look around and see the well, the yard fixtures, and trees

that my hands have planted and trained. I visit the barn, now going piecemeal, where I toiled in summer's heat and winter's cold. I wander about the orchard, recognizing each tree and spot so dear to memory, and again return to the house to be greeted by strangers, though treated with courtesy — yet what would I not have given to again have met as in the past the dear friends of my childhood, now scattered far and wide and moldering in mother earth.

I sadly close my eyes to the dear familiar scene and retrace my steps toward the railway station, gladdened and saddened by so near a glimpse at the scenes and places now silently held in the grasp of the past. I turn once more as the place fades from view and take one more longing, lingering look at the dearest spot on earth and sadly bid it farewell.

¹ The Lake Shore & Michigan Southern Railway, now Norfolk Southern. The route is traversed today by Amtrak's *Lake Shore Limited*.

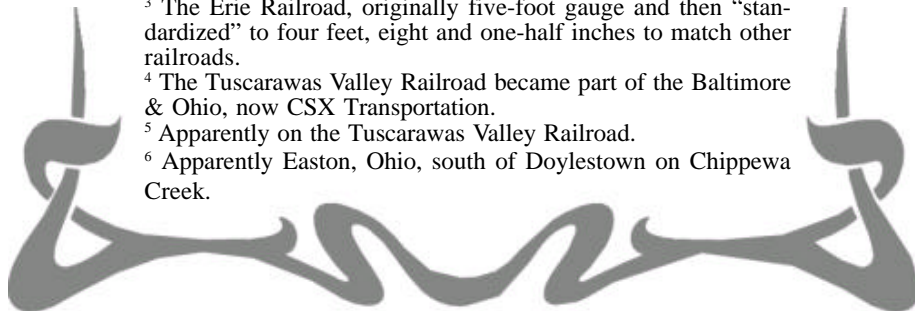
² Opened a year before Mr. Campbell's trip, later part of the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad.

³ The Erie Railroad, originally five-foot gauge and then "standardized" to four feet, eight and one-half inches to match other railroads.

⁴ The Tuscarawas Valley Railroad became part of the Baltimore & Ohio, now CSX Transportation.

⁵ Apparently on the Tuscarawas Valley Railroad.

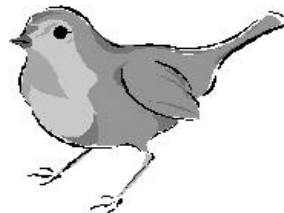
⁶ Apparently Easton, Ohio, south of Doylestown on Chippewa Creek.



listen for a thought

d. n. simmers, British Columbia, Canada

Darkness fills a blue room,
scratching noises outside are distant.
The grandfather clock tells me I should be asleep
I listen: cock my head over
like a robin
for a thought
listen for the thought to
slip away . . .
I try to get up: I try to fly
through a dream
full of rainbow slices:
the clock dents the wishes: three . . .



Break - Even Point

T. Ashok Chakravarthy, Hyderabad, A.P., India

To break the trust, To bridge the trust — Which one is easier? Undoubtedly the first.	Flowers will spread fragrance, Fragrance in turn, love and romance. But the cry of an orphan dear, The hunger of a roadside beggar Bereft of mercy, we avoid — yes. O! service to humanity, my God reckons service rendered to God.
To gain love, To break love Easier than the said one, No doubt, is breaking love.	Yes, no bud would aspire To be nipped in the bud itself, No flower would desire To be plucked before the sun rise.
To bestow life is great, To take life is deceit. The gifted life of a human being — Yes, is the Lord's aspiration.	Yet the omnipresent miracle prevails, Playing the tunes at God's will Where dwells the break-even point.
Plant a seed to see it sprout; Growth looks beautiful. No doubt	

NORTHERN STARS MAGAZINE

Quality Family Reading since 1997

Beverly Kleikamp, Editor/Publisher

N17285 Co Rd 400, Powers, MI 49874 U.S.A.

Subscription (6 issues per year) \$19.00 in U.S.A. (\$29.00 Canada)

Contest every issue - send SASE for guidelines

<http://members.aol.com/writernet/northstar.html>

Poets' Roundtable

Market and Contest Information

Dept. WWQ

826 South Center Street
Terre Haute, IN 47807 U.S.A.

Esther Alman, Editor

Dues \$15 per year (12 issues)

*Published by Poets' Study Club
of Terre Haute*

S M I L E

For subscription prices and
submission guidelines,
send SASE.

Joyce M. Johnson, Editor
Dept. WWQ

P.O. Box 5090
Brookfield, CT 06804-5090
U.S.A.

Crying Rocks

Vincent J. Tomeo, New York

Poetry Contest Special Honorable Mention, Spring-Summer 2002 (issue not published)

Shadows
Creep
Across
The desert floor
Up the cliffs
Soft
Weeds
Whisper
Willow
Spring
Trickles
Overpowering
Everything.



The Journey

Cecil Boyce, Texas

The old man lay there, thinking back over the years.
He knew it was almost his time, and was trying to allay his fears.
It had been a long, full life, with good health,
Friends and faith helping him through strife.
Tears filled his eyes as he thought back over years.
He had lived, loved, and learned what he needed to know,
And was thankful for friends and peers, who would drop in now and then.
They all learned from each other, and their
Love grew, as one day followed another.
He was weaker now, he knew, and needed
Help for everything he had to do.

He knew it just wasn't all dependence he got from everyone,
For his life had been one full of love, and
After all, that is the one thing, that there's never enough of.

He died silently one day, by himself.
After all, that was the only thing he had left to do for himself.
It was the way he wanted it, because he knew
He was the one who had to take the eternal cruise,
To meet his Maker, see Him face to face,
And to drift to glory at a nice easy pace.

Another World . . . Another Dawn

Sarah LuAnn Jensen, California

Poetry Contest Special Honorable Mention, Spring-Summer 2002 (issue not published)

On the *slow* train to visit Nell.
We were like sisters while
growing up.

I gave a knock on the door . . . an
old person to only open the door
part-way. I asked for Nell.

"She's not here anymore, she left
Earth some years ago...she awakes
to another World, another dawn.
She's gone." Then he closed the door.

Slowly, I walked myself back to
the train station. Hot tears roll
down my cheek. I'm remembering our
day when we played *hide and seek*.

Looking back . . . I had taken the train
to nowhere. I had taken the *slow* train
back to nowhere only trying to find
my childhood again.



The Rain

Raymond Malmgren, Georgia

I want to stand out in it
 — the rain,
 not soft and gentle
 but hard and pounding.
 I do not need
 nourishment now
 but cleansing —
 old skin stripped away,
 caked clay washed away,
 hard crust ripped away.

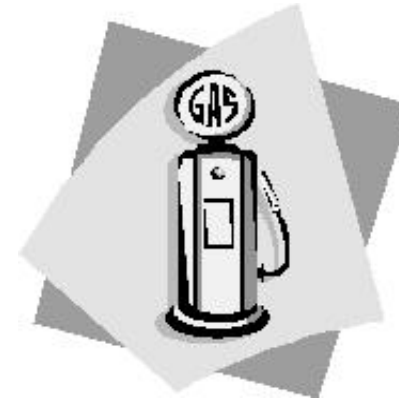
I want to feel it beat on me
 — the rain,
 quench the fire in my brain
 of sluggish dreams
 and pulsing pain,
 unceasing toil,
 unrealized gain.
 This downpour has —
 doubts to drown,
 fears to flush,
 woes to sweep away.

I do not bid it stop too soon
 — the rain.
 It needs to find
 the new flesh,
 the tender skin,
 the silenced voice
 within.

It needs unearth
 what is not bound
 by what has been —
 what waits within
 to spring forth new
 as bud from limb —
 untarnished life,
 unfettered dreams,
 unbroken will.

I am not afraid of it
 — the rain
 I know its sting
 and piercing pelts
 have their work to do.

God sends the rain
 not only soft and gentle
 but hard and pounding, too —
 to strip
 and wash
 and rip away —
 when time is overdue,
 when new beginnings
 are at hand
 and old must fall
 for new to stand,
 and alas!
 we must be clean
 to see His plan.



Out of Gas

*J. Alvin Speers,
Alberta, Canada*

In the fancy district of Malibu, on a motorcycle tour,
 Our son wound up with empty tank across from a rich man's door.
 He crossed the highway, rang the bell, enquiring about gas,
 A bearded biker with gleam in his eye, unawed by the wealthy class.

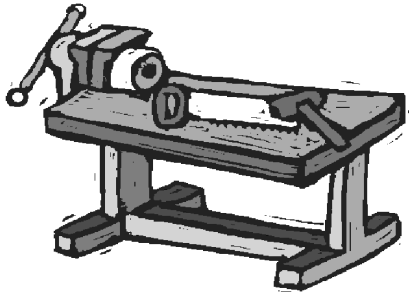
The occupant answered the doorbell with indifferent attitude,
 Misunderstanding the boy's request, he acted rather rude.
 "I've no money for gas; you're the second one arriving this afternoon."
 Our biker left muttering disappointedly about an unperceptive buffoon.

Re-crossing to his motorcycle, he pondered his next move.
 The householder had some second thoughts and good intent would prove.
 His Cadillac came driving up and he lowered the power window
 To proffer a couple of dollars; why our son did not know.

"Here's money for gas," he explained, "Is that what you were after?"
 "I don't need your funds," was the reply, as he doubled up with laughter.
 "I can buy it, but don't know where, since I just ran out here."
 "Oh, well, jump in and I'll take you," said the driver in good cheer.

He took him for gas and brought him back, proving a good sport,
 And on the way pointed out landmarks in the Hollywood resort.
 By coincidence an earlier caller had been out of gas and broke.
 Thinking they traveled together, the second 'hit' made him choke.

The advertising executive did his second good deed for the day;
 The bike was gassed up in short order and the rider went on his way.
 On circuitous route near six thousand miles, the trip was full of surprises.
 Meeting strangers far away from home, who knows what the other surmises?



Writer's Workbench

A Work in Progress

We receive a lot of good poetry in the mail—and some not so good, but it could have been better if the poet had taken more time to work with it.

When we consider poems for publication, we look for consistency in rhyme, but not contrived rhyme. Was the word just pulled out of a hat because it rhymed? The poem should scan well, too, which means it follows a smooth pattern of rhythm. Even free verse, which does not have rhyme and measure, must have some flow and shape that set it apart from prose, which lies flat on the page.

No doubt we all have had those flashes of inspiration at midnight. We jump out of bed and scramble for pen and paper before the lines can get away! But even these nocturnal visions are not set in stone. The best advice that I can give to any writer is: Rewrite, Rewrite, Rewrite! Ask yourself this: Is the reader going to “get it?” *You* may know what it means, but we write to be understood by others!

When I write a poem, I usually set it aside for a time before I look at it again. Then I am amazed at the little things that I didn't catch the first time around. I change words, finding new ones that make more sense. I change whole lines to make the meaning clearer. I take a closer look at the rhythm and rhyming scheme, or in the case of free verse, the flow. Then I set the poem aside again. A poem is always a work in progress.

An example is the poem I wrote recently, on the page opposite. I was comparing a person to her statue, both being made in a form of “clay”—flesh and stone.

Do you think the revised version flows better? A poem is like a river. It should flow smoothly to its ending, carrying the same thought that you started with to a completion.

—THE EDITOR

On Seeing Her Statue in the Garden

Words changed are italicized.

First Version

Her *image* is here
but where is she?

Part of the earth . . .
touring the sea . . .
or somewhere in eternity . . .

How *tragic* her life
in that weaker clay,
was more prone to crude decay,
while her fragile spirit flew
to where no chart can *ever*
show the way.

But here
her *likeness* stands *in* stone
more adamant than flesh and bone.

She transcends seasons, snow
and rain,
as if at peace to watch alone,
wearing upon her marble face
an ageless smile of stoic grace,
oblivious *of* gown or lace.

Revised Version

Her *form* is here
but where is she?

Sealed in the earth,
adrift at sea
or somewhere in eternity?

How *strange* her life
was made of clay
and subject to such rude decay,
the fragile soul now carried off
to where no chart can
show the way.

But here —
her *image* stands *like* stone
more adamant than flesh and bone,
and sheds the seasons, snow

and rain,
as if at peace to watch alone.
And now she wears upon her face
the ageless smile of stoic grace,
oblivious *to* gown or lace.



Essay/Short Story Contest

Our end-of-year contest will be for a short story or an essay. See our guidelines and address information on page 2, or visit our web site, <http://members.aol.com/wwquarterly>. Entries must be received by **December 31, 2003**. If mailing, please send SASE.

Entry fees: Subscribers (see the expiration date on your mailing label), \$1.00; non-subscribers, \$2.00. Author of the winning entry receives half the entry fees, and the winning entry and any honorable mention entries will be published in *WestWard Quarterly*.