

# **The House of Poetry**

Poetry Reading Session

2010

**Linda Susan Amos**

**Etchings**

You have embedded yourself  
So deeply into my heart  
And into my consciousness  
So much so,  
That if you had been a chemist  
And had chosen to use a vial of acid  
To etch your name  
Upon the granite slab  
Of my soul  
It could not have been made  
More permanent  
Nor more indelible.  
Inspired by A. J. Scott

**Linda Susan Amos**

**Destiny**

If I had never met you  
I would have conjured you up  
Out of dreams and pixie dust  
Because we were destined  
To meet, to fall in love,  
And, unfortunately,  
To part!

**Linda Susan Amos**

**Amoret**

I fear  
It will require  
More than  
A love knot  
To tie  
Your heart  
To mine.

At The Blue Heron B&B

In the pale light of late afternoon  
the view from the Country Room  
blurs to a watercolor scene:  
An old wooden boat is anchored  
at the end of a rough-planked dock;  
shimmering water slaps softly  
against the boat's peeling hull.

Veiled in fog suspended above the river,  
trees on the distant bank teem with the shriek  
and swoop of cormorants and ospreys,  
provide backdrop for dive-fishing splash  
and wing-drizzle rise to nests.

A lone heron stands in the muddy shallow.

As the sky deepens to twilight, a soft breeze  
sails in from the ocean and tugs the fog upriver.  
Black brushstrokes obliterate the scene,  
blind the observer standing at the window.  
A sharp stab of loss bleeds into the dark room.

Communion

Early, before anyone else is up,  
the farmer walks his corrugated fields,  
sensing the subtle shifts of growth.  
His body signals a response  
in a language  
others do not understand.

Except his son.  
Who sleeps, ignores the voice  
he, too, can hear,  
but covers his ears with dreams  
that spin like webs around him,  
bind him to his bed.  
He is still young.

The father is content,  
knowing that someday  
his son will take his place  
and walk these rows,  
conversing with the earth.

Getting a Handle on Things  
(for WD)

Grandpa always said if God wanted folks to hold onto money, he would have put handles on it. I laughed every time at that old joke, but was really pleased when he dug into his frayed pants pocket for his loose change, which he slipped into my outstretched, grimy palm. After he died, I found a few coins in his dresser drawer. I guess God put handles on those so Grandpa had a little something to leave behind that made me smile in spite of my tears.

## Roberta Pipes Bowman

### Grandfather's Clock

When I was small and spent the night  
at grandparents, Grandma shared her bed.  
She covered me with downy quilt.  
In another room an old clock,  
painted bird on nest, marked time.  
I waked when the clock chimed  
at night and heard the windmill creak  
and groan as it drew up loads of water.  
How cool it sounded sloshing in the tank.  
My parched mouth craved a sip.  
I longed for dawn's quick return.

The clock was silent in wee hours.  
At four it began its daily chore.  
Then Grandpa rose and built a fire.  
I would fall asleep until coffee  
and frying bacon aromas drifted  
like angels urging me to wake.

The bird is faded on that clock  
but chimes roll back the years.  
I long for a sip of that cool water  
as I wait for dawning light.  
I remember leaping out of bed,  
spending hours and hours at play,  
no shuffling step or nagging pain.

## Roberta Pipes Bowman

### The River Ark

...she took for him an ark of bulrushes, and daubed it with slime and with pitch...and she laid it in the flags by the river's brink.

Exodus 2.3

This basket weaver's shop is filled  
with wares he makes for varied use.  
A woman moves along the shelves  
then asks if he might have an ark  
of rushes like a crib with domed lid  
that fastens down and safely floats.  
The owner smiles, "I have a few,  
but kept inside another room.  
These are arks for Hebrew sons  
condemned to death by Pharaoh's law.  
The sentries watch for river arks.  
This one is lined with down and linen.  
Daub it with slime and pitch so that  
the crocodiles will let it pass  
while floating slowly down the Nile.  
I'll bring it after dark and you  
will need to launch the ark before  
the dawn, then let it drift along  
toward that royal bathing cove  
where the widowed princess bathes."

The mother bows before the basket  
and prays, "Great One, whose holy name  
I do not know, protect my child."

Today I seek that basket adorned  
with a cross to keep this little one  
from deceptive crocodiles of life  
and grow protected by the King.

## Summer Camp in Maine 2008

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That which she has always been,  
Has now found everlasting newness  
All white and delicate, like Queen Anne's Lace -  
Foresaking substance to grasp the shadows  
As the future peeks out from the next rainbow.  
And she lies down in dandelion dreams  
Making wishes for the happiness of others.

She's found her nirvana  
Listening to the water's whispered tides,  
Coming in and out, then out and in again  
To rest along the grassweed marsh below,  
Pushing out from rocks along the shore  
And rowing past the curves like a push broom  
Through overhanging trees and into sunlight.

Something there is now is like that which has never been,  
Nor ever would or could be, but always was, for at last she sees ... the joy of is.

## **Never Fully Here or There, But Clearly Beyond**

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**Written in 2007**

Life's all about the pauses, the small causes between the words ... the phone call punctuations.  
And tonight, I'm all about the silence and the language in between, even the clichés or lack of them.  
Tonight I'm all about the peace between the life and death of love immortal and all the stuff that follows  
Us even into death. Death is a crisp four-letter word that wears starched shirts and scratches our skin.

And then there's such a longer pause ... overall and afterward. Such a long, long pause so far away.  
We're not bilingual yet with death. We're young and making enemies faster than we can kill them.  
Dear God, today is Lent. Make this a day of longer pauses in between. Create a space for me.  
Invent a day of fewer enemies, such as former husbands ... who want to be my friend forever.

My oh- so-conditional love has its limits. Love can be gone in five months, five years or five lines.  
Gone to the quick and the dead. Please don't forget that, God. Give more not less of this slow bliss,  
My true love is with me first again, my love lost once and now so ever found. Keep us safe this time.  
Lest we forget all that was and all that's yet to be and all of it so clearly more in the blue abyss ahead.

For touching him is all I know of heaven,  
And lack of him is all I want to know of hell.

**A Poet Is Never Alone or Lonely, Even Somewhere Way Out Here or There**

If you'd been here in Bastrop, I wouldn't have slept so well last night or been this still.  
Or watched the dandelion seeds floating to the porch this morning, perfectly content.  
Wouldn't have heard the locusts mating or the dogs barking in the distance somewhere  
Out there across the Colorado River as wheels rumbled over that 1940s silver bridge.

Your noise is never noise to me but does block out some silent things best heard alone,  
You're a river rushing forward, charming every light and heavy thing that comes its way.  
Observing such a force, one needs to be a stethoscope occasionally, the dog asleep afoot,  
Tuning in to silence juxtaposed against the steady rhythm of this still self-sufficient heart.

Take the time to see a morning glory's lilac face below, the sunflowers leaning into sun,  
Vines intertwining rough, unpainted railings between this Sunday miracle of idleness...  
And that green view spilling out below cloudy skies in a time of too much rain ... a time  
Too much of all things, except the slow eloquent drawl of God and honeybees buzzing.

"Wildflowers at work here," "Ship's come in" and all that jazz along this tranquil path.  
Somewhere out there, a world waits, poised to take me up again and squash this quiet.  
But I'll be ready for it this time 'round, steeling my broken places against this sacred joy,  
Renewed to bolster friends with cancer, parents whose own dark fears outweigh my own.

Yes, once I wash away all the dirt of anything but me in that big claw foot tub inside,  
I'll leave this bed unmade, four pillows sleepily arranged against the window's sun,  
My single cup unwashed, my trash and worries in the sink, and pack the pretty clothes I Brought but didn't wear,  
then move along more thankfully - because you were not there.

## THE TATER REBELLION

By Shirley Carmichael

It began very quietly one fine spring day;  
    The seed taters slept snuggled deep in the hay;  
Then the farmer came in and cut them in half;  
    This tickled the taters, with glee they did laugh,  
For they knew they'd be planted in the warm, moist earth;  
    That soon they would sprout and have a new birth.

So the taters were dropped in row after row,  
    And their eyes turned to sprouts, and started to grow.  
They grew and they grew, and wriggled around;  
    They grew toward the sun, and popped out of the ground;  
But, the sun made their baldy heads burn and ache,  
    So they sprouted some leaves, lovely shade they did make.

Then the sun gave them warmth, and the rain gave them drink;  
    How lovely to be born in this world they did think.  
They rustled with pride at the way they were growing,  
    And the farmer was happy and started in hoeing.  
He chopped all the weeds and stirred up the earth,  
    And the taters were glad they'd been given new birth.

Then one day they decided that it was the season,  
    And their roots sprouted toes for this very reason.  
The toes were so many, they grew big as bowls.  
    The farmer said, "They're ready", and he dug up the rows;  
So the taters were happy for that's why they grew;  
    And, now, there were millions, or at least, quite a few.

They farmer had names for the sizes they grew,  
    The big ones were bakers and the little ones new.  
So he took them to market one warm summer day,  
    Except for the seed taters he put away.  
These he would save til next year's spring day;  
    So he tucked these taters down under the hay.

But, the taters that sold were not properly eaten,  
    By baking, or boiling, and properly beaten.  
They were very embarrassed, for they did have their pride;  
    And they started to shrivel in an effort to hide;  
For the people that bought them peeled off their skin,  
    And cut them in slices entirely too thin.

They fried them right crisp and sprinkled on salt,  
    And the taters cried, "No, this must come to a halt."  
Look what you have done without our permission.  
    You have cooked us so long, we have lost our nutrition.  
That's why we were planted, row after row,  
    For children to eat us, to help make them grow.

## Continued – The Tater Rebellion

So, if, this is the thanks for our toils and our labors,  
    Then we're not really helping to be good to our neighbors.  
And one brave, young tater told it around;  
    And the word spread quite quickly through country and town,  
The taters decided unanimously,  
    That, until all the people, decided to see –

The folly of grown-ups who let children snack;  
    Then they would stop growing, and that is a fact.  
They talked to the sunshine, and to the rain,  
    And slept in their seed-beds til spring came again.  
So when they were cut up and dropped in the ground,  
    They just lay there quietly and made not a sound.

The farmer grew worried and he wondered why  
    The taters weren't sprouting and he looked at the sky;  
And the sun wouldn't shine when it should have been glowing,  
    And, instead of it raining, the rain started snowing;  
Then the farmer remembered to whom he had sold them,  
    He went to the field and with gladness, he told them,

That never again would he sell his taters  
    To people who certainly must be children-haters.  
The taters were happy and shouted with glee,  
    For, at last, they could grow into what they should be.  
So, remember, dear people, when snacks you are selling,  
    You might start one more, all the taters rebelling.

# **In Judgment**

By Shirley Carmichael

**I sat like a judge in court  
And with burning, stinging voice  
Maligned the character of one.  
who seemed the Devil's choice.**

**I reviewed her past and present life  
And debated on her future.  
With relish, I found the worst,  
My deepening hate to nurture;**

**And, in my mind, her evil grew  
Until my soul was covered  
By demon rage and thought corrupt;  
Then, through God's Word, discovered**

**That He would find, come Judgment Day  
The time to judge my living  
By the measure which I judged  
This one, no mercy giving.**

# **CHRIST, THE LAST ADAM**

**By Shirley Carmichael**

**When Adam sinned in the garden,  
God sentenced all mankind to die;  
In punishment for his disobeying  
As dust in the ground, he would lie.**

**God cast Adam out of the garden  
Never more to look on His face;  
Judged guilty by God for His sinning,  
God had cursed the whole human race.**

**But, God made to Eve, a great promise,  
That her seed would win over sin;  
For a virgin would conceive of The Spirit  
And That Child bring the curse to an end.**

**When Christ came, He gave His life freely  
On the cross, "It is finished," He said;  
Then death was defeated forever,  
For the third day He rose from the dead.**

**So friend, if you know Christ as Savior  
Then the old carnal life is a loss;  
Yes, the first Adam's curse was lifted,  
By the Last Adam's death on the cross.**

**Marilyn Marshall Clark**

THE GIFT OF COLOR

The purple silk blouse you gave me,  
the precise blend of blue and red  
to lead me royalty. The bouquet in  
Thelma's room, white gladioli in a clear  
glass bowl, fanned out like a cosmic  
explosion, the leaf spears and tips  
of green buds headed for infinity.  
Showing Meagan how to swirl  
her brush to form petals. Dyeing  
Easter eggs with kids. The lonely  
Chinese neighbor stopped by  
as you worked in your flower bed,  
held up her thumbs and smiled.  
Your doorway arch of Carolina Jasmine  
Greets house finches and even guests  
with attitude like relatives and cats.

For Debra, February 14, 2008

**Marilyn Marshall Clark**

ABDULLAH GAH, WINTER 2002

The children are dying for lack of an ass  
to climb the roadless passes with bags of wheat,  
and babies drink gruel of water and grass  
Three years, the rains have failed to come in time

to fill the cracked fields with dancing (swaying) wheat.  
Grass baked with a trace of barley tastes mud cake dry.  
Each day big-bellied children run out of time  
while rags that bind the bloating give small relief.

The breasts of grass-fed mothers too soon run dry;  
still they cradle the young in their arms  
and wait. Cold huts give small relief.  
Where a road exists that a truck might climb a hill,

a warlord's men, in wait, cradle their arms,  
the babies drink gruel of water and grass,  
the road becomes a no-man's land on that hill,  
and children are dying because of an ass.

## WHAT I PRAY FOR

*People ask what I pray for, and I tell them:  
“New drugs and a miracle”.*

I stand at the kitchen counter  
And drop pills into a little blue plastic box.  
Into each section,  
Marked by a day of the week,  
I place--  
    4 *Clozapine*  
    3 *Stelazine*  
    1 *Wellbutrin* tablet

and on bad nights,  
when panic attacks,  
a *Xanax* or two.

More art than science, they say.  
And the alchemy of Sandoz, Roxane, & Teva  
Pharmaceuticals  
Reroutes my son's neural networking--  
Coats the raw edges,  
Smooths the tattered wires,  
The frayed cables.

Quiets the hounding voices  
And rapping knuckles  
That knock at his door  
Day and night.

Last month it was  
*Seroquel* and *Lamictal*.  
And in one failed attempt,  
*Lithium Carbonate*.  
Before that, before the clinical diagnosis,  
It was *Haldol* and *Benztropine*--  
The drooling twins of the early days,  
Cousins of *Thorazine*,  
The “shut ‘em up and lock ‘em up” drug  
Of *The Cuckoo's Nest*.

Now they're only brought out for first timers,  
Or the ones who forget, forego, or fail,  
Fall back into the black hole  
And ride into the Psych Ward  
In the back of an ambulance,  
Accompanied by a local sheriff,  
Or a cop.

Once attended to,  
Most graduate to the atypicals--  
The New & Improved antipsychotics,  
And are mended,  
Sort of,  
If they stay around long enough,  
Take their meds,  
Get their blood tested,  
Get to the pharmacy,  
Every week, or month,  
Under doctor's orders,

Or, leave,  
Get lost, live  
Under bridges  
Or inside boxes,  
For the rest of their lives.

Nancy Carpenter Czerw  
5/2/2009

## ALCHEMY

(Overheard at night in Bay Yard  
Farm: Singing by Breman and  
the barn cats..." *We are Celanese  
if you please...*")

Nan's a chemist. Breman's green.  
They've just been crowned the King & Queen  
Of the Adult Amateur Hunter scene.

Such rapid rise is rarely seen--  
Now Sherlock Holmes is on the scene.

Nan's a chemist at Celanese;  
She handles chemicals with ease.

But what exactly does she do?  
Make plants grow bigger? Invent new glue?

Or is she back there with machines,  
Splitting atoms, splicing genes?

Putting horse hide on a frame,  
Adding ears, a tail, a mane?

Is her horse the real McCoy,  
Or just an equine proto-toy?

Now Watson offers commentary--  
As usual, more elementary:

Positing another view  
(As all good sleuth's assistants do):

"Breman's green, not phosphorescent,  
And Nan's as fit as an adolescent.

Consider the possibility,  
The truth is *really* what we see--

Outstanding training, and of course,  
A wonderful rider and marvelous horse!"

Nancy Carpenter Czerw  
June 7, 2009

## ANIMAL

My cat  
Does not like to be held,  
Will not sleep on a bed,  
Disdains cuddling and kissing.

But when my son's mind  
Turned inward, and he  
Fell into fear,

She crawled under the sheets,  
And slept with him,  
All night.

Nancy Carpenter Czerw  
8/1/09

## UPSTATE AUTUMN

This season of gold and fire will never end.  
On a tree in a quadrangle of a college campus,  
Yellow leaves cling to the uppermost branches,  
Like little Tibetan prayer flags.  
The rest have been torn away;  
Pages of summer's bloody ending  
Lie in sheaves at my feet.  
But so long as these yellow leaves hold on,  
I too shall hold fast--  
Despite the fury of wind and weather,  
Despite all odds of probability,  
I shall hold the flame of this Autumn's gold--  
The fire of this season,  
Burning in my heart.

Nancy Carpenter Czerw  
11/18/09

**Peggy Zuleika Lynch**

*In Celebration of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*

Why today do we gather here  
to honor one  
whom we may only have admired  
did not catch his fire  
at the moment his meteor was soaring?

Now we know while it was burning  
it lighted lights.

It rose, glorious,  
winding through  
the dark of night.

It soared above the strife.

Non-violence it was  
and went to its end  
burning out in our hemisphere.

Those whom it helped  
to raise in its flight  
may be here, there, everywhere  
because he is now  
in the breeze that blows,  
in the flower that blooms,  
in the brilliance of a star  
beckoning on those  
who caught the vision  
of his meteor  
and carries it on afar.

Yes, today we honor

*DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JUNIOR*  
in his absence on his birthday  
as we go forth  
carrying his vision  
forward  
because  
he has become a star!

## **Benjamin Matlock**

Out of This Atmosphere

I am desperate  
to get out of this atmosphere  
I see space from here  
As I ascend I still feel you itch

I am reminded that I will  
always need our air  
There was something special  
about your blue eyes  
Roaming the smallness of earth  
could never erase there effect, there memory

I was never counted  
during the hurricanes and tsunamis  
I finally grasp that  
in your spring fury

The tornadoes were not meant for me  
but for her and all the others  
Now if you chose to care, to blow me around  
I will not let you stop me

Because I am desperate  
to get out of this hot atmosphere  
The air I breath is not relevant  
as you constantly point out  
stoically bidding me goodbye.

Goodbye!

Indicators

Wanting to ward off more doctors  
and sick at heart after your eulogy,  
I take out an apple, cut it in half,  
open it like a sympathy card.  
On television, closed captioning  
lets me know the perky news anchor  
is reporting on the health of the economy.  
Her hair is the color yours used to be.  
Even with the sound on *mute*,  
I can tell the news is bad.  
Like your internist who always knew  
too much, the news is abrupt  
and undeniable as chiseled stone.  
Still wearing my black  
skirt and tissue-smearred mascara,  
I watch the young woman on TV  
slowly open and close her thick lashes,  
lower her eyes, soften her gaze,  
wanting to let us know how sorry she is  
for what she must report:  
that with leading indexes still falling,  
the situation looks bleaker than ever.  
As I consider the country's condition  
and that of your children  
and the man who loved you  
and all those you left behind,  
the newscaster brightens into a smile  
as astounding as the star inside my apple.  
The scrolling ribbon says she is happy  
to tell us that despite the way things feel now,  
some analysts are hopeful, given the indicators,  
that by next year, we may be well  
on the road to recovery.

Before You Marry

Drive together out past the places  
of mailboxes and mowing.  
Cross a wooden bridge  
whose metal straps strain, clang,  
sing like an old woman finally in love.

Slow around a rutted curve.  
Pull up to a clapboard chapel  
whose patterned windows strain  
dyes of ancient hallowed light.  
Stop. Say nothing.

Wander the wrought iron churchyard  
in the company of velvet-headed oaks  
who mourn decades of dead  
laid in mounded pairs,  
their taken names chiseled in stone.

Lip-whisper verses. Shiver in the sun.  
Listen for the shush of the low wind.  
Called by the coming day, look up  
and down the empty road.  
Feel lost. Feel found. Feel proud.

Turn for home together  
wanting your way in the world  
to always be as good  
as this sainted gospel chorus  
of how it is to live and die in love.

Round

Iron stone, storm-worn  
into the capped shape  
of an acorn. A giant acorn  
collected from the apron  
of a century oak.  
Water oak hardened  
into petrified wood.

Collector and curator,  
she houses her exhibit  
in the display case  
of an antique glass-top table:  
a collage of the natural  
history of fifty years  
on six acres of sugar sand.  
For visitors, she narrates  
a life's work, catalogues her finds:  
A cicada husk. A tortoise shell.  
The cup spun by a hummingbird.

When asked her favorite,  
she admits her hope  
diamond is a special hen's egg  
found on an empty day  
when she almost stopped  
believing in miracles.  
Defying the ovulate, it is  
round and delicate as a puff ball.  
Perfect. Sacred. Impossible.  
*Proof*, she holds now,  
lifting her gaze to meet yours,  
*that anything, anything can happen.*

## *The Unexpected*

*It's the unexpected in life -  
those intrusions  
that jolt us out of every day complacency -  
one such as this - Wilna's story,  
one so unbelievable you know it must be true.*

*It begins with silence . . .  
In a moment's intuition, Wilna knows something  
isn't quite right.  
"Amanda! Amanda! Where are you?"  
Then to herself she says, "Maybe Amanda's in the bedroom."  
As Wilna opens the bedroom door, she finds Amanda  
playing in ashes, covered from eyelashes to ankles.  
A small urn lies empty on the floor beside her.*

*Both are transfixed.  
Then gasps and shrieks of disbelief follow -  
"Amanda, what have you done?"*

*Just at that moment, the phone rings.  
Crying hysterically as a close friend listens,  
Wilna says, "You won't believe what just happened!"*

*No words of sympathy or disbelief follow -  
just laughter.*

*Then catching her breath, she says,*

*"Wilna, it's Joe's way of playing with his little grand daughter  
one more time!"\**

*It's the unexpected in life,*

*awakening our knowledge of that sacred moment -*

*a moment held by a magical particle of dust,*

*calling us to resurrection.*

*\*true story as told by Wilna Neil*

*The Answer*

*Call Manhattan for answers - call Lisa -  
pay in advance ,  
words that stuck in her heart and mind.  
"Just call her , " a friend urged - "she'll tell you everything you want to know. "*

*For weeks the uneasy feeling was with her -  
a feeling of homesickness sweeping over her heart -  
that yearning to talk to her father and yet thinking,  
"How can anyone - a mere mortal like me-  
divine the mysteries of what is beyond . . .  
speak with the spirits of those who've passed over to the other realm of reality?  
How . . . is it possible . . . or am I chasing a phantom ... "*

*Then finally -  
The psychic's voice came through clear -  
It was all so casual - they could be having coffee, sitting at her breakfast table.  
But they weren't.  
The psychic was in New York, Veena was in L.A.*

*"I'm so glad you called.  
Your father has been pestering me.  
These are the words in his message to you. "*

*"Veena, I want to apologize to you for dying when you were only nine.*

*But please know this , my darling - only a thin veil is all that separates us,  
a veil that most are not aware of."*

*"Your father knows everything about you , Veena,  
from all the boy friends you've ever had to the one you have now.  
He even knows about the tattoo on your left hip."*

*"Oh, no, it's only when I'm in the shower you can see that!"  
Veena screamed.*

*"He knows you love animals,  
and that you're trying to decide whether to have a horse farm,  
or to become a veterinarian.  
He says to tell you that whatever you decide, you'll be wonderful at it.*

*"He's coming through very clearly to me  
because you are in tune with the spiritual dimension of life.*

*And again Veena wonders  
"Is this a phantom of dark shadows pursuing me . . . is this real . . .  
or is it a dream begging to be born . . ."*

*Early in life Veena became aware of the spiritual -  
a gift passed on to her from her father, Shiva -  
through his Indian heritage.*

*Once looking deep into his young daughter's eyes, he said,  
"Veena, my life might be short because of my heart."*

*"Daddy, will you let us know you're alright after you're gone?  
And let us know when you're in heaven.?"*

*Then in the autumn of Shiva's last year, attending a retreat,  
everyone was asked before leaving to write something  
they feel about the future -  
to slip it in an envelope, put it in the barrel in the center of the group,  
addressed.*

*On New Year's Eve,  
Shiva died.*

*Then one early Spring morning,  
Veena's hand reached inside the mailbox.  
There it was - the letter she had been looking for.*

*"Dear Veena,  
I know whatever God wills will be fine.  
I have faith and I'm happy.  
I know God's will is the best.  
My love,  
Your Dad*

*"Daddy wrote to me from heaven!"  
There was never a doubt in her mind.  
His letter had come. \**

*Memories . . . fantasies . . . dreams . . .  
swirl through Veena's soul . . .  
like a subterranean river racing unseen, silently through the desert,  
passing through many waters\*\* - then past the birth pangs of new life . . .  
breaking through to the thrill of Love's light . . .  
to ride on the wings of the wind.\*\*\**

*\* true story as told by Sharyn Petersen*

*\*\*Psalms 18:16 "You drew me out of many waters."*

*\*\*\*Psalms 18:10 "You ride on the wings of the wind."*

BULLDOZED  
(Fry Street, Denton, Texas)

Our 'sold-out' block, damned, barren, beggared, bulldozed bare,  
Looks back blind, holds out its pocked, bent cup, begs with a vacant stare;  
Seeks the clink of the golden coin of long-haired youth again,  
the wild merriment, mercies, the red edge of being once spent there.  
Instead sits this sad, stripped, scrawny, scruffy sod.  
The crumpled, caved-in chain-link fence cannot confine, contain  
The sigh of loss keening through that cruel, cold, commercial noose of wire - GOD  
Only hears the faint imprints of our primal howls, which still sustain, remain.  
Here WindChildren were and went, spirits sped, gifts spread;  
Seeds sent breeze-bourne to bring, begin, bear again in tomorrow's poorer beds.

How March winds blow and whirl the current co/eds by  
Into their joyful piles and blowzy, supple scatterings,  
But What can they know of such ancient, olden orderings?  
"Peace Man!" Through that old arch the smiles, screams, the sometimes stoned  
and ardent highs,  
The quick Presences seen where nothing now abides,  
The brimming days springing yet within these wintered, well-wandered eyes...

So becomes our sacred space, a quiet, emptied place;  
The long, separate apart, the lonely, cold, stilled, zeroed heart  
bereft of any warm embrace - that desolate, unsayable waste -

Alone ...

Communion ...  
( Aware )

Waiting  
(Want)

Waxing Moon  
Gibbous hour  
Silence  
Brimming  
Beautiful  
Before dawn.  
  
Spread  
Coverless  
Unclothed  
Moonlit  
Bedside window  
Open.

I know ...  
'We'  
Are  
Impossible.  
  
Yet ...  
Still  
I linger ...  
Wanting  
You.

Exquisite wrap -  
Ardent air  
Eager skin  
Moonlight  
Touching  
Lingering  
Poured  
Together  
Twined.

Perfect lovers -  
Blent  
You  
The Other  
One ...  
Aware.

## Waterfall Words

Flow thrilling waterfall of words,  
Deep spills, pure and pouring,  
Subsume, submerge me in strange spells.  
Let us be carried through glad cataracts;  
Christened in chasms and cascades;  
Tumbled through taut torrents;  
Roiled, roused, run down rapid gauntlets;  
Rushed, gushed, careened downstream;  
Spun by bright, brisk, swift swirls;  
Doused in a deluge of downpours.  
Wet me wild over your steep rims;  
Drown dross in dazzle, a seethe of currents.  
Drench and refresh this dry, parched plain.  
Float forever by from an ardent ark  
Held in an arc and flow of arms,  
Covered as fine, fluid raiment  
By the saving promise of your rainbows,  
The perfect wrap of rapt whirlpools.  
Sent sighs, symphonies of soulsounds,  
The music cast by throbbing, fetching falls.  
Swish away drab, dull history.  
Claim, cleanse, consume us in clear corridors;  
Sweep all stale breath to fresh.  
Revive, renew, an eager heart;  
Bathe, bewitch, bubble an addled brain.  
Resuscitate, resurrect This life;  
Quench every quest and thirst.  
WaterFall Me !

## A Suitcase of Woe

The dream was as easy as counting.  
It could drop in at any eye closing  
no matter where I was flying  
no matter whom I met  
no matter what I was doing  
always the same concern  
at any corner at any turn  
I lost my purse.

Sometimes I stepped outside looked down  
counseled myself  
*Don't worry you will wake up  
it won't matter.*  
But the frantic search  
the heavy feet I hauled  
along like loaded baskets  
while strange doors wouldn't open.

I just wanted my purse.

Finally I called myself awake, grateful  
for something that didn't happen.

Then two weeks ago  
at last after a lifetime  
of losing and tracing and closed doors  
and locked rooms in a dream  
I moved a book and my purse  
was there.

Oh the joy.

For days I told everyone I knew  
I would never have that dream  
again. I was convinced  
a new era a new plateau. Yes  
for days I could burst into sleep  
and not take my purse.  
But today I am one blink from tears.  
Last night I lost my suitcase  
my purse was in it.

Naomi Stroud Simmons 2001  
Published in PST YEARBOOK, 2002

## Travel Forecast

New Years,  
like a new car,  
I drive it carefully,  
avoid January pot holes,  
bad roads.

By spring  
all systems tuned,  
interior still clean,  
open roads, countrysides in bloom,  
beckon.

No map  
to guide my days.  
By June a dent or two  
does not dampen expectations.  
I cruise

into  
autumn vistas,  
all caution signs ignored,  
a scratch or two along the way.  
I near

year's end,  
model changes.  
When the crystal ball drops,  
I'll be on time unless I have  
a flat.

Naomi Stroud Simmons

Published: PST BOOK OF THE YEAR 2009

## Dark Emotions

Deep within his heart coursed the blood of his ancestors  
liquid fires raging unchecked, unfettered, blazing  
with burning desires to conquer, to be conquistadors.

Dark eyes smolder lock to dark eyes  
then to his corazon, his heart, his senorita,  
he passes the epitome of the Spaniard's true love  
the rarest of nature's gifts, one black rose

■ Jeannette L. Strother

tarrant county texas

purple

whispers night in warm color  
softly brushed... somewhere  
between midnight and indigo

purple

hides the moon in the dark March sky  
and I...pull my covers close  
against the sharp spring chill

purple

slowly washes darkening space  
huge orange globe sinks somewhere  
between air and land

purple

spring winds rustle  
large shadowed fronds  
mesquite's fanning bristles

purple

electric slashes the sky  
distant rumbles roll and echo  
soft rain trickles down

purple

songs as passing trains  
hoot and whistle...through  
sleeping towns

purple

discordant harmony  
chorused by wakening birds  
break of morning light

purple

a state of rest  
just before summer  
rises on waning spring

■ Jeannette L. Strother

## In The Old Ways

Mama taught me about gardening, cooking, canning and sewing. I guess these were things people survived with back in her day. Mama baked big, fat, white sugar cookies every week. I thought it was just to use up the milk going sour. It wasn't until years later, I remember the children from 'The Slope' (a non-working mining camp) seemed to always be at our back door.

No one saw much of Mama's temper except the family. She smiled at most of the town when we walked to do our chores. She didn't drive, so our feet took us everywhere we needed to go. If we saw someone older than her doing chores, we took the time to see them home. Then she would fuss like a bandy rooster about how some families "just don't care."

Some people saw it as vanity when Mama carried the biggest pot or the most pies to church for funerals or special events. She just liked to cook and wanted people to have plenty. No one complained when the mill was on strike and Miss Loretta always had a little extra in her kitchen.

When my Daddy's wife didn't want me, Mama covered my back. Papa's sister got sick and moved in. She was too weak to do for herself. Mama fed, bathed and nursed her back to health. "Hushed-mouthed" she work hard. She told me a secret once, "you'll get your reward in heaven."

On warm summer evenings we would sit on the porch, rocking the squeaky, metal glider. Sweet honeysuckle entwined the lattice grill behind heads; we spent the evening battling away sweet bees. Family or neighbors passing on the "lower road" would either stop and chat or throw up a hand and holler "hello".

When we put our flannels, Mama would reach for her dog-eared Bible and read a book each night. She taught me to always kneel at the end of the day.

## The Long Drive Home

When I received the call to come home,  
my feelings ran the gamut of sadness  
and fragility. Why can death not be defeated  
or subdued until we mortals are prepared.

I traveled the highways, my brain on  
overload...busy cataloguing and collecting  
thoughts of the canvas we called home.  
A little two-story, white frame house  
sitting at the base of gentle, rolling Ohio hills.

I shivered at the jostled memories scrambling  
round and round inside my head; forsythia  
bush switches for my errant legs; loving kisses  
on my little accidents and enough embraces  
to shame a bear.

I remember, flower gardens created by Mama's  
knowing hands; a tall productive quince  
that stood alone; ground-kissing apple trees  
which gently dropped their loads; the ancient  
arbor abundant with sagging vines of white  
and purple concord grapes.

I raced those hills as a hooligan. Her  
yard was my childhood palace. I sailed  
on the single-board hemp swing  
and hid beneath the arbor vines.

My mind tastes hot, tart applesauce  
on homemade, buttered bread.  
Do they still remember calling out  
her name...all the stray children  
she once fed.

I know I have Mama's forgiveness  
for not coming sooner.  
It was such a long drive home.

■ Jeannette L. Strother

## Charles B. Taylor, Jr.

IMAGINE

for John Lennon

Imagine you're standing next  
to Russian genius novelist  
Fyodor Dostoyevsky with the  
other members of the  
radical Petrashevsky group, about

to be shot by  
fellow soldiers from your  
own former military units.  
You're pissing in your  
pants, standing in the

December cold, shackled and  
hooded; the priest, carrying  
Bible and Cross, has  
given God's blessing on  
your death, the sentences

have been read, the  
golden spire of some  
church nearby has gleamed  
in the clear sunlight,  
Dostoyevsky has whispered "We

will be with Christ,"  
and his friend Speshnev  
has replied "A handful  
of dust," The soldiers  
take aim from fifteen

steps away from the  
scaffolding, "I understood nothing  
before I kissed the  
cross," Dostoyevsky later said.  
"They could not bring

themselves to trifle with  
the cross." He remembers  
Zola's The Last Day  
of a Condemned Man,  
and feels a profound

indifference to both life  
or death. He thinks  
how if he is  
spared life would seem,  
every second, endless, and

that would be unbearable.  
Suddenly someone appears waving

a white cloth and  
the soldiers lower their rifles.  
A carriage clatters into

Semenovsky square, and a  
sealed envelope from Adjutant  
General Sumarkov is presented  
and read. It is  
the Czar's pardon. The

joke is over. When  
they untie Grigoryev, they  
find he has gone  
mad. The rest of  
the prisoners feel nothing.

"They could just as  
well as have shot  
us" says Durov. Petrashevsky  
demands not to be  
touched, to put on

his own chains. He's  
placed in a troika  
and sent into a  
life of endless exile.  
Dostoyevsky gets four years

in a Siberian prison  
and then must be,  
till death, a soldier.  
Later he is pardoned  
and we have this

gift to the hearts  
of all who love  
to read and seek  
wisdom. Imagine, when your  
poor heart feels like

torn tarpaper; Imagine, when  
you hear the killing  
and torture; imagine and  
learn to live in  
hope not yet born

and imagine what Jack  
wrote to Joyce from  
the Slovenia headed for  
Tangiers. The ship nearly  
floundered in mountainous waves

five hundred miles out.  
Jack discovered inside a  
luminous calm and wrote:  
EVERYTHING IS GOD, NOTHING  
EVER HAPPENED EXCEPT GOD

## MARTIN LUTHER KING

It was in that voice,  
you can get a sense  
of it listening to recordings.

It was in his voice--  
a wavering, a deep sense  
of heart that wrung all

hearts in the same aria  
of soulful suffering and joy.  
The timbre of that voice,

a sound that carried his  
soul, a soul of such  
depth that the deep good

buried in the forgotten places  
of our hearts rose up.  
I'll tell you one story,

one tale that I believe  
can bring back to all  
what is in us like

that voice that so lifted  
the air setting us afire  
with hope for change. You

know Selma, you know the  
Washington march and what he  
said of the dream, but

the story I have to  
tell is when he was  
a child, when he was

playing with his brother Alfred  
downstairs in their home, and  
Alfred slid down the banister

and accidentally knocked his grandmother  
down. She lay on the  
floor without moving and Martin

grew distraught as he stood  
immobilized thinking his dear "Mama"  
dead and then the boy

ran upstairs and threw himself  
out the window, falling twelve  
feet, laying motionless as his

family called his name. Both  
were bruised but fine. Martin  
grew up to give us

the dream and the redemptive  
hope, that caring still singing  
in our sometimes wavering hearts.

All one needs is to  
heed his words, listen to  
the timbre of his voice

■ Charles B. Taylor, Jr.

## The Way of Virtue

Old Lao Tzu looked to Nature  
for illustrations with life,  
writing that nameless eternity  
cannot be told or written.

Blueness of the sky  
allows clouds whiteness.  
Green Spring yields Fall brown.  
Evil makes realization of Good.

Mysterious manifestations build  
the gateway to desire, because  
darkness appears as a spring  
of emptiness for fulfillment.

A stream seeks basic lowliness  
through each turn of desire,  
embraces being and nothingness  
in cycles of passion and light.

Mountain spirit lives in man,  
and in the primal woman, valley  
spirit centers for the river of life  
to flow low as its highest good.

Passion evoking spontaneity,  
mountains wash into valleys  
arousing lush fertility for life,  
radiant need in vital fruition.

We bear shaped vessels of skin,  
filled with the essence of God  
and daily charged to propagate  
ascending mastery by our souls.

## Angel Slides

Puffy clouds, a bit of haze  
sun behind the parting ways  
rails break through in golden rays  
worth the gaze and praise.

## The Sanctuary

Nature's spirit flows—  
    like holy water  
    from a baptismal  
    font—  
to build

temples of seven pillars  
on foundations inscribed  
with the circle of heaven.

Her fountain  
stirs a deeper wood—  
    laid in the hills,  
kissed by the sea,  
    fed living waters  
sprung from above.

Here grows a shining  
    inner shrine,  
God's haven built  
    of human curtain—  
a dwelling for faith  
    in the heart.

## Trucking and Tripping

We bring little, born into life  
needing help, guidance and love.  
If lucky, our burdens grow  
to give gifts as we pass along,  
handing out that which we ourselves receive.

We carry more away from life  
than we bring to it, much more.  
If lucky, we travel light,  
leaving behind a trail of love,  
a gentle path blazed through the wilderness.

### Point of View

That patchwork sky, this morning pink,  
gives reason for tired eyes to rise  
and rush to see through windowed view  
that scene—that glory colored wink  
of life with grace, God's given guise—  
granted all men, seen by too few.

Enthralled being, I sit and write  
determined here to open eyes,  
to show mankind a regal hue,  
that gift of God's creative light—  
ours to imbue.

### Lightness of Being

Whatever shades of light  
may stay my eyes to pause in trance  
one image cannot miss the point—  
a rainbow seen by chance.

### Self Image

As we delve deeply  
into ourselves  
looking for self

at the center we find  
God in control—  
a blessing, grace

which we need  
to experience in order  
to find our selves.

Made in God's image,  
God is the center  
of ours.

In our experiences  
God lives.

Our last blackberry morning.....

© by June Zaner, February 11, 2008

On mornings like these I miss my father  
though I was not the daughter he had wished for,  
especially in that last long year.

Old men, old daddies, have special needs,  
different from the young. Their toenails grow long and they  
curve under and become thick as rope and they are yellow.

The hair grows from their ears in curls, earlobes swell and crease.  
Chest hair goes grey and chest muscles relax into the belly  
over sticks of legs and knees that stiffen and crack.

Sitting on your deck that last day before you took to your bed,  
I could not see your feet and did not notice that they no longer  
held your fragile weight.

We talked of how much fruit the  
pear tree held and how it bent  
the limbs almost to the ground and  
how the tree would suffer if we didn't  
pick the fruit or trim the branches.

We talked of how big the Brazos berries must  
be now, down at the fence line, the ones we picked  
and brought back to the house last summer, stink bugs, dirt and all  
washed them at the sink and filled our bowls full then  
sprinkled sugar on top of them....

All glistening and swollen and black with  
juice and smelling of summer and sand.  
I recall how our tongues turned dark  
red and our teeth looked strange when  
we smiled at each other, father and daughter,  
enjoying the way we looked to each other.

■ June Zaner

**...as the world ends...**

©by June Zaner, February 26, 2010

He told me in so many words that  
I was his homecoming queen, that  
As the ashes fell and steel melted that  
He would jump into the fire for me,  
That he would grab my hand and hold on  
And not let go as the edges crackled, or,  
At least that edge we found ourselves on....  
Long years ago, when we could out-run clouds.

He'd shake a cigarette from his pack, rolled up  
Neatly in his shirt sleeve and light it, eyes  
Lowered, and let the smoke rise, like a blue  
Fog between us. It was so charming, so vogue,  
Then I would grow faint and take that same  
Smoke into my lungs, sharing it, warming it with  
My own breath, until it hung between us like some  
Offering, some omen, some witchy thing, a promise.

He cast a spell with his eyes, his smoke curling,  
Brown eyes mirroring my own. We liked the  
Reflection of each other, so much like love, and  
Thought it real, not shadows, not just nature, not  
Just what everyone saw in each other when they looked.  
Oh, well, it didn't last, it never does, and as the last  
Flame lept about my feet, I knew that he had not braved  
The fire for me, as the world ended, sizzle, pop, gone.....

■ June Zaner

## A little tune-up....

© by June Zaner, June 18, 2008

May Jean needed a little tune-up

For years the red had been leaking from her hair,  
First at the tips and then the roots,  
A bleeding out in flames, so to speak, of her youth  
Until now she sat, at age eighty six, in her yellow  
Fiesta dress, all swirled in rick-rack and pleats,  
In the hall of the hospital.

May Jean was checking in.

She'd brought a few things along to amuse her,  
Some video tapes of John Wayne's western movies,  
The latest large print Reader's Digest, her Metamucil,  
Several packs of Lifesavers, a tube of Tangee lipstick,  
Photographs of her grown children and, despite their  
Objections, her framed DAR certificate.

It was her life, after all....May Jean's life.

Powder had caked in the creases between her eyes and  
Eyeglasses, like a shelf, and made it difficult for her to blink  
When the nurse touched her shoulder, to tell her she must leave her  
Jewelry with her daughter, the rings, the bracelets, pins and necklaces  
She'd used to enhance her dress, her beauty.....all gifts given her  
By the man who had forced motherhood upon her and then walked away.

The jewels were May Jean's sparking annuities.

The years had been kind and she still went to teas and lunch and church with  
Friends, most of them on walkers and canes, without a man to hold their  
Elbows and help them off the curb. They had become a club almost, sending  
Cards and giving morning calls to check to see if they'd made it through  
Another night...those long, unforgiving nights when death came calling,  
The nights one did not wake from, in their eighties.

May Jean had vowed not to check out in the dark  
She had just checked in now, for a little tune-up.

■ June Zaner

## 1. To an Observer, Medically Inclined

To an observer, medically inclined,  
the corpse is barely different from the cart that bears it:

No breast nor thighs, no supine life:  
    only always corpse, cadaver  
    just so and never neither less nor more  
Than all those brittle, brilliant particles  
    that somehow make that metal gleam.

■ Richard Zaner

## 2. In dozens of airy rooms

listening with vacant eyes  
    and hollow ears, as  
  
the jubilant computers of another time  
keep track and track  
    and tape on tape  
recording with redundant regularity  
    (all that noiseless pulse and push,  
    buttoned key-like press  
    which no finger now need do)  
    for nowhere now is not:

There is no time  
    no time at all  
nor word softly used to ease  
the pain and lonely of such  
common things as milk and squeeze,  
    green and lips, sand  
    rain, shade, shadow, dark —  
nor you, nor we,   not I  
    nowhere now is not nor we who  
    give it constant birth, wanting  
    in a lonely anguish not to be

the cutting irony of being human:

which, Faulkner's herald reveals,  
weeping on funereal wood,  
is-not, is, not is, not even was;

and yearns,

curious as cunning,

for what ought to be —

then leaves such matters

to the dozen vacant rooms

connecting halls of hollow-eyed

and hallowed digital devices,

logically busy:

so we will not have

to hear nor touch nor see

our own asking, while,

perhaps,

self-automated we move

a cunning bit of steel about

here and there

cross-hatching (here and there) a face,

here and there

and digitized inscriptions flawlessly record

with eyeless track on track,

as traced records etch

that there is no time

no time at all

nor flesh at all

to age —

nor grow older with me.

### 3. On Hearing of a Death, By Drowning, in Molasses, of a Man, 26

December 21, 1968:

Slight oozings of the stuff,  
then more, the tanker bursting  
(in New Jersey) chock-a-block with  
This thick and sweet volcanic syrup  
(like literal *en soi*), and a man,  
the papers said, died in this viscose tomb.

But then,

Why not?)

Despite the eagle eye and  
hawkish mind, eager  
for news to stupefy and charm us;  
it was reported as “utterly bizarre”

—flawless icon of bedlam, this,  
the shifty mention,  
slyly celebrating  
like sheer pornography.

and through it all, the quiet irony:  
when born, we are old enough to die,  
and death by any other means is just as queer  
(and unrehearsed

■ Richard Zaner

## Tony Zurlo

### Notes on Quantum Music

#### I: Traditional Theory

Like most music students I learned keys and scales, flats and sharps, through mnemonics: "Father Charles Goes Down And Ends Battle" gives the order of sharps (FCGDAEB).

"Battle Ends And Down Goes Charles' Father" gives us the flats (BEADGCF). The notes on the bass clef lines in order are "Good Boys Deserve Fun Always" (GBDFA). It's all very logical.

For example, we memorize ACEG for the spaces between the lines: "All Cows Eat Grass." So if all cows eat grass, and I eat grass (cereals), I must be a cow, according to my finely trained Aristotelian brain.

#### II: Add Quantum Theory

Everything in the Universe is made up of Energy called Quanta; Music is one of the Things in the Universe; Therefore all Music is made up of quanta. Quantum theory helps clarify all of this.

Believe it or not, I'm neither a theoretical physicist nor a logician, but quantum theory has inspired Stephen Hawking and other geniuses in their quest for the Theory of Everything (TOE), so I tried it.

But I found quantum theory and classical logic to be incompatible. Melody, harmony, and rhythm are silenced during the mortal combat between Aristotle's syllogisms and the Heisenberg's uncertainty principle.

#### III: Back to Basics

The word FACE or "Furry Animals Cook Excellently" tells me the notes in the spaces between the lines. "I cook excellently. Therefore, I'm a furry animal. Quantum theory insists that what I am depends on the observer.

If we simply switched the mnemonic FACE to past tense, we'd have this: "Furry Animals Cooked Excellently." Now that could be a menu item. And add a pinch of quantum theory and Schrodinger's cat goes missing.

For now I'm skipping both quantum and logic, and sticking with mnemonics. I remember my guitar strings, EADGBE, by repeating, "Every Acid Dealer Gets Busted Eventually." And I tune my guitar, singing merrily: "My Dog Has Fleas."

■ Tony Zurlo

The Magnificent Unified Theory of History

Meditation I:

The Expanding Universe Theory of History

Wouldn't it be comforting to know you could  
recreate yourself if you ever became obsolete?  
Avoid the fate of anti-history sucked into  
a giant wormhole--destination unknown?

Your heartbeat achieves Warp-10, and the siren sounds,  
and above you dangling plastic tubes and needles  
fuse time and sound and space in your mind, and soon  
you become a nomad adrift in an expanding universe.

Meditation II:

The Multiple You Theory of History

On the other hand, if there are parallel worlds out there,  
maybe you could find evidence that you still exist, even  
if you vanish from here. But would you recognize another  
you out there? What if you were a bald-headed new born?

What if you have yet to be born in those parallel worlds?  
Or maybe you have died in one or more of those worlds  
and shall never reappear? Would all opportunities be lost  
for you to become the champion of your imagination?

Meditation III:

The Magnificent Unified Theory of History

If self-awareness can be willed into existence,  
why not will your own scripts into being, create  
histories you once only dreamed, endless epics  
starring your other selves from parallel worlds.

Why not unify history with your magnum opus  
drawing multiples of persons from parallel worlds  
to crown you Ruler of the Imagination, Creator  
of The Magnificent Unified Theory of History.

Tony Zurlo

Shove it up a wormhole

I exist in *The Twilight Zone*, a parallel universe where no one blogs, and Faves are outlawed. And "MySpace" means a person's secret hide-out from the world.

And the only berries I handle there are the blackberries and strawberries and raspberries and other berries that I pick and eat with cream and sugar.

I don't iPod, p-Pod, or poo-Pod. In short-- Y-Pod? The only Pods I know are those in *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, and I'd prefer they not know where I live.

I do read a lot, and to do that I have to "Face the book," so I'm confused by all this nonsense about Facebook. Often when I'm lost in another world reading,

my cell phone rings and a voice says I need to buy a PodSpaceBerry or a some other kind of berry. I tell them to "Shove it up a wormhole," and hang up.