

xv
Working Poems

by

W. Mahlon Purdin

To

*Ida,
Margaret,
and Bill.*

Other Works By W. Mahlon Purdin

P O E T R Y

- I. First Poems (1974)
- II. No Place To Wash Our Hands (1975)
- III. The Ballad Of Hayden Brown (1975)
- IV. And Is Mine One? (1976)
- V. Go Forth Companionless (1976)
- VI. July Poems (1976)
- VII. Self Poems (1977)
- VIII. Touch & Eddy (1977)
- IX. Forty Days, Forty Nights (1982-1990)
- X. Untitled Poems (1987)
- XI. Pencil Poems, Fading Poems (1987)
- XII. Untitled Poems II (1993)
- XIII. Songs (Compiled 1994)
- XIV. Spoon drifting (2001)
- XV. Working Poems (2001-2002)
- XVI. Selected Poems: A Chrestomathy (2003)
- XVII. Welkin Blush (2002-2004)
- XVIII. Poems/2005
- XIX. Poems/2006
- XX. Poems/2007
- XXI. Poems/2008
- XXII. Poems/2009-2010 (working)

SHORT STORIES

- The Last Remains (1972)
Abyss (1973)
Wish You Were Here (1978)
Kill Zone (1979, updated 2002)
Zachary Doane & The Cat Who Came In From The Cold (1987)
Ratworld (1990, updated 2003)

N O V E L S

- I'll Ask Her In The Morning (1978/2005)
The ScreenMasters (1990 - 2007)
The Seas of Sargasso (working)

N O N F I C T I O N

- Comments and Blogs
Some magazine articles
(many other writings available on legendinc.com)
Letters from Vietnam

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Dedication.....	2
Other works.....	3
Preface.....	6
Republican (1).....	7
Republican (2).....	8
Remedy.....	9
Sit Tight.....	10
Efflux.....	11
Exploring.....	12
Forget About It.....	13
We Must Forgive Them.....	14
Suppositious.....	15
“Standing in the wind...”.....	16
Golf, Guitar and God.....	17
Today.....	18
“So, it was a lonely night...”.....	19
Don’t They?.....	20
Emotionally Unavailable.....	21
Mr. Evans.....	22
“I have to stop, not...”.....	23
“You should be Chairman...”.....	24
Water Street.....	25
To Prove What?.....	26
New Business.....	28
“It’s not what you say, it’s...”.....	29
“He that will not try...”.....	29
Going To Association.....	30
Walt Whitman poem.....	31
To Tom McNulty.....	32
The Sea Was Lazy.....	33
Affection.....	34
To Suzanne and Bob.....	35
“Belong to a group...”.....	36
“God’s gift to you...”.....	37
Club Vacances Toutes Saisons: On Vacation.....	38
Not Dog Nor Dad.....	39
Divagating.....	40
1000 Miles is a Long, Long Way, Stephen.....	41
Horripilation.....	42
My Old Pen Back.....	43
Seeing The World.....	44
This, The Scene We Are Looking At, Is Only The Beginning.....	45
It’s Cold In The Swale.....	46
I Hope.....	47
It Looks Good, No?.....	47
It’s.....	48
“I restrung my guitar today...”.....	49
Who Knows.....	50
“It’s easy to the boss.”.....	51
And, Why Did They Use Lead Pipes?.....	52
And Then, There’s The Olive.....	52
“I’m in favor of spreading the wealth,”.....	53
“The impeachment...”.....	53
“The Senate Democrats...”.....	53
Forgiving.....	54
Miscellaneous notes.....	55
MarbleheadYourDream.com.....	56
Standing in the wind.....	57
Things I Learned in Palm Springs About Vacations.....	58
Happy Birthday, Joy.....	59

On Paper, At Least.....	60
Got My Address	61
The Estuary	62
He's My Friend, Joel.....	63
Flirtier Lashes	64
God Wiped Me Clean Tonight.....	65
Good and Faithful Servant.....	66
Everyday Thoughts	68
John Stemniski	69
Miscellaneous Notes.....	71
Hole-In-One.....	72
Tripping To Washington.....	73
The Killer "B's"	74
Suzanne	75
The Whole Magilla.....	76
Hunter Craig: 1981-1999.....	77
Gotta Go.	80
Eye Level.....	81
Randy Goodwin: 1938-2000	78
Perhaps I Can Enthrall You With A Dream.....	84
Hold Me Tight, Nothing Else	96
A Forgotten Birthday.....	97
The True Memorial	98
Good Intentions.....	99
My Old Cat.....	100
"My mother died yesterday..."	101
The Des Moines Marriott.....	102
Up With Her.....	103
Jack and Barbara.....	104
There Together	105
Deeply It Goes.....	106
Uncle Carl	107
Time, like an ever-rocking stream," et. al.....	108
Methodical, Intelligent Watch Dog.....	109
Denny and Alex and "Democracy that works".....	111
Something Undone	112
"It's over. My family."	113
Janet.....	114
Mom.....	115
Miscellaneous notes	116
Fear, Dread, Terror, Fright.....	117
"I miss you."	118
Timothy McVeigh	119
Regardless of how much you love me... ..	120
As If.....	121
First Jump	122
Forty-Eight Seconds	123
Sit Down With Honor.....	124
Time, Those Years	125
Coming Of The Next.....	126
Salty Smith (1938-2001).....	127

P r e f a c e

While there are a few “lost poems” in this volume from 1987, the rest were all written in the years 2000 and 2002. “Perhaps I Can Enthrall You With A Dream (A Poetic Novel)” was never intended to actually be a novel, but just a dream inviting you in. Dreaming is a survival skill in poetry, and in life; at least for me. The thought of living exactly what I see is too frightening. To translate everything into something else, sometimes better and sometimes worse, is an important ability, and thank God, we all have it.

Sorting through all of the dreams of everyday life is what this volume is all about. I wouldn’t say that it was planned that way, but nonetheless that is what happened.

Working is what people do. It doesn’t matter if you live luxuriously or if you live simply: your life is your only job.

All dedications are the subject of introspection and care, but this one I really struggled over.

This is my fifteenth book of poetry and my fifth decade of writing poems. I think I wrote my first poem sometime in 1964, but I can’t be sure. My Mom told me I was writing “as long as I can remember.” That could mean the 1950s. But, apparently, nothing I wrote in those days, poems or prose, was worth saving in a family memories secure location. I did recently find all of the letters I wrote home from Vietnam, but I’m not sure what to do with them. I have listed “Letters From Vietnam,” in my list of works, but that might be premature.

As time goes by, I find that my poems are more important to me with each passing year. To finish all of my books, and get them to a place where they can’t be lost is nearing obsession. I guess I’m trying to prove a point to my three dead parents. Perhaps that’s as good a definition of “working” as I’m likely to proffer.

March 18, 2005
Marblehead, Massachusetts

REPUBLICAN (1)

“Hello, I’m a young mother
Who woke up one morning
To discover my husband
Left me for a Club Med
G.O.
At the time we went on
The vacation we were making
\$72,000 per year
Together
And with three children
We were still able to have
Fun!
And now I have to pay for it.”

“Hey, you must be a Democrat.”

“No, I’m a Republican...”
[the shot fades to black slowly]
[voice over says]
“and for good reason.”
[fade in bright white letters]

The New Republican Party
Of Massachusetts.

22874

REPUBLICAN (2)

Most times when you see someone
Like me on television
You say to yourself,
“Well, here’s another upwardly
Mobile yuppie woman
Wondering whether she should
Buy a BMW or a house
In the Hamptons.
But not this time, television viewer,
Not this time.
I’m a victim of a socially transmitted
Disease that’s ruining my life.
I’m a victim who wants an answer.

“Hey, you must be a Democrat.”

“No, I’m a Republican...”
[the shot fades to black slowly]
[voice over says]
“and for good reason.”
[fade in bright white letters]

The New Republican Party
Of Massachusetts.

22874
(Thirty-seven seconds)

REMEDY

You're looking for a remedy
Not just a medicine.
It could be a therapy
That heals disease
Or relieves the pain.

Sometime it's a redress
Of old wounds or words.
Sometimes it's an amend
That must be made.
Sometimes it's relief
From old things and thoughts
We drag along.

A salve of something
A new freedom
It's all we want.
To expiate our inflictions.

32549

SIT TIGHT

Just stay calm, sit tight.
Take it easy, let things
Take their course.
Rest a little on your laurels,
Have some cookies with milk.
Maintain.
Stay cool.
Be kind, rewind.
You know where it's at.
You're something special.
All the time in the world.
Go get 'em.
Take a walk in the park.
Have some fun.
Party on.
You're a hero.
You're never the last to know.

(Some thoughts for you
When what you really want
Is always out of reach.)

Happy now?

31084

EFFLUX

It happens slowly
Like bleeding
Or dying
Or watching the
Sun set over the
Horizon with all of
Your dreams. Your love
Sets behind the
Fears and worries.
All of the insecurity
Creates strangely beautiful
Colors and then
There's that sound
Like a sigh
That goes on and on.

10984

EXPLORING

There are people who will
And there are people who won't
Give of themselves as a
Natural reflex.
Those who won't have a set
Of multiple defenses and
Maneuvers to put you off and
Make you feel inadequate.
"Which way is the wind blowing?"
"Depends on which way you are facing."
"Isn't it a great day?"
"Not in Sri Lanka."
And on and on.
Some people let you in with
Every word and every breath.
To them, exploring you means
Letting you explore them.

Openness is a treasure of
Self-worth. Be open.
You are worth exploring.

102034

FORGET ABOUT IT

It's way back there, lurking
Like a predator on the prowl.
It's always been there
It will always be there.
Somedays it's right on top
Of me, humping away
Like there's no tomorrow.
Like a victim, I don't
Resist, thinking it
Could be worse.
Then sometimes it laughs
At me for even thinking
Of resistance.
And tonight I'm sitting
Here scratching away
On this poem trying to
Forget about it.

31084

WE MUST FORGIVE THEM

The great history lesson is
That we must forgive
Our fathers,
Not make them heroes.
We must forgive them.

13094

SUPPOSITITIOUS

It came out of nowhere.
It was a bolt from the blue.
Never saw it coming.
It caught me by surprise.
We all feel the wonder
Of the way the world works
And there are many
Explanations and theories,
But, in the end, the world
Works the way it works
And we may affect it
In a moment, but
Not in the end.
We come and go
And never know.

2494

Standing in the wind
Leaning against it, really,
It rushes all around me
Like a hurricane.
I can feel it on every
Level and it's warm
And soothing, even
In its ferocity.
I'm just standing here,
Head bowed to the wind.

2494

GOLF, GUITAR & GOD

Amid the orange groves and fairways,
In all the strange traffic and stores,
Even skating about forty miles
And learning new ways to skirt death
Where the sidewalks end;
In the heat and then the
Sun-goes-out cold and drizzling
Rain of the desert that floods
Faster than you can run;
In the middle of my ways of
Dealing with loneliness and love,
Yes, even there, I returned to
My love of spiritual things and
My love of singing with all my heart.

I'm so glad I brought my guitar
And my songs and my books,
And, oh yes, my clubs, too.

2594

TODAY

I have lived
18,833 days
451,992 hours
27,119,520 minutes
1,6727,171,200 seconds
As of 10 p.m. tonight.

How many have I
Wasted?
How many have I
Squandered?
How many have I
Richly enjoyed?

Each and every one:
All of them wasted,
All of them squandered, and
All of them richly enjoyed.

Isn't that how
It's supposed to be?

22194

[NOTE: BP2 6,225; JP 18,645]

So, it was a lonely night
And a late night, as well, playing
My guitar and writing
Emails to my friends.
My old friends were there,
Tormenting me, distracting me,
And belittling me until
I ran away to bed.
This morning I was befogged
And walk/ran to clear my head.
Now, I'm sitting here doing
An annual report
Taking phone calls
And, being me,
Alone again, naturally.

31284

DON'T THEY?

This weekend was busy
A dinner out
And I know there
Are two kinds of sermons
Those that scare
And those that share.
Self is a big thing.
You change, you agree
You compromise, and
You dictate, you tyrannize,
You are so lazy and wonderful
That it is really true
That to know you is to love you.
But the alternatives present
Don't they?

EMOTIONALLY UNAVAILABLE

If you really know the other sex
You know that that is an impossibility

MR. EVANS

I will certify the books, but
But I cannot attend our annual meeting.
Would you please
Say for me, "Of all the tasks
Which I am asked to do, there is
Nothing which
I consider more important
Than our Association
Of the Pupils of Glenn Evans, other than
The truth that, as an elected official,
The people have placed in me.
I hereby certify that the books of our
Association are properly prioritized,
Fair and loving, and that they present
A context, to all of us, that we should
Unanimously and individually support
And nurture and emulate. And, while I love
Each of you, you will only know that
As we move on with forgiveness,
Ingenuity, and love.

32384

I have to stop, not
For myself, although
That would be good,
But for her and her
Because they are
Better than this
Brighter than the
Darkness I create
And happier than
The charade I
Attempt but can't
Really pull off.
Perhaps I have already
Stopped and reality
Hasn't caught me yet.

32884

You should be Chairman
Because you are fair
And emotional,
Funny and factual.
People like you.
That's important.
And, you can call me "Billy."
"Mr. Rinaldo" was brilliant
I'm going to nominate you.
If you'll let me help you.
I watched you read (word for word)
The letters and you struggled
But were fair and informative.
You will be a great Chairman.
Trust is important.
How did I know the Riptide has a Keno?
And why didn't you?

WATER STREET

It's the second Lee Street hill
To me. After Abbot Hall
I generally skate down
Lee Street head down under
The branch at break-neck
Speed then stroke and
Then over to Water Street.

(And then the fun begins.)

It is the steepest hill
In Marblehead.

TO PROVE WHAT?

Good-bye, Karla?
Today's the day.
Karla Faye's day,
Either for reprieve or for death.
What she did 14 years ago
Is totally abhorrent
And impossible to conceive.
But, while incarcerated she has changed
And that means something.
The victims' families are all set
To come and watch the death
Of Karla,
Believing that this will give them, "closure."
In fact, it will leave the wound
Forever open, and this may actually
Be what they ultimately want in their hearts.
"Closure" on the violent murder
Of a loved one would,
Perhaps, mean moving on
And leaving them behind.
This is extremely hard
For the average human being
To do.
People say they want closure
But they really want to strike out
Across the years of suffering
To achieve "justice," or even "satisfaction,"
Believing that to do a version to Karla
Of what she did to her victims,
Is just.
But the implications of that leads
Back to a society that kills to stop killing,
And mistreats to end mistreating.
To fully achieve closure,
The family should forgive
In the face of reformation and remorse.
That, and that alone, lends meaning
To the deaths of the victims of Karla.
If her life, she goes on, by example
And by practicing what she preaches,
And actually *decreases* the violence and
The hatred and the killing,
In a small degree,
The all of our lives:
The murdered, the imprisoned and the passers-by,

Are all better off.
As Karla dies today, so too,
Will die the last ounce of meaning
In the lives of those she killed.
And in moments after,
The hopelessness and meaninglessness
Of life will be made to seem more real,
Not less.
Karla Faye Tucker is a symbol of our society,
Why would we executed her?
To prove what?

4284
KFT : 1959 -1998

NEW BUSINESS

I watched people who do
Have other lives like
Mother, friend, realtor,
Citizen, and government
Interact civilly, politely,
And yet intelligently and
In the end productively
And decisively.
I wish you were there.
Tony was, and it wasn't
Easy for him.
I made sure of that.

4284

It's not what you say, it's
What you feel.
Are you heating up or cooling down?
Do you care more about the feeling
Than the thought? It's a problem.

He that will not try new remedies,
must expect the same old problems.

GOING TO ASSOCIATION

Up at 6 a.m., but to bed early
With a restful but up-and-down
Night. Straightening out my
Campaign signs took some time
And effort, and not without
The appearance of anger and will.
Then rushing to the Internet
To ftp information about the
Millennium Bug, a photo and
A site to learn more.
Then a fight broke out, showering
In a rush, crashing through
The house, left, returned, left
And returned again. Now
Totally in the grips, not relaxed.
Traffic, accidents upside down,
More traffic, lights, parking,
Walking, and suddenly there.
At Association.
Here.

5284

I mark'd, where, on a little promontory,
it stood, isolated.
I mark'd how, to explore the vacant,
vast, surroundings
It launch'd forth filament, filament
out of it
Ever unreeling them – ever tirelessly
speed them.

And you, O my Soul, where you stand,
Surrounded, surrounded, in measureless
oceans to spare,
Ceaselessly musing, venturing, throwing, – seeking
the spheres, to connect them;
Till the bridge you will need, be form'd – till
the ductile anchor hold;
Till the gossamer thread you fling, catch
somewhere, O my Soul.

– Walt Whitman

TO TOM McNULTY
On May 11, 1998

All men shine by borrowed light.
It's because of others
That we have learned our truth.
It's their ideas we embrace.
And we grow by their success.

As the years go by,
I hope to see your light borrowed
And enhanced and shined brightly
Through others who shared with you
The years of your service, the years of your success.

And who go way beyond.

51184

THE SEA WAS LAZY

Black and inky, it streamed by.
I was riding a ribbon smooth and silky.
Water starbursts were retina-remembered
But no other record would ever exist.
Pure memory, pure experience.
The transom barbeque smoke and all the offers
Of haute cuisine and mixed drinks from the boat backs
"I've got three kinds of beer on tap
Here, what kind do you want?"

My kayak was a silent slider
In the harbor of delights
On the Fourth of July.
The sea was lazy and alive
With explosions of color
And people, well past midnight
There was still music and laughter.
Sometime later it all went back to
Normal, except for a memory
Like ripples in my passing by.

I paddle around in the quiet after harbor
Relishing it all.

7684

AFFECTION

We still show affection
And nearly every day.
But as the years have
Passed we changed too.
Embracing
Today, warmly, lovingly
Taking a moment to
Share our feelings, I
Noticed she was scratching
My ear – absent mindedly –
Just like she does
To the dog.

It's the thought that counts.

I know that.

81484

TO SUZANNE AND BOB

It's just a word
And then it's more
And then it's more
And then it's more
And then it's more
And more
And more
And more.

And then
It's everything.

All the best. Always.

– Bill and Joy and Blythe

81884

Belong to a group
Heroes

Sense of achievement
Fun and excitement

Curiosity and creativity
Instill a spirit of adventure
Leadership and responsibility

Russell Somebody
U of ME
Institute of Student Aspirations.

God's gift to you
Was our life.
What you made of it
Was your gift to Him.

- Anonymous

CLUB VACANCES TOUTES SAISONS:
On Vacation

They told us it was a five-star resort,
That it was “just outside of Quebec,”
That it had a “full kitchen,”
And a “heated outdoor pool,
Comfortable accommodations
With a view of the St. Lawrence Seaway.”
We traded one of the nicest suites
On St. Maarten for this Unit 1907
Which was smaller than a trailer,
With two broken beds, a bathroom
Smaller than a phone booth,
No closets, full of moths and bugs,
Freezing cold with no extra blankets
No service at night to help,
No restaurants open within ten miles,
And no one who spoke English at all.
All of this only two hours from
Maine, America and sanity.
After one day, we’re all ready to
Head on home.

81784

NOT DOG NOR DAD

There were days when we
Rested in each other's arms
And took away the "taken for granted"
Feeling that the world imparts
So ferociously on us
Day after day
Like we would kiss long kisses
That stirred the passions and
Made us explore and refresh
Each other's feelings and
Delve into each other's love,
To see how deep it ran
And how hot.
Those were the days.
Now affection is like patting
Our dog on the head or kissing like
Our parents.

I am not a dog.
I am not your Dad.

9784

DIVAGATING

For
Just a little while
Drift along with me.
Wander around in
Our emotions.
Feel free. Feel there.
Feel here.

Relax and ramble
Around in our
Strange digression
Of remember and
Irrelevancy. Let's put
A parenthesis
Around things for
Just a moment.

Set it all aside
Briefly, perhaps.

Let's deviate for the
Sake of love

And lasting.

10984

1000 MILES IS A LONG, LONG WAY, STEPHEN

But, it is only the first step.
I skate with joy and a sense of child-like abandon.
I teach others and know what I know.
It's the long, steady strokes of the long distance, lonely skater.
I wrote about it in my soliloquy on the way to Provincetown.
But I never stopped.
The next day I skated twenty miles.
And the next, and the next.
I have gone through wheels and bearings and yes, even spacers.
I take pictures so others can see and I write poetry so others can feel.
Press on, dear friend.
Your explorations are vicarious thrills for me.
In the end I will complete another thousand miles
And another thousand miles, with you and others.
Silence has a resignation within it. Like love,
There is a sweet surrender.
Read the story I posted on Marblehead Magazine
Entitled, "Ed Gillette." There is something there for you.
We have along way to go.
Longer for me probably,
But I knew that at the outset.

HORRIPILATION

Standing there beside you
Thinking of you
Watching things
And doing things
Suddenly you
Horripilate extravagantly.

What causes that?
Fear? It's not cold.
What are you afraid
Of, or is it just
Something that happens.
Just one of those things?

10984

MY OLD PEN BACK.

It was waiting for all
These years in a drawer.
I wrote twelve books
With it and it recorded
A lot of almost forgotten
Things, events, people, and
Places where blood was
Spilled and love was shared.
And I held it in my
Hand more than anything,
Else, more than other hands,
More than other habits,
More than almost anything.
And now it's back
Scratching its way down
The page. Back
From the dark.

101884

SEEING THE WORLD

In so many ways it's just
Another afternoon alone
Watching video movies
One after the other
Eating whatever's around
Reading, writing, shifting
Back and forth in my
Chair. There's The New York Times
My notebook, a computer,
And all the other stuff
Of me. It's just like
So many other afternoons
Alone. Except on this one
I can look out the window
And see the world
From 32,000 feet.

12994

THIS, THE SCENE
WE ARE LOOKING AT,
IS ONLY THE BEGINNING.

That's an amazing thought,
Almost whenever it is said,
Isn't it?

Imagine that all the killing,
The senseless killing,
The lying, the misleading, the
Overkill of our society
Is only the beginning.

Imagine that this morning when
You took her in your arms and
Kissed her and touched her and
She ... well, she said, "This is only
the beginning."

Imagine that.

13994

IT'S COLD IN THE SWALE

Playing golf with a family of three.

His name, I think, was Ken Phillips.
His god was, "People should be free
To use their property for whatever they
Want," and "People should be allowed
To keep as much of their pay as they
Want." I said, "I couldn't
Agree more." He always tried to hit
The ball too hard, all eighteen holes.
Except when he got on the green,
He always hit it too softly there. He
Came up short, all eighteen holes.
His father was in the game.
He always got it to the hole.
He tapped in, all eighteen holes.
His mother was also in the game.
She played the best of all of us.
All eighteen holes. On a short
Par five, she told me that,
"It's good to blame it on him."
Meaning the old man, the father.
To me he seemed a democrat,
Fair, fun, easy-to-be-with,
And a surprisingly good six.
He was courageous, consistent,
And creative. He beat me
By more than ten shots, although
My last hole was my best but
He had left the course.

On the way back after 19 holes,
The sun, the Palm Spring sun, had
Gone down behind the mountains
That surround Cathedral Canyon,
We three golf-carted down into a swale.
It was really cold, probably 40 degrees
Or less. Ken said, "It's cold
In the swale." I had felt it to.
His mother had too. Ken was
Surprised when I shook her hand
As golfers always do.

13994

I HOPE

After your birth in 1982
All of my poetry is written
With you in mind.
Someday, you will
Find this page, I hope.

13194

IT LOOKS GOOD, NO?

You will never know
How assiduous I am.
Small perhaps.
That's for me to know.
But, in making the "date"
On the last poem, I
Adjusted the first 3 in the
Minutest way,

You will have to
Find the original.

13194-x

IT'S

God's presence is stronger
The lower you go.
So, when you're at the
Bottom He's screaming at you.

Or, did you already know that?

13194

I restrung my guitar today
With strings that were so old
And rusty that they were actually
Worse than the strings I took off
And threw in the trash basket.
They were actually “new” strings
That I have had for over
Ten years. Plus, I recently bought
A new new set which I left back
In Marblehead.
I was just rotating the stock,
Using the oldest first,
Which in this case turned out
To be kind of stupid.

13194

WHO KNOWS?

I saw her looking.
She would look low and high
And then make the wrong choice.
It was a small cigar case
With really only one good brand and size.
The Teamos were smallish rings
And the rest were vaguely unknowns.
No wonder she couldn't decide.
The Montecristos stood out like a
Sore thumb to me. She was lost,
But looking hard. Sincerely.
I helped her, God forgive me.
And she said, "He's been kind
To me and I want to encourage,
That behavior." She smiled.
If he's any kind of a person, then
That cigar should open a few doors.
Who know's? Maybe ...
It's only the beginning.

13194

It's easy to be the boss.
But, it's not easy to be right.
That takes years and
Friends and, yes, wisdom.
That is not easy.

13194

AND, WHY DID THEY USE LEAD PIPES?

If the Romans were so smart,
Why did they build Pompei
Right next to Vezuvius?
What were they thinking?

The “vodka martini”
Is a derivative of
The “dry martini” and
Not a true martini at all.

AND THEN, THERE’S THE OLIVE

A martini is a mix
Of gin and vermouth.
It is not just gin.
The question actually is
How much gin do you want?
A “dry martini” is a violation
Of the true martini protocol.
The smoothness of the
Vermouth and
Its flavor are
Definitely the
Main ingredients
Of a “Great
Martini.”

2394

I'm in favor of spreading the wealth,
Yes, I am. It's a liberal idea
But it's a good one.
The blossoming of the royalty in
The provinces was always
The death knell for
The aristocratic monarchy.
Who would speak against it?

2394

The impeachment
Was the third story
Tonight. Not the
Top of the news.

2394

The Senate Democrats
Are losing some face
Now because they are
Starting to seem
Repetitive. Except for
Ted Kennedy's
"Findings of Fiction."
They should follow his
Lead.

2394

FORGIVING

A Martini
Could be
An 8 oz. glass
Full of small ice
2 oz. of gin
3 to 4 oz. vermouth, or so.

To me, that is
A martini.

2394

PS. After an initial generous
stir, don't stir
again. This is important
because flavors
layer, like oil and water.
At first, sensational,
and then increasingly
forgiving.

Murray Canyon Dr.
Canyon South

Fleet
CarolAnn Caruso
639-2720
63

Sun City
Indian Wells W or East
Desert Willows

3728 6011 81 11001

Desert
Dunes
18550 Palm Drive
Desert Hot Springs

15 min.

Blythe 1 1/2

TV
2nd large

43
dead space

MarbleheadYourDream.com

It's when you go for a walk
The sidewalks are smooth,
There's a view now and then
That makes you say "Wow!"
Now and then. Plus, the
People are nice, lots of kids,
And we all see each other
Now and then, at the park.

Shock absorption in the grips
As a positive thing,
Means you expect the golfer
To have slow, very slow, instincts.

If you want a try
at adding to
marbleheadyourdream.com
join us at
"Friends of Marblehead."
We're waiting.

Standing in the wind
Leaning against it, really,
It rushes all around me
Like a hurricane.
I can feel it on every
Level and it's warm
And soothing, even
In its ferocity.
I'm just standing here,
Head bowed to the wind.

2494

THINGS I
LEARNED IN
PALM SPRINGS
ABOUT VACATIONS

- Didn't use the thermos
- Bring my extra carrying case
- Think about the guitar
- Tee shirts
- Travel jeans
- Golf shirts
- Two shorts
- No more than one pair of slacks
- One sweat pants
- Two sweater

HAPPY BIRTHDAY, JOY

I found it again. It was at
The bottom of a bottle, at
The last puff, the last stroke.
The last aching awaking;
There it was: a rebirth of joy.
A loving feeling. A happiness
That really had no reason.
Almost as though unseen
A hand had wiped away
All my troubles and pointed
Me in a new, but not new,
Direction. Happy Birthday, Joy.
I can't wait to take you
In my arms.

2594

ON PAPER, AT LEAST

Even the paper reeks
Of my vacation, but
Not for long probably.
As time goes by some
Things fade and some
Things stay.
The aromas and flavors
Fade to vague.
On paper, at least.

2494

GOT MY ADDRESS

The last guy I played
Golf with got my
Website address from me.
Bob, from Kansas, that's
How I think of him.
He had a super low
Posture and a wide,
Sweeping and powerful
Stroke. Could not putt,
Except for the lone birdie
Of the day. And then he
Took dead aim and got it.
It could be nice if he
Left a message for me,
But I doubt he will.

2594

THE ESTUARY

A thousand pictures
Cannot describe it.
A thousand days cannot
Encompass it.
Its beauty defines
The word.

2594

HE'S MY FRIEND, JOEL.

He's a drunk.
He's a poet.
He's a captain.
He's a jerk.
He's a genius.
He's a complete idiot.
He has the insight of Socrates.
He's as dense as a haddock.
He's all of that, and
He's my good friend.

2594

FLIRTIER LASHES

She seems litigious
You do induce comas, don't you?
Judging from your look I have misspoken.
Whatever world you're stuck in, I'm not sure
I get it.
By not going down the road, it remains
the road ahead.
Keeping things trapped in the bud.
Sweet dreams, Baby. How long must
I dream?

GOD WIPED ME CLEAN TONIGHT

It just happened
Unbelievably
All of my secrets, even
The little ones that slipped by,
And I got another chance.

They were beautiful
I selected them each, one by one
But, now, they are gone.
I am clean.
Cleaner than I think I should be.

It's a divine reprieve
And I really appreciate it.
God wiped me clean tonight, and
I want to stay that way.

How often does he do that?

3284

GOOD AND FAITHFUL SERVANT

We know what he did
And we know what he was
The quiet casket draped in white
You might almost have missed it
The quiet family seated to the right
The solemn friends
Some in uniform
Some not
Men and women and
Subtle little children
All a testament to
His service to others
To his Town. He didn't
Give more or flashy speeches
He just of himself.
He led the band and built
The parade, to honor others
He was a constant theme at
Our events....

He was always there, filling a need.
Practical, helpful, caring, amazingly
Energetic and thorough
The most ordinary, simplest tasks,
We extraordinary to him
Just loving, and express humility –
The things God asks of us.

George Carruth gave those
Coruscatingly and effulgently, spreading
A resplendence across
Each and every one of us.

He lived and shared his life and
Without hesitation, he loved.

Children, on cold and hot Saturdays,
The Elks, the Town, and seven jobs,
The veterans, his church: Father Burns
Said, "He was a throw-back
To the earliest Americans."
He also said, "He would be embarrassed

At all the praise here today.” He lovingly
Planned out all the details and burial,
So others wouldn’t have those duties.
Integrity, loyalty, self-sacrificing,
Giving, generous, he was an
Example, for us who
Remain behind.
His son walked to the podium
And remembered:
Faith, winning is not
The most important
Thing, practice,
Teamwork, practicality,
Duty, education, the Golden Rule,
Science, don’t waste time,
Family love, principle, persistence,
Human details, roots, small things,
Pride, but not proud, love
Your country, your Town,
Love every group, every project,
And every person.

Well done.
Good and faithful servant.

EVERYDAY THOUGHTS

It's like opening the window
And letting some fresh air in:
Taking a few minutes each day
To read others' thoughts on life –
Not news, not gossip, not
All the goofy, trendy fads
That fashion the daily press
And that scream through our air –
And love and on dreaming
Of a better way.

Reading through Psalms, or the Tao,
Or through Housman and Yeats
Takes my everyday thoughts
To an open window.
I can feel that fresh air –
Cold or dry, hot or stormy –
Of truth and of real life,

I pause rapturously
Just before I jump.

31094

JOHN STEMNISKI

When I first spoke to John
It was during a call I made to
The golf course where he was working.
It as a little surprising to hear a
New voice on the line,
Obviously an older man.
I asked my question and he was no help
At all. I wondered why they let him answer.
It's part of my theory of
Bad business that they always put the
Mot unknowledgeable, most unfriendly
Personality in as the phone answerer.
John fit this bill to a tee.
The next time I called it was in reference
To an upcoming tournament. Again,
He was no help at all. "I don't know,"
He said. "Is there anyone else there?"
I asked. "I don't see anyone." Very disappointing.
So, I got an opinion of John that was
Not flattering. Not flattering at all.
And, I knew he knew me, because around
The pro shop he sort of kept his distance,
Eyeing me out of the side of his eyes,
Wary. That didn't sit well either.

And, then, it was a Saturday afternoon,
I had worked late and felt like a round,
A few holes anyway, of golf.
As I walked around the winding course,
I saw someone else out there, hoofing it,
Like me, and I had a sense that I was
Gaining on him. At the third hole,
I was on the tee, he was walking to the green.
He reluctantly waved me up. I hit the green.
As I approached I recognized John.
It was not the recognition of thrill,
I sort of shrugged internally.
It is one of the ways of golf;
Single players join up for the good of all.
"Good hit," he said. "That was a beauty."
He chipped his second shot to the green and
We settled in to put out. I missed the birdie,
But made a par. He bogied.
The next hole he hit a monster drive
And loosened up a little. I dubbed about
175 yards, so he had some time off as I hit
My second, a screaming three-wood
To the front of the green. He sliced badly.

It was still his shot. He told me that
He got the job because he was a friend
Of the head pro. Which was an odd thing
To say to a member. "Oh, I used to help
Bobby with his chemistry," he said.
"Really. What are you, a chemist?"
He said, "I got my PhD at MIT, and worked
In missiles and nuclear stuff for my career."
It turned out that he holds several important
Patents and probably made a ton of money.
I found this interesting. And then he told
Me about his Dad who died of Black Lung
Disease in the mines of West Virginia,
And how after watching him drain away
With coughing and emphysema he
Decided that chemistry was for him.
"Forty years of research," he said.
"That was enough for me." In
Retirement, he began to golf.
"My father hated golf," he said,
"And he always told me that golf was a
Rich man's game, and 'you are not
A rich man's son.'"

We walked along, carrying out bags, playing
The course one shot at a time, together. I found
I loved this guy who didn't know anything
On the phone. Every time I played after that
I always looked for him. We became golfing
Pals. Now when I call I don't care what
He knows, it's John and we talk.
I see him in the clubhouse and it
Makes me happy. I admire him, more for
His Dad and his long career of pursuing
Knowledge than for anything else. And
I really like playing golf with him.
The way I got to know him,
And what I learned about him,
And about myself,
Made the whole thing a richer
Experience. If someone asked
John Stemmiski how he knew me,
I hope he will say, "Oh, I used to help
Bill with his chemistry," and
How true that would be.

31194

apophosis – the allusion to something by denying that it will be mentioned, as in, “I will not bring up my opponent’s questionable financial dealings.”

googol = 10^{100}

googolplex = 1 followed by 10100 zeroes, or,
10gogol = 10 to the power of gogol.

coruscate – reflect brightly

soi-disantk (swah-dee-zahn) – self-styled or so-called

farrago (fah RA goh) – a confused hodgepodge mixture

logeries – aggregation, collection

schemeil – an unlucky bungler

corrigendum (kor uh JEN duhm) – an error in a printed work discovered after printing and shown with its correction on a separate sheet.

HOLE-IN-ONE

It was a pleasant first day of July,
And I was not playing well.
Four double bogies on the front nine
With a score of 48 is not
My best by a long shot.
I had hit some nice putts
And one or two long irons
But it wasn't great and
Then it was.
The 10th hole at Westin
Is a 163 yard par three,
With traps guarding the green.
The flag was on the right just over the trap
And I was hitting second.
I chose a four-iron to be sure
I'd get it there and for once
In my life I gave it a perfect
Swing. It bounced once, then softly
Rolled toward the hole, diving inside
Just like a little mouse.

7293

TRIPPING TO WASHINGTON

First, it was just all being in the
New car and going to
Preview colleges.
Then it was the extremely
Stinky truck that grossed
Us out and we had
To speed past it or die....

Then my mother proclaimed
That she had survived
A fatal heart attack

Then, my brother and his wife
Taking advantage of me like high-rollers
Which they are not

Then, Irene and her sweet boy –
They both were surprisingly wonderful

Then, the drain stopped up and a super
Black man came late at night
To repair it after earlier in the day
Mom had said ... “No more
Negroes in my house....” It was
Fun to watch her hypocrisy go
Down the drain with the other crap....

Then she would go to bed and
Then come back like Marley’s ghost
Over and over. We knew she
Was not remembering each time
And each goodnight....

And then it was being together,
Just like always, one more time.

7293
(4-27-1999)

THE KILLER "B's"

In the finals this morning,
I was two up after two,
Three up after 10,
Two up after four, one up after 12.
Two up after 14. One up after 15.
Still one up after 16.
(I made a six-footer to tie the hole.)
We both parred 17(!) He won 18.
All square after 18 holes.
He hit a nice drive on the first extra hole (#1),
But I hit a corker to 177 yards from the
Green in a downwind fog that left
The dimmest flicker of the blue flag
To see in the distance, back right.
He slightly sliced 5-wood to the right
Of the right bunker, pin high.
I hit a beautiful 4-iron to the right edge
And it back-spun off the green about four feet.
My shot again. I chipped a six iron
To about ten feet (easy two-putt range)
And felt I had lost the hole.
He chipped to five feet, his ball stopping
As though on Velcro. Both lying three.
Me with a shot. Him now watching.
I knew I had a putt to win.
Said a little prayer.
And made one of the finest putts of m life ...
A perfect ten-footer that died into the hole.
Game over. He was shaking his head.
A new "Killer B" champion is crowned.
How sweet it is. How brief it is.
I remember 15 where I dropped
Three shots in a row
And plan to work harder and
Harder on chipping.
He was, in the end, a gallant
Opponent. And a very interesting one.

9693
(To Tim Whalen)

SUZANNE

She is so amenable. So comfy.
Everything about her is what I like,
Beauty. Brains. Braun. And so loving.
Loyal. Sexy. Entrancing. Enthralling.
Every curve. Every word. Everything.
Never in a million years.
Never in my dreams.
Never. Never.
But every day. Every hour.
Every minute. She is there.
Eight hours a days.
Forty hours a week.
She never says no.
She never says yes.
She just is. And is not.
Suzanne.

91993

THE WHOLE MAGILLA

Tonight I saw my breath
For the first time as the
Wintering begins slowly
On our mouths like a kiss
Then more like a hug
And then the whole magilla
Of ravage and rushing
Running for cover and
Dodging a battering
Through to the stilling
Warming way off on the
Other side.
Like a lover looking down
The lane, I can see
Her coming through
My misting breath.

10793

HUNTER CRAIG 1981–1999

It wasn't his church but it was
Packed with too man young people
Who should have been in class,
In crazy moods of exuberance
And against that never wanes
Over friends, colleges, dating,
And all the strictures of being teen-aged.
Every seat was filled with memories
And overflowing sadness unlimited
And even the isles fill with
More and more, now two abreast,
Now three abreast, now out
Into the streets. This community has
A back-up of love for its children
That is often postponed in the
Day to day but when it counts, it's
Overwhelming.

For the half hour before the service,
The thousand or so people in the church
Sat or stood without speaking as
Though a message had been passed
That no words would suffice.
Only silence could do that and
Even in the quiet there was
Still much unsaid.
I had the sense of not a thousand
But of only me.

The eyes of the people were haunting.
Having seen them in so many other
Ways: happy, angry, goofy, and excited
To mention a few, today the eyes were
Distant and gone. Vacant wet.
Searching and not finding.
Casting from side to side, then down
And then down farther and then
Up and up farther and then
Centered and wet and blinking.
The human eye says a lot
And, again, in the silence there
Was much, too much for all of us.
It was as if a single question
Hung there in the church and as
We all asked it, we all knew

That no answer was coming today.

A breeze blew through the church just
Before the service began. It was cool
And the candles struggled to stay lit.
And then the inexorable ceremony
Began in its pace of tradition,
Unstoppable.

Caroline Kane's reading of Paul letters
To the Corinthians was so brash, so
Genuine, so wonderful, so cleansing.

The earthquake on Tedesco.
A young man cut down.
Why have you forsaken me?
You are God's greatest gifts to each other.

His parents were magnificent, the day he died
Was their engagement day. When the police came
"I had that feeling."
I didn't want to miss a minute of
It ... Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday.
She was so generously sharing
From her heart ... amazing grace.
John Travolta in "Michael" that's
The type of angel Hunter is.
He's been transferred. He doesn't need
College anymore. There had to
Be a reason ... everyibe – you are
Under a tremendous responsibility
To carry on his work.

When we were married here, we walked
Out those doors and started a new
Life. Today is just the same.

Be kind. Be happy.

102294

GOTTA GO.

Why do I wander?
Why do I look away?
Why do I struggle so?
Gotta go. Gotta go.

Going from thing to thing,
I hear the others sing.
My heart is pounding so.
Gotta go. Gotta go.

10794

EYE LEVEL

Very late
The desk was up
The carpet was at
Eye level
The lights were on
And I panicked.
How did this happen?
Righting things including
Myself, I went up
To bed still in a panic.
How did this happen?
A loss of faith,
Right there
At eye level.

11394
(Some things you don't
want to remember.)

RANDY GOODWIN
1938–2000

When I first met Randy I thought
He was the most important
Person in the world, and
Then I realizes that he
Was thinking the same way
About me.

He wanted to know everything
About me, where grew up, what
I dreamed of and as I told him
He was nodding his head
The way a father does as his
Son takes the first step.
His smile lighted those
Early days of my business,
Of my dreams.

Over 20 years later one of the media
We place big expensive ads in
Screwed up and didn't clear
Our credit until the last minute.
It caused a problem and
Three weeks before he died
He was on the phone with me
Apologizing and doing everything
He could to set it right.

As you measure a man
He was one worth measuring,
But if you tried he would stop you.

When he started to play golf
We played together and I worried
That it would be stiff or something
Because he was always in a suit and
Always very busy and golf – to be played;
That is, it needs a strong does of
Goofing around. We teed off
At Tedesco and his shot was awful
And we winched. I offered him
A mulligan as a friendly golfer
Does, be he declined. “No,” he said,
“I’ll just play my ball.” Wondering
To myself where it was, he
Walked briskly off down the first fairway.

He was marking his card already as
We walked and it surprised me.
Sometimes I take a lot of shots," he said.
"I wouldn't want to forget one."
In the end he shot at least a 120
And didn't just enjoy himself,
He had an ever-loving ball.
Watching him truly enjoy himself
Was unusual for me and I knew
He wouldn't do it lightly or
Too often. But, boy, he really loved
Golf, and he would never be any good
At it, because he had put it off too long
For his own good.

There are funerals that occur
In Marblehead that are too
Big for the Town and this was one.
The quiet day to day of a small
Town sweeps past a lifetime before
We know it. Sometimes.
The routine familiarity, the sundry
Kindnesses and ordinary smiles,
The "Hi's" and "Hello's" "How are you's,"
Come and go softly one at a time.
And then someone is gone.
Those who say we take each other
For granted don't know the
Small town ways. Affection like
The still waters, runs deep. As if
Amazingly grateful for the routine, the
Quiet life, our community gushes forth,
At certain times with unity and singleness
Of purpose that is beyond all doubt.

Be not afraid to go before you.

The church was packed with people up and
Down the isles and more outside trying
To be close.

He met his wife, Barbara, in the bank.

On his funeral, he said, "I don't want a big fuss."

You made it so much easier
For so many.

Kahil Gibran was there.

John's tribute: "You always pulled for me."

Amazing Grace

Hugh Bishop: He was my human yardstick ... I
Measured everyone I met by him.
He was born in Marblehead,
Went to our schools,
Lived, loved and worked here.
He was the best Marblehead
Has to offer.

Even though he spent
His whole life in
Marblehead he went
About as far as a man
Can go.

12705

Perhaps I Can Enthrall You With A Dream
(Exerpts from A Poetic Novella)

by

W. Mahlon Purdin

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Part I: The End

Part II: Interlude

Part III: The Beginning

PART I: THE END

-1-

WHEN HE CAME INTO
his apartment it was still early afternoon.
The sun was out.
It was a summer day. The rooms were hot.
The air was stale. Walking to each window in turn
he opened them all
and the curtains blew inward
and brushed against his face.
The thought of a shower
came into his mind
and he began to undress
as he walked into the bedroom.
Taking from the closet there
a bathrobe and two slippers
he started for the bathroom.
He was interrupted mid way
by another thought:
"scotch and water."
So continued past the bathroom
Down the hall to the kitchen.
From the louvered-door cabinet
he drew down a glass,
filled it with cold tap water,
and then, he walked into the living room,
lifted a bottle of Johnny Walker Black,
and poured several ounces
into the glass of cold water.
He then took a deep draught.
Pausing, still holding the glass
near his mouth, he looked around
as though comfortably confused
in his refreshment
and then turned back and resumed
his walk to the bathroom
taking the glass, nearing half full now,
with him.

The soap and hot water felt wonderful
on his body. He could feel the weariness
easing away from his shoulders
and town the horripulations of his spine.
He washed carefully, assiduously,
from head to toe.
Under his chin and jaw bones where
oil seemed to gather
down the back of his neck, that seemed tense
as as though it was fighting the cleaning.
After scrubbing down and rinsing every part
of his body, he stood there

naked in the shower
for several minutes
just letting the warm water
rush over his body.
Finally, he stepped out of the shower
and reached for the shaving cream.
He shaved slowly and thoroughly.
He brushed his teeth scrupulously.
He dried off with particular attention
To details.
He had done all of this before
Earlier in the day
Before he had left for work.
But this time it had all been
for him. This time.
He had taken a shower because
He wanted to.
And he had enjoyed it,
The pleasure of initiative.

Completely refreshed and feeling much better,
he dressed in a pair of light blue trousers
a clean white shirt, socks
and his old comfy slippers.
He felt clean. All of his close felt soft and smooth going on.
He went to the kitchen and made a sandwich
Of cheese with crunchy white toast.
He ate slowly and quietly.
Finished, he washed the dishes and dried them,
stacking them carefully on the shelves.
He spent the next two hours cleaning the apartment.

He made the bed of course.
He straightened the bedroom.
The bathroom was already immaculate.
He stacked the coins on his dresser
by size and date, looking at each one.
He arranged his comb, wallet and handkerchief
neatly beside the coins.
He spent a half an hour in the den setting
magazines in chronological order, covers up.
He put all of his records back into their covers.
He dusted and polished the tables.
He vacuumed everywhere including
under the furniture and in the closets,
door frames and the windows, too.
He lifted and leaned the big couch back on its legs to
Get under it. He noticed that there really was no
dust even in the way back region. The rug's pile
was still ridged from the last time the vacuum

had been there.
He finished around 4:30 p.m. and, resting
for a moment, poured himself another scotch.
His legs were tired as he lifted them
onto the newly polished table and leaned
back into the soft pillows of the couch.
He fell asleep in this position for a while.

Around six he was up again
walking out of the kitchen with some fried chicken,
mashed potatoes and green beans
with slivers of bacon mixed in for flavor.
He set the plate on the table
and returned to the kitchen for
a glass of milk.
Eating slowly, he surveyed his apartment.
The television was unplugged from the vacuuming
so he plugged it back in and turned it on to the news. He listened and sort of watched as he ate.
When he was finished he washed his dishes
with care and a certain delicacy.
He was a man dedicated to order
and cleanliness.

No one had bothered all afternoon.
Neither doorbell nor the telephone had rung.
For this he was thankful.

There was no one there to watch
as he lit a cigarette (something he seldom did)
and strolled onto the balcony to watch the
evening sun begin to set behind the
buildings of Hartford.
As he opened the sliding glass doors
the smoke from his cigarette
swirled around his head.
He stood, quietly sipping his drink and smoking
for a time. He felt pretty good.
He noticed that the old aches and pains
were gone and that
he felt relaxed and contented.
He felt refreshed.
He lit another cigarette from the stub of the first
and stood facing the city.
He was thinking of small children playing in the park. (One child runs up to another child and touches him
on the shoulder, then turns and runs away shouting, "You're it! Bet you can;t catch me.")

He downed the rest of his drink, letting the ice cubes touch his teeth.
He wasn't a serious drinker, but
he had enjoyed the drinks that day.
His cigarette had an inch or so to go when

he set it lightly in the ash tray and
walked to the railing.
He briefly leaned on the railing and
felt the cold metal in the dampness of his palms.
Then he climbed onto the railing with the agility
of a far younger man.
He felt a sense of pleasure at the
quick response of his muscles.
He stood there, balancing on the rail, feet apart
like Colossus, with his hands on his hips.
He felt a breeze caress his clean-shaven face
and began to gently lean slowly against it.
He raised his arms over his head
and then extended them before him,
with some grace, as he fell like a diver
from view. He seemed to pivot on the air
as he disappeared. The ash tray moved slightly
with the shaking of the railing
and thin trails of smoke seemed to draw toward
the rails as though following him or at least
moving toward the place where he had been.
The wisps of smoke lingered there for a moment
and then disappeared too.

It was silent for a moment then an ice cube
in the glass clinked as it adjusted to its changing
little world. Soon there were lights in the city
as the sky darkened after sunset.

Then in the glass there was only water.
Two cold cigarette stubs in the ash tray.
There was no movement or sound at all,
save the sub-audible fluttering of the ashes in the
ash tray as a breeze touched them. And there was a
clock ticking somewhere in the apartment.

PART II: INTERLUDE

THINGS WERE SPINNING.
Flashes of gray and green
going by like ribbons in the wind.
Passing eyes. Watching.
Slowing now, blurs everywhere.
Now greens again, and blues.
The world rushing up, then still.
For a long time there was quiet.
Everything paused, catching for breath.
Things still slowing down.
Closer, closer...
Stop.

* * *

I woke on beach.
Cold sand in my face.
The waves were noisy.
I was alone.
Very alone.
At first it was impossible to move,
lying there I thought of death,
Is this death?
Lingering between real and nothing
on a stretch of sand
unable, or unwilling?, to move.
I can move. I'm getting up.
Unbelievable.
Now I feel fine.
My muscles are fresh.
I am flushed with a sense of freedom.
Of being free.
Of having freed.
Laughter.
Why am I laughing?
How funny this is. If I had known
that this is death I'd have done it sooner!
Now the sand is touching my cheek again.
I'm still laying in the cold sand.
Is that sleep coming?
Where is my laughing.

* * *

What is this?
All is dark
yet I stand and walk
while still lying.
Where? Where am I going?
What is this?

* * *

Now I am being carried.

* * *

They've tied me up I think.
Now I'm in bag of some sort.
They're throwing me somewhere.

* * *

I have landed.

1.

A SPOT OF OPACITY
on an otherwise transparent structure
I awoke
on a plain of green
reclining my head
against the bark of a tree.
It was a quiet afternoon.
The sky was clear as a bell.
I had been sitting here for about an hour
I felt,
and in that time
the only thing I can remember
is deciding to let the grasshoppers
hop and the worms worm
their way out and about.
I was part of nature for a time.
I wished for the moment of peace
to go on and on forever,
but, this was not to be the case.
Looking back,
it is as a dream,
and now is so real
it seems the only real thing.
But I was there once,
I was there as sure as I'm here,
and, I'm here for sure.
I'm alone now, and I was alone then
but I was not always alone.
That is the hardest thing to remember,
I was not always alone.

When I first moved
it was to brush bark bits
from my neck
and then to stand up.
The was warm, as always,
on my body
and I felt strong and alive.
Stretching every muscle
as though for the first time
I started to use this new form
so like the other.
This one is fresh, unabused
and healthy.
Air rushed deep into my lungs
silently as I breathed.
I remember looking around
and suddenly, beginning to laugh
suddenly, remembering all ...

Was I falling then?
I always feel now as though I'm falling.
Constant sort of vertigo
that keeps me waiting.
Waiting for what?
This is all I can remember now,
it's a lifetime,
I've been here now a lifetime.
I'm old now, but still strong
still going on.
But I can see it in the pond,
I can see it in the river,
It's there, I'm old.
The wrinkles on my face
show it, and I can see my hands
moving as the write this:
they are not young hands anymore.
If this is indicative
then what is logical?
In coming here,
where did I come from?
I no longer recall.
I try, but it's not there.
I remember a sense of newness and
beginnings.
But where is my first life?
I'm convinced of the fact
that there was another life
but particulars bewilder me;
escape me.

PART III: THE END*

** This "novella" is actually an introduction to my first novel, "I'll Ask Her In The Morning," which is the story of a man who commits suicide by jumping from the 33rd floor of a building in the first chapter. The rest of the book (480 pages) takes place in six seconds.*

HOLD ME TIGHT, NOTHING ELSE

The falling through a sudden gap of expectation
And unattached and not disoriented but reassigned
To a new destiny of devotion and giving affection
Without approval as though it was preordained
At this moment and not before that I should
Discard all and be reformed, renumbered and reborn
In a new image of a loving man who
Forgives all, and can't do enough, and who
Is happy to just sit with you and
Watch TV or drive around town or
Listen to the radio as though it
Was captivating like a passion only dreamed of,
Not indulged beyond dispute, like a harness
Put on and a long pull begun with the joy
Of being held tight on the way.

2705

A FORGOTTEN BIRTHDAY

Lost in thought and
All my dreams of new
Things and people who
Love with all their heart
And you, deep in there ...

Lost in action to move things
Along at a pace that
People can do and enjoy
And share in the success and
Happy times with you in there ...

Lost in regret for foolishness
And joy slipped away and
Worry about everything times two
That never happens but could
Have happened to me, and you too ...

I forgot your birthday deep in
All these things and in
Being me. On the way to a better day,
I missed something beautiful
A once-in-a-lifetime something beautiful.

A birthday surprise with you
Deep inside.

3300-5
For CR

THE TRUE MEMORIAL

In the wild beating
Of the heart in fear,
When “plumes were under heel,”
There is a message
Of love and loving
One another.
In the sweaty palms
Of hands “that took it striking”
And on the fingers that
Pulled the triggers over and over
With an embrace
So complete to
Confuse others.
To accept mortal danger every day,
So far from alienation,
A soldier and his thoughts
Formed a nation.
They are the nation.
And like our nation
They go on, remembering
They remember.

And in those memories
Lies the true
Memorial.

52805

GOOD INTENTIONS

It's hard to concentrate
With a caterwalling
Going on outside the door.
The plaintive sound
Of sheer undiluted
Insistence, the prodding
Of the small purpose:
Being on the wrong side
Of the door, so full
Of insipience and
Thickheadedness trained
By the right intentions
Was the wrong, wrong
Outcome.
It's bothersome, really
But imagine the awakening
When the door finally
Opens, you press forward
Against the widening gap
Fully expecting your
Dreams to be fulfilled, but
Instead get catapulted
Backwards by a swift,
But well-intentioned
Kick to the head

122705

MY OLD CAT

Tumbling backward
Rolling into a wooden
Box I built years
Ago to help him keep
Warm in winter and
Safe in summer, my cat
Deftly – even though
He is old: fifteen at least –
Avoided injury, quickly
Got a purchase on the
Cold planks of the back porch,
And scampered away, about
15 feet and then alertly
Looked back to see me
Admiring his nimbleness
Without malice.
I went back to reading,
Enjoying the peace.
I thought of him; his heart
Racing, his senses heightened;
Watching in all directions for
Additional challenges to his
Supremacy. For a moment
He was young again.

122705

My mother died yesterday
In her sleep, apparently, after
A long struggle, shall we say,
With a debilitating disease.
She was lonely and she was
Bored. She was unhappy and
She was confused about what
It all meant. "Why is this
Now my life?" she would ask me.
"I never thought I would end
Up so alone." She always
Chastised me for not calling more,
But when I did she complained
That she wanted to die. "I'm ready."
But beating in that 96-year-old
Breast was a determined stubbornness
Unlike any I have ever seen or
Experienced, even in combat
As young men died. Margaret's
Life force could have moved the
Moon, but on a cold January night
She died anyway. All alone.

114105

THE DES MOINES MARRIOTT

Valet parking.
Four blocks from the YMCA,
With free parking
Nice room on the 24th floor.
What a view.
A nice pool with exercise
Equipment, lots of towels,
And a beautiful sauna
And hot tub.
A nice restaurant
With onion soup, salad,
Lemon Pepper Walleye
And dessert.
My Mom would love this place.

119105
Especially the apple cobbler
with oatmeal.

UP WITH HER

When I travel, which is rare,
Kindnesses go a long way.
She was walking fast across
The dining room and looked
At me sitting alone and stopped
The way young women do sometimes,
Her bouncy hair still going,
Her clothes still going,
But she's stopped short
And looking at me.
"Hi," she said and reversed
Direction with a big smile.
It made me smile, too.
Her hair and her clothes
Just couldn't keep
Up with her.

119105

JACK AND BARBARA

When I saw her, I vaguely
But uncertainly recognized her.
She introduced me as "Billy,"
Even to another "Bill."
"Bill, this is Billy." It was odd
To me.

I recognized him right away
And told him so.
He said, "Really?"

She and I intensely discussed
The situation of my mother's
Death including all the details.
I remember him only saying,
"Turn up the heat, Honey." and
That he fell asleep in his chair.

But he drove with me all the
Way to the airport and
Waited until I was all
Set. He told me my visit
Was "an honor."

12015

THERE TOGETHER

It was cold at the graveyard
And they had set up an awning
And some chairs beside the grey
Casket. My father's grave
Was there too of course
And now those two are
There together.

The two dead bodies of my
Father and my mother,
My father's has been there
For twenty-five years,
My mom's has been there
For about eight hours now.

They are both dead and
Cold in their graves....
But all I can remember
Is her silly lip-wrinkling
Laugh and his flat top
And warm hairy arms.

12015

DEEPLY IT GOES

Sometimes there comes along
A sentiment, a thought really
That touches so softly
That how deeply it goes,
Almost goes unnoticed
As it reaches down into
The one place where only
Friends can go, where
Only kind thoughts dwell,
With laughter and love,
And, just fun things
Left to do.

Sometimes there comes along
A sentiment that carries
With it such feeling
That it just seems
So natural to believe, so easy
To accept that it
Fits together perfectly with all
The other thoughts
That we will remember
For a lifetime.

12215
Thanks.

UNCLE CARL

He was crying
Uncontrollably
Like a schoolboy
Jilted by a girlfriend
Or scolded by his Dad
Or so lost and alone
That hope was gone.
He stared at the program
Like a man reading
His own death warrant.
As though his death had
Never occurred to him
And it came upon him
Unawares and unfortold.
At his wife's funeral, for once,
I loved Uncle Carl.

3315

Time, like an ever-rocking stream,
soon bears us all away;
We fly forgotten, as a dream
fades at the opening day.

olumbent Impromptu
John 14: 1-6; 18-19

Virginia Knapp Lovgren 9-2-1917 to 2-9-2001
Married 56 years
Rockport Bell-ringer solist
Loves animals.

MYTHODICAL, INTELLIGENT WATCH DOG*

What was it like that last hour?
With death in hand and all his
Problems swelling ever greater
Was his heart pounding as though
There was time to make up
As though there were time to make up?

The crowd was not wall-to-wall.
But it was a nice crowd of people
Who I know loved him for what he was.
When you take you life – I suppose –
Some of the wind in the sails
Of grief goes out; the little craft drifts in.

The wonderful woman beside me
Lived through her mother's suicide
And while we talked of Frank Reagan's life
Her eyes filled with painful memories
And with memories of her only-child childhood
And her father's eternal ministry.

There was a palpable lack of sadness
In the room, and there was anger there.
People sat formally and listened intently.
The singing was solid but not moving, really.
You could hear the clock ticking
In the silence of thoughts; each with his own.

My memories of Frank include him hanging back
In crowds and when I sought him
He smiled with surprise and gratitude.
His glasses were always hanging around his neck,
They were half-eyes lenses lowered so
He could use them or not; mostly not.

When he needed help in business, he didn't ask.
It was a new license and service
That would make his restaurant more competitive
But he weathered on alone and failed in the end.
When we spoke about it, he waved it off
With a philosopher's pyraph: a nuisance now gone.

He loved dogs but I never knew it.

Although now I do remember seeing them.
Dog owners know something
Others don't know; dogs are lonely.
They are always lonely except in packs
Roaming. We become their true friend.

A true friend who knows all about them;
Their wonderful free spirit and loving souls,
And their messy parts and even worse.
That's a true friend: someone who knows you
And still loves you. And still loves you.
In Frank's last hours, all friends were barred.

The gentle spirit sitting beside me
Survived an hour like that when
All loved ones were cut off
With a violent self-destruction.
And she came here today to witness.
She taught his son in the fourth grade.

Like a ghost of a suicide past
She sat there in a suicide present
Thinking about Frank Reagan and
Probably about her mom
And about strengths and weaknesses
In all of us, like sails luffing, drifting in.

If you needed help
His hand went up.
When he needed help
He went off alone and
Closed the door.

3315

**Leslie Gould said this
described Frank Reagan.*

Denny and Alex

– How a man dies is not important. How he lived is what matters.

– A boy looks at a star and cries, “Why are you crying,” asks the star. You are so far away, the boy says. If I were not in your heart already you wouldn’t have seen me at all.

Democracy that works to find a way to solve problems and
reconcile differences with rights and privileges.

– Madison

polemicized and paralyzed

SOMETHING UNDONE

I'm sitting in the family room
Of my family's house after everyone
Is dead. It's been picked over and over
And now I'm leaving it like a carcass
To be devoured more thoroughly by
The true predators. I can feel my
Sisters and my step-brother and
My Dad watching TV and my Mom
Being here in every nook and cranny.
I can hear the TV and bacon cooking
And there's that feeling of all being
Together, of being a family that is haunting
Me to tears. I have searched and opened
And read through and looked behind
Everything in this place – one final pass
Has brought me – as though searching
For something relentlessly, inevitably
But you know what? I'm not sure
I found it. I leaving with a sense
Of incompleteness; of something not done
Something undone.

4152⁴

It is over. My family.
My parents – all three –
Are dead. The house is empty
And ready for the next.
The will is being completed
And the memories are what
They are now. Nothing will be
Added; only taken away.
With the years, with the drying tears,
With the childish fears.

It's over now. People are
Calling me on to my life.
But for a moment I
Sat here to write almost
Furiously – desperate to be alone.
Sad, so sad, to be alone
But alone in the end.
Just as I knew I would be.

4151⁴

JANET

Simple in your manners
Complicated in your mind
Sensitive and rude without malace
You drove my mom crazy
And me too.
We all owe you a debt of
Gratitude but exactly
What you did
Is hard to figure out.
Thanks anyway, Janet.

4151⁴

MOM

I miss you so much
Even though you thought
I neglected you.
Sitting here in your
Home alone at the very
End is so sad
So lonely I wish I
Could hear you play the
Organ or that we could
Sit at the kitchen table and
Talk and talk and talk.

But now it's gone.
It's gone.

What did it all mean?
What did it all mean?

4151⁴

A whale rammed the ship Sussex in 1820.

1712 the discovery of sperm whales

New Years Resolutions

1. Clean, reverent, patient,
trustworthy
loyal
helpful
friendly
courteous
kind
obedient
cheerful
thrifty
brave
clean
and
reverent

2. No flour, no sugar

Ontology

Matt 18:15-17
"Strictly obeyed..."

The principle that a person who rant about others is often describing himself.

Is America arrogant? Could we be un-arrogant with our fabulously successful democracy?

Sometimes "obvious things" are cross-grained.

The arrogance of powerlessness is worth watching.

"The God of Islam is not the same God as that of Christianity. It's a different God, and I believe it is a very evil and wicked religion.
- Franklin Graham, Billy's son.

Do we really want to go back to what we were on September 10th, or can we do better?

Jumper's exit weight ÷ canopy square feet = wing loading

FEAR, DREAD, TERROR, FRIGHT

At first we have to avoid or
To ward off the expected evil.
We have an uneasiness of mind
About the evil likely to befall us.
Then we experience great fear and
Apprehension: an alarm excited
By expected pain, loss, and other evils.
And then we go to extremes of fear,
Violent dread, agitation of body and mind.
And then suddenly we arrive
At fright, passionate, sudden, it
Invades us, it shocks us
And then is gone.

As we consider where it went
Our thoughts go down new ways,
New directions...
A little deeper into experience.

182⁵

I miss you.
Oh, yes, I do

I miss your laughter – its happy soul
I miss your laughter
Just lovin' you around.

When you just stood beside me
Did anyone ever tell you?
It's still glows in side me.
I miss the warmth of you.

Sometime I sit here in my chair for a while
And just think about your smile.
And now I just sit here missing you
There's nothing else I can do

I miss you.
Oh, yes, I do

535⁴

Revenue Debt – Bent update

1/4ly revenue of Water Building and Space
Fader Stramsky

781 844 3870

TIMOTHY MC VEIGH
(Rubble in all directions)

It was a little hazy in
Terra Haute today
And the air hung heavy
In all the cameras
Watching the death chamber
Building that seemed
About to blow up
Sending rubble in all directions.
But in the end, it was
Uneventful and dry and
Even routine. The announcers read
A line or two from Ernst Henly's
Poem, *Invictus*, which was
Inappropriate in a high degree.
But then what did you expect?
Timothy used the poem as his "final words"
But he should have stopped at
The first two:
"Out of the night that covers me
Black as the pit from pole to pole..."

6111⁴
With regrets to Henly

Regardless of how much you love me ...

When I first met you
Your lips were so soft
I wanted to take the day off

Last night your voice was so harsh
It made me want to run away
To have my way
To scream and die
To trash everything and lie.

They say it's the way of love
But it's not what I was dreaming of.

AS IF

They swim and buzz
All around as we
Try harder and harder
To move ahead.
Gadflies, horseflies, and botflies
And warbleflies...
With their annoying
And persistent criticism.
They buzz around as if
They are actually doing
Something when really
They just dodge responsibility
For originality and lurk
Around dart and spearing
Ideas that came along.
They hover over us like
A specter of dread, thoughts
Of bad things coming.
When really its only a bunch
Of flies that shoo away
With the wave of a hand.

5914

FIRST JUMP

There was a precipice
It was rockless, however,
But still it was the
Brink of disaster.
Ten thousand five hundred feet,
It was, above the ground.
And the wind was at
Hurricane velocity.
I was there, excited, ready
Full of wonder, as alert
As I can be. But I
Also had faith and hope
As I jumped into oblivion.
Forty eight seconds later
I was floating comfortably
Forty-five hundred feet
From the green, green grass
Of Mother Earth.

7111⁵

FORTY-EIGHT SECONDS

It was a vastly cushioned fall,
With an immediate barrel-roll
Of three hundred and sixty degrees.
Arms up, legs softly bent,
Back arched, looking at the
Far horizon, I fell
Five thousand five hundred
Feet in forty-eight seconds
Of sheer exhilaration, and
When the chute opened I
Was laughing out loud.
Just before I jumped, I
Saw two bumper stickers on the plane:
“At 13,000 feet nothing else matters,” and
“Normal people scare me.”
I still find the whole event
Exciting and amusing.

7111⁵

(Do you think I'm normal?)

SIT DOWN WITH HONOR

People who stand up and speak
At large public meetings
Are an interesting study
In human nature.
Some just talk to hear
Themselves. Others talk
Because they have to register
Their disagreement with
Change of any sort.
But every once in a while
Someone stands up
To express a vision
Of hope and progress
And caring for others
And these always
Sit down with
Honor.

1151⁵

TIME, THOSE YEARS

It isn't about having a dog
Really. It's about what
You learned during that
Time, those years,
Those moments.
It's about who you were
When it all started and
Then who you were
When it all ended.
The dog was always there
Looking, wagging, panting,
Watching, wanting,
Barking and sleeping.
There with you.
The dog as a time.
A period in your life
That ended when he
Died, or maybe when
You stopping missing him.

1151⁵

COMING OF THE NEXT

It always amazes me
The people who are there.
Like celebrities who steal
In so quietly like cats
Or mice, depending on
What's up or down. But
There they are one after the
Other so inevitably like
The tide at Devereux
Or the coming of the next
Election. But when
You've seen it all
Before and again and
Again there's a rythme
To it all that rings
So true like the bells
Of Abbot Hall.

1151⁵

SALTY SMITH 1938-2001

It was very quiet and solemn
He would have been uneasy here.
There was a profusion of flowers
Around the podium/alter as though
People didn't know what else to do.
To one side there was a setup
For an overhead projector that
Lent a sort of unknown element.
The church itself had a status and history
But few present knew what it was.
Perhaps like Salty himself, the church
Had been there for all to know for years and years,
But who knew?
Carl Smith read the 23rd psalm.
Erik read the 27th psalm.
Bear Cranney read a line too.
His friends were really friends, they said.
Because he was such a good friend.
He brought integrity and promise
And justice to their lives.
At the end of the funeral a blind singer sang
"You'll never walk alone,"
Like an angel to Salty
Who had been a whale hunter
A cigar smoking jokester who
Loved to play golf, fish
And hide his troubles.
He once took me to New York
On the club car. I remember
Him sitting beside me
In those big seats looking out
The window, watching the
World go by. He caught me.
"What are you looking at?"
I just smiled and said,
"I'm looking at you."
"Knock it off," he said.
His blurred reflection in
The scenery going by
Was smiling.
I'm sure of it.

11301⁵