

WestWard Quarterly

The Magazine of Family Reading



Fall 2007

To our readers . . .

For us here in the northern hemisphere summer has passed and once again the beautiful colors of autumn appear and we begin thinking of the coming winter season and Holidays ahead, so we have included some Holiday poems in our Fall issue because our Winter issue comes out *after* the Holidays.

Someone inquired recently about themes for issues and so I thought I would comment on that subject. Although we do not emphasize different themes, we try, as much as possible, to choose some seasonal poetry that matches the season of our quarterly Winter, Spring, Summer, and Fall issues. Along with the seasonal poems we intersperse many different types of poetry and forms.

Our featured writer this issue is Grace Hartley of Manitoba, Canada. We have been so delighted with the beautiful sketches of Patricia Sarazen that we have included another and she has agreed to be our featured writer for the Winter issue.

My own writing often gets put on the back burner due to my work on the magazine, but I have completed three chapbooks in the past year (see the ad on page 29) and I'm working on a fourth. Also, two of my poems have appeared in books that have come out recently: *Secure the Fort* by Lucy Cain (XLibris), and *A Glimpse of Heaven* (Howard Books/Simon & Schuster), writings compiled by my husband Dr. Richard Leonard and JoNancy Linn Sundberg.

Shirley Anne Leonard, EDITOR

WestWard Quarterly

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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 letters, requests for guidelines, queries or submissions to the address above. Send SASE for response.

Maximum Lengths: Short stories, essays and articles - 1200 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>.

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Cover Image: Cypress Gardens, Florida.
Photo by Richard Leonard, 1961.

Featured Writer . . .

Grace Hartley
Manitoba, Canada



For our Grade Twelve yearbook, the students of our class were asked to submit a poem. My poem, along with several others was selected for the memorable book. This is how I started writing poetry, though it wasn't until the early 1970s that I submitted poems to magazines. Poetry is my favourite form of writing, though I have written a few short stories.

I was astonished on winning second place in a compulsory writing contest consisting of all four years at college. I asked the professor why I had placed second. He was surprised by my question and quoted the phrase, "clarity of thought and simplicity of expression." Ever since then, these two qualities have remained my "philosophy" for writing. I look for these attributes as well as thoughtfulness and meaning in all poetry. If these characteristics are present, I believe it may constitute good writing.

Through my writing I hope to inspire others, affect change in thought and character in a person, offer simple pleasure and new visions. Main themes for my poetry are religion, inspiration, nature and love.

A very keen interest in my life is the love of music. I have played the piano many times throughout my life in churches and began this occupation early at age twelve. I enjoy classical music best, but am also moved by movie themes, and enduring popular pieces such as "Autumn Leaves," "As Time Goes By" and many others.

Reading is another favourite hobby. I find I simply "must" read, and can't imagine life without books. Of the classics, English, Russian and French authors are my favourites, but I also like to sit down with a good mystery book.

Poets such as Shakespeare, Emily Dickinson, Tennyson, William Blake and many others keep me constantly enthralled.

Winnipeg, Manitoba is my home, and the prairies are a source of inspiration for my writing. The changing of seasons are a constant delight. The antics and quips of my two grandchildren and companionship of my children and husband fill my life with an enduring glow.

Grace Hartley's first short story, "A Real Christmas," was published in *The War Cry* in 1982. Following this success she returned to writing poetry, publishing more than two hundred poems in the U.S.A. Three of her poems are published in anthologies of the Poetry Institute of Canada. A poem, "The Birds," is published in the *Meridian Anthology of Contemporary Poetry in the U.S.*

Grace Hartley's name has appeared at the top twenty of *RB's Poets' Viewpoint*. "My Destiny" appeared in the *Lutheran Digest*. Poems accepted by *Nite-Writer's International*, *Poetic License* and *To God Be the Glory* have received awards and credits. Other poems by Grace Hartley have been published in the U.K., Wales and Australia. Her photo and biography were on the cover of *RB's Poets' Viewpoint*.

Ode to Joy

Grace Hartley, Manitoba, Canada

What brings me greatest joy?
My soul-mate, family and friends,
A round prairie sky with no ends,
A home full of light after the day,
Ethereal music of the great and
An inspiring book to read until late,
Magnificent art whose shadows inspire—
In all these facets I never tire.
But such wealth brings to me
Oceans of pleasure and much leisure
To gaze at the seas, the stars,
The universe twinkling on the Milky Way,
And prairie grasses growing in masses
As far as the eye can see!

Hand in Hand

E. P. Schultz, Wisconsin

I remember being a little boy
Watchin' grandpa plow the furrows
Sittin' atop a split-rail fence

Breeze blowin' through my hair
Grandma at the top of the stairs
Mendin' socks and grandpa's overalls

Grandpa worked those eighty acres
With grandma right by his side
Never once wasted time to complain

Many a time they rode out the flood
But that dirt remained in their blood
And grandma's tears washed away the pain

They built it up, the wind tore it down
It's just the way the world went round
They stuck together and they made the best of it

I remember the good times, I remember the bad
But the one thing that always stayed the same
Is they did it all hand in hand

I've a life now of my own
The old place is past and gone
But I keep a split-rail fence at the edge of the yard

And every now and then
I go back again
And I'm that little boy on top of the fence

Protection

Donald G. Harmande, New York

While walking in my garden on an autumnal morning,
I observed the sun shining on a metal chair
laden with frost which caused steam to rise.
The warmth of the sun never dissipates
nor disappoints expectations.
This knowledge alone sent a feeling of renewal
to the depths of my soul and the Fall chill
that seemingly at first dimmed hope, now revived
my spirit with the consoling fact that
we are always protected in the wake
of our heavenly home.



First Autumn Alone

Charles A. Waugaman, Vermont

Glads show color
only at the tips
of their ungainly ladders.
Dahlias have settled for
spindly runts of bloom.
The early beans,
with brown, beetle-windowed leaves
are pulled
and discarded.

It is time to wrap up summer:
to lid the vessel of our joy;
to sweater memories
and keep them warm
for winter.

But how can I bolt and batten
a fruit cellar still
crowded with empty, dusty jars?

Though you may expect me to rake
all our brilliant years
into a pile
for burning
I am not ready
to settle
for an evening
of incense.

How Long Should I Live?

Larry Granger, Minnesota

Is it long enough if I collect
many shining moments of deep soul
satisfaction from hanging out with
nature, God, friendly friends, all
sides of the family and dogs. Maybe.

Maybe just sniffing the breezes
and feeling the sun and possibly
dipping one's toes in blue waters
ever so often is enough.

Maybe I need to be one of the
great accomplisners or accumulators
of my generation or at least my
neighborhood or maybe not.

Maybe I need to cut a path through
the artistic scene in art, literature,
drama or candlestick making, or just
something distinctive that can be called
art in the future. Maybe yes. Maybe no.

Maybe circumstance or disease or my
self-destructive tendencies which
give bad messages to my body will bring
this life to an end at the right time.
Or maybe not. Life is mostly maybes.

The Game

Cody Tucker (Age 13), Alabama

Our hearts are beating hard
Our bodies are filled with vigor
Our arms and legs are twitching with
excitement
The game is about to start

The whistle blows
Our bodies snap into action
The puck glides gleefully across the ice

Our parents and coaches are roaring
But we can't hear them
We're in our world —

Our happy place
Only one thing can stop that
The buzzer

We skate faster
And play harder
Than we ever have before
Someone shoots
The buzzer blows

And we're brought back down to earth
The crowds are roaring
So are we
We scored!

The Sun Dog

Charlotte R. Poplawski, Illinois

When the moon is in the seventh house and
Jupiter is aligned with Mars—
The Sun Dog is a phenomenon known to only appear
On rare occasions and it is marked by an
Unusual fact or occurrence, when it does—

Out of the blue it appeared—
Shimmering—sunlight—shining
Through “thin layers of clouds”
That special November day.

Romantic enchantments had
Centered upon them while
magical melodies murmured
That special November day.

It was her birthday when
The Diamond Ring appeared
In the magical box with
Ribbons and bows,
The card read, I Love You, My Dear.

As the Sun Dog began the evening—
It was her birthday when
In the Magical Box with
Ribbons and bows,
Melodies murmured on
That special November day.

The Ongoing Conversation

Peter Menkin, Ohio

God's presence
communicates silence, making
things seen and unseen:
prayerful notices. These conversations
continue reverently.
How soothing to listen: the Yes.
Be awake in spirit and mind
during the engagement with God.
The fiery envelopment
elicited within, enjoined
to others in a rising embrace
by unknowable vastness.
A moment to be aware
of God's presence.

Jazz Man's Blues

Adam Herring, Texas

Willy played that old saxophone,
feet marching along the cracked sidewalk,
soulful tunes drifting heavenward

Willy played the blues by the corner store,
change clinking in his old felt hat,
soulful tunes entertaining angels

Willy played the jazz for eager ears,
feet tapping, hands clapping in the concert hall,
soulful tunes soothing weary hearts

The music is in his soul,
deep down where only God can see,
stirring, waiting for that old saxophone

A Poet's Life

Michael Keshigian, New Hampshire

Alone
I'm happy.
The air is clean
and I breathe the cool fragrance
of life splashed about me
under the blue arena
where horse drawn chariots
fleck the sky
and race for the gold medallion,
dodging green arrows
of white pine
shot from a peak
which balances the prized sphere.
Wounded carriages
vaporize amid the golden hue
and I observe the episode
until my watch beeps
a familiar reminder.
I return dutifully
only to daydream
about the competition.

Scruffy and Otis

Dennis Ross, Iowa

We stayed awhile in a thatched cottage,
thick stone walls, three hundred years old
right on Galway Bay. Fifteen generations
mended nets, loved, bounced children, cried
in that house, and across the water
a ruined manor house with ravaged face
and vacant stare whispered stories
of English occupation and rebellion,
fire in the night in the time of the troubles.

More memorable, however,
were Scruffy and Otis, ragamuffin
neighbor dogs, who popped up in the air
like just-done toast each morning
to look over our door, bottom half closed,
for a bit of sausage or a game
of throw the plastic water bottle. Scruffy,
large with matted yellow fur would half lie
with his chin on the ground, front paws flat,
rear end up and entire body wagging
like a little puppy in anticipation, then off
like a drag-racer as the bottle was thrown.
Otis, black and white and smaller,
stood further back for a head start,
then joined the dash for Olympic gold.

I wish I could likewise open this door
beyond a slight nod
and pour out on total strangers
this same friendliness, this enthusiasm for life,
this sense of living generously.

Autumn Soliloquy

Shirley Anne Leonard, Illinois

Autumn leaves are falling, falling—
summer bending, turning, folding
into the wings of the restless wind.

Dawn reaches out with misty fingers
to paint a hazy burnished sky,
and hoarded daylight begs to linger
before the shades of night come by.

Harbinger of Fall

Charlotte Ann Zuzak, Pennsylvania

Appearing again in shadows
created by low set sun,
the purple night quickly approaches
emerging from a smoky sky.

Seasonal ambience of autumn:
golds, crimsons, coppers of
vibrant crisp leaves,
crystallize into warm, crackling quilts.

Fluorescent color appears
in the aura of autumn;
along town walkways
the ground swirls with the wind
like a magic carpet.

Rain's Blessings

Rebecca Larsen, Washington State

I can take pleasure in the falling rain,
Although it has a wet, unpleasant chill,
And dismal are the clouds whence raindrops spill,
For freshly watered earth is surely gain,
As are good, bounteous crops of fruit and grain;
With rain-brought water lakes and rivers fill
That we may have their beauty with us still;
The gloomy rain-clouds bear a sweet refrain.
When rain has ceased and clouds begin to part,
And radiant sunlight enters rain-washed air,
The earth and sky are seen with purer light.
The brilliance amid shadows lifts my heart,
And in this moment when the world seems fair,
A rainbow's gentle glory is in sight.

December Concert

Wilda Morris, Illinois

In the distance, a cardinal
whistles to its mate.
A small piece of cardboard
rolls across the lawn, each corner
contributing percussion.
The wind chimes play
another encore.



Blue Woodsmoke

Barbara Cagle Ray, Tennessee

My soul cries out when autumn comes
For blue woodsmoke and a country lane,
Rustling, crackling wind-blown leaves,
Faces pressed against a windowpane.

Nostalgia pulls me home once more,
Where trees are robed in autumn's cloak.
Firelight gleams from hearths within,
And skies are wreathed in chimney smoke.

Loved ones that I cherish are still there,
Their footprints etched in harvest gold.
I weave into rhyme their memories,
Lest they grow dim as I grow old.

I find autumn on an abandoned lot,
Where trees hold gold within their hair.
Long-muted voices seem to linger;
"Amazing Grace" re-echoes in the air.

My homesick heart surveys but rubble,
Yet things of beauty still remain—
Throngs of whispering autumn leaves,
Blue woodsmoke and a country lane.

Transient Beauty

Patricia Sarazen, Pennsylvania



Brooding autumn days
as leaves toss asunder.
Brightly clad in scarlet
and golden-hued wonder.

Surely God's angels hover near
fields of golden-rod brown and sere.
With earth's deep fragrant scents drifting
along gathering shadows of day,
peace settles over the meadow
filled with lovely quiet hours.

Transient beauty swathed in gold,
with ancient stories to be told
by the poets down the ages—
copious poems on parchment pages.
Come—'tis so sweet, this golden wonder
tossing 'round and all asunder.

Clasp unto your heart
autumn's golden wonder,
For before winter's door
autumn flees—evermore.

The Hymn

Janet Goven, Pennsylvania

It was such a haunting melody
softly blowing in the breeze;
the notes were barely audible
as they traveled through the trees.
A symphony of innocence
lay peaceful on the leaves,
not to call you to attention
but to bring you to your knees.

It was such a lovely evening
reminiscent of pristine days,
of perfection in twilight ending
God's creation's purest blaze.
Dusk's silence is resplendent
as His touch on earth displays
what natural man cannot express,
opens our hearts in songs of praise.

Summer's Benediction

Shari O'Brien, Ohio

On a brilliant September afternoon,
I watch squirrels stock their pantries
Like shoppers in a frenzied scurry
In grocery aisles before a storm.
Summer birds are winterizing nests
And saying goodbye to neighbors
Who don't fly south before the snow.

In a sky as indigo
As a painting of Van Gogh,
The sun hovers close to earth,
A benign escort hugging me
As I walk in bracing air.
In the burnished light, the grass
Is a glossy technicolor green,
And leaves shimmer like metallic jade
Fringed in pale gold and tangerine.

A bittersweet September afternoon
Is summer's exquisite benediction
Before the requiem of fall.

Heritage

Jane Stuart, Kentucky

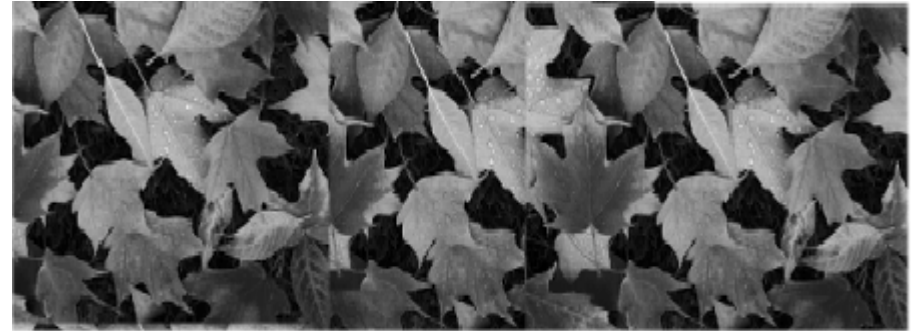
A light wind wakes our land that slept in dreams,
to stir our hearts with sunlight and then song.
Waking, we are a mirror of our dreams,
and memory of summer's long-lost songs
that fill our lives with endless poetry.

A light wind wakens earth; it brought new dreams,
a vision and love's image—now life seems
as beautiful as our fragility.
These endless winds blow bringing us more songs
that fill the meadow and once-silent fields.

Mammoths and Mastodons

Michael Stauffer, Michigan

Yesterday they were there
Mammoths and mastodons
grazing on the tall grass
behind my house.
A backdrop of glaciers
slowly inching their way forward
carving out the landscape.
If only I would have stepped out onto my deck
yesterday
I would have seen them.
Mammoths and mastodons
moving slowly through the woodlands
now inhabited by deer.
As I had my morning coffee
I could have watched the great beasts
lock tusks as one dominant male challenged another!
What a sight that would have been
yesterday.
The earth shaking beneath the weight of the giant creatures.
Mammoths and mastodons
lifting their trunks high into the air
trumpeting their arrival
before disappearing forever.
If only I had drunk my coffee outside
yesterday
I could have seen them
Mammoths and mastodons.



Selected Haiku and Tanka

Raymond Flory, Indiana

*Raymond Flory edited Explorer Magazine for nearly forty years
until it was merged into WestWard Quarterly under former
editor Marsha Ward.*

Golden afternoon
fades in October twilight
geese sweep horizon.

In autumn haze
two deer tiptoe in forest
a mourning dove calls

Sparrow on bare branch
shivers in November wind
snow clouds overhead

November dusk
captured by falling snow
city white-out.

November night rain
rattles windows of old mill
westerly wind moans

Conifers dusted with
fresh snow
bring back
memories of our
winter walks.

That icy evening
when I saw you
at the railroad station
I wanted to escape
into your warm arms.

Your soft hand
on my brow
gives new hope
in our
search for love.

Beaver Territory

Eric Greinke, Michigan

In spring the water
In Pickerel Lake
Is deep & clear
Blue like the sky

It overflows
To three smaller ponds
Cascading loudly
White water splashes over rocks

Now green summer
Is over
& the water
Is shallow

Matted by lily pads
Choked by
Rotting pickerel weed
Surrounding open water

Broken only
By beaver channels
Aquatic pathways
For mallards & swans

We pick our way
Around the lake
The path is blocked
By fallen birches

Razed
By the industry
Of the beavers
Tall birch trees

Taken down
Just for their branches
Whole groves fallen
With tooth marks

On the few
That still stand
We think it must be
The work of several beavers

So we get up early
To observe them
At their work
But they retreat to the lake
To warn us away with slapping tails

Caverns

Peter Layton, California

You are still
on the other side of the thin wall.
The beautiful curtains move.
The room is empty.
It is silent.

There are perhaps a hundred billion
lit lamps, they
are furiously burning.

In the near future you'll
lift me gently
to the warm side, hold me,

My deserted bones
to remain on these deserts,
where the years pass
simply like blown threads.

Sleepy Moon

Patti J. Woodson, Texas

Oh, sleepy moon over purple-pink dawn,
Your twinkling playmates have all gone.
They've slipped away into their heavenly beds.
Mere mortals drink coffee to clear our heads.

Oh, sleepy moon over purple-pink dawn
Has given way to daylight's morning sun
HE splashes color disarmingly bright as
A promise to man; another chance to get it right.

Morning sky splashed with orange, yellow and red.
An azure canopy sees you off to bed.
Cirrus and nebula cover your sleepy eyes
Against the panorama of bright skies.

So, sleepy moon over purple-pink dawn,
Your twinkling playmates have all gone.
We'll meet the morrow, as in a lovers' tryst.
I'll bid you goodnight in the morning mist.

Twilight

Sheila B. Roark, Texas

The sky wears hues of coral
lit by the lowering sun,
and twilight's now upon us
for day is almost done.

Darkening shadows hug the trees
formed by the dying light,
and flowers fold their graceful arms
preparing for the night.

The brightness of the day is gone
replaced by subtler hues
of charcoal grays and corals,
joined by soft, soothing blues.

There is a sense of quiet peace
now that the twilight's here
as nature settles down to sleep
because the night is near.

It won't be long before the stars
shine down their diamond light,
but for now the world prepares
for the coming of the night.

No Rhyme or Reason

Jim Brearton, New York

You were going to tell me
you can't rhyme anything
with orange
but I was too busy
trying to get off
this door hinge.
Then you said
you'd get me
something for Christmas
if I could rhyme month,
purple, or silver.
Who do you think I am,
McGuyver?
Wait, now that I
think of it—
I walked in the woods
and shot at deer
with a guy with a lisp.
I think he hunth.
And if your cat gets sick
you can give him
a purr pill.

Monty Versus the Bathmat

(A Sonnet for My Dog)

Michael Frey, New York

The remnants of the carcass removed,
The jumping, biting and barking subdued,
Monty walked away after having his fun.
My poor bathmat was dead, Monty had won.

This wasn't the first mat that Monty destroyed,
It was the fifth such one I had deployed.
What about bathmats made him so annoyed?
I never did know, so I consulted my Freud.

I left the door open by mistake when I left.
He soon went to work and left me bereft.
And off to the store I wearily walk,
With Monty in tow with eyes like a hawk.

As I placed the new mat he looked with a frown,
And I'm glad I'm not a bathmat when Monty's around.

Weakened Carpentry

Stephen Malin, Tennessee

(To Gerald Oxborough, Friend and Fellow Structuralist)

I shouldn't wonder, but I do, things
like why is the line drawn
never the line sawn?
Or why do the rigors of mortise
and tenon go to my joints,
not its?
And nothing fits.
The work is dirty,
knots are sturdy,
comments wordy
on thumbs that hurty.
Boards that are let in
let me out.
Tongue in groove,
tooth in tongue,
all's one
to me.
First we level,
then bevel,
shovel
out the rubble
and begin again—
when
we've had a little restorative.
Yo-ho-ho.
In a gale
never sail
in a seive;
when a-nail,
never fail,
it will give,
bend, split, lean,
careen across (boom)
the room.
Or if it hold
like cold rolled
steel, then I betcha
measure twice
did not suffice;
so hang in there, kid,
and Lord forbid
the guilt
for what we all
have jerry-built.

My Quilt

Harry T. Roman, *New Jersey*

A never-ending quilt am I,
a coverlet in progress;
a tapestry on the road
heading somewhere to completion.

Pieces of me sewn together,
a tasty salad made from life;
people, places, times, and memories
make the better part of me.

Central to this *ad lib* story
lies a core of several threads;
these, my gifts, my foundation
tell me why and who I am.

I cannot stop it if I need be,
many colors soon get added;
some I like and some I don't
but added in are they.

Sometimes my fits get overwhelmed,
lost in pigments mixed and swirled;
then it's back to basics for me
living simply, looking inward.

Now I lay me down to sleep
upon my quilt and memories;
no one other wears the soul,
the one I wove, as I've grown old.

Poets

Robert Donald Spector, *New York*

Do poets always know
when they are very young
what they would like to be?
Is there a gene they have
that makes them think in rhyme
or speak in rhythmic ways?
Do they really differ
from children that they know?
In some peculiar ways,
do they make distinctions
that are foreshadowings
of what they will become?
Or does a time arrive
when they will simply say,
I'll write a poem today?

Leaves in December

Michael Lee Johnson, *Illinois*

Leaves, a few stragglers in
December, just before Christmas,
some nailed down crabby to ground frost
some crackled by the bite of nasty wind tones.
Some saved from the matchstick that failed to light.
Some saved from the rake by a forgetful gardener.
For these few freedom dancers
left to struggle with the bitterness:
wind dancers
wind dancers
move your frigid
bodies shaking like icicles
hovering but a jiffy in sky,
kind of sympathetic to the seasons,
reluctant to go, rustic,
not much more time to play.

Flight

Eric Obame, *Maryland*

I am like an eagle in the sky
Flying high above the worries of the land below
Where I am no hand can touch me
And the clouds hide me from naked eyes
I twist, turn, soar and glide
I dive towards earth like a cosmic stone
Then I rise again towards the sun shining bright
And only space stands between me and its true light
I look down one more time
Just to smile at the world I am leaving behind
I am like a rocket in the sky
Fleeing the gravity of the world below
I am close to the edge now
The air is thin, and the stars are out
It is still day, but before me is night
Into the black, endless cold I go
And billions of lighthouses beckon me forward
I am a boy lying on the grass
Dreaming of flight

Autumn Mist

Mark Crosby, *Maine*

First appeared in Writer's Circle Online, July/August

Mountains burst into fiery reds and yellows
A chilly mist hovers over glassy ponds
Crisp MacIntosh and Cortlands are devoured
As earth slowly turns the other cheek.



Thanksgiving and Christmas Poems

Attitude of Gratitude

J. Alvin Speers, Alberta, Canada

Thanksgiving for harvest
We reap in the fall,
brings to mind our Creator
Who rules over all.

For some though, the picking
Is done at the mall;
They are grateful to growers
Who answer the call.

Each one has a role
In God's master plan,
And rich are the people
Who share where they can.

Counting the blessings
Afforded us here
Should summon thanks
For what we hold dear.

An attitude of gratitude
Can lighten the load
We may have to carry
On this earthly road.

How Far

J. Alvin Speers, Alberta, Canada

How far from the manger in Bethlehem
To the crowded city street
Where truth is compromised to wrong,
While man's justice drags its feet.

The power of God is in the faith
That can turn the hearts of men
To rescue souls from awful fate.
It does so again and again.

The modern crowd will not accept
The hope in the Bible's Word.
If they have their way with changing times
It no longer will be heard.

But still the cry of a lonely heart
Is heard, and peace is drawn
From the message of that first *CHRIST*mas,
Its promise by no means gone.

Epiphany

David F. Heidemann, Illinois

The living God came to earth one night
What a surprise!

He didn't look at all like the pictures we had seen
More like the neighbor down the road

He didn't come over to the house to visit
He just stopped in at this big Convention
(they must have lost His reservation)

But eventually they found Him a room

Had a few visitors that night

Local lads who had somehow heard

He was in town— I'm glad

I wouldn't want anyone to be alone in a strange place

Why'd He come?

Said He cared, that He loves us.

Said He wanted to get better acquainted
Something about Forgiveness

I'm not sure I really understand,

but the gifts that He gave really made me happy!

And if His Father is anything like He is,

I'd sure want to live in His Neighborhood.

"If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well...." —John 14:7

Christmas Past

C. David Hay, Indiana

The memories most endearing
No matter where we roam
Are those of Christmas Past
In a place we knew as home—

The magic of the season
With scent of wax and pine,
The aroma from the kitchen
that beckoned us to dine,

The dancing lights upon the tree
That cast their Yuletide spell,

The joyous song of carolers—
Peace on Earth—Noel!

The ghosts of cherished loved ones,
They live and always will,
For no one ever dies in
The place where time stands still.

The treasured scenes of yesteryear—
Could prayer but make them last!
Traditions of the heart live on
In dreams of Christmas past.

Midnight Service

Russell Rowland, New Hampshire

Christmas Eve, therefore the church is full.
 Poinsettias must think it is always so.
 For "Silent Night," the chandelier is dimmed.
 One per worshiper, two hundred candles glow.
 Our Fire Chief is present, and doesn't mind.
 Mothers draw daughters' hair safely behind
 their shoulders. Flames tremble in old hands.
 Perhaps what gathers all suburbia here
 is the opportunity to hold, if once a year,
 our incandescent spirits before our eyes;
 gaze deeply into them. Is it well with you,
 my soul? Yes, all is calm and bright.



Three No More

Jessica Cohen, New Hampshire

At twelve we are the
 Three Musketeers, a brunette,
 a blonde, and a redhead.
 At Canobe Lake in red heat, we take turns
 roller coasting and white water sliding
 on brown wooden logs.
 We bake brownies in our mothers'
 kitchens, white powdering the counter
 and red sprinkles splattering the tile.
 We crouch in a red-roofed plastic
 playhouse. "Who wants to be Mommy first?"
 The door creaks shut.
 Three heads—red, brown, white—around a miniature table.
 At thirteen we packed up white lined paper
 with red pencils and waited for yellow buses with
 brown book bags on our backs.
 We sat apart at brown wood desks,
 Filling white pages with notes
 in purple and red and orange ink.
 Now we Three Musketeers slide
 into our adolescence, on the phone in
 full-sized houses, baking cookies for boys,
 and leaving behind our red, white, and brown legacy.



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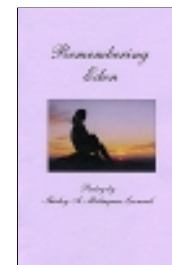
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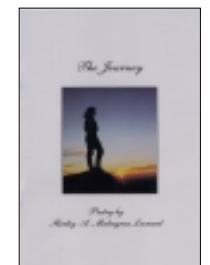
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Remembering Eden

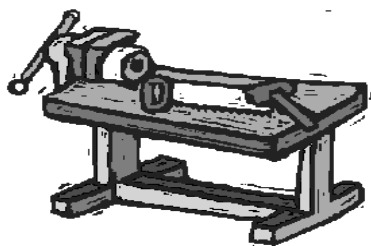


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Writer's Workbench

Tools of the Trade

When Shakespeare wrote his sonnets in the 1500s he had little of the writer's tools that exist today to make writing easier. Shakespeare's skill for language, imagery and pun have set him apart as arguably the greatest playwright of all time. Very little is known about his education although we know that the King's New Grammar School taught boys basic reading and writing. We assume William attended this school, since it existed to educate the sons of Stratford, but we have no definite proof. Likewise a lack of evidence suggests that William, whose works are studied universally at universities, never attended one himself!

This should give us hope, no matter where we start in terms of education, that with the tools available to us in this era we have no excuse not to make use of them. It has been noted that our language has become dumbed down over the years. This is evident in reading some of the classics from earlier times and then reading the novels of today. And that goes for poetry as well. I was reading a book of compiled poetry from earlier times, and was inspired to greater diligence in my own writing by the work of these poets who enjoyed so few of the resources we have and yet wrote with such skill in the use of language.

If you have a computer and use the Internet, the world is at your fingertips. You can access almost any kind of dictionary—rhyming, reverse, thesaurus, and so on—to find the right word. Even if you don't have Internet access, you can buy books that will give you the same information. A thesaurus is indispensable when you are looking for just the right descriptive word. A rhyming dictionary will give you so many more choices than you can think up by yourself. A grammar book will help you use words and punctuation with the kind of skill that editors are looking for when choosing a poem for publication.

So wherever your little "get-away-to-write nook" is, or whether you write with pen and paper or type your poems on the computer keyboard, always have your tool kit on hand. Dictionary, thesaurus, rhyming dictionary are indispensable to good work. When an editor looks at a poem he or she can always tell whether the author has done his or her "homework." It's quite apparent when a poem has been written hastily and the poet has not given a lot of thought to use of words, grammar and punctuation. It takes time to rewrite, but the effort is always worth it. Never consider a poem a finished work of art but a work in process. I have gone over poems written ten years ago and found ways to improve them.

Remember—rewrite, rewrite, rewrite! And then when you think it's perfect, go back a few weeks later and rewrite again. Diligence pays off!!

Proverbs 22:29 says: *Do you see a man skillful in his work? He will stand before kings; he will not stand before obscure men.*

Happy Writing!
—THE EDITOR

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