

# WestWard Quarterly

*The Magazine of Family Reading*



**Winter 2020**

# To our readers . . .

Winter has arrived, and this issue is filled with a selection of wintry verse as well as Frances Leitch's "Quotations of Winter's Snowy Wonder" (page 18). We do not often feature poetry about specific holidays, but in this issue you will find Ellen Reynard's poem about a wintry Easter (page 14) and Alan Yount's poem about a Valentine's Day teddy bear (page 23).

We recently heard from Editor Emerita Marsha Ward, who passed *WestWard Quarterly* on to Shirley Anne Leonard in 2003. Marsha says that preparing *WWQ* "is hard work, but worth it to the readers." She reports that she is "working on a new novel that I hope to release this quarter. Best wishes to you all for a happy and prosperous New Year!" Marsha is a writer on western themes; to see her work visit her web site, <http://marshaward.com>.

We are saddened to learn of the passing of frequent contributor Terrence Johnson of North St. Paul, Minnesota, on November 8, 2019.

Last issue's Featured Writer was Sandra Conlon of Colorado. In this issue we feature the work of her husband Francis D. Conlon (pages 4-5). Our policy has been to alternate between male and female Featured Writers; this is the first time we have followed a Featured Writer with his or her spouse.

Again we are "*WestWard Quarterly International*" with contributors from Canada, India and the United Kingdom as well as the United States. Enjoy this issue's content as you anticipate (in North America) the arrival of spring.

*Dr. Richard Leonard*, PUBLISHER

## WestWard Quarterly

Shirley Anne Leonard, Editor  
P.O. Box 369, Hamilton, IL 62341 USA  
editor@wwquarterly.com, 800-440-4043  
Web site: [www.wwquarterly.com](http://www.wwquarterly.com)

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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 length for poems is 40 lines. Shorter submissions have a better likelihood of being published. The Editor reserves the right to edit material. For more information on guidelines and how to send your submission, visit our web site. All rights revert to authors upon publication. Please credit *WestWard Quarterly* for prior publication if you later submit your work to other publishers.

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Cover Image: Snow Blowing, Beekmantown, New York, 2019.  
Photo by Derek Malmgren



## Featured Writer Francis D. Conlon Colorado

I like the focus that writing gives. I never thought that I'd be among the one in four persons with cancer, so writing gives that special space for thoughts, feelings, and memories. All these items drift by and can

be partly captured — perhaps even published to reflect the moment. I must avoid the overused word “existential” concern.

Who else has had a kidney biopsy on their 78<sup>th</sup> birthday? And, I am holding my own, hoping the next poem will be a bit improved.

I came to writing awkwardly. As a youngster, I wasn't proficient in writing. And one teacher back then told me so. That's not a good way to teach, and I don't use it. Negativity doesn't help advance learning.

That message, among others, got to me got me to study philosophy (“which bakes no bread”), and retirement got me to a seasonal park ranger job for twenty years. It's been a good combination of the inner and the outer parts of my self.

The nearby river here in northwest Colorado is the Yampa River, still considered wild-and-scenic in many places. Much of the high-desert landscape is the same as 150 years ago. At one of the nearby lakes, Elkhead Reservoir, the surrounding mountains include an old volcanic formation, the Bears Ears, that is some 60 million years old.

At Parks I do the opening shift, so that's a lot of sunrises, and probably my work is acceptable. The Bears Ears haven't complained, so far.

Mornings are a good time for thinking and writing. A campfire takes away the pre-dawn chill. With no cloud cover, there's nothing to hold the heat next to the earth. Later, the high-desert heat will build into the 80s. My early morning company is an overhead echelon of geese; on the ground are elk and antelope. The odd crackling sound of sand-hill cranes are in the sage brush. Certainly there's room for the rough draft of an essay or poem.

## Poetry by Francis Conlon

### Opening Shift at Parks

I have the secret of opening shift,  
All others are at orientation meeting,  
With donuts, sweets, lots of greeting,  
My inheritance is the solo ancient gift.

At the lake and boat ramp, I am on call,  
The sky is cloudy, and the air is cold,  
Few pleasure boaters; they're not too bold,  
Where did they leave the vessel last fall?

By the ramp's gate is the solo duck,  
The lake is his, with such luck,  
Memorial weekend is a kind of switch,  
Awakening sleepers to the summer twitch,  
Until then, I hold to solitary tender,  
Here, not needed, I do service render.

(Ah, a different time, a light-house keeper,  
Would fit me, the monastic solitude seeker.)

### The Wordless Dance

The wordless dance is never alone,  
Sinuous bodies move with unspoken rhythm,  
To sonic pattern in perceived tone,  
Recalling patterns subtly given.

No missive read from the past,  
Captures dance from muscle and bone,  
But movement's music touch is vast,  
Engulfing all in an existential home.

No record captures dance or its birth,  
It descends translucent from the sky,  
Showering all the renewed earth,  
A vision quest for the inward eye.

From ancient fires to new strobe light,  
The dance movement is invitation,  
For souls to move out of night,  
To dawn's surprising sensation.

My soul might open to such a grace,  
Where even small movements have a place.

(A new day, a new dance will start,  
A few steps together before I depart.)

### My Father's Dreams

My father's cool was an engineer,  
My birth at last: a delayed reaction,  
No calculation here, but it was dear,  
I claim small vision, just a fraction.

Did his dream have me on his trail?  
I had for math no computing skills,  
His old slide-rule would not prevail,  
I'd rather watch grass grow on distant hills.

Gone my father, some twenty years,  
Different dreams fade, memories mend,  
Parting was loving, tho with tears,  
New dreams let the old suspend.

My self and my years feel no regret,  
My dream for my child is to live free,  
Father's resting grass I'll not forget,  
Distance gives my soul a new vision to see.

I'll remember the walks, the water and sail,  
Dreams sometimes come true, tho shadows prevail.

## The End

*Brian C. Felder, Delaware*

We are half past January already  
and that in the blink of an eye,  
which underscores anew how one must embrace  
each hour of every day, for none return blank  
to be writ upon again.  
We do not get to erase the wrongs done  
or re-live the pleasures had  
or even substitute more interesting things  
for the ordinary ones that comprise the mean  
of our daily existence.  
And because this is so,  
it would seem that forethought  
might get us a better outcome;  
a higher, better use of our days,  
so they might go fully realized  
into the book that we become.

## Images on a Winter Afternoon

*Dr. James Piatt, California*

Old photographs in a picture album  
Whispering secrets across the room,  
Redheaded woodpeckers startling  
Timid sparrows near the bird feeder,  
Shadows from sycamore trees casting odd  
Visions of past winters on rooftops,  
And my mind is forming new images  
Of the rose garden for spring,  
I look up at the sky and see hawks soaring  
High in the heavens unrestricted by earthly wiles,  
I close my eyes and see brief images of a spring day  
As the winter day fades into eternity.

## One December

*Lydia Moccerro, Pennsylvania*

I remember  
One December  
Snowflakes piling  
on the timber —  
Legion-like —  
great in number  
Burying the firewood lumber.  
  
I remember  
One December  
Maple trees  
slipped into slumber.  
Blizzards came —  
to encumber  
Boughs in Winter's frozen chamber.  
  
I remember  
One December  
Howling Winds  
lost their temper —  
Whipped against  
the house in anger  
Battering the bricks and mortar.  
  
One cold evening  
I remember  
Fireside flames  
glowed blue and amber —  
Crackling logs,  
Burning embers  
Through the long night  
that December.

## The First Real Snowfall

*Bruce Levine, New York*

The first real snowfall  
Unexpected but not surprising  
  
Mid-January  
The winter chill  
Had been with us  
Making the days and nights  
Too cold for pleasure walking  
Cutting through our fingers and toes  
Chasms in our souls  
To be refilled and replenished  
  
The first real snowfall  
A pathway to the new dawn  
  
Tiny footprints  
From dogs walking  
Over snow-covered lawns  
Daily routines not suspended  
Due to any inconvenience  
Laughter put on hold  
Waiting and longing in the wings  
  
The first real snowfall  
Awakening the senses  
Another symbol  
Another sign  
Lessons to be learned  
About love and life  
Drifting on the tip of snowflakes  
And melting on the tongue  
Souvenirs of memories  
Forgotten and remembered  
  
The first real snowfall  
The first new hope of love

## A Fierce Winter Night

*Susan Dale, Ohio*

The wind roars with polar-bear breath  
And cuts with sharp rapiers  
Hoof beats thunder  
Across the mountain of night

Shuddering atop the pole  
A flag wildly furls  
Unfurls  
Winds swoop down the chimney  
and shout imprecations  
to the fire in the stove —  
blazing  
to greedily gobble up ashy logs

In the basement the sub pump  
Gurgles and swallows  
Scratching at the windows  
steel nails of sleet's white-bone fingers

Ah, we shiver inside for we know  
we are held hostage  
by the blinding white wrath  
of a fierce winter's night

## Frosty Stars

*Frances Leitch, California*

Winter's garment  
wrapped about the shoulders  
The snowflakes falling down  
As the sleigh slides  
across the ground  
rutting the snow  
Imprints left behind  
wherever the horses go  
Into the white hills  
and tall-thin trees  
Bringing the merry  
company of rovers  
on the breathless sea  
of frosty stars  
falling noiselessly

## Winter Watch

*Jane Hutto, Florida*

The leaves were gone, the trees all bare —  
A hint of frost was in the air,  
And when you walked upon the ground  
It made a sort of crunching sound.

Birds had made their mission known,  
For toward the south they'd quickly flown;  
If some had lingered here instead  
Kind watchers left out day-old bread.

At night the stars so bright and high  
Would gather in the winter sky,  
Then folks might wish upon just one  
When day was gone and labors done.

What did they wish, those gazers there?  
They wished for April's soft sweet air —  
For shoots of green and meadows soft,  
For trees returning what was lost.

## A Paean To Poesy

*Satyananda Sarangi, India*

Amid golden sunrays on golden sand,  
Fanciful flowers grow in frosty field;  
I, who compose poesy, may seem bland,  
Broken many a time, but I don't yield.

Shadows of tall bards tower round my door,  
Dancing like dark phantoms while we embrace;  
They flash, they dazzle and come to the fore,  
And words I once wrote travel into space.

Wind of poesy that blows o'er life's land,  
Its transience holds an eternal bliss;  
Though we crave for all things, simple or grand,  
Its tranquillity would not go amiss.

The cheerful boughs sway in a divine dance,  
To and fro like the gleeful maidens' feet;  
The leaves hail this breeze with welcoming glance  
Like the smiles of angels, gentle and sweet.

Here even the blind savour its halo,  
The deaf with its symphony fall asleep;  
Genuine hearts, battered by time, lying low  
Have fields of renewed happiness to reap.

You may care not now with little knowledge  
Or even when wise a hundred years hence;  
I would be true to art, this much I pledge,  
True as much in light as when dark is dense.

You, who boast of endless free verse talent,  
I fear they are vain except in false pride;  
Read those immortal bards of yore who sent  
Parts of their toiling lives as books of guide.

Yet if time permits and sleep is away,  
Remember my verse in the silent night;  
I was a young poet, mocked every day,  
But marched to not give up this vital fight.

I drank old verses to win o'er defeat,  
This rhyme is therefore in my heart and soul;  
And shall linger in me, playing its beat,  
Till I am turned to ash or dust claims all.

## Shelter

*Dorrih Leipziger, Florida*

I like it here, like myself sitting in earth-tones  
hard sun finding me out in the white afternoons  
through screens of sibilant gray-green pines  
fat hedges and random grassy weeds.  
I like the red-gold nest I've made indoors  
polished with books and music, glossy  
with private reflections, a dozen candles  
to peaceful saints. I like thick time  
pulled in chunks like fresh-baked bread  
for a late-night feast with visitors:  
some who perfectly say that the air  
has a way of seeming full of the edges of talk  
and some who play with words — almost like trans-  
parent walls — through which the past shines softly  
or the future shimmers a little. For now  
I like being part of tonight's simple rain  
tomorrow's bluster and wind but the time will come  
(so my familiars say) when I will be lonely  
listening for yesterday's voices and in tall mirrors  
seeing uncanny ghosts of myself and others.

## January Is

*Shirley Anne Leonard, Illinois*

The trouble with January is  
We approach it with promises  
On New Year's Day, when we compile  
Our resolutions, all worthwhile.  
The first week we do really swell,  
Till early ardor says farewell  
As we encounter winter blahs  
And put our hopeful list on "pause."  
The weather drops to ten below  
And we get weary of the snow  
The trouble with January is  
It is. And is — and is — and is.

## The Gray Season

*Ray Greenblatt, Maryland*

Some reference to warm days  
is still kept —  
sycamores dig toes into sod  
as if it were sand,  
a few pruned shrubs stand  
similar to bamboo groves,  
even a small bush retains  
a coca hue.  
But this is the season of  
stone barns and farmhouses  
walls and bridges,  
granite and slate wear well  
rosettes of moss;  
the woods have stripped down to gray,  
out of the mist flows  
the brook which gushes ashen liquid  
its ripples, eddies, smooth plates.  
The junco wears friar's worsted  
though its unrevealed belly  
is as white as a mouse's;  
I feel like the mist—  
no one can see into me  
nor through me;  
only a swatch of black  
would make contrast,  
gray is not neutral  
it is mystery.

## A Promise Kept . . .

*Margene Hucek, Virginia*

Be careful  
Be very careful  
of what you promise  
on moonlit nights  
when soft winds kiss the air  
and stars sparkle in the sky  
Daybreak will follow  
rising from the East  
bathing the earth in amber  
All will seem good  
But, be aware!  
The harsh noonday sun  
is standing by  
and soon  
it will reveal  
The Truth

## A Selection of Haiku

*Melody Meadows, New York*

A feathery tree  
brushes against the blue sky  
painting round white clouds.  
Snow clouds move folding  
blankets of night on mountains  
putting earth to bed.

Snow and evergreens  
in the silence of deep woods  
soothe my rushing soul.  
Shrubs wore ice jewels  
trees white coats of snow  
the sky wore blue teal.

## Out and About

*John Grey, Rhode Island*

Snow's retreated but the trees  
have yet to take advantage.  
The woods are cadaverous in all directions.  
No cover for the pond.  
No screen for the local, loyal birds.

Roads also emerge from thaw  
but seem more exposed  
than welcoming.

It's a time when  
the season needs the time  
to right itself  
but the winds don't know  
which way they're blowing next  
and chimneys still choke air around them.

People are out  
but they won't be about  
for weeks yet.

## January Jaunt

*Dr. Dennis Ross, Iowa*

Water puddles in the fields and ditches  
after a southern lover wind carried off  
the snow. The sky drifts low like dripping  
fingers misting my windshield and fog  
blankets the hollows, hiding thin aliens.

The old motorcycle gallops in the heavy  
moist air, kicking up its wheels  
after a month imprisoned by icy roads.  
I also feel a balloon lightness, free  
of any restraining ropes, soaring just  
for the pleasure of effortless movement  
across the grey face of the haggard world.

The cold gnaws at my parka and mittens,  
but fires glow inside. Right here is where  
I need to be in spite of incredulous looks  
from safe nesting motorists in warm cars.

## The Non-Industrial Revolution Retakes a Middle State Millsite

*Michael T. Corrigan, Maine*

Red ivy's clawed its way along the fence  
that guards the sidewalk here, and shades spiked weeds  
enough to force a lean to light and sun.

Behind, walls rot and ruined battlements  
of plants men built and grew, which spilt failed seeds,  
melt further into woods — though anyone

who looks perceives that once a mighty mill  
here stood, and thrived. It was for dreams and such  
men built, to slake their ordinary needs —

though needs can rage, consuming, taunting all  
who want, and maddening those who want too much,  
since that which kills the flowers kills the weeds.

## Chaos Abounds

*Randal A. Burd, Jr., Missouri*

What thoughts are left unthought? What is profound?  
Does any quest of value still remain?  
So much that once was sacred, now profane,  
Defines the soul still searching. Common ground  
May not exist, but seldom is it sought.  
Reflection rarely yields a different view.  
Truth comes, it seems, in varied shade and hue,  
And answers rarely mesh with what was taught.  
Anarchy freely reigns; chaos abounds.  
Conformity . . . coerced upon the few  
By those expressing outrage, sure to sue  
For feelings hurt on verbal battlegrounds.  
So many taking action should refrain  
From seeking pleasure in another's pain.

## Easter 1949

*Ellen Reynard, California*

Winter didn't give up easily in Western Montana where the Continental Divide loomed a thousand feet above our ranch house. Easter came early that year, the snow still knee deep even for my father in his boots.

We children spent the night before, wondering whether there would still be an egg hunt in spite of the snow; but when Easter morning dawned, sun-scattered diamond lights over the white fields, Mother and Daddy told us the Easter Bunny had just passed by.

We had breakfast, washed dishes, did our chores under Mother's watchful eye while Daddy went out to pitch hay for the cattle. After we put on snow pants and ski caps and mittens and parkas and boots, Mother gave us our baskets and we scampered out the back door into the shining morning.

Montana winters were every color you ever imagined and some you hadn't: pink and orange shadows under purple willows which ran along the banks of blue-iced ponds, snow sparkled gold silver blue mauve red.

Your breath crackled, tiny icicles lined your nostrils so you pulled your scarf up to breathe through its itchiness. The sound of your feet on the snow scratched so loud it was hard to sneak up on anyone — especially the Easter Bunny.

My brothers and sisters ran whooping across the front yard and down to the creek; soon their baskets were filled with many-colored eggs. I was the youngest and my infant independence led me toward the chicken house instead of following my siblings' stampede to the barn.

I trod carefully over the snow's crusted surface, etched with the prints of squirrels and birds — but no Easter Bunny tracks. Then from the left, a trail of man-sized boot prints barely broke through the crust. I followed the prints to the fence, and there, snuggled against the gate in the sunshine was the most beautiful gold, red and yellow Easter egg I had ever seen. I took off my mitten to pick it up; it was warm in my hand.

I crunched back to the house to show Mother my treasure, thinking about how even the Easter Bunny had to put on boots and mittens when Easter came in the middle of winter.

## Ode to Vivian

*Sandy Conlon, Colorado*

The girl who loves to dance  
through months of hard work  
Leaving nothing to chance.

She can shimmy and shake  
and wiggle like a snake.  
Does the dab and do whop with ease,  
not to mention the fish tail, shim-sham  
And camel-walk, if you please.

She can leap and glide into a double twirl,  
and perfected the crazy legs,  
Kick-around flying squirrel.

Lithe and nimble Viv starts  
with a knee slap, flea-hop  
Then boogies back to bee bop  
getting her groove  
In the downbeat of hip-hop.

Free as the air, she dazzles with her nae-nae  
fishy eyes fan-kick  
Slippery-eel and flying geese,  
wisting into a grapevine  
Feather-step, mesmerizing as the bees knees.

In the end, there's the worm  
and some classy swing and sway  
It's the Viv, light and cheerful as lilacs on a summer day.

## A Gap in the Fence

*Tony Cosier, Ontario, Canada*

Spotting the gap in the fence  
both sisters run at once.

The taller pumps her fists, pistons  
swift knees.

The smaller  
spins in her wake, floating  
soft circles.

Speeding arrow, trailing coil,  
they hint at a shape in the air.

Serpent and staff, they herald  
a new world's health.

With mad-winged heels,  
laughing shrieks, bounding hair,  
they reach the grey split rails  
and burst on through, making  
the wild field  
wilder.





*Lincoln's Boyhood Home, Knob Creek, Kentucky - Transparency by Richard Leonard*

## Legacy

### *Shirley Anne Leonard, Illinois*

There was a dignity to life, now lost.  
I see it in this Bible, aged and worn,  
perused by lantern, windows raw with frost  
inside this hut where pioneers were born.

I see it in these stately silent hills,  
in azure boundlessness of virgin sky,  
in lives and deaths devoid of useless frills,  
close to the rugged earth, therein to lie.

Men hewed their timber down and built it up  
in rustic homes of solid oaken beams.  
They thanked the Lord when'er they sat to sup  
and lived reality sparked full with dreams.

The land that bore them shaped them straight and tall  
and etched their faces taut against the West.  
It pit them strength for strength, victor take all,  
and tried them year by year and test by test.

Into it all, they threw a strong resolve,  
a courage born of need, a will of steel,  
a oneness with their God quick to dissolve  
self-pity weaker souls were apt to feel.

And we, who read their sagas, stand in awe,  
our ears besieged by wild electric din,  
and yearn to see the world that their eyes saw  
where truth and noble purpose reign again.

*"Remove not the ancient landmarks, which thy fathers have set." — Proverbs 22:28*

# 17 *From My Vantage Point . . .*

*by Chester the Cat*

*(Adapted from Spring 2013 Issue)*



Too often, we who have such potential for great creative endeavors — like writing — just waste our time being entertained by media. Sitting for hours and watching trivial stuff on television, for example, can steal vital time that we could be using to write a poem or some other piece of good literature.

My temptation, and Calliope's as well, is television. (Well, our Editor calls it "Cat TV.") We can sit for a long time in front of the "big screen," just taking it in and not really doing anything productive. Our favorite programs are bird programs. We like "The Sparrows" — always a scrappy show. Sometimes we watch the Cardinals play. Oh, with the winter season upon us "The Finches" are on, too.

I realize we shouldn't watch so much TV, but it's hard to stay away. Sometimes the show is so realistic, I want to bust through that screen and join the action. Callie gets excited, too; you should hear her teeth chatter when "The Finches" comes on.

Hey, that's a squirrel! Callie, did you change channels?

# Quotations of Winter's Snowy Wonder

by Frances B. Leitch, Writer and Poet, California

*Who knows the snow like an Eskimo? Eskimos have about fifty Words for snow. Living a wintry lifestyle, over time, they've creatively pondered upon its beauty, dependability, and, don't forget: longevity!*

*Just to name a few of their snowy words, there's a "ganuk," snowflake, and a "kaneq," frost. There's "kanevvluk," fine snow, and "muruaneg," soft deep snow. "Qanikcaq" is snow on the ground, and "mutaryuk" is fresh snow. "Prta" is a blizzard! And there's even "gengaruk," a snow bank. You can bank on snow!*

"Snow is your best friend," the Eskimos say. Wisely, Inuit philosophers determined that "you can get married when you can build an igloo (snow hut)."

Amongst other Inuit Eskimo sayings are, "A smile explains everything," and "If you are going to walk on thin ice, you might as well dance."

Robert Frost, often thought of as the unofficial poet laureate of the U.S.A., saw more than a bit of frost. In his poem "A Winter Eden" he said:

*It lifts existence on a plane of snow  
One level higher than the earth below,  
One level nearer heaven overhead,  
And last year's berries shining scarlet red.*

"A poem begins in delight and ends in wisdom," according to Robert Frost.

Delight: poetess Patricia L. Cisco captures a bit of it in "Winter's Embrace":

*Hills adorned in lacy white  
watch children sleigh into the night.  
In the brilliant pristine light . . .*

In Evermore's poem "Wonderful Winter Wonderland,"

*Time moves on, more and more . . .  
Christmas is almost here,  
A holiday filled with such cheer;  
Giving and getting so many things,  
Being with family, enjoying everything it brings . . .*

Winter is often characterized as a time for meeting with life's gifts and challenges, and settling in. The Inuit say, "A young man was following the growing numbers of caribou through summer and autumn. Then, in winter, he moved his tent out to the herd, and thus became the first caribou herdsman."

Robert Service, poet laureate of the Yukon, wrote:

*The winter! the brightness that blinds you,  
The white land locked tight as a drum . . . .  
The snows that are older than history,  
The woods where the weird shadows slant;  
The stillness, the moonlight, the mystery,  
I've bade 'em good-by — but I can't.*

Winter has us in its grip, and life slows to a quieter pace, moments of silence, time for thought and wonder. So let's revel in a snow bank "gengaruk," and read poems of its many faces.

## North Country, New Hampshire: Trilogy of Winter Poems By Esther Leiper-Estabrooks



### Inglenook Two Thousand

Just yesterday folks gathered round their fire  
In harmony to watch soft flickering;  
Absorb the heat and see the highest spire  
Of flame-fanned wood shift, tumble — crumbling.  
Today we crowd around a busy screen  
That flickers like the inglenook of yore,  
And it too seems a hearth: home-front the scene  
Of people focused on this central core.

New hearth? Why, the computer in the home;  
A tool — a toy — to all who live therein.  
The world seemed alien once, and hard to roam.  
It is so still — but now we can begin  
Absorbing knowledge of the Earth that's wide  
By Internet's access — our new fireside.

### Paper Mill Town

Tall stacks of brick puff plumes against the sky  
Which scribble stretched-out messages in steam:  
These dissipate unread while tatters fly  
From ragged clouds that show no sunset gleam.  
From east to west landscape is cast in gray  
While sifting flakes slant to the frozen street,  
One small girl waves as schoolmates trudge away,  
And turns to home, hot soup, and wood stove heat.

I watch a doorway open, swallow her;  
Imagine how her mother greets her then:  
Asks of the nuns, while eyeing how the blur  
Of white outside falls slow — then fast again,  
And how, past frosted panes and shriveled vine  
The virgin's likeness shivers in her shrine.

*Esther's Note: "Inglenook Two Thousand" was first published in the January/February 2000 Issue of WRITERS' Journal Magazine in my "Millennium Column" titled "The Future of Poetry and the Poetry of The Future." It is a Shakespearean Sonnet (ABAB CDCD EFEF GG). This is the twentieth anniversary and second publication for this poem. I am so pleased to have the opportunity for it to be printed in WestWard Quarterly Winter 2020 on this special occasion. (It is one small prayer answered.) The basis of "Paper Mill Town" is Berlin/Gorham, New Hampshire, while "A Further View" is just a favorite seasonal March memory of mine; both are Shakespearean. I will eventually write sonnets in the other named patterns as promised. Please be patient with me. Thank you all for the love of words and poetry.*

### A Further View

There is a spot of high New Hampshire ground  
That holds my heart wherever I may be,  
And though the years roll onward I have found  
Sure solace there, plus calm serenity.  
Dear wind-blown overlook; a place to view  
First meadowland, then forest, last a chain  
Of mountains always changing tint and hue  
By Mother Nature's sly legerdemain.

Vines curl about an edge that falls away  
In scree of shattered granite sharply piled  
But still a path threads downward so one may  
— With care — descend to where the air is mild.  
Let duties wait: I'll dodge time's reckoning  
To enter that bright landscape beckoning!



**My Old, Brand New House**  
*Janet Goven, Pennsylvania*

My new house is much older than  
the one I lived in for many years  
that contains a million memories  
of a lifetime immersed in tears.

I wonder how I came to know  
the enormity of such a move —  
that was lying at my fingertips  
with immense joy, it would prove

to bring me to a piece of life  
left un-tasted as yet, I knew  
that never looking back, instead  
I now see all things as brand new.

So, I keep my heart and mind reigned in  
to remember the command to pray  
with thanksgiving, as now I do testify  
He alone kept me in the way,

that He could give the gift of second chance  
with wisdom to follow through  
the plan He already had for me  
in an old house that is brand new.

**Icicles Triolet**

*Melissa Frentsos, New Jersey*

Tear drops have fallen from the skies  
And now are frozen to the trees  
Dear world, I hear your gentle cries  
Tear drops have fallen from the skies  
I know you miss the butterflies  
And springtime's cheerful, friendly breeze  
Tear drops have fallen from the skies  
And now are frozen to the trees

**Kids'  
Korner**

**My Stuffed Animals**  
*Brian Alan Bild, Missouri*

If my world were stuffed animals,  
How pure and simple life would be:  
Every animal in its place  
Always ready to play with me.

We would dance and sing  
And do our thing.  
We would tell stories  
While sitting in a ring.

We could have picnics  
Whenever we want.  
Or we could go,  
On an Easter egg hunt.

We 'd recall our days gone past;  
We'd sit and swap our stories  
'Bout what the days would bring.  
Or we'd pick morning glories.

I'd ask, "How are you doing?  
What did you do today?"  
We'd frolic in the sunshine  
We 'd talk, and play, play, play.

**New Playmate**

*Carrie Quick, Missouri*

Grass Hopper leaping  
In squares that I drew  
It will be fun playing hops with you.  
Now it's your turn to play.  
I have had mine.  
I'll throw your stone.  
Oh, get off the line.

**Kids'  
Korner**

### The Mad Poet

Harry T. Roman, *New Jersey*

He started spewing poetry  
and verse of every kind.  
As the days wore slowly on  
things got worse with time.

There soon came jingles  
and nursery rhymes  
inane ditties  
badly timed.

He couldn't stop  
nor staunch their flow.  
He continues yet  
for all we know.

### Ripped Paper

Rona F. Simon, *Ohio*

As students claimed their papers  
I'd graded the night before at home,  
Morrie took a look at his  
and very loudly groaned,  
"What! No grade? I gave  
those math problems my best shot —  
Mrs. S., my paper's ripped and  
where's the grade I got?"

With a sigh, I replied  
"So sorry, Morrie . . .  
but my young lab pup  
chewed your homework up.  
Do you really think this school  
has a rule that would say  
'When a teacher's dog  
eats a kid's paper,  
that student gets an A?'"

"Sure!", said Morrie,  
with a playful look.  
"Hmm . . .," I responded,  
while entering his A  
in my grade book.

### Worn

Matthew J. Spireng, *New York*

*"Shirts and shoes must be worn." – Sign on door,  
Smith's Family Restaurant, Greenwood, Delaware*

Hungry as I am, I'm concerned I'll be  
turned away. Oh, the shirt might pass.  
I've had it for years — a thrift store purchase —  
and though I've noticed no obvious signs  
of wear, surely on close examination there's  
something — a merciful stain, stray thread  
or wobbly button. But my shoes could be  
my undoing, new as they are. Maybe if I  
return to the parking lot and scuff them  
I'll gain admittance, hungry as I am.

### For Valentine's Day, a Teddy Bear Who Cares

Alan Yount, *Missouri*

it was always an idea  
on valentines day  
that a guy should give his gal  
a teddy bear.  
what you really need though:  
is a bear, that also talks & sings.  
\*\*\*\*\*  
one thing though:  
you don't want . . .  
is a bear who has been too long alone,  
on a shelf in the store.  
his first song, might be only fair:  
it could be roy orbison's "only the lonely."

\*\*\*\*\*  
you hope you can find  
a bear that can talk too . . .  
but not talk back, to her, for sure!  
she would be unhappy, with that scare.  
and as an old saying goes  
that was sung on the radio:  
in marriage  
there's a key to this song:  
you have a choice  
to be happy . . .  
or you can choose  
to be right!  
and then with the gal, the bear sings:  
"and also be so wrong."

\*\*\*\*\*

*Postscript: The singing bear also sings some more:  
"Hope this poem was not unbearable."*

## Write Me

*Vincent J. Tomeo, New York*

Something there is about a letter that someone can hold dear.  
It has style.  
It can be folded and placed in your pocket next to your heart.  
It can go where you go.  
It can be perfumed.  
It can be a pleasant surprise delivered to your doorstep,  
waxed and sealed.  
  
It can be unforgettable, or unforgiving.  
It can be delightful.  
  
You can run your finger across the page and hold it up to the light.  
It can be a coded message, flash and bright.  
It can be deciphered, written by hand from mind to heart to sight.  
  
It can be opened tenderly read and reread over and over again.  
Something there is about a letter.

## Walking on Fresh Snow

*James B. Peters, Tennessee*

An overnight December storm  
Left many inches of snow  
Burying the countryside.  
The morning sun rose quietly  
In a cold, blue sky.  
Putting on my boots  
and a heavy coat, I began  
to walk west across the farm.  
A silence filled the air . . .  
the boots sloshing through flakes  
Like grain on a shovel — the only sound.  
  
The two-hour walk left the trail  
of a man on a pristine field.  
Behind the earmuffs, the effort  
left a pounding in my warm ears,  
caused bits of perspiration to appear.  
Approaching the house,  
I looked back to see my tracks  
and found that the rising wind  
had erased all signs of my footsteps.

## Nightly Faith

*Dr. Roger Singer, Connecticut*

Every evening  
he gazed up  
at evening  
stars  
whispering  
words  
he collected  
or a poem  
or song he was  
fond of  
watching the mist  
of his breath  
layer gently  
into cool air  
and even if  
clouds blocked  
his view  
he continued to  
speak  
knowing the stars  
were still  
there

## Layers

*Nancy E. Martindale, Ohio*

Extra socks,  
Toasty warm,  
So the cold  
May do no harm.  
  
Add a sweater,  
Soft and thick;  
Pull it on,  
But be quick.  
  
A close-knit cap  
To save the lobes  
From the chill  
Of Jack Frost's probes.  
  
Fleece-lined boots  
With deep-scored tread  
To stay your feet  
In Winter's icy stead.  
  
Extra gloves,  
A scarf, a coat,  
Thermals under all,  
You gloat.  
  
But, I am warmer  
Now than you  
With just an electric blanket  
And a dream or two.

## Selection of Haiku

*Susan M. Surette, Massachusetts*

Enchanting landscape  
small eyes glance through frosty pane  
snow angels look back  
  
Noise muffling effect  
snow covers streets and sidewalks  
embrace peace and quiet

Street lit alleyway  
frosty trek past darkened homes  
bones shiver in haste  
  
Nature listens as snow falls  
no symphony for birds  
retreat to shelter

## How Can I Describe

*Mahathi, India*

Didn't see thee Lord with eyes, nor smelled thy scent.  
I never heard thy voice nor touched thy skin.  
But felt thy grace in deep silence and din.  
How can explain this all in world's accent?  
I try a word, a phrase, an apt comment . . .  
I search for idioms, and try to spin  
neology in burning earthly klin  
To invent cant or expression, nascent.

But human school is all about the tight  
Study of gathered dust into a tome.  
They read and breed in hearts the gnawing blight  
Of blasphemy, that soots the benign light  
Inside and miss the cues of prompting Om!  
Aye let me save for now this odd insight.

## Rebirth

*Cathy Porter, Nebraska*

In skies we search for answers —  
Beyond trees of reasoning,  
We long for shelter

To lay our burdens at the feet  
Of surrender; morning sneaks  
Through the window

Even when every fiber screams defeat —  
The seasons will change  
And tears will dry once more

## The Distance

*Joseph Murphy, Colorado*

It's half-buried by leaves  
on a wooded slope.

Will the brightly colored ball  
be reclaimed? Covered?

Ice still forms on the bridge's rail.

Spring seems as distant  
as the winter that's ending.

## The Dance

*Joan M. Forde, Massachusetts*

Struggling strength  
Handful of thoughts  
Steps to sound of life  
Carefree motion.

Reckless swing  
Waltz to days gone by  
Pick one or all  
But never stop  
The rhythm of curious feet  
And wandering emotions.

Explore the yet to come  
Enjoy the moment  
Unknown future  
Brings fathom of what may be  
A destiny still in the making!

## Places with a Past

*Linda Amos, Pennsylvania*

Sometimes when I enter a home  
Or a particular room —  
And I find that  
That time has stood still.  
These are unique places  
In special homes,  
Places to pause and to ponder  
To stop and to wonder . . .  
Such places as these welcome me.  
They seem to reach out  
And embrace me, and I feel 'at home'.  
Even if it's not my home.  
These are the places I could spend  
A lifetime living in  
And never grow old or tired;  
A special place with a past,  
A home.

## Love

*Rob Lowe, United Kingdom*

Love is a movement on the wind  
Blown where angry tongues take it.  
Love is a picture in the soul,  
Painted by circumstance and chance.  
Love is the fellowship of men,  
The blessing of sunshine. almighty  
Love is courage to start again,  
What a vast place the heart is!

## Whispers

*Peter MacQuarrie, California*

God whispers my name  
in my ear  
from near and not afar.  
There is power  
in his voice  
like a thunderstorm overhead.  
His words ease  
my sorrows  
like a mother's touch  
soothing a crying infant.  
His mercy reminds me  
to have faith  
in his whispered words.

The Flight of the Snowbirds  
Nelson R. Locher, New York

Every year at a certain time,  
before the winter season.  
A southern migration occurs,  
for a very specific reason.

This flock has the luxury,  
of living in two places.  
Part of the year they're our neighbors,  
then they move to their other spaces.

Snowbirds fly away before  
there's any chance of snow.  
Maybe they've become allergic,  
or just do not want to know.

While we're hoping for an early spring,  
it seems so far out of reach.  
They are playing golf,  
and sipping drinks on the beach.

If you see Snowbirds on the road,  
give them a smile and wave goodbye.  
Our happiness is on the outside,  
but inside we want to cry.

That type of lifestyle,  
is not meant for everyone.  
We'll just have to keep going,  
until all the shoveling is done.

Scene

Kiersta Recktenwald, Maine

Waterfalls and snow:  
we walk beyond amazement,  
certain of the fact,  
among azure, blue, and pine,  
as were it all forever.

Perfection

Joyce G. Bradshaw, Texas

Rainy  
winter morning.  
Listening  
to Rachmaninov,  
Borodin  
and Brahms,  
Reading  
poetry as  
varied  
and nourishing  
as the music.

Sibelius Is Awesome

Charles Parnell, Pennsylvania

Bukowski first said it.  
And I agree:  
A Sibelius symphony  
Is a treat for me!

Great music with splendor:  
It so satisfies.  
He crossed his T's  
And dotted his I's.

And his violin concerto  
Is always a joy,  
It gives me all goose bumps  
Ever since a young boy.

Yes, this composer is awesome  
You all will agree!  
I've championed his music:  
So thrilling and free.

I'll always remember  
The first time I heard.  
Jean Sibelius of Finland  
Is just THE LAST WORD . . .

# WRITER'S WORKBENCH

## Past, Present, and Future – JUST KEEP ON KEEPING ON

by Esther Leiper-Estabrooks



What about time; is it set or fluid? A second is a second, plus a weekend lasts two full days. Yet time so often seems subjective. When we enjoy a party, book, or film, the clock somehow whirls away. While to a woman laboring through childbirth time seems endless. By contrast, a metronome has no feelings, yet it continues to push on in the manner by which it was set. But for us humans, time can seem like fantastic elastic, dragging slow when we're in danger, in pain, or if waiting for something greatly desired. Thomas Carlyle, a Scottish essayist, historian, plus notable poet, declared:

TODAY

*So here hath been dawning another blue day;  
Think; wilt thou let it slip useless away?  
Out of Eternity, this new day is born;  
into Eternity, and at night will return.  
Behold it afore time no eye ever did;  
So soon it forever from all eyes is hid.  
Here hath been dawning another blue day.  
— Think; wilt thou let it slip useless away?*

To Carlyle, did a blue day mean a sky with an azure hue? Perhaps, yet to us a “blue day” means discouragement. Robert Louis Stevenson offered this advice:

TIME TO RISE

*Now a birdie with a yellow bill, hopped upon my windowsill;  
Cocked one shining eye and said, “Ain't you shamed, you sleepy head?”*

Life offers us both days and (sometimes) daze as well, but when we pass, we hope for heaven, speculating on God's infinity. We are flexible; at some times somber, yet ready to be charmed by humor and God's love. Indeed, as poets we're free to explore verse forms from haiku to book-length poems. We can even write satirically about real people like politicians, or movie stars, without getting jailed.

As poetry editor and columnist for *WRITERS' Journal* for thirty years I offered suggestions to other poets that I found good for my own outlook and output. Still, some felt I misunderstood or even bashed their efforts. I told them to use my ideas or not — their free choice. While I write free verse, more often I choose rhyme and rhythm. However for a poem about dynamite blasts I'd select harsh, discordant words. My elementary school was half a mile from the massive Glen Mills stone quarry, and each Friday was blasting day starting at noon. We kids crouched at our desks, covering our ears. Books plunged to the floor as our stone building shook — stones, in fact, that came from that very quarry!

Do keep pen and paper handy to capture new ideas and events. The next verse I jotted about claustrophobia:

A STORY ABOUT STOREYS

*It seemed one squinchy old elevator  
Set itself to snooze like an aged gator,  
Refusing to hustle like some slow waiter!*

(Continued on next page)

*It surely ignored humanity's rat-race!  
As we riders — furious — stuck in place,  
While each of us showed an upset face!*

Everyone stranded was either angry or claustrophobic and worried; so while no dictionary seems to admit the word *squinchy*, I used it meaning the elevator was old plus dilapidated. Odd happenings can perk up verse, so take advantage of unusual situations. Let your wordage stretch beyond everyday routine. Indeed, a poem which explores an uncommon idea offers an unusual challenge. Don't let opportunities slip: *So capture them in words*. I did 1800 prized and published, and experienced, dreams of becoming a member of the "dead poets society," standing shoulder to shoulder with all my heroes, such as Carlyle, Stevenson, and the rest of the Greats.

I entered my present day life in the Spring of 1976 on a ten-day vacation with my husband Peter Estabrooks to his home town (twenty years earlier) of Jefferson, New Hampshire in the Northern White Mountains. *Spring in the Whites is like no other!* We were hooked! By the the end of the ten days we were looking at a large apartment building in the center of the Jefferson Hill Village. This village was, and is, the home of the historic Waumbek Resort Hotel and its championship 18-hole golf course, which was then home to the year round White Mountains Center for the Arts — which in turn hosted a Spring/Summer/Fall Festival of Music and Visual Performing Arts with accredited college courses. *We're now well beyond hooked!*

Peter called his NYC Head Hunter, who could place him in a managerial position with Burndy Electric, a Connecticut firm that had expanded to Lincoln, New Hampshire and further expanded to Littleton (both on I-93), just two towns over from Jefferson. By the time it took to drive back to Galion, Ohio, our house there had a buyer deposit on it, and Burndy hired Peter; plus the Whites have downhill, cross-country, snowshoe, and snowmobile. *Yikes, we were going to heaven!*

Our life in Jefferson — 1976 to 2016 — was multi-faceted, complicated, very challenging, full of hardship and success — book-length story for sure. Peter's 1974 first prize haiku, which he won at Little Rock, Arkansas, sums it up nicely:

*Reach Among Sharp Thorns  
Dear Heart, Nor Spare Your Soft Hands;  
Sweeter The Plucked Rose.*

Of particular interest in the "here and now" is the period 2005 – 2020, when I served as Poet Laureate of the New Hampshire White Mountains Region for three five-year terms, and I'm about to sign up for a fourth term to 2025. The story *2005 – 2020* will fit well as a future *WestWard Quarterly* "Writer's Workbench" column; plus my planned agenda to 2025 is loaded with ideas for yet another column. Who knows what the future may bring? The story so far is captured in previous *WWQ* magazines, which you are welcome to read online at [www.wwquarterly.com](http://www.wwquarterly.com).

In early 2019 the Poetry Society of New Hampshire (PSNH) submitted Jennifer Militello to Governor Chris Sununu as next State Poet Laureate. Sununu chose Daniel Thomas Moran, and the fight was on! October 1st the Governor and the Poetry Society of New Hampshire compromised on Alexandria Peary. Regarding Militello and Moran, I went to my local town library and within days I had Militello's four books and Moran's eight, and wrote reviews on them. I tried the same routine on Peary's six: see *Exhibit Emails on Page 31*. My birthday on November 18 yielded the six and *WWQ*'s "Writer's Workbench" column for Spring 2020!

## Writer's Workbench — "Keep On Keeping On" — Exhibit Emails

**Esther Leiper** <estherleiperauthor@gmail.com> Thu. Oct. 10, 2019 at 1:41 PM  
To: apear@saalemstate.edu  
Professor Alexandria Peary  
English Department  
Salem State University  
Salem, Massachusetts

Dear Professor Peary,

Congratulations on your nomination as NH State Poet Laureate, October 2nd. We snail mailed a congratulatory message with our "WWQ Fall 2019 Preview Package" to you that very afternoon; and hope you received & appreciate it.

Also, that same afternoon, we contacted our Public Library here in Gorham to request all your books in the State Library System be brought in for loan to us. There was only one of the six found at the Milford Public Library. However, that one was reported on Monday 10/7/19 to have been "weeded out" and no longer available. Oh well, we tried! We want to get to know and appreciate your work.

This coming weekend we are planning our annual leaf peeping drive down thru Franconia Notch and as far south (perhaps to Concord) to check out progress of "NH Peaking". We always discover something to write about on this trip. It certainly would not be any inconvenience to drive over to Londonderry and visit with you at 32 Seasons Lane: and do a "one for one poetry book exchange".

If you approve: Please advise us the day and time of your choice either Saturday or Sunday for us to arrive at your house to do such an exchange. This will surely be an event worthy of a special poem. And please. do not hesitate to call us and/or email as you wish. Thank you.

Sincerely for the love of words and poetry. Please call soon,

Peter and Esther Leiper-Estabrooks  
The Poet House, 15 Potter Street  
Gorham, New Hampshire  
Telephone: (603) 466-2206

PS: We placed two messages on your home phone on Saturday, October 5th. The first was to express our dismay at none of your books in the library system; and later -the second call- to advise you of our message entered on your blog. (Just a note for the record, that we are truly anxious to read your books.)

**Esther Leiper** <estherleiperauthor@gmail.com> Fri. Oct 11, 2019 at 6:30 AM  
To: Balconyofwords@gmail.com

Alexandria,  
Sixteen hours have lapsed since we emailed you at Salem State University, MA. Possibly you could have missed it. Therefore, we are now forwarding this to your Londonderry, NH email address. Our proposal to do a "one for one poetry book exchange" starts tomorrow and includes Sunday; and due to the long weekend, we can include Monday 10/14 as well, if you wish. Please let us hear from you. We will be "on the road" this afternoon, back by 5:00 pm.

Esther and Peter

**Note:** As of this writing, no response to either email.

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